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THE COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE OF THE CADENZA IN THE CLASSICAL ERA

Samuel Karafotis

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses cadenza composition in the classical style and improvisation for flutists and other woodwind performers. Classical concerti continue to be performed frequently, requiring performers to select or compose cadenzas for these concerti. This research discusses the background and purpose of classical cadenzas, and the qualities present in historically accurate classical cadenzas. The research also addresses issues relevant to modern performers composing and improvising cadenzas, culminating in cadenzas composed by the author for the Mozart *Concerto in G Major, K. 313* for flute and orchestra.

INTRODUCTION

Art of the past allows us a unique window into the culture of those who lived before us. The only way we can look through this special window is to experience this art in the present. We experience this connection in music through listening, but unlike the paintings of such great artists as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, or the writings of an author such as Chaucer, composers did not directly communicate with their audience. The composer required a living medium, the performer(s), to fully realize his or her work of art. Because of this, the living performer is responsible for the true preservation, the interpretation and realization, of the work. Many composers conducted their own works, shaping the musicians' interpretation of their work; however, the majority of influential composers are deceased and can no longer offer insight into the performance of their compositions. It is for this reason that historical research in musical performance practice is vital, not only to play music accurately, but to preserve our artistic culture with reverence and respect.

The purpose of this research is to explore literature written about the cadenza and to deal specifically with the improvisation and

composition of cadenzas by flutists and other woodwind performers during the classical era¹ of Western art music. Cadenzas are solo passages near the end of a movement of a concerto that are composed or improvised by the performer. Many modern performers who compose or improvise cadenzas for classical concertos do so in a fashion that is not historically or stylistically accurate. Many times these cadenzas by twenty-first century performers are more in the style of the Romantic or Avant-Garde eras than the Classical era (Lasocki & Mather, 1978). This research will focus on specific aspects of cadenzas and their historically accurate composition, including the historical background and aesthetic purpose of the cadenza, the length of the cadenza, the location of cadenza, the use of figures and meters in the cadenza, the use of the concerto's thematic material and range of the cadenza, and the acceptable harmonic vocabulary of the cadenza

LITERATURE REVIEW

The information regarding the composition and improvisation of classical cadenzas comes from varying sources, including instructional treatises by composers and performers of the period, the analysis of cadenzas written by period performers and composers, and the writings of current musicologists, music historians, and educated performers. Because the literature reviewed consists of period writings by eighteenth century musicians and research conducted by scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there is a significant chronological gap in the writings.

In 1752, Johann Joachim Quantz, in his treatise *On Playing the Flute*, wrote one of the first tutorials on improvising and composing cadenzas (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. vii). Quantz, a German flutist, flute maker, and composer during the eighteenth century, was a teacher and court musician of Frederick the Great. Although his essay, *On Playing the Flute*, primarily applies to music of the late baroque, many of the practices he described carried into the classical period. A number of modern researchers, including David Lasocki and Betty Bang Mather, cite Quantz's treatise in regards to cadenzas. In addition, the instructions on cadenzas of classical composer and flutist Johann George Tromlitz are frequently identical to those of Quantz. Quantz describes the melodic and harmonic elements of good cadenzas as well as the appropriate length and location of cadenzas. Harmonically, cadenzas did not stray from the key, and most of the implied harmonies were tonic, sub-

1 c. eighteenth century, following the baroque and preceding the classical

dominant, or dominant chords. Melodically, most cadenzas consisted of smaller melodic figures and free meter containing asymmetrical phrases. In addition, Quantz describes the purpose and history of cadenzas, and his criticisms of his contemporary baroque performers' improvisation of cadenzas. Some of his criticisms of baroque performers include playing cadenzas where they are not appropriate, and playing cadenzas that are too long (Quantz, 2001, p. 179–185).

Johann George Tromlitz, a German flutist during the middle to late eighteenth century, provided instruction on performing cadenzas in his treatise, *The Virtuoso Flute Player*, written in 1791. Successful as both an orchestral flutist and a solo artist, Tromlitz had a strong commitment to pedagogy and flute making. Late in his career, Tromlitz wrote several works on these topics and developed features for the flute that would later be used by Boehm, developer of the modern flute. The instructions in his treatise include the proper location of the cadenza, the length of the cadenza, the harmonic and intervallic limitations of the cadenza, the use of motivic ideas within the cadenza, and instructions for cadenzas written for multiple instruments (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 257-274).

