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Reconstructing Bach: A Musical-Rhetorical Reinterpretation of His Violin Works

Reconstruindo Bach: Uma Reinterpretação Musical-Retórica de Suas Obras para Violino

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Abstract: During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, composers and performers embedded musical rhetoric in performance practice. Interest in musical rhetoric then waned after the Baroque period, only to be revived in the twentieth century. While music historians rediscovered and recognised its importance in the twentieth century, performers are only now beginning to understand how to apply musical rhetoric in their performances. Nevertheless, from a practical perspective, issues remain despite considerable scholarly discussion. Taking Johann Sebastian Bach's (1680–1750) violin concerto in A minor (BWV 1041) as its example, this article discusses musical structure, framework, and analytical interpretation from the perspective of historically-informed performances through the lens of eighteenth-century musical rhetoric, thereby demonstrating that musical rhetoric was a common practice in eighteenth-century performances. By acquiring knowledge of musical rhetoric and analysing pieces with this concept in mind before playing, performers are suggested to interpret music in an appropriate and stylish manner, thereby supporting a more successful and expressive performance.

Keywords: Musical-Rhetorical. Historical-Informed Performance. Johann Sebastian Bach. Violin concerto in A minor (BWV 1041)

Resumo: Nos períodos Renascença e Barroco, compositores e intérpretes incorporavam recursos de retórica musical na prática performática. O interesse pela retórica musical diminuiu após o Barroco e foi retomado no século XX. Enquanto historiadores da música redescobriram e reconheceram sua importância ao longo do século XX, os intérpretes somente agora começam a compreender como aplicar a retórica musical em suas performances. Contudo, do ponto de vista prático, ainda persistem questões, apesar da ampla discussão acadêmica. Tomando como exemplo o Concerto para Violino em Lá menor (BWV 1041) de Johann Sebastian Bach (1680–1750), este artigo discute a estrutura musical, o enquadramento e a interpretação analítica a partir da perspectiva das performances historicamente informadas, sob a ótica da retórica musical do século XVIII, demonstrando, assim, que a retórica musical era uma prática comum nas execuções desse período. Ao adquirir conhecimento sobre retórica musical e analisar as obras com esse conceito em mente antes de tocar, sugere-se que os intérpretes possam interpretar a música de forma adequada e estilisticamente coerente, favorecendo uma performance mais bem-sucedida e expressiva.

Palavras-chave: Retórica musical. Performance historicamente informada. Johann Sebastian Bach. Concerto para violino em Lá menor (BWV 1041)

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Introduction

> Musical execution may be compared with the delivery of an orator. The orator and the musician have, at bottom, the same aim regarding both the preparation and the final execution of their productions, namely to make themselves masters of the hearts of their listeners, to arouse or still their passions, and to transport them now to this sentiment, now to that. Thus [,] it is advantageous to both, if each has some knowledge of the duties to the other (Quantz 2001, p. 119).

Johann Joachim Quantz's instructions emphasise the importance of rhetorical playing in musical performances. His treatise, *Versuch einer Anweisung, die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (1752), has been recognised as a significant work of the eighteenth century, and his performance practice has been studied and followed by musicians ever since its publication. In it, Quantz (2001) advises musicians to employ oratorical strategies when preparing for a performance and suggests that performers engage their audiences by employing rhetorical skills to stir passion and sentiment. However, questions arise upon reading Quantz's instructions: Was musical rhetoric a common performance practice in eighteenth-century German music? If so, how can performers apply rhetorical skills to music?

These questions are pertinent to the modern performing musician, who is often 'far from that familiarity' with Baroque rhetorical styles, and most modern performers cannot play Baroque music 'in the way it deserves' (Laurin, 2012, p. xviii–xix). Moreover, scholars have emphasised the importance of rhetorical narrative in Baroque music and have suggested that it should be studied (Buelow, 1973; Tarling, 2005; Reiter, 2021). As musicologist Bruce Haynes states, 'it would be more accurate to describe music as one from Rhetoric took' (Haynes, 2007, p. 166). Therefore, finding the appropriate rhetorical styles to interpret music is becoming an essential skill for musicians.

Rhetorical oratory championed and reached its peak in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rhetorical skills and techniques then frequently became embedded in musical composition and performance processes, ultimately establishing themselves as the operating system and source of what music was and how it was to be accomplished (Haynes, 2007). The application of rhetorical principles was particularly prominent in German music, whereas such concepts were not widely applied in other countries at the time (Bartel, 1997). Music then formed a musical-rhetoric style and reached its peak in the late Baroque period, especially in Johann Sebastian Bach's works, until the early nineteenth century (Tarling, 1997; Laurin, 2012). Bach's violin works have been widely acknowledged as musical and technical landmarks. However, certain parts of his manuscript remain ambiguous, including the lack of tempo words, unclear articulation, and missing notes (Abravaya, 2006; Chang, 2020; Eppstein, 2000; Wollny, 2009). The uncertainties provide an opportunity to employ rhetorical principles to clarify and interpret musical intentions. In the twentieth century, music historians rediscovered and recognised the importance of rhetoric as the foundation of aesthetic and theoretical concepts in earlier music (Haynes, 2007), thereby deepening our understanding of the extent to which 18th-century Western music relied on rhetorical concepts. Although many scholars have discussed rhetoric, there is still a noticeable knowledge gap, particularly in the practical aspects of the issues raised.

As the historically informed performance began to flourish in the late 20th century, musicians gradually sought to reconstruct authentic approaches to interpreting music, especially that of the period before the end of the 18th century. If musicians are to appreciate and perform in the appropriate style of eighteenth-century music, it is first necessary to understand its rhetorical concepts, applications, and interpretations. One pioneer of early music musicians, also a baroque violinist and conductor, Sigiswald Kuijken (1944-) advises the musicians should go back to the sources and music manuscripts, then we can "go back to the

fact that "what the composer wants" (Kuijken, 2021). Therefore, this article explores German rhetorical music style through the testimonies of eighteenth-century theorists and musicians – such as Johann Mattheson, who wrote the treatise Der vollkommene Capellmeister (1739), and his contemporaries – and analyses Bach's violin concerto in A minor (BWV 1041) with particular attention on his manuscript through the lenses of musical rhetoric, figure and affection to elucidate the significance of eighteenth-century performance practices.

Rhetoric and Music

The rhetorical concepts applied to music are derived from Classical orators and philosophers, principally Aristotle (384–322 BC), Cicero (106–43 BC), and Quintilian (35–100 AD). Aristotle established the strategies of rhetoric systematically to improve and correct the Sophist culture. This culture began when Athenian men were required to stand in the assembly and give speeches to the crowd to persuade them to vote for the legislation. The Sophist teachers instruct men in the skills of analysing poetry, structuring speech, and developing arguments. Due to the Sophists' influence on Athens' democratic system of governance, the art of rhetoric spread rapidly throughout Greece. Aristotle established his own strategies and treatise to correct negative contemporary perceptions of the Sophists, who were accused the Sophists of manipulating the truth for financial gain (Harris, 2021). Aristotle's treatise had a tremendous influence on the development of rhetoric over two thousand years, with the Roman rhetoricians who came after him – such as Cicero and Quintilian – frequently drawing on Aristotle's treatise. Their instructions on rhetoric have since influenced musical practice and music composition.

Among the influential and powerful legacies are the five phases (canons): *inventio* (invention), *dispositio* (arrangement), *elocutio* (style), *memoria* (memory), and *pronuntiatio* (delivery) (Quintilianus, 1996/ 95AD, 383). These elements were employed to accomplish the following rhetorical aims: *docere* (to prove),

delectare (to delight), and *movere* (to move) (Wilson et al., 2001). In rhetoric, *inventio* describes the process of developing the key points a speaker seeks to address. In this stage, the speaker must consider their medium when deciding on the style and length of a speech. The second phase, *dispositio*, refers to the process of arranging and structuring content for maximum impact. *Elocutio* is the process of determining the content of a speech in terms of its rhetorical techniques, such as figures. The fourth phase, *memoria*, emphasises memorising the content of a speech so it can be recited without referring to notes. As an advanced form of *memoria*, the speaker visualises their speech as a mental dress rehearsal in which they explore the environment. Finally, *pronuntiatio* is the process of integrating the other four phases and practising the delivery of the speech, including gestures, tone of voice, and pronunciation (Eckstein, 2023). These five phases established a solid foundation of rhetoric that profoundly influenced the music of that time.

