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Strophic and Sonata Form in the Italian Opera Aria of the 1720s and the 1730s

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Abstract. At present, the theory of musical form is still dominated by the notion that elements of sonata form in composition began to penetrate into vocal genres or, more specifically, into the opera aria only by the end of the 18th century, when they had already been fully established in instrumental music. In the latest studies devoted to sonata forms, both in Russia and in other countries, there is no mention of the emergence or manifestation of the principles of sonata in opera and vocal music. Nevertheless, in Italian aria (both in serious and comic opera) the principles of sonata form have been forming intensively since the end of the 1720s, i.e., long before these processes were noted in instrumental music.

The article analyzes the composition in a number of arias from serious and comic operas by Leonardo Vinci, Johann Adolph Hasse, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi and Gaetano Latilla. In these arias, the sonata principles are reflected in the compositional, thematic and tonal-harmonic planes. All arias are variants of the early two-part (binary) sonata form enclosed by the outer sections of the *da capo*. The conclusions are as follows: 1) sonata form in arias is based on interaction with the strophic arrangement of the poetic texts containing figurative contrast; 2) sonata form was established in stages, from a distinctly structured exposition (without clear signs of sonata in the second section of the form) to a full binary sonata form with thematic repetition and tonal subordination in the reprise, the priority role in this process played by comic opera.

The article contains musical examples and tables.

Keywords: sonata form, 18th century Italian opera aria, stanza

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Международный отдел

Научная статья

Строфика и сонатность в итальянской оперной арии 1720–1730-х годов

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Аннотация. В настоящее время в теории музыкальной формы господствует убеждение, что в вокальные жанры, конкретнее, в оперную арию элементы сонатной композиции стали проникать лишь к концу XVIII века, когда они уже полностью сложились в инструментальной музыке. В новейших исследованиях сонатной формы, как отечественных, так и зарубежных, главы о появлении или проявлении принципов сонатности в оперно-вокальной музыке отсутствуют. Тем не менее в итальянской арии (как в рамках серьезной, так и комической оперы) принципы сонатной композиции интенсивно складываются уже во второй половине 1720-х годов, то есть задолго до того, как эти процессы отмечены в области инструментальной музыки.

В статье приводится анализ композиции в ряде арий из серьезных и комических опер Леонардо Винчи, Иоганна Адольфа Хассе, Джованни Баттисты Перголези, Гаэтано Латиллы. Сонатные принципы в них нашли выражение в структурно-функциональном, тонально-гармоническом и тематическом планах. Все арии представляют собой варианты двухчастной (двухколенной) старинной сонатной формы в рамках крайних разделов формы *da capo*. В заключение сделаны выводы: 1) сонатная форма в арии складывается на основе взаимодействия со строфической организацией поэтического текста, содержащего образный контраст; 2) становление сонатной формы проходило стадийно – от ясно структурированной экспозиции (без четких признаков сонатности во второй части формы) до полной двухколенной сонатной формы с тематическим повтором и тональным подчинением в репризе, приоритетную роль в этом процессе играла комическая опера. Статья содержит нотные примеры и таблицы.

Ключевые слова: сонатная форма, итальянская оперная ария XVIII века, строфика

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“After Francesco Algarotti’s *Saggio sopra l’opera in musica* (1755–1763), the *da capo* Aria acquired a bad reputation among theorists” – with this thesis Lorenzo Bianconi and Michel Noiray began the

preface to the collection of articles following the 2006 International Conference on Italian Aria [1, p. 515]. The critical attitude towards opera *seria* as a “costume concert” prevailed until the last third of the 20th



century and contained aesthetic and even ideological underpinnings. It is unlikely, however, that this was the reason why the aria, and not limited to the *da capo* variety, found itself virtually beyond the research field of the theory of classical musical form. The decisive role played the conviction in the unconditional priority of instrumental genres as the basis for the musical principles of composition themselves. As a consequence, vocal forms were assigned a purely marginal position, and, obviously, there could be no question of their influence on the creation of forms in instrumental music. In this essay we focus on an issue the very formulation of which would appear unconventional, namely the role of Italian aria in the evolvement of sonata form.