Daniel Gottlob Türk's *School of Clavier Playing*, written in 1789, is an instructional essay on keyboard playing. The book contains a chapter on extemporaneous ornaments, addressing the issue of cadenzas and lead-ins. Almost all of the rules that Türk applies to the composition and improvisation of cadenzas parallel those of his eighteenth century contemporaries, Quantz and Tromlitz (Türk, 1982, p. 289–318).

David Lasocki and Betty Bang Mather's *The Classical Woodwind Cadenza: A Workbook*, written in 1976, explores cadenzas and pedagogical writings of the classical period and presents the information in a practical manner (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. vii). This writing also describes many common errors of modern performers when composing cadenzas, such as inappropriate harmonic vocabulary (including uncharacteristic modulations), running too long, ranging too high, and adding too many ornaments (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 43–45).

Written in 1988, Joseph P. Swain's article, "Form and Function of the Classical Cadenza," discusses the origin of cadenzas, and the theoretical treatises addressing cadenzas written during the eighteenth century by Quantz, Daniel Gottlob Türk, and Carl Phillip Emmanuel Bach. The article discusses at length the cadenzas written by Mozart and Beethoven, their location in the form of the concerto, and their harmonic function based upon their location at the end of the concerto. Swain states that the cadenza can be either an embellished cadence or a prolon-

gation of the home tonality. Because the cadenza is located at the end of a classical sonata form, it must reaffirm the home tonality. Swain also discusses the form that is present in all cadenzas that Mozart wrote for his own piano concerti (Swain, 1988, p. 28, 35–44).

Written in 2005 by Danuta Mirka, “The Cadence of Mozart’s Cadenzas” discusses the cadential function of the cadence in Mozart’s cadenzas for his piano concerti. The article describes the piano cadenzas as being long enough that they require their own cadence, rather than belonging to one cadence, which was customary in wind or string cadenzas. This article discusses the cadence of the cadenza, generally signified by a trill, along with methods to approach and depart this section of the cadenza (Mirka, 2005, p. 323–325).

In their book, *Interpreting Mozart on the Keyboard* written in 1957, Eva and Paul Badura-Skoda provide a chapter on cadenzas and lead-ins. This chapter discusses and analyzes cadenzas written by Mozart for his piano concerti. The authors analyze these cadenzas as having a three-part form consisting of an introduction, a middle section, and a conclusion. The authors also discuss the use of thematic material from the concerto movement, harmony, and melodic qualities in Mozart’s cadenzas (Badura-Skoda & Badura-Skoda, 1986, p. 214–216)

FINDINGS

There are two types of improvisational embellishments in classical concerti: the cadenza and the lead-in. Cadenzas originated in Italy during the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century. The term *cadenza*, the Italian word for “cadence,” is derived from embellishments located at the final cadence in the solo part at the end of the first and second movements of the concerto (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 1). According to Quantz, “The object of the cadenza is simply to surprise the listener unexpectedly at the end of the piece, and to leave behind a special impression in his heart.” (Quantz, 2001, p. 179–180.) In addition to this, Lasocki states that the classical cadenza was intended to show off the performer’s inventiveness, expressiveness, sense of style, and the ability to play large intervals and fast passage work (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 15). The cadenza needed to be appropriate to the main passion or sentiment of the piece (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 261; Türk, 1982, p. 298; Swain, 1988, p. 34). No more than one cadenza should be played per movement, and it should be properly located within the larger work (Quantz, 2001, p. 180). Starting on the second inversion tonic chord, these cadenzas delayed the dominant seventh and final tonic chord.

The second type of improvisational embellishment is the flourish or lead-in, which occurred over the dominant seventh chord at a half cadence. These are also referred to as *Eingänge* by Mozart (Swain, 1988, p. 30). The half-cadence lead-in, resembling a short cadenza, was derived from baroque ritornello forms, and is usually used in classical music to lead into the main theme of a rondo movement.

