Musica Poetica in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Germany

WONG, Helen Kin Hoi

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy
in
Music
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
June 2009
ABSTRACT

Musica poetica is a branch of music theory developed by German pedagogues of the Reformation era. It is the discipline within music composition that was grounded on the powerful relationships between music and text. The term musica poetica was first coined by the Lutheran musician/teacher Nicolaus Listenius in 1533 to distinguish it from musica theorica (the study of music as a mathematical science) and musica practica (applied theory dealing with aspects of performance), the two disciplines continuing from the medieval education curriculum. By the middle of sixteenth century, musica poetica began to be firmly established, alongside with musica theorica and practica, as an independent branch of composition instruction, and was taught in the Latin schools in Lutheran Germany. As the treatises on musica poetica convey, the teaching of musica poetica was modelled on pedagogical principles of rhetoric that was taught in the humanistic curriculum of the Latin schools. In defining compositional procedures in relation to text-setting, these treatises borrowed or emulated terminologies from the discipline of classical rhetoric, and treated a musical composition as a work of oration, with an aesthetic aim of producing a work that could instruct, move and delight the auditor (docere, movere, delectare). These aesthetic goals were in line with the new liturgical function of music that resulted...
from the theology of Martin Luther, the founder of the Protestant church.

Given the intricacies behind the formation of the musical tradition, there is no doubt that *musica poetica* was inspired by Luther's theology on music, shaped by educational environment of the Reformation and were also influenced by the artistic and aesthetic currents prevailing in sixteenth century. To better understand the concept of *musica poetica*, all the above factors must be taken into account in constructing a thorough historical interpretation of the discipline. While research has long been done on historical development of *musica theorica* and *practica*, to date no comprehensive study of the history *musica poetica* has been published. This thesis aims to fill part of this void by providing a historical investigation of the concept of *musica poetica* of the sixteenth-century from a widened perspective. By drawing together the historical, cultural, social and theological factors that gave rise and shape to the musical discipline, it is hoped that a fuller historical context for *musica poetica* will be presented.
摘要

「音樂詩學」(*musica poetica*)是由宗教改革時代的音樂理論家建立的一門音樂理論。它是基於音樂與文字之間的密切關係上的一種作曲理論。「音樂詩學」這個專門名詞於1533年由路德教派音樂學者Nicolau Listenius建立，用於區別當時由中世紀教會體系傳承下來的兩個樂理支派——「音樂活動」(*musica practica*)和「音樂理論」(*musica theorica*)。到了十六世紀中，「音樂詩學」這門學系逐漸穩固地建立，並與「音樂活動」和「音樂理論」一同被教授於路德教會的拉丁文學校內。

從音樂詩學課本內的內容可看到其作曲的教授方法效仿了當時人文主義修辭學的教學原則。例如，在課本作者的作曲技巧訂立準則時，他們都會為一些有關音樂的手法配上修辭學中的語彙，並把音樂作品視為一篇演講，要求作品達至「取悅、感動、教導」的美學標準。這些美學觀念，和神學家馬丁路德在宗教改革時為崇拜禮儀音樂建立的新功能，展示了一種吻合的關係。

從以上關係可見，音樂詩學受啓發於路德的神學思想，受到人文主義教育觀念和教學環境的塑造，是在十六世紀的美學趨勢影響下所產生的一種音樂思想。若要對音樂詩學有更加全面的理解，我們
必須考慮所有有關因素來建造一個完整的歷史詮釋。除了一些有關「音樂活動」和「音樂理論」的歷史著作外，迄今在音樂學術界當中還沒有關於音樂詩學的歷史詮釋。本論文就教育歷史、文化、社會和神學角度，探討音樂詩學的起源和其在十六世紀的發展，希望能夠給音樂詩學一個全面的詮釋。
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would never imagine myself having come to this point of my study without the help of so many teachers, friends, and my family, whose significance in my life only intensify as the understanding of my own research deepens, and whose names I fear I do not have enough space here to cover. Thanks must go to my adviser, Prof. Michael McClellan, for his continuous guidance and his inspiring thoughts on the craft of research and writing, his penetrating and insightful questions which always hit my blind spots, and his sharing and listening both for the benefit of my professional and personal growth. I thank Prof. Greta Olson, who drew me into the orbit of the Middle Ages by exposing me to abundance of primary resources of the pre-reformation liturgical repertoires, showing by her own work the significance of contextual factors in liturgical music, which broadened my understanding of the music in its post-Reformation counterparts. I thank Prof. Cheung Wai Ling for her sincere advice on how to cope when things (in research and life in general) at times seem to fall apart, by sharing with me her own life insights. Thanks also go to Rev. Dr. Brandner Tobias from Theology Department, for having me as an auditor in his course on Reformation Theology where many clues about the context of *musica poetica* were uncovered, and for his advises on theological aspects of certain parts of my thesis, which ensured my trains of thoughts were on the right track. I also want to thank the administrative staffs from the Interlending Department of the University Library, for their reliable service, problem solving, which made access to remote research materials an enjoyable process.
Special thanks go to the Principal, Dean and staffs and colleagues of the Hong Kong International Institute of Music for their support and encouragement over the past years. Working at this place gave me many inspirations and insights into how mission of education and school curriculum was designed at aim at the realization theological principles. Special thanks also go to Miss Brigit Frommel, for her continuous guidance and support on my German language learning, and her help with translating seventeenth century German into its modern form. Thanks Miss Jaclyn Hung and Lau Sze Hong, for their assistance in proof-reading of certain sections of the thesis and pointing out formatting errors.

I thank my parents-in-law, who provided their study (which I deemed it as “my personal attic”) as a second home where many important milestones of this study were made, and their love and support over the years of my studies. I also thank my parents in Australia, for their support and patience (especially for “waiting my return until everything is done”) and being always proud of whatever I might be. Their perseverance is the model for enduring my own work. My everlasting thanks goes to my husband, Kim, for his love and support that gave me a sense of security to endure, his words of wisdom that saves me from being a perfectionist, and for selflessly tolerating and appreciating this important side of my life apart from being a mother of our two children, Hannah and Joanna, whose presence on earth are the source of my strength. I dedicate this work to my family.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract...........................................................................................................................................i
Acknowledgements.........................................................................................................................iii
Introduction.......................................................................................................................................1

Chapter

1. Luther’s Ideas about Music: a Historical Precursor to Musica Poetica....................7
   Luther’s Education Background...............................................................................................7
   Luther’s Aesthetic....................................................................................................................11
   The Greek Doctrine of Ethos.................................................................................................12
   Biblical Reference of Music....................................................................................................13
   Luther’s Parting with Church Fathers....................................................................................15
   The Place of Music within Luther’s Theology......................................................................16
   Function of Music within the Lutheran Theology.................................................................17
   Chorales.....................................................................................................................................19
   The Use of Polyphonic Music in the Lutheran Liturgy...........................................................21
   Luther’s Views on the Importance of Music in Education......................................................23

2. The Rise of Musica Poetica in Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Germany.................25
   Definition of Musica Poetica.................................................................................................33
   Heinrich Faber: De Musica Poetica 1548...........................................................................38
   Gallus Dressler: Praecepta Musica Poeticae 1563..............................................................39
   Seth Calvisius: Melopoia Sive Melodiae Condendae Ratio, Quam Vulgo Musicam Poeticam Vocant (Erfurt, 1592) .........................41
3. *Musica Poetica* in the Lutheran Latin School: Rhetorically Inspired Compositional Instruction

Teachers of *Musica Poetica*

Students of *Musica Poetica*

Pedagogical method of *Musica Poetica*:

*Praeceptum-Exemplum-Imitatio*

*Praeceptum*

*Exemplum*

*Imitatio*

4. Conclusion - Understanding *Musica poetica* in sixteenth-century Lutheran Germany

Religious Functions as Expressive Goals

From Context to Method, or Vice Versa

Bibliography
INTRODUCTION

*Musica poetica* is a branch of music theory developed by German pedagogues of the Reformation era. It is the discipline within music composition that was grounded on the powerful relationships between music and text. The term *musica poetica* was first coined by the Lutheran musician/teacher Nicolaus Listenius in 1533 to distinguish it from *musica theorica* (the study of music as a mathematical science) and *musica practica* (applied theory dealing with aspects of performance), the two disciplines continuing from the medieval education curriculum. By the middle of sixteenth century, *musica poetica* began to be firmly established, alongside with *musica theorica* and *practica*, as an independent branch of composition instruction, and was taught in the Latin schools in Lutheran Germany. As the treatises on *musica poetica* convey, the teaching of *musica poetica* was modelled on pedagogical principles of rhetoric that was taught in the humanistic curriculum of the Latin schools. In defining compositional procedures in relation to text-setting, these treatises borrowed or emulated terminologies from the discipline of classical rhetoric, and treated a musical composition as a work of oration, with an aesthetic aim of producing a work that could instruct, move and delight the auditor (*docere, movere, delectare*). These aesthetic goals were in line with the new liturgical function of music that resulted from the theology of Martin Luther, the founder of the Protestant church.

Given the intricacies behind the formation of the musical tradition, there is no doubt that *musica poetica* was inspired by Luther's theology on music, shaped by
The educational environment of the Reformation and were also influenced by the artistic and aesthetic currents prevailing in sixteenth century. To better understand the concept of *musica poetica*, all the above factors must be taken into account in constructing a thorough historical interpretation of the discipline. However, a survey of research on the subject to date reveals that knowledge contributed in this area, while rich in terms of variety of perspectives and methodologies, remains “scattered” with respect to an historical understanding of the concept as a whole. In fact, instead of linking idea of *musica poetica* to its religious foundation of the reformation era, a large part of the earlier literature exhibit a tendency to construe the *musica poetica* tradition as primarily concerned with the figural expression of textual meaning and affect, in other words the history of *musica poetica* was generally presented as the history of musical figures.

Starting from the early twentieth century, interest in the study of music and rhetoric was pioneered by German musicologists. Attempts were made to build up a unified system of musical grammar and syntax of Baroque music, the so called *figurelehre*.1 Despite the unsuccessful outcome of these scholarly attempts, these studies nonetheless demonstrated the close relationship between compositional devices in music and rhetorical procedures in oratory. Monographs on individual theorists and their treatises, either in facsimile editions or in German or English translations, together with Dietrich Bartel’s monumental survey of the treatises on musical figures

---

enable readers to see the diversity of theoretical approaches adopted within the *musica poetica* tradition.\(^2\) George Buelow’s essay “Music, Rhetoric, and the Concept of the Affections: A Selective Bibliography” provides a general examination in English of the relationship between music, rhetoric, and the concepts of the musical-figures as well as the affections in the Baroque period and a useful bibliography of secondary literature, laying a foundation for further contextual studies.\(^3\) While the theories of musical figures has been popularly used to serve as an analytical tool for analyzing Baroque music,\(^4\) skepticism of using this approach has been voiced: Brian Vickers (a professor of English Language who has written extensively on Renaissance philosophy and rhetoric) asked “How can the terms of rhetoric be applied directly to music? How far can one aesthetic system, a linguistic one, be adapted to another, non-linguistic?”\(^5\) Amo Forchert has also identified several important conceptual shifts that occurred during the *musica poetica* period and has questioned the historical basis for applying the figures and affects directly to


instances of ‘word painting’ in vocal music. With the increasing awareness over the contextual implications underlying the theories of *musica poetica*, scholars have begun to draw connections between these musical theories and the Lutheran theology which originally inspired it and to justify their interpretation of the musical-rhetorical devices from a theological standpoint. More recent attempts situate compositions within the particular environment under which they were produced in order to achieve a contextual interpretation of *musica poetica* compositions.

The diversity of research methodologies and analytical perspectives in the field have once again led us to different understanding of the intricate nature of *musica poetica*. *Musica poetica* is, in a retrospective summary by Bartel, “the uniquely German discipline of Baroque music which seeks to combine medieval music theory with Lutheran theology, inspired by Renaissance humanistic thought and seventeenth-century rationalism.” Therefore, any attempt to interpret music based on a rhetorical model will be of no avail without having considered all of its underlying historical, cultural, social and theological elements. While research has long been done on historical development of *musica theorica* and *practica*, to date no

comprehensive study of the history *musica poetica* has been published. This thesis aims to fill part of this void by providing a historical investigation of the concept of *musica poetica* of the sixteenth-century from a widened perspective. By drawing together the historical, cultural, social and theological factors that gave rise and shape to the musical discipline, it is hoped that a fuller historical context for *musica poetica* will be presented. This study will also serve to complement those existing studies on the history of *musica theorica* and *musica practica* to offer a better understanding of the development of academic studies of music in the sixteenth century.

Chapter one will begin by examining Martin Luther's ideas on music and its place within his theology. Historical evidence regarding Luther's musical experiences and rhetorical training during the years of his humanistic schooling in Erfurt will be considered. The aesthetics and the humanistic beliefs of this sixteenth century theologian will be drawn together to account for his decided views on music and its use in education. Chapter two will provide a detailed historical account of the rise of *musica poetica* as an independent branch of musical instruction in the Lutheran education system. The place of music and rhetoric in the reformed school curriculum of Phillip Melanchton (Luther's collaborator, and an education minister in the Reformation Germany of the sixteenth century) will be examined in order to see how

---

his teaching influenced the pedagogy adopted by the first generation of *musica poetica* theorists. Chapter three attempts to provide a better understanding of the cultural environment in which *musica poetica* was taught by examining the interconnections between pedagogical aspects of music and rhetoric at the Lutheran Latin Schools. The final chapter will conclude the study by providing a discussion of the significance of contextual study to our understanding of Lutheran compositions of this period.
CHAPTER ONE

Luther’s Ideas about Music: a Historical Precursor to Musica Poetica

The relationships between rhetoric and music existed long before the Reformation, but only in Lutheran Germany can one find a rich tradition of musica poetica, the teaching of composition founded on rhetorical principles. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore the influence of Martin Luther (1483-1546), the founder of the Lutheran church, whose ideas about music and its use in education prepared the soil for an entire tradition. Luther's educational background and aesthetic values will be examined in order to see why his educational reform contained the seed of the new discipline. It was the theologian's ideas about music that changed the function and form of church music, and his ideas on educational reform that gave rise to an environment where the study of rhetoric combined with that of musical composition became feasible. By the middle of the sixteenth century, musica poetica began to be firmly established, alongside musica theorica and practica, as an independent musical discipline in Lutheran Germany.

Luther’s Education Background

Like most educated Germans of his time, Martin Luther began his primary education at a Lateinschule, the Latin school under the medieval scholastic education system. He first attended the Mansfeld Trivial School where the rudimentary elements of the medieval trivium, grammar, rhetoric and logic, were taught. Apart from these academic subjects, Luther also learned the Catechism, i.e. the Creed, the Lord’s
Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, as well as some ecclesiastical and liturgical music. The teaching was largely based on rote learning accompanied by severe physical discipline – Luther remembered having been chastised no less than fifteen times in one single morning. Students first learned their letters and vocabularies, then grammar and morphology from the elementary grammar texts by Aelius Donatus (fl. 354 A.D.) and Alexander de Villa Dei (1170-1250), supplemented by writings of classical authors.\textsuperscript{11}

In 1497, when Luther was 13 years old, he entered the Domschule (cathedral school) in Magdeburg, an institution led by the Brudern vom Gemeinsamen Leben (Brethren of the Common Life).\textsuperscript{12} The cathedral in Magdeburg had a rich liturgical life, and music was doubtless a part of the ritual. Luther moved on to the Latin school at St. George in Eisenach in 1498. The Latin school at St. George had been closely connected with the parish church of the city since its founding year of 1190, and it had a reputation for excellence in education. Like most Latin schools in Thuringia (Eisenach's province), the Latin school of St. George was a so-called Trivium der Antike, which offered subjects primarily in Latin grammar, logic and rhetoric.\textsuperscript{13} While grammar was taught in the junior classes, it was in the senior years where logic and rhetoric were introduced. Students were taught the grammatical rules and intricacies of the Latin language based on the instructional manual

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
The teaching method of the school usually required rigorous drilling and memorization, which was very often accompanied by physical punishment. Luther later in his table talk described this as “Prügelpädagogik” (“Pedagogy by hit-and-learn”) that he himself had experienced, attacking the established medieval scholasticism.

