

The Career of an Eighteenth-Century Kapellmeister: The Life and Music of Antonio Rosetti

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Musical Examples in Supplement Chapter 10: Symphonies

❖ Example 10H

An analogous technique that is likely to have developed from the composer's concern for cohesive structure is the manner in which he moves from one formal unit to the next. Typically, sonata-form movements are laid out in a series of structural units tacked together to form larger divisions (exposition, development, and recapitulation). Internal units fulfill either a thematic (*P* and *S*) or functional (*TR* and *C*) role. They, in turn, are constructed from a series of smaller, less-strongly articulated passages. The binding together of such structural units at both small and broad levels often results in audible "seams" within the musical fabric. At the most inclusive level, a sharp and distinct division can be desirable, as, for example, at the beginning of the transition or closing area, but at less decisive levels of connection it generally is preferable to reduce the effect of these separations. This can be accomplished by devising bridging techniques that obscure the seams and guarantee a smooth directional flow from one musical idea to the next. In his early symphonies, Rosetti, like many of his contemporaries in the 1770s, does little to ensure this flow. The result is a succession of phrases like blocks placed end-to-end to achieve a larger structure. One of the most impressive—albeit not necessarily obvious—features of Rosetti's mature style is his ability to merge structural units into an organic continuity that establishes unity while still achieving the desirable degree of sectionalization. The opening Allegro assai of the Symphony in B-flat Major (A43) is a case in point. In this work, Rosetti marks the move from *P* to *TR* in a conventional manner by shifting from *forte* to *fortissimo* in the first measure of the new section. However, in order at the same time to create a directional motion that will propel *P* into the transition while also providing the continuity necessary to link these two structural units, he extends the last phrase of *P*, not allowing it to reach conclusion, and borrows its dotted rhythm to create the figure used to initiate *TR*. With this rather simple maneuver Rosetti has managed to cloud the distinctions between *P* and *TR*, while still not diminishing the integrity of their structural functions.

The first movement of A49—also in B-flat Major—provides another example of the composer's interest in seamless textures. Here, the linkage occurs between *TR* and *S*. Although this is an important formal juncture that must be firmly established Rosetti wants to insure a flow from one idea to the next. Conventional logic would be

to bring the rushing figuration of *TR* to a complete cadence, insert a pause, and begin *S* with completely new material. In fact, Rosetti proceeds somewhat in this manner, but with one small modification. Although his *S* theme is new, it leads off with the same rhythm that appeared in the cadence of *TR*. Sounded initially by the first violins and immediately echoed by the inner voices, the listener hears this rhythm four times in different sonorities and registers as both the end of one idea and the beginning of another. Its double duty in both passages acts as a glue that binds the two units while at the same time recognizing that they are distinct structural elements.

Symphony in B-flat Major (A49) I, mm. 37-42

Example 10H: Symphony in B-flat Major (A49) I, mm. 37-42.

Vivace

Flute

Oboe I & II

Bassoon

Horn I & II
in B Flat

Violin I

Violin II

Viola I

Viola II

Basso

ff

f

p