

Picturesque and Fantasia in the Works of Haydn and Mozart

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Abstract

The improvisatory elements, the intricacy and variety of writing are some of the characteristics that establish a strong connection between the fantasia and the picturesque style. This article focuses on the ambiguity between the use of classical formal structures and the ideal of the free fantasia form; the gap between improvisatory character and rigid form of written music; and the deviations from expected musical narrative produced by disruptive and surprising gestures. Moreover, the examination of works of Mozart and Haydn provides an instructive perspective on the significance to which the fantasia and picturesque style influenced Beethoven's works and compositions beyond the classical era.

Keywords: Picturesque, fantasia, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven.

The concept of the picturesque was developed in the eighteenth century, particularly through the discussions about the beautiful and sublime in art. William Gilpin was the first to discuss the details of a third style related to the beautiful and sublime; but it was

not until the 1780s that writings appeared giving the picturesque a well defined identity as an aesthetic ideal, and it was not until the mid 1790's that music was unhesitatingly and explicitly linked to established ideas of picturesqueness (Larsson 1980:146).

It was through the works of Uvedale Price that the picturesque achieved the status of an aesthetic in itself, with its own characteristics properties.¹ Moreover, although

¹ Until today, Uvedale Price's writings remain one of the most important records of the picturesque aesthetic and its presence in arts, particularly in the landscaping of the English gardens. He was also the first to use the term picturesqueness from the "necessity of having some one word to

he was not the first to propose the concept of the picturesque in music, Price was “the first to define musical picturesqueness and to show how it was clearly different from musical beauty and sublime” (Larsson 1980: 158). For Price the creation and cause of the picturesque comes from the combination of elements such as irregularity, sudden variation, and partial concealment of continuity, which excites curiosity, allowing the observer’s mind and imagination to participate in the artistic work.

The musical picturesque, according to William Crotch, is characterized by “playfulness of melody, broken and varied measure, intricacy of harmony and modulation, and a perpetual endeavor to excite surprise in the mind of the auditor” (Larsson 1980: 183).² In music, the picturesque as an aesthetic is best represented by the fantasia style, in which these characteristics are frequently found together.

With the compositions of C.P.E. Bach in the free-fantasia style, the picturesque achieved its climax in musical representation during the eighteenth century. C.P.E. Bach brought to music the sense of improvisation, concealment, and surprise promoted by Price and expanded its effects in a unique manner. Combining elements from the *Empfindsamer Stil*,³ with unexpected harmonic progressions, and dramatic use of music gestures, Bach developed an improvisatory style that influenced the music of several generations to come.

Among the tools C.P.E. Bach used to achieve the picturesque style in music is the dramatic prolongation of sound and silence, the sudden interruption of thematic material, various changes of *tempo*, and use of improvisatory passages (including insertions of this material as an interruption of the expected musical discourse). Drawn into this free style and influenced by the compositions of C.P.E. Bach, most importantly his fantasias, Haydn and Mozart distanced themselves from the

oppose to beauty and sublimity, in a work where they are so often compared” (Price 1842: Footnote 79).

² In his lectures presented in Oxford between 1807-22, Crotch affirms: “This style, which has not yet obtained a name, is analogous to the picturesque in painting; and I shall distinguish it by the term ornamental” (Larsson 1980: 83).

³ German literary movement.

traditional classical sonata and contributed to the repertoire of major fantasias composed during the late eighteenth century.

Much like most of C.P.E. Bach's fantasias, for instance, Mozart starts his Fantasy in D minor K.397 with an improvisatory introduction, where arpeggiated chords act as if seeking for a theme. To increase expectation and emphasize the arrival of the main theme, Mozart includes a prolongation on a single low a (a2) followed by a prolongation of silence (Ex. 1).

The image shows a musical score for Mozart's Fantasy in D minor, K. 397, measures 1-16. The score is divided into two sections: 'Andante.' (measures 1-16) and 'Adagio.' (measures 17-22). The 'Andante' section features a treble and bass staff with arpeggiated chords and a single low 'a' note. The 'Adagio' section features a treble and bass staff with a short motive based on a minor-second interval, followed by a measure-long, prolonged silence.

Ex. 1: Mozart's Fantasy in D minor, K. 397, mm.1-16.

A few measures later, in the same D minor Fantasy, Mozart develops a short motive based on a minor-second interval (previously presented in the theme), which is characterized by its fragmentation through recurring rests, sudden dynamic changes, and rapid harmonic rhythms. This five-measure section is suddenly interrupted by a measure-long, prolonged silence that explores the audience's imagination and curiosity. Finally, the familiar melody returns, but

taking a different harmonic path, as it is followed by a surprising and interrupting free, *presto* cadenza section (Ex. 2).⁴

Ex. 2: Mozart's Fantasy in D minor, K. 397, mm. 22-34.

Much like Mozart's prolongation of silence, Haydn's use of the fermata weakens the exact perception of the duration of time. For instance, in his Fantasy in C major

⁴ In this fantasia Mozart expands the exploration of the listeners' expectation and wonder. The entire piece seems to present an unstable driving force for something that is yet to come, in fact reiterating the assumption of this being an introductory piece to a subsequent piano sonata. This piece was first published as *Fantasia d'introduction* and lacked the last ten measures usually present in modern editions. For further reading, see Paul Hirsch's and John Kirkpatrick's article listed below.

