

Melody and Intonation

Annotation

The musicological concept of a melody, at all its capacity and self-sufficiency, is closely connected with another key concept – intonation. Analyzing intonation, we often mean only a melody, without taking into consideration other layers of the texture and by that substituting one concept for another. The analysis of the above mentioned concepts shows that self-sufficient concepts of melody and intonation are like as carriers of the semantics. In this case, the melody accents the semantic nuances important for intonation. Only in cases, when we tell about expressive one-voiced motive or the phrase (for example, in some rhetorical figures) they almost coincide.

Keywords: melody, intonation, concept, musical content, Boris Asafyev.

Introduction

The concept of melody in musicology, despite its weightiness and self-containment, is closely linked with another key concept, intonation. This link can be readily observed in the customary practice of musicians displaying the ease of transition from one to the other. When analysing intonation, we quite often actually signify just melody, not taking into account other layers of texture and by doing so we substitute one concept for another. Subsuming intonation under melody is quite characteristic of musicians who think linearly, such as vocalists and string and wind instruments musicians.

However, this convergence and substitution of concepts is observed not only in the customary practice of musicians. Scientific thought sometimes does the same. In the works of Viktor Belyy, Viktor Vanslov, Alexey Ogolevets, Vera Vassina-Grossman, Michail Karpychyev, Evgeny Nazaykinsky, Arnold Sokhor, Ninel Shakhnazarova, and partly Boris Asafyev this interpretation of intonation as a fragment of melody is present. For example, Mark Aranovsky writes: "... melody is unfolding in time and perceived as a line a sequence of united with intonational coupled tones, having the unity of the structure and content" (Арановский 1969: 37). It is relevant here to remember that Boleslav Yavorsky made a contribution of his own to the formulation of the "melodic" concept of intonation by defining intonation on the basis of the modal rhythm theory as the smallest melodic-structural unit of the sound flow representing "the juxtaposition of two sounds (or moments) of the tritone system" (Яворский 1908: 4) that differ in gravitation while intoning as "the principle of realising musical sound by means of intonation" (Яворский 1929: 23).

The above considerations already drive the inquisitive musicologist to question the boundaries of these concepts, their nature and whether it is appropriate to compare and substitute one for the other. To examine these issues, we can take as a point of departure the scientific positions currently held in studies relating to each concept.

Concepts "melody" and "intonation" in musicology

The original definitions of these concepts should be determined. Melody was the subject of a serious study in musicological literature in the works of Carl Dahlhaus, Liudmila Dyachkova, Arthur C. Edwards, Karel Janeček, Yury Kholopov, Valentina Kholopova, Dobri Khristov, Leo Mazel, Michail Papush, Hugo Riemann, Bence Szabolcsi, Yury Tiulin, Ernst Toch, and other researchers. The authors variously formulated the interpretation of melody. The spread of variants is, nevertheless, limited allowing the following generalisation after Kholopov: melody is a horizontal-linear succession of sounds that forms a whole; the dominant voice in homophonic many-voiced texture; a figurative and semantic unity (Холопов 1976: 550–557).

Intonation, too, was the subject of a number of fundamental studies (Asafyev, Vassina-Grossman, Nina Gerasimova-Persidskaya, Yaroslav Jiranék, Vyacheslav Medushevsky, Liudmila Shaymukhametova, Arnold Sochor, etc.) as well as specialised music dictionaries and references¹, including online publications and the information resources. These resources interpret intonation in various ways. Musical intonation is:

- the opening phrase of a melodic composition (Gregorian chant), sung solo;
- a fragment of melody ("rising intonation", "descending intonation", "circling intonation", "jump like intonation");
- a brief organ prelude, intended to establish the tonality of liturgical Gregorian chants as well as entry into vocal or instrumental piece of music until the middle of the 18th century like *Intrada* (in Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli's collection of intonations published in the 16th century);

¹ See Apel 1969; Kennedy, Kennedy, Rutherford-Johnson 2013; Sadie 2001; Thompson, Bohle 1975; Римап 2004; *Музыкальный словарь Гроува* 2001; Сохор 1974; Холопов 1976.

