

ONE MORE TIME: J. S. BACH AND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY TRADITIONS OF RHETORIC

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ABSTRACT

Although the question of a connection between Bach's music and the discipline of rhetoric has been raised repeatedly in the past, the proposed solutions have rarely taken into account the particular kind of rhetorical thinking prevalent in the eighteenth century. In this article, I show that a notion of rhetoric initially developed by Erasmus of Rotterdam and perpetuated in seventeenth-century writings, which focused on argumentative procedures involving variation and amplification, continued to underlie poetic and musical theory in Bach's time. By articulating fundamental creative patterns that came to underpin a variety of disciplines, this Erasmian model can provide the starting-point for a reassessment of rhetorical techniques in Bach's music, shifting the focus from isolated moments of affective decoration to the formal-expressive trajectories that shape the layout of whole pieces. Constituted in the interplay of compositional processes and their listening reception, these trajectories emerge as the result of the skilful arrangement of musical phrases into individual and flexible large-scale designs that often leave aside or undercut the supposed structural conventions of concerto or aria forms. The first movement of the third 'Brandenburg Concerto', BWV1048, serves as an example of how an awareness of these seventeenth-century rhetorical and musical legacies makes possible a thorough reconsideration of Bach's compositional strategies.

Does Bach's music have anything to do with rhetoric? Owing to the prominence of rhetorical terms and metaphors in much eighteenth-century German music theory and criticism, this question has been asked repeatedly in musicological scholarship from at least the early twentieth century onwards. Most of the proposed answers are so widely familiar that they require only the briefest recapitulation here: initially, enquiries focused on the interpretation of affect and meaning in Bach's music under the banner of *Figurenlehre*, an approach that was famously criticized in the 1980s and has since been partly modified or reformulated.¹ Other writers have used the standard five or six parts of an oration to describe the design of selected compositions by Bach, following Johann Mattheson's analytical experiment with an aria by Marcello;² still others have posited Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* as the source for the layout of complete

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1 See Arnold Schering, 'Die Lehre von den musikalischen Figuren im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert', *Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch* 21 (1908), 106–144, and Hans-Heinrich Unger, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Musik und Rhetorik im 16.-18. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1941); critiques by Peter Williams, 'The Snares and Delusions of Musical Rhetoric: Some Examples from Recent Writings on J. S. Bach', *Basler Jahrbuch für Historische Musikpraxis*, Sonderband (Winterthur: Amadeus, 1983), 230–240, and Brian Vickers, 'Figures of Rhetoric/Figures of Music?', *Rhetorica* 2/1 (1984), 1–44. For an updated account see Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

2 In Johann Mattheson, *Kern melodischer Wissenschaft* (Hamburg: Herold, 1737; reprinted Hildesheim: Olms, 1990), 128ff, and *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Herold, 1739; reprinted Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1954), 237ff; for modern



cycles such as the *Musical Offering*, a line of reasoning that has equally attracted a number of sceptical responses.³

In the past two decades or so, however, the excitement about rhetoric as a means of decoding an alleged system of affective expression or theological hermeneutics in Bach's music has noticeably faded. At least in the Anglo-American sphere, where *Figurenlehre* has widely fallen into disrepute, rhetoric has for the most part quietly disappeared from the Bach studies agenda. Two problems in particular have precipitated the demise of rhetoric as a suitable analytical tool for engaging with Bach's compositional language. In assuming fairly direct links between rhetorical terms or techniques and specific elements in Bach's music, many past solutions to the 'Bach-and-rhetoric problem' have put forward analogies that provide convenient labels for particular motives or sections, but upon closer investigation lack any real explanatory power. For the most part, these naming procedures elegantly sidestep the question of how any rhetorical label could actually contribute to an understanding of the ways in which a piece might cohere, convince or make sense in *musical* terms, whether seen from the perspective of compositional strategies or their listening reception. Furthermore, by interpreting rhetoric either primarily as a pictorial/expressive device decorating the surface of an underlying musical *Satz* (the basic premise of *Figurenlehre*) or as a structural template determining the formal outlines of a composition, the resulting analyses often fail to establish sufficient continuities between elements of localized expression and overarching structure. Although Bach's compositional procedures arguably operate on a variety of levels controlling shorter and longer temporal spans, their analytical bifurcation prevents a more integrated engagement with the subtleties of the compositional and listening processes involved.⁴

A telling example of the current restrictive reading of rhetoric as a means of superficial ornamentation appears in a recent definition by Eric Chafe, who in this instance subordinates it to the supposedly more substantive concept of 'allegory':

Rhetoric . . . is centred on what I would describe as incidental 'pointing' devices – that is, it does not attempt to link its designative devices in a sequence analogous to the idea of a sustained metaphor, which is the most compelling description of allegory. Rhetoric is, generally speaking, the 'surface' manifestation of the allegorical impulse . . .⁵

Yet rhetoric as it shaped seventeenth- and eighteenth-century creative thought reached far beyond a singular concern with exterior decoration, calling into question any such easy distinction between surface and depth. With this in mind, I want to suggest here a connection between rhetorical methods and Bach's compositional language that is in many ways more oblique than any immediate analogy, but perhaps more potent as a result. Instead of mapping specific rhetorical terminology onto the musical domain, I will consider certain fundamental procedures of creation and argumentation at the time as a way to open up a

analyses see, for example, Gregory Butler, 'Fugue and Rhetoric', *Journal of Music Theory* 21/1 (1977), 49–109, or Elmar Budde, 'Musikalische Form und rhetorische dispositio: Zum ersten Satz des dritten Brandenburgischen Konzerts', in *Alte Musik und Musikpädagogik*, ed. Hartmut Krones (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997), 69–83.

³ See Warren Kirkendale, 'Ciceronians versus Aristotelians on the Ricercar as Exordium, from Bembo to Bach', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 32/1 (1979), 1–44, and Ursula Kirkendale, 'The Source for Bach's *Musical Offering*: The *Institutio oratoria* of Quintilian', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 33/1 (1980), 88–141; critical response by Paul Walker, 'Rhetoric, the Ricercar, and Bach's *Musical Offering*', in *Bach Studies* 2, ed. Daniel Melamed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 175–191; and Kirkendale's rejoinder, 'On the Rhetorical Interpretation of the Ricercar and Bach's *Musical Offering*', *Studi musicali* 26/2 (1997), 331–376. See also Alan Street, 'The Rhetoric-Musical Structure of the "Goldberg" Variations: Bach's Clavier-Übung IV and the *Institutio oratoria* of Quintilian', *Music Analysis* 6/1–2 (1987), 89–131.

⁴ Exceptions to this general trend could certainly be named, such as Daniel Harrison's application of rhetoric to the analysis of Bach's fugues; see his 'Rhetoric and Fugue: An Analytical Application', *Music Theory Spectrum* 12 (1990), 1–42.

⁵ Eric Chafe, *Analyzing Bach Cantatas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xv.



fresh perspective on Bach's music, one that looks at it from the standpoint of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century rhetorical traditions and their altered yet continued presence in the early eighteenth century. In reflecting anew upon the sustained prominence of rhetoric in the educational and intellectual culture of Bach's time, I aim to develop a model for discussing certain vital compositional strategies that can begin to bridge the analytically generated gulf between an expressive surface and its structural backbone. By shifting the focus to the formal-expressive trajectories that shape the temporal layout of Bach's pieces, such a model emerges as suspended somewhere between the 'poietic' (compositional) and 'esthetic' (listening) ends of Jean-Jacques Nattiez's well rehearsed semiotic paradigm, but decidedly strives to avoid any reliance on a 'neutral' structural dimension.⁶ While both the compositional and listening processes that constitute these trajectories are of course notoriously elusive as objects of historical-analytical enquiry, they become tangible here as interdependent and mutually elucidating forces that are jointly underpinned by a historically situated art of persuasion.

