Music as Gestural Language: Music and Speech in the French Enlightenment

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Abstract: It is easy to refute the notion that music conveys meanings by pointing out how arbitrary it would be to attribute context-independent conceptual meanings to musical elements. For us modern listeners who are used to listening absolute or pure music this all makes perfect sense. However, we should not forget that music was in earlier periods thought to convey meanings which were not conceptual, but more like the gestural meanings involved in speech intonation, gestures and dance. It is this earlier rhetorical tradition with its corresponding performance tradition we must also take into consideration when we judge whether there are meanings in music or not.

Keywords: Musical aesthetics, musical rhetoric, Condillac, Dideror, Rousseau

Today we posthanslickians tend to think music as pure and absolute. If music is supposed to communicate meanings at all, they are musical meanings. Thus, we have sometimes difficulties in understanding how and why music was connected with rhetoric during earlier periods. However, for the French philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Condilllac, Diderot and Rousseau, there was no need to connect music artificially with meanings in the manner of nineteen-century program music. They thought that music and speech were intrinsically and historically connected through intonation and gesturality to begin with. In order to understand the aesthetics of eighteen-century music and of earlier music in general, it may be worthwhile to see how these philosophers discussed the nature of the meanings expressed and expressible in music and how musicians of the period implemented corresponding ideas in music.

The Common Gestural Origins of Speech and Music

In his *Essai sur l'origine des connoissainces humaines* (1746) Condillac traces the origin of spoken language to gestures. This original gestural language had in turn developed from spontaneous natural gestures. Condillac considered that when humans started to use spontaneous natural gestures, such as reaching for an object, on purpose and in order to communicate with their fellow being, these natural signs were transformed into artificial signs (Condillac, *Essai*, II, I, I, §§ 1–5 and II, I, II, § 13). Finally, one has added vocal signs to this artificial gestural language (*Essai,* II, I, I, § 6). Spoken language was in the beginning used in combination with gestural language, but when its expressive powers reached a certain stage, vocal language prevailed over its gestural counterpart (*Essai*, I, I, I, § 8). However, this spoken language conserved something of the character of gestural language as vigorous bodily moments of gestural language were replaced melodic intonation, in which the intonation rose and descended in sensible intervals. So, for example, the vocable *Ah* could express admiration or surprise, pain, pleasure, sadness, joy, fear, disgust and practically any sentiment depending on its intonation (*Essai*, II, I, II, § 13).

Condillac concluded that in earlier times spoken language and singing have been rather close and inflections in speech have been so distinct that a musician could have notated them (*Essai,* II, I, II, §§ 13–14). In the origins speech was also chantlike by the fact that the syllables were not even, but some of them were pronounced fast one after the other and some extremely slowly (*Essai*, II, I, II, § 25). Condillac also observes that one could have used the same word for distinct ideas depending on its melodic intonation, which he believed to be the still the case in Chinese. He also claimed that the prosody of the antient Greeks was songlike (*Essai*, II, I, II, § 15). He finds evidence for the closeness of declamation to singing in the practices of ancient Greeks and Romans. He observes that they notated their declamation and accompanied it with instruments (*Essai*, II, I, III, §§ 15-16).

Music was, according to Condillac, for a long time merely a means to make speech more vigorous and agreeable. However, when it had perfected itself to rival with the expressiveness of speech, it was possible to separate it from speech (*Essai*, I, I, V–VI, §§ 46–47). In a similar manner the art of dance developed from the language of gestures (*Essai*, II, I, I, § 11). In this manner speech, music and dance had all developed and separated themselves from the original protolanguage incorporating them all.

Gestures as Embodied Signs

Condillac thought that natural signs are dependent on bodily structure. According to Condillac the language of animals is limited to natural gestures and cries that organisms with a similar bodily structure can understand, but those of a different species and with a different kind of anatomical structure cannot (Condillac, *Traité des animaux*, II, ii; OP 1, 360–362). Such gestures, although learned, are, however, not conventional. They are natural, in the sense of the word 'natural' contrasting with conventional, artificial or arbitrary. Condillac observes that we have not chosen these first signs: they have been given to us by nature along with the conformation of our organs. But once nature has thus shown us the way, we can imagine new artificial signs ourselves. So, in this way we could in fact express all our thoughts by gestures as well as by words, with a gestural language consisting of natural and artificial signs (Condillac, *Grammaire*, I, i; OP 1, 429.).[1]