- the ability to produce musical tones, play or sing a melody, articulate and pronounce out loud;
- the universal foundation of music without which music does not exist. Asafyev considers: music is a completely intonational art, and not a sound art; “the art of intoned meaning” (Асафьев 1971: 344); “an idea to be expressed with sound becomes intonation” (Асафьев 1971: 211);
- “the meaningful development of musical communication, the materialisation ... of thinking in culture”, as Isaly Zemtsovsky maintains (Земцовский 1996: 99);
- the generalised perception of the represented world of the work. Yuly Kremlev: intonation is “the nucleus of image” (Кремлев 1976: 68). Medushevsky: “generalising intonation” (or “general intonation”) is the work’s overall intonational coverage from this point of view (Медушевский 1980: 178–194). It can be said that Tchaikovsky’s “Autumn Song” from “The Seasons” embodies a melancholic intonation, and of course terms like lyrical, tragic and other intonations of the whole work are unavoidable);
- “the unity of expressiveness-meaning existing in non-verbal sound embodiment, functioning with the participation of musical experience and non-musical associations” – this definition of intonation gives Valentina Kholopova (Холопова 2014: 131);
- the brief semantic element of music; analysts-practitioners often equate it with a motif or phrase (“lamento-intonation”, “invocatory intonation”, “interrogative intonation”);
- separated and filled with semantics interval (“the second’s intonation”, “the sixth’s intonation”, “the fourth’s intonation”).

Among the above interpretation, semantically cultural approach to intonation by Asafyev draws our attention. This outstanding scholar was not a supporter of a once-and-for-all given axiom. Polished by him, term, movement and evolution of his thoughts imprinted in quite different statements about intonation². It becomes clear that a number of interpretations of intonation starting from the numerous declarations of Asafyev and, particularly, intensively conceptualised by Russian musicology, point to the semantic origins of intonation.

Here is the picture formed from the sphere of performers:

- the correct or exact loudness of sounds and intervals, which is relevant for musicians singing or playing instruments with non-fixed loudness. Here, Nikolay Garbuzov’s interpretation of intonation as a nuance inside the zone of loudness of musical tone fits well (Гарбузов 1948);
- the ability to generate musical tones, to play or sing a melody, to articulate, to say out loud, or – according to Aranovsky – “the means of pronouncing the musical sound” (Арановский 1984: 83);
- “*the meaningful sounding*, and not a mere statement of deviation from the norm (clean or not clean presentation of sound)” according to Asafyev (Асафьев 1971: 198); in a contrary case, we can say that the performer is producing sounds and not intoning music. Thereby, the field of performance adds such interpretations of the concept that can serve as criteria for the quality of performing including the essentially semantic fullness of sound.

Proceeding from a universal semantic component of intonation in its different interpretations, it can be rightfully defined it as *the smallest image-sense element of music*. In this definition, the basic signs place intonation in the content area of music of determined dimensions: it is a *small (brief)* unit.

Now we shall try to compare the two concepts according to a series of parameters.

Comparison of melody and intonation

Facture formation. The main feature of melody is monophony and it is a matter of principle that applies to both monophony and many-voiced texture. For intonation, monophony is only a possible type, usually in monophony material. In many-voiced texture, intonation covers all the set of expressive elements according to Jaroslav Jiránek, Mazel, Sergey Skrebkov, Antonín Sychra³. As Medushevsky rightly noted, “not one of the phenomena of the analytical organisation of music (interval, mode, chord, rhythm, etc. – *L. K.*) can be equated with intonation, but each one of them becomes an aspect of intonational form...” (Медушевский 1985: 67). This statement does not exclude the possibility that any one component is able, depending on the level of its artistic value, to prevail over the others without excluding them. Melody can find itself playing this role (in a neutral background accompaniment in monophony), harmony (what can be referred to as “named” harmony) etc. Proceeding from here, derivatives such as “timbre-intonation” (Sergey Slonimsky), “harmonic intonation”

² It should be added that the interpretation in English literature of the term by Asafyev is occasionally denoted graphically as *intonazia* or *intonatsia*.

³ The special situation is formed in polyphony, where can be combined several intonations simultaneously (in development, reprise, code of multi-subject fugue, in exposition of multi-subject fugue with simultaneously demonstration of subjects).

(Kremlev), “rhythm intonation” and “intonation of dynamics and articulation” (Kholopov) and others become possible.

