

Exploring the Aesthetic of Empfindsamer Stil: A Case Study on Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Keyboard Sonata in A Major, Wq55 No.4's Second Movement

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Abstract. This paper aims to analyze Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Keyboard Sonata in A Major, Wq55 No. 4's second movement from different aspects to appreciate the charm of the Empfindsamer Stil. The analysis is from various aspects, such as harmonies, dynamics, ornamentation, and dramatic expressiveness in the sonata. In addition, this research will gain a deeper understanding of the aesthetic of this musical style and its significance in the development of Western classical music.

Keywords: Empfindsamer Stil; Aesthetic; C. P. E. Bach; Keyboard Sonata in A Major, Wq55.No.4's Second Movement; Transition; Baroque to the Classical Period.

1. Introduction:

In the mid-18th century, the composers witnessed a significant transformation in musical aesthetics. In northern Germany during the mid-18th century, a significant style of instrumental music occurred: the Empfindsamer still (sensitive style). It was essential in transitioning from the Baroque to the Classical period. This style's characteristics emphasize the expression of deep feelings and emotions in a natural fashion. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach took a significant role in this style; he was the representative composer of the Empfindsamer Stil. His keyboard sonata in A major, Wq55 No.4's second movement is an excellent example of a sensitive style. This paper will analyze explicitly the harmony, dynamics, ornamentations, and dramatic expressiveness within this piece's first movement to explore the aesthetic features of this style. Furthermore, this research will gain a comprehensive understanding of the legacy of this expressive style and investigate the importance of this style in Western classical music.

2. Background:

Carl Philipp Emanuel (1714-1788): He was an influential German composer and musician. He created time during a transition between the Baroque style and the Classical style that followed it. He was the second surviving son of Johann Sebastian Bach. To distinguish him from his brother, Johann Christian (London Bach), people called him the "Berlin Bach" during his residence in that city and later the "Hamburg Bach" when he succeeded his godfather Telemann as Kapellmeister in Hamburg. His personal composition approach was representative of the sensitive style, and he applied the principles of rhetoric and drama to musical structures. He created various genres of music, such as symphonies, concertos, chamber music, choral works, and keyboard works. He has another identity; he was an excellent pedagogue. His treatise "Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments" influenced two generations, such as Mozart and Beethoven. Moreover, this treatise is the most significant work for understanding the style and interpretation of 18th-century music. It is comprehensive on thorough bass, ornamentation, and fingering and an authentic reference to many other 18th-century performance refinements.

Piece: Keyboard Sonata in A major, Wq55 No.4: In his lifetime, C.P.E. Bach was a prolific composer of keyboard sonatas; most of his pieces were intended for his favorite instrument, the clavichord. He altogether published eight sets of six keyboard sonata from 1742 to 1779. Choosing this piece, the



piano sonata in A major, Wq55 no.4, belongs to his work "Six Clavier Sonatas for Connoisseurs and Amateurs", composed in 1765 and published in 1779. The collection of the number Wq55 includes six pieces. The A major piano sonata is the fourth work in the first volume of this series and has three movements. The tonality of this piece is A major. The fast movement of this piece exhibits the typical traits of the galant style, and the second movement is slow, demonstrating the *empfindsam* style, which uses the musical elements that make the music full of individuality and emotional intensity [1].

Introduction of the *Empfindsamer Stil*: It is an essential movement that appeared in northern German instrumental music during the mid-18th century—this style emphasizes emotion and feeling valued above all. Indeed, the features of this style are intimate, sensitive, and subjective expression, naturally expressing deep feelings and emotions. This style was a close relative of the galant style. [2] The characteristics of this style were surprising turns of harmony, chromaticism, nervous rhythms, and dramatic use of rests. The contrasts of using musical elements such as dynamics, registers, and textures, frequent use of the *appoggiatura*, frequent outbursts in the music, and speech-like melody, the music uses recitative-like and fantasia-like passages. Frequent melodic leaps occurred within the music; the phrase length was longer and asymmetrical. The representative composer of this style is the C.P.E. Bach; another prominent composer is Georg Anton Benda.