Rhetoric at the beginning only referred to language-related fields, such as words and meanings. It gradually broadened not only musical thought but also painting. The application of rhetoric to music began during the Renaissance, when humanists renewed their cultural interest in Classical writers and linguistic disciplines. In the Renaissance period, Italy gradually became the centre of intellectual renewal, and scholars turned their gaze to humanity rather than God. People in the Renaissance period were more focused on human concerns, such as freedom, dignity, intelligence, creativity, and independence (Brooks, 2022). These intellectuals rediscovered ancient works and ideas, among them Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, discovered by Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459) in the fifteenth century. Bracciolini's recovery of works by the orators Cicero and Quintilian gradually influenced Western music (Laurin, 2012). Specifically, this revival led to the common tradition of emphasising musical text expression and general reference in the Renaissance and Baroque periods (Bartel, 1997).

The humanist focus on language and linguistic disciplines eventually prompted the influence of rhetorical concepts on musical thought. This influence is first evident in Germany, where musicians began analysing musical components through an existing musical expression or form to identify the available pedagogical and artistic techniques of both rhetoric and music. In particular, rhetoric played a significant role in Martin Luther's theological framework and his approach to combining music and sacred texts in his preaching. The Protestant reformer understood that when engaging with a spoken text intellectually, the text and its affect can be expressed more emphatically by adding music, provided the music remains centred on the text (Bartel, 1997). Indeed, the term *musica poetica* (musical rhetoric), which refers to the compositional discipline of composing music based on rhetoric, combining with *musica theoretica* and *musica practica* in German Baroque music (Buelow, 2001), first appeared in the writings of sixteenth-century German Lutherans (Benitez, 1987), who argued that the creativity of composers should give guidance on both the basics and setting a text to music. In other words, musical works should use rhetorical terms to define the processes and structures of composition (Benitez, 1987). The initial idea of employing rhetoric to align music with texts was gradually expanded into the doctrine of affections (German: *Affektenlehre*), which was then applied to Baroque instrumental music (Wilson et al, 2001; Bartel, 1997). The systematic development of musical rhetoric occurred primarily in Germany; while Italian writers and composers were not interested in defining musical rhetoric, the vocabulary of French musical rhetoric is questionable, and English references were limited to treatises on rhetoric alone rather than to music or rhetoric in music (Bartel, 1997).

The Foundations of Musical Rhetoric

As music and oration have the same purpose – to affect audiences' feelings through sound – rhetoric can be applied to music effectively, using similar techniques that permit music to

stir emotions that persuade listeners in the same way as orators (Haynes, 2007; Tarling, 2005). Brian Vickers (1988) notes that rhetoric was highly influential on music from 1500 to 1750, but that by the eighteenth century, its dominance was in decline, and it lost its supremacy as new aesthetics of visual arts and music emerged that moved away from language-based standards. John Neubauer (1986) states that music should not be linked to rhetoric too literally and that rhetoric should be considered more specific and broader. Furthermore, Judy Tarling (2005) notes that a key difference between music and rhetoric is that in rhetoric, the performer (orator) is always a solo speaker who typically develops their speech themselves, while a musician must adopt rhetorical methods that are sufficiently flexible to accommodate groups of various sizes in which each musician's personality and imagination make a larger contribution to a performance's affection. From the argument above, we can see that some scholars argue against comparing music and rhetoric too closely.

Aside from different perspectives, music and rhetoric ultimately have the same goal: to affect audiences' emotions. When applied appropriately, rhetorical principles support the audience's understanding of the music's meaning through narrative and hermeneutics (Haynes, 2007). According to Tarling (2005, p. 4), 'the musician and orator have so much in common that once this connection has been made in the performer's mind, a new attitude towards performing develops, usually with a beneficial effect.' Therefore, applying rhetorical ideas to music performance is necessary to present appropriate musical styles.

Rhetorical Principles in Eighteenth-Century German Music

Framework and Figure

The original purpose of the Classical rhetorical concepts was to instruct an orator in the art of directing and arousing the emotions of listeners. When implemented in music, the composer must follow the same guide and employ the exact 'rhetorical figure[s]' used in

oration: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria,* and *pronuntiatio* to achieve the rhetorical purpose (Laurin, 2012, p. vix–xv).

In the context of music, specifically, *inventio* refers to the general idea of a piece and its inspiration (Haynes, 2007, p. 166). Engaging in *inventio* is the first step in the rhetorical structure process and requires the composer to choose a theme or subject before deciding on the key, metre, and rhythm. The processes need to take text and affection into consideration (Bartel, 1997). Throughout the seventeenth century, *invention* was linked only to textual expression and was therefore text-oriented. In response to the growing popularity of instrumental music in the eighteenth century, composers applied *inventio loci topici* to write music more concerned with Johann David Heinichen's affectionate statement (Buelow, 1966). Heinichen proposes that a composer should design an idea from the text's inspiration and then transfer it to imagination (Bartel, 1997). Mattheson agreed with Heinichen's ideas and emphasised the importance of affection, while suggesting that melodic motives should be structured from the melody.

Furthermore, Mattheson specified that instrumental pieces should evoke a special passion; since instrumental music is without words, the instruments should govern the affection and present it "verbally and perceptibly" (Mattheson, 1981, p. 291). Notably, Mattheson thought it permissible to borrow a good melody from other composers if the melody is a fine model; however, he cautions that the use of another's melody must 'return the thing borrowed with interest' and make it prettier and better; otherwise, it would become 'copied' and 'stolen'" (Mattheson, 1981, p. 298). Accordingly, analysing *inventio* in the context of eighteenth-century instrumental music ought to focus on musical motifs, such as theme, key, metre, and rhythm.

Dispositio refers to the main body of a composition derived from *inventio* (Haynes, 2007, p. 166). According to Mattheson, the steps required to transform rhetoric into music are *exordium*, *narratio*, *propositio*, *condutatio*, *confirmatio,* and *peroratio* (Mattheson, 1969, p. 752). *Exordium* is in effect the introduction, which must attract

the attention of listeners and lead them to the following section. Examples include preludes, fugues, and ritornellos. Mattheson emphasised that these sections must be revealed in such a way that the listeners are 'stimulated to attentiveness' (Mattheson, 1969, p. 753). *Narratio* refers to the entry of a solo instrument into a piece, sometimes combined with the next step, *propositio,* which is considered the 'actual proposal' in rhetorical terms (Bartel, 1997). In musical rhetoric, *propositio* refers to the function of the actual melody content, with *condutatio* and *confirmatio* strengthening this section. In spoken rhetoric, *condutatio* means to refute objections; in music, it may be 'expressed in melody either through the expanding of other ideas or through quotation and refutation of strange-seeming events' (Mattheson, 1969, p. 754). C*ondutatio* uses suspensions, chromaticism, or contrasting passages. Conversely, *confirmation* employs repetition to support *propositio*. *Peroratio* is the conclusion of the composition and may use amplification to enhance the emotional impact of the piece, usually by including *exordium* or ritornello (Tarling, 2005).

Elocutio refers to the use of figures or devices in musical rhetoric, and its application to both musical and spoken rhetoric is the most closely related and articulated (Bartel, 1997). According to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theorists, numerous rhetorical figures in music exist; however, this article focuses on the most common categories: repetition, silence, and contradiction (Laurin, 2012). The first figure, repetition, encompasses *anaphora* (i.e., general repetition, e.g., a bass line, phrase, or motif)*, climax* (i.e., vocal or melodic repetition in different registers, volume, or pitch), and *anticlimax*, which includes *anabasis* and *catabasis*. Of these two components of the *anticlimax*, the former describes an ascending passage, upward movement or exalted affect, while the latter describes a descending passage, downward movement or negative affect (Laurin, 2012). The second figure, silence, is an unexpected silence that shocks or surprises the listener after a long musical section (Tarling, 2005). The two types of silence are *aposiopesis* and *ellipsis*. The former refers to a sudden pause in music

to evoke surprise, while the latter omits an expected consonance and also conveys rhetorical value by adjusting the dynamic, as in suspension (Laurin, 2012). The third figure, contradiction, is also known as *parrhesia*, which describes the use of notes outside the key to create unexpected dissonance (e.g., chromatic, tritone, or dissonant jumps) on a weak beat, which evokes a sense of pain, surprise, or discomfort. Another device that is similar to the figure of contradiction is the antithesis. In music, the antithesis typically takes the form of contrasting styles, rhythms, tessituras, tempos, and moods placed close together, coinciding (Tarling, 2005) or, as Mattheson suggests, between the first and second parts in one aria (Mattheson, 1969).