Because of the gradual development of artificial signs from the natural ones, the distance between natural signs and artificial ones is not great. In a letter to Gabriel Cramer Condillac reproaches himself having mistakenly given the impression to the contrary (Condillac 1953, 86.). This close genetic relationship between natural and artificial signs and the possibility to transform one into the other does not, however, permit identifying them: what Condillac indicates here is merely that the same sign can act as a natural sign and as an artificial one. In his *Essai* he had already described how artificial language originated in "giving the natural signs the character of instituted signs," that is, by men starting to use the spontaneous natural gestures and cries *on purpose* in order to express their sentiments. In this way natural and artificial sign were for a long time mixed together (*Essai*, II, I, ii, § 13). But this genetic connection and coexistence does not annihilate their essential difference. Once the natural sign is used as an artificial one, it is also transformed into a proper sign: the natural signs are signs only in a metaphorical sense (Condillac 1953, 85–86).[2]

From Condillac's observation on the possibility of the same signs acting as natural signs pertaining to spontaneous reactions and as artificial signs used in communication, it follows that it is often possible to trace some conventional signs to their embodied origins. One could easily generalise Condillac's example of the development of pointing from spontaneous natural gesture of reaching with one's hand to the development of musical gestures. In this way, it would be possible to find, for example, the physiological motivations of conventional musical rhetorical figures. For example, the fast tempi expressing rage could be traced to the accelerated heartbeat of a person in rage. That unprepared dissonances can refer to unrest or anxiety is based on their analogy with the physiological tension involved in the orientation reflex evoked by surprising and unfamiliar stimuli, especially frightening ones, and so on. In this way, in Condillac's scheme musical expression can be said to be closer to nature than spoken language, where traces of the physiological or gestural motivation of expressions are scarce.

Rousseau

Rousseau's view of the role of musical features, that is, melodic intonation and rhythm in the development of language is similar to Condillac's. In his posthumous *Essai sur l'origine des langues* (1781) Rousseau too thought that poetry, music and speech had a common origin (Rousseau 1781, ch. 12; OC 12, 474). He claims for example that originally language had few consonants, but vowels were richly and melodically accented. Rhythm was equally important. The root words were imitative or 'accents' expressing emotions. The reason for the preponderance of vowels for Rousseau was that they were in their melodically accented and rhythmical nature closer to nature than the artificial consonants, who served mainly to separate and make the pronunciation of vowels easier. Thus, Rousseau describes the nature of this original language by observing that "[i]nstead of speaking one sang". He observes that "[i]instead of arguments, one had sentences; one persuaded without convincing; one painted without reasoning (Rousseau 1781, ch. 4; OC 12, 410–411).

According to Rousseau in the beginning there was no other music than the melody formed by the melodic accents of speech, no other measure than the one formed by their (temporal) quantities. One spoke as much by melodic intonations and rhythms as by articulated sounds. Speech and music flowed from the same source and were originally one and the same thing. A language without melodic accents, that is language formed merely by consonants and vowels could according to Rousseau express ideas but not sentiments or images. Expressing the latter requires rhythms and tones. And, like Condillac. Rousseau refers to the ancient Greeks, who possessed these elements more profusely than the language of later times (Rousseau 1781, ch. 12; OC 12, 426-–478). However, the fact that music was close to the origins of language does not mean that it is all natural. Tones do not affect us merely as sensations. When they are combined to form a melody, they act also as signs and as images. From mere physical sounds they are elevated into means of artistic imitation (Rousseau 1781, ch. 13; OC 12, 492–493). As art they are essentially a form of culture, the understanding of which requires a trained ear. So, Rousseau concludes that music is a language, the understanding of which requires that one possesses a dictionary (Rousseau 1781, ch. 14; OC 12, 493–494).

And as far as harmony is concerned, it is according to Rousseau even more conventional than melody. It provides pleasure only for trained ears. Perceiving and enjoying harmony requires an extensive habituation (Rousseau 1781, ch. 14; OC 494–495). This difference between the more conventional nature of harmony in comparison to melody is also the reason why Rousseau prefers melody to harmony (Rousseau 1781, ch. 17 and 19; OC 12, 515 and 520–526). Melody, by imitating the inflections of speech, is able to express grief, pain or joy, intimidation and moaning. Rousseau observes that not only does it imitate, it speaks and is more passionate and more vigorous than speech. Harmony can contribute to this, but it can also be an obstacle by enchaining melody and replacing a passionate accent by a harmonious interval. Harmony also tends to separate the song from the words, so that the two languages enter into contradiction (Rousseau 1781, ch. 14; OC 12, 496–468).

