

## On the Instrumentation of the Melody Line in Alessandro Rolla's Symphonies D4 and e1 (1803–1811)

### Annotation

The aim of this paper is to look at the design of the melody line and in particular the usage of the violin parts (first and second violins) in Rolla's symphonies D4 and e1 (1803–1811) from a music-analytical perspective. The following aspects are presented in details: octave doublings of the melody line within a movement, as well as the participation of the low strings in the performance of the melody and the relationship (also, in the performance of the melody) between the first and the second violins firstly and secondly between the violins and the woodwinds. The one-movement symphonies e1 and D4 are of high art with respect to the instrumentation and were unfortunately largely ignored until now by artists and researchers. The aim of this paper is also to draw the attention of the music world on these long-neglected instrumentation jewels.

**Keywords:** Alessandro Rolla, symphony, tone-colour analysis, instrumentation, melody line, statistics.

Alessandro Rolla's artistic accomplishments are remarkable. Near the end of the 18th century he was considered to be one of the greatest violist in Europe, around 1795 he was Pagannini's teacher and since 1792 he was also the conductor of the royal court orchestra in Parma. As a conductor, Rolla sustainably shaped the musical life of northern Italy. Many symphonies by Beethoven and Haydn were played in Milan under his leadership; he conducted at La Scala many operas by Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti and also conducted the premier of Bellini's *Norma*.

Rolla's compositional accomplishments are also of great importance. Through his compositions he helped in making the viola, up until then little used as a solo instrument, into one equally appreciated one as the violin (Tumat, p. 295). He also composed eleven ballets and many chamber music works with different instrumentations. His symphonic oeuvre includes twelve symphonies, most of which are not edited until today.

Even though Rolla's accomplishments both as a conductor and as a composer are very significant, there are almost no music-analytical papers about his work (except: Inzaghi 1982 and Inzaghi 1984). There are in fact no music-analytical studies of his symphonies.

The aim of this paper is to look at the design of the melody line and in particular the usage of the violin parts (first and second violins) in Rolla's symphonies D4 and e1 (1803–1811) from a music-analytical perspective. The following aspects are presented in details: octave doublings of the melody line within a movement, as well as the participation of the low strings in the performance of the melody and the relationship (also, in the performance of the melody) between the first and the second violins firstly and secondly between the violins and the woodwinds.

Rolla's twelve symphonies can be sorted into four categories, according to dating:

Before 1800:

D3 (strings, 2 cor, 2 ob)

D5 (strings, 2 cor, fag, 2 ob, 2 fl)

1803–1811:

D4 (strings with 2 vla parts, 2 cor, 2 fag, 2 cl, 2 fl)

e1 (strings with 2 vla parts, 2 cor, 2 fag, 2 ob, 2 fl)

Around 1805:

C1 (strings, 2 cor, fag, 2 cl, 2 fl)

D1 (strings, 2 cor, fag, 2 cl, 2 ob, 2 fl)

D2 (strings, 2 cor, 2 fag, 2 ob, 2 fl)

Possibly after 1816:

Bb1 (strings with 2 vla parts, 2 cor, 2 cl, 2 fl)

Bb2 (strings, 2 cor, 2 fag, 2 ob, 2 fl)

Date unknown:

D6 (strings, 2 cor, 2 fag, 2 ob, 2 fl)

D0 (at least 2 vl)

Bb0 (strings)

Symphonies D4 and e1 are the only ones, which were edited in the second half of the 20th century (Longyear, p. 1–33) and only have one movement. Both have a nearly identical instrumentation: strings with split viola voices, two horns, bassoons and flutes. D4 also has two clarinets in C, while symphony e1 has two oboes instead of two clarinets.

The musical form of the two symphonies is (Ex. 1):

Symphony	Tempo indication	Formal section	Measure
e1	adagio	introduction	1–14
		exposition	15–111
		first subject	15–34
		transition	35–57
		second subject	58–84
		closing section	85–111
		recapitulation	112–220
		first subject	112–140
		second subject	141–167
		closing section	168–220
D4	larghetto allegro	introduction	1–9
		exposition	10–148
		first subject	10–29
		transition	30–43
		second subject	44–97
		closing section	98–148
		recapitulation	149–305
		first subject	149–162
		transition	163–176
		second subject	177–238
closing section	238–305		

Example 1. Musical form of A. Rolla's symphonies e1 and D1 (overview)

Both symphonies have a very similar form. They have no development, both have a slow introduction, the closing section is not proportionally long and the formal parts before the second subject last for a relatively short time.

Although both works have a very similar music form, they are completely different according to the tone-colour design of the melody line. In order to obtain tangible research results on the instrumentation of the melody line for the entire symphony, it would be of fundamental importance to consider all tone-colour constellations of the melody line from an overarching perspective.