Memorising is the final step in constructing a speech and entails memorising the speech and the accompanying gestures that support his ideas. Both Quintilian and Cicero emphasise the importance of *memoria*, with Cicero using mnemonic techniques to help memory as well as imagination, and Quintilian stating that memorising speeches is essential to education and advising that one should first memorise a small portion of the speech, imagining the word's position as a memory aid (Tarling, 2005). Mattheson agrees with Quintilian's statement and instructs that 'the sentence should be so constructed that one could pronounce it decently' (Mattheson, 1969, p. 607).

Finally, in spoken rhetoric, *pronuntiatio* refers to delivery and describes eloquence (in French, *déclamation* (Haynes, 2007); in German, *Vortrag*). It is generally regarded as the most essential rhetorical device, and many rhetoricians agree that it is more important even than musical structure, such as *inventio* (Tarling, 2005). However, German writers paid only minor attention to this rhetorical skill (Bartel, 1997). To perform eloquently is to play or sing in an oratorical manner, which involves emphasising and exaggerating agogics, tempo rubato, pauses, inflection, dynamics, and articulation with precision and clarity (Haynes, 2007). The German writers Quantz and Carl Emanuel Bach named this skill *Vortrag* and, in Quantz's treatise, the term describes expressive

musical execution, which includes two essential elements of music – to touch and to please (Quantz, 2001). The whole idea can be shown in this example: Haynes (2007) uses Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.'s powerful delivery of the words 'I have a dream', accomplished in part through the 'energy' and 'tremors' in his voice (Haynes, 2007, p. 171). The discussion above shows the importance of *the* idea and how the affection could influence on listeners' emotion.

Regarding the responsibility for understanding and demonstrating these rhetorical devices, Tarling (2005) argues that both composers and performers have a duty to communicate them effectively to the audience. The composer, she writes, is responsible for *inventio*, *dispositio,* and *elocutio*, while the performer is responsible for *memoria* and *pronuntiatio*. Accordingly, the following discussion of Bach's violin concerto in A minor focuses on *inventio*, *dispositio,* and *elocutio* regarding its framework and on *pronuntiatio* in terms of interpretation.

Bach and Violin Concerto BWV 1041

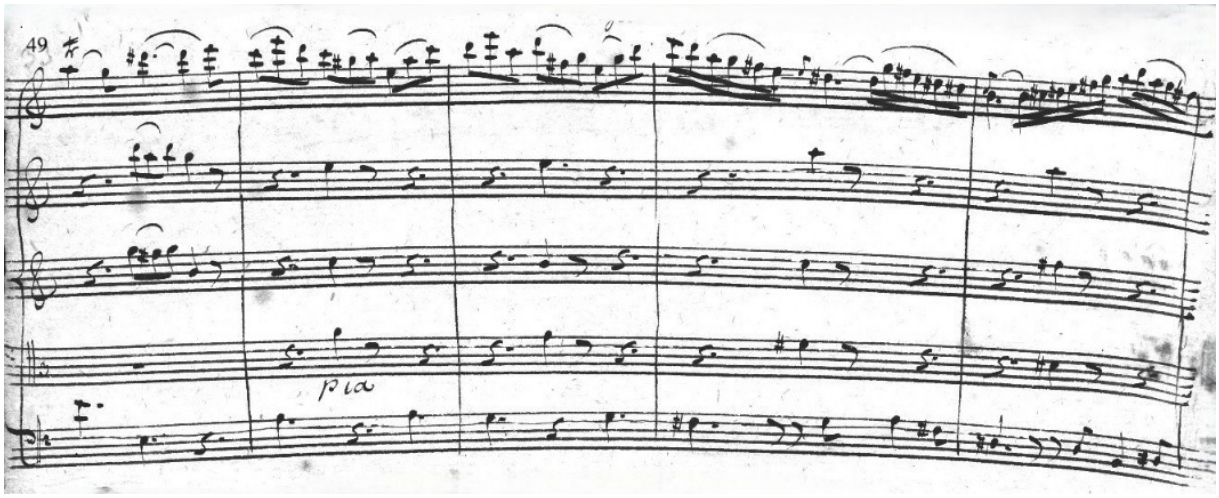
The following part of the article analyses Bach's Violin Concerto BWV 1041 by applying the concept of rhetoric, with focus on musical structure, framework, and analytical interpretation. Bach's important violin works include his remarkable Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin (BWV 1001-1006), Violin Concertos (BWV 1041, 1043), Sonatas for Violin and Obbligato Harpsichord (BWV 1014-1019), and Sonatas for Violin and Continuo (BWV 1021, 1023). His works were influenced by the reconstruction period of the post Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). During this era, cultural exchange expanded as French and Italian musical traditions entered German courts and cities, introducing advanced violin techniques through Italian virtuosi (Geiringer & Geiringer, 1966). Among Bach's musical works, they are influenced by four traditions. The first tradition is French style, which comes with French tempo words. The second is the Italian Corelli tradition; it usually has four or more movements,

with only one tempo word applying to all movements. The third is the Italian Vivaldi tradition. In this tradition, Bach follows a typical three-movement concerto, each movement usually marks a clear tempo word with "possible omission of the opening Allegro caption". The fourth tradition is the Frescobaldi toccata tradition, in which the tempo words are usually placed in the middle of the work. The markings only remind the musician about tempo changes (Abravaya, 2006, 148). Stylistically and technically, this concerto, BWV 1041, belongs to Bach's third tradition, which combines the virtuoso flair and structural form of Vivaldi with Bach's own texture and harmonic language. A baroque violinist as well as the artistic director and concertmaster of the Bach Society, Shunske Sato (1984-) states, "This concerto is just about the first one you encounter, as a young talented violinist... I've grown to understand Bach's idiom better and developed an instinct for his music" (Violin Concerto in a Minor. Netherland Bach Society, 2021)

During his Cöthen period (1717–23), Bach wrote two violin concertos: BWV 1041 and BWV 1042. The earliest surviving manuscript of his A minor violin concerto, held today in the Berlin State Library's (*Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*) Prussian Cultural Heritage collection (*Preußischer Kulturbesitz*), dates from around 1730, shortly after he took on the role of director of Leipzig's Collegium Musicum. However, many scholars suspect that the concerto was first composed during Bach's time as *Kapellmeister* in Cöthen (1717–23) (Dotsey, 2018). Basing his claim on the style of the piece, Hans Eppstein (2000) states that it cannot have been written before Bach's time in Weimar (1708–17). Although this concerto and various editions have been interpreted and performed by numerous renowned violinists, its manuscript raises some doubts about the marks of articulations and notations (Eppstein, 2000; Wollny, 2009). Regarding the music text, the manuscript is free of errors, but the articulation marks of the solo part are notated imprecisely and sometimes even contradictorily (Eppstein, 2000; Wollny, 2009). From the top staff (solo violin) of Figure 1, the slur part is unclear, and the pattern of passages suggests some possible

mistakes (bars 50-52). These uncertain and vague parts gave us space to rediscover the concept of musical rhetoric.

Figure 1. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement III, bars 49-53.



