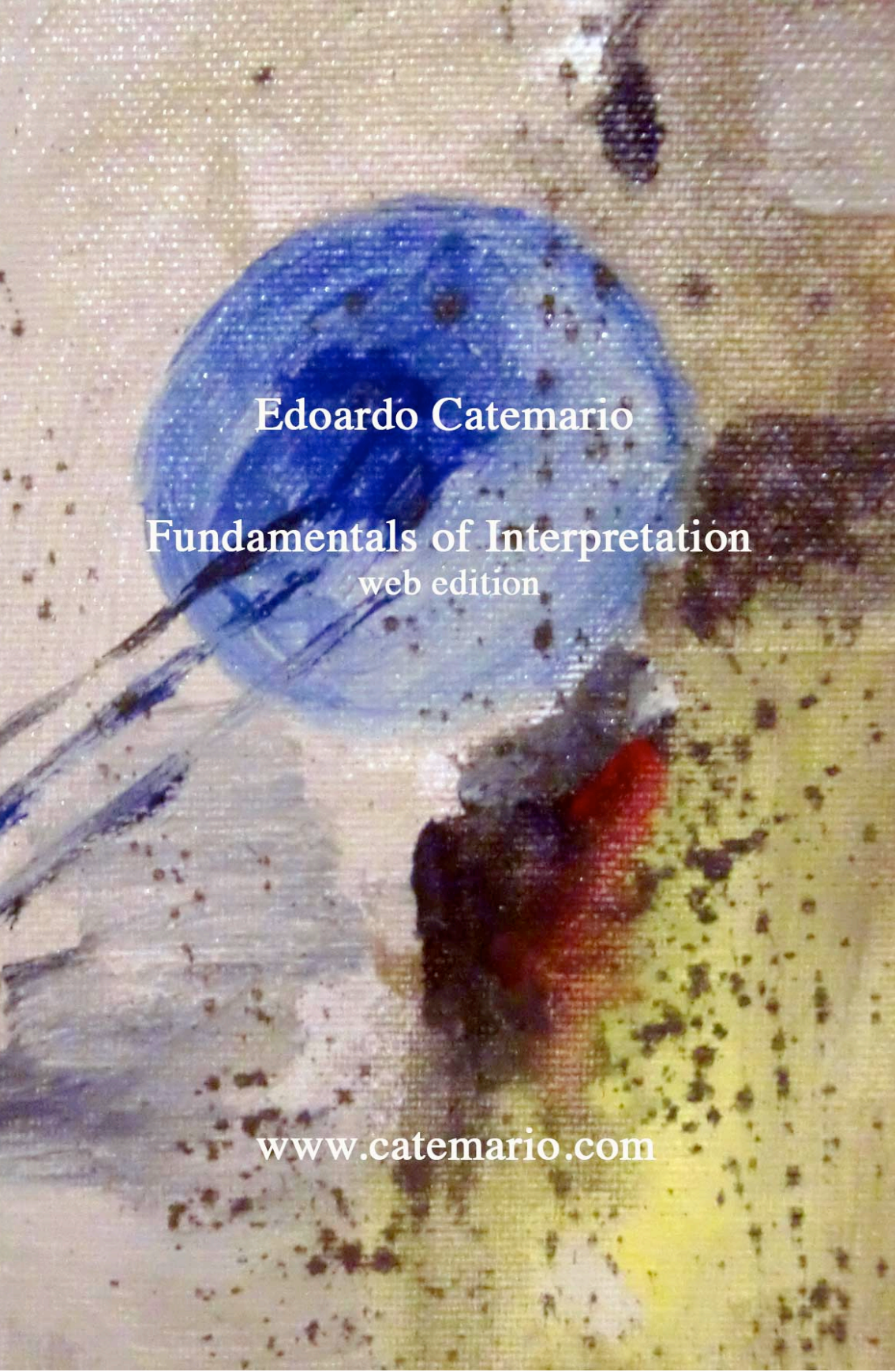

Edoardo Catemario
Fundamentals of Interpretation
web edition
www.catemario.com

Fundamentals of Interpretation

A practical manual of interpretation

by

Edoardo Catemario

www.catemario.com

This ideas and information in this booklet were taught to me by my students over the period of 1993 to 2001 while I was teaching my first course in Paris. Therefore, it is logically dedicated to them.
:

to Remi, Eric, Daniel, Fabrice, Maxime, Jean François,
Anne, Ines, Antonio e Daria

with love.

English translation by Ko Ransom.

Front cover: Musica (tecnica mista 24 x 24) by Roberto Greco

Foreword

"The prime characteristic of an excellent performer is to make ugly music beautiful!" Andres Segovia

The good performer, the "interpreter," is a person of honor first and foremost, as well as a man of honesty to his audience. He is willing and able to understand the innermost sense of the music he plays. Those whom I consider as my masters gave to me a world of methodological certitudes and artistic curiosity. I have always conceived the foundation of my freedom to be my adherence to the rules of my school of certitudes. As a performer, my most pressing challenge is to manage the logical link between knowledge and its application. Am I able to play what I know? And what am I? As a teacher, I foster my students to join together what they know, what they are, and what they play.

When reading, we care about the text, the single letters, the single words, the punctuation, and the separation of paragraphs. This is because of our need to understand what we are reading. If one is to discuss a text, it is worth understanding it well. Communicating feelings is a more complex issue, but that is exactly what happens in music! An excellent starting point for such communication is an agreement on its lexicon and its interpretation, or at least on their basic, elementary notions. That is why I would like to share with you these little certitudes, though they may be considered obvious by my masters (and all the great musicians I've had the pleasure to know personally). The most fundamental idea is that in Western music, our text- the score- contains the means of understanding a piece of music's inner meaning, and that every single sign is important. I separate all signs into three categories: evident signs (manifest signs), less evident signs (hidden signs), and instinctive differentiations. This manual serves as a kind of bare "minimum" in these categories.

The need to write this basic manual was born while I was teaching my course on interpretation while in Paris, in order to help my "apprentices" with this matter.

I have attempted here to present a synthesis, in hopes of encouraging other young interpreters to acquire information from other more structured and exhaustive manuals.

Buona musica a tutti.
Edoardo Catemario

Index

Part I
The evident Signs

Music: from the Greek language: Mousike (techne), "art of the Muses." The art of combining sounds based on defined rules that vary according to location and era.

The dictionary definition of the word “music” gives us the opportunity to attempt to identify the basic elements of musical notation[1] and introduce an initial schematic that defines Music’s constitutive elements as Sound and Rhythm. Over the last hundred years, classical music has developed a specialization of roles, so that the composer and the performer are now increasingly two different entities.
The composer’s path starts from his life’s experiences and ends as a sound expressed by a graphic sign. The performer moves in the opposite direction, trying to reconstruct an emotional life from a sign by means of sound. If there is the constant need on one side for increased precision in writing, there is a requirement on the other side, the performer’s side, for the utmost care and respect for what the composer wrote. This is self-evident for all the explicit signs "noted" in the score, but not as much so for information that assumes the knowledge of music. We deal here now with the former case. To understand the score’s significance, you must know all the conventional signs[2]. It logically follows, then, that you must recognize the pitch and duration of sounds!

Here is our first schematization:

Sound	**Rhythm**
The dynamic notations: ***ppp***, ***pp***, ***p***, ***mp***, ***mf,*** ***f***, ***ff***, ***fff*** including the suddens: **sfz**, **sffz** (the sforzando) and the progressives ***pf*** e ***fp.*** The Crescendo and the Diminuendo and and the various notations for timbre.	Rallentando, Accelerando, Ritenuto, Morendo, Stringendo, etc. and all the articulative notations: > accent, · staccato, − marcato and legato

As you can see, these are signs we are accustomed to seeing in scores. These are the basis for the execution of any piece of music. This first schematization will be useful in illustrating the use of information included in a musical text. To outline: at least until we are certain that our musical ability and talent has surpassed the composer’s, it’s much better to play **exactly** according to the instructions given in the score.

Indications of Intensity

I imagine that my young reader already knows what dynamics are, and therefore knows how to perform a **pp** or a **ff**. The signs for intensity may apply to individual notes or to entire sections. An indication applies until there is a different one[3]. In the gradual notations, each note will be slightly more intense than the preceding (**crescendo**) or less intense (**diminuendo**). The crescendo and the diminuendo may be present in two different layouts: the abbreviation (cresc., dim.), or a "fork" (two diverging lines for the crescendo and converging for the diminuendo).

