

## MODERN CONCEPTS OF BAROQUE MUSIC ANALYSIS IN FOREIGN MUSICOLOGY (ON THE EXAMPLE OF ANTONIO VIVALDI'S RV 396 CONCERTO)

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**Abstract:** The element of experience and experimentation covered the most different levels of the process of creating Baroque music: it is clearly represented not only in the field of updating musical instruments, ensembles and orchestral compositions, but also in the field of searching for new means of expression, methods of musical development, musical genres and musical forms, technology of musical performance. Significant changes have occurred in the field of musical language: the calm, measured step-by-step melodic movement was replaced by a free metro-rhythmic organization and wide leaps in the melodic line, which made it possible to fill the musical fabric with intonations of speech and create sound imitations of emotional human gestures. The goal of this research is to establish a strong relationship between the modal narrative and structural development of Antonio Vivaldi's Concerto in A Major for Viola d'Amore, Strings, and Basso Continuo, RV 396, across the work's three movements. The analysis of the movements follows the ascending in half-step order chromatic octave (Primary Chromatic Array, or PCA) and the descending diatonic octave (Primary Diatonic Array, or PDA), with lesser chromatic orderings not reaching tonic octave completion (Secondary Chromatic Arrays, or SCAs) included. These methods are applied using the dual modal and chromatic progression tools based on the gamut system of that mode, which was suggested by Henry Burnett and Roy Nitzberg.

**Keywords:** Henry Burnett's system; Baroque aria; instrumental concerto; modality; musical forma; Ritornelle; pattern.

### 1 Introduction

The form of ritornello (also written as French *ritournelle*), devised in opera arias and cantatas by Alessandro Stradella (1639-1682) and systematized by Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709), was in high demand among the composers of the late Baroque. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the genre of concerto, written in three movements (fast-slow-fast), aspired to show both the virtuoso technique of the soloists' (*concertino*) and the harmonic strength of the ensemble (*ripieno*). Growing to include various contrasting episodes, it imitated the Italian opera arias, often based on ritornello as the structuring device. Ritornello form, with its (sometimes partial) returns of the initial orchestral statement (or ritornello theme) in different keys, separated thematically, tonally, and dynamically by the solo *concertino* episodes, emphasized the competitive and almost theatrical - without employing neither text nor dancing - nature of the performance. Thematic, tonal, and dynamic developments allowed for an expansion of structural and modal margins of the genre. "For, as sonata form comes to dominate the symphony, ritornello form comes to dominate the concerto, and can easily be seen as the first conspicuously successful solution to the problems of large-scale tonal architecture" [9, p. 31].

### 2 Literature Review

The form offered a thematic diversity - contrasting rhythmic patterns of the ritornello theme, a thematic exploration in the solo episodes, harmonic richness within the hexachordal scheme, choice of solo instruments, as well as various lengths of the segments and the entire composition. An early 20<sup>th</sup> century study of the Baroque concerto by Wilhelm Fischer in his work "On the History of the Development of the Viennese Classical Style [Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Wiener klassischen Stils]" [3, p. 145] provided us with the names of different segments of the ritornello theme. According to the Austrian musicologist, the ritornello theme includes three distinctive segments. The first one is *Vordersatz* (theprecursor) - the introduction or exposition of the motif and the tonic key, the second is *Fortspinnung*

(spinning-forth) - the continuation and extension of the initial material by using internal repetitions, intervallic changes and sequences, and the third one is *Epilog* (conclusion) - the formal cadence in the tonic. Continuing the Italian lineage of the ritornello form advancement, Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) attempted to further expand the possibilities of its thematic development. The composer used a "split ritornello" structure with the solo interruptions of the ritornello theme and included a new (fourth) thematic segment, termed in 1932 by Walther Krüger the *pianoidée* [3, p. 145], in that theme. When introduced, the *pianoidée* (quiet idea) brought about a sudden and dramatically expressive shift from the major key into its parallel minor, often accompanied by changed dynamic level (*diminuendo*) and a lighter texture of music. By adding the new thematic segment in the ritornello theme, Vivaldi ultimately opened another channel of modal changes within the composition.