In addition to Latin instruction, the school provided a basic education in theology, as well as an extensive music education. In particular, students learned to sing liturgical music, and had to take part in singing during mass in the church of St. George. Luther, as a student, earned his living as a choirboy in Kurrende, by singing music in the streets and in front of private residences for alms. Luther himself later recalled: “At the time that the festival of Christ’s birth was celebrated we went from house to house, and village to village, singing popular Christmas carols and common psalms

---

14 “In its first part, the Doctrinale deals with Inflections, in its second with Syntax, in its third with Quantity (of syllables), Accent, and Figurae (fixed ways of speech). It had been intended for advanced students, who were supposed to learn from memory all the exceptions, and was very instrumental in evolving the medieval Latin, which had become quite different from the classical Latin in structure as well as in vocabulary. Terms such as substantia, essentia, existentia, quantitas, qualitas, identitas, causalitas, finalitas, quidditas(!), and haecceitas(!) were either newly created or given new meanings adapted to the terms used in Aristotelian philosophy. The Doctrinale was immensely popular until the 16th-century humanists did away with it.” Ernest F. Livingstone, “The Place of Music in German Education from the Beginnings through the 16th Century,” Journal of Research in Music Education 15, no. 4 (Winter 1967): 249-50.


16 “Scholasticism as a school activity describes a rational approach to investigations in theology, philosophy, and the liberal arts. It was based largely upon the logic of Aristotle and his improvers, and was used both to conduct research and to teach. It was thought that authorities from antiquity had made substantial contributions and that contemporary advances on those authorities would be incremental and cumulative, but only if those authorities were well understood. The two principal features of scholastic procedure – exposition and disputation – each developed as a response to the fragmentary recovery of materials from late antiquity. Exposition was needed at first to understand obscure or different texts, which were often studied in isolation from recognizable contexts. From marginal notes, scholia, and glosses, exposition developed into lectures and lengthy commentaries, and in time the mastery of texts entailed the mastery of massive amounts of earlier exposition. Disputation was used at first to confront the conflicting patristic interpretations of Scripture, and in time was adapted to problems in areas beyond biblical hermeneutics.” Lawrence D. Green, “Scholasticism,” in Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age, edited by Theresa Enos (New York: Garland Publication, 1996), 655-6.

in four-part harmony.”  

As a member of the school choir Luther would have learned the speculative aspects of music theory (in Luther's time, schools retained a respect for music in its ancient role as a component of the medieval *quadrivium*, music as a science of proportion and number that mirrored the order of creation). He would also have learned the more specialized skills of reading music, improvisation, and perhaps composition, which would have included principles of polyphonic composition underlying hymnody (i.e., the harmonizing a melody in note-against-note style, so that all the voices sing syllables together and yet with each part having an individuality of its own). Later in his life Luther attributed his experience as a performer and familiarity with the liturgy to the education he received in Eisenach. Aside from his school training, Luther was also exposed to a rich musical culture in Einsenach. Under the leadership of Archbishop Ernst von Sachsen (1476-1513), choral music and florid counterpoint flourished in the school and church of St. George. Luther also enjoyed the friendship of the priest Johannes Braun, who often led spiritual and secular music-making, including the singing of motets, in the home of Heinrich Schalbe, with whose family Luther lived.

In 1501, Luther began his law studies at the University of Erfurt. Founded in 1392, the University of Erfurt was the largest German university at this time, taking in approximately 260 new students per year. Luther's undergraduate studies included the *trivium* (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and Aristotelian philosophy. The *trivium* was to be augmented, in the years of his master's degree and was followed two years

---

19 Ibid., 70.
later, by the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy) of the postgraduate curriculum of the university, together encompassing the *septem artes liberales* (seven liberal arts). As a part of the *quadrivium*, Luther was required to study speculative music theory, which was complemented with a required lecture class on Aristotle's teachings on music.

During his study of the liberal arts, Luther learned to play the lute and to compose. The University of Erfurt, since 1494, offered students education in poetry and rhetoric, demonstrating a strong orientation towards humanistic studies. Students were encouraged to write their own poetry following classical models of Virgil, Ovid, and Horace, and to compose musical settings for them in homophonic style. The lasting influence of these exercises was later confirmed by Luther himself. During the time that the *Deutsche Messe of 1533* was being prepared, the composer Johann Walter asked Luther who had taught him the skill of setting words to music and he replied: “The poet Virgil taught me this, who is also able to apply his poetry and vocabulary so artfully to the story he is writing. So should music arrange all its notes and songs in accord with the text.”

**Luther’s Aesthetic**

Luther's ideas about music can be gleaned from the numerous statements (e.g.  

---

22 The Erfurt University statutes of 1412, reaffirmed in 1449, directed that candidates for the master's degree should study the *Musica speculativa secundum Boetium* of Johannes de Muris for at least a month. Robin A. Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 113.
forewords to musical publications, the Table Talk, 25 correspondences) he made throughout the years of his career as a religious reformer (1517-1546). While it is impossible to ascertain precisely with which theoretical works Luther was particularly familiar, a survey of reading sources available to Luther as a student will show that his frequent remarks on music were likely informed by the Greek Doctrine of Ethos, biblical commentary on song, as well as the works of Church Fathers.

**The Greek Doctrine of Ethos**

Luther adhered to the idea that the right kind of music cooperates in the formation of good human character (the Greek Doctrine of Ethos is articulated in Aristotle's *Politics*, in Plato's *Laws* and *Republic*.) 27 because of its power to uplift the soul and govern the feelings of the heart. In his Foreword to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae iucundae atque adeo breves quattuor vocum* (1538), Luther stated that: “…the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in this world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts, and spirits…. Our dear fathers and prophets did not desire without reason that music be always used in the churches. Hence we have so many songs and psalms.” 28

---

25 The Table Talk (*Tischreden*) consists of remarks made by Luther at the dinner table recorded by others.

26 “The very fact that he discoursed on music on many occasions proves that the thoughts and opinions he expressed were well established convictions and were not merely casual or transitory. His statements likewise show that his musical philosophy was carefully thought out, logical, sincere, enthusiastic, and applicable to situations of life and ecclesiastical activity.” Walter E. Buszin, “Luther on Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 1946): 80-1.

27 “Aristotle, as stated before, applies the concept of *Mimesis* [art as a result of imitation of human in action] to all the arts. Plato, in the third book of the Republic, considers music sovereign “because rhythm and harmony possess to the utmost degree the power to penetrate the soul and move it strongly.” Hence the primary role of music in Greek education and the choice of appropriate “harmoniae” to influence the listener in the best possible way for his own edification.” Gerard LeCoat, “Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 5, no. 2 (1971): 207-23.

Luther also believed in the ethical quality of music in the molding of “fine and skillful people,” and therefore recognised the pedagogical value of music in educating young people: “Music … makes men gentler and milder, more mannerly and more rational…He who knows this art is in the right frame, and fitted for every good pursuit. We cannot do without music in our schools.”  

This belief in the edifying purpose of music was also evident from his views regarding the function of his setting of the Geistliches Gesangbuchlein (1524) as Luther himself wrote in the preface: “The music is arranged in four parts. I desire this particularly in the interest of the young people, who should and must receive an education in music as well as in the other arts if we are to wean them away from carnal and lascivious songs and interest them in what is good and wholesome. Only thus will they learn, as they should, to love and appreciate what is intrinsically good.”

**Biblical Reference of Music**

Luther understood music (with its raw components such as air vibration, the proportions and relationships of different pitches and so forth) to be not a work of humankind (*inventio*), but rather a work of God, a *creatura* that is a gift to humankind. As a creation of God, music therefore could offer something more

---


31 “On the question of the invention of music there was a fundamental conflict between the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition and Greek philosophic perceptions of history. On the one hand, Genesis 4:21 states, according to the Vulgate: “Iubal ipse fuit pater cantentium cithara et organo” (Jubal is the father of those who play the harp and organ). On the other hand, according to Greek tradition it was Pythagoras who, on hearing the different pitches made by blacksmiths hammering metal, deduced the basic proportions of musical sound…For [Luther] it was beside the point to discuss the primacy of either Jubal or Pythagoras, since neither invented music…the question of the origin of music cannot be answered simply in terms of history, chronology, or human progenitors; indeed, the question cannot be understood, let alone answered, without recourse to theology, since music *per se* was not invented by humans but rather created by God.” Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, 67-70.
than an entertainment for the human senses; it could exercise positive moral influence and diminish the negative effects of evil. Luther frequently affirmed that music could dispel sadness, banish the devil or physical temptation and was directly related to God’s Word:

He [the Holy Spirit] testifies in the Holy Scriptures, that through the medium of music His gifts have been put into the hands of the Prophets [e.g., Elisha]; again, through music the devil has been driven away, that is, he, who incites people to all vices, as was the case with Saul, the King of Israel. For this very reason the Fathers and Prophets desired not in vain that nothing be more intimately linked up with the Word of God than music.

Having recognized music as a gift of God, Luther also saw that music, with its persuasive power, was also embedded with homiletic functions akin to preaching since “God has [through the accounts of Old Testament] preached [praedicavit / gepredoget] the Gospel through music.” One of the many examples of such analogy can be found in his exposition of Psalm 98, in the first series of lectures on the Psalms given between 1512-1515, where he commented:

To make music with hammered trumpets is to preach [predicare] the mystery of the kingdom of heaven and exhort to spiritual good things. To make music with voice of the bronze horn is to preach [predicare] and to reprove our sins and evil.

---

32 Luther’s understanding of music as a gift of God and its power to cast out the devil has theological connection, as Leaver observes: “From his point of view the corollary of music being the gift of God is that the devil, being opposed to God, must therefore abhor music…In his table talks are recorded a number of similar statements, such as ‘Satan is a spirit of sadness; therefore he cannot bear joy, and that is why he stays very much away from music.’” Leaver, Luther's Liturgical Music, 93.
34 LW, 54:129.
35 “In 1508 Luther was sent to the Augustinian priory in Wittenberg and began to study for his doctor's degree, which was conferred in October 1512. He did not begin teaching until a year later, during the winter semester 1513-1514, and his first lectures were on the Psalms, the songs of the Old Testament: Dictata super psalterium (1513-1515).” Leaver, Luther's Liturgical Music, 32. LW, vols. 10-11.
36 LW, 11:275.
Another example can be found in Luther’s treatise on the Last Words of David (1543), where he wrote:

When David uses the word *sweet* he is not thinking only of the sweetness and charm of the Psalms from a grammatical and musical point of view, of artistic and euphonious words, of melodious song and notes, of beautiful text and beautiful tune; but he is referring much more to the theology they contain, to the spiritual meaning ... The Book of Psalms is a sweet and delightful song because it sings and proclaims [predigit] the Messiah even when a person does not sing the notes but merely recites and pronounces the words. And yet the music, or the notes, which are a wonderful creation and gift of God, help materially in this, especially when the people sing along and reverently participate.  

**Luther’s Parting with Church Fathers**

Having been an Augustinian monk, Luther would have studied the Church Fathers’ attitudes towards music throughout the ages. While many of them were devoted to and enjoyed music, they showed a cautious attitude towards its position in Church due to its potentially negative emotive power. For example, St. Augustine, whom Luther had specially singled out for comment, had grave doubts about the propriety of music in Christian life since “music hath charms.” Augustine was cautious in his endorsement of the musical art, and in Book 10 of his *Confessions*, he admitted his suspicion of and respect for an art that was so powerful in its sensory stimulation that it threatened to overshadow the words being sung. This traditional suspicion of

38 “Augustine was wary of music’s power, admitting that even he was more moved by sacred texts when they were sung than when they were read. Seeing this enjoyment as sinful bodily gratification, he questioned whether music had a place in the Church, but concluded it did: ‘Yet when I recall the tears that I shed at the song of the Church in the first days of my recovered faith, and even now as I am moved not by the song but by the things which are sung - when changed with fluent voice and completely appropriate melody - I acknowledge the great benefit of this practice. Thus I waver between the peril of pleasure and the benefit of my experience; but I am inclined, while not maintaining an irrevocable position, to endorse the custom of singing in church so that weaker souls might rise to a state of devotion by indulging their ears.’” Oettinger, *Music as Propaganda in the German Reformation*, 13.
music expressed by the early church authority is totally absent in Luther’s attitude toward music, as Faulkner has pointed out:

Yet there is something quite remarkable about the attitude he expressed toward music: the traditional ecclesiastical suspicion of music is totally absent, and in its place stands a love, an open, warm acceptance of music in all forms. 39

Luther clearly distinguished his position from the Church Father in this matter:

Music is a beautiful and lovely gift of God which has often moved and inspired me to preach with joy. St. Augustine was afflicted with scruples of conscience whenever he discovered that he had derived pleasure from music and had been made happy thereby; he was of the opinion that such joy is unrighteous and sinful. He was a fine pious man; however, if he were living today, he would hold with us. 40

The Place of Music within Luther's Theology

Unlike other reformers of the sixteenth century, who were rather circumspect with regard to music, 41 Luther understood music as a “donum Dei”, “a gift from God”. Luther perceived an affinity between music and theology rooted in their power to uplift the soul and chase away the demon of sadness, and its ethical nature could serve to edify the listener. Luther observed that music was an integral part of prophecy in the Old Testament and therefore music and theology must be inextricably bound together. Luther judged music as the highest art in serving theology, a conviction that distinguishes him from his predecessors and

41 “The Swiss reformers [e.g. John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli] were suspicious of music because it had a power of its which, in their view, could undermine the primacy of the Word of God; it was also subject to misuse and abuse, and instead of celebrating the glory of God in worthy hymns it was frequently used to deify the inglorious aspects of human nature in immoral songs.” Robin A. Leaver, “The Lutheran Reformation,” 265.
contemporaries. On 4 October 1530, Luther wrote a letter to the composer Ludwig Senfl, in which he stated:

I plainly judge, and do not hesitate to affirm, that except for theology there is no art that could be put on the same level with music, since except for theology [music] alone produces what otherwise only theology can do, namely, a calm and joyful disposition.... This is the reason why the prophets did not make use of any art except music; when setting forth their theology they did it not as geometry, not as arithmetic, not as astronomy, but as music, so that they held theology and music most tightly connected, and proclaimed truth through Psalms and songs.42

**Function of Music within the Lutheran Theology**

Luther’s emphasis of music as a great tool to serve theology was reflected in its new role in the reformed liturgy. Luther’s emphasis on the Bible as the only source of understanding salvation (*sola scriptura*) and his idea of a universal priesthood of all believers43 were exemplified by the fact that the sermon increasingly became the focus of the liturgy.44 This means that the priest was no longer the agent of transubstantiation and the Sacrifice of the Mass from the congregation’s point of view,45 but rather a “proclaimer” of the Word,46 a “preacher” in the true sense. The

---

43 “It is a well known and easily established fact that Luther made much of the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers. This doctrine, based largely on 1. Peter 2,9, prompted him not only to have high regard for the common man and for his well-being, temporal as well as spiritual, but also to consider the worshipper seated in the pews while arranging his services of worship. The laity was to take an active part in the performance of the Church's liturgies, and hymn-singing by the congregation became an integral part of Lutheran liturgies.” Buszin, “Luther on Music,” 94.
44 “The significance of the sermon for the Lutheran Reformation is indisputable - Luther and his followers transformed the entire worship service into a vehicle for the proclamation of the gospel. From its roots in the late medieval preaching revival, the Reformation’s messages were spread through the largely illiterate population of the early modern Empire as much by actual preaching as by the written word, and many of the early books and pamphlets were sermons. Beth Kreitzer, “The Lutheran Sermon,” in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, ed. Larissa Taylor (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), 59.
45 “Whereas the Roman Church spoke of the Mass in terms of *sacrificium*, *opus bonum*, *meritum* – supremely expressed in the eucharistic Canon – Luther spoke in terms of *beneficium*, *testamentum*, *donum*, which are clearly presented in the proclamation of the *Verba Testamenti* alone… The action of the Mass in traditional thinking was of humans making an offering to God, but for Luther the movement was entirely in the other direction: God’s gift is brought to us.” Leaver, *Luther’s Liturgical...*
theological ideas of *sola scriptura* and priesthood of all believers also gave music a new role – music became a partner to the sermon in the service of proclamation, since the Word of God was best delivered by preaching and singing, as Luther stated in his preface to Georg Rhau’s *Symphoniae jucundae* (1538):

> It was not without reason that the fathers and prophets wanted nothing else to be associated as closely with the Word of God as music. Therefore, we have so many hymns and Psalms where message [*sermo*] and music [*vox*] join to move the listener’s soul, while in other living beings and [sounding] bodies music remains a language without words. After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music [*sonora praedicatione*], namely, by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words.\(^{47}\)

Kremer summarizes the new function of liturgical music in the Lutheran church by drawing a connection between music and the sermon:

> Liturgical music simultaneously represented divine praise, confession of faith and proclamation and thus served the Gospel; its basis, like that of the sermon, combined *'cantio' (song)* with *'contio' (speech)*, in subordination to the Word of God and not to canonic rule. Accordingly, music was 'not bound and approvable by rule', and could aspire to become the 'living voice of the Gospel' (*viva vox evangelii*). Within this distinctively theological comprehension of sacred music the congregation assumed an active role. If 'the Word of God or song should abide among the people', song would

---

\(^{46}\) “For Luther, the ‘Word,’ in its most basic form, is Christ... Luther also often speaks of both scripture and preaching as ‘the Word,’ but that does not mean that for Luther every literal word in the Bible is ‘the Word.’ Rather, the center and meaning of scripture is Christ, and thus the Bible can only be understood insofar as it is interpreted through Christ...In scripture, the Word can be found in two forms: law and gospel. The law serves to show the perfect will of God, but also to prove to human beings that they are sinful and unable to do God’s will. The gospel, on the other hand, first calls Christians to repentance (through the law), then provides forgiveness and grace through Christ...The ‘Word’ is found in scripture, but most accurately it is the spoken rather than the written word...Because the Word is a living word, however, Luther felt it must be preached in order for it to be effective. ... the preacher is the instrument or medium through whom God works to change his listeners: ‘It is easy enough for someone to preach the word to me, but only God can enter it into my heart. He must speak it in my heart, or nothing at all will come of it.’” Kreitzer, “The Lutheran Sermon,” 41-42.