The history of sonata form in 18th-century music has long attracted the attention of researchers. In Russian musicology, as early as in the decade of the 1970s, works appeared in which the sonata “prehistory” was carefully analyzed [2; 3]. Notably, the only mention of sonatas in an opera aria was associated with Mozart’s arias of the 1780s, when the classical sonata form had already been fully established in instrumental music [2, p. 32].

The same tendency prevails in musicology outside of Russia, but there are important exceptions. Alfred Einstein, in his book about Mozart (1945), outlined the priority of Italian aria in the development of at least one instrumental form: “... historically speaking, ... the form of the monumental aria was perfected, in the works of Stradella and Alessandro Scarlatti, earlier than the concerto, so that the concerto was actually fashioned after the aria” [4, p. 357]. The influence of this idea is noticeable in the subsequent fundamental studies. For instance, in Charles Rosen’s book, *Sonata Forms* (1980), a whole chapter is devoted to

the aria and its features that conduced to the formation of the compositional structure of the sonata [5, pp. 28–70]. Rosen discovers in vocal music the origins of three of the five types of sonata form designated by him – the second (sonata without the development section), third (the early type of sonata) and fifth (concerto-type sonata), based on the similarities in the unfolding of the tonal-harmonic plane. He also distinguishes a special “arioso type” of the early two-part (binary) form with the tonal plan T–D/T–T [5, pp. 28–29] as the origin of the sonata without the development section. Nevertheless, he ignores the way the functional and thematic relations have been formed in the composition of the aria. This classification was later relied upon in a seminal study by James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, who also share Rosen’s position on the role of the arias in the formation of sonata form – albeit, without mentioning or analyzing any specific examples [6, p. 348].

In general, until recently, the formation of sonatas has been considered almost exclusively within the domain of instrumental music. If we summarize the “merits” of arias in this process within the context of existing works, we can find mentions of the role of *da capo* in establishing the three-phase composition and concerto principles [7, pp. 145–165], and of the “arioso type” of the early binary form [8, pp. 38–39]. The only important observation that should be pointed out is the one in Reinhard Strohm’s work (1976) devoted specifically to Italian arias of the early Settecento. Here the author mentions one of the arias from Leonardo Vinci’s opera *Semiramide Riconosciuta* (1729), describing in the first section of the early binary form as a presage of sonata thematic contrasts [9, pp. 64–65]. But even in these rare cases, the composition in the aria was almost always considered only

from the point of view of its pure musical, “instrumental” component, disregarding the coordination of the music with the structure and logic of the poetic text. In recent years, this situation has begun to change. A recent work, an article by Nathan John Martin once again focuses on Mozart’s arias in connection with sonata form [10]. Following that article, Graham Hunt suggests revising the approaches to the analysis of opera forms and their interrelation with instrumental forms [11]. In the early 2000s, the issues of form-generation in Italian arias were discussed in detail in the book by the authors of this article, among other things from the point of view of the varieties of sonata form in the arias from the 1720s and 1730s [12]; later, sonata forms in arias were examined in the article by Dana Nagina [13]. In parallel to the works written by experts on opera music, studies appeared (albeit, only a few in quantity) devoted to form-generation in instrumental music of the second half of the 18th century, which noted points of contact with the compositional principles of aria *da capo* – in particular, in Haydn’s early sonatas [14]. But a substantial correction of the ideas about the place of the 18th-century operatic aria in the mainstream evolution of musical forms, including sonata form, is still a distant prospect. One could probably agree with the judgments that have been prevailing until now and refuse to develop the issue any further, if it were not for the abundance of examples in Italian operas of the 1720s and 1730s which contradict the generally accepted opinion. Observations on the historical material shows that the basic principles of sonata form were already taking shape at that time in vocal opera music and thus influenced the instrumental music later on. In other words, *cantare* (sing) was in this case just as important a foundation as – if not more important than – *suonare*

(play), although this seems to contradict the very etymology of the word “sonata”. The two decades (the 1720s and 1730s) attract our attention primarily because they cover the period from the first signs of sonatas in arias to their almost perfect crystallization and the appearance of complete early sonata forms.