In pursuing such a historically nuanced understanding of rhetorical thought, it is necessary to modify the assumption of a timeless, monolithic system of rhetoric that often underlies standard introductions to the art of oratory today, derived primarily from Cicero and Quintilian.⁷ Many aspects of this classical doctrine were no doubt alive and well in much eighteenth-century educational and critical literature, including the realm of music theory. In *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), for example, the central document for the early eighteenth-century transmission of musico-rhetorical ideas, Johann Mattheson draws on a number of these customary tropes, such as the three levels of style, or the parts of speech for his much-cited Marcello analysis. The two eminent classical writers are even cited by name in a couple of footnotes, in addition to the anonymous, Cicero-based *Rhetorica ad herennium*; Quintilian is brought into play specifically as a warning against an overabundance of decorative figures, which Mattheson dismisses as 'corrupting excesses'.⁸ Yet beyond these occasional and inevitable appeals to classical authority, what were the particular sources and contexts that shaped Mattheson's conception of rhetorical devices and their potential usefulness for an aspiring musician? Some of the less familiar references in the *Capellmeister* arouse curiosity and invite a more thorough exploration of specific eighteenth-century modes of rhetorical thought. In Chapter Four, 'Von der melodischen Erfindung', for instance, Mattheson strives to harness rhetorical strategies of invention for the realm of musical composition, in particular the idea of 'topics' as an aid to uncovering suitable arguments and counterarguments, and in this context the author fails to mention any distant classical predecessors.⁹ Instead, he acknowledges his debt to a contemporary treatise on poetics: the *Gründliche Einleitung zur Teutschen und Lateinischen Oratorie* by the Jena university professor Christoph Weissenborn (published posthumously in 1713), a volume that significantly broadens and complicates the supposedly standard body of rhetorical knowledge.¹⁰ Although its author discusses some of the familiar categories, including the processes of invention adapted by Mattheson, in many instances no clear distinction is drawn between this first inventive task of the orator and the supposedly separate offices of disposition and elocution. Instead, the boundaries between the three realms frequently become blurred in Weissenborn's comprehensive exposition of procedures for constructing, varying, amplifying and embellishing verbal statements in order to devise an artful and cogent discourse.

6 Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), especially 15ff. For a critique of Nattiez's tripartite model see George Edwards's review in *The Musical Quarterly* 76/1 (1992), 114–121, and Robert Hatten's review in *Music Theory Spectrum* 14/1 (1992), 88–98.

7 As laid out, for example, in Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*, trans. Matthew Bliss, ed. David Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

8 Mattheson, *Capellmeister*, 148. Cicero's *De oratore* is cited in connection with the art of gesture, 35, *Ad herennium* for the 'very old' doctrine of the three levels of style, 70. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

9 Mattheson describes various rhetorical topics or 'loci' as possible sources of musical inspiration, such as the 'locus oppositorum', which gives rise to contrasting metre, motion or register. *Capellmeister*, 131.

10 Mattheson, *Capellmeister*, 123. Although he reports some scepticism amongst his contemporaries regarding these aids for invention, Mattheson is clear about their potential usefulness.



The rhetorical strategies outlined by Weissenborn concern the manipulation of both the grammatical features and logical construction of a verbal period, and range from the substitution of synonyms to the expansion, fragmentation and reassembling of whole sentences and paragraphs, accompanied by generous lists of examples in both Latin and German. The model sentence ‘The laudable art of noble poetry is pleasant beyond all measure’ is altered, for instance, by varying the ‘gradus’ of the central adjective, using it first in the comparative, then in its superlative form; the sentence thereby becomes ‘One cannot find a more pleasant art than the excellent art of poetry’ and ‘Poetry is, to my mind, the most pleasant among all the liberal arts and sciences’. Later on, Weissenborn amplifies the two-part statement ‘Christmas is one of the highest feasts of the whole year, for then Christ, the Saviour of the whole world, was born’ by adducing an ‘argumenta pathetica’ to stimulate a sense of joyfulness: ‘Rejoice in the Lord at all times, and again I say: rejoice! This is the day that the Lord and the newborn Saviour have made for us: let us therefore rejoice and be joyful in it!’.¹¹

Weissenborn’s unremitting engagement with creative procedures involving variation and amplification offers an instructive first glimpse into the fundamental patterns of thought that structured many contemporary writings on rhetoric. Yet eighteenth-century writers certainly did not invent these strategies themselves. Similar methods already feature in a previous publication by Weissenborn, *Statera latinitatis dubiae et variatae* (1709), where a single exemplary sentence (‘piety is valuable’) is subjected to a host of variation techniques that seek to generate ever more ways of saying the same thing. And in this volume, the author helpfully reveals one of his central points of reference for this kind of procedural thinking, citing, among others, the treatise *De duplici copia verborum et rerum* by Erasmus of Rotterdam.¹² First published in Paris in 1512, the *De copia* must be counted as one of the most famous and lastingly influential rhetoric treatises of the humanist era, and stands as the most likely source of inspiration for the particular rhetorical tradition scrutinized here. Its main pedagogical aim, to encourage the ‘abundance of words and ideas’, is proclaimed in the title itself, and is pursued by offering the reader a catalogue of compositional methods for varying and amplifying phrases and sentences in order to create a well argued statement out of any proposition. In two hefty volumes Erasmus presents, for example, almost twenty different formulations for ‘expressing thanks’, and many more increasingly elaborate variants for concepts such as ‘freedom’, ‘usefulness’, ‘effort’ or ‘praising and blaming’. He then shows – rather more skilfully than Weissenborn – how to expand the simple phrase ‘He wasted all his substance in riotous living’, turning it into a coherent paragraph with striking cumulative force by ‘enumerating all the different types of possessions and setting out the various ways of wasting them’:

All he had inherited from mother or father or acquired by the death of other relatives, all that was added by his wife’s dowry . . . , all the increase that accrued from various legacies . . . , all he received by the prince’s generosity, all that he raked in during his military service, all his money, plate, clothes, estates and land, together with farm buildings and stock, in short everything, chattels and real estate, even his very household, he threw away on degrading affairs with low women, revelry every day, extravagant parties, nights spent wining and dining, luxurious foods, perfumes, dicing and gambling, and all in a few days so squandered, gobbled up, and sucked it out that he did not leave himself two half-pennies to rub together.¹³

11 Christoph Weissenborn, *Gründliche Einleitung zur Teutschen und Lateinischen Oratorie wie auch Poesie* (Frankfurt and Leipzig: Pohl, 1713), 58 and 100. The four tasks of invention, disposition, elocution and action are treated as separate entities only in the final part of the book, ‘Pars theoretica’, 211ff. Other topics discussed include verse forms (158ff) and literary genres (169ff). For further information on Weissenborn see Moritz Geyer, *Leben und Werke von Mag. Christoph Weissenborn* (Altenburg: Bonde, 1888).

12 Christoph Weissenborn, *Statera latinitatis dubiae et variatae* (Leipzig: Lanckisius, 1709), 23.

13 Desiderius Erasmus, *De copia*, trans. Betty Knott, in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings 2*, volume 24, ed. Craig Thompson (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 411ff and 572. The main classical source for Erasmus’s method would have been the first chapter of the tenth book of Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*. See George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 206.