\(^{47}\) *LW*, 53:320-321.
lead the congregation to an understanding of the Word of God.⁴⁸

**Chorales**

It is because of this proclaiming function of that music assumed an important role in the task of ecclesiastical reform. Beginning in winter 1523-4 Luther and his colleagues began writing, revising, composing and arranging hymns⁴⁹ for congregational use in the new evangelical worship, and these were published as *Geistliches Gesangbuchlein* (1524), the first Wittenberg hymnal. These hymns, or chorales, were written in the vernacular with an aim to facilitate congregational participation,⁵⁰ and were incorporated into the Latin Mass. In the same year *Geistliches Gesangbuchlein* (1524) was published, Johann Walter arranged these hymns into four or five parts for choirs for alternatim use in services. This collection was published in 1525 as *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn*,⁵¹ with a foreword by Luther.

In the process of making the chorales, Luther’s primary concern was the clarity and comprehensibility of the liturgical text and its close representation of the Gospel message for the purpose of indoctrination of the laity. For example, when Luther

---

⁴⁹ In the Bible, Paul speaks of “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Col 3:16), although he did not define or distinguish among them. These terms were used interchangeably in Luther’s expression as equivalent.
⁵¹ “Modeled on Franco-Flemish *cantus-firmus* compositions such as those of Josquin, the settings of Walter are notable for their conciseness and for the fact that, instead of being based on plainsong melodies (in augmentation), they are composed on the melodies of the “new” congregational hymns (in regular note values), with the *cantus-firmus* usually in the tenor and imitative counterpoint in the other parts. Walter’s chorale settings first appeared in part books issued as *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn* (Wittenberg, 1524), the so-called “Chorgesangbuch,” a work that was revised and expanded in subsequent editions of 1528, 1544, and 1550/51.” Robin A. Leaver, “The Reformation and Music,” 391.
asked the help of Spalatinus\textsuperscript{52} in 1524 to compose a hymn text based on a Psalm passage, Luther requested:

\begin{quote}
I desire, however, that you exclude unfamiliar words and courtly expressions in order that the words be simple and familiar to the people, and yet, at the same time, pure and apt and that the meaning be clear and faithful to the psalms. He who has grasped the sense of the words must be free, however, to substitute for the original expression other convenient words. I do not possess the gift in so great a measure that I am able to do what I desire. I desire, therefore, to put you to the test to ascertain whether you are a Heman, an Asaph, or a Judith.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

Not only the text sung must be clear and comprehensible, Luther insisted that every subtle aspect of the vernacular hymns must fit together to be idiomatically expressive. He stated this clearly in his writing \textit{Against the Heavenly Prophets} of 1525:

\begin{quote}
Although I am willing to permit the translating of Latin texts of choral and vocal music into the vernacular with the retention of the original notes and musical settings, I am nevertheless of the opinion that the result sounds neither proper nor correct; the text, the notes, the accents, the tune, and likewise the entire outward expression must be genuine outgrowths of the original text and its spirit; otherwise, everything is nothing more than an apish imitation.\textsuperscript{54}
\end{quote}

Regarding the process of transforming the entire Latin Mass into German (\textit{Deutsche Messe} 1526), Luther expressed a similar concern regarding the word-tone relation for expressive purpose:

\begin{quote}
To translate the Latin text and retain the Latin tone or notes has my sanction, though it doesn’t sound polished or well done. Both the text and notes, accent, melody, and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{52} Spalatinus was at the time private secretary to Frederick the Wise and of great service to Luther.
\textsuperscript{53} Buszin, “Luther on Music,” 87.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{LW}, 20:197.
otherwise all of it becomes an imitation, in the manner of the apes.  

Johann Walther's words of 1565, recorded in Michael Praetorius’ *Syntagma Musicum* (1565) reveals how Luther himself actually incorporated musical elements into the different parts of the liturgy to produce an artistic whole:

When Luther, forty years ago, wanted to prepare his German Mass, he requested of the Elector of Saxony and Duke John . . . that Conrad Rupff and I be summoned to Wittenberg, where he might discuss music and the nature of the eight Gregorian psalm-tones with us. He himself selected finally the eighth tone for the Epistle and the sixth for the Gospel, saying at the same time that Christ is a friendly and charming Lord, hence we shall take the sixth tone for the Gospel. Since St. Paul is a very serious-minded apostle, we shall use the eighth tone for the Epistle. He [Luther] prepared the music for the Epistles and Gospels, likewise for the Words of Institution of the true body and blood of Christ; he chanted these for me and asked me to express my opinion of his efforts. At that time he kept me in Wittenberg for three weeks; we discussed how the Epistles and Gospels might be set properly. I was in Wittenberg with Luther until the first German Mass had been presented [October 29, 1525]. I had been asked to listen to this first performance and then take a copy with me to Torgau and report, at the command of the Doctor, my impression to His Glace, the Elector. . . . I know and hereby truthfully testify that . . . Luther . . . found great delight in the chorale as well as in figurate music [i. e., solo or unison music as well as part music]. I spent many a pleasant hour singing music with him and often experienced that he seemingly could not weary of singing or even get enough of it; in addition, he was able to discuss music eloquently.  

The Use of Polyphonic Music in the Lutheran Liturgy

Although Luther decreed that the use of German chorales would bring the congregation into closer participation in worship, he never ceased admiring the both the traditional chants and the more recent styles of liturgical polyphony of the Catholic Church (as exemplified by Josquin, Isaac, and Obrecht and la Rue among

55 LW, 40:14.
56 Buszin, “Luther on Music,” 96.
others) and largely retained them as an important musical ingredient in Lutheran worship. Among these composers Luther especially admired Josquin, whom he described as the “Noten Meister” for his sensitivity to text-setting. Toward the end of 1531 the Reformer expressed the view:

God preached the Gospel through music, too, as may be seen in Josquin, all of whose compositions flow freely, gently, and cheerfully, [and] are not forced or cramped by rules like the song of the finch.

On 26 December 1538, after listening to Josquin’s *Haec dicit Dominus*, a motet for six voices, Luther made the following comment:

It beautifully comprehends the difference between Law and Gospel, death and life. Two voices make the plaintive lament *Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis etc*, against which four voices sing *Haec dicit Dominus, de manu mortis liberabo populum meum etc*. It is a very good and comforting composition.

---

57 “Luther’s theology of music was formed within the context of a particularly rich tradition of choral liturgical music in Wittenberg. Kathryn Duffy has demonstrated the extent of this liturgical music tradition in her study of the repertory of the Castle Church in Wittenberg during the early decades of the sixteenth century, Duke Frederick the Wise, Elector of Ernestine Saxony between 1486 and 1525, was second in political rank only to the Emperor Maximilian. Duffy convincingly argues that Duke Fredrick’s intention was to rival Maximillian’s Hofkapelle - which included, in succession, such musicians as Isaac, Senfl, and Hofhaimer - by establishing a significant musical foundation for the liturgical life of the Castle Church, Wittenberg. Between 1508 and 1520 this foundation was doubled, as 40 singers and musicians were increased to 81. They were responsible for singing almost 1,200 Masses throughout the year, as well as the daily Offices, to music by much prominent composers as Josquin, Isaac, and Obrecht among others. It was therefore against a rich experience of polyphonic liturgical music that Luther developed his theology of music, and also, with others, notably the composer Johann Walter, created patterns of worship-music for the Wittenberg churches that proved normative for the formation of the Lutheran tradition of liturgical music.” Leaver, “The Reformation and Music,” 390-1.

58 Mathesius records when the motet was sung at Luther’s table, sometime around 1540: “In between the singing he expressed good things, ‘Josquin,’ he said, ‘is the master of the notes [Noten Meister], which must express what he desires; he other masters of singing [Sangmeister] must do what the notes dictate. He most certainly possessed a great spirit, like Bezalel [see Exodus 31:2-6], especially when he ingeniously and beautifully intertwines together *Haec dicit Dominus* with *Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis.*” Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, 56. Mathesius was a personal friend of Luther.


60 Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, 54.
Luther’s Views on the Importance of Music in Education

Luther believed that the church and the school should be inseparable in promoting the Lutheran reformation, and music must be taught for a practical preparation for participation in church services. This can be reflected in his emphasis on the importance of practical music study in schools, for the students made up the choirs that led congregations in worship. In 1520 (in *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation*) and again in 1524 (*An die Ratsherren aller Städte deutschen Landes, daß sie christliche Schulen aufrichten und erhalten sollen*) Luther argued for the reform of the existing educational system and the foundation of new grammar schools where practical music would resume an important role:

I have always loved music. Those who have mastered this art are made of good stuff, they are fit for any task. It is necessary indeed that music be taught in the schools. A teacher must be able to sing; otherwise I will not as much as look at him. Also, we should not ordain young men into the ministry unless they have become well acquainted with music in the schools. We should always make it a point to habituate youth to enjoy the art of music for it produces fine and skilful people.⁶¹

While this was a clearly defined policy that owes much to the leadership of Luther, his idea of music education was implemented largely through the support of such colleagues as Bugenhagen, and Jonas, and most prominently Melanchthon, who compiled Lutheran school and church orders in which the role of music was carefully prescribed. Thus music formed an important part of the studies at schools of all levels, and eventually some of these students in their turn would become teachers of music in the schools, producing textbooks promoting the art of practical music for the purpose of liturgical use.

This chapter has demonstrated that, as a humanistically inclined theologian and a reformer of the Christian church, Luther’s emphasis on the proclamation and intelligibility of the “Word of God” gave music a new liturgical role, reflected in his use of congregational hymns for the purpose of worship, edification and indoctrination. Seeing the close bond between the church and the school in sustaining a community of Lutheran worshipers, Luther argued that music should serve the pedagogical purpose of training the minds and skills of the younger generation for the service of the church. Although Luther did not personally construct and oversee the program for music education (given he was already occupied with other theological issues supporting the Reformation debate by the 1520s), there is no doubt that it is this new religious function of music that laid an aesthetic foundation for all kinds of musical studies to be taught at the schools under the reformed curriculum, implemented by his alliance and colleague, Phillip Melanchthon. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the school curriculum itself in order to see how *musica poetica* laid its roots.
CHAPTER TWO

The Rise of Musica Poetica in Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Germany

While Luther’s theology inspired a rich tradition of Lutheran hymns proclaiming the Word, the church reformer’s ideas would not have been realized so spontaneously in art music without the contribution of Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560), whose education program offered an environment where musica poetica became feasible as a new musical discipline. In the newly reformed secondary schools (i.e. the Lateinschulen) and universities, Melanchthon’s teaching of the classical languages and rhetoric inspired music theorists to suggest a category of music study which combines rhetoric with composition, and therefore, alongside the established musica theorica and musica pratica, erecting a separate branch of music study.

Melanchthon was by training and experience well prepared to become an advocate of humanistic principles of education. The nephew of the renowned humanist Johannes Reuchlin, he attended the Latin School in Pforzheim where he studied Greek at the age of ten. He was made a Bachelor at Heidelberg in 1511, and in 1514 a Master of

---


63 Generally speaking, the educational system under Melanchthon contains three phases. Each of these phases contains a variety of school names according to their particular pedagogical emphasis within a humanist curriculum: basic (Lateinschulen, Trivialschulen, Partikularschulen, Ratschulen); intermediate (Gelehrtenschulen, Paedagogien, Fuurstenschulen, Klosterschulen, Landesschulen, Gymnasium); and advanced (Gymnastium, Academica, Lyceum, Universitas).

64 Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522) was chancellor to the duke of Württemberg and professor at Ingolstadt and Tübingen. He wrote De verbo mirifico and De arte cabalistica in support of Christianity. Processing knowledge of Hebrew, he promoted humanistic learning in the universities. Lewis William Spitz, Luther and German Humanism (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), 17.
Arts at Tübingen. He taught classes on Virgil, Cicero, Livy, and Terence. He took up the position of the chair of Greek in the University of Wittenberg in 1518, teaching rhetoric and dialectic alongside classical and biblical texts, and published biblical commentaries in which he applied the methods of rhetoric and dialectic to the elucidation of the Scriptures. Melanchthon’s expertise in rhetoric can be gleaned from Peter Mack’s account of his academic activities in Wittenberg University:

[In the beginning of] Melanchthon’s career, during those crucial years from 1518 to 1524 ... [he] lectured on both biblical and profane texts, and published his first rhetorical textbook and his commentary on Cicero’s *Topics*, among some eighty other texts ... [He] lectured in 1529 on Paul’s Letter to the Romans, a few months later on dialectic and the *Organon* of Aristotle, and finally on two Ciceronian orations, *Pro Murena* and *Pro Marcello*. In 1530 he taught Cicero’s *De Oratore*, immediate followed by Cicero’s *Pro Archia* ... In 1531, he probably lectured on Homer’s *Iliad*, and certainly on three Ciceronian orations, *Pro Caelio*, *Pro Sulla*, and the ninth *Philippic*. In 1532, he took up Romans again, as he did so many times before and after this period, then the *Ethics* of Aristotle, Book V, and a Ciceronian oration, *Pro Ligario*.  

His *De rhetorica libri tres* (*Three Books on Rhetoric*, 1519), *Institutiones rhetoricae* (*Rhetorical Instruction*, 1521) and *Elementa rhetorices* (*Elements of Rhetoric*, 1532) were among the earliest textbooks that he wrote on the subject of rhetoric.  

---

66 “Melanchthon’s treatises, particularly the *Elementa*, were immediately influential among Lutherans. Already in the 1530s other authors such as Georg Major and Arsacius Seehofer incorporated Melanchthon’s adaptation of the classical rules of rhetoric. Major appropriated Melanchthon’s ideas, and in 1535 published his *Quaestiones Rhetoricae die Predigt* in a question-and-answer format. Seehofer’s *Enarrationes Evangeliorum Dominicalium* (first published in 1538), a postil directed toward students, praised Melanchthon’s contributions to homiletics, and applied the genera to specific scriptural periscopes ... Other Lutheran theoretical treatises on rhetoric and preaching owed a great debt to Melanchthon, such as Wellwe’s *De modo et ratione concionandi pro studiosi Theologiae* (1558), Pankratius’s *Methodus Concionandi* (1571), Lucas Osiander’s *De ratione concionandi* (1584), Andreae’s *Methodus concionandi* (1595), and Hunnius’s *Methodus concionandi* (1595), all published in Wittenberg.” Beth Kreitzer, “The Lutheran Sermon,” in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, ed. Larissa Taylor (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), 50-51.
Melanchthon’s education reforms for Wittenberg University became the model for other universities throughout Protestant Germany. In his “On Improving the Studies of the Young” (De Corrigendis Adolescentium Studiis), an inaugural speech delivered upon assuming the chair of Greek at Wittenberg University in 1518, Melanchthon introduced a university curriculum that revolutionized the approach to the liberal arts, philosophy and Scripture. Casting aside the methods and content of medieval scholasticism, he proposed the study of languages (Latin, Greek, Hebrew), literature, history, rhetoric, and mathematics. In place of the traditional scholastic authors, “he endorsed the study of classical philosophers, rhetoricians, and poets, especially Plato, Homer, Virgil, Horace, and ‘the true historical Aristotle’ (as distinct from the Aristotle of scholastic commentaries).”