Thus, Rousseau's preference goes, in contrast to Rameau, to melody, which he thinks is closer to nature. But closer to nature does not mean natural in so far as tones in a melody do not affect us merely as tones, but as signs of our affects or sentiments which we recognize in them. And this, Rousseau observes, is why the Caribbeans who have a similar nervous system as Europeans, are not touched by the music that touches us Europeans but experience it merely as noise. Rousseau reminds us that one must understand the language that is spoken in order to be moved by it. Like colours in a painting which can achieve their effect as signs or representations, sounds achieve their powerful effect only when they represent the affections of our soul. Rousseau sums up this by writing that it is not the ear that gives pleasure to the heart but heart that gives it to the ear (Rousseau 1781, ch. 15; OC 12, 501–505). Having compared colours and tones, Rousseau however warns against the false analogies between them. Colours are absolute and independent from each other but tones are relative. In a harmonic system, tones are nothing naturally, by their own nature: a tone is not tonic, nor dominant, nor harmonic or fundamental by itself, since all these characteristics are mere relations.

And in this sense a painter is closer to nature whereas music is more a human art (Rousseau 1781, ch. 16; OC 12, 511–513).

So, Rousseau thinks that the more musicians approach the purely physical impressions, the more they distance themselves of its origins and deprive it of its primitive energy. Leaving behind the oral melodious accents, and attaching itself to harmonic institutions music becomes noisier to the ear and less sweet for the heart: "it has ceased to speak and soon it sings no more; then all its accords and all its harmonies cease to have an effect on us." (Rousseau 1781, ch. 17; OC 12, 515).

Rousseau analyses the development of musical systems starting from the system based on hexachords of the ancient Greeks (Rousseau, 1781, ch. 18; OC 12, 516–520). For Rousseau this development was, not surprisingly for him, not progress but degeneration. It was the triumph of harmony over melody with its attachments to the natural and delicate intonations of speech, which were replaced by the "calculus of intervals" of harmonic systems. Music cut its natural associations with speech. Melody was forgotten and the attention was turned towards the rules of harmony, with all kinds of artificial forms of polyphony and the invention of the minor mode and various dissonances. By concentrating on the physical effects of vibrations, music lost its moral effects that it was capable of producing when it was twice the voice of nature (Rousseau 1781, ch. 19; OC 12, 520–526).[3]

Hieroglyphic Meanings

In his *Lettre sus les sourds et muets* (1751) Diderot describes how our originally holistic and simultaneous experiences are translated into the successive order of discourse. He describes also the "hieroglyphic' meanings transmitted by poetry and music, which are somehow able to preserve something of this holistic simultaneity.[4] These *hieroglyphs* enable one to express many things simultaneously. Poetic and imaginative discourse becomes a fabric of hieroglyphs piled one upon the other (Diderot AT 1, 374; DPV 4, 169). Diderot also presents an example of how this takes place in music. He makes an effort to express musically the meanings involved in a verse by Lucretius describing the last moments of a dying woman (Figure 1). Diderot uses the dissonant interval of a descending semitone for the words "I am dying" (a); the words "in my eyes the day refuses to shine" begin with a rising diminished fifth, and after a rest, continue with even a more dissonant interval, the tritone (b); the word "day" is expressed by ascending semitone (c), figuring a ray of light, the last effort of the dying; the words "refuses to (shine)" are escorted by a gradually descending notes (d), and finally she dies attended by an interval of a descending half tone (e). In addition to these correspondences with the meaning of the text Diderot takes care to add to his musical accompaniment correspondences with the rhythm of the text: when the poet expressed the dissolution of forces by the slowness of two spondees in the word *Exsolvatus*, the musician expresses this by two adjacent minims (f), the cadence on the second of these notes imitating according to Diderot aptly the movement of a fading light. After having described how a painter might have expressed the content of these verses, Diderot returns to describe how the musician could strengthen the expression of the vocal part hieroglyphically in the accompaniment. In the first measures of the bass is very gloomy resulting in a chord of major septime (g), deviating from the ordinary rules of chord progression, followed a chord with diminished fifth (h) and a series of minor sixths and thirds (k) that characterize the exhaustion of forces ending up with their extinction, all this corresponding to the words *Alto quævisit cælo lucem* (Diderot AT 1, 386–388; DPV 4, 183–187).