The popularity of Erasmus's treatise in most of northern Europe in the two centuries after its initial appearance can hardly be overestimated. Already by 1600 over 150 reprints of *De copia* had been issued, and more kept appearing throughout the seventeenth century.¹⁴ Meanwhile, other influential sixteenth-century humanists had developed their own methods for manipulating verbal phrases and periods, often similar to those found in *De copia*, though generally less extensive. Their work sometimes served as a substitute for Erasmus's writings, especially in those places where the Erasmian texts were officially regarded as problematic because of the ambiguous confessional politics of their author. Harshly critical of the excesses of Catholic religious practice, many of Erasmus's publications were placed on the first papal index of forbidden books in the 1550s, yet at the same time he showed himself unwilling to profess open support for the radical Lutheran cause, and was therefore potentially unwelcome in either camp.¹⁵ Partly for this reason, some Protestant circles preferred the writings of the staunch Lutheran Philipp Melanchthon, whose highly popular rhetorical primers also reviewed a variety of amplification techniques for verbal composition.¹⁶ In certain areas of (Protestant and Catholic) southern Germany, meanwhile, the output of the less controversial Strasbourg humanist Johann Sturm was held in greater esteem. His *De imitatione oratoria* (1574) dealt primarily with the emulation of classical *exempla* (especially Cicero), again offering a collection of procedures for varying and augmenting model sentences through 'addition', 'subtraction', 'transposition' and so on.¹⁷

The wide distribution of these rhetorical methods through large numbers of publications, reprints and educational programmes ensured that Erasmian or Sturmian patterns of argumentation were gradually diffused into a kind of general knowledge which, without necessarily being linked back to its original formulation, could function as a powerful and ubiquitous source of creative stimulation in a variety of disciplines. Their teachings were disseminated even more effectively in the form of countless simplified textbooks that became required reading in many German Protestant schools and universities, governing the education of numerous German intellectuals, among them key figures in seventeenth-century musical life: as a student at the Johannisschule in Lüneburg, Joachim Burmeister probably learnt the nuts and bolts of rhetorical theory from a shortened version of Erasmus (and Melanchthon) published by the previous co-rector of the school, Lucas Lossius, and Heinrich Schütz most likely encountered Erasmian thought during his law studies in Marburg, where the university's statutes of 1629 still stipulated the teaching of 'the figures of amplification', the '*copia* of words' and methods for combining words and phrases.¹⁸ More generally, much of the rhetoric-based *musica poetica* tradition that took shape in the early seventeenth

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- 14 See Knott, Introduction to Erasmus, *De copia*, 280ff, and Herbert David Rix, 'The Editions of Erasmus' *De Copia*', *Studies in Philology* 43 (1946), 595–618. Rix's list runs to 180 editions in total (going up to 1824), and he estimates that near the same number of digests was available, in addition to two extensively annotated versions by Micraelius (1538, cited by Weissenborn) and Veltkirch (1655).
- 15 For the fate of Erasmus's publications within the Catholic Church see Marcella and Paul Grendler, 'The Survival of Erasmus in Italy', *Erasmus in English* 8 (1976), 2–12 and 17, and Andreas Flitner, *Erasmus im Urteil seiner Nachwelt: Das literarische Erasmus-Bild von Beatus Rhenanus bis zu Jean Le Clerc* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1952), 38ff. See also Cornelis Augustijn, *Erasmus: Der Humanist als Theologe und Kirchenreformer* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), especially 154ff.
- 16 For Melanchthon's discussion of amplification techniques in his 'Elementa rhetorices' (1531) see Joachim Knape, *Philipp Melanchthons 'Rhetorik'* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), 479ff. In many cases his rhetorical treatise was also published side by side with Erasmus's *De copia* (see note 18).
- 17 Johannes Sturm, *De imitatione oratoria libri tres* (Strasbourg: Iobinus, 1574). Sturm's approach is closely connected with the widespread humanist practice of keeping 'commonplace' books of excerpts from canonical authors for inspiration and emulation. Regarding the liberal tendencies in Sturm's educational programme see Lewis Spitz and Barbara Sher Tinsley, *Johann Sturm on Education* (St Louis: Concordia, 1995), 349ff; for his and Melanchthon's pedagogical influence see Willy Moog, *Geschichte der Pädagogik der Neuzeit von der Renaissance bis zum Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Ratingen: Henn, 1967), 136ff and 161ff.
- 18 Lucas Lossius, *Erotemata dialecticae et rhetoricae Philippi Melanchthonis, et praeceptionum Erasmi Roterdami, de utraque copia verborum et rerum* (Frankfurt: Brub, 1552). The statutes are cited in *Statuta Academiae Marpurgensis deinde Gissensis de anno 1629*, ed. Hans Georg Gundel (Marburg: Elwert, 1982), 166.



century arguably concerned itself to a far greater extent with Erasmus-inspired methods for shaping motives and phrases into coherent musical statements, rather than the exclusive endeavour of capturing certain pictorial or affective moments of a text with the help of musico-rhetorical figures.¹⁹

Even if by the turn of the eighteenth century the number of actual editions of Erasmus's and Sturm's books had begun to trail off, the same methods continued to be propagated.²⁰ In a treatise on German poetry from 1692, *Curiöse Gedancken Von Deutschen Versen*, the Leipzig-trained dramatist and literary critic Christian Weise demonstrates how to make use of such procedures in the realm of poetic practice: in a chapter on 'construction' he draws up a thoroughly Erasmian list – tailored to suit contemporary literary tastes – of twelve increasingly involved variants of the sentence 'I shall go to the garden', such as 'Well, now the trees shall see me again', or 'Should I not lend this hour to the beloved path that leads me towards the garden?', or 'Does a dark house still keep me trapped within the town? But no! The garden is in flower and it stirs my yearning'.²¹ A few years later, the Weimar school rector Philipp Großgebauer published a primer on rhetoric whose title almost literally duplicates the name of Erasmus's long-lived *De copia*, advertising a method for 'infinitely colouring and varying one and the same sentence', thereby once more promoting the 'abundance of words and ideas'. Inside, the reader encounters a handy summary of variation techniques in tabular form that associates each letter of the alphabet with particular rhetorical procedures, amounting to several dozen.²²

Although Großgebauer's tabular adaptation seems to bespeak a certain ossification of Erasmus's imaginative beginnings, a cluster of publications from the 1720s, including Weissenborn's *Gründliche Einleitung*, again confirms the unfaltering authority and vitality of the original rhetorical ideas in the educational and literary culture of the time. The full text of Johann Sturm's treatise on variation, for example, resurfaces over 150 years after its initial appearance in a collection of writings on 'imitation' edited by Friedrich Andreas Hallbauer (1726), another Jena professor, who also deals with distinctly Erasmian methods of variation and amplification in his own handbook on rhetoric, *Anweisung zur verbesserten teutschen Oratorie* (1725).²³ While the source remains unacknowledged in this instance, other writers still refer to Erasmus explicitly, and often in a manner so brief that it suggests an assumption of complete familiarity on the part of their readership. In

19 See Carl Dahlhaus, 'Musica poetica und musikalische Poesie', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 23 (1966), 110–124. Arno Forchert, 'Heinrich Schütz und die Musica Poetica', *Schütz-Jahrbuch* 15 (1993), 9, and Siegfried Oechsle, 'Musica poetica und Kontrapunkt: Zu den musiktheoretischen Funktionen der Figurenlehre bei Burmeister und Bernhard', *Schütz-Jahrbuch* 20 (1998), 7–24. The connections between Erasmian rhetoric and seventeenth-century music theory and practice are discussed in my article "'Mutato Semper Habitu": Heinrich Schütz and the Culture of Rhetoric' (forthcoming).

20 In a very different context, considering the reception of Enlightenment authors among the general reading public, William St Clair has pointed out the need to consider a span of several generations for determining the effect of particular ideas as they gradually spread and consolidate; see his *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4 and 253ff.

21 Christian Weise, *Curiöse Gedancken Von Deutschen Versen* (1692), cited in *Poetik des Barock*, ed. Marian Szyrocki (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1968), 225ff. Weise also describes amplification procedures that closely resemble Erasmus's paragraph on 'riotous living'; examples appear in Ursula Stötzer, *Deutsche Redekunst im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1962), 197ff. A more general discussion of Erasmus in the eighteenth century is Werner Kaegi, 'Erasmus im achtzehnten Jahrhundert', in *Gedenkschrift zum 400. Todestage des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, ed. Historische und antiquarische Gesellschaft zu Basel (Basel: Braus-Riggenbach, 1936), 205–226, especially 207. The *De copia* still makes the occasional appearance in nineteenth-century publications, for example in Ferdinand Hand, *Lehrbuch des lateinischen Stils* (Jena: Cröker, 1833; second edition, 1839), 14.

