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MUSICAL RHETORIC IN THREE OF THE 10 PRELUDES FOR PIANO BY CARLOS CHÁVEZ

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Abstract: In this document, the musical rhetoric and the theory of affects are briefly reviewed, links of this theory are found determining a type of temperament in the first three preludes of the work 10 preludes for piano by the composer Carlos Chávez, which may serve to the pianist performer who addresses this series of pieces.

Keywords: Musical rhetoric, Chavian work and interpreter-pianist.

INTRODUCTION

This document begins with a comparison between the ancient and modern styles that coexisted in the Baroque and the reasons why musicians and theorists were linked to musical rhetoric and its procedures. Next, the theory of affects and its translation into musical rhetoric by music theorists are addressed. Subsequently, it focuses on analyzing the presence of an existing character or temperament in the first three preludes of the work 10 preludios for piano by Carlos Chávez, which can serve as support for the pianist interpreter of the Chavian work, as well as for the teacher who wishes to support himself. in the document to supplement instruction to their students.

Until before the last third of the 16th century, European music had preserved a unity of style in each era, for example, in the Middle Ages, or the Renaissance. On the contrary, in the baroque style unity is lost and awareness of it is created. Renaissance music does not disappear in the Baroque period, but is preserved by calling it an ancient style (stile antico) applied to the sacred, having Palestrina as its highest representative.

Composers then handled two languages: the old style, also called the first practice (prima prattica), which provided the basis for a complete training of the musician, and on the other hand, the recently emerged modern style, which provided greater freedom to the

creator. One of the representative features of the difference between the ancient and the modern at this time was the approach that was taken between the music and the lyrics, the first type subjected the lyrics to sound art, while the second was the opposite "...According to Berardi and his maestro Scacchi[...]In Renaissance music, <<harmony is the master of lyrics>>; in the baroque <<the letter is the teacher of harmony>>..."(Bukofzer, 2004, p.19).

There are two reasons why the musicians and theorists of the baroque period were related to the complex system of rhetoric and its operation. The first is the product of the aspiration that arose in the Renaissance to imitate the forms and procedures of Greek and Latin culture, which caused a re-updating of rhetoric and poetics late in the 16th century and beginning in the 17th century. This will result in the genesis of a theory that will consist of rhetoric of music. The second cause was:

the obsessive desire of theorists and composers to see in music a great telluric force capable of moving and shaking the affections of an audience, just as good orators did with their speeches. Taking from rhetoric the necessary tools to provoke such effects in the audience became a fundamental task for baroque musicians.

(López Cano, 2000, p.34)

This would imply the elaboration of treatises that contained and explained how one could move and persuade with musical rhetoric.

Since the heyday of Greek culture, the relationship between emotional states and music has been sought. However, it is in the time of the baroque when it is possible to develop a more refined theory, although not devoid of complexity. The researchers point out how, from its beginnings, the music created in the Baroque period was based on

affections. Baroque musicians devoted great energy to discovering the way in which the passions of the soul arose and functioned, relying on the reflections of the thinkers of that time. The compositional process was carried out anticipating that the work in its entirety or each of its parts or movements would contain the imitation of human passions and hoping to obtain the pertinent response from the public according to the way in which it was theorized that it could be imitated in the music, for example, joy or sadness. However, it was not the overflow of emotions as in romanticism and there was no psychological approach, because this branch did not yet exist. The representations of the passions were stereotyped, the product of reflection, that is, the intellect was involved in it and its incarnation was drawn in music. Since philosophers and music theorists greatly influenced baroque music, it is important to briefly explore their approaches in order to understand how they were later used in music.

THE THEORY OF AFFECTS

Several were the philosophers who influenced the musicians and artists of this period, among which René Descartes stands out with his work *Les Passions de l'ame* (1649), which considers the passions or affections, as sensations or movements of the soul, that they are generated, last and strengthen, through the activation of light parts of the blood called animal spirits. All this is air that is transported through the bloodstream to the brain, entering the deepest parts and reaching the pineal gland, where the soul is located. The vibration that animal spirits have in the soul triggers a passion.