This article analyzes the three movements of *Concerto in A Major for Viola d'Amore, Strings and Basso Continuo*, RV 396 by Antonio Vivaldi, with the task of establishing a close connection between its modal recounting and structural growth, throughout the entire concerto. Applying the tools of dual - modal and chromatic progression, based on the gamut system of that mode, which was suggested by Henry Burnett and Roy Nitzberg [3, p. 10], the analysis of the movements would follow the ascending in half-step order chromatic octave (*Primary Chromatic Array, or PCA*), and the descending diatonic octave (*Primary Diatonic Array or PDA*), with lesser chromatic orderings not reaching tonic octave completion (*Secondary Chromatic Arrays or SCAs*) included.

### 3 Materials and Methods

The theoretical basis of the study involves the following concepts: general theory of music, intonation theory, theory of musical style, doctrine of musical form. The method of ascent from the abstract to the concrete was used in building the interpretative model and concept of the work. The method of systematization and generalization was used to systematize and generalize information on the topic of research: aesthetic, musicological historical, and theoretical literature. The deductive method was chosen to isolate and characterize the individual components of the late Baroque vocal-interpretive model.

### 4 Results and Discussion

When eleven chromatic and diatonic pitch classes are interrupted by the twelfth or "missing pitch" - "the minor third or augmented second above either the central hexachord of the modal gamut or of the tonic system of a key" [3, p. 11], the system modulates from one eleven-pitch-class system to another. Burnett and Nitzberg's eleven-pitch-class tonality theory shines a new light on the interpretation of the *pianoidée* as a new thematic element in Vivaldi's famous concertos.

#### *The first movement of the Concerto in A major*

The first movement of Vivaldi's *Concerto in A Major for Viola d'Amore*, RV 396 gives a perfect example of the composer's resourcefulness in the use of ritornello form. Centered on the A hexachord, it consists of five ritornellos and three solo episodes (see Figure 1).

Hexachord pitch classes: D - A - E - b - f# - c#  
Harmonic function: IV I V II VI III

Figure 1. "Hexachord and Harmonic function"

The ritornello theme of the movement is tonally closed; the feature becomes a sustained and strengthened element of the late Baroque concertos [4, p. 329]. Vivaldi's ritornello theme begins and ends in the tonic and combines all four main segments,

described by Wilhelm Fischer: the *Vordersatz* (mm. 1-4), the *Fortspinnung* (mm. 5-7), the *pianoidée* (mm. 7-10), and the *Epilog* (mm. 10-13) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. “Four main segments in Vivaldi’s ritornello theme: the *Vordersatz*, the *Fortspinnung*, the *pianoidée* and the *Epilog*”

The tonal changes within the ritornello theme, moving from A major to A minor and then to A major, dictate an evident modal shift from the 3# system to the “0” system, carried out by the *pianoidée* segment and not reversed at the cadence of the theme. The “0” system will be sustained until the following solo episode.

The music of the *Vordersatz* relies, characteristically for the early eighteenth-century music, “upon variety of rhythmic patterns rather than on melodic profile” [3, p. 145]. It presents several of such rhythmic patterns:

- *rhythmic pattern a* (m. 1) – a combination of the eighth and sixteenth notes, moving in parallel intervals in the upper voices, and steady moves of the eighths in the lower voices;
- *rhythmic pattern b* (m. 2) – a syncopated rhythm of the embellished eighth note followed by a quarter note, then an eighth note in the upper voices, still moving in parallel intervals, against steady moves of the eighths in the lower voices (repeated twice), where the accompaniment of the lower voices provides a continuity complementing the contrast of two patterns;
- *rhythmic pattern a<sup>1</sup>* (mm. 3-4) – the modification of the original pattern is caused by a switch from a unison playing of a melody (upper voices) and an accompaniment (lower

voices) to the unison of all instruments, including basso continuo, carried out to the end of the *Vordersatz*.

The segment is harmonically stable, confirming the key of A Major; it plays the role of the thematic “seed”, shared and developed by the other upcoming segments of the ritornello theme. For example, the first half of m. 1, supported by a harmonic progression I – ii<sub>6</sub> – V<sup>4-3</sup> – I, is repeated exactly in the *Epilog* segment of the theme (m. 11), copied by the upper voices of the *Solo Episode 1* (m. 13) and repeated in that manner in the *Solo Episode 3* (m. 51). The motive *b-a-g#-a-g#-f#* in the upper voices of m. 1 (the second beat and the first half of the third beat) is later moved to *d-c#-b-c#* in m. 3 (the same beats), then reversed into *b-c#-d-c#* in m. 2 (including the ornamentation), which would be important for the melodic formation of the *pianoidée* segment.