22 Philipp Großgebauer, *Artificium variandi, quo Ratio unam eandemque sententiam . . . infinito colorandi variandique . . . ad verborum rerumque copiam . . .* (Jena: Bielckius, 1703). The alphabetical table precedes page 1.

23 *Collectio praestantissimorum opusculorum de imitatione oratoria* (Jena: Buchius, 1726) and *Anweisung zur verbesserten teutschen Oratorie* (Jena: Hartung, 1725; reprinted Kronberg: Scriptor, 1974), 592ff. Hallbauer also republished another volume by Sturm, *De periodis libellus* (Jena: Buchius, 1727), with a Preface extolling the merits of Sturm's approach.



a volume on German rhetoric published in Leipzig the year after Bach's arrival there, for example, Johann Andreas Fabricius commends the concept of variation as a means for devising a rich and persuasive style, reiterating many of Erasmus's central devices:

One can vary the words, the ways of expression, the structure of the periods, make long periods out of short ones and short out of long ones, alter a period through all manner of styles; one can vary sentences with the help of tropes and figures, words with the help of cases and grammatical variants, indeed one can vary the whole layout [*connexio*] of a speech with various kinds of connections.

The author then goes on to name two writers for further reading on the topic, without feeling the need to mention a specific title for either: the seventeenth-century philologist and Hebraist Johann Christoph Wagenseil, and Erasmus.²⁴ Fabricius's contemporary Benjamin Hederich, meanwhile, could lend authority to his own detailed exposition of methods for oratorical amplification with the casual observation that of course 'Erasmus's *De copia* is known to everyone'.²⁵

It might seem that most of these testimonies to a continued presence of Erasmian ideas in the eighteenth century were confined to the rather narrow sphere of instructional literature on rhetoric, with potentially limited influence on wider cultural trends. Yet connections to other disciplines abound, including the realm of music theory and practice, where Mattheson's reference to Weissenborn's treatise is by no means an isolated case. Elsewhere in the *Capellmeister*, the author shows decidedly Erasmian tendencies, most characteristically when introducing the idea of the so-called 'figurae sententiae', which cover the compositional manipulation of whole musical phrases or periods, achieved by employing 'variations, imitations, repetitions, etc.'. According to Mattheson, there are seventeen of them, 'which can be looked up in any rhetorical treatise and which can almost all be used in [the making of] a melody'.²⁶ Without necessitating any awkward adaptations of specific rhetorical terminology, his formulation testifies strikingly to a smooth transfer of Erasmus-derived procedures for verbal construction to the sphere of music theory and pedagogy.

Further evidence for the ubiquitousness of this rhetorical knowledge abounds in other eighteenth-century music treatises, such as the second part of Friedrich Erhard Niedt's multi-volume opus on figured-bass practice. The author's obsessive exploration – for didactic purposes – of how to devise countless variations of a simple bass pattern, while claiming to have 'a hundred thousand more' up his sleeve, more than matches Erasmus's pedagogical zeal for invention in the verbal domain.²⁷ Both Mattheson, who published a version with commentary of this *Handleitung zur Variation*, and J. S. Bach himself, who relied on Niedt's thoroughbass rules for his own teaching purposes, would have been fully familiar with the approach presented therein.²⁸ Bach's contemporary Georg Philipp Telemann, meanwhile, offers practical examples of these devices in his *Evangelisch-Musicalisches Lieder-Buch* of 1730, whose 433 four-voice settings of Protestant

24 Johann Andreas Fabricius, *Philosophische Oratorie* (Leipzig: Cöerner, 1724; reprinted Kronberg: Scriptor, 1974), 358. The 'Wagenseil' citation probably refers to a passage in Johann Christoph Wagenseil's encyclopaedia for adolescents, *Pera librorum juvenilium* (Altdorf: Noricorum, 1695), volume 1, 849ff.

25 Benjamin Hederich, *Anleitung zu den fürnehmsten philologischen Wissenschaften, nach der Grammatica, Rhetorica und Poetica* (Wittenberg: Zimmermann, 1713, here seventh edition, 1746), 406. Among various Erasmian exercises, Hederich presents fifty ways of varying the 'thema' 'Everyone will have to die'; see 537ff. Further sources for a later transmission are Johann Hübner, *Neu-vermehrtes poetisches Handbuch* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1712 and several later editions), 162ff, where the author suggests eight different four-verse poetic versions of a single sentence, and Elias Maior, *Liber postumus de varianda oratione* (Bratislava: Kästner, 1734), which contains variation methods for each grammatical entity from nouns to adverbs and prepositions.

26 Mattheson, *Capellmeister*, 242.

27 Friedrich Erhard Niedt, *Handleitung zur Variation* (Hamburg: Schiller, 1706), 18. All three volumes are reprinted as *Musikalische Handleitung. Teil I-III in einem Band* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2003).

28 Mattheson's extensively revised edition appeared in 1721; he also published the third part of the treatise after Niedt's death as *Friedrich Erhardt Niedtens Musicalischer Handleitung dritter und letzter Theil* (Hamburg: Schiller, 1717). For



chorale melodies are often laid out with variants for individual phrases or closing formulas.²⁹ And Johann David Heinichen confirms in the preface to his figured-bass treatise *Neu erfundene und Gründliche Anweisung zu vollkommener Erlernung des General-Basses* (1711) that such variation procedures lay at the heart of his concept of composition. Like Mattheson a few years later, Heinichen considers a number of ‘loci topici’ to facilitate the process of setting an operatic aria text to music. Since ‘in an opera one affect can in some cases occur ten or twenty times’, composers need to be able to generate many different musical ways of treating the ‘often identical metre or verse types’ in the libretto; for as general opinion has it, ‘it would have to be a bad composer who is not capable of writing down twenty different versions of a single formula’.³⁰

The same thought patterns surface in an even more instantly recognizable fashion in a statement by Bach’s direct predecessor at the Thomaskirche, Johann Kuhnau. In the introduction to his cantata cycle of 1709–1710, he provides hands-on advice for composers on how to come up with musical inventions; in particular, he suggests that when faced with the task of setting a prose text, a composer should consider the given words in various other languages, and take inspiration from there. As an example of how such a procedure fuels his own imagination, Kuhnau ponders the short psalm opening ‘Lobe den Herrn’ (Praise the Lord) in a number of translated forms (in particular two different Hebrew versions) and, stimulated by the associations conjured up through this process, invents the following ‘mentally conceived paraphrase’: ‘Praise the Lord, do it often and industriously, carry it forward on bended knees and with all testimony of praise, let his glory sound far and wide and in various fashions’. Such an expanded verbal statement, Kuhnau claims, can then give rise to a musical design created by ‘not only repeating the clausulas, but inverting them and varying them in sundry ways’.³¹

The Erasmian echoes in this concise outline of a compositional method are too loud to be tuned out. Kuhnau expands his short textual fragment into a longer paragraph by means of adducing the particular circumstances and manners in which the activity of ‘praising’ could manifest itself, drawing on a variety of Erasmian amplification devices; his strategy to bring into play the image of ‘bended knees’, for instance, evokes Erasmus’s fifth method of enlarging a statement, by which ‘instead of setting out the subject in bare simplicity, we fill in the colours and set it up like a picture to look at, so that we seem to have painted the scene rather than described it, and the reader seems to have seen rather than read’.³² In musical terms, Kuhnau appears to have followed his own method quite stringently in his (undated) setting of this particular psalm text: introduced by an instrumental sonata, in which phrases are varied, exchanged and combined between a string and a wind ensemble, the opening chorus sets only the first line, ‘Lobe den Herren, meine Seele, und was in mir ist seinen heiligen Namen’ (Praise the Lord, O my soul, and with all that is within me, praise his holy name). After inventing an initial musical formulation for the first half of the sentence, Kuhnau then indeed repeats and varies this textual-musical phrase ‘in sundry ways’, alternating tutti and solo statements

the Bach connection see Pamela Poulin, *J. S. Bach’s Precepts and Principles for Playing the Thorough-Bass or Accompanying in Four Parts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

29 Georg Philipp Telemann, *Fast allgemeines Evangelisch-Musicalisches Lieder-Buch* (Hamburg: Stromer, 1730). Thanks to Jan Philipp Sprick for pointing this out to me.

