

Research on the Development of Motet and Its Decline after 1750

Taking Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus* and *Exsultate Jubilate* as an Example

Yue Zhao

School of Teacher' Education
Nanjing Xiaozhuang University
Nanjing, China

Abstract—Motet was an important polyphonic genre which rose in the Thirteenth Century. For hundreds of years, its form has evolved continuously, so there is no clear definition. We should put it in a specific period and understand it with the background of the times, not just giving a general concept. According to the historical evolution of motets, this article makes a brief analysis on the development of motets after 1750, combining with Mozart's two motets.

Keywords—motets; classicalism; Mozart; *Ave Verum Corpus*; *Exsultate Jubilate*

I. INTRODUCTION

Motet was an important polyphonic genre which rose in the Thirteenth Century. For hundreds of years, its form has evolved continuously, so there is no clear definition. We should put it in a specific period and understand it with the background of the times, not just giving a general concept.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT COURSE OF MOTETS

Motet, this genre was born around 1220 in Paris, France, and was developed from Clausala. Clausala was used to replace musical segments of other paragraphs in the liturgy under certain circumstances, usually established in a particular chant, which is compiled in the order of the liturgical procedure, which gradually develops into an independent polyphonic genre. Most of them are two vocal parts. There is no lyric in the upper part. When people fill in Latin or French lyrics for the upper part, the fragment came into being as a new genre. That is motet. The word "motet" is derived from a French word "mot" which means "lyrics", and its Latin form is motetus. Originally it refers to the voice part of writing lyrics above Clausala, and then this noun has been used to refer to the whole work.

In the Thirteenth Century, motet generally had three vocal parts. Originally the lyrics of the top part were mostly in Latin, related to religious rites. Later, composers tried to compose scripture songs for singing out of the church rites, making the lyrics of the above two vocal parts of the works dialect, gradually appearing the secular lyrics in French, and the Latin lyrics of chant melody part became chorus lyrics. These

scripture songs gradually separated from the activities of worship and spread in the secular society.

Until 14th and 15th Century, equal rhythm technology was used in the motets. Composers' creative means became more and more complex and the length was expanding. Viteri, Marvin and Steffre made important contributions to the development of motets one after another. Although equal rhythm technology has been disjointed from the development of music in the Fifteenth Century, the same rhythmic motets were often used for religious or secular festivals, major events, or ceremonies, so it continues until the middle of the Fifteenth Century.

In the Renaissance, the name of "motet" was continued to use from the middle ages. It was still a polyphonic form, but the features of the works are completely different from the previous ones. Although these works in the Renaissance were all derived from equal rhythmic motets, the rhythm was no longer so obvious that it was no longer influenced by discantus. Composers sometimes used the means of imitation counterpoint, and most of songs were composed for chorus, usually in Latin. At this time, the motets were of religious nature, but not for special festivals of worship. They are suitable for singing on any occasion. The lyrics often used the words of alternate hymns.

In fact, some motets during the Renaissance were sacred pastoral songs. There are differences between scripture songs and pastoral songs. The most typical were works of religious music composers, especially Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina whose lyric language of works are the determinant features. If it is in Latin, it is scripture song; if in dialect, it is pastoral song.

Later, people began to write secular scripture songs, especially in praise of the King as the theme, Latin for the lyrics. The content usually was to celebrate victory, and even praise the beauty of music. However, in the medieval secular scripture songs, courtly love often became the theme and disappeared gradually during the Renaissance. Many of the secular scripture songs were called "ritual scripture songs". The songs are characterized by clear pronunciation. The audiences do not need to know the lyrics in advance. There is a clear connection between the paragraphs and a strong contrast

in the texture and the rhythm. The scripture song is one of the outstanding forms of Renaissance music.