Sound formation. If there is a melody in the form of fixed structural and reproduced it, and only it, the intonation as a semantic unit lives in the variability of its manifold forms of sound. In contrast to the constancy of melody, intonation in the audio-integrative relation is variably. That is why Asafyev’s idea about “intonation dictionary” of a musical culture (Асафьев 1971) finds no further concrete specification. It is not possible to draw such “dictionary” because the “words” of the dictionaries have no single sound shape and are virtual.

Dimension. Melody can already be formed by a couple of sounds, declares Yury Tiulin (Тюлин 1939: 19), but it requires duration. It is in the linear flow of thought, in the divisions in time that essence of melody or “melos” is revealed (Asafyev’s “melos” refers to the linear-time flow of energy, the flowing of one sound into another. In contrast with melody, intonation is laconic, rolled, formulary, lapidary. By varying its sound form, it can cover greater time fragments (up to an entire musical composition) and thereby gain the status of “generalising” intonation (according to Medushevsky).

Structuring. From the point of view of composition, melody is characterised by its containment of cadences and its structure made of motifs, phrases, sentences and other structural units. In intonation, all of this becomes impossible, as intonation is firstly a laconic element. Its structural equivalent can be a motif, phrase or even one consonance (the opening two chords of Beethoven’s “Eroica”, the tonic triad of the high-pitched strings and woodwinds in the prelude of Wagner’s “Lohengrin”) or a single sound (first powerful tutti “F” of Beethoven’s “Egmont”, similar “B” at the beginning of Borodin’s Symphony No. 2). Secondly, the intonation of sound (from the point of view of playing) is variable, “polymorphous”: the same intonation can actually be structurally formed differently (in Tchaikovsky’s “Barcarolle” from “The Seasons”, the intonation of melancholic meditation appears in one-measure motifs in the accompaniment, then two-measure phrases in the enriched bulging melodic wave, further in four half-measure sequential-imitative motifs with the relief melody etc.).

Polymorphism (from the Greek: *polymorphous* – multiform) of intonation means not only a multi-variant form of its sound, but also the difficulty and even the impossibility for her single, formular meaning. In many structural variants, the semantic nucleus of intonation is constantly enriched with a variety of semitones and shades, which are in the game and embody its natural life in a musical composition.

Artistic expressiveness. Melody is capable of being quite expressive, for instance, in lyrical songs. Its expressive potential is conditioned on the unity of the multitude of simple means of musical expressiveness, covered by melody as a complex technique (meter, rhythm, mode, tonality, tempo, register, timbre, etc.).

The main function of intonation is to convey meaning. All its other features serve this function. High semantic concentration leads to semantic generalisation and typification – the existence in culture of typical intonation formulas (question, exclamation, lament, rhetorical figures, etc.), “migrating intonational formulas”. This concept is developed by Liudmila Shaymukhametova, who believes that “migrating intonational formula” is “the steady turn (idiom) of intonation, which is separated from the particular text and migrating from text to text, saves the invariant properties of the structure and semantics” (Шаймухаметова 1999: 15).

Different values of the expressive quality of melody and intonation in a musical composition are discovered when using inertial general forms of movement (scales, arpeggio and other passages). For melody they are disastrous (decrease the aesthetic attractiveness, meaningfulness of modal-linear relations); whereas in intonation they reveal and actualise some other specific meanings, for example the great joy and delight from perfect music playing in fast passages. Therefore, the expressive potential of melody is in principle great, but melody lacks the ambition to accumulate all expressiveness (sometimes quite hastily and tendentiously voiced in judgments of melody).

Place in the structure of musical content. Expressiveness allows including both melody and intonation in the structure of musical content. This structure like all abstraction is conventional and schematic enough, covering elements of different qualities and functions, forming a *system*. The majority of elements of musical content relate to one another in this system as levels of hierarchy: the tiniest – *tone* – unit of musical work has both physical (acoustic) and expressive characteristics. On the basis of the expressiveness of tone, *musical intonation* is born as the smallest relatively delimited and self-contained semantic element of music. The intonational process (variation and interaction between musical intonations) outlines the specific contours of *musical image*. The relationship between musical images resolves some artistic *theme (topic)*. In turn, the theme disclosing under this or that point of view crystallises the closely related artistic *idea* of the work.