Although the ways and means of shaping the sonata form in the opera *seria* and in comic genres were somewhat different, in both cases the main impulses for the development of the musical form on the way towards sonata, in our opinion, originated mainly from the changes in the nature and logic of the texts of opera arias of the 1720s.

By the 1720s, the poetic text in the *da capo* arias, with rare exceptions, consisted of two stanzas. The repeated initial stanza served as the basis for the outer parts of the *da capo* form, the second – for the middle. Most often, both the poetic text and the music manifested one affect or one maxim; between the outer and the middle sections, along with similar thematism, there usually was a modal contrast as well. If the verse intended for the aria and inscribed in the development of the plotline contained a sharp semantic opposition and encapsulated the character’s contradictory state, then the contrapositions were clearly and rationally distributed between the two sections of the aria. In this case, the *da capo* forms with the contrasting middle sections appeared, but each section separately retained its internal static unity. In other words, just as earlier in the 17th century, in the first decades of the 18th century the strophic organization of the text played a dominant role in the overall composition of arias.

By the early 1720s, however, poets had developed a taste for the dynamic presentation of conflicting states. “*Son*



regina e son amante” (“I am a queen and I am a woman in love”), declares Dido in her entrance aria in the first published libretto of Pietro Metastasio’s *Didone abbandonata*, and this opposition is presented very dynamically – within a single line. In 1724, expressing such a conflict in musical composition was a rather challenging task. Domenico Sarro and Leonardo Vinci – the composers of the first operas on Metastasio’s libretto – found a common emotional “denominator” in the pathetic intonation of the statement. Sarro emphasized the *amoroso* affect in Dido’s A-major graceful aria; Vinci attributed the dominance to *agitato*, the unrestrained onslaught of motor movement in the rhythm of the C-major Tarantella – the fast, energetic speech of the queen, who realizes her greatness, but at the same time is captured by the frantic passion of love.

Practically at the same time the next step was taken: the composition of arias in which the clash of affects gave the impetus to the birth of a sonata exposition with thematically and functionally independent primary and subsidiary sections. This became possible when each of the contrasting images was given its own place in the poetic stanza. The aria of Vanesio from Johann Adolph Hasse’s intermezzo *Larinda e Vanesio* (1726) composed to the libretto by Antonio Salvi (an adaptation of Molière’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*) can be considered one of the first examples of this kind. Vanesio is seized with vain dreams of becoming a nobleman in order to terrify his rival duelists and win hearts at balls. Two contrasting images collide in the text of the aria – the furious Mars and the lovely Cupid coming together right in the first stanza.¹

Scheme 1. A verse from the text to Vanesio’s aria *Un Marte furibondo* (I, 2) from the intermezzo *Larinda e Vanesio* (lib. by A. Salvi)

A	Un Marte furibondo sarò nel far duello, ah!	Like an angry Mars I will fight in duel, ah!
...	Ma tutta leggiadria,	And nothing but the very grace,
B	un amorino bello,	A charming Cupid
C	se muovo al ballo in pie, ah!	I will when I start dancing, ah!

Hasse draws on this opposition, which leads to an innovative solution for that time: the introduction of sharp thematic contrast within a single musical structure. “Martial music”, imitating the beating of drums and the flare of the trumpet, appearing in a small ritornello and in the opening section of the first two verses, is suddenly replaced after the caesura by a supple, graceful minuet.

Example No. 1 J. A. Hasse. Vanesio’s aria *Un Marte furibondo* (I, 2) from the intermezzo *Larinda e Vanesio* (1726)

In this aria, only the exposition can be considered as being in sonata form. In the second section neither the primary nor the subsidiary theme groups are repeated. The aria of Semiramide (II, 12, libretto by Pietro Metastasio), mentioned by Reinhard Strohm in his study [9], assumes exactly the same form – that of a sonata exposition added by the second section with a developmental passage and closure of the section. The heroine, betrayed by her lover, laments her fate (the first of the three stanzas) and immediately hurls ireful reproaches at her abuser (the second stanza).