Melanchthon also organized in his home a schola privata, giving private tuition on aspects of humanistic subjects to a group of students from advanced schools such as the Gymnasium, to prepare them for admission to universities. The teaching program of the schola privata includes “the cultivation of refined Latin speech, the training of

---

67 “Melanchthon’s successes in restructuring the Wittenberg curriculum ensured that he was asked to give curricular advice at the foundation and/or reform of several other universities, such as Marburg (1527), Tübingen (1535), Leipzig (1539), Königsberg (1544), and Heidelberg (1557).” William Harrison Woodward, Studies in Education During the Age of the Renaissance 1400-1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), 214.

68 Steven E. Ozment, “Humanism and the Reformation,” in The Age of Reform (1250-1550): An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 290-317; despite the traditional acceptance of the scholastic method for interpreting Aristotle’s works in the Middles Ages, understanding of his works was revived from a humanistic perspective in the Renaissance. Luther, who specially valued the linguistic components of Aristotle’s output, also expressed similar opinion with Melanchthon in his letter To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation (An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation) of 1520: “I would gladly agree to keeping Aristotle’s books, Logic, Rhetoric, and Poetics, or at least keeping and using them in an abridged form, as useful in training young people to speak and to preach properly. But the commentaries and notes must be abolished, and as Cicero’s Rhetoric is read without commentaries and notes, so Aristotle’s Logic should be read as it is without all these commentaries. Martin Luther, Luther’s Works: 55 Vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1972), 44: 201.
manners, and the perfecting of rhetoric and declamation in theatre performances.”

Melanchthon’s plan for the restructuring of secondary schools is mainly outlined in the second part of his *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony* (the *Unterricht der Visitatoren in Sachsen, 1528*), which presents a model for the Latin school, the “public school” proper at the time, as can be seen in hundreds of school ordinances in some sixty towns in Lutheran Germany. In the *Instructions*, Melanchthon provided a carefully stratified curriculum consisting of three levels. The first level, which consists of children who are beginning to read and write, began with Melanchthon’s primer *Enchiridion elementorum puerilium* which presents the Latin alphabet, followed by the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and other prayers. Having learned this material, students began to build up a vocabulary of Latin words by reading the proverbs of Cato and studying the grammar of Donatus.

At the second level, students were introduced to Latin grammar of various classical

---


70 “On Luther’s suggestion of November 22, 1526 to the new elector, John the Steadfast, a visitations committee was formed to conduct a survey of Saxon churches. Luther was appointed director, and Melanchthon prepared the “Instruction of the Inspectors” (“Unterricht der Visitatoren”) which was published on March 22, 1528 … As a result of the inspection, school ordinances were prepared, with Melanchthon’s plan for the Electorate of Saxony (1528) standing as the model.” Bruce Allan Belingham, “The *Bicinium* in the Lutheran Latin Schools During the Reformation Period,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1971), 48-9.


72 “… the legislation for school visitations in Saxony (the *Unterricht der Visitatoren in Sachsen, 1528*) … established a ‘highly influential norm’ … for regulating schools … [For example], the 1529 *Kirchenordnung* of Hamburg expressly referred to Melanchthon in its regulations concerning the school that was to be set up: ‘Therefore, the form shall be adopted for the other classes, and exercises shall be conducted, according to the rules outlined by Magister Philip Melanchthon in his his *Visitatie der pastoren tho Sassen.***’ Joachim Kremer, “Change and Continuity in the Reformation Period: Church Music in North German Towns, 1500-1600,” in *Music and Musicians in Renaissance Cities and Towns*, ed. Fiona Kisby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 119.

73 “Initially, it appears odd that a medieval grammar (fourth century) should find a place in a humanist curriculum. The conciseness of Donatus’ expositions of the eight parts of speech, however, featuring capsule definitions of each part in a question/answer format, makes this grammar useful to the humanists. Moreover, its brevity - a mere ten pages, makes memorization of the whole text easier for the young student.” John Henry Derkson, “De *Imitatione*: The Function of Rhetoric in German Musical Theory and Practice (1560-1606)” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1982), 9.
and humanist authors. Students began to study elements of etymology, syntax and prosody based on examples from the verses of Terrence, Plautus, Erasmus and Luther’s translation of *Aesop’s Fables*, along with recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments and some selected Psalms. When the students are sufficiently trained in Latin grammar, they moved on to the third level to begin the study of eloquence using readings from Ovid, Cicero, and Virgil, from which further study on etymology and syntax and prosody was made. Having mastered the *grammaticae praecpectiones*, students could, in place of hours originally assigned to grammar study, begin rhetoric and dialectic with the aid of Erasmus’ *De duplici copia verborum*. The study of eloquence was enhanced by weekly writing exercises in both prose and verse. All three levels of students, as outlined in regulation, must be trained using Latin as the primary language. In addition, they were to receive daily instruction in music and hymnology.

During the sixteenth century rhetoric was a standard subject in the Latin schools across Lutheran Germany. It is possible to chart its development in these schools through their school textbooks, regulations and curricula.\textsuperscript{74} Under the Lutheran education system, rhetoric was only taught in the final one or two years of school, after the students had thoroughly mastered Latin grammar and syntax. According to Dietrich Bartel, the typical weekly curriculum of the advanced students included eight hours of Latin, three hours of dialectic, two hours of rhetoric, and two hours of reading of the classics.\textsuperscript{75} In addition to other subjects, provision was also made for further private tutoring in rhetoric. The student was taught to prepare a given topic


\textsuperscript{75} Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).
either in oral or written form according to the examples of classical authors. As Dilwyn Knox has pointed out, since the study of rhetoric was allocated to the end of the Latin school curriculum, during which students had only about two years to acquire a good grounding in subjects to prepare for their university education and eventually for use in their ecclesiastic or civil positions, rhetorical textbooks had to be concise and stripped of all impractical details. Melanchthon’s rhetorical textbooks, with their brevity and practicality, became standard in Protestant Latin schools. These textbooks limited instruction in rhetorical theory to *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*, and reduced the lengthy explanations of rhetorical concepts and techniques by classical authors to a few easily grasped precepts. Written in a catechetical format, rules of rhetoric were defined with examples from classical writings, providing material that the students could emulate/imitate. Classical authors, therefore, were not read for their literary content or theoretical subtleties but rather to determine linguistic rules. In sum, Melanchthon’s rhetoric was a guide to the *methodus* of rhetoric, and it was taught through ‘*praecptum, exemplum, et imitatio*’. In the classroom it was supplemented with readings from

---

76 “The pedagogical and practical constraints outlined above determined the typed of rhetorical textbook used in Protestant Latin schools. Classical rhetorics like Cicero’s *De oratore, Orator, De inventione, Partitiones oratoriae, Quintilian’s Institutiones oratoriae* and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* were deemed unsuitable primers. They were assigned, if at all, as supplementary rather than required texts, and usually at gymnasia [advanced schools] rather than ordinary Latin schools. They were appropriate instead for university or special schools where curricula overlapped with those of universities. This held true also for popular Renaissance works like Agricola’s *De inventione dialectica.” Dilwyn Knox, “Order, Reason and Oratory: Rhetoric in Protestant Latin Schools,” in *Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. Peter Mack (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 68.

77 In defining the art of rhetoric, Melanchthon has reduced the traditional fivefold theory of rhetoric to three parts for practical use: “The art of rhetoric is almost wholly incorporated in three subjects, the devising of subject matter, arrangement of subject matter and expression. Therefore I shall not propound rules for the other two subjects of memory and delivery. The former is helped very little by theoretical rules, while delivery nowadays is quite different from what it was in antiquity. The most appropriate manner of delivery should be learned by imitating public speakers.” Dilwyn Knox, “Order, Reason and Oratory: Rhetoric in Protestant Latin Schools,” in *Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. Peter Mack (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 69-70.

78 “It was Melanchthon’s policy in teaching all subjects in the Latin schools that the teacher should first present a rule (*praecptum*) which he would then illustrate (*exemplum*) and give the students to
Melanchthon’s pedagogical methods were esteemed and subsequently adopted as a model for musical instruction. This is evident, in part, from the predominance of the use of catechetical format of music textbooks written by music pedagogues of the sixteenth century, many of whom were former students of the Wittenberg University: Johann Spangenberg: *Questiones musicae* (1536), Auctor Lampadius: *Compendium musices* (1537), Sebald Heyden: *De Arte Canendi* (1540), Martin Agricola: *Quaestiones* (1543), Heinrich Faber: *Compendiolium musicae pro incipientibus* (1548), Gregor Faber: *Erotemata* (1552), Johann Zanger: *Practicae musicae praecepta* (1554), Wilfflingseder: *Musica teutsch* (1561) and *Erotemata musices practicae* (1563), Lucas Lossius: *Erotemata musices practicae* (1563), etc. In his introductory letter (to *Questiones musicae*, 1536) to the publisher Georg Rhau, Johannes Spangenberg put forward the reasons for using Melanchthon’s trivium-based teaching and methods for the purposes of musical instruction:

> For I perceive that study to be very easy which is treated by means of questions, and for whose matter examples are not lacking. For who could be taught Dialectic itself more accurately, more concisely and more richly than he who is taught by Doctor Philipp Melanchthon, a most learned man of our age, by most beautiful and most clear questions. Would that they too (the questions) might be sometimes forged by examples. After this, who is not about to select Rhetoric with great desire when Georgius Maior, an extraordinary creator of great maturity has grasped the whole discipline of Rhetoric by means of most pleasant questions, in a most concise arrangement, in a small package, as it were? And what further? This kind of instruction provides access to the whole discipline easily. 79

[79 Quotation from John Henry Derkson, *“De Imitatione: The Function of Rhetoric in German Musical*]
Melancthon’s educational reform, with its emphasis on the linguistic arts advocating the humanistic understanding of classical authors, and the impact of his rhetorical teachings, both in the form of primers in Latin schools and public lectures on scriptural exegesis at University of Wittenberg, had great impact on his students, many of whom later became teaching musicians in the Latin schools. For example, Nicolaus Listenius (born Hamburg, c. 1510), the church Cantor and music master at the Stadtschule in Salzwedel (from 1536), who studied at Wittenberg University in 1529-31, during the time Luther and Melancthon taught there, became the first to define music, a subject which was traditionally part of the quadrivium (mathematic disciplines), in relation to the language arts. In chapter one his Musica of 1537, one of the most widely-read school primers of the time, Listenius expanded the traditional two-fold division of the study of music (i.e. musica theorica and musica practica) by introducing the third branch, musica poetica, the study of composition, as an independent technical category.

Theoretical, whose goal is knowing, is that which is concerned only in the contemplation of skill and the understanding of the subject. Hence the theoretical musician who knows this art, truly content in this, presents no example of his work in performance.

Theory and Practice (1560-1606)” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1982), 36.

80 Listenius’ Musica of 1537 was an expanded version of his earlier work Rudimenta musicae planae, published in 1533 by Georg Rhaw, at Wittenberg. The term musica poetica first appeared in Rudimenta musicae planae, but was defined in Musica of 1537 in more detail.

81 “Musica (1537) was one of the two most popular instruction books in Germany during the sixteenth century, running to many editions and being specifically required in numerous Schulordnungen for various cities [e.g. Wittenberg, Augsburg, Nuremburg, Leipzig, Frankfurt, Breslau] when schools were reorganized under the influence of the Reformation. In these schools, Listenius’ Musica was generally required for use in the upper classes, whereas Heinrich Faber’s shorter Compendiolum musice was used by the lower classes. Listenius’ Musica … was also used as the text for music lecturers at the University of Cracow in 1562.” Nan Cooke Carpenter, Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 266.

Practical, whose goal is doing, is that which delights not only in the intricacies of skill, but extends into performance itself, leaving out no part of the act of performance. Hence the practical musician, who teaches others something more than the recognition of art, trains himself in it for the goal of any performance.

Poetic is that which is not content with just the understanding of the thing nor with only its practice, but which leaves something more after the labor of performance, as when music or a song of musicians is composed by someone whose goal is total performance and accomplishment. It consists of making or putting together more in this work with afterwards leaves the work perfect and absolute, which otherwise is artificially like the dead. Hence the poetic musician is one who is trained in leaving something more in his achievement. These latter two types (i.e., practical and poetic) have always the first (theoretical) included, but the reverse is not true.83

**Definition of Musica Poetica**

To understand the significance of Listenius’ definition of *musica poetica*, it is necessary to first understand the nature of musical pedagogy of the time. In the early sixteenth century, the study of music was divided between *musica theorica* and *musica practica*. *Musica theorica* was a scholarly activity, which took the form of study of speculative theories inherited from Boethius and the Pythagorean tradition of the ancient Greeks.84 It was a branch of mathematics that deals with the study of proportions that describes the behavior of sounding bodies, which mirrored the order

---


84 *Boethius’s treatise [-De institutione musica-] remained the standard textbook on music throughout the Middle Ages, until the end of fifteenth century; it was still widely used in the sixteenth. The subjects covered in musical studies, the mathematical orientation, the concern for pitch nearly to the exclusion of rhythm, and the Pythagorean foundation all remained essentially unchallenged for a millennium. Boethius’s interpretation of the Greek sources also had no competitor, and his work provided the only, if indirect, link with the early Greek sources for the musical scholars of the Latin Middle Ages. Ann E. Moyer, *Musica Scientia: Musical Scholarship in the Italian Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 32.
of creation. As such, it was studied together with arithmetic, astronomy, and geometry as part of the quadrivium. Musica practica, in the sense as codified by Italian theorist Gaffurio (Practica musicae, Milan 1496-7), mainly deals with practical or applied theory, focusing on composition, counterpoint, and mensural notation including a few recommendations on performing practice. It was learned by working musicians, such as singers in chapel choirs or composers, who were concerned with practical aspects of music. While Italian theorists defined musica practica primarily as the art of composition, the term was used in Reformation Germany primarily in association with vocal performance, an important component of Lutheran education system. Ralph Lorenz summarizes the nature of musica practica in sixteenth century Lutheran Germany succinctly:

The German treatises on musica practica are designed for use in the schools, especially at the secondary level. These manuals present concise definitions, illustrations, and exercises for learning to perform vocal music. The focus is primarily on fundamentals such as the scale (gamut), clefs, vocables, hexachords, mutation, solmization, the modal system, and aspects of notation, including note and rest values, ligatures, and mensuration. The treatises are often divided into musica plana (plainsong and basics) and musica figuralis (polyphony) … The practical aspects of these treatises were important for choirboys because they were constantly performing at weddings, funerals, banquets, and in regular church services.

---

85 “As a mathematical discipline, …[musica theorica] attempted to explain music as number and to bring the numerical order of tone into an exact juxtaposition with the concept of God as universal order. We meet here not only theoretical concepts of profound significance to German Baroque music, but ideas vitally interconnected with theology, philosophy, and metaphysics.” George Buelow, “Symposium on Seventeenth-Century Music Theory: Germany,” Journal of Music Theory 16, no. 1/2 (Spring 1972): 39.


88 “German writers from the early years of the Lutheran Reformation tended to confine [musica practica] to the art of ‘mere’ performance, something which could be grasped quickly and easily by young boys in school.” John Butt, Music Education and the Art of Performance in the German Baroque, Cambridge Musical Texts and Monographs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xii.