What characterizes Diderot's composition and its analysis is that it not only contains musical imitations of the intonation of speech in the melody line but also harmonies whose tensions correspond to the affective meaning of the text and rhythmic features corresponding to the notions involving movement in the text. And these hieroglyphs are really presented one upon the other, simultaneously in the text, in the melody and in the harmony. In addition, one can observe that the music is not meant to transmit conceptual meanings such as death directly but by means of expressing movement or its lack by musical expressions which are associated to and/or described in terms of

movement and its extinction. In addition to these harmonic movements there are interpretations that refer to the direction of movement upwards or downwards, which have acquired 'hieroglyphic' meanings.
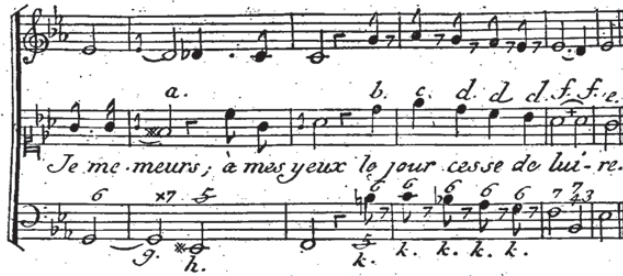

Figure 1. Diderot's composition to the words of Lucretius.

Figure 2. The 3rd recitative of the cantata *l' Amour piqué par une abeille* by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676–1749).

The Nexus of Living Meanings

In the eighteenth century not only philosophers but also musicians insisted on the relation of music to gestures and affects that they express. The gesture's ability to reveal hidden, meaningful layers was pointed out by Michel Paul Guy de Chabanon (1779). According to him there was something frightening in the gestural, because "it tells what words are not able to say". (Chabanon 1779, 89; cited in Law 2010, 241.) The danger of the gestural lies in the fact that it is often perceived corporeally and even without noticing. Also, its meaningfulness may be based on its ability to convey something different or even contradictory to the other sensory impulses. In the case of the cantata *l'Amour piqué par une Abeille* (*Cantates Françoises, 1ere livre,* 1710) composed by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676–1749) this sweet, intertextual act is a parody of a real tragedy, borrowing all its musically gestural phenomena from the tradition of the actual *tragédie lyrique* (Figure 2). Of course, the *tragédie lyrique* was also a realm of cultivated, gestural meanings. The borrowed style encompassed the whole embodied tradition on performing serious tragedy including the style of music, text, delivery, intonation, and gestures.

During the 3rd recitative of the cantata *l'Amour piqué par une abeille* the music performance becomes a nexus of living meanings. The recitative describes an act of a faked death scene on the idyllic island of Cythera. This early *emblemata amatoria* represents a myth about Amor and a honeybee. In the earlier antique version, which is written down by Theocritus in his idyll XIX (it's also attributed to Moschus and Bion) Amor tries to steal honey from a beehive and then complains about the stings to his mother Venus (Figure 3).

Figure 3. *Dulcia quandoque amara fiere* (Sweet things sometimes become bitter), engraving from: Andrea Alciato, Emblemata, Paris 1583. Scholten 2005, 8.

There are many possible cultivated, gestural expressions available related to musically expressed dying. The musical-rhetorical tradition provides a full spectrum of musical options starting from different pauses, sighs and omissions to glissandos and several ways of exclamation. The recitative as such (as notation combined with the text) manifests the classical, rhetorical figures of *hyperbola, amplification* and *antithesis*.

The first half of the cantata is preparing the audience for a surprising shift taking place in this 3rd recitative. The Cupid (*Amor*), the son of Venus, is charmed by a rose he finds in the forests. He picks it up but at the same moment a bee hiding in a rose bites him. He cries and even claims he is going to die, maybe in order to gain pity from his mother. At the same time the poem's lyric ambience turns into a sweet comedy.

"Je me meurs!", Je succombe à ma douleur mortelle"
"I´m dying! I´m perishing from this lethal torment!"

In seconds this miniature *tragicommedia* inside a larger poem (cantata) is over. As a reaction to this, Amor´s mother, Venus, sings comforting words and somewhat belittles the sufferings of Amor by claiming that Amor himself causes much more painful suffering.

