

Borrowing for Contrast, I: Schütz, Bach, and Mozart

Abstract

Contrast is one of Western music's foundational elements, and yet—beyond a literal description—it is a difficult, perhaps impossible element to theorize about. The study of borrowings nonetheless opens a window onto the use of contrast in music of the common-practice period. Composers of tonal music call upon different borrowings (from the same composer or from different composers) to furnish the contrast they need, and in so doing they provide us with clues that prove indispensable to the process of analysis. In the first article of this two-part study, I first show (by way of counter-example) how J.S. Bach uses a fugal snippet from a *Symphonia Sacra* by Schütz to generate much of the material for the entire *Prélude* to the *D minor English Suite*. Bach is perhaps the one composer who does not need a secondary borrowing to procure contrast—all the material derives from a single, brief source. I then show how Mozart, by contrast, uses not only Bach's *Prélude* throughout the opening *Allegro* of his *C minor keyboard Concerto*, K. 491, but also calls upon the *Sarabande* and *Gavotte* from the same *Suite* and upon the *Andante* from J.C. Bach's *G minor Symphony*, Op. 6, No. 6 (a borrowing discovered by Ellwood Derr) to set the *Concerto's* opening arpeggio figure against the passagework that ensues, and against the subordinate theme.