In turn, this imbalance sets in motion another movement of the animal spirits. Which make blood, fluids and humors circulate through the body and later the affections are located in one of the organs of the body

depending on the emotion or humor that is. An example of this is how Descartes explained the movement of spirits in the case of love, reflecting that this thought, when it affects the brain, mobilizes these subtle particles of blood towards the intestines and stomach so that the juice of food is transformed into new vital fluid, which quickly reaches the heart avoiding stopping in the liver.

and that driven with more force than that which is in the other parts of the body, the more abundant it is in the heart and produces a more intense heat in it, due to the fact that this blood is stronger than that which has been rarefied several times in passing, and return to pass through the heart; which makes it also send spirits to the brain, whose parts are thicker and more moved than usual; and these spirits, strengthening the impression produced by the first thought of the amiable object, force the soul to dwell on this thought; and in this consists the passion of love.

(López Cano, *Ibid.* p. 48)

Each emotional state has its explanation. For example, Descartes exposes how joy stimulates the orifices of the heart, the spirits cause a dilation of these allowing the volume of blood to be repeatedly greater from the coronary arteries to the veins and vice versa. What makes it possible for the blood to penetrate more finely in a balanced way to the brain and in it flows to the pineal gland, expanding the images and thoughts of joy. Each passion or emotion is generated by various factors, which can occur individually or in combination:

- Objects that we perceive with any of our five senses.
- Ideas that assail our imagination: memories, fears, obsessions, etc.
- • The type of emotional temperament: choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic or sanguine that is usual in an individual.

- Movements generated by the soul: when with our own will we produce thoughts and emotions.

The Baroque thinkers, product of their investigation of the affects, came to the conclusion that a movement of the soul influenced the body, putting it into action. In other words, an affection of the soul produces an effect in the body. The French philosopher, theologian and musical theorist Marin Mersenne (1636) affirmed that when the soul is affected by one of the passions, there are two types of movements of animal spirits: ebb and flow. In the flow, passion causes animal spirits to go from the heart or liver to other parts of the body, for example, joy or hope. In the reflux the concentration of the spirits in the heart or liver comes from other parts of the body, this is characteristic of sadness, fear or pain.

What would govern the foundation of musical rhetoric would be the imitation of the physical effects produced by an affection in a man, this will be the guideline for representation in sound creation. A complex system of analogical association is then produced by manipulating the characteristic elements of music such as: melody, rhythm, harmonic structure, instrumental color, style, rhetorical figures, etc., with which a passion of the soul is imitated. In most cases this takes the form of an allegory. Mersenne explained that in a composition there must be a musical accentuation of the passions of the soul, differentiating them into ebbs and flows. In the flows the sounds must be pleasant, consonant and concerted, on the other hand, those of reflux must be gloomy, dissonant, etc.

Mersenne exemplifies his reflections with the passion of anger, explaining how a person who becomes angry: raises the volume of his voice, to express himself with greater excitement, his heart beats faster, which even affects his breathing. In music, an attempt will

be made to imitate this passion, influencing one of its characteristic elements, thus the allegory of anger in music will consist of:

a fast and agitated rhythm of the melody, precipitating on the end of each phrase, as an allegory of the pulse. Likewise, the register in which it is sung will rise, sharpening, above all, at the end of each sentence in a second, fourth, fifth or more, allegorizing the tone of voice with which one speaks when angry.

(López Cano, *Ibid.*, p. 61-62)

The German composer and musical theorist Johann Mattheson (1739) considers that as joy expands animal spirits, it will require large and widened intervals for its imitation, in contrast, sadness will require a contraction of them, using narrow intervals. He proposes that arrogance, pride, arrogance must be expressed with musical figures of serious and bombastic movement, avoiding speed and downward movements, without humor.

The systematization of baroque musicians included modes, intervals, dissonances, and tempo indications. Thus theorists such as Charpentier, Mattheson and Rameau established generalities of how to consider tonalities, for example: C major is considered a) happy, warrior, b) Anger, anger, impertinence or c) Enlivened, joyous respectively. Mattheson established with respect to the indications of tempo and character, for example (López Cano, *Ibid.*, p. 68):

Adage: sadness

Lament: lament

Slow: relief

Andante: hope

Affectionate: love

Allegro: consolation

Presto: wish

The rhetorical figures allow us to know the main affect of a musical work, although it is not appropriate to designate an unequivocal and definitive meaning to these, since they are open structures. However, Baroque composers used a common type of rhetorical figure for certain affections. In music, the classical rhetorical system composed of five parts was used: *Inventio, Dispositio, Elocutio, Memoria, Pronuntiatio*. Only memory was set aside since baroque musicians were not interested in memorizing the music they played.