The sforzando

For an Italian, the concept of the sforzando is straightforward, needing no further explanation... However, this is not so for those who do not speak the language. The concept of “effort” is linked to the concept of inertia and the force needed to override it. Once you first overcome inertia, less force becomes required to continue an action. Imagine moving a heavy weight: at first, an extra "effort" is required to start it in motion, but the force needed to keep it in motion is lower. The idea of applying an "effort" to a note or a chord affects its intensity, but also its release, by virtue of an "imaginary resistance" to the player. The note will be slightly delayed, **as if it is unwilling to be played**, while the player tries to overcome its “reluctance.”
The sforzando, sfz, lays in a hybrid position involving both sound and rhythm, where its sound will be slightly stronger than its surrounding context, and its start is slightly delayed. The sforzatissimo, **sffz**, is the exaggeration of the concept of the sforzando.

note: [1]We limit our interest here only to music that is commonly defined as "classical": that is, Western music using the conventional signs collectively known as modern notation. [2]Conventional signs are the signs of expression that contribute to the formation of the sound in the same way notes do. They point out the "management" of sound and rhythm. A note has a different meaning when played mildly versus when played loud. Where the music is written loud, all the notes, not only the first, must be played loud up to the next sign that gives a different intensity! [3]Where ‘forte’ is indicated, all the notes (not only the first one!) must be played ‘forte’ until another indication is found.

The Accelerando and Ritardando

The **ritardando** and the **accelerando** (also present in the score with the abbreviations rall. and accell.) are two progressive rhythmic signs: each successive note is executed slightly slower than the former in the former case, and slightly faster in the latter. This **gradualness** is at the core of the concepts of accelerating and retarding. They represent in the sphere of rhythm what crescendo and diminuendo represent in the sphere of sound. The accelerando and ritardando start from the note on which the sign is placed **up to the notation "a tempo".**

The Ritenuto

One of the mistakes I often need to correct is the misunderstanding that plagues young performers leading them to play a ritenuto as a ritardando. These two concepts are, in fact, wholly separate and far apart from one another. In the case of a ritenuto, we are faced with sudden rhythmic information. In other words, in the ritenuto, a single sound will have a slower pace than its surrounding sounds, and a ritenuto involving a succession of notes will have a small delay in each note, not gradual, and each independent from the other[4]. The abbreviation rit. when referred to a single note always means ritenuto.

Signs of Articulation

Indications of articulation are among the signs that, while present in the score, often play the role of "Cinderella". The signs of articulation determine the way in which we "pronounce" a musical microstructure. They are fundamental in understanding the character of the pattern that generates the score. When present, they are a huge help in interpretation. When absent, they should be selected using our own expertise and good taste. The fact that there are different words for each sign means that they identify different concepts: it is therefore unacceptable to make an accentuato into a marcato, or a staccato a staccatissimo.

note: [4]From an emotional point of view, the difference between gradual and sudden indications is quite remarkable: the former are associated with a high degree of predictability, feeling reassuring and "rational." The latter adds a hiccup in a performance's timing, enhancing unpredictability. Its effect is thus more dramatic.

Legato and staccato

I assume that during the course of learning solfeggio, my attentive reader already had the chance to learn the differences between **legato** (which is indicated by a curved line that joins two or more sounds) and **staccato** (which is written by placing a dot above the note to be played so), and therefore knows how much sound and how much silence must be performed in both cases. A sequence of sounds is called legato when there is no silence between them, and the "head" of one note stems from the "tail" of the one preceding it. All other possible articulations envisage a certain amount of silence between individual sounds[5]. A single sound obviously cannot be "legato" on its own. A **staccato** means to perform the first half of a note as a sound, and the second half as a silence. The **staccatissimo** means playing the first quarter as a sound and the remaining three quarters as a silence.

Marcato

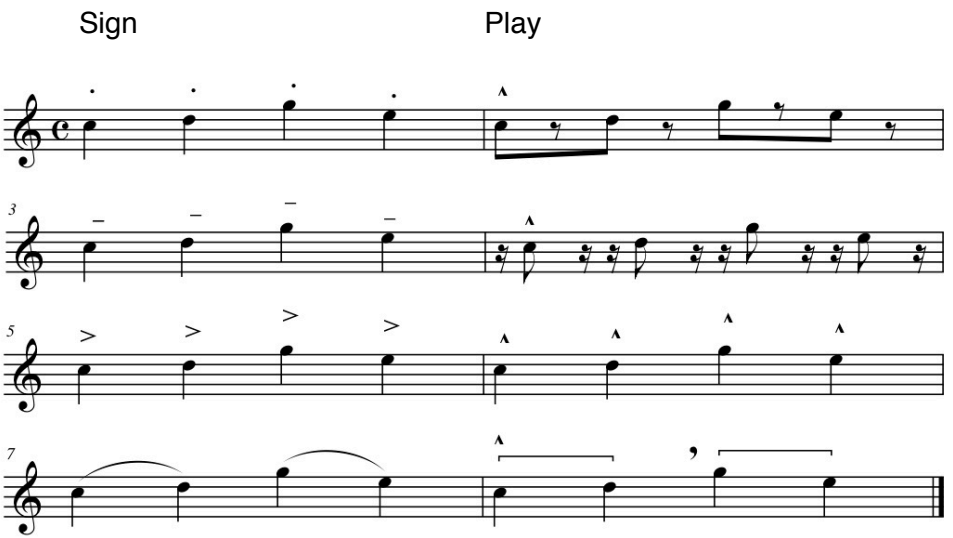
The **marcato** (indicated by a dash above the note) deserves some more detailed explanation. Once again, let me refer to its literal meaning. What does it mean to highlight a drawing? What exactly is to be marked? These trivial questions invite trivial answers... it is the contour that is to be marked. That is, the black line separating color from white paper and/or that defines a shape. Inevitably, the next question to ask is what is meant by the "contour" of a note, and what is the "black" in music? If we assign the concept of silence to "black," it is clear that marking the boundary of a note means to somehow exaggerate the silence around it. I am confident that my diligent reader knows the parts of a sound: start, vibration, decay. The Marcato applies to the first and third part of the sound; that is, the start of the written note will be slightly delayed, and it will be dampened shortly ahead of its duration. The emotional result of a Marcato is a sort of "**heaviness**" of a phrase[6].

Accentuato

The sign for **Accentuato** (a small fork above a note) is used to indicate that the note has a "weight" independent from its position in the rhythm (downbeat or upbeat). It is an element of "novelty." Neither the duration nor the emission of the sound is altered. Its effect, from an emotional point of view, is one of "motion."

note: [5]The sign for Legato can also be used to join several sounds each bearing a different articulative sign. In such cases, it represents the "grouping" of the affected sounds. [6]I'd like to introduce a fundamental concept here: if the marcato is used to add weight to a phrase, the staccato, being its logical opposite, so to speak, would take this weight out.

Staccato, Marcato, Accentuato, Legato



A bit practice…

Music is an art of making, not of saying.

Knowledge of it is completely useless until it becomes sound. Every single step toward the understanding of a text should never be separated from practicing it using bits of common sense and intuition. For example, I would like for my eager reader to now enjoy playing excerpts of compositions he already knows, or to simply improvise a sequence of notes while working toward mastering the differences between the individual signs discussed so far.

His first exercise could be playing a succession of notes legato, then the same sequence staccato. Then marcato, staccato marcato, legato marcato, accentuato, accentuato legato, and so on.

One more useful practice technique is to set a fixed number of notes between each "sound layer." For example, performing four different notes **pp** before reaching **p**, then four as **p** before coming to **mp**, and so on. Performing the earlier sequences of notes while also going through all the different dynamics could bring you through all the intensities and colors you are able to perform.

Musical ancillary information

The title

I hope that stating this will not raise the ire of any of my readers, but, although the fact may seem trivial, there is some information that is so obvious that it looks unnecessary. However, in my experience, no information contained in a musical text is of that kind. The first piece of "ancillary" musical information we have in a score is the title. This element may, to some extent, already drive our expectations. A title may be evocative, or it may indicate a specific musical form. In ancient music, the title often indicates if the composition is a dance (Allemande, Giga, Sarabande, Chaconne, Passacaglia), if it is a theme with variations (diferencias), or a combination of improvisational elements (Fantasia, Toccata, Prelude). When dealing with the classical era we often face titles that indicate the musical form of the composition (Theme and Variations, Sonata, Sonatina, etc.). If the composer knows what he is doing, the title of a work is not given at random. A descriptive title is associated with descriptive music: Estampes (Soiree dans Grenada eg.), Claire de Lune, Pastoral, "The Four Seasons." Sometimes, there is also an explanatory subtitle: Devilish Capriccio. - Tribute to Paganini, Symphony No.3 - Eroica.

The composer

The second piece of information we usually find is the composer's name. If we are already familiar with some of his work, we roughly know what to expect and how to speak his music's language. Each composer has, quite often, his own deeply personal style, using "stylistics" we easily recognize as belonging to all his artistic creations *7. Just think of Johann Sebastian Bach! Sometimes, we also find the date of the piece. This may put us on the right track as far as finding the "empathy" appropriate for the era in question.

The sources

Sources may be useful when trying to understand the original meaning of a musical text and in order to recognize all the interventions that have occurred in the history of the song ("tampering" by interpreters and musicologists, whether skilled or not). If you do not have the urtext or the manuscript and you are unable to get it, at least try to use a version bearing the name of a trusted reviewer (a concert player or a well-known musicologist). Those who are famous are, quite often but not always, also talented.