The Musical–rhetorical Gestures and Figures in the 3rd Recitative, *l 'Amour charmé*

An act of pretended death is highlighted by a sudden change of the key from G major to a minor in bars 4–6 and from a minor through an unprepared dissonance to e minor in bars 7–9. The e minor section is elevated rhythmically by a change of tempo *lentement* (bars 7-9). The bass line becomes very chromatic by descending at first in a minor (bars 5-6) then in e minor (bar 7) through a chain of suspensions. *Passus duriusculus* (meaning the chromatic base line proceeding in half-steps) is here used combined with a thought of death, as describing the "path" downwards to the gates of under-world, and the physical symptoms of losing one´s strength and perishing. In musical–rhetorical terms this is a classical *catabasis,* but in a strange context. This kind of *stylus gravis*–citation (bars 5–6) in the middle of the most delightfully sweet cantata could maybe be taken seriously, if it was not immedi-ately repeated in e minor (bar 7).

The repetition is over the top. The borrowed style brings classical tragedy in the middle of the cantata full of joyful, dance–like airs. Strongly chromatic scales were associated with Italian style also known for its angular melodic leaps, improvisatory ornamentation and violent, unprepared disso-nances that were sometimes considered as exaggeration. For an eighteenth- century French listener this kind of chromatics was maybe a bit pretentious, and against "the truth" found in Nature, in *La Belle Nature*. The shift back to the original tempo is marked as *plus gay* (bar 9). The *lentement* section presents strongly contrasting and *hyperbole*-like *antithesis* against the surrounding texture. One could also point out the feature that these overly dramatic phrases are sung by a little, round-faced boy, Amor.

After the first chromatic bass line (bars 5–6) a pause interrupts the passage and we hear Amor himself moan: *"Je me meurs"* in bars 6–7. The sung interval, triton, is as such rhetorically efficient *saltus duriusculum*, but this time the bass note that is played at the same time as the word *"meurs"* is totally out of the key, an unprepared d sharp, for which one plays (in the basso continuo) a dimin-ished seventh chord starting a chain of following suspensions. The unprepared dissonance interrupts the tonally flowing texture, which has here a musical–poetical meaning.

This kind of musical texture is usually more fun and convincing if the cultivated gestural expres-sions are carefully rooted into the performer's body. The 'cultivation' is, in other words, happening in the actual embodiment during the rehearsing period and the actual performing of the music and the text. Therefore, the difference here between the cultivated and natural gestures is partly blurred and deliberately unclear. If the gestural features of this music and poetry are performed in a way which makes it difficult to say whether the applied gestures are natural or artificial, then the music and the text start to become alive. Also, the performance becomes technically more advanced, easier to master and possibly brilliant.

One choice would be to apply many vocal techniques described by Clérambault's colleague, Michel-Pignolet de Montéclair (1667–1737) in the eighteenth-century treatise *Principes de Musique* (1736), for example *glissando, le son glissé,* which is a continuous slide upwards or downwards be-tween two notes, and *le sanglot,* which is a kind of suffocated, violent inhalation or a sob, which was "almost always used on the first syllable of the word *helas!* or in the exclamations like *ah!, eh!* or *ô!"* (Montéclair 1736, 89). Both techniques were called ornaments in this treatise and they both are musical phenomena reminding closely to the embodied, natural gestures (Figure 4). These kinds of vocal and performative techniques were not necessarily notated in the score. Instead, they were a

part of the performance practice of that time. The gestural way of emphasizing the sung and spoken words was an important part of the delivery in theatre, in *opéra-ballet*, in court as well as in church according to the rhetorical-musical treatises of this time-period.

Figure 4. *Le son glissé* and *le sanglot* as a part of the lamenting style. Both ornaments are essentially gestural, because they remind closely to the natural equivalents. (Montéclair 1736, 89.)

The short pauses in bars 6 and 7 followed by two sixteenth-notes emphasize the impression of agony, because the interrupting pauses are also a stylistic citation (from *tragédie lyrique*), which is now used to describe "the dying" Amor´s tottering and suffocated moans. The interrupting, small pauses together with fragmented text is a musical-rhetorical device also used in another cantate *La Morte di Lucretia* (1728 or before) composed by Montéclair, and in this cantata the *glissando* is even marked in the bar, where Lucretia is dying (for real, not as a part of a comedy).[5][6]

The eighteenth-century French orators like Le Faucheur (1657) and Bretteville (ed. 1701) describe a voice expressing sorrow as filled with sobs, sighs and moaning. (Chaouche 2001 B, 116-117.) Gilbert Austin (1806) refers repeatedly to classical authors like Cicero, Quintilian as well as to French authors like Dubos, Marmontel and Noverre among others. He describes the gestures expressing sorrow and agony as follows: "The inclination of the head implies bashfulness or languor. "The eyes weep in sorrow." (Austin 1806, 483.) "The hand on the head indicates pain or distress." (Ibid., 484.) Also: "Distress when extreme lays the palm of the hand upon the forehead, throws the head and body back, and retires with a long and sudden step." (Ibid., 490.) "Then suddenly the eyes are withdrawn, the head is averted, the feet retire, and the arms are projected out extended against the object, the hands vertical." (Ibid., 487.)

