

The Concert Paradigm in the 16th and 17th Centuries: Sound and the Audiovisual Conception of Space

The Baroque audiovisual conception of sound implies sound existence in time and space and its perception as a physical given. The Modern Age conception of sound differs from that of the Middle Ages where sound was viewed as a metaphysical given in absolute time and space. The new quality of sound can be revealed analytically from three examples. They took shape in transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque and are in fact symbols of the Modern Age music:

1. The score. 2. Basso continuo (“the thorough-bass epoch”). 3. the concert (“the epoch of concerting”).

These three are interlinked paradigmatically as facets of the single *sociocultural* process that took place in late 16th–early 17th centuries. This paper looks at how the new notation, the new music playing practices and the concert born as a genre and a social institution reflected the changed worldview and told on the spatial image of sound.



Figure 1. Lorenzo Costa. *A Concert*. 1485–1495. National Gallery, London

In the middle of the 16th century Diego Ortiz taught in his *Trattado de Glosas* (1553) how a four-part madrigal should be performed on the harpsichord and the violone. Here is what he wrote: “You should take a madrigal or a motet or anything else which you wish to perform and set it for the cembalo in a way this is commonly done.”¹ The practice of vocal polyphonic pieces arrangements for musical instruments in compliance with the strict style standards had been spread in Italy so widely by that time that Ortiz wrote about it matter-of-factly. To all appearances, his written statement must have been preceded by the practice that had been settling for decades. (Figure 1)

In the second half of the 16th century many types of notation were elaborated for such type of playing: following the score, alphanumeric or note tablature, *basso sequente*, bass and the upper part, *basso per l'organo*, or playing with fully noted accompaniment. But to select an optimal notation, efforts of several generations had to be made – less of composers than of performers who invented the intavolatura for their own convenience. Publishers joined in the process. Editions produced in the 1580s and 1590s (that is, already in Lasso's and Palestrina's lifetime) show that the participation of the organ in vocal music performances was so desirable that a great need became apparent for publications designed specially for such practices. The initiatives of Giacomo Vincenti in Venice and Simone Tini and Francesco Besozzi in Milan developed precisely in respect of organ basses. Publishers took part in the search for a notation adequate to reduced execution since this had a direct effect on the development of etching technology. Giacomo Vincenti was the first to issue two-line organ basses with signatures. He wrote in the editorial preface to the score of Giovanni Croce's motets (1594): “My new invention awaits you, the purpose of which is to ease the effortful and arduous path of reading the intavolatuta.² The Milanese publisher of the Venetian master Giovanni Basano's motets had the last word (1598). The *bassi per l'organo* part was set in his print shop in one line only. But such notation had been already used in the mid-16th century manuscripts. For instance, it can be found in Diego Ortiz's publication of 1553: “<...> I here propose six ricercares for the following simple melody which where it is written for the bass should be played by the cembalo and accompanied by consonances and some counterpoint.”³

What meanings did the scores carry, which had been brought to life by, among other things, the organist's need to see in front of him and keep in hand – authoritatively, individually – the whole fabric and harmony of the vocal piece he accompanied? In other words, what was the organist playing and how was it notated?

¹ See Ortiz D. *Trattado de glosas sobre clausulas y otros generos de puntos en la Musica de Violones*. Roma, 1553. / Übertr. von M. Schneider. ³ Kassel u.a. 1961. S. 68.

² Cited from Barsova I. *Ocherki po istorii partiturnoi notatsii (XVI vek–perвая polovina XVIII veka)*. M., 1995. P. 159.

³ Ortiz D. *Trattado...* Op. cit. S. 55.

To answer this question we should point out two peculiarities characteristic of the 16th-century performing practice:

1. A work is performed not as it has been composed.

2. It is enough to write it differently to make it appear as a composition of the Modern Age. It becomes new both in its spirit and in its ideology.

We shall term these two cornerstone cultural phenomena as “postcomposition” and “transnotation”.