The Tempo

The musical tempo is one of the first indications of a score that determines its definitive character. Throughout my life, I've listened to far too many performances that do not take this information into account. This brings a thought to mind: if we assume that the composer knows of the metronome and also knows the conventional assignment of metronome speeds to tempos, why should one not play the tempo noted in the score? If you assume that the composer did not possess this knowledge, we enter the realm of chance. We enter into the no-man's land where anything goes. Once there, we should not be shocked by the changing of rhythms, dynamics, phrasing and maybe, just for good measure, even a few notes here and there.

Here is the "conventional assignment" of metronome speeds to tempos:

40-52	LARGO
48-66	ADAGIO
60-88	ANDANTE
84-108	MODERATO
104-120	ALLEGRETTO
120-144	ALLEGRO
138-168	VIVACE
160-200	PRESTO
200-208	PRESTISSIMO

This cross reference is helpful in the act of interpretation, the inherent limits that belong to any conventions notwithstanding. It is our task to apply this to micro and macro-structures. In any case, it should be noted that these tempos relate to the binary unit of time. Hence they must be scaled down in the case of a fractional rate (multiplying by 2 and dividing by 3), double tempo (where lower metronome speeds are given). It should also be noted that the metronome has undergone some improvements during its lifetime of about two centuries, little has changed from a mechanical point of view. According to some people, it is slightly faster today than when it was first created.

Character

The musical tempo not only describes the relative speed of the piece we are playing but also determines its character. To an Italian, one simply needs to understand the literal meaning of the terms used to indicate time. For those who are not Italian, one needs to learn a bit of Italian! I should point out that before relying on the conventional metronome, the tool used to reference tempos was the clock in our bodies: the heart! The heart, compared to the metronome, is less steady, but more sensitive to emotions. It also moves gradually, whether accelerating or decelerating!

Here is a brief description of the musical tempos (and their character).

Largo: The opposite of Stretto ("narrow" in Italian). Indicates something that takes up space. The tempo "largo" implies a wide and calm expressiveness regardless of its slowness when played. Not to be confused with the lento, which has instead a connotation more closely tied to speed than to space.

Adagio: Literally "at ease," neither slow nor fast. Indicates a piece of comfort. No hurry. Prescribes a smooth expressiveness.

Andante: Literally the present participle of the Italian verb meaning "to walk." A piece adhering to the walking pace of the performer. Prescribes a reflective expressiveness, sometimes detached and contemplative. Not too slow.

Andantino: Faster and prettier than the Andante. Became established in the classical era, very heavily used by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Prescribes a gentle and light expressiveness, a graceful pace.

Moderato: Literally "with moderateness." By the Latin language: "Est modus in rebus" (There is a measure in everything). Faster than the andante, prescribes regular and incisive expressiveness.

Allegro: Literally "cheerfully." A piece with a breezy, lively and smiling character. The pace can be quite rapid.

Vivace: In the Italian language, its literal meaning is "full of life," even "brilliant." Indicates a song of an exuberant nature, very cheerful and full of "joie de vivre."

Presto - prestissimo: Not waiting at all: "on the spot!" Very fast, fearing nothing.

Part II
The Hidden Signs

The alternation of momentum and rest

All of Nature is based on alternation: the day follows the night, the heart compresses and decompresses in turn, vigilance follows sleep. Music is no exception. The organization of sounds is made by a complex system of simple information, an alternation of arsis and thesis consisting of tension and resolution, momentum and rest. When a dancer makes a jump, he gives energy to a move that will keep him aloft for an instant, only to then be inevitably attracted back to the Earth. As long he is in the air, our dancer has a certain amount of energy that keeps him away from the ground. However, experience shows that the Earth always wins out in pulling him down... and, sooner or later, the dancer will fall! Music behaves in exactly the same way in the domain of both sound and rhythm. In music, everything that induces a sense of stasis is the ground, the state of rest. By the same logic, in the sphere of rhythm, a metric accent represents the ground where one stays in order to gain new energy to jump again. Once performed, a played accent is already part of the fall of the next metric accent. While falling, it has a great energy that fades out when it touches the ground (metric accent) again. The same rule also applies in the harmonic field: different sounds feel an attraction back toward the tonic.

Direction

Music, though based on geometry and symmetry, just as is architecture or any other visual art, also possesses a kind of growth. It develops over time. It is like making someone observe a building by the slice: one slice at every second of time, preventing them from directly and intuitively valuing its symmetries. As such a phenomenon, music produces a feeling of expectation. When listening to it, we consider the points of departure and arrival, "where we come from and where we do go" (Celibidache). An "innocent" listener will likely perceive symmetries on an intuitive level. However, a performer cannot avoid a careful analysis of all the rhythmic stresses, both melodic and harmonic, in order to reveal what is, in short, the basic information of the piece of music: its direction. It exists and is present in all musical structures, from the smallest to the largest. Direction must be recognized and applied to both "micro" (measure, aside, semi-phrase) and "macrostructures" (phrase, period, sections, dynamics of a piece, and finally the piece in its entirety). For each single structure, the moment of stress must be highlighted by first using an initial preparatory phase that will then be overcome by a subsequent resolution phase[7]. This alternation of tension and rest can be seen in the principle of arsis (up) and thesis (down). What is up must be taken there (brought up), then it falls. The same principle applies to all individual elements of Music.

The Articulation.

Giving direction to "micro" structures means, first of all, to articulate. **Articulation** is the first building block of expression, and determines the position of the rest. Articulation also determines, when it not clearly identified, if notes are to be played accentuato or legato rather than staccato or marcato.

Let's make a simple example: two two-syllable words that could be both easily be a foot: “Mama” (e.g. two syllables with an accent on the first) and “above” (e.g. two syllables with the first leading into the second). We always articulate the sounds that are part of our language, and one could say that the language is based on the articulation of sounds. So why not music? A useful exercise would be to associate words to the different sounds of a score to be performed. The articulation chosen at the beginning of a piece determines its general trend, and is binding for the rest of the composition. The simple reason for this being that the audience will recognize a microstructure only if it is brought up the same way it was heard the very first time. The same articulation must correspond to the same aside in order to allow a non-expert to be able to follow a musical pattern.

Articulation or Direction?

The alternation of momentum and rest is at the center of what is conveyed in music, and thus must be understood unequivocally. It is important to understand that momentum and rest belong to both small structures (in which articulation and direction coincide) and to larger structures as well (in which we only think in terms of direction).

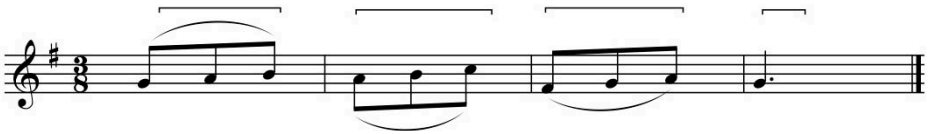
note: [7]This fact can be easily found in “macrostructures.” All one must consider is the “road” of modulation to be followed in order to understand that we will have a It suffices to think about the “path” to be followed in modulating to understand that we will have a path of momentum that is to be prepared and resolved. Or, looking at the dances of Bach’s suites, we can find a move toward the Dominant followed by a return, during the second phase, to the Tonic.

The Foot

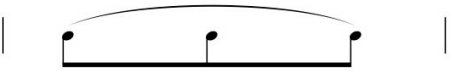
According to the Greek metric, a foot is the union of several long (indicated by the ─ sign) syllables and/or short (indicated by the .symbol) syllables. In music, an even smaller meaningful cell is when you can recognize an alternation of momentum and rest. The term “foot” is used here to describe this cell, which is called a “motif" by Bas. Its close link with the Greek metric offers us the opportunity to use prosody to recognize the character of some pieces by the use of the foot.

examples:

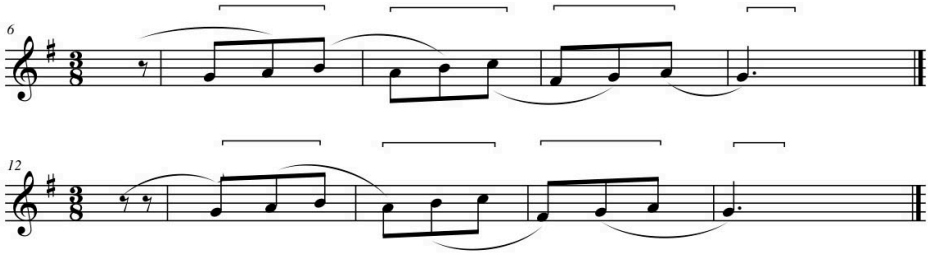
This sequence of sounds:



having this foot:



is entirely different from of the next two examples

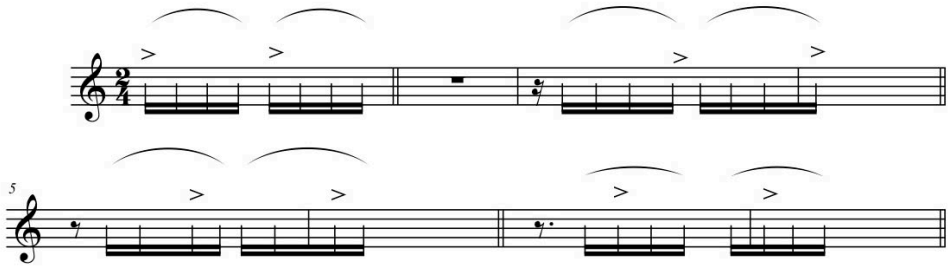


which respectively have this foot

and this foot.