A View of the Aesthetics: The term "aesthetic" has roots in philosophy and has evolved. It traces back to the Greek word "aesthesis," its original meaning is related to people's sensibility and experience. At the same time, the concept of aesthetics emerged in the 19th century in the philosophical category, and its meaning is related to people's perceptual impressions. The research objects are the aesthetic essence of music, the value and function of music, the aesthetic problems in music creation, how to perform and appreciate music, and the development of music aesthetics. [3] In music, aesthetics is the study of the nature of beauty, taste, and expression within the art form. Music aesthetics investigates the principles that govern what is deemed pleasing, meaningful, or significant in music. This paper's principles include various aspects such as melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, rests, and structure of the phrase.

3. Historical Context:

In the mid-18th century, Europe witnessed an essential shift in creative and cultural sensibilities, distinguished by the emergence of the sensitive style. This period saw a shift away from the strict framework of the Baroque period, as artists and thinkers strove to communicate a more nuanced and emotive range in their works. The socio-cultural context of *Empfindsamer Stil* is characterized by an increasing emphasis on individualism, sensitivity, and heightened awareness of human emotions. This movement primarily reacted to the Enlightenment's rationalism, as artists attempted to communicate the intricacies of human emotion through their works.

The second movement of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Keyboard Sonata in A Major, Wq55 No.4, is an excellent example of the *Empfindsamer Stil* and captures the essence of the era. This piece incorporates emotional intensity and unpredictability, which embodies the aesthetic values of the time.

4. Rhetorical Elements:

In delving into this movement, I found that the composer employed rhetorical elements to elevate expressive communication within the musical framework. The movement, characteristic of the *Empfindsamer Stil*, is marked by a heightened emotional resonance and a deliberate exploration of affective nuances. Through a meticulous examination, one can discern the strategic use of rhetorical devices such as figures of speech, contrast of dynamics, and musical gestures, all contributing to the overall aesthetic richness of the music. In this movement, the composer's use of rhetorical techniques and devices transcends mere ornamentation, playing a critical role in establishing the second movement's narrative and emotional trajectory of the second movement. It has a value point that rhetorical pauses create tension and release, reflecting the fluctuating human expressiveness. Furthermore, carefully using melodic contour and harmonic development is a rhetorical strategy. The

incorporation of expressive ornamentation, such as appoggiaturas and trills, functions as rhetorical punctuation marks, intensifying the emotional impact of critical moments. These rhetorical tactics serve as structural features and vehicles for portraying Empfindsamer Stil's intricate emotional landscapes. In the compositional techniques part, the rhetorical elements and their aesthetic value are demonstrated in the compositional of this piece.

5. Compositional Techniques:

The composer in the second movement of the piano sonata in A major, Wq55 no.4, through expressive contrasts, skillfully handled emotional contrasts, sudden harmonic shifts, dramatic use of the rests, and abrupt dynamic changes, capturing the depth of feeling and unpredictable nature of this style. The piece is a monument to C.P.E. Bach's skill in fusing technical mastery with a deep investigation of human emotions, and it matches the artistic objectives of the period. The characteristics of the sensitive style in the second movement of this piece: the first aesthetic value of viewing is that the composer frequently uses melodic leaps. For example, analyzing the beginning phase of this piece, I found that the six intervals, octave, and fourth intervals are frequently used in the melodic voice. In this movement, the composer uses the musical elements of the leap intervals in the melodic voice part, such as fourth, sixth, octave, and compound melodic intervals. This creative approach evokes a range of emotions; this feature-sensitive style is different from other music styles like sacred music; in the Baroque period, the composer had strict rules for using intervals, rarely occurring compound intervals, and leaps in the melodic voice. In contrapuntal music, the composer uses the musical elements of the leap interval in the melodic after always using the step follow, but in the sensitive style, looking with the graph illustrates that the C.P.E. Bach used the leap in the melodic line rarely followed directly by step, this approach imbues the music with an unpredictable beauty that makes it colorful. Secondly, the point of this piece is to view this style's aesthetic value through the composer's compositional techniques of dramatic use of the rests. Analyzing this movement, the composer uses different types of rests, such as the quartet rests, eighth-note rests, sixteenth-note rests, thirty-second-note rests, and dotted sixteenth-note rests. This rest use of the place of this movement is unusual; it appears in the different voices, such as the soprano, bass, or alto, sometimes to highlight the melodic voice and sometimes to make the music gain some relation from the nervous. The composition techniques for dramatic use the rest illustrate the features of a sensitive style, which is another significant point of this style; it has aesthetic value; these creative ways make the music full of unpredictability, and it shows off the sensitivity and individual emotions in the musical works. In addition, the graph shows the contrast with the dynamics of the selecting passage from this movement. Composers use the dynamic of piano and forte, which uses the motion between piano and forte frequently and then within the contrast between forte and pianissimo, and the motion of dynamics from the piano transitions to the mezzo forte and delivers the fortissimo. The contrast of using the dynamics in the music is the features of sensitive style; it expresses the composer's intimate emotion and makes the music full of tension.