Example No. 2 L. Vinci. Semiramide's aria *Tradita, sprezzata* (II, 12) from the opera *seria Semiramide riconosciuta* (1729)

In general, such a hybrid, “partial” sonata form can be found in many arias of operas *seria* and *buffa* of the second half of the 1720s, and therefore it can be considered to manifest the primary, preparatory stage in the formation of the vocal sonata structure. It contains all the necessary indications of the sonata form’s exposition. It includes a distinctive deployment of the tonal plane; there is also a compositional-syntactical structure, in which the moments of material exposure, of the transition preparing a new, alternative exposure, and the conclusive constructions with all the necessary zones of cadences and caesuras are distributed in a strictly defined sequence. They serve as the basis for the functional plane of sonata form with its inherent sequence of the primary theme group, transition, subsidiary theme group and conclusive sections.

The emergence of full-fledged sonata form in arias did not take long. It appeared at the end of the decade. The solos from Hasse’s intermezzo *Scintilla e Don Tabarano*, composed only two years later (1728, libretto by Bernardo Saddumene), can hardly be criticized for being “immature.” Scintilla’s aria from the first movement demonstrates sonata elements naturally and effortlessly. Moreover, here it is not merely an exposition present here;

a recapitulation appears: not only does Hasse present the subsidiary theme group in the main key, but the primary theme group as well. Thus, the overall profile of the composition corresponds not to the early, but to the quite mature form of the sonata without a development section.²

Scheme 2. Composition of the first section of Scintilla’s aria *Più viver non voglio* (I, 3) from the intermezzo by J. A. Hasse *Scintilla e Don Tabarano* (1728)

(Stanza)	A	...	B	A'		A	...	B	A'		
(Mesures)	7	12	15	19	22	26	30	35	39	43	
Rit	- T ¹	- Tr.	- T ²	- T ³	- Rit.		T ¹	- Cb.	- T ²	- T ³	- Rit.
t	- t	- tr.	- d→III	III	III		t	- tr.	- (D)	- t	- t
(PT)	- PT	- Tr.	- SS (I-II)	- CS		PT	- Tr.	- SS (I-II)	- CS		

And in this case, the occasion for the thematic juxtaposition comes from the poetic text and the stage conditions. Scintilla manipulates the host by acting out a scene of disappointment in life in front of him. She comments on his reactions in asides and meanwhile manages to slap Corbo, the servant (walk-on part) who is trying to spoil her game.

Scheme 3. A verse from the text to Scintilla’s aria *Più viver non voglio* from the intermezzo *Scintilla e Don Tabarano* (lib. by B. Saddumene)

A	Più viver non voglio Destino spietato	I no longer want to live, pitiless destiny:
...	M’uccide il Cordoglio Mi man...ca già’l fia...to	The sorrow is killing me... My bre... ath is already fai... ling.
B	(Ei piange! Vo’ in poppa Che gusto: e tu schioppa).	(He’s weeping! Everything is going fine. What fun: and you can burst!)
A'	Mi sento morir.	I feel that I’m dying!

As a result, here, albeit, somewhat different from the text of Vanesio’s aria, there is also a contrast of moods, which did not escape Hasse. The primary theme group (the first two verses) openly parodies the topoi of despair and wrathful complaint characteristic of serious opera. The next two verses go against the background of the transition move with expressive sighing



motives in the vocal part. A clear caesura is followed by the *a parte* retorts, and on the last verse Scintilla returns to acting again. This time, the complaint is mixed with hope: new thematic material emerges – the soulful ascending sixth move in the relative major.

The complete early sonata form soon appears in opera *seria* as well. In the aforementioned *Semiramide Riconosciuta* (1729) by Vinci, the outer sections of *da capo* in Tamiri's aria (I, 5) are arranged as a full-fledged early sonata form with the two independent theme groups.

Scheme 4. Composition of the first section of Tamiri's aria *Che quel cor* (I, 5) from the opera *seria* by L. Vinci *Semiramide riconosciuta* (1729)

(Stanza)	A	...	B		A	...	B	...	B														
(Mesures)	8	12	13	16	19	21	26	27	30	31	32												
Rit.	T¹	-	Tr.	-	T²	-	Rit.		T¹	-	Tr.	-	T²	-	Tr.	-	T²	-	Rit.				
T	-	T	-	(D)	-	D	-	D		D	-	tr.	(+II)	-	T	-	T	(D)	-	T	-	T	
Rit.	-	PT	-	Tr.	-	ST	-	CS		(PT)	-	-	Tr.	-	ST	-	Tr.	-	ST	-	CS		
(T ¹ T ²)										(T ¹)													(T ¹ T ²)

The poetic stanza contraposes not as much states and images as emotional or even stage “gestures”: the haughty bridegroom with his imaginary love and the heroine who rejects his flattering speeches.