Hob.XVII:4, Haydn prolongs the sound of a single octave until it “can no longer be heard,” creating a chance for the listener to imagine the continuation of the narrative, and more importantly create an expectation of its conclusion. Combining the subsequent, unexpected change of motive with the contrast of texture and register, Haydn intensifies the surprising effect of the passage⁵:

This prolongation of the E to an unusually long duration is not an end in itself, a detail of execution applying only to the note to which it is attached: it heightens attention and expectation, focusing attention on the unconventional harmonic juxtaposition (Harrison 1997: 389) (Ex. 3).



Ex. 3: Haydn's Fantasy in C major Hob.XVII: 4, mm. 181-198.

Following Price's descriptions of the picturesque use of disharmony in music, Haydn inserts an abrupt change “in order to relieve the ear from the languor and weariness, which long lasting smoothness of sweet and flowing melodies always brings on” (Price 1842: 108). In this section Haydn starts by combining a *diminuendo* dynamic, with a harmonically-static pattern, and a restful, one-measure-long chord. Proceeding to the unforeseen, thus creating an inevitable surprise, Haydn continues with an abrupt change of texture and topic, featuring a furious sequence of arpeggiated chords starting in Bb major, resolving in E major 24 measures later (Ex. 4).

⁵ This fermata first appears on measure 192, and is later repeated in a different tonality on measure 302, with the same performance indication. C.P.E. Bach also used the *tenuto* notation to emphasize harmonic changes, i.e. Fantasia Wq 58/7, Wq 59/6, Wq 61/3.



Ex. 4: Haydn's Fantasy in C major Hob.XVII: 4, mm. 73-95.

The affects created by the fantasia's exploratory and improvisatory style largely resulted from its varied and intricate writing. These affects "excites that active curiosity which gives play to the mind, loosening those iron bonds with which astonishment chains up its faculties." It creates a sequence of events "perfectly applicable to tragic-comedy" opera, which is the essence of the structure and musical language encountered in Mozart's Fantasy in C minor K. 475 (Price 1854: 98).

Mozart structures this fantasia in a succession of contrasting sections, resembling a sequence of operatic scenes, which are framed by the *Adagio* sections in C minor.⁶ Each section, or "scene," is characterized by its own tonality (tonicized key), *tempo*, and topic, as illustrated below (Ex. 5):

Section/ Scene	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Measures	1-25	26-35	36-85	86-124	125-160	161-176
Tempo	<i>Adagio</i>	<i>Adagio</i>	<i>Allegro</i>	<i>Andantino</i>	<i>Più allegro</i>	<i>Adagio</i>
Tonality	C minor	D major	E major/	Bb major	G minor	C minor

⁶ In its overall structure, the return of the *Adagio* section alludes to an exposition – recapitulation pattern. Charles Rosen suggests that what this "recapitulation" resolves is not the harmonic tensions of the opening, but the tensions set up by all different tonalities of the whole piece. [According to him,] the resolution is less like that of a sonata than of the final section of an operatic finale" (Rosen 1971: 92).

(tonicized key)	F major					
Topic	Improvisatory/ Fantasia	Galant/ Learned style	<i>Strum und Drang</i>	<i>Empfindsamer Stil</i>	<i>Strum und Drang</i>	Improvisatory/ Fantasia

Ex. 5: Mozart's Fantasy in C minor, K. 475 – Structure .

The freedom, with which Mozart treats the formal aspects of the Fantasy K. 475, emphasizes the improvisatory aspect of the fantasia style and contributed to polemic between improvisatory character and the rigid form of written music. It also raised questions about the presumed need of prior-to-performance practice. The difficulties and imperfections of musical notation encountered when transcribing their own improvisations were widely discussed among composers of the time⁷. They understood that besides their initial difficulties, the problem also applied to the performers' interpretation of written music, and understanding of its limitations. Therefore,

the most potent manifestation of the art of fantasy lies in the role given to the performer. Written-down fantasy demands complicity between creator and executant. The music must give the illusion that it has never been written, just as the performer must enact the role of the spontaneous creator. This end the composer must incorporate within the work an exaggerated theater of spontaneous gesture (Eisen 1999:48).

In the musical picturesque, these theatrical gestures deliberately fragment the musical narrative. Moreover, these elements link the fantasia to its fundamental characteristic: C.P.E.Bach's works and the influence of the *Empfindsamer Stil*. This literary movement, primarily represented by Laurence Stern and Jean Paul, developed into a style characterized by the exploration of sentiments, using fragmentary, and non-linear structures⁸. Their discontinuous texts

⁷ According to Annette Richards, a Fantasy Machine was constructed "in an attempt to preserve and make the exact transcriptions of improvisations" (Richards 2001:77).

