

ITALIAN INFLUENCES ON FRENCH CELLO REPERTOIRE IN 18TH CENTURY

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Abstract

With this research we aim to understand the beginning of French composing style for cello solo in 18th century and Italian influences on it. After studying some of musical features of each country, we looked for which features from French tradition were preserved and which were absorbed from Italian style. We also observed the familiarity of the compositions with cello's idiom and possibilities.

Key words: Cello, Baroque, France.

Introduction

The relation between French and Italian music in 18th century created many discussions which still are under research. Despite the negative reception from French court¹, the Italian music had much influence on France. The beginning of that century was the moment when strings family instruments, with Italian origins, as violin and cello, arrived in France and rose as soloist over many countries, as the cello. According to Walls², compositions for solo violin began to appear in France after Arcangelo Corelli Opus 5 (Rome, 1708) and for the cello, not much latter. Studying that repertoire one can understand the incorporation process of Italian features to the French music, the adaptation process of national language to the instruments possibilities and the transformation of French style.

Results and Discussion

The research was divided in two parts. In the first we studied the aesthetical values of French music criticism and musical features of each country through treatises, methods and sheet music of the period and recent texts about the matter. After, we studied the French cello repertoire looking for Italian influences. The repertoire selected as reference was some of the sonatas for cello and throughout bass by Jean-Baptiste Barrière (1707-1747). We concluded that the French criticism was guided by the same values of clarity, restraint and "good taste" which guided the Louis XVI court society³. On the other hand, the Italian music, more related to the people⁴, had preference for virtuosic, liveliness and creativity. Barrière preserved elements from French tradition and mixed them with Italian elements. We observed that the familiarity of the composer and his pieces with cello's idiom and possibilities has grown over time.

Conclusions

The transformations suffered by music criticism in France were essential for the beginning of French cello repertoire. The decrease of monarchy power made possible bringing new features for national compositions and new instruments to the country. We concluded Barrière mixed the features from both styles and this is what makes his music rich. The composer abandoned the elements which were uncommon for the cello in the time and brought new techniques, as passages in high range and capotasto use. Considering that French composers, influenced by Italian music, were reevaluating music aesthetic, we can describe Barrière work as according to the national style and also innovator. The cello repertoire followed the French fashion in dialogue with Italian music and mixed the styles. It had, in an earlier moment, elements from viola da gamba idiom but got updated with the new techniques. At last, we concluded that this repertoire reflects the will to reunite the tastes from both countries, as is well documented by French composers, as F. Couperin (1668-1733), or foreigners, as J. J. Quantz (1697-1773).

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¹ DON FADER. *The Honnête homme as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music*. Califórnia: University of California Press, 2003.

² WALLS, Peter. 'Sonade, que me veux tu?': Reconstructing French Identity in the Wake of Corelli's Op.5, *Early Music*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Feb., 2004), pp. 27-47. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³DON FADER. 2003

⁴ SILVA, Tereza Cristina Rodrigues. *Ao gosto de Il foribondo; um estudo das seis Sonates Pour le Violoncelle et Basse Continue de Francesco Gemminiani segundo seus tratados e transcrições*, Tese de Doutorado, UNICAMP, Campinas, 2009.,