Example of a binary rhythm

These feet are often found in the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and are usually called "Bach's quatrain."

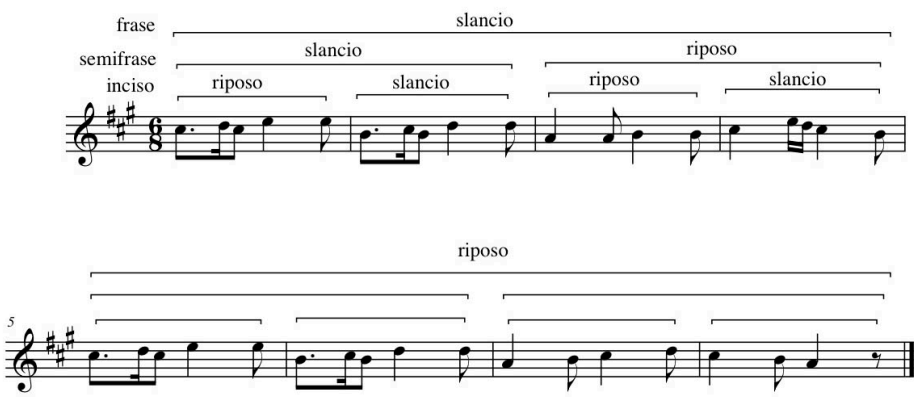


Aside, phrase and period

Musical terminology draws its meaning from the grammatical lexicon when it discusses structures. This situation is quite understandable if you consider that music was born as a vocal phenomenon, and is therefore associated with the spoken text. Instrumental music has retained the terminology and the behavior of vocal music: even in the absence of text, we behave as if it exists.

The articulation in a piece of music's macrostructures (its direction) follows the principles of momentum and rest. Here is an example:

W.A.Mozart

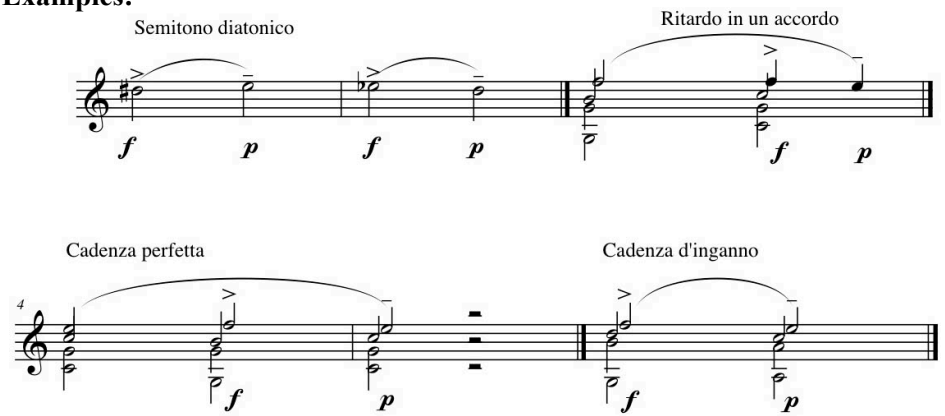


The Hidden Signs

Momentum and rest in the relationship between sounds

Harmony also follows the rules of articulation in another point of guidance: dissonances must be performed with greater intensity than the consonances on which they are resolved, because of the alternation of momentum and rest. Consonances are "static," and do not give any feeling of motion. They represent the "ground," the rest where the introduced dissonance is resolved. **Dissonance**: tension, momentum, strength. **Consonance**: resolution, rest, lightness. The rest does not need to be marked by any increase in energy (just as if the dancer we mentioned before was to stamp their feet on the stage to loudly announce their contact). The dissonances are "dynamic," creating in the audience a feeling of incompleteness and being aloft, hence they require energy[8]. The distance of a diatonic semitone is the most evident example of a basic dissonance-consonance articulation. The attraction imposed by the latter sound on the former is such that the first is fully loaded with energy, regardless of if the semitone is ascending or descending. Accordingly, all the harmonic rhythms can also be analyzed using the same schema[9] (momentum and rest).

Examples:



note: [8]The alternation of momentum and rest affects both a piece of music's microstructures (a dominant chord should be performed stronger that the tonic one on which it is resolved) and its macrostructures (the whole area of dominance could be performed with greater intensity than the tonic area).[9]It is evident, most of all when dealing with some music after 1900, that the concept of dissonance should be considered elastic to some degree, as should the concept of cadence. It is obvious that if in a harmony, consonance is represented by seventh chords, ninth chords will be required at the very least in order to produce an impact.

Phrasing

The Sense of a Phrase

A singer who sings an aria knows very well that he needs to breathe. The choice of when to breathe is dictated by the text. However, what is natural for a singer it is not so for players of stringed instruments[10]. The words of a text help in many ways, suggesting when to breathe (at the end of a sentence), where to stop (at the end of a period), where and when reach the climax (the most dramatic words), and even the type of rubato. All of this "help" is absent in instrumental music. Hence the musical text has to be understood in depth by applying all the knowledge we have. A phrase is composed of elements (foot, aside, semi-phrase) that accumulate in order to build up to a period. But why do we care? It is because we may then breathe, as in vocal music, when we recognize a semi-phrase (small breath) or a phrase (breath). At the end of a period, we may finally consider one part of our discourse concluded, and rest for a moment. All constitutive elements of a musical discourse must always maintain their "inherent meaning"; that is, they must always contain arsis and thesis, tension and resolution, momentum and rest.

A phrase usually has a meaning of its own. In music, this is done by is preparing the apex, then resolving it. A sentence begins, develops and ends. The way in which it begins and ends substantially contributes to the sense of the phrase. That's why **incipits**, the **type of cadence** (male and female), and the **end of the phrase** must be identified.

The Influence of the Relation Between Tension and Resolution on the Rhythm

In some instances, the normal isochronous tempo marking can be deceived by the introduction of agogic accents, or accents that are suggested by the melody and are added to the ones already known from our study of solfeggio (metric accents, primary and secondary syncope and syncopation). These are, of course, in addition to all accents noted in the score.

note: [10]Wind instruments occupy a hybrid position in respect to this issue.

The Hidden Signs

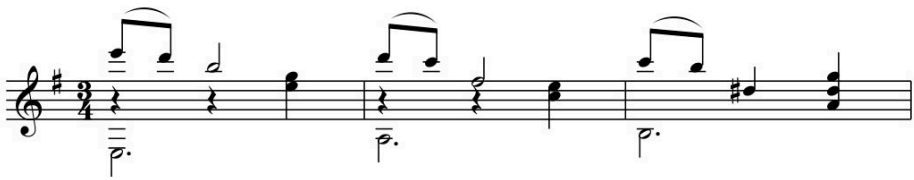
The Incipits

There are only two ways a phrase can start: on the upbeat or on the beat. This feature has an influence over the articulation of the entire piece. There are three combinations of incipit: thetic, prothetic or anacrusic, and acephalous. In the first case, the piece starts with a sound placed on the metric accent. In the second and third cases, it starts on an upbeat. The amount of upbeat determines whether it is anacrusic or acephalous. The first is a small amount that then immediately falls on the strong accent; the second a series of longer values that bridge to the metric accent [11].