Next, the presence of musical rhetoric in the first three preludes of the work is analyzed in *10 preludes for piano by Carlos Chávez*, that can offer a focus for the execution of the work to the performer-pianist, as well as to the piano teacher who wishes to rely on this information for their students.

In the work *10 preludios for piano* by Carlos Chávez, the composer uses archaic scales such as Gregorian modes with a modern treatment. In each of the pieces in the series there is a regularity of rhythmic values that is maintained until the end through the phrases, which causes a character or temperament. That is why some authors relate this work to the baroque theory of affects:

The unit of note values, established at the beginning of each Prelude, runs throughout the piece as a mechanical constant, with virtually no interruptions. This procedure preserves a single temperament during each piece, which links them to the theory of Baroque affects. (L. Parker, 2002, p. 66-67)

It is possible that Chávez, who studied baroque music, was inspired by this tendency, but in a subtle way. Knowing this character condition that distinguishes one prelude from another can be useful to the pianist interpreter, since it helps him in an interpretative plan for each prelude. Thus, the first *Andantino espressivo* prelude manages to maintain a strong solemnity together with a relative calm, which is skilfully supported by a tempo whose

constancy is manifested in rhythmic figures of quarter notes and eighth notes. In addition, there are pedal notes: round or white with a dot.

This sensation caused by the prelude I corresponds to the use that one of the Baroque composers such as Claudio Monteverdi gave to the Greek Doric mode according to a researcher said creator with the Doric "...it persuaded prudence and gave birth to chaste desires in the chest thoughts..." (López Cano, *Ibid.*, p. 66) it must be clarified that in the case of Italian the mode is Doric Greek and that it is Phrygian Gregorian in Chávez's piece, although the modal sensation is similar.

The second *Vivace* prelude is Gregorian Doric and would be Phrygian. For Monteverdi, the use that the baroque musician gave this mode to it was "...he incited those spirits of brave principles to fight, and he incited their hearts with furious vows..." (Op. cit, p. 66), in the Chavian piece, verve, jubilation and brilliance are achieved by means of a perpetual movement of eighth notes, in addition to its abundant fragmented scales in general, increasing the height in each progression and a mostly strong dynamic :

The third prelude *Poco mosso* is written in hypolydian mode (octave do-do), it is a beautiful choral full of peace and some mysticism, Chávez takes us to the temple without thinking about his music for the religious celebration. The piece maintains its temperament as a result of little movement through a constant evolution in quarter notes between voices, above all extremes.

Chávez's preludes have a varied articulation, a moderate tendency in meter changes compared to previous works of his youth, differentiation of accents in time, change of tempo and speed, modification of the agogic, in addition to having a two-voice texture. and others like the third prelude four voices in long phrases.

Andantino espressivo $\text{♩} = 84$

Piano *p*

Example Number: 1(Chavez, 1940, p.3).

15

p sempre

mf cantando

cresc.

* In the case of a slight accent u

Example Number: 2 (Ibidem, p.3).

1

Vivace $\text{♩} = 120$

mf

Example Number: 3 perpetual movement of eighth notes cc.1-6 (Chávez, Ibid., p. 6).

Example Number: 4 perpetual movement of eighth notes cc.22-27, fragmented scales (Ibidem, p.6).



Example Number 5 Third prelude (Chávez, Ibid. p.14)

The self-taught sense or exercise that Carlos Chávez experiences in these 10 preludes is also evident, since his intentions were to compose one for each mode and in the process he decided to make combinations, thus they are the Chavian compositional vision of the use of modes, that is, without stick to the way and rules in which modes were used in medieval times. His inspiration, dedication and experimentation led him to write these very well-achieved pieces as a result of his ability to penetrate and absorb the essence of the styles resulting from his daily work and analytical capacity.

CONCLUSION

The 10 Preludes for Piano by Carlos Chávez is a technically difficult work, as well as compositionally complex. It is probable that Chávez did not have the use of musical rhetoric as his main purpose in his work, however, as we can see in these three preludes, each one has a characterizing temperament, this may be useful for a pianist interpreter who wishes to address this work, since it can help you design an interpretive plan resulting from this analysis approach. Carlos Chávez composes in a modern way, resorting to ancient procedures such as Greek scales and the use of a temperament for each of the pieces of musical rhetoric. This reading can serve as support for teachers who want to increase their students' knowledge of Chavian work.

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