Source: Manuscript. D-B, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Mus. Ms. Bach P 252 (2). [digitized version]

The Rhetorical Framework of Bach's Violin Concerto BWV1041

No tempo mark appears in the first movement of BWV 1041, while the second and third movements are marked as *andante* and *allegro assai*, respectively. This section analyzes the concerto framework and its figures, first discussing the application of *inventio* and *dispositio* to each movement. A discussion of the application of *elocutio* in each movement follows. For an overview of the components of each rhetorical phase, see Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of the Rhetorical Components

Rhetorical phase	Description
Inventio	Topic or theme, key, metre, and rhythm
Dispositio	Content 1. *Exordium*: introduction or prelude 2. *Narratio*: entrance of the main melody 3. *Propositio*: actual content or melody 4. *Condutatio*: argument, point, idea expansion, or new musical idea (e.g., suspension and chromatic scales) 5. *Confirmatio*: repetition to support *propositio* 6. *Peroratio*: conclusion or postlude
Elocutio	Musical-rhetorical figures 1. Figures of repetition: anaphora, climax, anticlimax 2. Figures of silence: aposiopesis, ellipsis 3. Figures of contradiction: parrhesia, antithesis

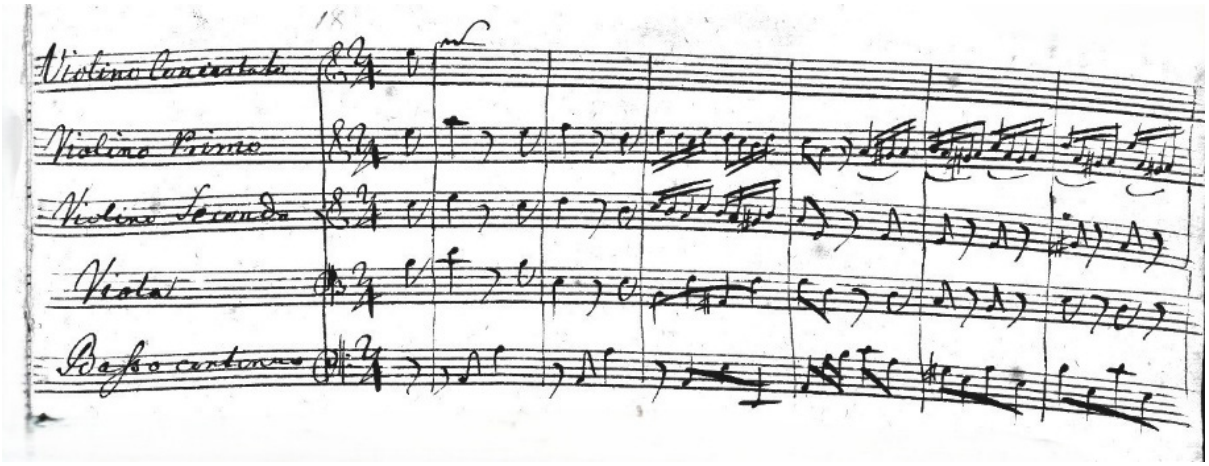
Source: Source from which the author obtained the table

Inventio and Dispositio

The First Movement

Regarding *inventio*, despite the lack of a tempo indication in the first movement (Figure 2), the metre, which is an essential source for performers, can serve as a guide to the appropriate tempo (Chang & Chen, 2021). Here, the 2/4 metre hints at a more moderate tempo, indicating the *tempo giusto,* serious and emphatic. At the same time, it should be played more 'lightly' and 'playfully' (Kirnberger, 1982, p. 386-387; Breidenstein, 2019, p. 14). Johan Philipp Kirnberger's instructions indicate the tempo to performers, as well as how to play the notes and rhythm of a piece.

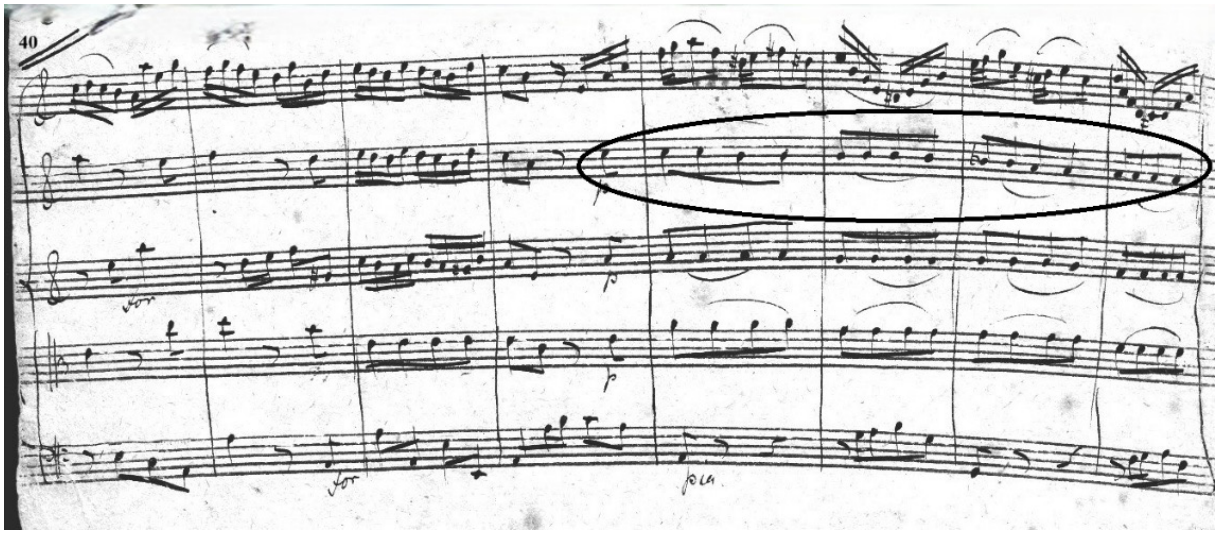
Figure 2. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement I, beginning.



Source: Manuscript. D-B, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Mus. Ms. Bach P 252 (2). [digitized version]

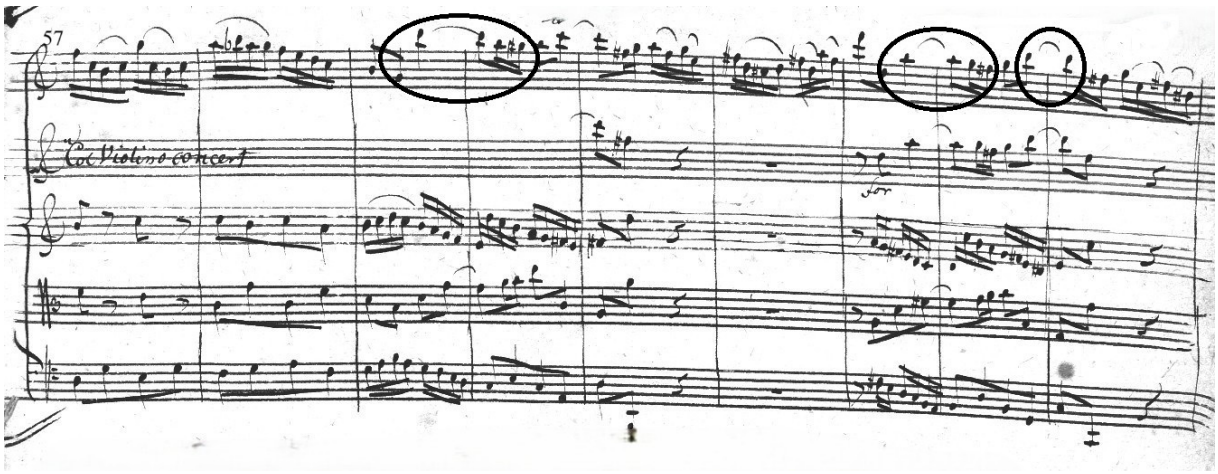
In terms of the *dispositio*, the *exordium* part can be identified by its ritornello form (bars 1–24). The *narratio* and *propositio* begin at the pickup of bar 24, when the solo violin enters, with *condutatio* beginning to develop after this entrance in various ways. In bars 44–47, Bach uses chromatic descending motion to lead to key modulation and to create new musical ideas, showing the contrast between the acoustic as a point of argument and his rhetorical *condutatio* (Figure 3). Another example, the suspension note, is used in the violin solo to create tension (Figure 4). *Confirmatio* occurs in bar 142, with the orchestra repeating the *propositio*, and the *peroratio* begins with the return to tutti in bar 167.

Figure 3. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement I, bars 40-47.



Source: Manuscript. D-B, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Mus. Ms. Bach P 252 (2). [digitized version]

Figure 4. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement I, bars 57-65.