⁸ For further reading on German literature association particularly between Laurence Sterne's writing and Haydn's music, see Mark E.Bonds' article cited below.

act as fantastic openings for the reader's imagination, as meaningful as the text into which they intrude; through hyphens, dashes and extended asterisks, the non-verbal is represented (made present) in the spaces between the words, which may be loud expression of the unsayable or silent enacts of time (Richards 2001:138).

In the fantasia style, this extension of space that interrupts the discourse is created through a particular use of rests and prolongation of silence. For example, in the Fantasy in C minor, Mozart articulates the use of silence as comic and dramatic punctuation for the six operatic scenes present in this musical narrative (see table Ex. 5).

In the transition from sections II to III Mozart interrupts a sequence of dominant chords with the recurrent presence of rests. These rests, intensifying the progression of unresolved chords, incite curiosity on the listener, and dramatize the upcoming contrast. The harmonic tension is technically resolved in section III (B7 chord- E octave), but the contrasts in register, texture, dynamic, and topic deceive this resolution as an unexpected arrival of an agitated and energetic passage (Ex. 6).



Ex. 6: Mozart's Fantasy in C minor, K. 475, mm. 33-41.

The passage between sections IV and V is very similar to the description above, Mozart uses practically the same musical gestures to create the surprising effects of this transition (Ex. 7).



Ex. 7: Mozart's Fantasy in C minor, K. 475, mm. 122-125.

When approaching the *Adagio* “scene”, so to speak, on measure 161, Mozart prepares this familiar, yet unexpected, return through the interrupting use of rests combined with the tonicization of a dominant chord. The prolongation of the rest on measure 160 incites the listeners' curiosity, emphasizing the upcoming deviation from regularity with its abrupt contrast (Ex. 8).

Ex. 8: Mozart's Fantasy in C minor, K. 475, mm. 154-162.

In this way, as Price proposes,
we may conclude, that where an object, or a set of objects, are without smoothness or grandeur, but from their intricacy, their sudden and irregular deviations, their variety of forms,

tints, and lights and shadows, are interesting to a cultivated eye, they are simply picturesque (Price 1854: 98).

The influence of the picturesque aesthetic is not limited to the examples above; or to the compositions of Haydn and Mozart.⁹ It influenced composers of the late classical era and beyond. For instance, much like Mozart's search for a theme in the opening of K. 397, Beethoven start his Fantasy op. 77 combining this element with the interrupting use of cadenza-like material and prolongation of rests (Ex. 9).¹⁰

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Beethoven's Fantasy op. 77, measures 1-4. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The first system is marked 'Allegro.' and 'Poco adagio.' The music begins with a forte (f) dynamic and a rapid, ascending scale in the right hand. The tempo and mood change to 'Poco adagio.' with a piano (p) dynamic and a more melodic, descending line in the right hand. The second system continues this 'Poco adagio' section with similar melodic and dynamic characteristics.

Ex. 9: Beethoven's Fantasy op. 77, mm. 1-4.

Like Haydn, Beethoven uses the principle of the picturesque musical disharmony (discussed above), and through a sudden change in dynamic and harmony, he interrupts the musical discourse in a surprising change of topics (Ex. 10 - compare to Haydn's writing in Ex. 4).

⁹ Mozart's and Haydn's composition in the fantasia style are not restricted to the works mentioned above. Mozart's Fantasy K.397, K.475 and Haydn's Fantasy Hob. XVII: 4 are, however, representative of the style and suitable for the present discussion.

¹⁰ The influence of the picturesque and the presence of the fantasia style is also particularly strong in Beethoven's Piano Sonatas *Quasi una Fantasia*, op. 27 nos. 1, 2 and the first section of his Choral Fantasy op. 80 for piano, choir and orchestra.



The image displays a musical score for Beethoven's Fantasy op. 77, measures 31-39. It consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows the right and left hands with various dynamics including *cresc.*, *dim.*, *pp*, and *ff*. The second system continues the piece with a prominent *f* dynamic and features complex textures with many sixteenth notes and some fingering numbers like '5' and '6'.

Ex.10: Beethoven's Fantasy op. 77, mm. 31-39.

Haydn and Beethoven, in many ways, also share the same elements presented at the conclusion of their fantasias. Both composers include one last presentation of the main theme, now in variation, preceded by a harmonically unstable passage. As a preparation for the last cadence of the piece, they mischievously lead the listeners to believe that the previous dense texture is simply dissipating and fading out (through the combination of rests and increasingly soft dynamics) to its final resolution. Instead, almost as a comic surprise, both composers emphasize the conclusion through an extreme dynamic contrast. An ultimate example of the picturesque in music (Ex. 11 and 12).

Ex. 11: Haydn's Fantasy in C major Hob.XVII: 4, mm. 442-467.

Ex. 12: Beethoven's Fantasy op. 77, mm. 239-246.

In the nineteenth century, the characteristics that link the fantasia and picturesque, such as improvisatory, engaging, and expressive writing, were particularly explored in the short piano compositions. The picturesque elements combined with the romantic-era language can be represented by the character pieces for piano (Impromptus, intermezzi, and preludes). In this way, the picturesque aesthetic may be considered one of the most important and most neglected influences in the piano compositions after the classical era.

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