89 Ralph Lorenz, “Pedagogical Implications of Musica Practica in Sixteenth-Century Wittenberg” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1995), 4-5.
While both *musica theorica* and *practica* were musical disciplines carried down from the medieval scholastic tradition, Listenius’ *musica poetica* had a humanistic connotation. The word *poetica* derives from the Greek word *poieo* meaning “to make, produce, or create.” Listenius’ tripartite division of music was modelled on Aristotle’s theory of arts, from his *Poetics* (first printed in a Latin translation by Giorgio Valla in 1498) in which human mental activity/knowledge is divided into three spheres: the theoretical (from Greek *theōrein*, to contemplate), the practical (from Greek *prattein*, to bring about, accomplish), and the poetical, or creative (from Greek, *poiein*, to make). While composition was traditionally recognized as a practical art, Listenius, under the influence of his humanistic studies, recognized music as an imitative art, similar to a literary work created by the poet, that can become expressive – an idea conveyed by Aristotle’s term *mimesis*. In this sense, the artistic goal of composition under *musica poetica* is different from that of *musica practica* – while *musica practica* involved treating musical compositions as craftsmen’s application of speculative theories, *musica poetica* involved the laying out of compositional devices and organizational techniques that resulted in a finished

---


92 Aristotle’s Poetics was also recognized as one of the greatest sources of influence in Renaissance musical thoughts: “The theoretical concepts for the process of humanization were provided by the literary humanists. They in turn were under the influence of ancient theory, in particular, Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The *Poetics*, which one scholar characterized as “a literary Bible for Renaissance classicism,” was copied, commented and translated (from the original and from Averroe’s paraphrase) in numerous editions from the last quarter of the fifteenth century on. From a musical standpoint its influence can be pinpointed in two doctrines: imitation (*mimesis*), and the stirring of emotions (*ethos*).” Don Harrán, *Word-Tone Relations in Musical Thought: From Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: American Institute of Musicology, 1986), 91.
piece of music, or a perfect and absolute work (“opus perfectum et absolutum.”)\textsuperscript{93}

Rivera compares this idea to the nature of a linguistic work:

\[\text{[Musica poetica]} \ldots \text{was more than devising counterpoint by properly using consonances and dissonances; it was an art of setting down a completed work that had a coherent design and unity - a beginning, middle, and end, as Aristotle observed in his Poetics.}\textsuperscript{94}\]

By counting composition as poeisis, Listenius’ new technical category redefined composition from a humanistic perspective. Composition was no longer perceived only as a practical art based on speculative theory, which had been richly cultivated in the Italian musical tradition.\textsuperscript{95} Hence, the term musica poetica represents a call to a humanistic pedagogical foundation to the study of composition that would not only be in line with the pedagogical goals of the reformed school system, but also complement the increasing demands of practical music making in the Lutheran schools and churches:\textsuperscript{96}

In Reformation Germany, it was the practical skills of singing and performance that were taught in the Lutheran Lateinschule, the centerpiece of the humanistic educational system developed and implemented by Luther and his education minister, Philipp


\textsuperscript{95} “[Listenius] is the first writer to define composition as the separate art of musica poetica, distinct from the fields of musica theorica and practica. Later theorists adopt the threefold division (e.g. Finck 1556, Oridryus 1557) or merely omit to mention composition within the context of musica practica.” John Butt, Music Education and the Art of Performance in the German Baroque, Cambridge Musical Texts and Monographs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8.

\textsuperscript{96} “Thus, there was a highly organized school system in Wittenberg within which music was considered to be a very important subject. The university and especially the secondary schools provided fertile training grounds for the development of practical skills. Students were exposed to music of the highest quality in the Netherlandish style.” Ralph Lorenz, “Pedagogical Implications of Musica Practica in Sixteenth-Century Wittenberg,” 24.
Melanchthon. What was lacking in this practical curriculum was the advanced teaching of counterpoint and composition - skills essential to a fledgling cantor or composer - that had developed so strongly in the Italian tradition of *musica practica* culminating with Zarlino. Such skills could only be acquired by students in private lessons. What stepped in to fill this void was, on the one hand, the dissemination of Zarlino's compositional pedagogy, and on the other, *musica poetica*, a creative new branch of music theory developed by German pedagogues.  

It is the Lutheran Latin school system, with its emphasis on music as well as rhetorical teachings in the form of systematic pedagogy, that inspired music theorists (who were usually teachers in the Latin school – the *Kantors*) to offer instruction on composing music as a poetic art with a humanistic pedagogical foundation. In fact, it was the *Kantor's* duty to teach music as well as the *trivium* subjects, which includes rhetoric, and it would be very natural for them to adopt the classical art of rhetoric as its conceptual and pedagogical model.

The term *musica poetica* soon began to appear in the titles of treatises on musical composition.  

Heinrich Faber (1500-1552), a *magister atrium* (MA 1545) of Wittenberg University and the rector of the cathedral school in Naumberg, became the first to use the term in the title of an unpublished manuscript treatise, *De musica poetica*, of 1548.

---


98 The following discussion will be a survey of some representative treatises of the discipline. Although references pointing to the importance of *musica poetica* can be found sprinkled throughout Lutheran sources, many of the *musica poetica* treatises of the sixteenth century were, possibly due to its private mode of teaching, never published (e.g. Martin Agricola in *Musicae Choralis Deudsch* and *Musica Figuralis Deudsch* referred to an intended *musica poetica* text; Likewise, Hermann Finck promised a *musica poetica* treatise, but they were all not published.) For the purpose of this study, it is also not feasible to look at every Lutheran musical textbooks of the period for instances of appearance of the term or implicit references to the idea of *musica poetica*. Therefore, discussion will be focused on compositional treatises specifically designed for the instruction of *musica poetica*.

99 Heinrich Faber was best known as the author of *Compendiolum musicae pro incipientibus* (Brunswick, 1548), a textbook on singing used in Lutheran schools which was reprinted for numerous times and was recommended more than 49 different school ordinances issued between 1599 and 1613. He was also registered as a private teacher of music in Wittenberg University in 1551. Ralph Lorenz, “Pedagogical Implications of Music Practica in Sixteenth-Century Wittenberg.” 286-9.
Heinrich Faber: *De Musica Poetica* 1548

Heinrich Faber’s *De Musica poetica* was the third part of a larger treatise on music, *Ad musicam practicam introductio*, first published in 1550. The first section of *Ad musicam practicam introductio* provides an explanation of Greek musical terminology and deals with rudiments of plain song and polyphony; the second part deals with rhythmic-notational problems of mensural music based upon contemporaneous musical practice. The third section, entitled *Tertia Pars Musica: De Fingendis Musicis*, was intended as a final step in the author’s pedagogical system. It has been found in manuscript, together with the second part, under the collective title *Secunda pars Musicae practicae et poeticae Magistri Heinrici Fabri*, dated Brunschweig, August 1548.100

Faber defined *musica poetica* as “the art of shaping a musical poem” (*Musica poetica est ars figendi musicum carmen*), before restating Listenius’ definition of *musica poetica*. He divides poetic music into two parts, improvisation (*sortisatio*) and composition (*compositio*). Considering improvisation as “a sudden and impulsive ordering of a song through diverse melodies” which is based on one’s practical experience, Faber emphasized the superiority of composed over improvised music.101

---

100 One of the three extant copies resides in Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz. According to Bellingham, Heinrich Kätzel discovered the work in the Hofer Gymnasialbibliothek during its rebuilding after World War II; another copy exists in the Zwickauer Ratsschulbibliothek. Bruce Allan Belingham, “The *Bicinium* in the Lutheran Latin Schools During the Reformation Period,” 98, Faber’s *Musica poetica* was the subject of a dissertation at Friburg im Breisgau (1966) by Christoph Stroux: “Die Musica poetica des Magister Heinrich Faber”.

101 Dividitur autem musica poetica in duas partes, sortisationem et compositio.…. Sortisatio est subita ac improvisa cantus per diversas melodias ordination. Quia vero hæc ordination canendi non valide probatur eruditis, non opus est ut diutius huius rei, quæque solummodo usu consistit immoremur [Poetic music is divided into two parts, improvisation and composition…. Improvisation is a sudden and impulsive ordering of a song through diverse melodies. But because this ordering of singing is not greatly approved of by the learned, it is not worth dwelling on this matter any longer, which consists
The first seven of the nine chapters deal with the basic vocabulary of composition: consonance, dissonance, suspensions, voices or parts, and chord formation. In the final two chapters, Faber provides discussion of the use of cadences (clausula) by equating its function to the end of a sentence or paragraph, and musical devices such as cadences, fugues, and rests were discussed in terms of musical ornaments.

**Gallus Dressler: Praecepta Musicae Poeticae 1563**

Gallus Dressler (1533–80/89), cantor of the Magdeburg Lateinschule in 1558, where he succeeded the noted Lutheran theorist Martin Agricola (1486–1556), and later a magister from Wittenberg University, produced the *Praecepta musicae poëticae*, which comprises the text of a series of private lectures he delivered in the Magdeburg Lateinschule between October 1563 and February 1564. This treatise appeared in four manuscript versions (Magdeburg, 1571, 1575, 1584, 1601), and was remained unpublished throughout the sixteenth century. It is devoted exclusively to the art of musical composition, which its author called *musica poetica*.

between the importance of clear articulation of phrases in music and grammar and punctuations in speech:

Let young men not persuade themselves that musical *concentus* are the result of a casual and fortuitous accumulation of consonances. For just as speech has eight parts of speech, likewise there is the sentence with commas and fullstops, by which it is conjoined like members with joints; so too the musical *concentus* has eight or even more tones, likewise intervals and cadences, from which the harmony is constituted. Moreover, what the sentence and comma are in speech, in poetic music these are the cadences, which constitute the parts as much as the whole body. Therefore, it is not sufficient only to know the composition of cadences, but learners must be taught in what order cadences are to be conjoined so that they also render a just harmony for the ears. Two things are to be considered carefully in the placement of cadences: one of which is that they correspond in a fitting way to the words, the other to the *concentus*, and that they cohere to them equally.¹⁰³

In an apparent analogy to the three classical *genera* of orations, Dressler distinguished four *genera* of polyphonic style, according to whether a composer used a transparent type of fugal writing (*nudus*), fractured counterpoint (*fractus*), fully sonorous imitative polyphony (*plenus*), or a more versatile style that adjusted to the changing requirements of the underlying verbal text. Dressler considered that a musical composition, like an oration, consisted of an *exordium* (opening introduction), a *medium* (middle), and a *finis* (conclusion).¹⁰⁴ Recognizing different kinds of musical passages have different structural functions within the context of a piece as a whole, he offered an extensive discussion of the kinds of materials that are suitable for each of the three parts of a composition. Dressler concludes the treatise with a final chapter [chapter XV. By what methods students may progress with profit in this subject. (XV. *qua ratione tyrones in hoc studio cum fruge progridi possint*)]

¹⁰⁴ According to Aristotle, a tragic drama or an epic poem, to be a unified whole, must have a beginning (*arche*), middle (*meson*), and end (*teleutae*). (*Poetics* 7.3 and 23.1.)
that gives five recommendations on how to proceed in learning *musica poetica*.

**Seth Calvisius: Melopoiia Sive Melodiae Condendae Ratio, Quam Vulgo Musicam Poeticam Vocant (Erfurt, 1592)**

Seth Calvisius (1556-1615),<sup>105</sup> Kantor of the Fürstenschule in Schulpforta from 1582 until 1594, and later Thomaskantor in Leipzig, translated the term into Greek and titled his treatise as *Melopoiia sive Melodiae condendae ratio, quam vulgo musicam poetica vocant* [Melopoeia, or method of composing melody, which is commonly called *musica poetica*] (Erfurt, 1592.)<sup>106</sup>

Apart from transmitting the essence of Zalino’s contrapuntal theory (as laid out in his *Istitutioni harmoniche* of 1558) into the German compositional method, chapter eighteen, entitled “De orative sive textu,” discusses the close relationship between words and music in musical composition and mentions poetic figures to be effectively set. Among its progressive features was a comparison between the segmentations in a musical work and the punctuation points of poetry, and a musical reflection of a question in the text by using an imperfect cadence ending on the dominant.

---

<sup>105</sup> “After attending schools at Frankenhausen and Magdeburg [in 1572, where he probably studied music with Dressler, who was there until 1575], Calvisius began his studies at the University of Helmstedt in 1579 and continued them from Easter 1580 at the University of Leipzig, where he had matriculated in 1576. In 1581 he became Kantor at the Paulinerkirche, Leipzig, only to move in November 1582, on the recommendation of the Leipzig theologian Nikolaus Selnecker, to Schulpforta as Kantor of the Fürstenschule. He spent 12 fruitful years there not only as an inspiring teacher but also in the study of history, chronology and music theory. In May 1594 he was recalled to Leipzig as Kantor of the Thomaskirche in succession to Valentin Otto.” (Adam Adrio and Clytus Gottwald, “Calvisius, Sethus [Kalwitz, Seth]” in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed Mar 10, 2009).

Joachim Burmeister: *Hypomnematum Musicae Poeticae* (1599)

Joachim Burmeister (1564-1629), Kantor of the Nikolaikirche and Marienkirche at Rostock from 1589, and *magister* from the University of Rostock in 1593, and thenceforth *praecceptor classicus* (teaching Latin and Greek classics) and music teacher at the town school of Rostock, published his first treatise on composition, *Hypomnematum musicae poeticae*, in 1599. Like Dressler, Burmeister conceives the structure of a musical work by analogy to that of a classical oration, and he divides the work into exordium, body, and peroration, and distinguishes the smaller affective periods that make up these sections. His main contribution to the pedagogy of *musica poetica*, however, lies in his discussion of the musical “ornaments,” i.e., the syntactical procedures for varying, combining, and amplifying musical phrases. In chapter 12 of the treatise, which is devoted to the “ornaments” of music, Burmeister identified twenty-two musical ornaments (classified as either harmonic, melodic, or mixed) that are commonly used in polyphonic composition of the late sixteenth century, and labels them with names that are either borrowed from rhetorical manuals or freshly coined to emulate rhetorical terms. Rhetorical *colores* (or tropes and figures) such as *metalepsis*, *hypallage*, *apocope*, *palillogia*, *parembole* and *anaphora*, were equated with musical devices such as a suspension, cadences, fugues, melodic sequence, or repeated pattern, etc. In the dedicatory

---

107 Burmeister, Joachim. *Hypomnematum musicae poeticae*. Rostock: Stephan Myliander, 1599; the complete title of *Hypomnematum musicae poeticae* reads: *Hypomnematum musicae poeticae a Magistro Joachimo Burmeistero, ex Isagoge cuius et idem ipse auctor est, ad chrum gubernandum, cantumque componendum conscripta, synopsis*. [Synopsis of Observations on Musical Poetics by Master Joachim Burmeister, from the introductory treatise of which he is also the author, which was written for directing a choir and composing a musical piece.] Translation of the title is quoted from Joachim Burmeister, *Musical Poetics*, translated by Benito V. Rivera (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), xiv.

108 Burmeister’s list or rhetorical terms were largely borrowed from Lucas Lossius’ *Erotemata dialecticae et rhetoricae Philippi Melanchthonis et praeceptionum Erasmi Roterdamii* of 1562. Lossius was the vice-rector of Lüneburg Lateinschule, who also taught Burmeister classical rhetoric during his attendance in the Latin school.
preface of the treatise, Burmeister points out pedagogical purpose for his musico-rhetorical figures:

I have also made it possible for those elements which are special and notable in this art, hitherto in need of proper names so to speak, to be given their proper names so that our discourse, aimed at illuminating the matter through comparison, may not be rendered ineffective because of a lack of terminology.¹⁰⁹

By using a vocabulary already familiar through the student’s rhetorical studies, Burmeister’s system of musico-rhetorical figures aimed to offer students a systematic tool for analysing a composition and to identify musical devices which they could then apply in their own work. By moving away from dispositio (as covered by his predecessors) to aspects of elocutio, Burmeister’s Hypomnematum musicae poeticae presents a refined application of rhetorical principles to musical composition. Burmeister’s Hypomnematum musicae poeticae also became the basis of his two other treatises, Musica autoschediastike (Rostock, 1601), and Musica poetica 1606, both of which deal with the same subject matter, showing the author’s reworking of his ideas on the presentation of musico-rhetorical figures.¹¹⁰

By the middle of sixteenth century, musica poetica became widely accepted as an independent branch of music in Lutheran Germany, as many music textbooks adopted the tripartite scheme in defining musica, such as Hermann Finck’s Practica musica (Wittenberg, 1556), Johannes Oridryus’ Practicae Musicae (Dusseldorf, 1557), Henning Dedekind’s Praecursor Metricus Musicae Artis (Erfurt, 1590), and

¹⁰⁹ Joachim Burmeister, Musical Poetics, translated by Benito V. Rivera, xlvi.
¹¹⁰ “All three [treatises] treat the same subject matter in various degrees of detail... Musica autoschediastike is a more compendious treatise than Musica poetica; the latter is sometimes clearer and more concise, but the earlier versions must be consulted now and then to untangle obscurities that remain in the final version.” Peter Bergquist, review of Musical Poetics, by Joachim Burmeister, translated with introduction and notes by Benito V. Rivera, Journal of Music Theory 40, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 348.
Cyriacus Schneegass’ *Isagoges Musicae Libri Duo, Tam Theoricae quam Practicae* (Erfurt, 1591).\(^{111}\) The study of composition was therefore no longer considered to be the second part of *musica practica*. With Melanchthon’s education curriculum emphasizing the *trivium* and practical music in the reformed schools and universities, the study of music as a speculative science (*musica theorica*) was gradually phased out of the curriculum and was no longer required by the statutes of universities\(^{112}\) along with the cancellation of professorships in music.\(^{113}\) Leading musical pedagogues were no longer full members of the faculty, but were incorporated in the universities under sessional staff to give lectures to or to teach privately those students who so desired, or to assist with the musical aspects of academic festivals. Most of the advanced musical training (including the study of composition, *musica poetica*) now began to take place in the secondary schools, or more typically in the Latin schools (*Lateinschulen*), where music teachers, i.e., the *Kantors*, were...