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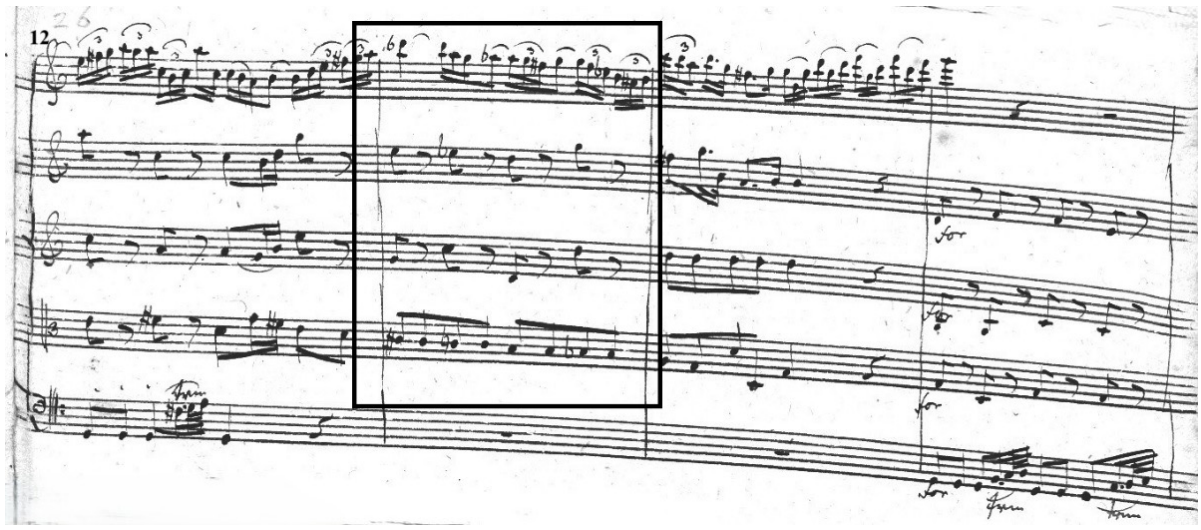
The Second Movement

The *inventio* of the second movement is in C major and 4/4 time with the tempo marked as *andante*. This 4/4 time should be played with a livelier tempo and execution (Kirnberger, 1982). According to Leopold Mozart, *andante* should be played at a 'walking' speed

that allows the piece to take 'its own natural course' (Mozart, 2010, p. 51). Sebastian de Bossard defines *andante* as 'to stroll with even steps,' meaning making the notes sound equal and distinct (Donington, 1974, p. 388). As a result, we can conclude that the *inventio* of the second movement, the affect, should present a lively and light style with natural walking speed as its musical topic.

Regarding the *dispositio,* the *exordium* starts from bars 1–4, which is the prelude (introduction) in the orchestra section. The *narratio* begins with the entrance of the solo violin at bar 5, followed by the *propositio*, which starts at bar 9. In this movement, Bach uses *condutio* in several places to present the points of his argument by contrasting the acoustics of the tonal melody and the chromatic effect, as in bar 13 (Figure 5), which shows the chromatic melody line of the solo violin with the chromatic bass line on the viola. In bar 39, *confirmatio* is used to echo the *propositio* part, with the *peroratio* in bar 43 serving as the conclusion.

Figure 5. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement II, bars 12-15.



Source: Manuscript. D-B, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Mus. Ms. Bach P 252 (2). [digitized version]

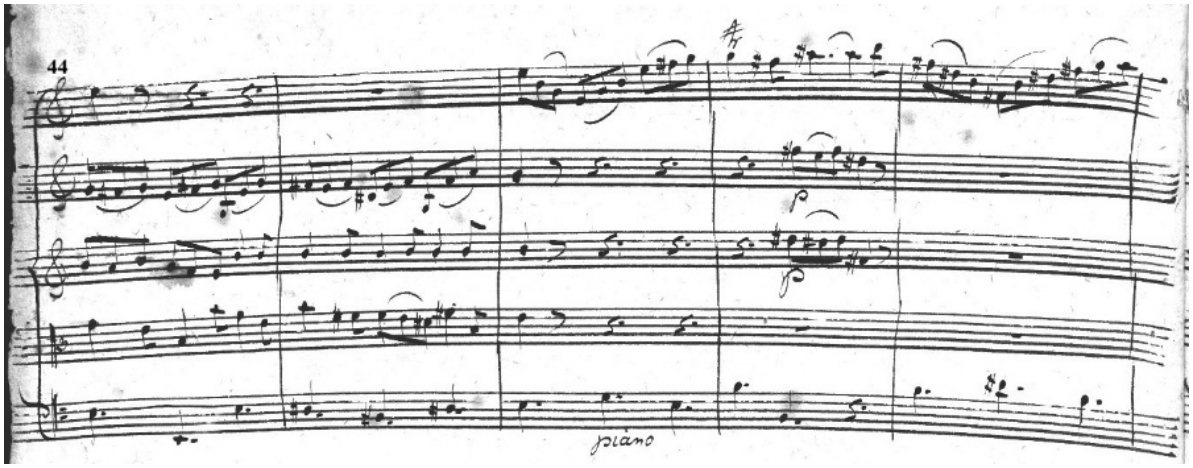
The Third Movement

Concerning *inventio*, the third movement returns to A minor and shifts to 9/8 time with *allegro assai* as the tempo in the gigue style (Posner, n.d.). As a gigue, the piece is played in a quick, lively

manner, with short quaver patterns and melodic crotchets in the singing part (Quantz, 2001). According to Quantz (2001), if *allegro assai* is indicated in triple time with a semiquaver, it should be played at a more moderate tempo, not too quickly, especially in German works, which tend to be more difficult. The 9/8 metre suggests a heavier playing style that puts some weight on the last note compared to 3/4 time, in which the quavers should be played more lightly (Kirnberger, 1982). Based on this discussion, it would appear that the movement's effect should be joyful and intense, played at a lively but not too fast tempo, with extra weight on the third beat of 9/8 to emphasise harmony.

In terms of its *dispositio*, the third movement begins with a long *exordium* (ritornello) from the beginning to bar 24. Similar to the first movement, the *narratio* and *propositio* are combined and start from bar 25, the solo violin entry. One example of an application of *condutatio* occurs in the second entry of the melody part (bar 46, Figure 6), where this entry expands upon the musical motif in the solo violin part. Another *condutatio* is the constant change of harmony to create affection, which can be traced from the style of Bach's Giga II (Little & Jenne, 2001). In this movement, the *confirmatio* is placed in bar 91 to emphasise the *narratio* and *propositio*. The *peroratio* (bar 117) repeats precisely the same as the *exordium* (bar 1–24) to end the movement.

Figure 6. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement III, bars 40-44.



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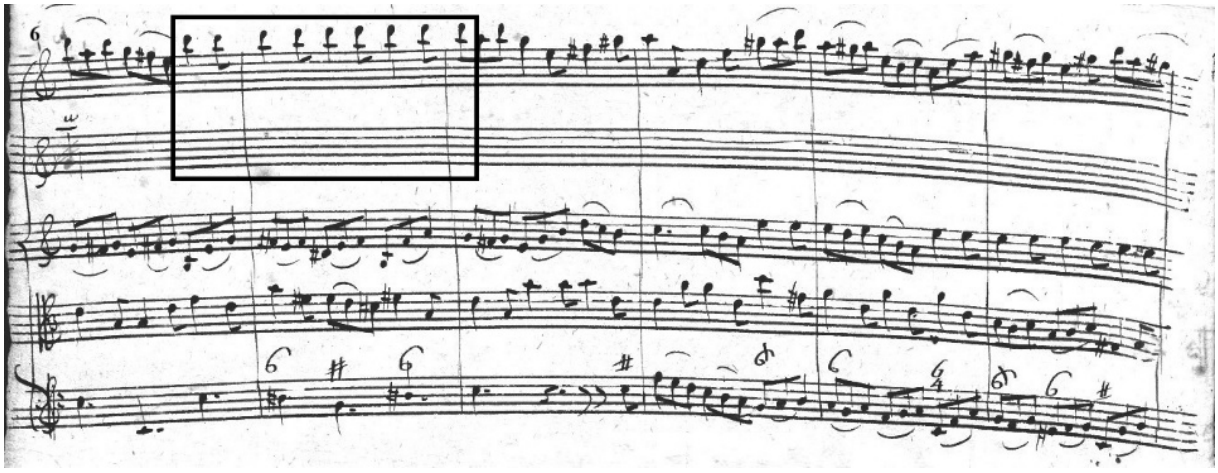
Elocutio

As the essential elements to form the structure of music, the selected use of three kinds of rhetorical figures – *anaphora*, *climax,* and *anticlimax* – throughout the three movements indicates the extensive application of rhetorical devices related to *elocutio* in this work.

Anaphora

In the third movement (bars 6–8, Figure 7) , the repeated notes and rhythms of the solo and first violins reinforce the repetition. The rhythm is set with a long note followed by a short note, and it builds tension by repeating the B note.

Figure 7. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement III, bars 6- 11.