The name of "motet" had been still used to the Baroque period, but the features have changed, especially in France. Small works or hymns are only accompanied by figured bass, and the large works contain a complete orchestra. In Germany, composers also used new musical languages to composed motets. Schuetz published a series of motets, some in Latin and some in German. Bach composed six classical motets, which are relatively long, composed of chorus and figured bass, and used to train his chorus.

After the second half of the Eighteenth Century, few composers used this genre, and motet did not regain its central position in the middle ages and the Renaissance, and did not attract the attention of the mainstream composers like the Baroque period. Since the tradition of Christian Church made church music far away from the development of secular music, composers often wrote their own style of motet after the Nineteenth Century. As a result, most of motets composed by Lester, Brahms and Verdi did not show their highest level or most prominent features.

When the western style of art changed from Baroque to classicism, the motet of glorious history began to decline. Mozart's Exsultate Jubilate (K165/158a) and Ave Verum Corpus (K618) are typical works at this transition stage.

III. ANALYSIS OF MOZART'S TWO WORKS

In the Late Eighteenth Century, Salzburg and Vienna were the most important centers of Latin motets.

Mozart's church music was influenced by Haydn's brother Michael. Most of his works had bright colors, extroverted character, and often show a brilliant doctrine rather than a strong personal belief. Mozart deliberately used the Fuchs counterpart of ancient Baroque style in some works, and most of his works use a brand new texture of harmony and instrumental music, with Chorus of four parts (SATB) and orchestra with the scale of symphony. There are exceptions, of course, but almost all of them were created for other cities except for Vienna and Salzburg.

Ave Verum Corpus was the last song of Mozart written in Baden in the vicinity of Vienna in 1791. Entrusted by a music planner of a parish, Mozart composed it for Corpus Christi of the Catholic Church. He finished this song during his creation of a dram Magic Flute. At the moment, he was visiting his wife conceiving his sixth child in a hot spring area in Baden, only 6 months from his death.

This is a quiet and moving small song. The whole speed is slow and it uses bright and mild major and was sung in the form of chorus (SATB). Only uses string and the pipe organ for rigorous accompaniment. Its main musical style is expressive and comfortable. This short work has fully displayed the typical style of the classical period in detail.

The whole work has only 46 small sections, and Mozart's manuscript only shows a few description words, only marking sotto voce at the beginning, and the entry of music is very weak.

The content of lyrics is essentially a prayer, and the Latin text reads as follows:

Ave verum corpus, natum
de Maria Virgine,
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine
cuius latus perforatum
fluxit aqua et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum
in mortis examine.

O Iesu dulcis, O Iesu pie,
O Iesu, fili Mariae.
Miserere mei. Amen.

English translation:

Hail, true Body, born
of the Virgin Mary,
having truly suffered, sacrificed
on the cross for mankind,
from whose pierced side
water and blood flowed:
Be for us a foretaste [of the Heavenly banquet]
in the trial of death!

O sweet Jesus, O holy Jesus,
O Jesus, son of Mary,
have mercy on me. Amen.

Ave Verum Corpus is a D major music, with gentle crotchet to promote the main melody. The accompaniment part is tautophony of crotchet or halbnote. String accompaniment can bring a sense of peace, a feeling of hope.

There are temporary transfers in every eight sub-sections, which have been transferred three times and marked with temporary sharp or flat.

The beginning ten sections are of D major; the melody is gently progressive; the rhythm is smooth. The harmony is of the inner chords, graceful and calm, narrating the descending of the Lord Jesus.

From the eleventh section to the eighteenth section frequently appears #G, in "Fig. 1". The phrase turns to A major, and the melody begins with the change sequence of the previous sentence, using the sync and the high tone of the five pats, in "Fig. 1", describing Jesus descending as the lamb of

the God for the sin of the world, lying in the manger, and finally nailed to death on the cross.

