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The Doctrine of Affections: Emotion and Music

Kristen E. Jarboe
kjarboe@cedarville.edu

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The Doctrine of Affections

Music in the Baroque Period

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Thesis

The Doctrine of Affections was based off of an ancient philosophy that viewed music as a stimulus which could move the affects in the body. This theory greatly influenced composers in the Baroque period and how they composed music.

The Theory

- Term coined by German musicologists Hermann Kretzchmar, Harry Goldschmidt, and Arnold Schering
- Effect of music on the body
- Aesthetics in other art mediums
- Personal emotions are separated from music
- Emotion is evoked from music, not composer
- Drawn from Ancient Greek “Doctrine of Ethos”

The Doctrine of Ethos

- Music can affect the character, morals, and behaviors of a person
- Different scales had different characteristics
- Dorian= calm, easy to listen to
- Phrygian= made people become more passionate and able to inspire
- Lydian= caused weakness of the mind because of its simplicity

The Affects

- The body would stay in one affection unless acted upon by a stimulus
- A stimulus moves an affect, and then the affect informs your mind of the emotion you're feeling
- Affect: state of mind and body that is related to feelings or emotions

Johann Mattheson

- Der vollkommene Capellmeister (“The Perfect Chapelmaster”)
 - 1739
 - Examples of how to arouse a certain emotion in a listener
 - Intervals:
 - Large intervals= joy
 - Small intervals= sadness
 - Rough harmony/rapid melody= anger

Supportive home life

Took music lessons from the age of 7

Lost his hearing

Studied ancient writings and began writing himself

Descartes and his “Passions of the Soul”

6 basic passions:

- Wonder
- Love
- Hatred
- Desire
- Joy
- Sadness / despair

Key Signatures



C Major= innocently happy, completely pure

C Minor= innocently sad

Love sick

C# Minor= despair

D flat Major= grief and depression

D Major= triumphant

D Minor= serious and melancholy

Feminine, continuous worries

D# Minor= deep distress, existential angst

Fear, hesitation, anxiety, “the language of ghosts”



E flat Major= cruel, hard, devotion

E Major= quarrelsome, incomplete pleasure

Delight, yet bickering

E Minor= restless, grief, longing

F Major= furious, quick-tempered, deeply angry
but outwardly composed

F Minor= obscure

Deepest depression, lament

F# Major= conquering difficulties, sigh of relief

F# Minor= gloomy, passionate resentment



G Major= serious, magnificent, fantasy

Calm and satisfied, friendship, gratitude, “a gentle key full of peace”

G Minor= discontent, uneasiness, worry of the future

A flat Major= death, eternity, judgement

A flat Minor= grumbling, moaning, life-long struggles

A Major= joyful, declaration of love, youthful and optimistic

A Minor= womanly, graceful, tender and capable of soothing

B flat Major= joyful, clear conscience, hopeful for a better world



B flat Minor= terrible, the night, mocking, turning away the world and the divine, giving up, belief in darkness

B Major= harsh, strong, wild, rage, uncontrolled passions

B Minor= the key of patience, calmly waiting for fate, destiny, submission, solitary