The term “postcomposition” is introduced here to define free arrangement of a borrowed text. A postcomposition of the 16th century is an outcome of cantus-type creativity inherent in medieval and Renaissance cultures. A new text is formed as a commentary to a pre-existing text, to a cantus, as its elaboration, its interpretation (composition using a *cantus firmus*, the parody method, and other techniques). The *Trattado* by Ortiz reflects this practice. Ortiz demonstrates it by the example of his improvisation to Jacobus Arcadelt’s madrigal *O felici occhi miei*. He teaches how a new opus can be created using a four-part madrigal by playing it on the harpsichord and entrusting the violone or viol player with the coloration of one of the parts (or with the creation of a fifth part). (Figures 2 and 3)

The Renaissance postcomposition can be juxtaposed with the contemporary postmodern strategy of evolving a free discourse above any cultural “cantus”, be it a madrigal of a Dutch master, a Chekhov’s play, or a classical opera staged on modern lines (say, by Dmitry Chernyakov or Robert Wilson) This method is used rather widely and diversely in modern postcomposition for the creation of new opuses.

The same situation formed in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and it gives rise to questions which are topical for our days too. Here is one of the questions. Let us define it as the problem of relationship between the cantus method and authorship: How did the late Renaissance postcomposition contribute to the establishment of the category of author?

Free arrangement originated in the performer’s medium and therefore did not express author’s ambitions. But it claimed to the status of *a new text*. What sound effect were the composers striving for? What new conception of sound had been laid there? In order to understand it, let us try to observe the changes taking place in the process of music making.

Vocal polyphony played by the lute, organ or harpsichord can be likened to the transition from manual work to technological production. The alienation from the material, the loss of tactile links with its nature takes place in it. As a result of the monotimbral sounding of the linear sound mass its verticalization occurs and, consequently, intonational alienation from the vocal nature of the fabric, the loss of linear tension and of the melodic, vocal, singing foundation.

The manual “making” of the counterpoint – knowledge, skill, and experience – are combined with the keen hearing of the coordination of separate parts in the single flow of the cantilena (Zarlino). Reduction is an analytical operation uncovering the structure of the whole. Polyphonic hearing is ousted by another mode of hearing germinated by the new technology, namely, by the rhythmic presentation of vertical consonances. The *basso continuo* is technological but neutral; it reduces the niceties and is unresponsive to details, it rationalizes the close-up picture for the sake of the whole because its function is to carry in itself the generalized harmonic meaning of the piece. The vector of evolution leads to the establishment of the rhythmic pattern: the beat-pulse measures the time. It is not accidentally that the prototype metronome was invented precisely in the Baroque era, a mechanical chronometer that expressed the Baroque image of time directed to nowhere.

Now, in what way were the extra-author’s type of creativity and the cantus-type, commenting thinking in conditions of accompaniment turning into their antipode – the author’s piece?

Both the score and the intavolatura are new types of notation: the parts are placed one under another and, what is most important, are separated into bars. It is known that prior to the Baroque era the score was



Figure 2. Michelangelo de Cavaraggio. *The Lute Player* (c. 1595). The Hermitage, St. Petersburg



Figure 3. Michelangelo de Cavaraggio. *The Musicians* (1595). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

a composer's pattern, a draft. When the composition was completed it was disposed of and the finished piece was divided into separate parts – partbooks for singers. Each singer was an element not knowing the whole. The consolidated score with the general division into bars becomes not simply the carrier of the text but the text itself. The score turns into the book.

In essence, the score unfolds as a picture of the universe seen from a single point of observation, in the focus of the individual. It expresses the unity of time and space: the abscissa is the vertical; the ordinate, the time axis passing from left to right, is the horizontal.

