

The First Application of Ritornello Form in Concerto

A Structural Analysis of the First Movement of the Sixth Concerto in Torelli Op. 8

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Abstract—In the development of the music, the ritornello form with the theme of main part for tune shift and reproduction is one of the main forms next to fugue in the Baroque Music period, which embodies the principle of the cyclic form as well as the Rondo. In 1708, the Italian composer Giuseppe Torelli first applied the form to the first movement of the sixth concerto in Op. 8. On the basis of the analysis and research of this movement, this paper summarizes the structural characteristics of the ritornello form which was first used in the Baroque Concerto genre.

Keywords—Ritornello form; Torelli; structure; Baroque

I. INTRODUCTION

Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709), Italian violinist, teacher and composer, was one of the great musicians in Baroque period. As a violinist, he successively served as a violinist (1686-1695) in the orchestra of St. Petronio in Bologna, the chief of Marquis of Brandenburg (1698-1699) in Ansbach, the violinist of the orchestra in St. Petronio Church (1701), and his performance level was highly praised by people of the same era. As a violinist, he taught many students and some became famous, such as Francesco Manhe, an Italian violinist, composer and church musician. As a composer, he not only created a large number of excellent works covering vocal music, oratorio, Sonata, symphony and Concerto, but also left precious music wealth for the world. He has played an important role in the promotion and development of music genres.

Among Torelli's many excellent music works, the 12 Concertos numbered Op. 8 are undoubtedly a masterpiece that best reflects Torelli's creative wisdom and musical status. In addition to the fact that it was the last large-scale work with a summing up nature before Torelli's death, what's more important is that Torelli first used the fast-slow-fast design to lay out the structure of the three movements in the sixth piece of the work. The use of this principle has a far-reaching impact on the creation of Concertos of later generations, and has become one of the important symbols of Italian Concertos in Baroque period. In addition, Torelli also used the ritornello form for the first time in the first movement of the sixth piece of the work.

As it is known, the ritornello form was one of the main forms in Baroque period, next only to fugue form, which embodies the principle of cyclic form as well as rondo form. The theme that appears many times is called regression

segment, and the part that alternates with regression segment is called interpolation. Compared with rondo form, the difference of ritornello form is that the main theme is transferred in tune and reappeared in the development of music. The application of ritornello form in this work makes this type of form, which originated from folk poetry and dance, developed and widely used in vocal music genre, enter a new field of practice. Therefore, it is of great significance to study the structure of this movement in order to understand the writing characteristics of the ritornello form in Baroque instrumental music, especially in Concerto. Based on the analysis and research of this movement, this paper will sort out and summarize the structural characteristics of the ritornello form which was first used in the Baroque Concerto genre.

II. ANALYSIS OF WORKS

This works, written in 1708, is the sixth one of Op. 8, with three movements. The first movement is based on G minor, with speed of Vivace and 6/8 beats. It is a typical ritornello form of seven part structure. Its structure is shown as follows ("Table I"):

TABLE I. MUSICAL FORM

Primary structure	A	B	A1	C	A2	D	A3
Start-and-stop bar	1-19	20-21	22-36	37-47	48-63	64-77	78-93
Tonality	g-	g	d-	bB	bB -	bE-	g
Performance form	Tutti	Solo	Tutti	Solo	Tutti	Solo	Tutti

The regression segment of the ritornello form is based on g minor, with 19 bars in total. It can be divided into two parts according to music texture composition and material application. The first part is 1-9 bars, which is a three-part theme with distinct character and imitative polyphony. At the beginning of the music, the extremely active theme is played in the first violin part with a high posture, followed by the second violin part and the viola part with two-bar time distance to imitate the theme in octave and fifteen. The deep cello does not take on the active theme, but plays a deep long g to form the main sustained harmony. The second part of the ritornello segment ends in g minor with the extended development of the music materials presented in the first part,

which is closely connected with the first insertion in the form of intrusive termination.

The structure of the first insertion is short and small, which cannot compete with the regression section in length and scale. However, Torelli designed the performance form in a unique way, playing the insertion part in the form of two violins solo, so as to form a contrast with tutti in the regression section in terms of timbre, sound level and strength. This performance form is also used in other insertion parts of the movement. The first reproduction of the regression segment is based on the d minor of the main tone, which belongs to the typical tonal layout. In the reproduction, the first part has done a complete shift processing, and the second part has slightly changed in structure and tonality.

The second insertion is based on the parallel bB major of the main tone. From the perspective of material relations, the insertion is still closely related to the first part of the regression segment. Canon-style imitated melody writing chasing each other in the first violin and the second violin, full of vitality. After the keyboard instrument group used in accompaniment stayed in the subordinate function harmony of bB major, the two violins also made a six-bar solo segment with the implied main function alternating harmony. Since then, the regression segment in bB major slightly changed for the second reproduction.