On the other hand, the other aesthetic of this style is that the composer uses the nervous rhythm. The graph of the music score demonstrates that the composer uses the quintuplet and thirteen and frequently uses the demisemiquaver, as well as the fragmentation of tense rhythm type of embellishments. This tense rhythm type and quarter notes and eighth notes cross each other between different parts and different melody lines, not only has a kind of balance and harmony of beauty but also makes the music full of interest, more in line with everyone's expectation of appreciating the beauty of sensitive style, from sacred music to music that ordinary citizens could enjoy.

Furthermore, the other point of aesthetic value within the sensitive style is that the composer creates music using the surprising turns of harmony. Analyzing the selected passage of this movement illustrates that the use of surprising turns of harmony in the music was characteristic of a sensitive style. From Table 1, gain the progression of harmony, from measure 4 to 10, C.P.E. Bach uses the harmony frequently modulation, it difference from the classical period, the progression of harmony does not obey strictly with the principles of progression of harmony within the long line, in the

classical period, the piano sonata the progression of harmony always composition in the one key stable in some measures, but in the sensitive style, harmony was modulation suddenly, from the view of aesthetics to analyze this passage of sensitive style, this creative ways of harmony makes the music has the charming, make the people full of the expectation, and the timbre full of the change of colorful temporality. It expresses the abundant emotion of the individual.



Fig 1. Music Score

Table 1. Harmonic Analysis of Measure 1-10

Measure	Tonality	Progression of Harmony
1-3	F harmonic minor	Tonic chord-Dominant chord-Tonic chord-Leading tone chord-Dominant chord-Tonic chord
4	E Major	Dominant chord-Tonic chord
5	A Major	Sixth degree chord-Dominant chord-Tonic chord
6	D Major	Dominant chord-Tonic chord
7	E harmonic minor	Dominant chord-Tonic chord
8	A Major	Dominant chord-Tonic chord-Second degree chord-Third degree chord
9	E Major	Seventh degree chord-Tonic chord-Fourth-degree chord
9	A Major	Dominant chord
10	A Major	Tonic chord-Dominant chord- Tonic chord

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, exploring Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Keyboard Sonata in A Major, Wq55 No. 4's second movement, provided valuable insights into the deep understanding of the characteristics of the Empfindsamer Stil. This paper, connecting with the social-cultural background and analyzing the composition techniques to verify the use of rhetorical elements, plays a significant role in this style to illustrate this style. Moreover, this paper explains the points of the aesthetic value of this style to appreciate. Notably, this style is full of aesthetic value and differs from the Baroque and Classical periods.

References

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Appendix:

Clavier is a French term that translates to "keyboard" in English. It is widely employed to denote keyboard instruments like the harpsichord, organ, piano, etc. C.P.E. Bach created many pieces for the clavichord, his favorite instrument. The clavichord is the earliest type of stringed keyboard instrument about which there is specific information available [4], and it was a widely used keyboard instrument in the Renaissance. The clavichord was a stringed keyboard musical instrument developed from the medieval monochord; the fretted clavichord's string produced three or four pitches by being struck in other places by metal tangents connected to the three or four corresponding keys. With time and technology development, players could control the volume from p to pppp with their fingers later. In the 18th century, although it was out of fashion, it remained a favorite in Germany.

Kapellmeister: This word originated as a German word. This word is a compound word, and it is divided into two words: Kapelle means the choir in German, and Meister is the German word for "master." This word describes the leader or conductor of a musical group such as an orchestra.

Harmony: The formation of the harmonic theory system is Jean-Philippe Rameau's achievement. He epitomized the intellectual aspirations of the Enlightenment in the 18th century. [5] He was a French composer and music theorist. His famous book "Treatise on Harmony" demonstrates the harmonic system he created, unifying the many branches of harmony before the 18th century. The new Cartesian modes of thought and analysis significantly impacted Rameau; his methodology incorporated mathematics, commentary, analysis, and didacticism explicitly intended to illuminate and scientifically reveal the structure and principles of music. He attempted to establish universal harmonic principles from natural causes using meticulous deductive reasoning.