This is a map of being. The WHOLE MUSIC opens to the eye of *one* man for the first time – that which has not been accessible to anyone before, namely, the musical composition in its entirety. Time is observed all at once: the past, the present and the future. Space unfolds from bottom to top, from the bowels to the skies. From the basses to the upper voices (the bass is the land and the soprano is the sky and the air).⁴ The being so created and such picture of being could be called forth only by the *individual mind* of the one living in the Modern Age, the one who identified oneself as creator.

The medieval counterpoint that we have likened to fine manual work gives place to the “highly technological” chordal technique. The parts are composed not separately but all together as multivoiced monoliths-verticals. The solo voice, the melody, is emphasized against their background as individuality, as the author's representative, as the carrier of new musical expression and new meaning – the reflection of the world by the individual mind.

Hence the ensuing effect of accompanied singing (playing) is dimensional sounding where a new dimension emerges – the depth, the background against which the foreground is accentuated. This transition has taken place owing to *basso continuo*.

Basso continuo (the accompaniment as well as the new type of composition – a melody with a chordal accompaniment) singles the soloist out of the other numerous voices, brings it to the proscenium, so to say, shifting the accompanying voices to the depth of the stage. In this way, in “a composition in the concertato style with *basso continuo*” (Heinrich Schütz, 1648), an illusion of space is created: an utterance and the echo, “nearer” and “farther”. But what does it mean? First, new spatial categories characterizing Baroque mentality (let us also recall the echo effects: loudly – softly, which express “here and there”). Second, a question arises: “nearer” or “farther” relative to whom?

And here one more new category transpires – the subject who is physically present at music making but perceives it from outside the music. This is an individual or collective listener, the public, the audience, the opera house. The real and intramusical space formatted in a new way is oriented to it: its presence is accounted for by the music itself. The new spatial concept of music – the illusory and real three-dimensionality – is meant

for both audio and visual perception. This is also kind of director's and sound man's strategy designed to meet the new social order, the new situation of music existence as an object of collective aesthetic experience. The proscenium and the depth of the stage are located relative to the view from the audience. The appeal to the audience makes for a situation of concert. Or, probably, even for a situation of concert likened to the theatre.

The phenomenon of *basso continuo* accompaniment is akin to the effect of direct perspective, a system of spatial vision focussed from the point of view of the individual, that is, from outside the canvas. Such functional division of space into the proscenium and the depth of the stage can be found in the Italian pictorial art of the late 16th and early 17th centuries, in Caravaggio's paintings in the first place. The idea of light and shade contrasting peculiar to his innovative style is aimed at the same *soloist-vs-background* effect. He places his main characters in the foreground and illuminates them with strong light while the rest of the canvas is shaded and merges into a common background space. (Figure 4)

The idea of concert in music signifies the same, what is heard and seen from the audience: the soloists at the proscenium and the accompaniment in the depth. This idea not simply divided the musi-



Figure 4. Michelangelo de Cavaraggio. *The Flagellation of Christ* (c. 1607). Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples

⁴ The overtone view differs from the medieval view where space grows up and down from the central axis – tenor the “pantokrator”.

cians spatially and functionally into *solī-concertati* and the accompanying group; it also erected an insurmountable wall, even though invisible, between the performers and the public, placing the object of perception in the frontal position before the subject of perception. (Figure 5)

The word *concerto* had several meanings in the Baroque era: (1) performing a solo against the background of *basso continuo* – that with which the concertato style is associated; (2) playing together, often with a competitive intrigue, although not necessarily; (3) a contest; (4) a new genre involving the *basso continuo* accompaniment (Viadana); (5) an act of performance before the public; (6) a situation of art consumption; (7) an event in social and cultural life.

It should be noted that all these meanings rise to the first one – “performing a solo against a background”, its being the cornerstone of the whole cultural paradigm of the Modern Age opened up by the Baroque era. It is not accidentally characterized as “the epoch of concertizing” and “the epoch of *basso continuo*” (Hugo Riemann). (Figure 6)

We have seen that the paradigm of concert was just germinating at the stage of postcomposition, but already in early Baroque it determined the structure of composition. The separation into performer and listener complemented the “author – opus” linkage. Now it grew in length: author – opus (score) – performer – listener. All the categories were new.