---


112 “In many of the German universities, the teaching of music followed traditional medieval lines until the time of the Reformation, after which music as a mathematical discipline was eliminated from the curriculum altogether or absorbed in the teaching of physics. In Prague the *Musica* of Jean de Muris was required for the last time in 1528. Vienna’s professors of mathematics were required to lecture on music according to Ptolemy, Boethius, or Muris until the middle of the century. At Heidelberg *musica speculativa* was likewise taught as a part of mathematics until well past the middle of the century. Cologne, noted for its strong adherence to scholastic philosophy until near the end of the century, required music as a mathematical discipline continuously from its founding until 1574, after which it was probably taught as a part of physics. The *Musica* of Muris was offered at Leipzig in the first half of the sixteenth century, but with the humanistic curriculum inaugurated there in 1558, music was eliminated from the prescribed course of studies and absorbed by the natural sciences (physics). Wittenberg, too, prescribed the *Musica* of Muris in its early statutes, but with the advent of the Reformation, this subject was dropped from the curriculum.” Nan Cooke Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities*, 317.

113 “The coveted title of *musicus* [theoretician and mathematician] which previous centuries had bestowed only on theorists was snatched away from the university and given to the composers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries purely on the strength of their genius. It is no wonder that music declined at the universities and was finally removed from their programs of study around the middle of the 16th century. In 1545/46, Adrian Petit Coclico's drive for the establishment of a professorship in music, though supported by his students and the University of Wittenberg, failed because of the refusal of the Elector Johann Friedrich. A similar move on behalf of Sixt Dietrich, also at the University of Wittenberg, had also failed; Salamanca remained the only European university with a special chair for music.” Ibid., 358-9.
employed.\textsuperscript{114} In addition to directing school or church choirs and teaching the rudiments of music, the \textit{Kantor} was also frequently called upon to teach other subjects of the \textit{trivium}, especially Latin and rhetoric. This connection gave the Lutheran \textit{Kantor} a feasible opportunity for a new didactic undertaking, i.e. to give aspiring composers instruction on the structural procedures and elaborative devices for producing a persuasive musical work using an esteemed approach of rhetorical pedagogy. The Latin school was then the place where such rhetorically inspired teaching of composition was keenly cultivated and developed.

\textsuperscript{114} “Although there were no full professorships in music, the [Wittenberg] University often contracted with the music pedagogues to teach students privately. Wittenberg pedagogues who received such commissions include Listenius, Faber, Finck, and Coclico. In addition, private teachers sometimes gave lectures at the university and assisted with the musical aspects of academic festivals. Their primary source of income, however, still came from teaching in the secondary schools. Ralph Lorenz, “Pedagogical Implications of Music Practica in Sixteenth-Century Wittenberg,” 23; Livingstone also acknowledged the overlapping nature of personnel in secondary schools and universities of the period: “[in the Lutheran Germany of the early sixteenth century], some larger secondary schools taught almost the whole program of the arts faculty, and may well have done as good and thorough a job in that as did many universities.” Ernest F. Livingstone, “The Place of Music in German Education from the Beginnings through the 16th Century,” 248.
CHAPTER THREE

Musica Poetica in the Lutheran Latin School: Rhetorically Inspired

Compositional Instruction

As an independent branch of musical instruction alongside musica theorica and musica practica, musica poetica was taught largely in the Lutheran Lateinschule - the centerpiece of humanistic education emphasizing the trivium. While Melanchthon’s curriculum required that music (such as singing and rudiments of music theory) be taught for an hour per day for all students,\textsuperscript{115} musica poetica was offered as the private lectures for the musically advanced students, and was taught in addition to the schools’ publicly scheduled music classes.\textsuperscript{116}

Teachers of Musica Poetica

Teachers of musica poetica were Lutheran Kantors who had received extensive academic and ecclesiastic training in music, as well as humanistic studies at the gymnasium and university. These theorist-Kantors, who were highly specialized

\textsuperscript{115} Melanchthon allocated music a significant time portion in the curriculum, as Nan Cooke Carpenter details: “In the school at Eisleben, generally considered the first product of Wittenberg’s evangelical and humanistic influence (1525), music was taught for an hour a day; in his \textit{Declamatio in laudem novae scholae}, presented in 1526 when a new school was opened in Nürnberg, Melanchthon included the daily teaching of music in his plans for organizing the schools of that city; and Melanchthon’s \textit{Schulordnung} for Saxony also specified daily instruction and practice in singing from the first year onward.” Ralph Lorenz, “Pedagogical Implications of Music Practica in Sixteenth-Century Wittenberg” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1995), 18-19.

\textsuperscript{116} For example, “Dressler himself informs us on the title page of the treatise and in its \textit{præfatiuncula} [short preface] that the present form of the \textit{Praecepta musicae poeticae} was delivered as a series of lectures at the \textit{Lateinschule} in Magdeburg, where he was Cantor, between the dates of 21 October 1563 and 29 February 1564. It was intended for the more advanced students in the school, and in the same \textit{præfatiuncula}, Dressler adds that the lectures were delivered on Thursdays, from midday to 1 P. M., the topic of \textit{musica poetica} having been specifically requested by some of the students for treatment during this hour.” Robert Forgács, \textit{Gallus Dressler's Praecepta Musicae Poeticae} (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 12.
musicians, constituted a small subset of the pool of Kantors employed throughout Germany. As Butt has observed, historical evidence from school documents of various German towns suggests that most Lutheran Kantors were academics “who were not necessarily eminent ‘practical’ composers and performers, and who might have considered the position of cantor as a stepping-stone towards a post as rector (head of the school), pastor, or university professor.”117 Many sixteenth-century Kantors who were associated with the teaching of musica poetica (e.g. Martin Agricola, Hermann Finck, Heinrich Faber, Gallus Dressler, Seth Calvisius and Joachim Burmeister) were not only composers in their own rights but also well experienced in the art of performance as demonstrated by their treatises on musica practica.118

The Lutheran Kantor was an important figure in the school hierarchy, ranking third after the rector (the Schulmeister or the headmaster) and deputy rector. Schools with only two teachers would have a Kantor on the staff.119 A Kantor’s main responsibilities lie in his dual role as the choirmaster and composer who supplied the

118 Treatises on musica practica by these Kantors include Heinrich Faber’s *Compendium musicae pro incipientibus* (Brunswick, 1548); Gallus Dressler’s *Musicae practicae elementa* (Magdeburg, 1571); Seth Calvisius’ *Compendium musicae* (1594), *Bicinia septuaginta ad sententias evangeliorum* (2 st.) (Leipzig, 1599), *Exercitiones musicae duae* (Leipzig, 1600), *Exercitatio musicae tertii* (1609), *Compendium musicae pro incipientibus* (Leipzig, 1602); Joachim Burmeister’s *Musica Practicae sive aris canendi ratio* (Rostock, 1601; extract from *Musica autoschediastike*).
119 “The [Lutheran] aesthetic and functional need for music is reflected in the statistics which reveal the fact that a cantor had a place on the faculty of even the small institutions. The staff of a school with only two teachers would consist of a rector and a cantor or, in place of the latter, a sexton with the clear understanding that he was required to teach singing and to look after the musical needs of the community. A school of three teachers boasted a rector, a cantor and a sexton. As the size of the school increased teachers with varying ranks and titles were added, but it is clearly evident from the documents that an increase in the number of students called for an increase in personnel for the instruction of music… It is difficult to establish numerically the ratio between cantor and students, but the statistics for the three great Saxonian Fürstenschulen of the Reformation may be taken as a gauge: at Meissen one rector, two baccalaurei, one cantor, sixty boys; at Merseburg one rector, two baccalaurei, one cantor, 70 boys; at Pforta one rector, three baccalaurei, one cantor, 100 boys.” Frederick W. Sternfeld, “Music in the Schools of the Reformation,” *Musica Disciplina* 2 (1948): 110-111.
music, both *Musica choralis* (plainchant) and *Musica figuralis* (polyphony), for church services, such as the music for the daily Matins, Vespers and the Sunday services. Apart from composing music and rehearsing with the church choir, he would also be required to teach theories of *musica practica*, knowledge which was essential for choir singers. In addition, the *Kantor* was responsible for preparing the singers for any wedding, baptism, funeral, or civic celebrations held in the city.

Unlike the Medieval cantors who were clerics in charge of the liturgy (e.g., Gregorian chant) and financially secured by the church authorities, the cantors during the Reformation were appointed by the civic community since schools were run by the city councils. For the Lutheran *Kantors*, who were highly educated

---

120 For example, the Hamburg *Kirchenordnung* (written in Low German) requires that “At noon the cantor is to teach singing to all the older and younger children, not merely according to custom, but, in time, artistically, and not only chant [*den langen sanck*] but also polyphony [*in figurativis*]. The four teachers [*de veer pedagogi*] whose duty it is to sing in church are to assist him occasionally as necessary in the school. He is also to be assisted by the schoolmasters [*scholegesellen*], with the exception of the headmaster, when he desires to celebrate a festival with his choir in the churches, so that the children shall be given good and cheerful training. Joachim Kremer, “Change and Continuity in the Reformation Period: Church Music in North German Towns, 1500-1600,” in *Music and Musicians in Renaissance Cities and Towns*, ed. Fiona Kisby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 124.

121 The Wittenberg 1533 Ordinance gave a plan for teaching music in the Latin School: “…after noon, at the twelfth hour, as soon as they come into the school, they should first sing *Come Holy Spirit*. After that, Music is to be practiced by the cantor with the highest and the second class so that they can sing over the melodies for the Feasts; but at other times in the week, when possible, when they have nothing to do with the church song, they are to learn theory.” Lorenz notes that “the four periods of music per week of the Wittenberg 1533 Ordinance were about average for the Saxon schools.” Ralph Lorenz, “Pedagogical Implications of Music Practica in Sixteenth-Century Wittenberg,” 18-19.

122 “The pre-Reformation *Kantorat* [the office of a *Kantor*] developed from the function of the principal singer into the office of a director, and after the 11th century it became a highly respected administrative post. The musical duties of the position passed to a succentor, while the cantor undertook its more formal functions.” Joachim Kremer, “Kantorat,” in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed Apr 10, 2009).

123 Kremer considers the office of the Lutheran cantor not as a reform/evolution of its Catholic form, but rather was rooted in the changing social structure in German towns of the previous centuries resulted by the founding of city parish schools: “… some towns had already founded cantorships at municipal schools before the Reformation. In the rich mercantile cities of Lübeck and Hamburg, city parish schools had already been founded in the thirteenth century (Lübeck in 1262 and Hamburg in 1281). Similarly, in Helmstedt (1407), Brunswick (1415-20), Hanover (1441) and Schönningen (1499) the establishment of cantorships was linked with the founding of city parish schools. In historical terms, the civic school cantorship represents a precursor of the Lutheran cantorship, rather than the German cathedral cantorship.19 The rapid imposition of the Reformation, completed by 1535 in towns of Lower Saxony such as Lüneburg, Celle, Hanover, Brunswick, Goslar, Göttingen and Minden, thus coincided with a preliminary stage in the history of schools and cantorships which enhanced the
men, well versed in Latin grammar and literature, financial security and career advancement (by moving on to the posts such as rector (head of the school), pastor, or university professor) was achieved by simultaneous employment as a teacher in the Latin school in charge of music, but also with an obligation to teach other academic subjects, in most cases Latin. The Kantor’s Latin classes were also the primary venue for recruiting singers for the Schulkantorei,¹²⁴ which consisted of different school choirs for use in church services, serving as the musical transmitter of biblical messages, as Robinson-Hammerstein observed: “The cantor could make his selection for the ablest vocal candidates and he could check up on their Latin, the perfect knowledge of which was required as a prerequisite of membership of the Lutheran Kantorei. For the primary function of the Kantorei as educator of the congregation was to sing Latin-psalm-motets of the most intricate but Word-supporting kind, departing from medieval psalmody.”¹²⁵

**Students of Musica Poetica**

Students of *musica poetica* were those who were considered musically advanced. That is, according to the widely held view in the sixteenth century, the requirements were an experience in practical music, particularly singing. Knowledge of singing efficiency of Reformation music education. A phenomenon characteristic of Lower Saxony, namely, the production of numerous didactic treatises for teaching music, may owe its origin to this local coincidence.” Joachim Kremer, “Change and Continuity in the Reformation Period: Church Music in North German Towns, 1500-1600,” 120-1.¹²⁴ “One of the chief purposes, and a natural outgrowth of the intensive music program in the 16th-century Protestant schools, was the development of school choirs for use in the church service. Much of the singing during the music period was devoted to the preparation of the choirs for their part in daily and Sunday worship services. Within the Schulkantorei were several branches, each of which had a particular assignment in the church music program. The Schulchor was usually the largest of the choirs since it encompassed all the students in the middle and upper grades, except those who were selected for special polyphonic singing…. the Chorus symphoniacus … specialized in the singing of polyphonic music…. It was through this type of Kantorei organization that the Nethelandish music and the polyphonic music of the early Lutheran composers found its best vehicle of expression.” Herbert Nuechterlein, “The Sixteenth-Century Kantorei and Its Predecessors,” *Church Music* 71, no. 1 (1971): 5.¹²⁵ Helga Robinson-Hammerstein, ed., “The Lutheran Reformation and Its Music,” in *The Transmission of Ideas in the Lutheran Reformation* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989), 153.
was commonly considered by theorists in the sixteenth century as to be prerequisite to learning composition. In the introductory comments made by Dressler in the preface to his *Praecepta Musicae Poeticae* of 1563, Dressler notes that the subject matter of *musica poetica* is suitable only for more advanced students who already have a basic knowledge and experience of practical music, particularly through singing. Similarly, Listenius began his treatise *Musica* (1537) with the following explicit comments linking singing and composition: “Music is the knowledge of singing well and correctly. To sing well is to produce the voices and notes of a song fittingly according to certain definite rules and proportions.”

A similarly close connection between singing and composing is found in Adrianus Petit Coclio's remarks on Josquin des Prez's teaching method, and this is the approach adopted by Coclico himself, as can be seen in the title of his *Compendium musices descriptum ab Adriano Petit Coclio discipulo Iosquini de Pres, in quo praeter caetera tractantur haec: De modo ornate canendi, de regula contrapuncti, de compositione*.

My teacher Josquin … never gave a lecture on music or write a theoretical work, and yet he was able in a short time to form complete musicians, because he did not keep back his pupils with long and useless instructions but taught them the rules in a few words, through practical application in the course of singing. And as soon as he saw that his pupils were well grounded in singing, had a good enunciation and knew how to embellish melodies and fit the text to music, then he taught them the perfect and imperfect intervals and the different methods of inventing counterpoints against plainsong. If he discovered, however, pupils with an ingenious mind and promising disposition, then would teach these in a few words the rules of three-part and later of four-, five-, six-part, etc. writing, always providing them with examples to imitate. Josquin did not, however, consider all suited to learn composition; he judged that only those should be taught who were drawn to this delightful art by a special natural

---


The students of *musica poetica* were not only musically advanced students with an interest in composition; many of them aspired to take music as their career and considered *musica poetica* as a part of their formal education. As historical evidence shows, the musical language employed by these *Kantors* in their compositions demonstrates a strong affinity to the kind of aesthetic embodied by *musica poetica*. Johannes Reusch (1525-1582) states in the preface to his *Elementa musicae* that he had been a student of Heinrich Faber (author of *Musica poetica* 1538) around 1538 in Naumburg. Upon matriculation at the University of Wittenberg in 1543, he became the Kantor at the *Stadtschule* of Meissen, and headmaster from 1548 to 1555; he was Kantor at the *Fürstenschule* of Meissen in 1547–8. According to Walter Blankenburg, his principal work *Zehen deutscher Psalm Davids* (1551) exhibits “the earliest examples of German-language psalm settings, a genre that was to become particularly popular in the Lutheran heartlands,” and his motets “exhibit considerable compositional skill; in accordance with the Netherlandish style of the time of Josquin, their characteristically linear flow is interrupted by expressive homophonic interludes closely related to the sense of the words.”