The *Vordersatz* ends on a half cadence in A Major (middle of m. 4), and the *pianoidée* begins with the two unison notes, connecting it to the segment of *Fortspinnung* – the diatonic sequences, melodically grown out of the contours of *b-a-g#-a-g#-f#* of m. 1, sustaining the key of A Major. The third descend of the sequence (middle of m. 7) is abruptly stopped by the *pianoidée*, which relies on the dominant pedal and presents a tonal (A minor), dynamic (*pianissimo*), and textural contrast to the previous material (short imitative motives of viola d’amore/violin I and violin II are in obvious opposition to the unison of the *Fortspinnung*). The placement of the *pianoidée* right after the *Fortspinnung* is typical for Vivaldi concertos. The abrupt change in the flow of the composition is accentuated by the modal shift. Transfer from the 3# system to the “0” system is accomplished by means of the missing tone (C<sup>b</sup>); it is emphasized melodically by the viola d’amore and violin I (*d-c<sup>b</sup>-b-c<sup>b</sup>-c<sup>b</sup>-c<sup>b</sup>*, m. 8).

The *pianoidée* segment moves directly into the *Epilog*, which brings back *forte* and A Major of the opening segments of the theme. The presence of C hexachord will remain in effect until its missing pitch (Eb or D#) is introduced. The *Epilog* (mm. 10-13) is melodically, rhythmically and texturally based on the *Vordersatz*, and the first half of m. 11 is an exact copy of the first half of m. 1. As a conclusion of the theme, the *Epilog* ends affirmatively on a perfect cadence in A Major.

The *Solo Episode 1* (mm. 13-26) begins with the repetition of mm. 1-2 of the *Vordersatz*, moved two beats forward and linked to the first descending sequence of the *Fortspinnung* (mm. 15-16 copy the material of m.5), modulating from A Major to E Major. The harmonic progression from the tonic to the dominant as a first step of motion is typical for the Vivaldi’s ritornello forms when they are written in the major key. D# – the missing pitch of the “0” system – is introduced by the violins in m. 19, shifting the mode back to the 3# system.

*Ritornello 2* (mm. 26-34) is in E Major. It includes three segments out of original four: a shortened (by one measure) version of the *Vordersatz* ending on a half cadence (mm. 26-29), the transposed into the dominant *pianoidée* segment (mm. 29-32), and the abridged *Epilog* (mm. 32-34) that starts right on the “copied” part of the *Vordersatz* and ends, as before, on a perfect cadence in E major. Use of all three rhythmic patterns with the *Vordersatz* (*a*, *b*, and shortened *a<sup>1</sup>*) proves that the ritornello has only one *Vordersatz* and is not divided into two smaller units.

The *Solo Episode 2* (mm. 34-46) starts in the key of the dominant, E Major, and modulates, ending on a perfect cadence, to the minor mediant, C# minor, which fulfills a common penultimate harmonic goal for the movement based on the A hexachord. According to the research done by Henry Burnett, “in terms of sheer dramatic intensity, composers would naturally choose iii as a climactic event, since iii is the furthest pitch class away from the tonic within the reordered hexachord of the key” [3, p. 148]. The move begins with the chromatic sequence in E Major V<sup>5</sup><sub>6</sub>/IV – V<sup>5</sup><sub>6</sub>/V – V<sup>5</sup><sub>6</sub>/vi, “brushing against” future C#

minor, but most importantly, introducing the pitch members of the A hexachord's PCA. Both **PC1 (A#)** and **PC2 (B)** appear in **m. 38**, played by viola; **PC3 (B#)** and **PC4 (C#)** are joining them in **m. 39**, also played by viola (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. "Modal development: The Solo Episode 1, Ritornello 2, The Solo Episode 2, movements I"

Introduced in **m. 39 B#** is the central hexachord's missing pitch, it shifts the system three sharps up to the **F# hexachord (6# system)** – until it is followed by **A (or A<sup>b</sup>)** in **m. 40** (viola d'amore and violin II), which would be the missing pitch of the hinted **F# hexachord**, reversing the modal progression back to the **3# system**. There are two more pitch-classes shown in **m. 42** – **PC6 (D#)** and **PC7 (E)**, both are played by violin I (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. "Central hexachord's modal progression"

*Solo Episode 2* is concluded by a perfect cadence in **C# minor**, leading into the next part of the form.