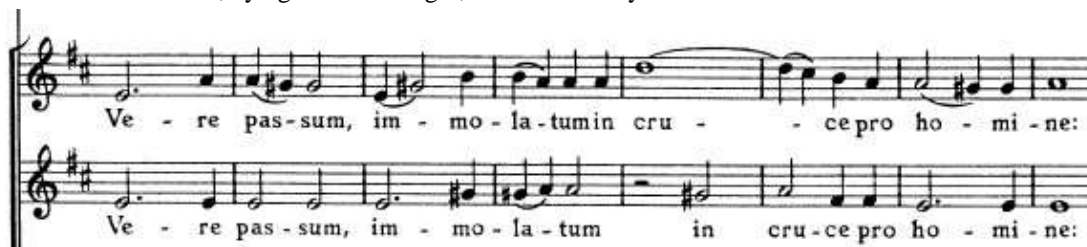


Fig. 1. Score 1.

In the next sentence, the sharp F and the sharp C are all restored, and the frequent occurrence of flat B marks the transition of F major, in "Fig. 2". The melody and rhythm remain the original peace and tranquility. The end of the sentence is stopped at the secondary D major, and the next section directly becomes the main chord of D major, and thus returns to D major. The music appears softly and bleak at this time. It describes that the Lord Jesus was crucified, wearing a crown of thorns, bleeding on his rib. The lyrics wrote that the breaking of Jesus's body brought salvation and hope to all generations.



Fig. 2. Score 2.

In the fifteenth sub-section appears the treble of five pats. It reappears in the 38th sub-section, lasting six pats, in "Fig. 3", clear and bright, so that the music reached the climax, expressing the eternal love of the Lord Jesus to the world. After the larger fluctuations of the music, it gradually weakens, and ends with a weak sound to the end of the music, and the world returns to tranquility.



Fig. 3. Score 3.

At the penultimate sub-section, the accompaniment of the fiddle has a typical Mozart style tail trill, in "Fig. 4", which indicates that in the composition of motets after the second half of the Eighteenth Century, the composers no longer follow the usual practice, but add more and more new features of their own times and integrate them perfectly.



Fig. 4. Score 4.

Mozart's another earlier motet is Exsultate Jubilate which has more typical features of this period.

Exsultate Jubilate was originally made for the famous castrato Venanzio Rauzzini. He was also a keyboard player and composer. He became a teacher later, and was a theater manager in Bath, England, and had a brilliant career.

Exsultate Jubilate was created in the last Italy trip of Mozart and his father Leopold. They went there to supervise the debut of Lujo Sierra in Milan. Vinazio Lauchini was the first lead of the opera. Exsultate Jubilate was set to be performed in the Sanantonio Church in Milan on January 17, 1773 and was sung by Vinazio Lauchini. When Mozart completed the opera Lujo Sierra on December 26, 1772, Exsultate Jubilate had not yet been started, so Mozart and Vinazio Lauchini had to work against the clock in the following three weeks to finish it. Although the song of Exsultate Jubilate is written in a hurry, this masterpiece was still well received. The work was slightly modified in 1780.

Today, it is sung by the solo soprano, accompanied by orchestra.

The orchestra is compiled as follows: two oboes (or two flutes), two French horns, two violins, a viola, a cello, a contrabass, a bassoon, and a pipe organ.

This scripture song has a subtle change compared with the Italian motets of early Eighteenth Century. There are four movements.

The first movement is aria, Allegro, and the theme is exultate, jubilate. This movement has already shown the bud of sonata form. The music was entered in F major, and the flat B appears repeatedly from the fortieth sub-section in exposition, in "Fig. 5", and the movement was transferred to C major. In recapitulation from 71st sub-section enters in C major and reappear flat B in the 76th sub-section. In the 77th sub-section it directly transfers to B major and until 90th sub-section, the movement returns to F major, in "Fig. 6", and in the following realizes tonality obedience which is the most important characteristic of the sonata style.



Fig. 5. Score 5.



Fig. 6. Score 6.

