

The Stabat Cadence

Abstract:

The paper examines Stabat Cadence from the different perspectives: its origin and nature of grammar; its nature as a topic in music by Pergolesi, Mozart and others; and its status as a musical exemplar (model for imitation) in the 18th century music.

Keywords: Stabat Cadence, G. Pergolesi, W. Mozart, cadential progression, 18th century music.

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Каденция Stabat

Аннотация:

В статье с различных сторон рассматривается каденция Stabat: ее истоки и структура; семантическая составляющая каденции Stabat как особой формулы в музыке Дж. Перголези, В. Моцарта и других; ее значение как одного из шаблонов в музыке XVIII века.

Ключевые слова: каденция Stabat, Дж. Перголези, В. Моцарт, каденционный оборот, музыка XVIII века.

During the first decades of the early 18th century in Naples, it became a habit among composers and maestri to repeat a cadential progression at the end of a piece of music two, three, or even more times.

1. Cadential progressions.

One of the examples, chosen among literally thousands, is the conclusion of a harpsichord toccata by Leonardo Leo (1694—1744),

composed probably after 1734¹. The toccata reaches its first formal conclusion with the PAC in bar 47: the two bars immediately after the cadence repeat the beginning of the toccata, after which three PACs follow. The repetitions, together with the shortening of the cadential progressions, give the conclusion a swirling effect. The early date of this example of what Janet Schmalfer called “one more time” technique

suggests that the Neapolitan cadential reiteration lies perhaps at the origin of this technique, which became common during the Classic era.

I use the term “cadential progression” mostly in the same meaning as William Caplin, but in a narrower sense. For Caplin, cadential progression is “a progression that confirms a tonality by bringing its fundamental harmonic functions” (Caplin 1998). My idea of cadential progression is closer to the one shown by Caplin in his essay *The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions* (JAMS 2004). He shows four cadential progressions: two authentic ones, one half-cadential, and one deceptive. Both authentic progressions start with a first inversion tonic chord followed by a pre-dominant chord (usually a II 6/3 or 6/5, but also a subdominant triad is possible) leading to the dominant (in the second, preceded by a cadential six-four). Despite the harmonic diversity, the bass line remains the same: a stepwise motion from the third to the fifth melodic scale degree followed by a skip on the first, thus: ③④⑤①.

This cadential progression, along with several others, is also shown in many Neapolitan collections of rules, of *Regole*, with different names: *cadenze lunghe* (Greco), *accadenze* (Cotumacci) or even *cadenze semplici*. The names on the rule illustrations refer to the cadence proper according to the three basic Neapolitan cadences: simple, compound, and double, thus ignoring the progressions leading to them. But we do have some descriptions of the progressions, needless to say, in the usual reticent manner. Bernardo Pasquini, one of the fathers of the partimento tradition and a student of Francesco Gasparini, the author of the hugely successful treatise *L'armonico pratico al cimbalo* (Venice, 1708), spent a few words on the ③④⑤① cadential progression in a manuscript series of rules located now in the Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica in Bologna:

“When one finds three notes [in the bass] that ascend stepwise, and the last leaps upwards a fifth, or downwards a fourth, we shall give to the first note [the chord of] the sixth; to the second, [the

chord of] the fifth and sixth; to the third note, the fourth and third, and with the fourth the fifth is given too ... To the note [of the bass immediately] before the cadence we shall always give fifth and sixth together, and to the last [before the close] remember to play the fourth followed by the third”².

The term *cadenza lunga* appears for the first time in an early-eighteenth-century *zibaldone* entitled *Partimenti di Greco Gaetano*. In this manuscript the celebrated maestro Greco (who taught Porpora and Domenico Scarlatti, among others), shows a series of five “*cadenze lunghe di 5/3 — 6/4 — 5/3*” transposed into different keys. As I said earlier, it is not clear if Greco by “*cadenza lunga*” meant the cadential progression itself or the cadence proper (a shortened version of the standard *cadenza doppia*).