Scheme 5. A verse from the text to Tamiri's aria *Che quel cor* from the opera *seria* *Semiramide riconosciuta* (lib. by P. Metastasio)

A	Che quel cor, quel ciglio altero Senta amor, goda in mirarmi	That this heart, these haughty eyes Are full of love, enjoy my appearance,
...	Non lo credo, non li spero.	I do not believe in this and do not hope.
B	Tu vuoi farmi insuperbir.	You just want to conquer me with flattery.

In the 1730s, sonata form within the Italian *da capo* aria occurred more and more frequently, both in operas *seria* and *buffa*.

Two main tendencies can be distinguished in its subsequent development. The first trend is the intensification of the musical contrast between the two theme groups, and the realization of figurative and narrative motifs that oppose one another in the poetic text.

Scheme 6. A verse from the text to Vitellia's aria *Come potesti, oh Dio* from the opera *seria* *La clemenza di Tito* (lib. by P. Metastasio)

A	Come potesti, oh Dio! Perfido traditor...	How could you, oh God! Faithless traditor...
B	Ah, che la rea son io!	Ah, I am the guilty one!
...	Sento gelarmi il cor,	My heart turns to ice,
C	Mancar mi sento.	I feel faint.

The classic expression of this tendency is Vitellia's Aria from Act II of Hasse's *La clemenza di Tito* (1738, libretto by Metastasio), in which two antithetical affects collide: the angry accusation of the murder of Titus, addressed to Sesto, and the complaint.

Example No. 3 J. A. Hasse. Vitellia's aria *Come potesti, oh Dio* (II, 6) from the opera *seria* *La clemenza di Tito* (1738)

The musical score for Example No. 3 shows a vocal line in 4/4 time, starting with a *Presto* tempo marking. The lyrics are: "Co-me po-te-sti, oh Di-o! Co-me po-te-sti, oh Di-o! Per-fi-do, per-fi-do tra-di-tor, tra-di-tor, tra-di-tor... Ah, che la rea son i-o, la rea son i-o! Sen-to ge-lar-mi il cor, man-car mi sen-to, man-car mi sen-to." The score includes performance markings such as *PT*, *Tr.(T¹)*, *Larghetto*, *Tr.(T²)*, *ST*, and *CS*.

Five times Hasse contrasts the musical topoi of the arias *di sdegno* and *lamento* (counting the middle section and the repetition of *da capo*), in which all the musical-expressive components differ: the tempo (*presto* and *larghetto*), the time signature (4/4 and 3/8), the intonational structure

(declamatory lines and graceful arioso tunes), the texture (the stormy chord repetitions of strings and the gentle echoes of the violins), and finally, tonality. The inherently strophic alternation of the contrasting sections is held together by the tonal plane characteristic of the early sonata form: G–g–B/B–g–G || e–a (the middle section of the *da capo* aria).

This aria raises a number of questions essential to the theory of sonata form. The main one is the role of the thematic and tonal-functional disposition in the formation of the classical sonata structure. On the one hand, the thematic juxtaposition, as it is presented in the Vitellia’s aria, bears the obvious imprint of the strophic principle of musical arrangement: the contrasting sections seem to meet “end-to-end”, with a sharp contrast intensifying this impression so much that it almost alleviates the elements of the development and preparation of the new theme in the transition. The first element of the transition part takes on the value of a separate, intermediate theme. In other words, the thematic contrast reduces the functional subordination of the sections and the coherence of the development in sonata form. On the other hand, such a thematic disposition evokes a connotation of an important quality of the sonata dramaturgy formulated by Yuri Tyulin – the dynamic conflux and the intensive preparation to subsequent sections of the form and themes [15, p. 251–252]. In the case of Vitellia’s Aria, one can speak about the full-fledged implementation of the principle of *derivative contrast*, about the emergence of the musical material of the transition and the subsidiary theme group from the primary theme group, its re-intonation. The syntactic structure of the

two theme groups and the pitch contour of their constituent motifs possess a noticeable similarity: two rounded motifs playing with the suspension, a descending stroke within a sixth, and at the end – the motion along the sounds of a triad.