The third insertion also overlaps with the former structure in the form of invasion termination. In terms of material relationship, the third insertion has the same material use characteristics as the former two insertions, and is still related to the first part of the regression segment. Due to the development of materials, there are many internal tonality involved, including bE, bB, bA, bE and g. The end of the tonality stops on the generic harmony of the main tone, making the generic preparation for the third reproduction of the regression segment.

The last reproduction of the regression segment is now on the main tone, the first half is reproduced as it is, the second half is reduced in structure, and the main and subordinate alternative bunching link is introduced, and openly ends on the subordinate harmony.

III. STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF THE WORKS

A. Structural Characteristics of Regression Segment

1) Personalized melody writing

The melody composition of the regression segment of this movement does not have the singing line with vocal characteristics, but shows obvious motivational writing characteristics. As mentioned in the previous analysis, 1-9 bars at the beginning of the music are the core part of the regression segment, which contains three distinctive materials in the theme of lively emotional polyphony, which are respectively represented by the letters a, b and c. Material a is the ascending of the four tone group, d-g-a-bb. Material b is carried out in second interval with decorative property, which starts from g to bB in third interval and then down to Material a in sixth intervals. Material c is the jumping of the

sixth interval from g to bb.¹ These three materials form the basis of the development of the whole movement. In the first nine sections of the music, there has been a high degree of development motivation.

The second part of regression segment is mainly composed of three materials. In the horizontal aspect, three kinds of materials keep the order of presentation in the first part: Material a still keeps the melody of the fourth jump to lead out the music as the beginning, Material b immediately follows to advance the music to the next stage through three downward molds, and Material c is developed by the second violin part in the way of interval reduction. When the interval distance is reduced to a small third, the first violin part follows this practice. In the longitudinal aspect, while Material a leads to music, the cello part cuts, splits and expands the time value to overlap in the way of reflection, which is very exquisite.

2) Structural characteristics of intermediation

Combined with the structure division of the whole piece, it can be seen that the first presentation of the regression segment is separated from the insertion by the performance form of the whole piece, with a total length of 19 bars. Combined with analysis of music texture writing and material use, the regression segment can be divided into two parts: the first part is 1-9 bars, which is a three part polyphony theme; the second part is 10-19 bars, which is a musical segment showing the first part of the three motives in the longitudinal and horizontal interweaving development and a perfect stop at g minor. Therefore, the whole regression segment shows the structural characteristics of the extended single and two-part form. From the perspective of tonal movement and harmony configuration, the regression section can be divided into three parts: the first part is the theme of three part imitation of polyphony, which is based on the main sustained harmony in g minor. The second part is the development of music materials before this, accompanied by the off-tonal harmony, involving bB-g-c-bB. In the third part, it returns to g minor from bB major, and makes a complete termination. From the perspective of tonal movement, music development logic and harmony configuration, these three structural blocks have shown the structural functions of presentation, expansion and convergence, and have certain three structural features. From the above two aspects, it can be seen that the regression segment has the structural characteristics of intermediary nature.

3) Unique reproduction mode

The essential difference between the ritornello form and the rondo form is that the overlapping part (that is the regression segment of the ritornello form) makes the shift reproduction in the music development. In the ritornello form, the regression segment usually appears four times, and

¹ Of course, Material b can also be understood as the decoration for cutting Material a, and the sixth interval of Material c can also be seen as the reverse of the jumping of the fourth interval at the beginning of Material a for interval expansion. Because these two kinds of materials are used more in the later music development, they are named and marked separately.

the typical tonal layout is the main tone, the subordinate tone, the close relation tone and the main tone except the subordinate tone. Torelli followed this principle of layout in tonal design of the regression segment and its reappearance of this movement, which is based on the tonality of g, d, bB and g respectively. However, in the reproduction of the regression segment, the processing of the second part of music materials is ingenious, showing unique design features. First of all, the three times of reproductions belong to the change representation in structure. On the basis of keeping the structure length of the basic structure (the first part) unchanged, the internal structure segment of the second part with expanding significance is designed according to their needs. Secondly, compared with regression segment, the structure lengths of the three reproductions were reduced. But the last three parts are roughly the same in length proportion. Compared with the original regression segment, they achieve the structural balance by either omitting a structural segment, increasing the expansion of a segment, or introducing new links. The combination of these factors makes the whole structure show a personalized representation.

B. Structural Characteristics of the Insertion

1) Material identity

The aesthetic point of view in Baroque era generally required not taking sharp contrast of materials as the starting point, and the material characteristics of insertion are always closely related to the regression segment. Torelli also followed this view in the creation of the movement's inserting part. The materials of the three inserting parts originated from the regression segment, and developed from the three materials shown in the regression segment. From the above analysis, it can be seen that the first inserting part is mainly developed by connecting Material b and Material a. The second inserting part takes material a as the core and adopts the most progressive and imitative development, and introduces some decomposition chords of non representational materials. The third inserting part mainly adopts Material a as the basis and adopts the most progressive and imitative development. These writing methods make the whole work maintain a highly unified structural feature in the material relationship.