Examples

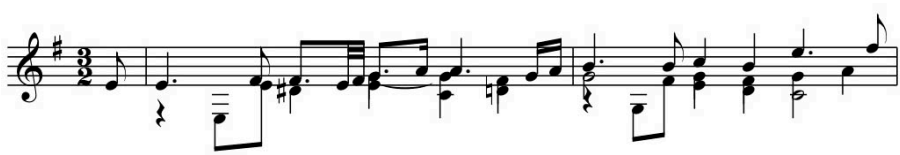
Thetic incipit

F.Tarrega



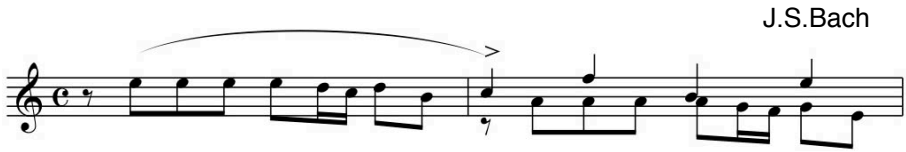
Prothetic or Anacrusic incipit

J.S.Bach



Acephalous incipit

J.S.Bach



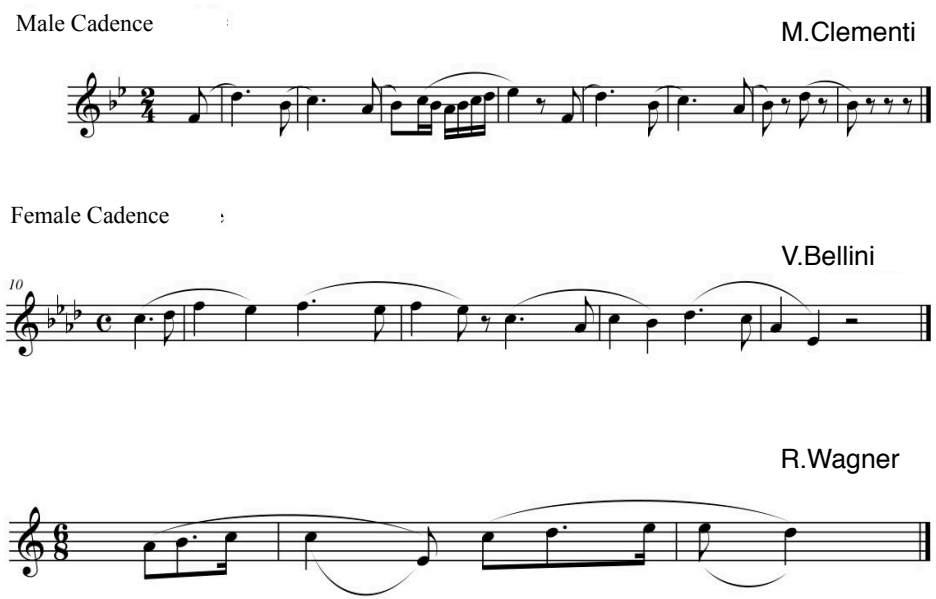
note: [11]The length of the acephalous ictus can be as much as a measure minus a portion (however small) of the metric accent.

The Male and Female cadence

The cadence is the transition from the momentum of a phrase to the next rest. A rhythm is a linking of cadences of different dramatic intensities. All cadences featured inside phrases and periods present limited strength when they end. Cadences featured at the **end of phrases and periods** present major strength, instead.

When the rest lays directly on the beat, a truncated, or male, cadence is produced. When not immediately on the beat, the cadence is a female one.

Male and Female Cadence

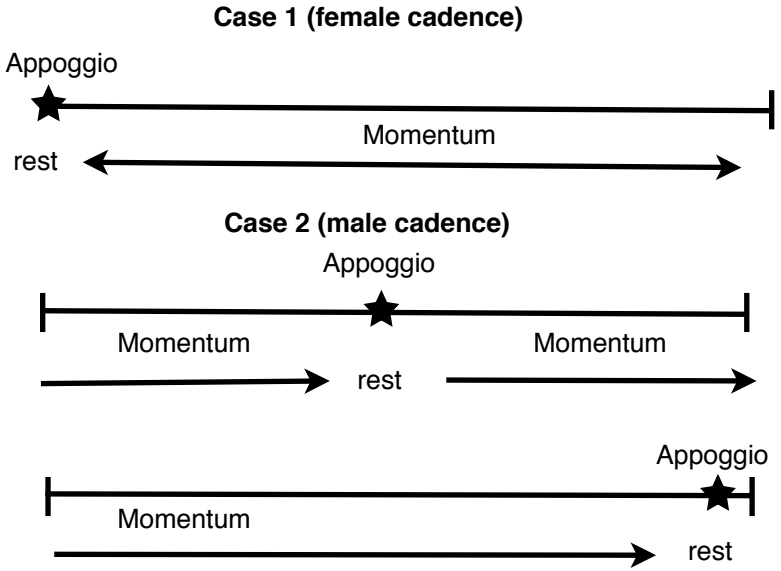


The concept of Appoggio

Larger structures also feature an alternation of momentum and rest just like in a foot or an aside. In fact, we may state that macrostructures are nothing but amplified microstructures behaving in the same was as their elementary component cells. As we stated that music is mainly the direction of a semi-phrase, a phrase, or a period, the **appoggio**, or the main beat to which the whole structure is driven toward, must be identified. Because this, the appoggiatura, behaves in a phrase similarly to a how beat behaves in a foot or an aside. Therefore, it has an interesting likeness to male and female cadences, i.e.

1) The phrase or period starts with an appoggio (female cadence)
2) The phrase or period starts before an appoggio (male cadence)

While performing, just progressing toward the appoggio is enough to produce a meaningful semi-phrase, phrase or period.

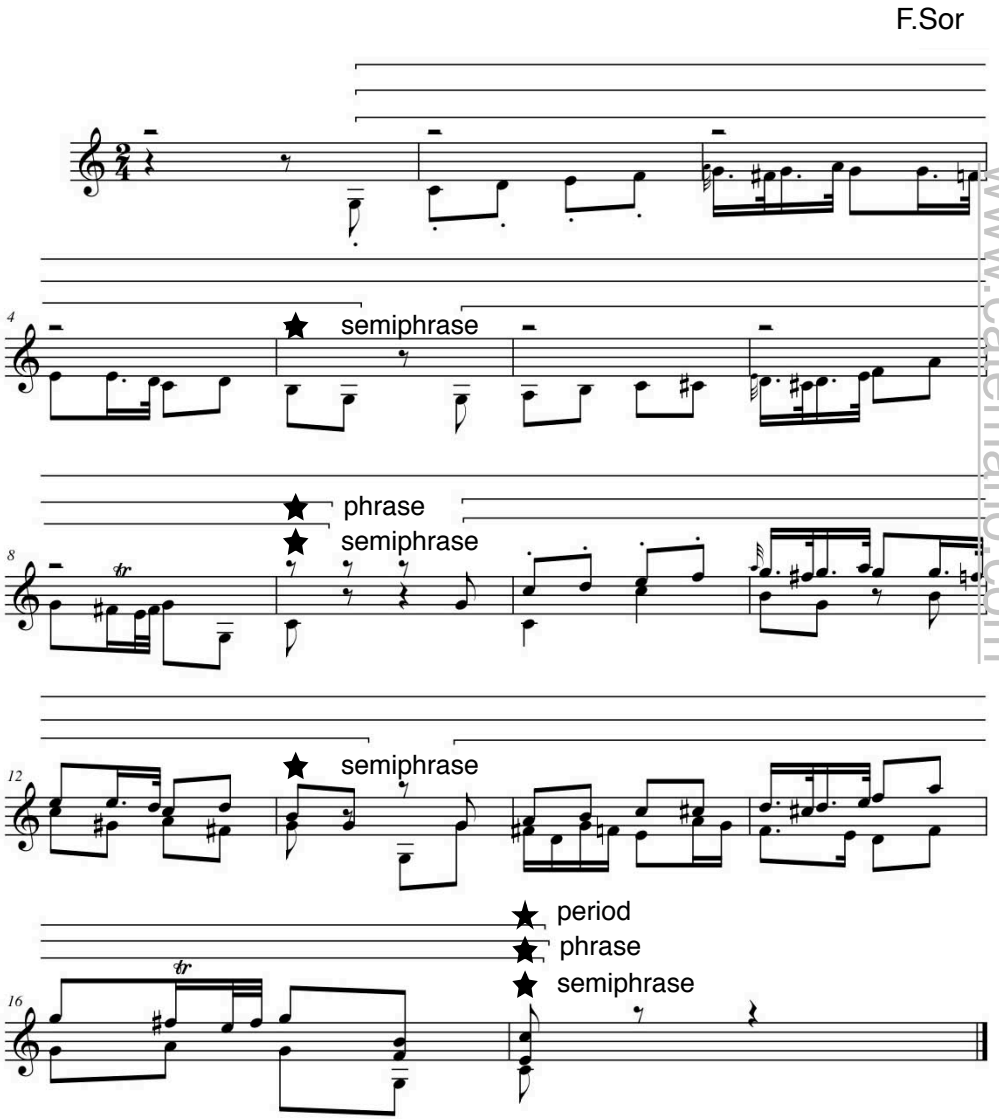


The end phrase

The direction of a piece, by its nature, moves toward the end of the piece. All single structures move toward their ends, the final cadences of phrases and periods. Sections and entire passages are the parts that musical logic is most applicable to.

A bit of practice...

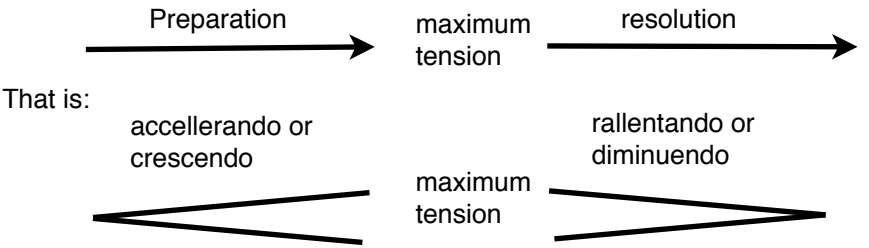
Try to play the following study while paying attention to the direction of the semi-phrase.