Contrast, as we know, cannot be considered to be the sole, or even the main argument of sonata form; the decisive role is certainly provided by the tonal-harmonic relations and the nature of the transformation of the thematic material. In other words, it is not the presence of contrast in itself that is important, but how it is interpreted in the context of evolvment. It is natural to expect purposeful processes of this kind from the instrumental variety of sonata form. But Vitellia’s Aria also demonstrates a number of impressive solutions: in the recapitulation of the early sonata form, the subsidiary theme group is expanded, and its developmental function is strengthened.

A version of the thematic material dynamic conflux typical of comic opera can be found in the entrance aria of Don Pancrazio, the main character of Gaetano Latilla’s *La finta cameriera* (1737, libretto by Gennaro Antonio Federico and Giovanni Gualtiero Barlocchi). Pancrazio dreams of marrying a young maid, unaware that she is a disguised man, his daughter’s secret suitor. The hero experiences an unceasing storm of passions and compares himself to an anthill or a hornets’ nest.

Scheme 7. A verse from the text to Don Pancrazio’s aria *Io ho un vespaio* from the *commedia in musica La finta cameriera* (lib. by G. A. Federico, G. G. Barlocchi)

A	Io ho un vespaio, un formicaio Da capo a pie’,	I’ve got a wasps’ nest, or anthill inside me. From my head right down to my toes,
...	mi sento ohimè	alas, it feels like
B	Il sangue friggere e mille pungoli Mi stanno il core a punzicciar,	My blood is boiling and a thousand stings Are pricking my heart.
C	Ohimè, ohimè, ohimè!	Alas, alas, alas!



Latilla finds reasons for these thematic contrasts in the juxtaposition of the emotions of anxiety and self-pity. At the same time, he resorts to the repetition of the verse “*Mi stanno il core a punzicchiar*” (... are picking my heart continuously), but he interprets it musically in different ways: first in line with the “stormy” topos (in the transition), and the second time (in the second subordinate theme) – “pitifully”, sobbing painfully, feeling punctures in his heart in a bizarre melody descending almost in whole-tones.

Example No. 4 G. Latilla. Don Pancrazio's aria *lo ho un vespaio* (I, 3) from the *commedia in musica La finta cameriera* (1737)

The second trend in the development of the sonata form in vocal music in the 1730s is associated with a greater freedom in its use, without direct reliance on the poetic text and impulses of the plot and content. The sonata structure becomes to a greater degree a musical phenomenon proper; its internal arrangement is not directly conditioned by the poetic text, but is only coordinated with it, sprouting from its interpretation by the composer. A typical example is Licida's aria “*Mentre dormi Amor foment*” (I, 8) from Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's opera *L'Olimpiade* to Metastasio's libretto (1735). The poetic text depicts a pastoral scene in which the hero wishes his friend a peaceful sleep in the bosom of nature.

Scheme 8. A verse from the text to Licida's aria *Mentre dormi Amor foment* from the opera *seria L'Olimpiade* (lib. by P. Metastasio)

A	Mentre dormi, Amor foment	May love foster within your sweet dreams
B	il piacer de' sonni tuoi	the idea of my pleasure
C	con l'idea del mio piacer.	whilst you enjoy your slumbers.

The aria is undividedly dominated by a magnificent vocal melody, perfect in its independence from any specific imagery, whether visual or verbal; there is not a trace of orchestral or vocal sound imitation in the score. In the outer sections of the *da capo* aria Pergolesi incorporates the sonata form with the clearly outlined primary theme group, transition, subsidiary theme group and conclusive sections (the tonal plane T–D–/T–T). Although the themes do not contrast sharply, they boldly emphasize one another, creating the picture of a serene musical idyll. At the same time, in the text, there is no preplanned difference in their character.