This is how the following hierarchical “bunch” of elements of the content of musical composition is structured (Chart 1)⁴.

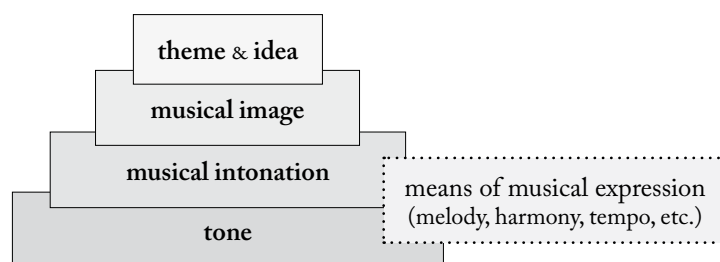


Chart 1. Structure of the musical content

In the above “coupling” of elements, “the nested doll effect” is at play where tiny elements are part of a bigger element, the bigger elements pour into an even bigger one, etc. Yet, besides the hierarchical linked elements, musical content includes other components. The intermediate place between the components of the two of the lower levels of hierarchy are occupied by *the means of musical expressiveness* or elements of music, which include melody, rhythm, meter, tempo, timbre, dynamics, mode, tonality, etc. They characterise tone on the one hand, and partly shape musical intonation on the other.

It turns out that in the structure of musical content, musical intonation solidly occupies its place as one of the main elements, while melody occupies the intermediate position between tone and intonation.

Value in a musical composition. In the spectrum of means of musical expressiveness, it is customary to give melody preference. Its priority was undeniable in the 18th–19th centuries. However, in the 20th century the situation started to change, and there was a transformation of the expressive techniques system. Rhythm, timbre, dynamics started occupying the foreground. Melody lost its former priority in the implicit “table of ranks” and conceded its leading role to other components of musical texture. Intonation is as mobile in value in context, existing in great historical periods and conceding its position in some stylistic currents of contemporary music (in long vibrating sonorous clusters, for instance).

Designation of the genre. Here melody and intonation are quite distanced. Melody is the genre that demonstrates the triumph of vocalising and an undeniable authority of total melodism in a vocal or instrumental piece (“Melodies” of Edvard Grieg, Felix Mendelssohn, Sergey Rachmaninoff, Anton Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, and other composers), whereas intonation is the opening instrumental segment of a Gregorian chant or an organ prelude to a choral piece (in Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli’s work) and as a genre denomination it existed only in early music. Thereby, we can form the following picture (Chart 2):

	Melody	Intonation
Texture formation	Monophonic line	Variable
Sound formation	Constant	Variable-integrating
Dimension	Variable: from linear two-note to structure developed in space	Small semantic unit
Structuring	Hierarchical in stages (motif-phrase-sentence-period etc.)	Uniting-generalising (interval, metro-rhythm, mode, tonality, timbre, register, dynamics etc.)
Artistic expressiveness	Important quality whose rank ranges from high to low (in general forms of movement)	Inherent quality
Place in the structure of musical content	Intermediate position between sound (tone) and intonation	One of the main elements of structure
Value in a musical composition	High in classical music, but varies in other epoch and style conditions	High in classical music, but varies in other epoch and style conditions
Designation of the genre	“Melody” is a genre of vocal and instrumental pieces	“Intonation” is a genre of prelude to Gregorian chant

Chart 2

⁴ For more details about the structure of musical content see: Казанцева 2009: 18–25.

It is clear that melody and intonation differ from one another by many parameters. They are similar in only two cases. In the first place, they are similar when establishing their value in a musical composition. Nevertheless, their existence in different contexts needs to be taken into account: melody exists in the system of means of musical expressiveness, while intonation in the system of elements of musical content.

Their similarities are more obvious in another aspect: as components of artistic expressiveness. Yet, here, too, we cannot do without some nuances of difference: melody unfolds in the energy of movement, temporary deployment, modal changes, metro-rhythmic and potentially harmonic functions, while intonation is powerful in its semantic “infinity”, leading to typified meanings, it has a tendency to generalise meaning and abstract. In melody, unity is valued, individual and unrepeatable, whereas in intonation its capacity and universality in relation to variable sounds that form it is valued.