David Palladius, *Kantor* at the Martineum in Brunswick from 1572 to 1599, attended the *Lateinschule* at Magdeburg during the period Dressler was teaching there, was considered by Martin Ruhnke as “a typical German composer of the Lassus school.” His sixteen motets based on biblical texts bear witness to his “solid, workmanlike training,” and in settings of the six metrical texts, which include an ode by Horace, he demonstrated

---

his sensitivity to the text by loosening the musical fabric: “instead of having all the voices declaim the text homophonically, he added counterpoints, set one group of voices against another, inserted polyphonic sections and created lively rhythms by means of syncopation.”

As the teaching methods and layout of the *musica poetica* treatises have demonstrated (see chapter 2 and later part of this chapter), the teaching of *musica poetica* was designed for students who were also informed of principles and teaching methods of rhetoric. As a part of the *trivium*, rhetoric has a distinctive role that offers students beyond instruction in correctness of speech and writing:

Rhetoric, most broadly defined, is the art of communicating by means or words. Renaissance scholars, however, had a less comprehensive view of rhetoric, distinguishing it from its sister disciplines in the *trivium*, grammar and dialectic. Grammar taught the principles of constructing sentences, punctuation, and the classification and use of such elements as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Dialectic concerned rules of logic and proofs. Rhetoric was the art of persuading and moving readers and listeners to believe and feel as the author or orator intended.

This distinctively persuasive nature of rhetoric required students to be both intellectually and psychologically prepared before beginning to study it. As Peter Mack points out, apart from proficiency in Latin grammar, rationality and psychological maturity was requisite to the study of rhetoric:

For rhetoric the requisite maturity was rationality. Until the age of seven a boy was only potentially a rational being. The formative stage was the next seven years, from the age of seven to fourteen or fifteen, the years during which he was at Latin school.

---

During these years parents and teachers had to direct the growth of a boy's reason, his capacity to reflect on information from the sense and to control impulses like hunger, fear and anger. A Latin school promoted this variously. It taught a boy to check instinctive, unreflective verbal expression by making him learn Latin and speak it in and out of the classroom. It taught him to check instinctive bodily movement according to the rules of civilitas. And it taught him ethical and theological imperatives that censured improper thoughts provoked by a disordered will inherited from Adam. These controls had to be in place before a boy could be entrusted with rhetoric and dialectic. Only when he had acquired ratio, only when he was more than thirteen years old and was just or was about to become an adolescens, should a boy begin to learn oratio, that is, the rhetorical and dialectical techniques that would permit him to express rather than suppress his thoughts. To rephrase Cato’s influential definition of an orator, first, the puer bonus, then the adolescens bonus dicendi peritus.\(^\text{132}\)

This would imply that the subject of musica poetica, the subject designed for the rhetorically informed students, was reserved for the end of the Latin school curriculum, after the study of rhetoric had begun, i.e. for students of the upper one or two classes. This approach to the music education of musicians is unique to Germany As Hermann Finck (1556) has observed that, while in other countries gifted students begin their musical studies very early and pursue them exclusively, the Lutheran school curriculum did not permit students to specialize in music until they knew the principles of the other chief disciplines (“reliquarum quoque praecipuarum artium principia cognoscunt”).\(^\text{133}\)

Brian Vickers provides an overview of the general contents of rhetoric study in the sixteenth century:

The rhetorical education … trained the student in both criticism and composition. He


was taught to read analytically, to identify metaphors, sententiae, and anything from forty to two hundred rhetorical figures, in all the literature he read, whether the poems of Ovid or Virgil, the prose of Cicero or Seneca, or the Bible. He would mark these in the margin of his book, and transfer some as quotations in his notebook, to be reused in his own writing. He was taught how to compose as oration, or write an essay, using the traditional processes of creation (invention, disposition, elocution, pronunciation, memory), and to arrange the final work into one of the canonical patterns (prooemium, divisio or narratio, confirmatio, confutatio, peroratio). He was taught the three levels of style, the main literary genres, and the styles appropriate to each genre. He learned these and other pieces of knowledge by slow and systematic instruction, painstaking memorization, and constant recapitulation. Whoever had an education in Europe in this period can be counted on to be familiar with all of the main processes of rhetoric. Those composers who had at least a grammar-school education certainly knew their rhetoric, whether, like Thomas Campion, they had been to Cambridge or whether, like Burmeister, they had been to the Gymnasium in Lüneburg.  

Pedagogical Method of Musica Poetica: Praeceptum-Exemplum-Imitatio

In the teaching of rhetoric, Melanchthon’s policy required that the teacher should first present a rule (praecptum) which he would then illustrate with literary models (exemplum), followed by imitation (imitatio) and practical application. This method, which was also used in teaching other subjects of the trivium, is an ancient method and can be traced back to Quintilian’s outline for the praecpto. As discussed in chapter 2, the study rhetoric was offered in the final years of the Lutheran Latin schools. The agenda of the humanist educators requires that students acquire the skills of eloquence without undue delay; thus, rhetorical textbooks for the Latin schools were organized with an expectation of brevity and practicality. Like other

135 “The method [praecptum-exemplum-imitatio], of course, is not new; indeed, [it was cited in] Quintilian’s outline for the praecptio. Like Quintilian, the humanists presuppose a firm grasp of the categories and terminology of dialectic and rhetoric, disciplines that are summoned at this stage as tools for analysis and evaluation of style.” John Henry Derkson, “De Imitatione: The Function of Rhetoric in German Musical Theory and Practice (1560-1606),” 25. See section 2.5.6-9 of Quintilian’s Institutio Oratoria.
136 “These works attempt to facilitate the educational process by means of correct, clear and brief presentation of material in a systematic format. Several arrangements gain popularity, including the question/answer pattern, which is related to the classical dialogue form. Other schemes present the
trivium subjects, a motto of rhetorical pedagogy was praeceptum-exemplum-imitatio: learning the rules, studying examples, and imitating established masters.\textsuperscript{137} For the purpose of their rhetorical studies, students of the Latin schools used various textbooks which presented the rhetorical principles in a condensed form. Rules of rhetoric were defined with examples from classical writings, providing material which the students could emulate/imitate. Thus, by the time musical composition was attempted, the students would have also gone through training in the trivium, and know the method used in teaching the artes decendi (the language arts of grammar, rhetoric and dialectic) well. The vocabulary and concepts of rhetoric, already ingrained, could be called upon to illuminate unfamiliar procedures and serve as mnemonic aids for advanced composition. Adrianus Petit Coclico’s statement [in 1552] provides the best summary about the how music was taught in the advanced schools of the Lutheran region:

\textit{Nec Musica extra liberalium artium numerum posita est, ideo eadem quoque via, qua vel Rhetorica, vel alia ars addiscitur. Arte nimium, exercitatione, et imitatione.} \[138\]

[Music has not been placed outside the number of liberal arts, for it is taught in the same way as either Rhetoric or any other art, as an art, certainly by practice and imitation.\textsuperscript{138}

material in brief statements under appropriate headings. In all of these textbooks, the author strives to define all of the constituent parts of a subject and then to define their relationships in a methodical way; so that the reader is left with a complete and integrated view of the topic. Martin Crusius defines this approach to the presentation of information as “method” in the following characteristic exchange from his edition of Melanchthon's \textit{Elementorum rhetorices libri duo} (1570): [Latin quote translation] By what means are the precepts of rhetoric transmitted? By means of method. What is method? It is like a short cut and a certain path, indeed a scheme of the transmission of arts and disciplines.” John Henry Derkson, “De Imitatione: The Function of Rhetoric in German Musical Theory and Practice (1560-1606),” 17.

\textsuperscript{137} “It was Melanchthon’s policy in teaching all subjects in the Latin schools that the teacher should first present a rule (\textit{praeceptum}) which he would then illustrate (\textit{exemplum}) and give the students to learn as homework. The rules were to be learned by memory (\textit{memoria complectuntur}), and in the next class period were repeated (\textit{imitatio}). Further examples were presented to provide practical exercise (\textit{usus}) in the acquired skills.” Bruce Allan Bellingham, “The Bicinium in the Lutheran Latin Schools During the Reformation Period,” 143.

Praceptum

In presenting the precepts of the craft of musical composition (*praecptum*), terms are either borrowed from the rhetorician’s vocabulary or emulated to suggest a literary parallel. Terms dealing with different compositional stages of an oration, such as *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio* were common in discussing stages of planning of a musical composition. In discussing how to write different musical passages that are functional within the composition as a whole (i.e. *dispositio*) one would find terms such as *exordium*, *medium*, and *finis*. These musical references to the steps of the rhetorical *dispositio* were first found in Gallus Dressler’s *Musica poetica* of 1563, and were still seen in Burmeister’s *Musica poetica* of 1606, which also referred to the central section of a musical work as “the body of the composition itself.”

Apart from terms dealing with the overall structure of the composition, rhetorical

139 “*Dispositio* is the suitable arrangement of the parts of the oration and of the arguments. It fulfills the function of bringing so much clarity to the speech that even if you have invented the best ideas, none of them will be worth anything when you do not proceed suitably or intelligently.” Phillip Melanchthon, *Institutiones rhetoricae* (Strasbourg, 1523), fol. 22v. Translation quoted from Joachim Burmeister, “Musica Poetica (1606),” in *Source Readings In Music History*, vol. 3, The Renaissance, ed. Gary Tomlinson (New York: Norton, 1998), 190.

140 “Classical authors varied in their numbering of the parts of an oration. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 1.3.4 lists six parts: *oxordium*, *narratio*, *divisio*, *confirmatio*, *confutatio*, and *conclusio*. The broader threefold division was obviously inspired by Aristotle's injunction that a tragic drama or an epic poem, to be unified whole, must have a beginning [arche], middle [meson], and end [teleute] (Aristotle, Poetics 7.3 and 23.1). A comparison of the middle part to a human body is found in Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.14.8: ‘If the listener is already well disposed, there will be no need of an *exordium*, except to summarize the subject of the speech, so that, like a body [soma], it may have a head.’” Joachim Burmeister, *Musical Poetics*, trans. Benito V. Rivera, 203.

141 “The later German theorist Joachim Burmeister (ca. 1564-1629) must have known Dressler’s work, as his own treatise of 1606 entitled *Musica poetica* (Rostock: Stephanus Myliander) expands on the tradition represented by Faber and Dressler. Furthermore, Burmeister analyzes and refers to the very same motet by Orlando do Lasso, *In me transierunt* of 1562, that Dressler had already singled out for comment. In addition, Burmeister, following Dressler’s lead, subdivides a composition according to the traditional rhetorical categories of *exordium*, medium or corpus cantilenarum, and *finis*. Furthermore, he concurs with Dressler in classing various fugal techniques as among the ornaments of composition.” Robert Forgács, *Gallus Dressler's Præcepta Musicae Poeticæ*, 16-17.
terminologies were also used with reference to musical devices for varying, combining, and amplifying musical phrases for the purpose of heightened expression. While in earlier periods general terms such as clausular, color, punctum, flores, distinctio, diminutio, repetitio, and others were commonly used, from the end of sixteenth century onwards specific terms dealing with elocutio (eloquence or style) occupied a central place in the discussion of musica poetica treatises. As the third part of the compositional stage for the oratory, elocutio taught how to ornament an oration with figures of speech, literary devices used to ornament an oration with the aim of moving the affections.\footnote{142} Passages containing expressive literary devices given by terms such as hyperbaton, polyptoton, ploce, paranomasia, isocolon, homoioteleuton, etc., and every Latin school student would have spent years learning to recognise and name rhetorical figures in literary texts. The use of a system of musico-rhetorical figures was pioneered by Burmeister in his treatise Hypomnematum musicae poeticae of 1599, which provided a list of terminologies either adopted from the figures of speech or newly coined to emulate one, to literally describe the expressive compositional devices which deviated from the norm of prima prattica imitative counterpoint.\footnote{143}

The precepts of musica poetica gave similar pedagogical benefits of precepta in rhetoric. Melanchthon made the following statement regarding the original purpose for the rhetorical rules: “Rules were devised not to make men eloquent but to show

\footnote{142} In book IX of his Institutio oratoria, a work which remained authoritative throughout the Renaissance, Quintilian describes a rhetorical figure as “a conformation of our speech altered from the common and obvious usage…. A figureis therefore a new and artful manner of speech”: “Figura … conformatio quaedam orationis remota a communi et primum se offerente ratione….Ergo figura sit arte aliqua novata forma dicendi.” Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria IX.1.4, 14, 350, 354.

students the method and theory of judging the speeches of eloquent men.” Just as the knowledge of rhetorical precepts helped a listener to critically evaluate a delivered speech, musical precepts helped the budding composers to make sophisticated judgments about the music of other compositions. In his *Praecepta Musicae Poeticae* of 1563, Dressler gave similar reasons for the study of composition through musical precepts:

> The usefulness of this art is when frequent practice will lead to the nature and recognition of the art, so that we are able to judge about the quality of a song, whether it is refined or commonplace, true or false, and to correct what is false and compose something new.  

Apart from offering rules for the students against which certain standards of criticism for musical works, the musical precepts also provided a vocabulary and analytical tool for musical analysis, which was a preliminary step students had to take prior to imitating their models and creating their own compositions. Derkson provides reasons for the privileging of analysis over imitation in the study of rhetoric in the Renaissance:

> The unceasing rhetorical analysis of classical literary works in the Renaissance is directly linked to the humanists’ concern for recapturing in their own writings the lucidity and elegance which they find in Cicero’s works. They believe that before one can imitate, one must analyze. The more one understands a model’s structure, mechanics, interrelationship of parts, and the details of individual segments, the better is he equipped to produce an imitation. Rhetoric provides the tools for exactly such analysis, complete with technical terminology and standards of style. Because it

---


145 “Huius artis utilitas est, uti ad naturam et artis cognitionem frequens exercitatio accesserit, ut de cantus qualitate, an sit urbanus, an vulgaris, verus an falsus iudicare possimus, et falsum corrigere et novum componere.” Robert Forgács, Gallus Dressler’s *Praecepta Musicae Poeticae*, 65. Dressler’s first three reasons for studying *musica poetica* are modeled on those given by Heinrich Faber in his manuscript treatise *De musica poetica* of 1548 (f. 98r).
provides such a complete system for artistic evaluation, rhetoric, already firmly entrenched in literary theory, begins to take root also in other arts.  

Similarly, the theorists of *musica poetica* were primarily interested in giving students a vocabulary in order to analyse a composition and identify musical devices which they could then apply in their own composition. The educational value of the musical precepts and their use in musical analysis was recognized by Dressler, who advised using the following procedure when studying *musica poetica*, “the rules of the art handed down above must [first of all] be learned,” and secondly, “let the songs of proven composers … be investigated … and let them be examined by means of the rules of reason,” and specifically, in the course of such an examination, “let the more beautiful syncopations, cadences, fugues, and the sweeter combinations of consonances be noted especially.”

The use of musical precepts as a tool for analysis was made most explicitly by Burmeister, whose rationale for his system of musical figures as an analytical tool can be found in his *Musica autoschediastike* 1601. He observes that well-written musical works contain effective features which help to account for their expressiveness, and in seeking to categorize these musical features within a coherent framework, offers a vocabulary of musical figures as an aid to teachers, who may base their lectures and analyses on it, as well as to students, for whom it may serve as a reference work for discussion and for analysis. A more detailed and systematic treatment of analysis appears in Burmeister’s *Musica poetica* of 1606, which contains a chapter devoted to analysis. After laying out his analytical method and

---

illustrating its operation, Burmeister shows how his scheme works by analyzing Lassus’ well-known motet, *In me transierunt*, revealing the underlying aspects of the composition from mode, genus of tuning, type of counterpoint, system of accidentals, to finally the disposition of the various segments of the piece with his musical figures.\(^\text{149}\)

**Exemplum**

As discussed in chapter 2, in the humanistic study of rhetoric, works from ancient authors (e.g. Cicero, Quintilian) were extracted and read for the purpose of illustrating linguistic rules. In the study of *musica poetica*, theorists turned to musical works of the recent past for the purpose of illustrating musical precepts. In particular, musical passages that demonstrate certain persuasive or effective instances of text-setting were chosen to illustrate the musical precepts. Students would memorize these rules and use them for analysis of other compositions. In illustrating the invention of fugues for the opening, middle and concluding sections of a composition, Dressler comments that “these things must be learned by practical experience and are to be recognized more by examples than by rules” and then proceeds to different ways in which fugues can be formed or recognized, using motets by contemporaries such as Clemens non Papa and Orlando di Lasso as examples.\(^\text{150}\) In Burmesiter’s *Hypomnematum musicae poeticae* of 1599, Lasso is by far the most frequently cited composer, with twenty-five of the twenty-nine citations. In his *Musica*

\(^{149}\) In his *Musica poetica* of 1606, Joachim Burmeister analyzes Lassus’s *In me transierunt* according to his use of rhetorical figures in the following manner: “This harmonic piece can be divided very appropriately into nine periods. The first comprises the *exordium*, which is adorned by two figures: *fuga realis* and *hypallage*. Seven inner periods comprise the body of the piece, similar to the confirmation of a speech (if one may thus compare one cognate art with another). The first of these is adorned with *hypotyposis*, *climax*, and *anadiplosis*; the second is likewise, and to those figures may be added *anaphora*…” Burmeister, *Musical Poetics*, trans. Benito V. Rivera, 207.