Example No. 5 G. B. Pergolesi. Licida's aria *Mentre dormi Amor foment* (I, 8) from the opera *seria L'Olimpiade* (1735)

Another example from Pergolesi's music, this time from his *commedia in musica, Lo frate 'nnamorato*, to the libretto by G. A. Federico (1734), shows that even in comic opera sonatas are not only present in burlesque arias, but likewise combine perfectly with lyrical scenes. Nena, the heroine of the opera, suffers from unrequited love, but does not want to indulge in sorrow.

Scheme 9. A verse from the text to Nena's aria *È strano il mio tormento* from the *commedia in musica Lo frate 'nnamorato* (lib. by G.A. Federico)

A	È strano il mio tormento E vano il mio martire.	My torment is strange And my martyr is in vain.
B	No che nol puoi soffrire	No, you cannot therefore suffer
C	Povero amante cor.	Poor heart in love.

In the poetic text there are no direct reasons present to contrast different moods; but Pergolesi traces in it the shades of joyful anticipation (the primary theme group and the transition) and of sadness and anguish (the subsidiary theme group). All of this makes use of the same poetic text, which with minor variations is expounded upon many times in the aria.

Scheme 10. Unfolding the text of the verse from Nena's aria *È strano il mio tormento* from the *commedia in musica Lo frate 'nnamorato* (G. B. Pergolesi)

(Stanza) A BC A' BC B'C | A A' BC B'C

The music, however, unfolds its own sonata “narrative,” which is very conditionally and arbitrarily coordinated with the poetry.

Example No. 6 G. B. Pergolesi. Nena's aria *È strano il mio tormento* (I, 10) from the *commedia in musica Lo frate 'nnamorato* (1732)

The arias we have mentioned are not isolated examples, albeit very striking ones;

they illustrate the general trends in Italian opera of the 1720s and 1730s. Analytical observations allow us to answer the question posed at the beginning of the article –

about the role of opera arias in the formation of sonata form. First of all, there is hardly any doubt that sonata form emerged in a clear, consistent way, and long before its manifestation in instrumental music, within the framework of Italian operatic aria. It was formed on the basis of the interaction of different thematic spheres, for which one of the main impulses was the poetic text and its strophic organization. In the first instance, an initial role in this process was played by the comic opera, with its characterizing qualities and propensity for sharp, at times exaggerated, figurative contrasts within the same solo vocal number.

The shaping of sonata form on the operatic “foundation” was stadial. The clearly structured sonata exposition was the first to declare itself in the 1720s, and it was this that heralded the new compositional principle. Then, at the turn of the decades, another height was conquered – the sonata recapitulation was formed with its thematic repetition and tonal subordination necessary for a complete form. As the main feature of such sonatas one can name the *dynamic conflux* of themes and sections of the form.

The study of the stages of the early sonata form shaping in opera arias allows us to conclude that the main method suitable for identifying the principles of sonata composition should be considered, first of all, the analysis of thematic processes from the structural-functional angle of view. The main criterion for sonata is the presence of



alternative exposure (closely coordinated with the process of harmonic modulation from one key to another) within a single structural arrangement. In other words, in order to speak about the appearance of the signs of sonata form, it is sufficient to have a fully formed sonata exposition, rather than the indispensable presence of the development section and/or the same-keyed

recapitulation, as is often still commonly believed.

Unfortunately, virtually all studies of the theory and history of sonata composition that we are aware of do not devote any attention to such its “prehistory” and to this entire issue, which, in our opinion, can be considered an obvious gap in contemporary musicology.

Notes

¹ Here and below, the first stanzas of the arioso texts are mentioned, since it is in these texts that the initial dynamic figurative contrast is expressed. This contrast, in turn, is reflected in the sonata compositions typical exclusively of the first sections of the *da capo* form. The letter symbols in the left column indicate verses which provided the composers with a pretext for contrasting thematic ideas, while the ellipses stand for the moments of changes and transitions.

² The diagram sequentially shows: 1) the logical organization of the verse stanza, 2) the numbers of measures outlining the boundaries of the sections, 3) the distribution of musical themes or passages of different types (introductory and final – Rit., Exposition – T, transition – Tr., closures – Cl.), 4) the tonal plane, 5) the functional plane of the sonata composition (PT, Tr., ST, CS).

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