The *basso continuo* accompaniment was desirable to the musical practice and formed there. Its role in the propagation of music among amateurs has not been appreciated equal to its merit thus far. Meanwhile, it contributed essentially to the creation of a new situation in the perception of music. The amateurs made up the environment where the connoisseur listener, the core of the concert-going public, came into being.

After a short training any amateur music lover was capable of performing a canzonetta to his own accompaniment (Figure 2). He experienced double enjoyment from it: making music with an accompaniment and “appearing”, that is, introducing himself framed in harmony, playing a king surrounded by his retinue. Seeing himself as an object of art before the imagined listeners and viewers: I’m an aria, I’m a concert, I’m a soloist! The Baroque was an era of personal self-identification through, among other things, aesthetic self-experience. This era formed the public – connoisseurs, musical dilettanti, and simply music lovers. Personal, individual consciousness came through dimensional hearing and seeing of the virtual world and identification of oneself with the soloist-hero and the maestro-demiurge. In this way, modest applied music-making rising to postcomposition and then to composition opened the way to the embodiment of the sound ideal of the Modern Age, the major symbols of which are the score, *basso continuo* and the concert.



Figure 5. Dirck Hals. *Musicale* (1623).
The Hermitage, St. Petersburg (Домашний концерт)



Figure 6. Jan Vermeer. *The Concert* (1665–66).
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston



Figure 7. Jan Miense Molenaer. *Family Making Music*.
Netherlands, 1630

Santrauka

XVI–XVII amžių koncertinė paradigma: garsas ir audiovizualinė erdvės koncepcija

Baroko epochos audiovizualinė garso koncepcija – tai suvokti garsą kaip fizinę realybę, taip pat tai, kad jis egzistuoja ir laike, ir erdvėje. Tuo naujųjų laikų garso koncepcija ir skiriasi nuo viduramžių koncepcijos, kuri garsą laikė metafiziniu dalyku erdvės ir laiko absoliutume. Naują garso kokybę galima analitiškai atskleisti kaip pavyzdį pasitelkus tris kaip tik Renesanso ir baroko sandūroje susiformavusius dalykus, kurie iš esmės ir laikytini naujųjų laikų muzikos simboliais. Tai:

1. Partitūra.
2. *Basso continuo* („generalboso epocha“).
3. Koncertas („koncertavimo epocha“).

Visi trys tarpusavyje susiję paradigmiskai – pasaulėžiūrinio, materialiuoju ir meniniu aspektu kaip skirtingos bendro *sociokultūrinio* proceso briaunos XVI–XVII amžių sandūroje. Kaip naujoji notacija, naujoji muzikavimo praktika ir koncerto – žanro ir socialinės institucijos – gimimas atspindėjo pasaulėžiūros pokytį ir kaip visa tai paveikė garso erdvinį pavidalą – štai apie tai ir kalbama straipsnyje.

PARTITŪRA. Kokia prasmė slypėjo partitūroje (ir tabulatūroje – klavyriui), prie kurios atsiradimo, be kita ko, prisidėjo vargonininko (klavesinininko, liutnininko) poreikis turėti prieš akis ir pajungti savo valiai – autoritariškai, individualistiškai – visą kūrinių harmoniją, kūrinių, kurio giedojimui ar grojimui jis vadovauja? Partitūra – tai tarsi pasaulio sukūrimo paveikslas. Ji išreiškia laiko ir erdvės vienovę: abscisė – vertikale ir ordinatė (laiko ašis iš kairės į dešinę) – horizontalė. Tai būties žemėlapis. Vieno žmogaus žvilgsniu aprėpiama tai, kas anksčiau buvo niekam nepasiekiamo, būtent – kūrinys kaip visuma. Taip pat tai kuriamojo būties planas – braižomoji lenta, drobė ant molberto, ekranas, monitorius, kuriame vienu metu matyti visa erdvė ir laikas. Erdvė skleidžiasi iš apačios į viršų, iš gelmių į debesis. Laikas suskirstytas į vienodus atkarpas, taktus, jis pulsuoja proporcingai skirtingais matavimo vienetais, jis objektyvus, ne psichologiškai, bet dinamiškai. Toks būties paveikslas gali būti suvokiamas tik subjektui, turinčiam individualią, autorinę sąmonę, subjektui, kuris save identifikuoja kaip kūrėją.