_autoschediastike_ of 1601, Burmeister titles his chapter 12 “The Ornaments or Figures of Music, Illustrated with Examples by the Most Admired Master Composers, Written in Staff Notation,” explaining once again each of the original twenty-two figures from his previous treatise in greater detail with additional musical examples drawn from Orlando di Lasso, Clemens non Papa, André Pevernage, Jacob Meiland and other contemporaries.\(^{151}\)

**Imitatio**

*Imitatio* was discussed in classical treatises on rhetoric, and especially those by Cicero, the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*;\(^{152}\) as a pedagogical method used in the study of rhetoric throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, *imitatio* denotes the writing exercises by which the student of rhetoric acquires skill and stylistness of a chosen model. Fromson illustrates what elements are involved in the process of *imitatio* advocated by the humanists:

> In sum the imitative strategies advocated by Vives, Melanchthon, Ledesma and Erasmus have a great deal in common. Of paramount importance is the ability to emulate the formal structure of the model - the order of its ideas, the layout of the opening section, the transitions between adjacent sections, and the overall argument,

---


\(^{152}\) “The classical treatises had urged imitation as a pedagogical exercise. Thus the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* begins by pointing out that the orator needs to possess the faculties of Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery - the five principal parts of Ciceronian rhetoric - and the treatise goes on to say that ‘all these faculties we can acquire by three means: Theory, Imitation, and Practice .... Imitation stimulates us to attain, in accordance with a studied method, the effectiveness of certain models in speaking.’ But the ancients also realized that imitation was an essential element in the formation of any mature literary style. Thus Quintilian begins the second chapter of Book X of his *Institutio oratoria* - which is entirely devoted to the concept of imitation - by pointing out that it is from ‘authors worthy of our study that we must draw our stock of words, the variety of our figures and our methods of composition, while we must form our minds on the model of every excellence. For there can be no doubt that in art no small portion of our task lies in imitation.’” Howard Mayer Brown, “Emulation, Competition, and Homage: Imitation and Theories of Imitation in the Renaissance,” _Journal of the American Musicological Society_ 35, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 39.
Similarly, *musica poetica* theorists emphasize the importance of imitation of models as an exercise in acquiring proficiency in composition. This requires in the first place both understanding and memorizing of the musical precepts presented through musical examples. Having understood the nature of those precepts, the students would be directed to models which are to be closely analyzed, with careful attention given to every aspect of structure, ornament, and artifice. Having mastered such analysis, the students attempt to compose an imitation by making use of the best features of the original. In this way, the students learn the basic mechanics of composition, method of writing a coherent structure, expressive devices and the niceties of an individual writer’s style by composing similar pieces themselves. In the appendix to his *Musica poetica* of 1563 (Chapter XV - Concerning the method of progressing in this study), Dressler stressed the importance of imitation as exercises for bringing the precepts into musical reality:

> It is not enough for learners to have examined in this manner the work of others unless they approach them in their own experiences. Therefore, they must come to them through practice, and the teacher must conjoin the practical experience of the arts with rules.

Similarly, Burmesiter believes that imitation is the structured and detailed observation and analysis of models through which the student eventually learns to compose similar pieces:

---

Imitation is the study and endeavour to pattern and model our musical compositions after the works of master composers, which are skillfully examined through analysis.  

Burmeister outlines two kinds of imitation – general (genike) and specific (eidike). The first type is the imitation of the best musical practice – invention, disposition, vertical intervallic progressions, and general musical syntax – to be found in the works of all good composers. The second type is the close imitation of a single composer’s style. He then suggests twelve composers as masters worthy of emulation: Clemens non Papa, Orlando di Lasson, Ivo de Vento, Alexander Utendal, Jacobus Regnart, Johannes Knöfel, Jacob Meiland, Antonio Scandello, André Pevernage, Leonhardt Lechner, Luca Marenzio and Johann Dressler.  

Among the models that are considered worthy of emulation, musica poetica theorists also differentiated these composers according to different levels of style of musical language, a method similar to that of a humanistic way of imitating different styles of oration. In chapter XV (Concerning the method of progressing in this study) of  

---

156 Melanchthon outlines two types of pedagogical imitation - *imitatio in genere* and *imitatio in specie.* “*Imitatio in genere* entails the adherence to standards of diction, correctness, and stylistic decorum common to all writers of the Augustan age;” *Imitatio in specie* is the imitation of a single model. Melachthon considered Cicero as the best model for such type; “Because this art cannot be made perfect without examples and imitation, and it is an established fact among experts that the most perfect composition is that of Cicero, we must admire those who set before them this author in order to imitate both his strengths and his arrangement.” John Henry Derkson, “De Imitatione: The Function of Rhetoric in German Theory and Practice (1560-1606),” 65.  
158 “This crucial step in discriminating between the levels of style was first properly made by Aristotle, who in book III, chapter 12 of the *Rhetoric* stated that a different style was appropriate for each kind of oratory (namely, (1) judicial, (2) deliberative and (3) demonstrative).…. Later theorists such as Demetrius would distinguish four styles, but the codification at three (Grand, Middle, Simple) was made by Cicero (*Orator*, 21) using the terms *vehemens*, *modicum*, *subtile*, and by the author of *Ad Herennium*, who prefers to call the gravis, mediocris, extenuata …. Cicero went on to apply the categories to his triple division of the aims of the orator: ‘to prove’ was best done using the plain style; ‘to delight’ the middle, and ‘to move’ the grand or vigorous (*vehemens*; *Orator*, 21.69f).” Brian Vickers, *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry* (London; New York: Macmillan; St. Martin’s P., 1970), 74; In his *Institutiones rhetoricae*, Melanchthon identifies three styles of orations: “Those who write on style [*de elocutions*] mention three characteristics: Elevated [*sublimis*], when the oration contains
*Praecepta musicae poeticae*, Dressler states that pupils should choose an appropriate compositional model among recent or contemporary polyphonists and should imitate their style, he recommends four groups of composers in particular: (1) Josquin and his contemporaries, whose works, though fugal, are rather spare in texture; (2) Issac, Senfl, and their imitators, whose fractured counterpoint is outstanding; (3) Clemens, Gombert, Crecquillon, and their contemporaries, whose fugal writing is more sonorous than that of the generation of Josquin, and (4) Orlando di Lasso, who surpasses all the others in “suavitas”, decorum, and sensitivity towards a text.\(^{159}\) Similarly, in *Musica poetica* of 1606, Burmeister identified twelve polyphonists worthy of imitation and grouped them into three styles: low, middle and elevated, according to which a student should imitate progressively:

Each of the above composers has an individual vein style. Some lean toward the lowly, such as Meiland, Dressler, and Scandello; others toward the middle, such as Clemens non Papa, Ivo de Vento, Regnart, Perenlage, and Marenzio; others toward the elevated [sublime] such as Utendal Knofel, and Lechner; and others toward a mixture of the middle and the grand, such as Orlando, and so on. The aspiring composer … should begin by imitating a composer who has cultivated the lowly style in everything that he has published, and from there he should gradually proceed to the higher style.\(^{160}\)

Having explored the ways in which the teaching of *musica poetica* was modeled on pedagogical principles of rhetoric in the Latin school, it is easy to see that, despite that fact that its existence as a new discipline was a result of the feasibility of combining teaching resources on music and rhetoric in the Latin school curriculum,
music and rhetoric were intrinsically bound together for their shared artistic concerns:

Like the grammatical structure of language, a [musical] composition has punctuations, syntactical terms, sentences, periods, which have to be “pronounced” with prosodical accuracy and clearness of declamation. They have to be ‘executed’ with improvised ornaments, oratorical urgency and dynamics. Like the creation of a speech, composition consists of the invention (inventio), disposition (dispositio), elaboration and decoration (elaboratio, decoratio) of musical movement. Like an oratio, a composition must, in arrangement and style, take account not only of its subject, but also of the actual circumstances of the audience, the place and the time. Like a speech, it has a beginning, a middle and an end (exordium, medium and finis, or more detailed perhaps: exordium, narration, propositio, confirmatio, confutatio, perotatio). Like a work of eloquentia, it must have elegantia, exornatio, decorum. Like an ingenious oration, it will be ornamented by figurations which, at the same time, increase the expression; for example, repetitions can have an emphatic effect, antitheses a contrasting, and pauses a surprising one, just as in a speech. And like an orator, the composer can vary his thoughts and can reflect upon means to give variety and diversification (varietas) to his composition.161

Not only were music and rhetoric similar in terms of materials and structure, what was more important was the shared didactic purpose behind these common vocabularies. Ars rhetorica teaches the orator how to deliver a speech (oratio) that is coherent to its subject and aim, is vivid and impressive, and can instruct, move and delight the auditor (docere, movere, delectare);162 similarly, the goal of the musicus

---

162 It was Aristotle who distinguished three criteria for the artistic proof of an oration: “ethos, the speaker’s ability to convince the audience of his moral character; pathos, emotional appeal to the audience; and logos, appeal to the reason by logical argument.” Brian Vickers, “Figures of Rhetoric/ Figures of Music?”, 62-63. Based on this distinction, “Quintilian (Institutio oratoria) tried to show that the duty of the orator is composed of instructing, moving and delighting his hearers. He declared that moral philosophy was properly the province of rhetoric. He further assented to a doctrine of musical ethos, and viewed musice as the handmaiden of rhetoric.” Willem Elders, “Guillaume Dufay as Musical Orator,” 2. Quintilian’s Institutio oratoria (The Training of an Orator) was rediscovered in 1416 at St. Gall by the Florentine humanist Poggio Bracciolini, and this idea soon became incorporated in the humanistic study of rhetoric.
poeticus was to take the musical and textual elements at hand and to put them together in such a way that the listener was both persuaded and edified. Therefore it was natural for the Kantors to turn to rhetoric as a model for compositional instruction; through it, they and their students had been taught to compose extended prose communications. By borrowing its terminologies and method, expressive elements of existing masterpieces could be analyzed and made available for pedagogical purpose to ensure a tradition of text-sensitive polyphonic styles of compositions be continued for the service of the church.
CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion - Understanding *Musica Poetica*

*in sixteenth-century Lutheran Germany*

If the congregational chorale expressed most fully, in musical terms, Luther’s theological idea of the ‘priesthood of believers,’ then polyphonic vocal music, the product of *musica poetica*, with its carefully considered structure and its communicative aims akin to the “musical sermon,” would certainly come closer to a representation of his idea of the proclamation of the Word. This study has provided a context for *musica poetica* of the sixteenth century by tracing its ideological roots in Luther’s theology, leading to the rise of the discipline as a ramification of Luther’s education reform, and constructing a clearer picture of the pedagogical tradition by placing it within the institutions that fostered its development. Several implications can be drawn through this process:

**Religious Functions as Expressive Goals**

By locating the roots of *musica poetica* within Luther’s idea of music as a proclamation of the Word as illustrated by his own treatment of the hymns, one is brought to see how ideologies, whether theologically or philosophically based, can manifest themselves in different musical genres while retaining a unified function. This consistency in function was particularly important for the music written during the Reformation, since its primary objective was to persuade the hearts and indoctrinate the minds of a new community of Lutheran worshippers. Having
understood *musica poetica* as having a pedagogical function for the purpose of advancing the theological ideals of Lutheran liturgical music, text-sensitive polyphonic music, which the sixteenth-century teachers of *musica poetica* advocated, was logically considered to serve the same function. Therefore, when interpreting liturgical music written within this tradition (i.e. those works composed by the first generation of Lutheran composers) it is important to relate this function to the expressive means of these works and set it as the benchmark for accessing the expressive features of the music.

**From Context to Method, or Vice Versa**

By tracing the rise of *musica poetica* in the Latin school as an extension of Luther’s ideas about liturgical music, one is brought to see the fact that, despite the care with which Luther's theology and related aesthetic values were articulated and disseminated, contingent factors surrounding and informing his thought (e.g. his educational background and that of the *musica poetica* theorists, the choice of rhetorical methodologies, the choice of musical examples used to construct the musical vocabulary, etc.) largely determined the shape of the pedagogical discourse. In other words, the context which fostered the tradition was as important as the philosophical ideas that engendered it. While on a macro level the teaching system of *musica poetica* was itself a result of its context, on a micro level, each *musica poetica* treatise was a product of its particular context. The pedagogue’s musical background and his rhetorical education would have had an impact of how *musica poetica* was taught. Compared to later periods, the relative consistency in terms of methodologies and aesthetic assumptions employed in the discourse surrounding sixteenth-century *musica poetica* reinforces the primacy of the didactic-religious
function of the music that it inspired.

From the seventeenth century onwards *musica poetica* was subject to increasing heterogeneous discourse.\(^{163}\) It is therefore important to understand the particular context in which it first developed. This thesis has employed a “context to method” model in order to make sense of sixteenth-century *musica poetica* broadly. However, for the analysis of individual treatises or compositions, a “method to context” approach, particularly with respect to repertoire from the 1600s, would undoubtedly prove useful.

The intended audience, theological ideals, compositional models, aesthetic assumptions, all informed the various treatises and pedagogical methods discussed in the previous chapters. Together, they provide us with many clues about the intellectual force, rhetorical thought and musical taste of the sixteenth century and offer us a deeper appreciation of the ideological goals that supported Lutheran composers’ concern with text setting.

\(^{163}\) “Beyond this initial reality of the divergent roles for musical-rhetorical figures, difficulties for further research have been compounded by historical and geographical variants, particularly in accounting for the style changes occurring during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, national/regional differences in aesthetics and practice, and the rhetorical aims of each treatise… Concerning the musical styles that incorporate such figures, Burmeister, Nucius, and Thuringus wrote primarily of the strict styles of Renaissance polyphony and fugue, Kircher and Bernhard incorporated the new techniques of opera (especially recitative) from Italy, while Printz addressed ornamentation, emanating largely from Italy in the vocal style and from both Italy and France in the instrumental style. Janovka Vogt, and Walther attempted to catalogue figures from all previous styles, and Ahle concerned himself primarily with issues of text. In contrast, Mattheson, Scheibe, and Forkel characterized rhetoric increasingly as a theory of melody (the Ordering of ideas, punctuation, and grammar) for the new gallant style.” Karl Braunschweig, “Genealogy and *Musica Poetica* in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Theory,” *Acta Musicologica* 73, no. 1 (2001): 51-52.


Aune, Michael B. ‘*To Move the Heart*: Rhetoric and Ritual in the Theology of


Braunschweig, Karl. “Genealogy and *Musica Poetica* in Seventeenth- and


———. “Symposium on Seventeenth-Century Music Theory: Germany.” *Journal of


Croghan, Christopher M. “Melanchthon’s *Der Oradinanden Examen* and *Examen


Dyck, Joachim. “The First German Treatise on Homiletics: Erasmus Sarcer’s


Grendler, Paul F. “The Universities of the Renaissance and Reformation.”


Herbst, Wolfgang. “Kirchenmusiker.” In *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*:


——. “Music and the Doctrine of Adiaphora in Orthodox Lutheran Theology.”


Kremer, Joachim. “Change and Continuity in the Reformation Period: Church Music


Lehmann, Hartmut. “Lutheranism in the Seventeenth Century.” In *Reform and


———. “The Place of Music in the System of Liberal Arts.” In *Aspects of Medieval


Morrison, Karl F. “Incentives for Studying the Liberal Arts.” In *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, edited by David L. Wagner, 32-57. Bloomington:


Plett, Heinrich F. “*Musica Rhetorica*: The Rhetorical Conceptualization of Music


———. “Music Printing in Leipzig During the Thirty Years’ War.” *Notes* 61, no. 2 (December 2004): 323-49.
———. “Music, Print and Presentation in Saxony During the Seventeenth Century.”


Sulzer, Johann Georg. *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition in the German Enlightenment: Selected Writings of Johann Georg Sulzer and Heinrich*


———. “The Snares and Delusion of Musical Rhetoric: Some Examples from Recent Writings on J. S. Bach.” In Alte Musik: Praxis und Reflexion, edited