For comparison, the dramatic symptoms of dying are described by Giovanni-Andrea Gallini (1728–1805) in his *A Treatise on the Art of Dancing (1762)*. He writes in detail how the famous eighteenth-century actor David Garrick (1717–1779) played his death scene.

> "The last act was given up to regrets and grief, humanity triumphed over murder and barbarism; the tyrant obedient to the voice of conscience, denounced his crimes aloud; they gradually became his judges and his executioners; the approach of death showed each instant on his face; his eyes became dim; his voice could not support the efforts he made to speak his thoughts. His gestures, without losing their expression, revealed the approach of his last moment; his legs gave away under him, his face lengthened, his pale and livid features bore the signs of suffering and repentance. At last, he fell […]"

What draws attention here is the realistic quality of Garrick's performance. Even the very act of pronouncing words is hindered by the strongly expressive, gestural features of his performance. Similarly, the gestural features included in the music example (the recitative *l'Amour charmé*) are

integrated in the actual delivery of the music. Music is thus something more than its mere notation (the score), and when we discuss music, we need to address its actual bodily performance practice and take the musical–rhetorical performance tradition into consideration, when we judge whether there are meanings in music or not.

Expression and Nature

From the musician's point of view the performance of music includes natural and cultivated, artificial gestural phenomena. The layers of musical–rhetorical context and artificially elaborated skills are intertwined with the natural breathing, thinking, moving, and reacting of the performer's body. A skilful performer uses the living, vital functions of the body as a part of the professional approach. However, not all the vital functions are considered eligible for the stage. The cultural context of the performance dictates what is considered interesting, natural, beautiful, or impressive.

The natural gestures as a part of a cultivated music performance were acknowledged by 17th- and 18th-century music theorists, philosophers, and orators like Marin Mersenne (1588–1648), Bernard Lamy (1640–1715) and later by the composer and music theorist Jean-Philippe Rameau (1638–1764). For Mersenne the natural, vocal "accent", *un accent de la voix (une inflexion ou modification)* was something in common with both human beings and animals "who cry to demonstrate their joy as well as their sadness" (Mersenne [1636] 1975, 365).[7] Even though Bernard Lamy differentiated natural utterances of animals like roaring lions and howling wolves from the natural cries of human beings, he maintained that there is a gestural level understandable between human beings even without the signifying, cultivated language. He uses a sigh as an example of a natural gesture shared with human beings even representing different nationalities (Lamy [1675] 1757, 13–14).

For Rameau ([1760] 1965) the first cries of a baby as different inflexions of the voice (and even without the gestural) were kind of music as such: "One may say that music, considered simply as different inflexions of the voice; not including the gesture, must have been our first language since one has finally imagined terms to express oneself. It is born with us, this language; a child gives us proves of it already in a cradle." Apparently, Rameau maintains that musical expression does not always require masterful, technical application of the artificial, cultivated part of the rhetorical delivery. In his example, the expression is natural and understandable. (Rameau [1760], 165.) However, in his *Traité de l'harmonie* Rameau writes that a good musician should also be like an actor and a good orator:

> A good musician should surrender himself to all the characters he wishes to portray. Like a skillful actor he should take the place of the events he wishes to depict, believe himself to be at the locations where the different events he wishes to depict occur, and participate in these events as do those most involved in them.[8] (Rameau [1722] 1971, 156.)

On the other hand, Rameau's *le corps sonore* principle (Rameau [1722] 1986, 18) seems to derive musical elements from nature in another way. *Le corps sonore* principle differs from the previous generations of the musical intervals by Gioseffo Zarlino (1558, 37), by maintaining that all the intervals are originally generated from the mere fundamental bass, which already includes other intervals in its series of overtones. Zarlino's theory was based on divisions of the octave, not on the overtones. The phenomenon of overtones was convincingly theorized and verbalized by Joseph Sauveur in 1701, and Rameau understood that this created a need for a new theory on how to generate the intervals and harmonies. Later on, in his *Génération harmonique,* Rameau ([1737], 2–9) developed his ideas on *le corps sonore* in terms of vibrating body and air.