Each of these embellishments is indicated by the composer with a fermata over the first chord or rest that can be embellished (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 16). Frequently with the second inversion tonic cadenza, this fermata sign was above the final trill. At this point the accompaniment either held a chord or became silent (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 7). Stopping the movement in the accompaniment caused a tempo, color, and harmonic change that would aid in the element of surprise (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 1).

Classical period cadenzas and lead-ins, although improvisatory in nature, follow several specific stylistic characteristics in relation to their length, approach and exit, rhythm and meter, melodic material, and harmony. Generally, classical cadenzas should be relatively brief (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 262). According to Lasocki, classical cadenzas should be longer than their baroque predecessors, but not nearly as long as the romantic cadenzas that came later (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 7). Although Quantz, Türk, and Tromlitz state that cadenzas should last only one breath, Tromlitz describes numerous occasions where an exception can be made (Quantz, 2001, p. 185; Türk, 1982, p. 299; Tromlitz, 1991, p. 260). According to Tromlitz, breaths can be taken at rests, after short notes, or before the final trill (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 265). Both Quantz and Tromlitz state that many cadenzas at the time were too long. This was a tradition that Tromlitz felt was promoted by uneducated audiences, a problem which carries into the present day (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 260). Lasocki felt that this was caused by modern performers confusing classical woodwind cadenzas with classical cadenzas for solo violin or piano, classical cadenzas for two or more woodwind soloists, and romantic solo cadenzas; all of which are traditionally longer (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 40). Contrary to this, these cadenzas should be kept short, to keep the element of surprise and the interest of the audience. Also, it should be noted that flute cadenzas tended to be shorter than other woodwind cadenzas because of a flutist's need for breath (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 40).

The start of the cadenza is usually preceded by a *rallentando* (Türk, 1982, p. 293). The first note should be a long tonic chord tone that is generally the tonic pitch in the key. The performer should start softly,

crescendo, and diminuendo before playing through the material in the cadenza (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 16). The end of the cadenza is indicated by a trill on the second scale degree that can be prepared in several different ways, and always includes an *appoggiatura* on the third scale degree. The final trill should start *pianissimo* and then crescendo before the final termination. The final termination consists of a turn including the tonic and the second scale degree, before ending on the tonic pitch. During the trill, the accompaniment plays a dominant seventh chord, signaling the final theme of the piece at the resolution of the trill (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 16). This dominant seventh chord should be in the tempo of the final theme that confirms the tonic key (Mirka, 2005, p. 295, 307).

According to Lasocki and Mather (1978), the classical concepts of balanced phrasing and periodicity are abandoned for unequal, non-metric passages (p. 23). This is in agreement with the writings of Quantz and Tromlitz (Quantz, 2001, p. 185). Tromlitz states, however, that meter can be observed occasionally, especially when using thematic material from the concerto. Metered sections of cadenzas are short, quickly departing to another meter or non-metric material (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 261, 265). In addition to free meter, the tempo should change throughout the cadenza (Türk, 1982, p. 301). Because of the improvisatory style of the cadenza, tempo changes cannot be easily or accurately notated, and for this reason, are rarely notated at all (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 262; Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 34).

The arrangement of the melodic material is at the discretion of the performer. Melodic figures in cadenzas consist of two to eight notes and last for one half to two beats (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 23). According to Tromlitz, diversity and alternation of figures is important, a technique that contributes to the changing meter (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 262). The length of melodic figures and patterns should be varied, while the cadenza should not be too long or consist of an excessive amount of melodic ideas (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 262; Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 33). Based upon the analysis of cadenzas by Lasocki and Mather, melodic figures occurred separately, in repetition, or in sequence, with groupings of melodic figures forming patterns (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 23). Although Quantz's opinion on baroque cadenzas states that figures or intervals should not be repeated more than twice and should never start on the same note, Tromlitz suggests that a performer may repeat a figure four times (Quantz, 2001, p. 182–183). Tromlitz also advises that, "single figures lend themselves to more frequent repetition than composite