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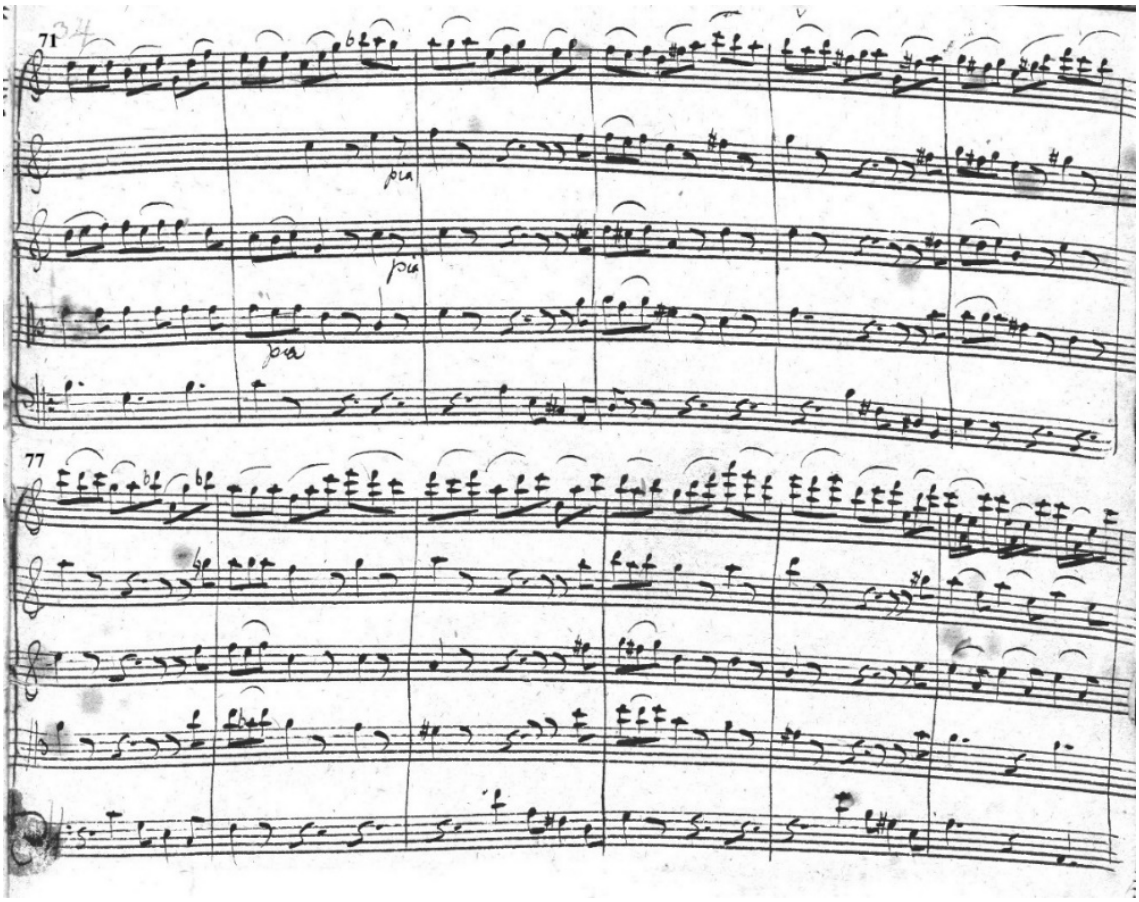
Climax

The third movement, bars explicitly 72–81, shows the progression of the climax (Figure 8). The solo violin part begins with two-bar motifs that ascend to different registers after every two bars, with the pitches and chords increasing in the orchestral part.

Figure 8. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement III, bars 71-82.



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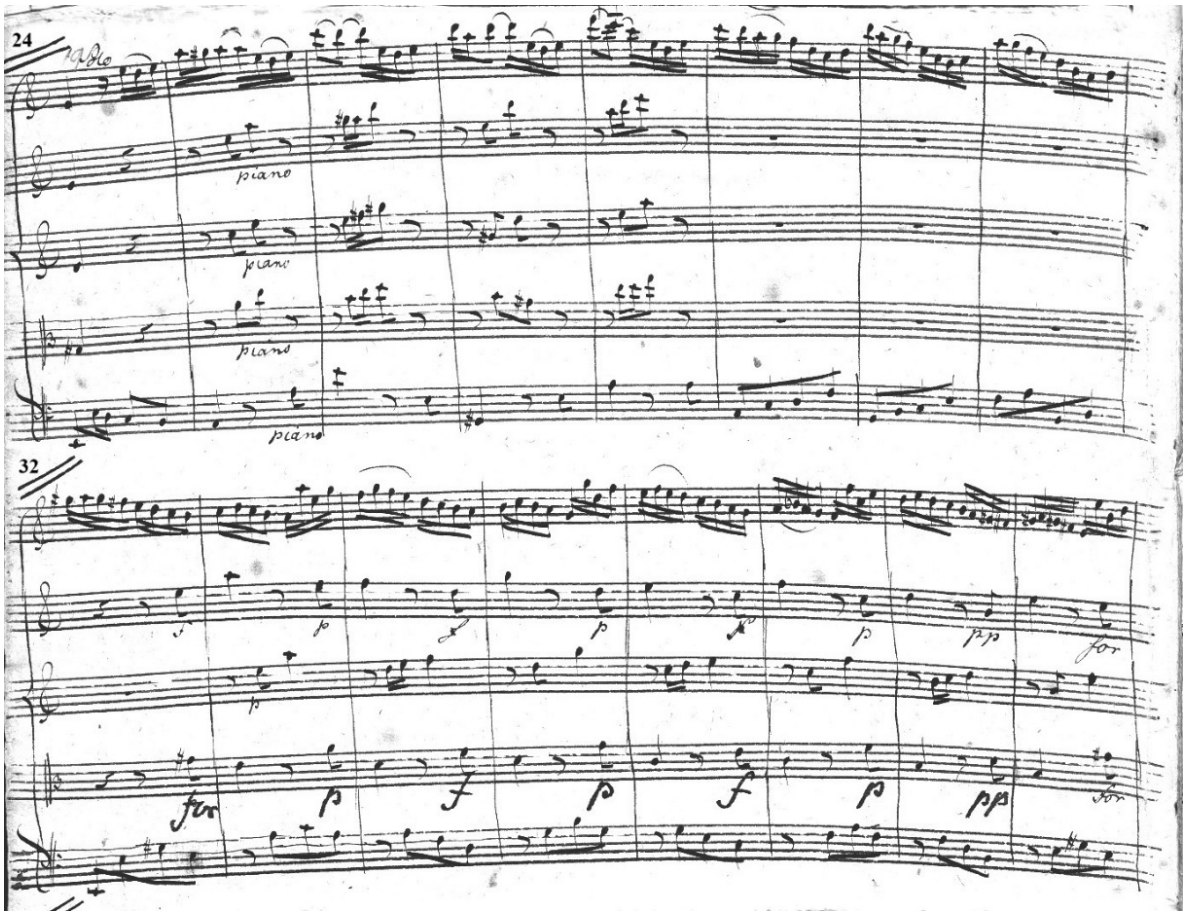
Anticlimax (Anabasis and Catabasis)

Both *anabasis* and *catabasis* appeared in the first movement (Figure 9). The former shows the passage ascending on the solo violin part beginning at the pickup of bars 24–28, and the latter shows the descending passage from bar 29.

Figure 9. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement I, bars 24-39.



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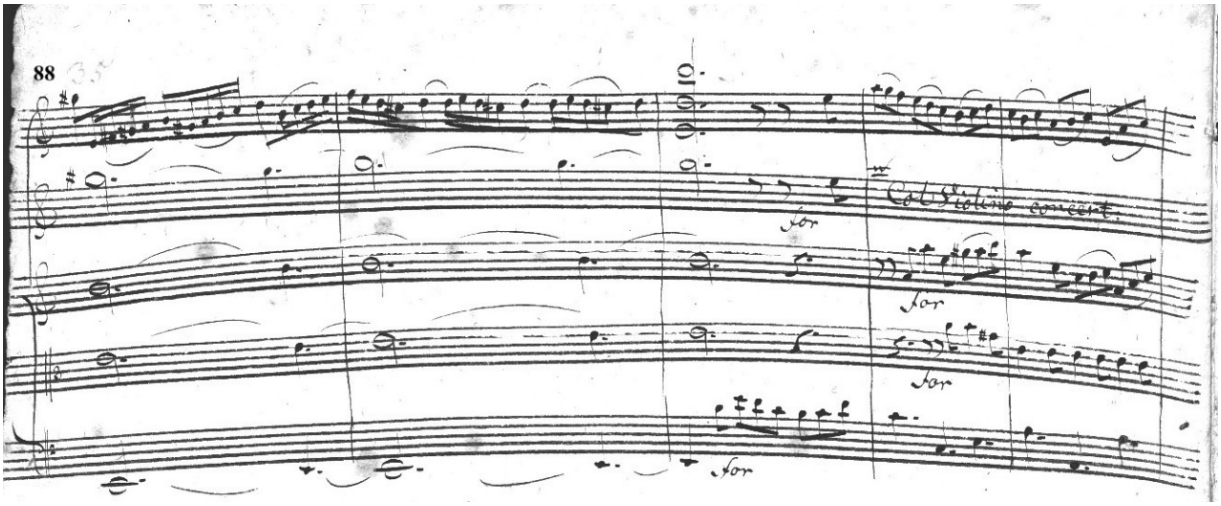
Aposiopesis

The *aposiopesis* appears in the third movement (Figure 10). Here, it takes the form of a surprise silence that follows the solo violin's cadenza. The note stops on bar 90 with the V chord and pedal in the orchestra's part. The solo violin should continue to sustain the chord or ornament with a fermata to create a silent moment.