The apex

From a macrostructure perspective (section, movement, sonata or suite, etc.) what we've seen about the appoggiatura shows that it leads to the point of maximum stress, which is usually called the "apex." The apex is reached only once in any score. It is its highest point, and is to be prepared and resolved. The apex in a macrostructure must be always prepared; it may be located at any point of the structure except for the beginning. The "scale" leading to the point of maximum tension is also named the climax.

For example:



Rhetoric in music

Often, when we express a thought in both spoken and musical language, we do so through consolidated forms called rhetorical figures. The structures of these figures are fundamentally related to each other in one of two ways: they either confirm or negate one another. The first of their two structures "offers" information, and the second gives the "answer." They can be structured in the following ways: affirmation-affirmation (confirmation), affirmation-negation, affirmation-doubt[12]. Schematizing these even further, we may summarize the proposal-response pair by virtue of how much the second term satisfies the first, or its level of conclusiveness [13].

note: [12]In a macrostructure, doubt is proportional to the level of displacement from the original tone. Mozart uses the dominant chord whenever he wants to emphasize a question embedded in the text (in vocal music, obviously!) The confirmation is subject to the use of roughly the same motifs that are in the proposing structure (foot, theme, phrase). [13]The relationship between these individual structures is sometimes named using the Latin words Adfirmatio (statement), Dubitatio (doubt), enfasis (emphasis), and so on.

The concept of Rubato

Tempo is the fundamental element informing direction. The management of time by way of direction (i.e. the ability to get to the appoggiatura) is commonly called "rubato." Respecting the tempo does not mean swallowing a metronome. The tempo must always be managed while keeping in mind the concept of pulse, or the ability to give regularity to the appoggiatura. The rubato is the series of minor inflections of rhythm that invigorates the internal path between two subsequent appoggiaturas. In other words, it is restricted to managing small accelerandos and ritardandos while keeping the piece's sense of structure and changing its pulse.

How does one keep a regular pulse while introducing a certain amount of time change? The easy answer is that it's enough to give back the time taken by the rubato before it becomes clear that it has been taken. That is, before the next appoggiatura. What has been stolen by the rubato has to be given back in order to restore equilibrium to the pulse. A rallentando will correspond to an accelerando, and an affrettato (hurried) to a ritenuto.

Direct relationships

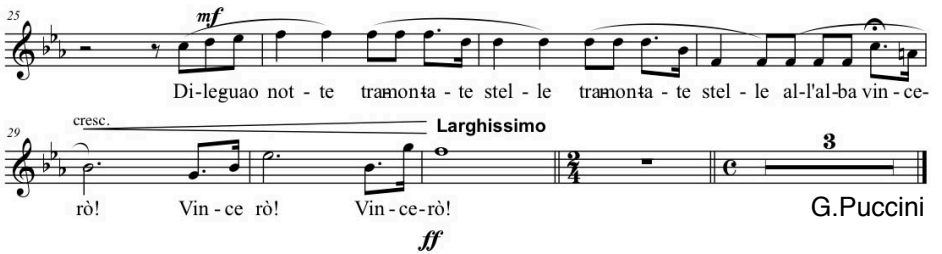
Collective memory is the bundle of so-called "genetic' information that we assimilate at a period of our lives when we have yet to build up logical or rational protections, therefore becoming part of our mindset without our awareness. We consider most parts of our thought as being obvious and natural, not recognizing that it has been founded on thought from Athens in the fifth century or earlier and on Indo-European culture, if not even before that, at the beginning of mankind. This kind of "obvious" information is not subject to any critical thought. Rain falls downward, donkeys do not fly, but birds do, and so forth. In music, there is information that is not a matter of speculation, nor can it be explained persuasively. Such types of information represent the axioms of our musical understanding. One of the most common direct relationships is: ascending melody-crescendo, descending melody-diminuendo. It is a kind of natural expectation; all the listeners are expecting the "do di petto" of a tenor to also be very loud! As I am not willing to deceive the confidence of my readers here, I dare to make another conclusion: we may say that the highest note of a score may also be its acme. The direct relationship may also be used between structural elements similar to each other. For instance, the same motif, such as an aside or period, may have a "terraced" manner of relative dynamics when presented at different tones. Or, the dynamics of single structures may be directly related in respect to the tonal distance between them (an interval of a "fifth" chord between two motifs prompts to a greater dynamic distance in comparison to a "third" chord). In other words, the clear use of a direct relationship is a first way to make expressive and understandable the structures

we have recognized (though we shall use the dynamics noted in the score if they are present). The information embedded in the crescendo is a raising of tension, as is an ascending melody. However, the use of direct relationships appears to be uniquely obvious and predictable.

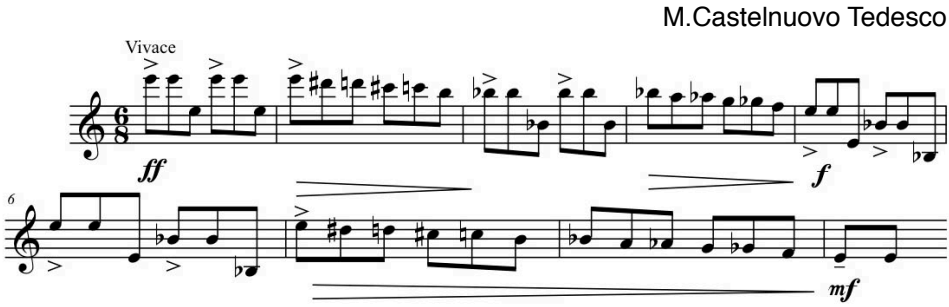
In keeping with the nature of the score and by virtue of the principle of variance, we may, for example, use the opposite of the direct relationships (ascending melody-diminuendo and descending melody-crescendo). Eventually we may introduce, from time to time, some elements of unpredictability [14].

Examples of direct relationships

Ascending melody crescendo



Descending melody diminuendo



note: [14]Obviously, using harmonic analysis will help all those who are not fully satisfied with only using direct relationships. The knowledge of the relationships between chords allows us to adjust the tension within structures and tonal areas and to recognize their mutual relationship.

The hidden polyphony

The Concept of Polyphony

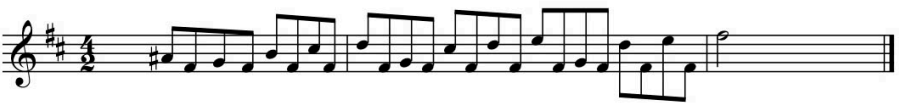
Whenever we are faced with several melodic lines proceeding simultaneously, we must think about polyphony. Polyphony's essential premise is that it implies the sounds of individual lines that persist at the same time. As mentioned before, even pauses can be regarded as sounds, allowing a piece to be polyphonic but to not have all of its voices singing simultaneously. A piece can be polyphonic regardless of the register in which its melodies are deployed. However, to perceive that a piece is polyphonic, we require that at least two sounds persist momentarily at certain points of the musical score, or that there is an "encounter" of voices at the beginning and at the end of the musical elements. Polyphony, from a graphical point of view, can be written in many ways: either on one or several pentagrams.

The hidden polyphony

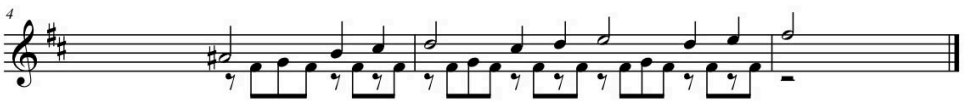
It may happen that polyphony is not clearly noted [15]. That is, the actual values relevant to each sound are not used, they are not properly inserted in their respective melodic lines, and the melodic lines are "mixed" with each other, creating the perception that they are a single line. This is the case for many works of early music (Telemann, Bach and many others), as well for as some modern music. Telemann even reaches the point of writing polyphonic fantasies for the transverse flute (well known as a monodic instrument). The procedure of hidden polyphony is, in reality, quite simple. The same instrument, even if monodic, goes from one register to another, following two (or more) independent melodic lines. From a performance point of view, the key is to give oneness and independence to the individual lines (once, of course, they have been identified), and to give the perception that the start of one voice overlays the end of another. In the case of a polyphonic instrument, this is simple, but imagine if you play a wind instrument!

note: [15]The issue of hidden polyphony is, clearly, one of graphics. That is why we are dealing here with a problem related to the interpretation of the graphic sign. In the past, it was certainly less problematic for those who were writing by hand to simplify their writing by grouping more voices in a single line. A further small remark: the usefulness of having a manifest polyphony is limited to knowing how many voices there are. Once we know this, we can proceed to the articulation of each voice, its phrasing and the piece's dynamics.