The Significant as Too Obvious and Banal

The signifying, cultivated meanings could be experienced as banal, if the composer had not convincingly understood the chosen poems. Composer and music theorist Bertrand "Bénigne" de

Bacilly (c. 1625–1690) seemed to be irritated by composers, who used "high notes" for the words signifying sky, stars, clouds, mountains, rocks, gods or celebrities and who used "low notes" for words like ground, sea, fountain or a valley ([1679] 1993, 121). For a performer simple word-painting and phenomena associated with the so called 'program music' is not necessarily a problem. Music can be childish in this sense and yet it may manage to be powerful. Interestingly, the same music as intervals and rhythmical portions can convey very different musical meanings, and composers have noticed that the same music can sometimes be used, for example, with religious or secular text. This could be explained by so called *hyperconnotative* nature of music (Born 2000, 32). According to Born (2000, 32) "it is because music lacks denotative meaning, in contrast with the visual and literary arts, that it has particular powers of connotation". In this article, however, we add that music can simultaneously have denotative and (hyper-)connotative layers of meaning, as well. The meanings, which are involved in the diffuse gestural semiosis, exist partly in the notation, partly in the historical performance practices like the ones described in the treatises of oratory and singing, and partly in the performer's body.

What are the hidden meanings then in this musical emblem composed by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault? The emblem could be interpreted as a gentle warning, a humoristic guideline to avoid sexual love particularly at young age. By an abrupt shift of the musical genre and narration it's perhaps easier to make young people understand the dangers of sexual relationships. Again, the 'little death' experienced by the cupid could be a referring to so called *la petite mort,* which is a euphemism for orgasm. In the Galenic (Galen 129 CE – c. 200/c. 216 CE) sense to die a little also meant "a fainting fit", losing one's strength, or losing one's conscience. William Shakespeare's lines such as "I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eyes" from *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600, Act 5, Scene 2) and similarly "I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom" from *King Lear* (1606, Act 4, Scene 6) are referring to the same thing. In this French baroque version of the emblem the beehive is replaced by the flower, in which the bee hides. This detail gives further possibilities for a gestural delivery of the performance practice of *lamento*. The *lamento* itself can thus be made ambiguous, because the lamenting is so beautiful (aestheticized), and often described as appealing, even as erotic. What is intriguing in this cantata, is the trust on the power of enigma to describe the complex nature of love. More importantly, in the chosen details of the cantata, the textual, literary meanings are transformed in multiplex poetic and bodily processes, which are natural and artificial, too.

Conclusions

As we have shown above, the French philosophers who wrote on the meanings in music referred the close connection between music and affective expression to the origins of language. According to Condillac, music, dance and discursive speech had all grown out of the original melodic and gestural language by differentiation. He and Rousseau thought that despite this differentiation music had preserved its original connection with the affective meanings involved in speech intonation and gestural language. Yet, as Condillac insisted, when the natural signs expressing affective meanings were used on purpose to communicate, they were transformed into an artificial and conventional language. Rousseau too maintained that music was a conventional language, the understanding of which requires a trained ear in order to understand the meaning of the signs involved. Nevertheless, despite this artificial nature of musical signs, the meanings involved in the diffuse gestural semiosis were considered to be capable of expressing the original simultaneous and holistic nature of experience, in contrast to discursive language, which is, according to Condillac and Diderot, essentially a method of analysing experience into the successive order defined by syntax (Kaitaro 2022, 100–115). So, Diderot spoke of 'hieroglyphic' meanings, that cannot be translated in the propositional meanings of articulated language. However, it is perhaps important to observe that since Rousseau and Diderot considered music as a language, its meanings were not merely imitations based on similarity (Dubruque 2001). The meaning of music could not thus be assimilated neither to

the mimetic model provided by painting nor to that of the conceptual meaning of discursive language. It is *sui generis*.