30 Johann David Heinichen, *Neu erfundene und Gründliche Anweisung zu vollkommener Erlernung des General-Basses* (Hamburg: Schiller, 1711; reprinted Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000), 11ff.

31 Kuhnau’s text is reproduced in B. Fr. Richter, ‘Eine Abhandlung Joh. Kuhnau’s’, *Monatshefte für Musik-Geschichte* 34 (1902), 148–154. This translation is adapted from John Butt, review of *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach*, by Eric Chafe, *Music and Letters* 74/2 (1993), 291. A similar method is outlined in a contemporary poetic treatise by Bach’s cantata librettist Erdmann Neumeister: ‘After an invention has been laid out, I write down the strophes with rhymes consecutively, not worrying about how the verses come out in terms of metre and elegance. Afterwards I change, alter, transpose and turn around everything until the verse works well in construction, scansion, content and other requisites.’ In *Die Allerneueste Art, Zur Reinen und Galanten Poesie zu gelangen*, ed. Christian Friedrich Hunold (Hamburg: Fickweiler, 1707, here 1722), 602. Neumeister deals with the variation and amplification of phrases and sentences in the same volume, 512ff.

32 Erasmus, *De copia*, 577.



and embellishing the melodic outlines (Example 1), before proceeding to the second clausula, which is equally amplified through varied repetitions, culminating in a broad cadential tutti passage that concludes this straightforward yet expansive musical enactment of the boundless praise of God.

As is evident here, Kuhnau's idea of how to create a larger musical design seems to be additive at root, starting from the individual phrase rather than any predetermined notion of a whole shape, and his method evinces a firmly integrated conception of musical form and expression, as formal variation and amplification procedures are used to achieve expressive immediacy through projecting musically the *sensus* and *scopus* of the accompanying words.³³ The same approach to large-scale musical construction, from simple binary forms to fully fledged sonata movements, is formulated ever more precisely in theoretical writings throughout the eighteenth century, most comprehensively in Joseph Riepel's introduction to the art of composition (1752–1755).³⁴ A few decades later, in the 1780s, Heinrich Christoph Koch would still develop his influential theory of musical forms from the expansion of an initial melodic statement, which according to him can be amplified through procedures such as repetition, transposition, voice exchange, extension, reiteration of cadential formulas, sequences, digressions and so on.³⁵ For the realm of musical practice, Elaine Sisman has discussed Haydn's variation technique on the basis of exactly this kind of procedural thinking, citing Erasmus as a distant but unmistakable predecessor.³⁶ Mark Evan Bonds has also explored at length how the oratorical metaphor underpinned early eighteenth-century attempts to describe larger formal patterns, starting once again from the Mattheson-Marcello association. Bonds develops his approach mainly from a retrospective position, however, adopting 'sonata form' as a central point of reference and seeking precursors to nineteenth-century organicist descriptions of the model.³⁷ Yet at least in the first half of the century, any discussions of musical form as a set of recognizable structural templates were still vague at best, and the compositional premises of Bach's time appear in a surprisingly different light when viewed and heard instead from the opposite historical end, filtered through the prism of preceding seventeenth-century ideas and practices concerning the invention of single phrases and their subsequent reconfiguration.

This is the case, for example, in Bach's 'Brandenburg' Concertos, whose formal designs have caused greater headaches to modern analysts than most of Bach's other works, the Passions perhaps excepted. The first movement of the Third Concerto (BWV1048), for instance, fails in many ways to exhibit the functional ritornello/episode alternation (or, because of its particular scoring – three violins, violas and cellos each plus violone and harpsichord – even the clear tutti/solo distinction) that would be expected of a 'standard' concerto movement. Beyond general frustrated remarks about the movement's 'impenetrable' form, scholars have made various attempts to fit alternative familiar structures around it: Rudolf Gerber described its 'vegetable-like' nature as presenting a 'frame form' with an associated 'rondo-like alternation', while Malcolm Boyd more recently summarized the 'unusually proportioned' movement as generally tripartite (ABA'); the second A can only stand as a plausible label, however, if it is understood as nothing less than

33 Eric Chafe has read Kuhnau's text in a more esoteric way in relation to the music of Bach and its theological hermeneutics; see Eric Chafe, *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 10ff. Yet when considering Kuhnau's theory and practice side by side in this manner, it seems that the author is in fact referring to fairly specific verbal/musical techniques. For a further critique see also Butt, review of *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach*, 289–294.

34 Joseph Riepel, *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst* (Regensburg: Montag, 1752–1765), reprinted in *Sämtliche Schriften zur Musiktheorie*, ed. Thomas Emmerig (Vienna: Böhlau, 1996), volume 1, 43ff. Riepel also includes numerous variation procedures to aid the design of a melody; see volume 1, 134ff. See also Peter Benary, *Die deutsche Kompositionslehre des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1961), 81ff.

35 Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (Leipzig: Böhme, 1782–1793; reprinted Hildesheim: Olms, 1969), volume 3, 156ff.

36 Elaine Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 53ff.

37 Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), especially 82ff.



38

Violino I

Violino II

Viola I

Viola II

Fagotto

Cornetto I

Cornetto II

Trombone I

Trombone II

Trombone III

Soprano I

[Solo]

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, *tr* mei - ne See - le *p* *tr*

Soprano II

Alto

Tenore

Basso

Basso continuo

6 6 6 6 5 4 3 6 6 6 5 4 3

Example 1 *Lobe den Herren, meine Seele*, ii, chorus: 'Lobe den Herren, meine Seele', bars 38–61 (Johann Kuhnau, *Lobe den Herren, meine Seele*. Psalm 103, ed. Evangeline Rimbach (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995)). Used by permission



44

[Tutti]

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, — mei - ne See - le. —

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, — mei - ne See - le. —

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, mei - ne See - le.

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, mei - ne See - le.

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, mei - ne See - le.

6 6 6 5 6 6 5 6 6

5 3 4 3

Example 1 *continued*



50 SI [Solo]

Lo - be den Her - ren, — mei - ne See - le, — mei - ne See - le. —

56

[Tutti]

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, — mei - ne See - le. —

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, — mei - ne See - le. —

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, mei - ne See - le.

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, — mei - ne See - le. —

Lo - be den Her - ren, mei - ne See - le, — mei - ne See - le. —

Example 1 *continued*



'a full-scale second development of all the themes and motifs so far heard'.³⁸ The issue at stake here is not merely the formal oddity of an individual movement, but concerns an ingrained image of Bach the composer in general, as supremely rational and in control of the overall architecture of his creations. When such control is apparently absent, the threat of irrationality looms large: for this first movement of BWV1048, Gerber openly asserted a lack of 'rational order' despite the 'motivic unification'.³⁹

Yet although I would be equally inclined to view Bach's compositional methods as predominantly shaped by reasoned choices and procedures, this rationality need not be tied to the evidence of abstractable 'forms' as orderly sequences of As and Bs; on the contrary, the score-notated representation of a compositional process that involves numerous procedures of variation and amplification can appear quite asymmetrical and bewildering in its variety and rate of change, alongside an aural experience of a convincing overall trajectory. Ares Rolf has given a persuasive account of the listening experience in this movement as 'varied, coherent, humorous, playful and very vivid – indeed not difficult', although he still maintains that the piece is essentially 'irrational' in nature because of its dynamic formal processes, which displace an 'architectural superstructure'.⁴⁰ Similarly, Elke Lang-Becker singles out procedures of 'juxtaposition, combination and confrontation' as the dominant features of the piece's layout.⁴¹ It is indeed the kaleidoscopic display of continually reformulated, ever-changing phrase segments and their myriad fragmentations and expansions that seems to govern the design of the movement, in which the instantaneous creation and fulfilment (or subversion) of expectations determine a trajectory that generates and resolves localized and large-scale tensions without necessarily being devised or heard against a pre-formulated template.⁴²