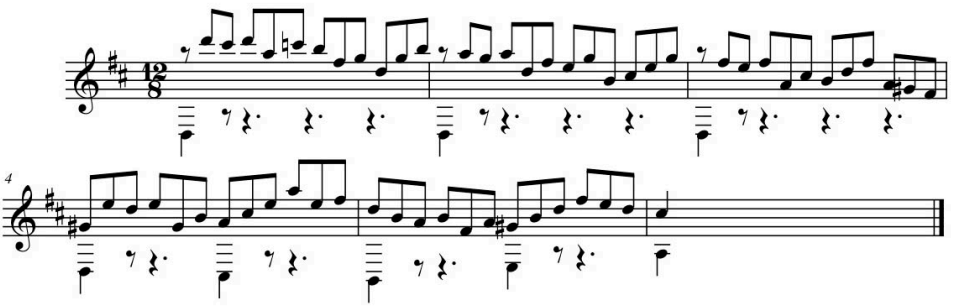
Hidden polyphony G.P.Telemann



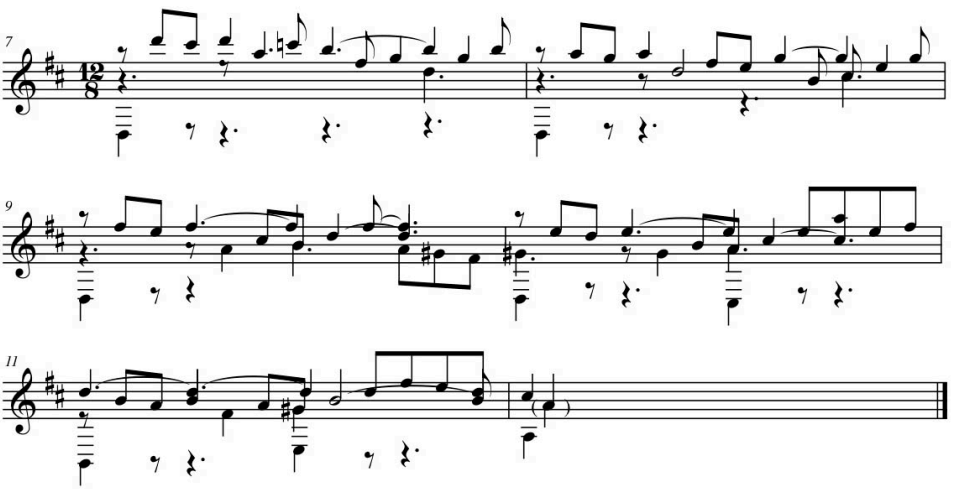
Evident polyphony



Hidden polyphony J.S.Bach



Evident polyphony



Part Three

Interpretation: Intuitive Distinctions

The concept of Variance

In music, while we have a limited number of simple structures, the number of their possible combinations is fairly large. From the composer's perspective, a piece is the "variance" (according to precise structural rules) of the thematic material, the idea generating the score. From the interpreter's point of view, once he recognizes a piece's structural elements and their connection to one another, he must assign a "weight" to each one of them. In this respect, a formal element (motive, aside, phrase, part, period, section, etc.) that is repeated in exactly the same way cannot have the exact same meaning both times because of what has been stated earlier in the piece (momentum-rest, climax and apex).

That is why we need to introduce **variance** (expressive variance, of course!). Any repetition, unless otherwise expressly noted, should be changed. As always, this principle remains valid in both micro and macrostructures.

Simple and Complex Information

We can define as "**simple**" any information containing a single musical meaning. This can be further reduced to simply directional information. A scale is simple information, as it is either ascending or descending. Looking more generally, any melodic line is made of simple information. The rhythm is also simple information because, regardless of the complexity of rhythmic combinations, it contains only one core piece of information: the direction toward the metric accent.

Complex information is the result of multiple pieces of simple information, summoning the listener to a greater attention: every time we perform several melodic lines simultaneously, we provide complex information to the audience. This is because intervallic relationships are formed between individual voices. In other words, in addition to a horizontal, directional aspect, there is an extra vertical direction resulting from several stresses created by the intervals generated between notes. It is always wise to bear this concept in mind any time we introduce variance so as to not overload the audience with overwhelming amounts of information.

Simple and complex Variance

It is possible to change either a single aspect of a structural element (only its intensity, timbre or speed) or a combination of aspects. In the first instance we have a **simple variance**, and a **complex** one in the second. As always, these expressive elements fall either in the sphere of rhythm or sound. Therefore, we can use a variance of intensity (first f then p) or a variance of timbre or color, or we can slightly modify the time on this or that note (ritenuto) or on a whole part (rallentando, accelerando). The choice of one type of variance rather than another depends on one's personal taste. From a practical point of view, as I learned from my masters, it is better to have a variance of sound at first (dynamics, timbre) and a variance of rhythm only after that.

Rhythmic variances have a great dramatic power. The changing of the rhythm of the piece (with ritenuto, rubato, stops, etc.) is a resource to be used with very much care. A simple variance will be, in most cases, more than enough in a mild performance; you should switch to a complex variance (crescendo and accelerando, ritenuto with changes of timbre) only if you are willing to exaggerate the dramatic effect [16].

Why a Variance ?

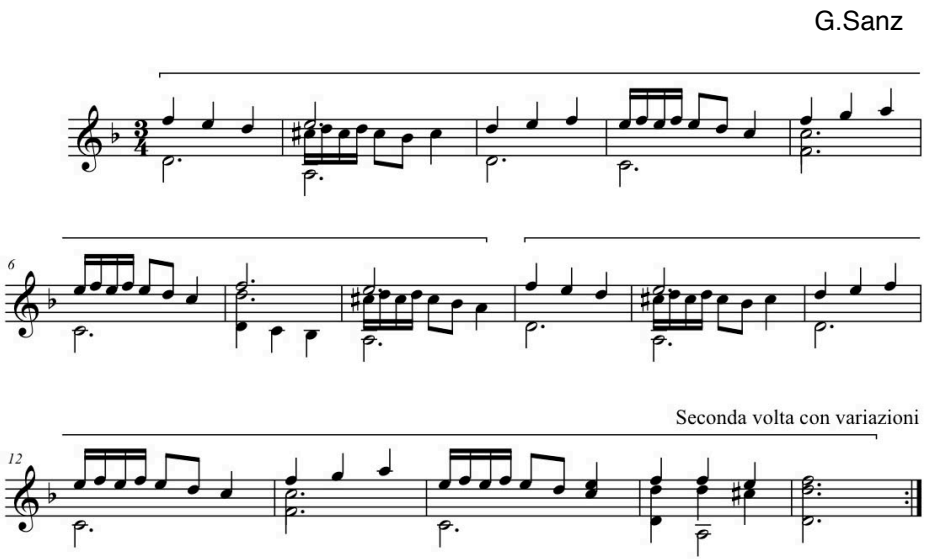
Why a variance? If I wanted to demonstrate my love to a woman and began to repeat over and over in exactly in the same way, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you... what would happen? I suppose that at best, discarding situations ending in violence, she would leave me on the spot, thinking that she is dealing with a lunatic! Well, something similar may happen in music, as well. The only difference being that, in a repetitive performance, the message is a **sleep-inducing boredom**. (For those who suffer from insomnia, this may be a good treatment!) Hence it is obvious that a variance is a must in order to gain the attention and keep alive the senses and the minds of our audience. Exceptions to this include so-called "minimal" music (but only some parts!) that made an art of repetition, and some more contemporary music, where obsessive repetition tends to reproduce the mechanicalness and the worries of modern life. As always, this principle is equally valid in both micro and macrostructures

note: [16] In general, we tend to use complex combinations to increase a sense of expectation (momentum) or resolution (rest).

A bit of practice…

Music is an art of making, not of saying. Did someone already say that?

Here is a small, yet useful exercise. Try performing variances by using all the variations you know one at a time (simple variance). Try changing the articulation, dynamics, color, speed, and rhythm (where you know that it has to be changed: at the end of semi-phrases, phrases, and sentences) while introducing changes progressively at first (accellerando, rallentando) and then suddenly (ritenuto). Then, try them in combination, creating complex variances (accelerando and crescendo, rallentando and diminuendo). Try, in other words, to master the means of expression on your own.



The Intuitive Differences Between a Canzone and a Dance

Here I would like to introduce yet another extremely general and obvious schematic. Even before we enter the inner depths of learning musical forms, it may be of some use to segregate all music into Canzone and Dance. I am not willing to go deep into the etymological meaning of these two words, as I would just like to highlight two fundamentally contrasting aspects of music. On the one hand, there is the Apollonian facet: melody and lyricism. On the other hand, there is rhythm, body, the Dionysian facet. Anytime the Canzone prevails, we may wish for a greater breadth of expression, an abandonment to melody (cum grano salis -with a bit of good common sense) that may influence its pace. The prevalence of the Dance imposes a rhythm in the most stubborn of manners. Of course, the presence of one does not rule out the other; you are often faced with sections of contrasting characteristics in respect to the overall system of a piece. You may come across lyrical parts of a dance, and vice versa. I would like to add one more small note regarding rhythmic trends: the more the rhythm is emphasized (i.e. the more we highlight every accent), the greater the feeling of slowness while in the slow sections, as well as the feeling of momentum in the fast sections. In other words, if you want to achieve the effect of extreme brilliance in a bright allegro, just be extremely rhythmically precise and articulate the sequence of accents. In a slow section, a similar procedure produces a feeling of stillness. From a practical point of view, in slow sections it is better to articulate the beat in its unit, increasing its directionality towards the metric accent.

