

## Sequential Expansion and Baroque Phrase Rhythm

### Abstract

We often think of the sequence as the backbone of Baroque *Fortspinnung* and as a staple of figured passagework. At the same time we overlook its extensive durational properties because they are not immediately obvious. These properties derive from the presence of an ancillary chord in each of the sequence's two, three, or four components – an applied dominant or contrapuntal sonority that precedes or follows the principal chord of the component. The time span this subservient chord occupies may represent an anticipation or extension of the principal chord's time span. Owing to such built in tonal and durational expansion, many sequences appear to alter the harmonic and melodic pace established in earlier passages.

As a theoretical concept, sequential expansion is more problematic than it seems to be: While many sequences embody expansion, few do so from the vantage point of combined species counterpoint, the basis of Baroque temporal activity. In attempting to resolve this conflict, the present paper undertakes the first step in constructing a theory of phrase rhythm for Baroque music, challenging the misguided perception of motoric pace and unrelenting thematic continuity that has pervaded both the textbook and the scholarly views of Baroque rhythm. Examples by Rameau, Bach, Handel, and Corelli demonstrate that the essential pace of the composition not only progresses more deliberately than it seems to do, but that it changes much more frequently. In so doing, it facilitates thematic, harmonic, and rhythmic parallelisms and enlargements whose close durational links represent informal temporal structures at the phrase level and beyond.