2) Weakening of structure and function

Compared with the structure of the regression section and its reproduction parts, the scale of several inserting parts of the movement is relatively small and there is no obvious division of theme structure. At the same time, because the material of the insert is closely related to the regression segment, it cannot form a comparison from the source, which leads to the insert more showing the functional characteristics of the accessory structure. In this movement, the insertions play the role of connection and transition between the regression segment and its reproduction part, and undertake tonal transformation and a small number of expansions. It is shown as follows: the first insert, which is the connection between Material b and Material a, has only two bars, and plays a more important role in completing the connection of the recurrence of the regression in the generic

key. The second insert uses Material a as the canon model at the beginning, which plays the role of developing the music material, and the second half is composed of the decomposed tone of the dominant chord played by the two violins, have the connection function in the second reproduction in regression segment. The third part uses Material a as the basis for the most progressive and imitative development, and at the end, it returns to the complete termination of g minor, playing the role of connection between development and tonality conversion. These writing methods weaken the structural function of the inserts.

3) Unique comparison between inserts

In material relationship, it shows the same characteristics and performance mode among inserts, making it impossible to get a qualitative comparison. However, Torelli carefully designed the structure, tonality and other aspects of the inserting parts, making it show some centrifugal contrast factors in the music writing. The specific performance is as follows: with the development of music, the structural length of the insert is gradually increasing, and the lengths of the three inserting parts are 2, 11 and 14 bars respectively. At the same time, the tonal layout of each inserting part tends to be complicated. The first inserting part is based on the g minor of main tune, the second inserting part is in its parallel major, and the third inserting part is tonal changeable, involving bE, bB, bA and bE. These factors make the inserts show centrifugal contrast factors, and form the unique contrast mode among inserts.

C. The General Structural Characteristics of the Ritornello Form

1) Material design in one continuous line

Combined with the analysis of the structural characteristics of the regression segment and the inserts, it can be seen that the whole regression form is highly consistent in the use of music materials. The three materials presented in the regression segment not only complete the presentation and development of themselves, but also serve as the basis for the generation of inserts and participate in the whole music development. The regress segment of motivation, together with the insertion from the development of motivation, constitutes the structural characteristics of the whole movement's motivation writing style.

2) Ingenious way of comparison

Although there is no fundamental comparison between the parts because of the same material relationship, Torelli adopts a simple and convenient way to distinguish the inserting parts and the regression segments. The specific method is: the whole band plays the regression part in tutti, and the inserting part is played by two solo violins, and some bands serve the accompaniment. As a result, the regression parts and the inserts get excellent contrast effects in timbre (ensemble and solo), strength, and texture and so on. This writing method has a great influence on the creation of solo concerto and the development of its genre.

3) Features of main polyphony mixed texture

From the perspective of texture, the movement also has the characteristics of the main polyphony mixed texture.

From one aspect, the octave imitation polyphony of the three parts presented by the string part in the regression segment, and the same type of writing in the three reproduction processes of the regression segment thereafter, together with the imitation and Canon style polyphony writing presented by the two solo violins in the second and third parts, make the whole movement show a strong polyphony musical temperament. From the other aspect, the keyboard instrument group of the concerto band composition in the system adopts the main tonal texture writing from the beginning to the end, whether it is the column chord shown in the first part when the regression section is first presented, or the decomposed chord sound shown in the second part of the regression section, and the writing method of the same texture in the reproduction of the regression section. Together with the main sustained harmony, the second insertion, the third insertion or the off key patterns of the column style or the decomposed chord, it has formed the main tone style of the movement. The combination of these two factors makes this movement form the characteristics of main polyphony mixed texture.

In addition, the structural characteristics of A BA1CA2DA3 shown in the regression form in this movement, because of the close connection between the insert and the regression section in the material relationship, further shows the principle of the form with variation meaning (free variation) AA1A2A3A4A5A6, which forms the superposition of the principle of the cyclic form and the principle of the variation form (but dominated by the principle of the rondo form). As a result, the whole movement shows the characteristics of mixed structure to some extent.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the development of Concerto Music, Torelli has always been a pioneer. In his Concerto Sp. 8, he used the framework of ritornello form to create the first movement of the sixth piece for the first time, and combined with the creation law of Concerto, gave the new structural characteristics of ritornello form. Through the analysis of this paper, it can be seen that in the ritornello form, the regression segment has shown three structural features: personalized melody writing, structural features of intermediary nature and unique reproduction mode. The insertion part also shows its own structural features in the material relationship, structural function, and the comparative relationship among the insertion parts. Under the combination of the structural features of the regression section and the insertions, the whole regression style also shows the multiple structural features of the organic writing style, such as the material design, the unique contrast style, the main polyphony mixed texture writing style, the combination of the variation style principle and the circular style principle. These structural features had an important influence on the composers such as Vivaldi and Bach who used the ritornello form in the field of Concerto, and played a positive role in the formation and development of the types of Sonata, Rondo Sonata and solo concerto.

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