Conclusion

Thereby, it turns out that melody and intonation are not identical, but original, self-contained phenomena, resembling one another as conveyers of the origin of meaning. Intonation “is carried out” with a sound material and the melody is one of the variants of its “materialization”. Only in cases of brief expressive monophonic structure does the melody acquire the function of intonation message and they become almost interchangeable.

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Melodija ir intonacija

Santrauka

Muzikologinėje vartosenoje melodijos sąvoka, nepaisant savo aprėpties ir tam tikro autonomiškumo, glaudžiai susijusi su kita pamatine sąvoka – intonacija. Glaudų sąryšį tarp šių sąvokų patvirtina jau vien tai, kad kalbant apie muziką jos itin lengvai kaitaliojamos. Analizuodami intonaciją, dažnai turime omenyje būtent melodiją. Tuo tarpu įprotis redukuoti intonaciją iki melodijos ypač būdingas atlikėjams, kurie įpratę muziką suvokti lineariškai, – dainininkams, stygininkams ir pūtikams. Kai kurie tyrinėtojai taip pat linksta prie šių sąvokų suartėjimo ar net sinonimiško vartojimo. Dėl šios priežasties vertėtų pamąstyti apie melodijos ir intonacijos sąvokų atskyrimą, kiekvienos iš jų ypatybių išskyrimą ir panašumo bei vienos pakeičiamumo kita legitimumą.

Minėtų sąvokų vartosenos analizė atskleidžia, kad dauguma tyrinėtojų melodiją apibrėžia pagal tokius esminius požymius kaip horizontali linijinė garsų seka, pasižyminti tam tikru išbaigtumu ir vientisumu, kaip pagrindinis balsas daugiabalsėje homofoninėje faktūroje, kaip figūratyvinio ir semantinio lygmenų vienovė. Intonacijos sąvoka interpretuojama kur kas įvairiau. Šiame straipsnyje ji traktuojama kaip mažiausias semantinis muzikos elementas, kurio svarbiausias vaidmuo yra priklausyti didesnei muzikos sferai ir turėti tam tikrą semantinę apimtį (smulkus vienetą).

Abi sąvokas palyginus skirtingais parametrais, paaiškėjo keli dalykai. Faktūroje melodija visada vienbalsė, o intonacija homofoninio ir harmoninio daugiabalsiškumo atvejais apima visus faktūros sluoksnius. Daugiabalsiame audinyje vienu metu gali skambėti dvi ar daugiau vienbalsių intonacijų. Kalbant apie apimtį, intonacija yra lakoniška, o melodija yra labiau išplėtotą linijinę minties išraišką. Struktūros požiūriu melodiją sudaro atskiri motyvai, frazės, sakiniai ir pan., o intonacija yra visiškai monolitiška. Tiek melodija, tiek intonacija pasižymi išraiškingumu, nors semantikos svarba jose skiriasi. Iš melodijos ir intonacijos išaugo skirtingi žanrai: iš melodijos – vokalinės ar instrumentinės pjesės, kuriose ryški totalaus melodinio prado dominanti; intonacija tapo grigališkojo choralo užuomazga.

Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad minėtos sąvokos artimos tuo, jog abi perteikia reikšmes, o kitais bruožais yra gan skirtingos. Dėl šios aplinkybės jos laikytinos muzikos turinio struktūros dalimi. Hierarchiškai organizuotoje struktūroje intonacija užima teisėtą ir svarbią vietą, o jos semantinė savastis priklauso nuo garso išraiškos galimybių, kurių pagrindu vėliau formuojasi tokie dideli semantiniai dariniai kaip muzikiniai vaizdiniai. Melodija, kaip ir kiti muzikos kalbos elementai (harmonija, ritmas ir t. t.), užima tarpinę padėtį tarp garso, kaip akustiškai išraiškingo muzikos turinio komponento, ir intonacijos, kaip mažiausio semantinio darinio. Turint omenyje tai, kad melodijos ir intonacijos sąvokų apibrėžtys nesutampa net reikšmės sudarymo plotmėje, sąvokų sinonimiškumas tampa neįmanomas. Jos beveik sutampa tik tais atvejais, kai kalbama apie išraiškingą vienbalsį motyvą ar frazę (pavyzdžiui, kai kuriose retorinėse figūrose).

Reikšminiai žodžiai: melodija, intonacija, muzikos turinys, Borisas Asafjevas.