Figure 10. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement III, bars 88-92.



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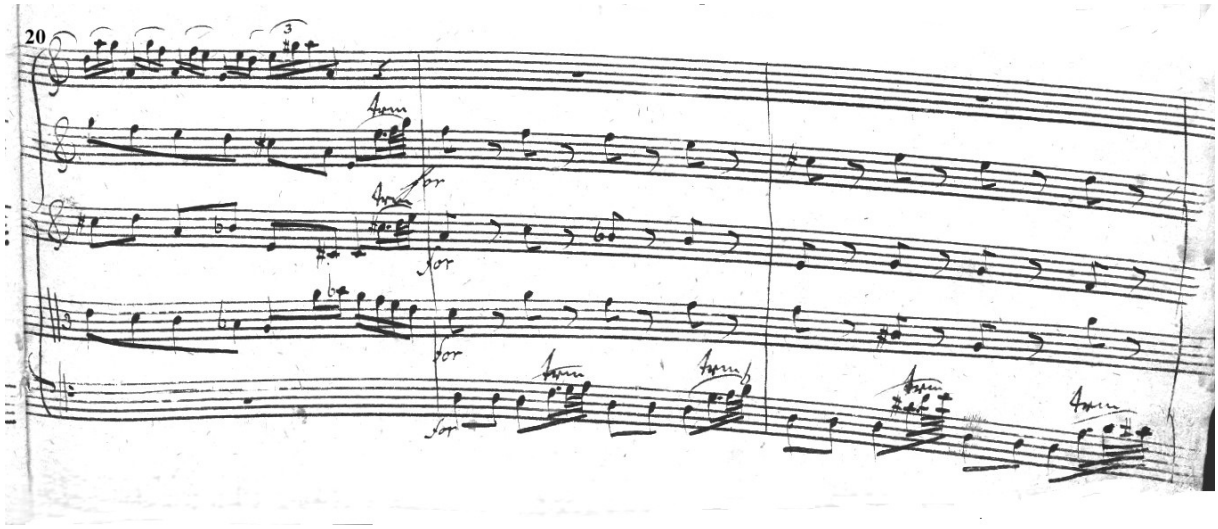
Ellipsis

After the melody line played by the solo violin in the second movement (bar 20) descends, the melody stops on the V chord. At the same time, the orchestra part continues, completing the cadence with V–I progression (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement II, bars 20-22.



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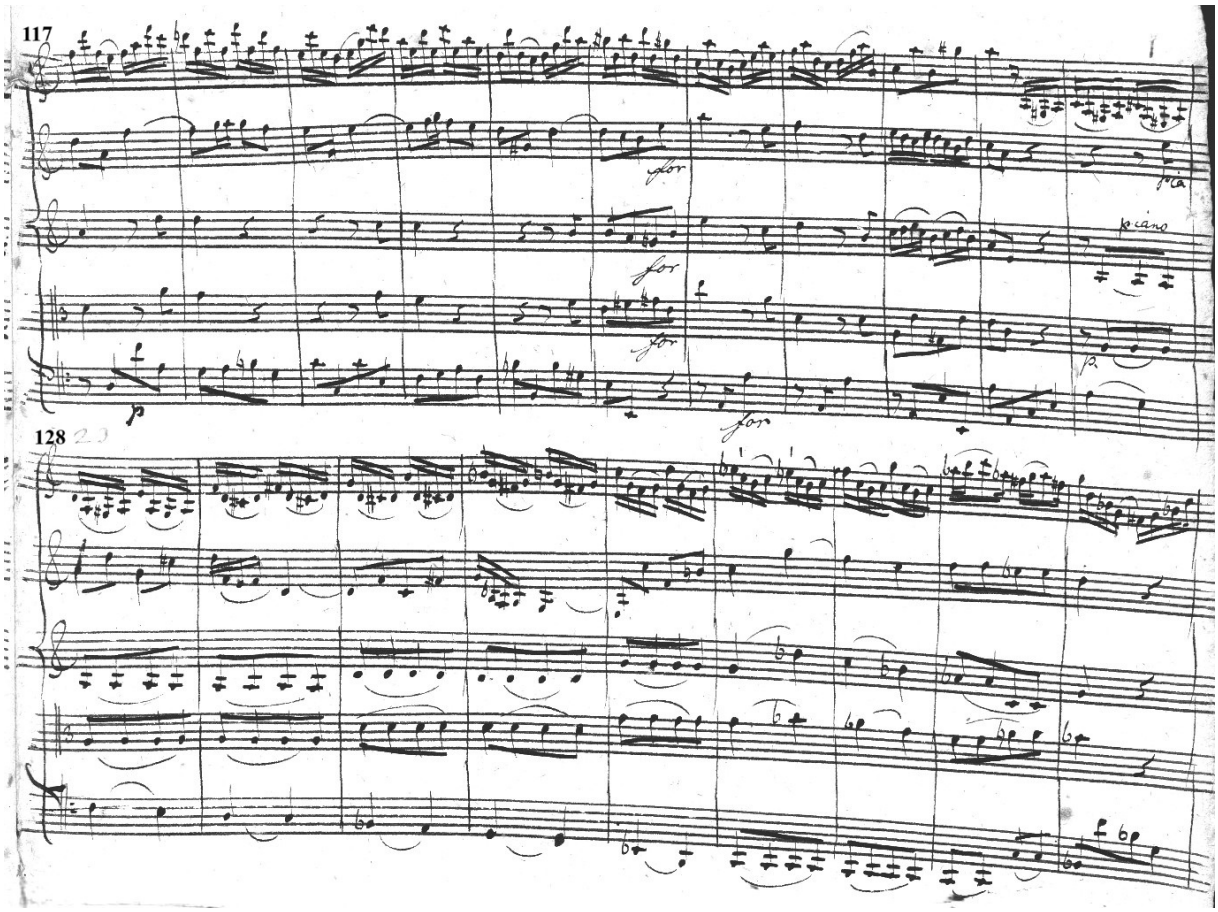
Parrhesia

In Figure 5, we see an example of *parrhesia*: the melody line and its chords appear outside the key, surprising the audience and evoking an uncomfortable affection.

Antithesis

An example of *antithesis* appears in the first movement (Figure 12). Specifically, from the pickup to bars 127–134, the solo violin initiates an *anabasis* to express ascending affect. Still, it is interrupted by the first violin's descending melody line, which appears to attract listeners' attention through acoustic contrast.

Figure 12. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement I, bars 117-136.