ones.” (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 262). Both Quantz and Tromlitz agree that it is acceptable to use melodic material from the concerto when fashioning a cadenza (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 262). Quantz states that this can accommodate for a lack of inventiveness and to also retain the sentiment of the piece. Lasocki and Mather state that the amount of melodic material from the concerto used in the cadenza was minimal (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 37). In the attached cadenzas for the Mozart *Concerto in G Major, K. 313*, thematic material from the concerto appears in mm. 1–2 and 4–5 of the first cadenza, and in mm. 9–12 of the second cadenza. Thematic material is not used in the lead-in for the third movement, because lead-ins generally did not use thematic material from the host movement. Quantz and Tromlitz both agree that fast movement cadenzas should consist of extended leaps, triplets, and shakes (Quantz, 2001, p. 184). They also both state that slow movement cadenzas should consist of small intervals mingled with dissonances. Despite these guidelines suggested by Quantz and Tromlitz, Lasocki’s analysis of classical period cadenzas showed that classical period performers used small intervals and dissonances in quick movement cadenzas, and that leaps, triplets, and trills were apparent in slow movement cadenzas (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 39).

The use of harmony in cadenzas is subject to rules. Quantz states that, “You must not roam into keys that are too remote or which have no relationship with the [tonic key].” (Quantz, 2001, p. 184). Because of this, the range of harmonies available is limited (Quantz, 2001, p. 181). Tromlitz states that the modulations referenced are not true key changes, but that these implied harmonies may allude to another tonality (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 263). Occasionally in the attached cadenzas there is an implied secondary dominant. These secondary dominants are only meant to strengthen the harmonic progression; they do not modulate to another key. The underlying presence of the home key is evident throughout both cadenzas. Because of the location of the cadenza at the end of the movement, the harmonic progression present in the cadenza must confirm the home key. According to Lasocki, an implied chord should last no more than a few figures (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 28). In addition to this, intervals need to be correctly resolved, and chordal progressions should occur through a common tone or stepwise resolution (Quantz, 2001, p. 183; Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 29). Lasocki and Mather address the harmonic progressions that are common in classical cadenzas. Allusion to the dominant harmony can be made through the augmented fourth of the tonic pitch. This is apparent in mm. 9 and 13 of the cadenza composed for the second movement of the Mozart Concerto. This pitch will act as

the leading tone to the dominant and will imply a secondary dominant function (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 263). Modulation to the subdominant harmony can be achieved through the major third above the tonic. This type of modulation is used in mm. 2 of the first movement cadenza when the B resolves upward to the C. In a minor key, the major third will substitute for the minor third (Tromlitz, 1991, p. 264; Quantz, 2001, p. 184). The modulation to the subdominant harmony can also be achieved by using the flatted minor seventh and resolving it by descending stepwise motion (Quantz, 2001, p. 184). This modulation is used in mm. 12 of the second movement cadenza. The most common harmonies used are those with dominant functions. These include the dominant seventh and diminished leading tone chords. The next most common harmonies used are the supertonic, subdominant, and submediant harmonies. Following these are secondary dominants and secondary leading tones, while the least used harmonies are the mediant and tonic chords (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 29). The parallel minor can be substituted for the major tonic, but should be short so the performer can return to the tonic in a stylistically correct fashion (Quantz, 2001, p. 184).

The issues current performers have with composing classical cadenzas arise for several reasons. First, since recording technology did not exist during the eighteenth century, there are no recordings of cadenzas by period performers to use as a reference (Lasocki & Mather, 1978, p. 15). Second, since the composers of the classical era have been deceased for several hundred years, we cannot use them as a resource the same as we can with current living composers. Third, because baroque and classical performers only played the most current music of their period, many of the performance practices were not well preserved for future generations. Finally, according to Swain, cadenzas are not adequately addressed in current literature or education. For these reasons, many performers do not possess the knowledge necessary to compose cadenzas that are historically accurate or pleasing to the audience (Swain, 1988, p. 27)

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research may include an in-depth analysis of classical cadenzas composed by period performers, and those composed by a period composer such as Mozart. Analysis of classical cadenzas may address form, harmony, melodic material, and relation to the concerto movement, in addition to other qualities.

CONCLUSION

Having knowledge of the background, purpose, and attributes of classical cadenzas benefits both the performer and the audience. Application of the information acquired through this research will allow the performer to compose cadenzas that are musically accurate, aesthetically pleasing, and true to the composer's intent. This will allow the performer to have an overall better performance of the concerto by maintaining musical integrity and preserving the work in its truest form.

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