The sonata is a music genre of rigorous style and balanced coordination. In the classical period, the sonata was generated and influenced by the enlightenment movement in the classical era. It is full of ideal emotional constraints, with clear and orderly melody lines, in order. It especially pays attention to the unity of the whole form and the rigid structure. It generally uses functional harmony, simple and pure. Mozart, born in the second half of the Eighteenth Century, combined the long historical motet with current sonata form, giving this kind of church music a new sense of the times and full of fresh breath.

The second movement is recitative, with the theme of Fulget amica, Dies. The accompaniment instruments are only the cello, the contrabass and the organ in "Fig. 7".



Fig. 7. Score 7.

The third movement is aria, Andante, and the theme is Tu Virginum Corona, in A major. The magnificent and flowing theme of the music movement has a remarkable similarity to the main theme of the first movement. It is followed by a short cadenza music segment rather than an expectable recitative. Music directly enters the main theme Hallelujah. To be exact, Beethoven was the initiator of this method of composition, and he was recorded as the first person to connect two concerto movements. The characteristics of music in the classical period are highlighted here.

The fourth movement is Alleluja, a fast Allegro, which comes directly from the slow third movement. Full of high spirits, the jumping notes flow with elated, cheerful, relaxed and pleasant emotions. In the final movement, Mozart represented similar main melody and realized the trinity of music in the joyful Ritornello, which eclipsed the other proverbs.

As a whole, the scripture song, born in 1773, was filled with the rational spirit of the classical period and integrated into Mozart's own musical elements. He had a certain confidence of success in his creation. At the beginning, Allegro has a powerful superb skill; in the middle of music "your holy woman's wreath" is beautiful as a song, leading to the final Hallelujah; in the fourth movement the strong contrast of mood and style needs the singer to be able to successfully grasp the fast and gorgeous music and movement. Although it was nominally used for the liturgy, it actually has a lot in common with the arias made by Mozart for the concert, including the elements of the concerto form.

In addition, the motet with 415 sub-sections repeatedly appears Mozart-style tremolo in "Fig. 8", staccato in "Fig. 9",

the fast flowing notes with the inner chord as the backbone, and the most representative coloratura in "Fig. 10".



Fig. 8. Score 8.



Fig. 9. Score 9.



Fig. 10. Score 10.

IV. CONCLUSION

The prosperity and decline of motets are historically inevitable. The purpose of people's creation of motets is constantly changing. Primitively it was to replace Organum's Clausula in the liturgy. A lot of secular techniques and contents were integrated into motet in the period of the Renaissance, and gradually it lost the function of religious music, and put more emphasis on characteristics of ceremony music. Until then, the return of religious attributes was followed by the integration of secular genres and techniques. It integrates religious and secular characteristics. Its historical development course is a mirror of social history, reflecting important practical significances.

In fact, the appearance of any form of music is closely related to the development of social culture. We should systematically learn and study music in the light of the whole social background in order to understand more deeply and directly.

REFERENCES

- [1] Cai Liangyu. Western Music Culture. People's Music Publishing House, December 1999, 1st edition. 蔡良玉. 西方音乐文化[J]. 人民音乐出版社, 1999年12月第1版.
- [2] [US] Paul Henry Lang. Music in Western Civilization (translated by Yang Yandi), Guizhou People's Publishing House, March 2001, 1st edition. [美]保罗·亨利·朗. 西方文明中的音乐[M] (杨燕迪等译) 贵州人民出版社 2001年3月第1版

- [3] Yan Fei. Cultural Characteristics of the Development of European Motets: Confrontation and Adaptation of Religion against the Secular World. Master's Thesis of Henan University, 2003. 闫霏. 《欧洲经文歌发展的文化特征——宗教面对世俗的对抗与适应》[D]. 河南大学硕士学位论文, 2003
- [4] The New Grove Musical and Musician Dictionary, 2000, Volume 17, Published by Macmillan Publishers Limited, London.