*Ritornello 3* (mm. 47-50) is the shortest in size. It is represented by a single *pianoidée* segment, played in **C# minor** and sounding quite different from the original segment. Instead of the dominant pedal, lighter texture of the segment and *pianissimo*, an initial melodic jump to the seventh of the **V<sub>7</sub>**, and a half cadence in its conclusion, this "version" of the *pianoidée* is supported by the pedal on the "new tonic" (**c#**), it is played *tutti* and *forte*, melodically outlines **C# minor triad**, and concludes with a full cadence in the key of **C# minor**. There are several repetitions of the modal shift **3# system – 6# system**, initiated by

**B#** in **m. 42** (viola d'amore and violin II) and "cancelled" by **A** in **m. 47** (in violin II), then initiated again at the end of **m. 49** (lower strings and *basso continuo*) and "balanced back" into **A hexachord** in **m. 51** (violins). *Ritornello 4* (mm. 51-55) re-establishes **A major** and presents both shortened and reduced in scoring versions of the *Vordersatz* and the *Fortspinnung* of the theme.

*Solo Episode 3* (mm. 55-70) is in the tonic; it is the largest of the solos, and can be called the "central episode". The climb up the PCA, started in *Solo Episode 2*, continues: **PC9 (F#)** is in **m. 62**

(violins), followed by **PC10 (G<sup>b</sup>)** in **m. 64** (viola d'amore), then **PC11 (G#)** and **PC0 (A)** in **m. 70** (viola d'amore). The episode is concluded by a perfect cadence in **A major** (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. "Modal development: The Solo Episode 2, Ritornello 3, The Solo Episode 3, movements I"

The *Ritornello 5* (mm. 71-79) completes *Ritornello 4*, repeating three segments of the ritornello theme - the *Fortspinnung* (mm. 71-73), the *pianoidée* (mm. 73-76), and the *Epilog* (mm. 76-79) – exactly the way they sounded in mm. 5-13. Confirming **A Major** once more, *Ritornello 5* presents a modal shift from the **3# system** to the "0" system accomplished – just like in *Ritornello 1* - within the *pianoidée* segment (**m. 74**). Not only the ritornello theme, but the entire first movement ends in the "0" system.

#### The second movement of the Concerto in A major – Andante

The second movement of the *Concerto in A major – Andante* - is intermediate in nature (simpler in structure, shorter in size, subtler in sound) and somewhat reminiscent of the opening *Allegro*, following the contours of its tonal plan. **A major** (the main key of the movement) initiates the first part of the rounded binary form (typical dance form, with a triple meter and large-scale repetitions), then modulates to the dominant by the middle of it (**m. 93**), confirming **E major** in a full cadence (mm. 96-97). The second part of the binary form starts in **C# minor** (mm. 98-106), then, without any modulation (just like at the beginning of *Ritornello 4*), returns directly to the tonic. Melodically, it also refers to the previous ritornello. For example, the opening two-bar motive is associated with the motive **a-g#-a-b-a-g#** of the *Vordersatz*, and the expressive jump from **B#** up to **A** in **m. 100** is a reminder of the *Solo Episode 2* (mm. 43-44).

*Andante* returns the composition back from the "0" system to the **3# system** with the show of **D#** (the missing pitch of the **C hexachord**) in **m. 90**. In **m. 100**, **B#** of viola d'amore produces a modal shift to the **6# system**, which is sustained up to **A<sup>b</sup>**, played by each of the instruments in **m. 107**. After that point, the **3# system** remains stable – until the next movement.



### The third movement of the Concerto in A major

Finale of the *Concerto in A major* is also a ritornello, with five ritornello and four solo episodes centered on the A hexachord. The ritornello theme is tonally closed, its *Vordersatz* combines two rhythmically contrasting fragments (mm. 118-119 and mm. 119-122), giving the composer a recognizable and diverse material for future installments of the ritornello. The theme does not present the *pianoidée*, but includes extended *Fortspinnung* (mm. 122-126), leading to the *Epilog* (mm. 126-130), which ends on a full cadence in the tonic.