The tone-colours of a melody change within a symphonic movement several times. This results in a huge amount of data, which describes the course of the instrumentation, which in turn makes the overview of such processes extremely difficult. It is, therefore, necessary to develop a system that illustrates the course of such tone-colour processes. Two different approaches were developed for this tone-colour analysis:

- Illustration of the tone-colour constellations in a tabular form;
- Description of the constellations through symbols.

The abstraction of the sound dispositions in a tabular form has, on the one hand, the advantage (in terms of the large-scale form) that they clearly display timbral processes on the one side. Such tables can provide information about long-term trends of the instrumentation of the melody line that would otherwise remain hidden because of the big size of a symphony movement (Beran, 2004).

The description of the tone-colour combinations of the melody line with symbols has, on the other hand, the advantage that one can compress all the tone-colour data of a symphony on only a few lines. However, the review of these processes becomes much more difficult as the data compression increases.

In order to achieve just that it is necessary to develop a system, which compresses as many tone-colour constellations in a clearer way on one side with tables. As a result, long-term tendencies are visible, something which would not be possible through the many different changes of instrumentation from beginning to the end of a movement.

The first row of such a table gives an orientation about the form disposition of the movement. Different colours and symbols are introduced for the representation of the different places where the melody is doubled in octaves. The colour gray signifies the “octaving” of a melody and the symbol “X” signifies that a melody is played two octaves higher. The colours give no information about the position, but describe the final relation that two melodies have.

The second row of every table describes the number of bars of the respective motifs, where an “octaving” and/or duplication take place, and the last describes the interval where a melody is not in unison octaves. The instruments are listed from bottom to top according to the arrangement of a modern score. The tabular representation of the various manifestations of a motif allows us to gain insight into the tone-colour characteristics of this motif, which would otherwise have remained hidden only from reading the orchestral score.

In order to describe the system in practice, the melody line of bars 39–56 of Symphony e1 is exemplified. In Example 2a the instruments which play the melody are noted with a colour (black, gray: an octave higher, symbol “X”: two octaves higher)<sup>1</sup>. Example 2b shows the tone-colour constellations in a tabular form. The first violin, as expected, plays the most important role (four constellations). The remaining three, however, are completely different from each other (one melody in octaves, another in thirds and the third in two octaves). Due to the tabular representation of the tone-colour constellations, it is now easier to expand the tone-colour space and to pursue the development of the melody line.

The image shows a musical score for Example 2a, covering bars 39 to 56 of Symphony e1. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with staves for Fl. 1-2, Ob. 1-2, Fag., Hn. 1-2, Tp. 1-2, Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., and Bass. The score is annotated with gray shading and 'X' symbols to indicate octaving and two-octave doubling. A circular graphic of a violin is in the bottom right corner.

\*M. 41, ob I: Erroneously C in part. \*\*M. 41, vl I: Ornament erroneously written on C.

Example 2a. Rolla, Symphony e1: Bars 39–56 (Longyear, p. 25)

<sup>1</sup> Measure 39–42: Vln. 1 / measure 43–45: Vla, Octave higher: Vln. 1 with Ob. 1 and Fl 1 / measure 46–49: Vln. 1 / measure 50–52: Violins in thirds doubled by oboes and flutes also in thirds / measure 52–53: Vln. 1 / measure 53–54: Bass with Vla and Fag in unison, octave higher: Violins and Ob. 2, two octaves higher: Ob. 1 and Flutes / measure 54–56: Vln. 1.

Bar	39	43	46	50	52	53	54
Fl.1		■		■		X	
Fl.2				■		X	
Ob.1		■		■		X	
Ob.2				■		■	
Fag.						■	
Vln.1	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Vln.2		■		■		■	
Vla.						■	
Bass						■	
Interval				3rd			

Example 2b. The tone-colour constellations of the melody line of Example 2a in a tabular form

Example 3 lists all tone-colour constellations of the melody line of Rolla's Symphony e1. The following results are clear after examining Ex. 3:

1. The instrumentation of the melody line is changed a total of 45 times within 215 bars.
2. In the vast majority (40 times), the violin is used for this change.
3. In the constellations with one instrument (17 in total)<sup>2</sup> the violin again plays the most important role.
4. In the constellations with two instruments (8 in total) the combination of the first violin with the first flute playing one octave higher appears six times.
5. Up until Bar 28, the instrumentation changes ten times. All these ten constellations are different. This means that Rolla tries to avoid tone-colour repetitions from the beginning until the transition of the development. The tone-colour of the melody line remains until this point extremely varied.
6. From the 45 constellations, only 17 are repeated during the entire symphony. This shows how varied Symphony e1 by Rolla is with respect to the tone-colours.
7. The melodies in unison with or without octaving (34) are three times more than the melodies in thirds, sixths and tenths (11). From these 11 constellations however, only one show tone-colour repetition (measure 50 correlates with measure 215).
8. The second theme (measure 58, 59, 141, 152 and 168) appears five times in total, always with a different instrumentation.
9. The brass instruments do not participate in the melody line design; on the contrary, the bassoon does so very often.
10. The second violins never double the first ones when the two instrument groups play the melody alone.
11. The lower strings (Vla. and bass) are used relatively often.