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Interpretation of the Rhetorical Devices Employed by Bach

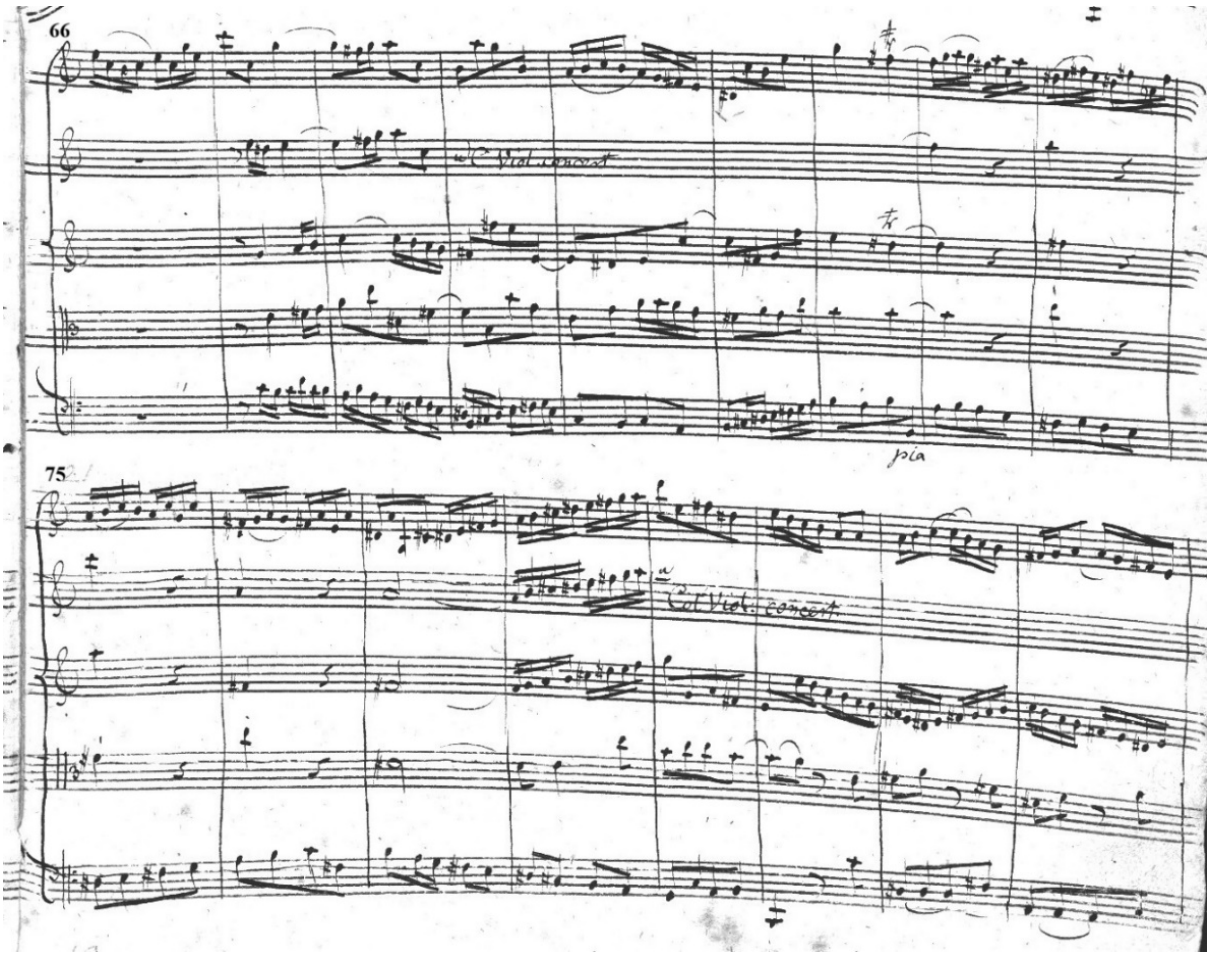
Based on the above observations, it is clear that Bach strategically applied rhetorical techniques in his compositions. These techniques demonstrate how he effectively applied rhetorical skills to enhance the expressive depth and communicative power of his music, with the interpretation and delivery of his intended affection falling to the performers, who must develop and engage with skills related to *pronuntiatio* to achieve the intended effect. In spoken rhetoric, *pronuntiatio* encompasses articulation and delivery, both speech- and language-based. Although many different techniques may be employed to achieve *pronuntiatio*, those most relevant to musical rhetoric are discussed here. In spoken rhetoric, *pronuntiatio* comprises dynamics, emphasis, and variety.

Articulation includes clarity, endings, silences, and tempo choices. Quintilian (1921) states that the clarity of articulation in a speech should be as free, clear, and distinct as possible at all levels. Mattheson (1969) outlines several rules, such as style, metre, division, emotional clarity, precise caesuras, and emphatic notes. Concerning endings, both the performer and listener are afforded a break to take a breath at the end of the cadence (the sentence in spoken rhetoric). To create silence, the performer must pay special attention to 'the intonation and tone quality' of the end notes before the silence to make an extra effect with unresolved chords (Tarling, 2005, p. 143). For example, in bar 90 of the 3rd movement of Figure 10, the solo violin and orchestra parts end with a fermata on a long chord and create silence before the cello enters. The long chord should be played in tune and with precision to generate a strong emotional response in the listener. Finally, the choice of tempo requires the performer to be cautious about the implied relationship among tempo, notation, and musical structure. To ensure that the performer's decision about tempo engages with the rhetorical concept, they must consider the metre and the type of note value from the music structure, such as quiver,

minim, crochet, and so on (Chang & Chen, 2010; Kirnberger, 1982), which echo to a baroque flutist Barthold Kuijken (1949-) advice, we should consider if performer's interpretation matches sources to achieve what composer's design (Early Music America, 2018).

Regarding delivery, eighteenth-century theorists connected dynamics with various emotional expressions. In general, higher note registration means a louder effect, and lower note registration means a softer effect, with loud often being grand, noble, or angry and soft being sweet or pathetic; however, in rhetorical style, performers are expected to play detailed dynamics without any written indication (Tarling, 2005). In Figure 13, the solo violin should play descending notes with decrescendo from bar 73 to 77, followed by ascending scales with crescendo from bar 78.

Figure 13. Bach, Violin Concerto in A minor BWV 1041, Movement I, bars 66-82.



Source: Manuscript. D-B, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Mus. Ms. Bach P 252 (2). [digitized version]

In spoken rhetoric, emphasis relates to the use of words with strong meaning and impact, but it can also be applied easily to sound (Mattheson, 1969). It is necessary to understand the musical ideas from the composers' intentions to play emphasis in appropriate places, so that the musical ideas make clear sense to the listener. In musical rhetoric, one of the most commonly used devices is dissonance, intended to produce a specific effect. Whereas consonances create agreeable and pleasing sounds, dissonances should be played with various degrees of emphasis to make a special effect. These parts should be played louder – sometimes violently – and then resolved with more relaxed and softer playing (Tarling, 2005; Quantz, 2001).

Variety is key to pleasing the ears of listeners, and performers must entertain and hold their attention. According to Cicero, arousing positive affection in an audience requires that the variation in the length of words – written or spoken – should differ based on the context and the performer's intention to evoke a particular emotion. In Figure 5, the *parrhesia* conveys discomfort in the second movement. The surprising B♭ on the first beat in bar 13, and the A♭ that follows with the chromatic scale, should be emphasised and stretched slightly longer to make the effect clear. Ton Koopman (1944-), a Dutch conductor, organist, harpsichordist, and musicologist, suggests that the performer, "they should find what is attractive for them in early music, to see if they can defend their way of playing or singing" (Gotoh, 2025). To achieve an appropriate musical interpretation, performers should base their approach on historical sources. Therefore, the music can be presented with both logical consistency and fresh performing insight.

Conclusion

This article has applied musical-rhetorical devices to the work of a composer writing before the nineteenth century. Music historians have only recently rediscovered the use of rhetoric to

support the basis of aesthetics in the early twentieth century, with the result that we are just now beginning to understand how much pre-nineteenth-century Western music employed this practice (Haynes, 2007). The purpose of rhetorical music was to move audiences emotionally, and since all shared affection in society, this music was composed for the public. The use of musical rhetoric in this period highlights a significant departure from Romantic music after the nineteenth century.

When applied to an analysis of Bach's violin concerto in A minor, the principles of musical rhetoric reveal how the piece employed musical structures, figural types, and the delivery of affection. Musical rhetoric had a significant impact on European music before the nineteenth century, as demonstrated in German music and treatises. When interpreting eighteenth-century music to play it as intended, we must consider its rhetorical background, especially the influence of musical rhetoric on compositional and performing styles, to achieve the composer's intentions, as Kuijken advises. In doing so, contemporary composers and performers might experience the affection intended by eighteenth-century German musicians and convey it to their audiences. For performers nowadays, we should interpret music through a rhetorical lens to achieve an appropriate style. As Kuijken (2021) states, "Stay as close as possible to the music which was born in the composer's mind... you have to concentrate on the valuable sources". As performers, we should position ourselves within the affection of the piece and endeavour to arouse the expression beyond the composer's expectations. Musicians seeking to engage listeners through a historically informed performance approach should understand the period's musical language, not only in musicological scholarship but also in Bach's intended rhetorical ideas.

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