Such a reading might seem to neglect the historical evidence for Bach's encounter with and subsequent adoption of Vivaldian ritornello form, which – so the argument goes – provided him with exactly such a predictable structural model that could exist detached from its realization in actual compositions. Yet while certain formal conventions, like those for binary dances and da capo arias, were undoubtedly quite securely in place by the early eighteenth century, this seems not to have been the case with the concerto genre to the same degree. In his *Compendium musices* from around 1730, for example, Johann Adolph Scheibe includes a succinct definition of the tripartite form of an aria, while for the concerto the focus is shifted decisively from structure to procedure: he only advises that the *Hauptsatz*, which should be varied and imitated throughout, can be reused 'here and there on another or the same pitch' on which it occurred initially.⁴³ Furthermore, as

38 Rudolf Gerber, *Bachs Brandenburgische Konzerte: Eine Einführung in ihre formale und geistige Wesensart* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1965), 24ff; Malcolm Boyd, *Bach: The Brandenburg Concertos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 79ff. For an analysis of the movement based on the divisions of a speech see Budde, 'Musikalische Form und rhetorische dispositio'.

39 Gerber, *Bachs Brandenburgische Konzerte*, 25.

40 Ares Rolf, 'Vom "wilden Wesen" in der Musik: Versuch über das dritte Brandenburgische Konzert', in *Martin Geck: Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ares Rolf and Ulrich Tadday (Dortmund: Klangfarben, 2001), 261.

41 Elke Lang-Becker, *Bach: Die Brandenburgischen Konzerte* (Munich: Fink, 1990), 57ff, 61. Laurence Dreyfus has discussed Bach's processes of invention in terms of such rational compositional operations, although he downplays the importance of their temporal layout; see his *Bach and the Patterns of Invention* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 59ff.

42 Regarding the problem of baroque 'forms', the nineteenth-century system of *Formenlehre* has of course been widely criticized in recent decades; even so, the structures it identifies continue to frame scholarly approaches to early eighteenth-century repertoires, as evident in Boyd's assessment of BWV1048, cited above (note 38), Michael Marissen's reading of the 'Brandenburg Concertos' (discussed below) or recently Jeanne Swack's discussion of *ouverture* and da capo forms in 'A Comparison of Bach's and Telemann's Use of the Overture as Theological Signifier', in *Bach Perspectives* 6, ed. Gregory Butler (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 104–111.

43 Johann Adolph Scheibe, 'Compendium musices', published as an appendix to Benary, *Die deutsche Kompositionslehre*, 43 and 84. The treatise remained unpublished in its time but circulated widely in manuscript; see 55ff. Walther's *Lexicon* contains an equally vague definition of the concerto, in which 'each part takes precedence at a certain point'. Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon oder musicalische Bibliothek* (Leipzig: Deer, 1732), 179. See also David Schulenberg's excellent critique of the idea of the concerto, 'The Sonate auf Concertenart: A Post modern Invention?' in *Bach Perspectives* 7, ed. Gregory Butler (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 55–96.



Simon McVeigh and Jehoash Hirshberg have recently shown, even Vivaldi's concertos, mass-produced within a 'common framework', rely primarily on a collection of dynamic procedures of disposition that are incessantly modified in individual compositions, marking his concerto form as an individualizing and additive process rather than the divisible and independently transferable structure it became in later theories of baroque form.⁴⁴ And Christoph Wolff has argued that it was indeed primarily such a collection of 'generative and formative procedures' that Bach learnt from his engagement with Vivaldi's scores.⁴⁵

A closer look at the alterations of a single musical segment in Bach's concerto movement illustrates his exhaustive use of such generative procedures in creating a compelling overall shape for this piece. In charting these musical transformations, I should stress once more that my analytical approach remains unconcerned with drawing direct links to any particular rhetorical devices described above; rather, I propose to examine the movement through the lens of a rhetorical mode of thinking that brings into focus certain compositional strategies of variation and amplification central to the piece's design and effect. The phrase portion shown in Example 2a, here called *x*, appears for the first time in bars 47–49 after a full restatement of the opening ritornello in the tonic, G major. Up until now, the harmonic and motivic manipulations have covered fairly safe and comfortable ground, comprising only a lengthy excursion to the dominant D and increasingly complex fragmentations and recombinations of the material contained in the first ritornello. Phrase *x* at first continues in this vein, presenting its new solo material over a G pedal with the reassuring accompaniment of the ubiquitous opening motive.⁴⁶ Upon its repetition in bar 51, varied in scoring, the segment begins to take on a slightly more unstable character, now outlining a diminished-seventh chord, which, however, soon reveals itself as a preparation for the next cadence on E minor in bar 54. When *x* is taken up again in bar 67, it projects a similar modulatory function; yet its subsequent occurrence from bar 91, directly after the disruptive, chromatically charged 'flood-of-sound' passage, effectively draws out this preceding sense of disorientation, as Bach now puts the figurations initially over a chromatically ascending bass progression, while extending the whole segment from three to six bars (see Example 2b).⁴⁷ To confuse matters further, according to the previously established pattern of *x* followed by a return to the stable (if fragmented) material of the ritornello opening, a listener might expect to reach a firm resting point upon the cadential arrival in bar 97, but instead a further sequential insertion delays a conclusive cadence in A minor until bar 101.

44 Simon McVeigh and Jehoash Hirshberg, *The Italian Solo Concerto, 1700–1760: Rhetorical Strategies and Style History* (Woodbridge and Rochester: Boydell, 2004), 3ff. Because of its lack of a recognizable ritornello form, some scholars have argued that BWV1048 must have been written before Bach's encounter with Vivaldi's music, but when assuming a revised notion of the Vivaldian concerto as a flexible collection of compositional procedures, this conclusion becomes less inevitable. See Martin Geck, 'Gattungstraditionen und Altersschichten in den Brandenburgischen Konzerten', *Die Musikforschung* 23 (1970), 139–152, Peter Ahnsehl, 'Zum Problem der Ritornellstrukturen in den Brandenburgischen Konzerten von Johann Sebastian Bach', in *Cöthener Bach-Hefte 4: Hofkapellmeisteramt-Spätbarock-Frühaufklärung* (Cöthen: Historisches Museum Köthen, 1986), 96–100, and Michael Marissen, *The Social and Religious Designs of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 12ff.

45 Christoph Wolff, *Bach: Essays on His Life and Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 74ff. See also Jeanne Swack, 'Modular Structure and the Recognition of Ritornello in Bach's Brandenburg Concerti', in *Bach Perspectives* 4, ed. David Schulenberg (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 33–53. Additive phrase arrangement has been discussed with regard to many other eighteenth-century repertoires as well; see recently Channan Willner, 'Sequential Expansion and Handelian Phrase Rhythm', in *Schenker Studies* 2, ed. Carl Schachter and Hedi Siegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 192–221, and W. Dean Sutcliffe, *The Keyboard Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti and Eighteenth-Century Musical Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 145ff.

46 However, the motive is now placed on the strong beat, participating in an overarching metric dualism that is addressed in Rudolf Stephan, 'Die Wandlung der Konzertform bei Bach', *Die Musikforschung* 6 (1953), 134ff. For a more recent discussion of accentual patterns in Bach's instrumental music see Channan Willner, 'Stress and Counterstress: Accentual Conflict and Reconciliation in J. S. Bach's Instrumental Works', *Music Theory Spectrum* 20/2 (1998), 280–304.

47 'Tonfluth' is Philipp Spitta's description of this passage. Cited in Rolf, 'Vom "wilden Wesen" in der Musik', 264.