Rolla tries through different instrumentations to create a sound, which is as varied as possible. Some of his strategies are:

- Relatively often instrumentation changes (point 1)
- Avoiding tone-colour repetitions (points 5 to 8)
- Different instrumentations of the second theme (point 8)
- On the other hand, he tries to gain the attention of the listener through specific combinations which are constantly repeated (points 2 to 4)

<sup>2</sup> Measures 5, 15, 31, 46, 52, 54, 65, 79, 95, 119, 135, 137, 147, 158, 174, 193 and 194. The tone-colour constellations are obviously not only one bar long; here we only list the first bar.

e1	Introduction						Exposition (1st subject and transition)										
Bar	1	5	9	10	11	13	15	21	22	28	31	43	46	50	52	53	54
Fl.1	X	■		■				■		■		■			■		X
Fl.2	X		■			■								■			X
Ob.1	X		X		X		■		■	■		■			■		X
Ob.2	■			■	■	■								■			■
Fag.	■				■									■			■
Vln.1	■			■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■
Vln.2	■		■			■						■		■			■
Vla.	■																■
Bass	■																■
Inter.			3rd			3rd								3rd			

e1	Exposition (2nd subject and closing section)						Recapitulation (1st subject)										
Bar	58	65	68	75	79	81	85	91	95	112	119	133	135	136	137	140	141
Fl.1	■		X	■		■	X	■		■		■				■	■
Fl.2													■				■
Ob.1							■						■		X		
Ob.2												■			X		
Fag.			■				■								■		
Vln.1	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Vln.2								■				■			X		■
Vla.															■		
Bass														■			
Inter.							3rd										3rd

e1	Recapitulation (2nd subject and closing section)										
Bar	142	147	152	153	158	168	174	193	194	214	215
Fl.1	■									■	■
Fl.2							X			■	■
Ob.1								■		■	■
Ob.2						■				■	■
Fag.			■		■	■					
Vln.1	■	■	X		X	■		■		■	■
Vln.2				■			■				■
Vla.			■			■					
Bass						■					
Inter.			6th							3rd	3rd

Example 3. Rolla, Symphony e1: complete tone-colour constellations of the melody line

D4	Introduction								Exp. (1st subject)				
bar	1	1	2	3	4	5	5	6	11-23 / 151-171				
Fl.1	■		■			■		■				X	
Fl.2			■	■			■	■				X	
Clar.1		■	■		■		■					X	
Clar.2	■	■		■		■						X	
Fag.												■	
Vln.1	■				■	■		■	■	■		X	■
Vln.2		■	■		■				■		■	X	
Vla.												■	
Bass												■	
Inter.	3rd	3rd	3rd			3rd	6th			6th			

D4	Exposition (transition-closing section)												
bar	37	41	44	46	47	49	51	53	55	57	76	98	124
Fl.1			■	■		■						■	
Fl.2		■											
Clar.1			■		■		■	■		■			
Clar.2							■		■				
Fag.						■		■		■			
Vln.1	X		■								■	■	
Vln.2		■											
Vla.	■	■											
Bass													
Inter.	3rd	6th					3rd		3rd				

D4	Recapitulation												
bar	181	182	184	186	188	190	207	241	247	249	257	274-276	300
Fl.1				■		■						■	
Fl.2					■						■		
Clar.1		■	■			■						■	
Clar.2	■										■		
Fag.							■						■
Vln.1							■	■		■	■	■	■
Vln.2								■	■	■	■	■	■
Vla.			■	■				■	■	■	■	■	■
Bass									■	■	■	■	■
Inter.	6th		3rd		3rd			3rd	3rd	6th	3rd		

Example 4. Rolla, Symphony D4: complete tone-colour constellations of the melody line

Example 4 lists all tone-colour constellations of the melody line of Rolla's Symphony D4. The following is found:

1. The instrumentation of the melody line is changed a total of 39 times within 300 bars.
2. Contrary to Symphony e1 there are less octavings in the melody (colour gray does not dominate).
3. The colour gray dominates in the beginning of the symphony (measures 1–37); almost no melodies in octaves can be heard between bars 41 and 241 (colour gray completely disappears) and in the remaining bars constellations in two octaves appear again. This arrangement (measures 1–37 / 42–241 / 247–300) does not match the overall form of the symphony. Thus, the musical form has almost no influence on the melody line's tone-colours of this symphony.
4. There is only one melody in two octaves (symbol "X").
5. In contrast to Symphony e1 the first violins do not dominate in the execution of the melody line. Out of the 39 constellations, the first violin pauses in 17 of them. There is even a relatively long section (measures 41–76), where the first violins pause completely, which was not the case with Symphony e1.
6. Similar to Symphony e1, the constellations with thirds, sixths and tenths are here the minority (16 out of 39). Rolla tries again to get the maximum out of his instruments in order to create a sound, which is as varied as possible. Out of these 16 constellations, 13 are different (only bar 1 correlates with bars 51 and 181 and bar 2 with bar 188).
7. As in Symphony e1, the brass instruments do not participate in the design of the melody line; the bassoon again does so very often.
8. The same is true for the lower strings.

Rolla tries in a similar way to create in both symphonies varied sounds. Although the focus of his compositional works is on the violin and the viola and although he is mostly famous for his viola concertos, the tabular representation of the two symphonies shows a completely different picture.

The woodwinds and low strings participate quite often in the design of the melody line. These constellations are moreover usually different from each other. For the construction of such processes (avoidance of tone-colour constellations in the course of the whole movement, different instrumentation of a recurring motif, etc.), the composer requires not only an extraordinary feeling for tone-colours, but also excellent artisanship and knowledge in the field of instrumentation.

In the compositional works of Rolla, characterized with respect to the design of the melody line, there appears to be a tendency for tone-colour variety even there where the instrumentation is limited. He tries in a refined manner to get the maximum out of the limited instrumentation. The one-movement symphonies e1 and D4 are of high art with respect to the instrumentation and were unfortunately largely ignored until now by artists and researchers. The aim of this paper is also to draw the attention of the music world on these long-neglected instrumentation jewels.

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## Apie melodinių linijų instrumentuotę Alessandro Rolla simfonijose D4 ir E1 (1803–1811)

### Santrauka

Nors Alessandro Rolla (1773–1840) pasiekimai tiek dirigavimo, tiek kompozicijos srityse itin reikšmingi, beveik nerasime jo kūrybai skirtų analitinių tekstų. Jo simfonijos iki šiol nesulaukė deramo muzikos tyrinėtojų ir teoretikų dėmesio.

Šio tyrimo objektas – melodinių linijų formavimas ir, konkrečiai, smuiko (I ir II smuikų) partijų bruožai A. Rolla simfonijose D-dur, D4, ir e-moll, E1 (1803–1811). Smulkiau aptariami šie melodinių linijų formavimo aspektai: oktavinis melodinės linijos dubliavimas, žemesniojo registro styginių instrumentų dalyvavimas atliekant melodiją ir santykis tarp pirmų ir antrų smuikų bei smuikų grupės ir medinių pučiamųjų grupės instrumentų (atliekant melodiją).

Nors A. Rolla kūrinuose dėmesį pirmiausia patraukia smuikų ir altų partijos, o pats kompozitorius geriausiai žinomas kaip koncertų altui autorius, patyrinęs šių dviejų simfonijų melodinių linijų instrumentuotę ir garso spalvą paaiškėjo, kad tikrasis vaizdas yra visiškai kitoks.

Kompozitorius dažnai pasitelkia medinius pučiamuosius ir žemo registro styginius, norėdamas suteikti sodresnę atspalvį melodinėms linijoms. Tačiau kaskart šių tembrų deriniai pasirodo šiek tiek skirtingu pavidalu. Kad kompozitoriui kiltų idėja plėtoti tokius procesus (t. y. vengti pasikartojančių tembrinių derinių toje pačioje kūrinyje, pasirinkti kaskart skirtingą instrumentuotę pasikartojantiems motyvams ir pan.), jis turi pasižymėti ne tik išskirtine tembrine pajauta, bet ir instrumentuotės išmanymu bei aukščiausio lygio meistryste.

A. Rolla kūrinuose, straipsnyje analizuojamuose melodinių linijų formavimo aspektu, tembrinė įvairovė pasireiškia netgi tais atvejais, kai instrumentuotės galimybės labai ribotos. Kompozitorius nuolat mėgina rafinuotais būdais išgauti maksimalų efektą iš negausaus priemonių arsenalo. Instrumentuotės požiūriu A. Rolla vienadalės simfonijos E1 ir D4 vertintinos kaip aukštojo meno pavyzdžiai, tad juolab apmaudu, jog kompozitoriaus palikimas iki šiol liko beveik nepastebėtas nei atlikėjų, nei tyrinėtojų. Atkreipti muzikos pasaulio dėmesį į šiuos ilgą laiką pamirštus instrumentuotės šedevrus yra vienas svarbiausių šio tyrimo tikslų.