*Solo Episode 1* (mm. 131-143) incorporates some sequential movements within the borders of the central hexachord and modulates to E major. It does not produce any modal changes. *Ritornello 2* (mm. 143-147) remains in the key of the dominant and includes both of the contrasting fragments of the *Vordersatz*, confirming that it is one undivided segment.

In *Solo Episode 2* (mm. 148-160), which starts in E major and employs sequencing moves to establish C# minor by m. 154, there is a noticeable climb up the PCA. **PC2 (B)** in m. 148 (played by viola d'amore) is followed by **PC3 (B#)** and **PC4 (C#)** (both – in violin I and violin II), in m. 152. **PC6 (D#)** in m. 153 it resolves into **PC7 (E)** in m. 154 (viola d'amore). B# as the missing pitch of the 3# system is causing – again – a modal shift to the 6# system (m. 152) (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. "Modal development: Solo Episode 1, Solo Episode 2 in the movements III"

This shift is sustained throughout *Ritornello 3*'s shortened *Vordersatz* in the key of the minor median (mm. 160-164) and half of the *Solo Episode 3* (mm. 164-171). There A, played by viola d'amore, double bass and basso continuo (m. 168), confirms the return to A major and revokes the modal shift, reinstating the 3# system.

*Ritornello 4* (mm. 171-174) is, once more, a shortened *Vordersatz* in the tonic key, but the following *Solo Episode 4* (mm. 174-189) imitates the *pianoidée* of the ritornello by switching to the parallel minor. Appearance of C $\flat$  (end of m. 176), just like in the *pianoidée* of the opening *Allegro*, brings about a modal change from the 3# system to the "0" system, as well as the remaining pitch-classes of the PCA – **PC8 (F $\flat$ )** in m.

**180** (viola d'amore and violin I), **PC10 (G $\flat$ )** in m. **181** (violin II), and later **PC11 (G#)** in m. **187** resolving into **PC0 (A)** in m. **188** (both played by viola d'amore) (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. "Modal development: Ritornello 3, Ritornello 4 in the movements III"

The completion of the PCA coincides with the conclusion of the last solo episode of the third movement and D# (the missing pitch of the "0" system) played by violin I in the final measure of that solo (m. 188), signaling the return of the original A hexachord as a modal center. *Ritornello 5* is the exact replica of the *Ritornello 1*, stabilizing and finalizing the developments within the Finale.

### 5 Conclusion

Three movements of the *Concerto in A major for Viola d'amore, Strings and Basso Continuo* appear to be an excellent example of the highly advanced in terms of modal and tonal exploration late Baroque style. Music of it demonstrates typical for the style aspiration of portraying contrasting emotions and ideas through a wide range of diverse harmonic, rhythmic, and structural components. The form of ritornello allows Vivaldi to find many new possibilities of materializing that aspiration. Undoubtedly, there is a certain "scenario" of modal and tonal progressions, creatively reinterpreted but congruent for the each one of three movements, based on the traditional for the late Baroque music logic of dramatizing and propelling forward the flow of the composition.

Moving from the tonic in major to its dominant key and then the minor median as a way for attaining the dramatic effect is reinforced and complemented by the underlying logic of its modal progressions, following the fifths of the composition's central hexachord and reaching the outer edge of it at the point of the central episode of the ritornello (from A to E to c#). The movements of the *Concerto* are connected through their ongoing modal changes, initiating rapid shifts of the system (6# - 3# - "0") within the borders of one segment or movement and resolving them within the other. Exploring - again and again - the structural and harmonic importance of the single pitch-class, the missing pitch of the given system's hexachord, approached from

the various "spelling" points (A-B# vs. A-C $\flat$ ), Vivaldi delivers an elaborate ritornello form, always remembering to keep his audience surprised.

Ritornello's flexibility of design and variety of both harmonic and rhythmic expression found its way into compositions of other influencers of the late Baroque music of different countries: concertos of German-based Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) as well as the early symphonies by "The English Bach", Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782), and a prominent composer of the Milanese school, Giovanni Batista Sammartini (1701-1775). Before the sonata form reached its peak, namely

ritornello form of the late Baroque concerto provided composers with numerous possibilities of thematic and structural exploration, closely connected with the inner modal plan of development.

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