Example 2a 'Brandenburg' Concerto No. 3, BWV1048/i, bars 46–56 (Johann Sebastian Bach: *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, series 7, volume 2, *Sechs Brandenburgische Konzerte*, ed. Heinrich Bessler and Alfred Dürr (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1956)). Used by permission



52

Y

Musical score for Example 2a, measures 52-54. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a piano with a complex texture of six staves. The top two staves are treble clef, and the bottom four are bass clef. Dynamics include 'f' (forte) and 'Y' (fortissimo).

55

Y (invert)

Musical score for Example 2a, measures 55-57. The score continues with six staves. The top two staves are treble clef, and the bottom four are bass clef. Dynamics include 'Y (invert)' (fortissimo).

Example 2a *continued*



89

X (extend)

p

p

p

p

92

Example 2b 'Brandenburg' Concerto No. 3, BWV1048/i, bars 89–100



95 Y (fragment, extend)

98 (+ invert)

Example 2b *continued*



107 X (extend)

110

Example 2c 'Brandenburg' Concerto No. 3, BWV1048/i, bars 107–120



Musical score for Example 2c, measures 113-116. The score is written for a string quartet (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello) and a piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two systems, each containing three measures. The first system starts at measure 113 and ends at measure 115. The second system starts at measure 116 and ends at measure 118. The piano part is marked with a *p* dynamic. The string parts feature various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and rests.

Example 2c *continued*



119 Y (fragment, extend)

Example 2c *continued*

Bach thereby renders increasingly volatile not only x itself, but also the supposedly affirmative ritornello material, while the motivic complexities continue to multiply, creating a growing sense of destabilization and disintegration despite the incessant repetition of a small amount of material. This trajectory reaches a climactic and noisy high point of tension in the final recurrence of x , which Bach here amplifies in length, chromatic density and instrumentation, stretching it to a full eleven bars and placing the increasingly angular figurations *unisono* in the three cellos for the last five bars, accompanied by the now oddly inverted opening motive (Example 2c). The accumulated energy, eventually suspended over a dominant pedal, initially seems to find the desired resolution in the cadence in bar 119, where, however, the sequential activity continues once again, before finally leading to the immense relief of the concluding ritornello statement firmly grounded in the home key. Seen in juxtaposition, Bach's different versions of x bear witness to a compositional process of gradual alteration and expansion that closely mirrors Christian Weise's increasingly rich reformulations of the 'garden' episode.

Similar compositional procedures are evident in Bach's treatment of most other phrase portions in this movement, not at all limited to the so-called episode sections, but very much affecting the motivic substance of the ritornello material as well, whereby a strict distinction between the two types becomes extremely awkward to maintain over the course of the movement. One variation of the opening thematic segment in particular contributes to the blurring of these boundaries, and to the effectiveness of the overall expressive design outlined above, namely the reformulation of the very first motive in bar 9, right after the cadence that concludes the initial ritornello statement (Example 3a; here called y). Fragmented and descending through the three groups of instruments, this variant, with its thinner texture and shifted metrical placement, indeed seems to herald the arrival of an 'episodic' section, although the unchanged motivic outlines circling around the tonic betray a curious reluctance to leave the stable confines of the ritornello material, an impression confirmed by the subsequent appearance of y in bar 16, where with a swift scalar descent in the bass we find ourselves back in G major yet again. When y recurs after the first modulatory x (bar 54, see



Example 3a 'Brandenburg' Concerto No. 3, BWV1048/i, bars 8–10

Example 2a), it seems to have abandoned all pretensions to an episodic nature and now sounds decidedly like a welcome return of the harmonically stable tutti/ritornello, confirmed by the following familiar cadential material.

In the remainder of the movement, Bach plays freely with the highly ambiguous character thus established for *y*: immediately after its ritornello-like occurrence in bar 54, its motivic outlines are distorted into an ascending diminished chord layered on top of the *Fortspinnung* material in the cellos, subtly refashioning the phrase into an apparently pre-cadential formulation that undermines its tonally settled nature and function. Bar 66 brings a shortened version of the segment once more in the tonic, merged with yet another motive in the lower parts, which is, however, instantly eclipsed by a restatement of the disruptive *x* (Example 3b). When *y* next appears in bar 74 in another peculiar inversion (ascending from cellos to violins), it again serves to prepare the subsequent cadence, with little of its initial forthright character as a thematic opening left (Example 3c). Further destabilized later on through the sequential patterns described above (bars 97 and 119, see Examples 2b and 2c), *y* is thereby made to participate in the same process of increasing disintegration of formal, tonal and functional certainties, and disruption of previously established patterns and expectations. In the very last bars of the movement a semblance of *y* returns once more, now reconfirmed in its pre-cadential function. In this guise, the inserted phrase effectively furthers the listener's anticipation of imminent final closure, while simultaneously delaying the desired point of arrival through extending the original ritornello statement on its concluding appearance.

It is on account of this bewildering array of ceaselessly varied and amplified thematic segments, whose unpredictable yet fluent temporal sequence seems to owe so little to any preconceived formal outlines, that



Example 3b 'Brandenburg' Concerto No. 3, BWV1048/1, bars 65–67

Bach at the central point of the movement can dare almost to capsize the proprieties of concerto style and genre without destroying the inexorable momentum of the movement. His insertion of the fugue-like exposition of a previously unheard theme in bar 78, alongside a faithful echo of the ritornello opening, is perhaps the boldest feat of rhetorical persuasion in the whole piece (see Example 3c). The artifice is rendered effective largely through its seamless emergence out of the playful yet cogent musical processes that by then are already saturated with unexpected transformations, juxtapositions and overlappings of all motivic components, enhanced in the act of performance by the visual impact of motives and motion passing constantly amongst the different instrumental groupings. Whether supposedly 'thematic' or 'episodic' in nature, Bach's musical inventions are in this way sonically inspected from various angles and resurface in the most startling and exhilarating combinations, while coalescing into a listening experience of precariously mounting complexity that threatens to trip over itself and fall apart, before being channelled at the last minute into an affirmative re-collection of forces and ideas.

Bach's compelling large-scale design for this movement is arguably only appreciated in its full aural effect if the piece's formal and expressive dimensions are considered as wholly integrated and interdependent, rather than as analytically separable entities. For this reason, my reading has downplayed any possible moments of local affective signification on the one hand, and Bach's potential reliance on preconceived formal templates on the other. Some scholars have asserted the existence of such fixed conventions in Bach's music more forcefully, and have used them to construe the 'Brandenburg' Concertos as socially or politically seditious, as in Susan McClary's interpretation of the unexpected harpsichord cadenza in the Fifth Concerto,



74 Y (invert)

77 fugal insertion

Example 3c 'Brandenburg' Concerto No. 3, BWV1048/i, bars 74–80



or in Michael Marissen's conjectures regarding Bach's unruly political and theological agendas based on the subversion of a Vivaldian ritornello prototype.⁴⁸ Yet I would want to resist the impression that any meaning or effect beyond localized expressiveness in this repertory is made possible mainly through challenging or displacing entrenched conventions of form and genre. While playing with and outstripping such conventions undoubtedly formed a major component of Bach's compositional toolkit (as in the fugal intrusion described above), careful interrogation of the specific stylistic and listening contexts is necessary in order to gauge what would have drawn on predetermined models and expectations, and what would have been freely invented and fluid but nonetheless perceived as engaging and persuasive.⁴⁹