The Major-Minor Duality

The difference between major and minor keys is a strong duality that can once again be understood (forgive me for repeating myself...) at the instinctive level. More than two thousand years ago, Aristotle analyzed in his treatise the nature the type of influence induced by music on the human mind. But far from proposing a dissertation on this subject, I would just like to complete my list of obviousness and suggest that the minor keys often personify the nocturnal and meditative side of music, and that major keys the bright and enjoyable side. (The height of banality!) I beg my reader to remark here that knowing this basic distinction does not mean knowing everything. In fact, it is rather closer to knowing nothing! A good treatise on musical forms is interesting and necessary reading; at the very least, a thorough study of harmony is indispensable. For those who want to go deeper, there is counterpoint and fugue, the study of orchestral scores and, perhaps, a bit of music history.

The clarity of the musical thought

My teacher taught me that music must be "spoken."

Music does not have a semantic structure as the spoken language does. In other words, it cannot be understood in a singular way (though there are significant problems regarding this in spoken language, too). Why then, did Titina want to repeat this aphorism over and over until she dropped? Was it, perhaps, the need for clarity that pushed her to such a statement? That is, the need to make the musical message as easy and as accessible as possible to the audience? But what does it mean to be clear? And how do we apply clarity to music? It goes without saying that in order to be clear, we must have clear musical ideas in our mind. As we have seen, the analysis of the formal elements helps lead to an understanding of where we come from and where we are heading. But once we have a clear understanding of the music, it is wise to bear in mind that a listener has a different perception than the performer. He has his own timing, understanding and sensibility, but he lets you lead him in wondering what he's listening to. (Hopefully the performer will not be wondering about his own performance!)

The listener is willing and expecting to be instilled with inner feelings he normally does not have access to. For this reason, if the performer opens this window, the listener becomes unaware even of the passage of time.

The clarity of a performance requires of the performer flawless technique and a complete command of the instrument. The performance should always look as easy as possible. Extremely easy. I believe that the talent of a great virtuoso is the ability to make what looks impossible to others look easy. In our performance, simple information needs no clarification. It is understood by the audience because its inherent plainness. A scale is a scale, a major chord is a major chord. The need to clarify while performing only applies to complex information. The development of a fugue is based on a series of complex pieces of information, just as is the finale of a symphony, an oratorio, so on, and so forth. It is appropriate here to use all the technical stratagems we know. Choosing the right timbre to allow all the harmonics of dissonance to vibrate (perhaps emphasizing the more evident impacts) or the choice of contrasting articulations in order to highlight two simultaneous melodic lines; the crossing of dynamics (one melody played diminuendo while the other is played crescendo), or any other trickery you may think of. The important thing is that once the message is understood, it is transferred to the listener in full clarity, leading to no doubt whatsoever in his mind.

Do not fear "overdoing it." You can always moderate your momentum if you ever have such a perception!

As field practice and as a useful exercise, record your own performance and compare it with the text and the idea that you have about it. Sometimes, what we hear inside of us is not even close to what we play, and is even less close to what a listener perceives.

Another benefit of this is to also foster a good sense of consistency of the musical message. In other words, to be able to always play exactly according to our intentions (two performances of the same piece should be as similar to each other as much as possible). Of course, this should not keep us from changing our mind, but any change should happen in a conscious way and should be decided after a careful analysis. One final comment: it is best not to fall in love with our own performance, as a bit of constructive self-criticism will allow us to grow!

Although not directly related to the topic of this booklet, I would like to say a few words about the method of one's study. I have observed over my years of teaching that this is one of the biggest problems students must cope with. There is no magic recipe, as you should already clearly understand. Whoever believes that one can avoid fatigue or physical suffering in his study will soon realize that this is impossible!

A first basic element is concentration. Study should never be performed in a mechanical manner. If the mind is not wired to the hands, and the other way around, your study will be approximate and superficial. There is also the risk of foregoing any logical pattern. When one learns woodworking from an artisan, he learns to control where to hammer! And should he make a cabinet, he would be forced to follow a series of logically linked steps (i.e., the cutting of wood must take place before its bonding). In that case, what pattern is to be used in the case of studying a new text? Many of my students are obsessed with getting to the end of a piece, and in many cases carry on learning by heart. Only after that do they study the whole piece, isolating, at best, only the difficult passages. Only after years of struggle do they finally come to understand the low and slow returns from this style of study. Very seldom do I study a piece from start to end. I get excited when I am able to play a single phrase perfectly, and wait eagerly for what will come next. Using my judgment and my knowledge, and once I have resolved any technical problems, I then study in depth each single phrase. This allows me to not have to go back to what I have already studied.

That said, a thorough and gradual study of a piece (working step by step) helps in interpretation as well. By understanding microstructures, recognizing asides and similar phrases, and thus giving due balance to each piece of the puzzle, I am able to reconstruct it by means of full control of each individual microstructure.

The problem of originality

Young performers quite often raise to me the question of how to reconcile the need to grow their own originality with the boundaries presented by the musical signs. This is actually a false dilemma. Just copy the greats who came before us! All great artists have always found the right balance between order and freedom, a balance copied, in turn, by the masters before them. Mozart did so with Haydn, Picasso with Rembrandt, Woody Allen with Bob Hope. When I was a teenager I copied Andres Segovia; later, when I was able to, Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli.

One grows fully both as a man and as an artist by copying the great masters. As time goes by, one absorbs them, giving way to a meaningful and deliberate personal style.

To copy a great master means to capture his personality while not losing our own. Our taste is refined with time as we grow more cultured, talented, and skilled. An attitude of openness to incoming information is the prerequisite for learning.

Conclusion

We have at last reached the last page, but I would like you to understand how incomplete I feel this rudimentary manual is. Not to come across as repetitive, but this little book is only a suggestion toward real study based on books filled with examples and written by great musicians. In my experience, however, learning by the books cannot replace practice on the field together with a “maestro” worthy of such a name.

If you have had one in your lifetime, you know the drill.

Good work!

Books not to be missed by a musician

The Art of Fugue - J. S. Bach

Poetics of Music - I. Stravinsky

Musical Rules for Home and Life - R. Schumann

A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin - L. Mozart

Fundamentals of Musical Composition- A. Schoenberg

Elementary Training for Musicians - P. Hindemith

Practical Manual of Treaty- N. Rimsky-Korsakov

Treaty on Musical Form - J. Bas

Art of Piano Playing- H. Neuhaus

Essays on music - A. Schopenhauer

Secrets of the Ancient Music - Antoine Geoffroy-Dechaume

Analysis - I. Bent

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Grazie!!
Edoardo Catemario

EDOARDO CATEMARIO

International Guitarist and Pedagogue Edoardo Catermario began his study of music at the age of 5. At 11 he gave his first solo recital. He is a featured artist by DECCA and his repertoire includes a vast amount of solo works from a variety of periods and styles, from the romantic repertoire (played on original instruments) to the baroque, to 20th century music, to contemporary and avant-garde music. His repertoire also includes almost the entire chamber repertoire, and 43 Concertos for guitar and orchestra. Catemario received first prize in numerous national and international competitions. In January 1991, he was the first prize winner of the prestigious "Andres Segovia" guitar competition in Almunecar (Granada), and of the Alessandria International Competition in 1992. He has performed in concerts, broadcasts and major festivals in countries and locations including: Grosser Saal of the Wiener Musikverein (Vienna), Auditorio Nacional (Madrid), Bolshoi Saal of the Philharmonia (St. Petersburg), Suntory Hall (Tokyo), Carnegie Hall (New York), and Wigmore Hall (London), among others. He is frequently invited as a guest soloist by orchestras including the Wiener Akademie and the Accademia Bizantina under the direction of famous conductors such as Martin Haselbok, Marzio Conti, Enrique Batiz, Ottavio Dantone, and others. His recordings on DECCA and ARTS Music have been awarded with critics' prizes including Joker by Crescendo (Belgium), Hios recordings have been named Choice of the Month by Cd Classica (Italy), and given 5 Stars in Musica in January 2004. His performance of Concerto #1 by Giuliani was included in the BBC Music Magazine, and he was featured on the cover of Guitart Magazine and Classical Guitar Magazine. Master Classes in Germany, France, Spain, Italy, United Kingdom and Austria. Sommer Akademie professor at Salzburg's Mozarteum from 2001 until 2007. Frequently invited at the Royal Academy as guest artist.