BASSO CONTINUO. *Basso continuo* charakterizuoja naują baroko kompozicijos tipą – melodiją su instrumentiniu akordiniu pritarimu. Jis pagrindinį solisto balsą išskiria iš kitų balsų. Pageidaujamas dainavimo ar grojimo su akompanimentu efektas – platus skambėjimas, kuriame atsiranda nauji matmenys: gylis, fonas, priekinis planas ir tolimas planas. Nauja kompozicija su *basso continuo* buvo pavadinta „concerto“ (Viadano), o stilius – „concertato“ (Monteverdi). Solo ir fono atskyrimas bei jų tarpusavio sąveika sukuria *erdvės iliuziją*. Su tuo susijusios naujos erdvinės barokinio mąstymo kategorijos: „arčiau – toliau“, aidų efektai, *garsiai – tyliai*, išreiškiančios *cia* ir *ten*. Kilo klausimas: kieno atžvilgiu „arčiau“ ir „toliau“? Štai tada atsirado dar viena nauja kategorija – suvokiantysis subjektas, kuris *fiziškai* dalyvauja muzikavime, tačiau *jo klausosi ir jį stebi iš šalies*. Į jį orientuota naujai suformatuota realioji ir vidinė muzikinė erdvė: į jo dalyvavimą *atsižvelgta* pačioje muzikinėje kompozicijoje. Nauja erdvinė muzikos koncepcija, iliuzinis ir realusis trimatiškumas skirtas ir garsiniam, ir vaizdiniam suvokimui. Tai dar ir tam tikra režisūrinė bei garso režisierių strategija, numatyta naujam socialiniam užsakymui – naujai atsiradusiai situacijai, kai į muziką imta žiūrėti kaip į kolektyvinių estetinių jausmų objektą. Avanscena ir scenos giluma įrengiamos atsižvelgiant į matomumą iš salės. Pastangos siekti salės pritarimo – tai jau koncerto situacija, galbūt netgi koncerto kaip teatro situacija.

KONCERTAS. Baroko epochoje žodis „concerto“ buvo naujas ir turėjo keletą reikšmių. Pagrindinė – solinis atlikimas su *basso continuo* akompanimentu; tai, su kuo buvo siejamas „koncertinis stilius“. Ir štai buvo baroko epochos atvertų naujųjų laikų kultūrinės paradigmos kertinis akmuo. Neatsitiktinai ši epocha buvo vadinama „koncertavimo epocha“ ir „generalboso epocha“.

Barokas – tai savo tapatumo nustatymo epocha, beje, kaip vienas iš būdų pasitelkiamas ir *paties* estetiškas įsijautimas. Šita epocha suformavo vertintojų, muzikuojančių diletantų, tiesiog melomanų publiką. Asmeninis, individualus supratimas buvo ugdomas pasitelkus virtualaus pasaulio erdvinį klausymą ir matymą ir tapatinant save su solisto herojumi ir Maestro kūrėju. Tokiu būdu iš taikomojo muzikavimo atsivėrė kelias kardinaliam moderno epochos, naujųjų laikų epochos sociokultūriniam projektui įgyvendinti.

Renesanso ir baroko laikų paveikslai, vaizduojantys muzikuojančiuosius, atskleidžia, *kas ir kaip* atliekama bei kaip keičiasi erdvinė muzikantų dispozicija.