Downing A. Thomas has in his *Music and the origins of language: theories from the French Enlightenment* (1995, 32–33) distinguished two paradigms in music. He observes that early modern musical theory was caught between the trivium and quadrivium: between the verbal and rhetorical paradigm and the scientific and mathematical paradigm. The first paradigm resulted in the eighteenth century in the concern with "eloquence and persuasion, operation involving the indeterminate values of consensus or community rather than preconceived, determinate concepts". The second resulted finally in non-representational aesthetics. Thomas's observation points out an important aspect of eighteenth-century musical aesthetics which is clearly visible in the writing of Condillac, Rousseau and Diderot: if there is meaning in music it is not similar to the determinate meaning of conceptual discourse. It resembles more the indeterminate and embodied meanings involved in gestures, bodily movements or physiological-emotional reactions. It is interesting to observe that despite the fact that Rameau's theory of harmony based on '*corps sonore'* (Rameau [1722] 1986), tends more towards the second, scientific paradigm, he too speaks of expression in music. However, and not surprisingly since Rameau's theory of harmony tries to derive harmony from nature, he tends sometimes, by insisting on the inborn nature of the language of inflexions, also to reduce the expressive features of music to nature instead of the culturally coded and artificial aspects of expression. His insistence on the make-believe "participation" in the events and characters points equally to the reliance on the natural emotional reactions instead of the kind of controlled and unemotional imitation proposed in Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien.*

Our examples demonstrate the various kinds of embodied and gestural meanings the eighteenth-century theoreticians and musicians considered to be expressible music. They illustrate well the Condillacian idea, shared by Diderot and Rousseau, that musical meanings although culturally coded are closely linked to our bodily reactions and gestures, and even if we sometimes have a tendency to attribute more abstract conceptual meaning to music this can happen only through these more embodied meanings. For example, sorrow in not expressed directly but by imitating its bodily symptoms like sobbing. It also often requires the participation of the text. But as our example show it is not only text alone that bears the burden of meaning: even when it is the text that expresses emotions, affects, gestural or conceptual meanings, the musical expression can support, complement – or undermine as the case might be – these textual meanings. Added to this are the real gestures of the singer, which form an additional level on the whole formed of the text, music and acting. And as we have seen gestural meanings of music and acting and their complex relations to the text also permit the use of means analogous to the traditional rhetorical figures such as irony, *hyperbola, amplification* or *antithesis*. Evidently, once the rhetoric of musical gestures is established, is can be used in instrumental music too. The listener automatically understands the same musical gestures even in music without text or acting.

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Notes

[1] Condillac takes care to distinguish the artificial and the arbitrary. What is artificial need not be arbitrary: artificial signs are not selected at random but with reason (loc. cit.)

[2] Cf. *Essai,* I, IV, ii, §§ 23–24, and II, I, i, §§ 2–3.

[3] By the expression "doublement" Rousseau refers here probably to the fact of song imitating both the intonations of voice and the passions.

[4] This ability to present ideas simultaneously was also according to Condillac a characteristic of natural gestures. One can understand such gestures at first sight, although it would require a long discourse to translate them. (*Grammaire*, I, i; OP 1, p. 430). However, in a later chapter of the *Grammaire,* Condillac describes how one can begin to analyse and decompose simultaneous sensations into a succession of signs by using only gestural language. But at this point this gestural language is transforming itself into an artificial language. (*Grammaire*, I, vii; OP 1, p. 443).

[5] The same fragmentation of the text and the small interrupting pauses are also heard in Claudio Monteverdi's opera *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, act 3 scene VII, in the aria *Addio, Roma!* sung by Ottavia, when she is leaving Rome forever.

[6] The fragmentation of the pronounced text (*quelques monosyllables)* is also described by Diderot in his *Entretiens sur Le Fils naturel*: "But what moves us always, are the shouts, muffled words, cracked up voices, monosyllables escaping now and then, some kind of throaty murmurs, sounds uttered through the teeth." (Diderot AT 7, 105–106; DPV 10, 106).

[7] "*Or ces accents de passion sont communs aux hommes & aux animaux qui crien autrement pour monstrer leur joye que pour monstrer leur tristese: C'est pourquoy j'ay dit de la voix ou de la parole, d'autant qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de parler pour faire des accens…*" (Mersenne [1636] 1975, 367.)

[8] *Au reste, un bon Musicien doit se livrer à tous les caracteres, qu–il veut dépeindre; & comme un habile Comedien se mettre à la place de celuy qui parle; se croire être dans les lieux où ses passent les differents évenements qu'il veut representer, & y prendre la même part que ceux qui y sont les plus interessez; être bon déclamateur, au moins en soy-même, sentir quand la voix doit s'élever ou s'abaisser plus ou moins, pour y conformer sa Melodie, son Harmonie, sa Modulation & son movement.* (Rameau [1722] 1971, 143.)

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