Such a re-evaluation proves enlightening not only for many of Bach's instrumental works, but could as well form the basis for a reassessment of musical design in some of his texted compositions, be it through contemplating the cumulative effect of amplification processes in, say, the opening chorus of Cantata 21 ('Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis') or by rethinking the continually varied, lengthened and truncated reiterations of the bass ritornello in the alto aria 'Von den Stricken meiner Sünden' from the *St John Passion*. Even a cursory glance confirms that the first chorus in BWV 21 relies heavily on a seventeenth-century-inspired 'additive' notion of composition, sometimes (derogatorily) referred to as the 'Reihungsprinzip'.⁵⁰ A strategy of gradual elaboration is evident not only in the movement's large-scale design – a more complex version of Kuhnau's bipartite invention in 'Lobe den Herren' – but also in its opening cumulative phrase arrangement of repeated exclamations followed by an expansive imitative exposition, to which Mattheson's enlightened sensibilities could only respond with ridicule (Example 4).⁵¹ 'Von den Stricken', meanwhile, no doubt incorporates a more up-to-date and 'balanced' da capo layout, yet close attention to its irregular phrase patterns, so prominent in much early eighteenth-century compositional practice, once again exposes comparable strategies of variation and amplification. The conventional aria structure is closely interwoven with an ongoing process of unpredictable phrase manipulation in the lowest part, which is itself continually redefined by its shifting relationship with the similarly expanding and contracting melodic segments in the upper voices. The opening ritornello, for instance, is lengthened by four bars for its second statement from bar 9, now incorporating the voice; yet while in the oboe parts the phrase is interrupted after four bars (bar 13), allowing the voice to continue with the original line, the bass proceeds in its original form for two bars longer and is extended through an insertion only at bar 15 (Example 5). The fluctuating correlation between lower and upper parts gains structural significance on a larger scale in the central section of the aria, where the new textual material in the voice is undercut half-way through by a varied return of the familiar bass ritornello in the tonic D minor (bar 55). The piece's singular shape and expressive effect result in no small

48 Susan McClary, 'The Blasphemy of Talking Politics During Bach Year', in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13–62, and Marissen, *The Social and Religious Designs*, 16ff; for a critique see Michael Talbot, review of *The Social and Religious Designs of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos*, by Michael Marissen, *Music and Letters* 77/3 (1996), 466–469.

49 Very little work has so far been done regarding the listening habits of Bach's potential audiences for the concertos in Cöthen or Leipzig; hence my reliance, in the present context, on surrounding theoretical sources to establish a contemporary framework of expectations (see note 43).

50 See, for example, Alfred Dürr, *Die Kantaten von Johann Sebastian Bach mit ihren Texten* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1985), volume 2, 461.

51 Mattheson's response to this passage appears in his *Critica Musica Pars VIII* (1725), in *Bach-Dokumente Band II: Fremdschriftliche und gedruckte Dokumente zur Lebensgeschichte Johann Sebastian Bachs 1685–1750*, ed. Werner Neumann and Hans-Joachim Schulze (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969), 153. The stylistic and structural variety in the different movements of the cantata, together with its complex source situation, has attracted much commentary; see most recently Martin Petzoldt, 'Die kräftige Erquickung unter der schweren Angst-Last': Möglicherweise Neues zur Entstehung der Kantate BWV 21', *Bach-Jahrbuch* 79 (1993), 97–141, and Christoph Wolff, 'Die betrübte und wieder getröstete Seele': Zum Dialog-Charakter der Kantate "Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis" BWV 21', *Bach-Jahrbuch* 82 (1996), 139–145.



2. Chorus

Oboe

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Soprano
Ich, ich, ich, ich hat-te viel Be-küm-mer-nis, ich hat-te viel Be-

Alto
Ich, ich, ich,

Tenore
Ich, ich, ich, ich hat-te viel Be-küm-mer-nis, ich

Basso
Ich, ich, ich,

Fagotto

Violoncello
Violone
Organo (bez.)

6 4 7 5 5 6 4 9 7 6 4 6

4

küm-mer-nis in mei-nem Her-zen, in mei-nem
ich hat-te viel Be-
hat-te viel Be-küm-mer-nis in mei-nem Her-zen
ich

9 9 8 5 6 6 6 7 6 6 #
4 4 4 5 5

Example 4 *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*, BWV 21/ii, chorus: 'Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis', bars 1–9 (Johann Sebastian Bach: *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, series 1, volume 16, *Kantaten zum 2. und 3. Sonntag nach Trinitatis*, ed. Robert Moreen, George Bozarth and Paul Brainard (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1982)). Used by permission



6 *tr*

Her - zen, -
 küm - mer - nis, ich hat - te viel Be - küm - mer - nis in mei - nem
 - zen,
 hat - te viel Be - küm - mer - nis, ich hat - te viel Be - küm - mer - nis, Be -

9 5 4 4 3 5 9

8

ich hat - te viel Be - küm - mer - nis, ich hat - te viel Be -
 Her - zen, in mei - nem Her - zen, in mei - nem Her -
 ich hat - te viel Be - küm - mer - nis, ich
 küm - mer - nis in mei - nem Her - zen, in mei - nem

6 5 7 # 4 3 6 7

Example 4 *continued*



7. Aria

Oboe I

Oboe II

Alto

Continuo

senza Bassono grosso

7 6 9 8 9 8 6
5 7 6 6 7 8 4
3

5

7 # - 6 7 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 5 6 5 #

9

p

p

Von den Stricken meiner Sünden

p

7 6 9 6 9 8 4
5 7 5 6 7 6 2

Example 5 *St John Passion*, BWV245/vii, aria: 'Von den Stricken meiner Sünden', bars 1–22 (Johann Sebastian Bach: *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, series 2, volume 4, *Johannes-Passion*, ed. Arthur Mendel (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1973)). Used by permission



13

— mich zu ent - bin - den, mich zu ent - bin - den, wird mein Heil —

7 # 4 6 7 5 4 2 6 8 6 4 6 5

16

f

f

tr

ge - bun - - den;

6 - # *f* 6 7 6 6 6 6 5 3

20

tr

p

tr

p

von den Strik - ken

6 5 # *p* 5 6 7 5 6

Example 5 *continued*



degree from the frictions produced by these overlapping procedures of repetition and augmentation, rather than its more easily classifiable outer form.⁵²

The question of whether the pervasive techniques of variation and amplification that Bach draws on in his compositional pursuits came to him through direct contact with rhetorical teachings based on Erasmus, or through his engagement with seventeenth-century musical traditions that explored Erasmian possibilities of composition and argumentation, or by even less traceable routes, in some ways requires no definitive answer.⁵³ In light of Heinichen's and Kuhnau's outlines of their compositional activity, we might conclude that in the early eighteenth century rhetorical models loomed large in the process of imagining alternative versions of musical inventions and their consolidation into whole pieces. It is certainly possible that Bach himself kept an eye on the numerous rhetorical and poetic composition treatises that appeared in Leipzig, Jena and other nearby places during his tenure at the Thomaskirche. But perhaps a transmission by musical rather than rhetorical channels looks more plausible, since by this time, at least in Bach's hands, certain compositional idioms work on an intra-musical level so removed from the word-inspired experiments of early seventeenth-century music that the search for direct outside models often appears to miss the point. Yet I would argue that an understanding of Erasmian rhetorical principles nevertheless provides an indispensable foundation for approaching this repertory, since it was the one discipline at the time that concerned itself with devising and shaping primary patterns of creative thought, whose significance clearly extended beyond the confines of speech and letter writing. A renewed appreciation of this kind of rhetoric can therefore enable us to recognize and articulate fundamental compositional strategies and concerns for which the majority of other discourses about music lack the conceptual and terminological requisites. From an Erasmian perspective, Bach's procedures for creating his individual compositional designs can be seen to exploit a rhetoric of variation and amplification that is resolutely and uniquely musical.

52 Joel Lester has suggested a similar reconsideration of formal design in Bach's music, although he reduces his compositional strategies to three 'common structural principles'; see his 'Heightening Levels of Activity and J. S. Bach's Parallel-Section Constructions', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54/1 (2001), 49–96.

53 Bach's engagement with seventeenth-century compositional legacies is documented in, among others, Arnold Schering, 'Die alte Chorbibliothek der Thomasschule in Leipzig', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1918–1919), 275–288; Christoph Wolff, 'J. S. Bach and the Legacy of the Seventeenth Century', in *Bach Studies* 2, 192–201; and Stephen Crist, 'The Early Works and the Heritage of the Seventeenth Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to Bach*, ed. John Butt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75–85.