In Greco’s *cadenze lunghe* each line shows the same progressions in different keys. The second progression in each line features the ③④⑤① cadential progression: the third is an incomplete cadential progression ⑥④⑤① similar to Pasquini’s second progression; nn. 4 and 5 show two different versions of a stepwise approach to the dominant from above. Similar progressions appear in the rule collections of Durante and Cotumacci.

2. Cadenze finte

“One can make feigned cadences in different ways, and they are called feigned when a given composition has a cadence that does not terminate in the usual scale degrees, but deceives, moving to another scale degree or tone. It is also called a feigned cadence when one makes the resolution in the minor instead of the major” (Gasparini, *L'armonico pratico*, 35).

I have quoted Gasparini because his is the only existing definition of the *cadenza finta*, but I suspect that his idea was slightly different from that in use in Naples. For a Neapolitan master, a *cadenza finta* might be better defined as a *cadential progression that delays the arrival on the closing tonic*. Under the label *cadenza finta* Saverio Valente offers three examples of cadential

progressions having in common the delay of the closing tonic.

All consist of expansions of the pre-dominant harmony; the fifth scale degree is always treated as a passing tone until the end of the progression, when the ⑤—① motion takes place. Moreover, scale degree ⑥ is never accompanied with the triad (differently from most standard deceptive cadences). This kind of progression corresponds to the scheme that Robert Gjerdingen calls *indugio*.

In Valente's first example the cadential progression is set in motion by I 6/3 followed by II 6/5, but the arrival on the dominant is delayed by a progression of a third from ④ up to ⑥; prolongation of the pre-dominant harmony is accompanied by two stationary voices and possibly a voice exchange with the bass in the accompaniment. A second, more complicated version of the *cadenza finta* further expands the pre-dominant harmony. The third version duplicates the ③—④—⑤—⑥ motion with two chord progressions. The figures imply that this bass line is designed to support an ascending scale in the top voice from 1 up to 6, followed by an attempt of a *clausula tenorizans* on V, and then by the real compound cadence on I. This progression is the largest expansion of a cadential formula in the partimento theory.

The particular kind of cadence that I would like to describe now has a bass line identical to Valente example 1, but with just one difference: on scale ⑥ we have the interval of the fifth rather than the sixth. This is the standard harmonization of the deceptive cadence as it is known today. The deceptive cadence has been the object of recent inquiry by a number of scholars, among them Carl Schachter and Markus Neuwirth, who pointed out the variety of formal and tonal functions that the deceptive cadence may give rise to. Again, I will confine my discussion to a case of repeated cadential progression that includes the deceptive motion with the interval of the fifth on scale degree ⑥.

In his book *Music in the Galant Style* Robert Gjerdingen mentions a similar (but not identical) deceptive progression as one that is often found

in partimento literature, and shows examples of Cotumacci and Sala. I would like to move a step further and try to point out a special case of deceptive progression that was used by many composers in a way that, in my opinion, conveys a certain musical meaning. I will also try to trace the history of this progression, from its emergence in the Neapolitan classrooms to its worldwide diffusion and decline, and make some conjectures about the way this progression, starting as a grammar unit, gained the status of topic. I will also offer some analyses from Mozart and conclude with some thoughts on the use of exemplars.

3. Durante and the deceptive/authentic progression

Partimenti were an important channel for the transmission of compositional models, albeit not the only ones. Not surprisingly, Neapolitan *partimenti* — as well as other Neapolitan music — very often close with a double cadential progression in which the first one is deceptive, the second one is authentic.

In particular, the deceptive/authentic progression (in short, D/A progression) appears frequently in both *partimenti* collections by Francesco Durante, the *Diminuiti* and the *Numerati*. 15 out of 103 *partimenti* in the *Diminuiti* series end with a D/A progression ③④⑤⑥; ③④⑤① or its shortened version ④⑤⑥; ④⑤① (roughly 15%) while in the 57 *Numerati* the D/A progression appears 22 times, scoring a 39% of the total.

If we look a little bit more in depth, we find that the D/A progression is not equally distributed between the two modes. Major *diminuiti* have a meagre 5% of D/A progression, but in the minor mode the percentage rises to 32%.

The *Numerati* score a 21% of D/A progression for the major mode, and hit an astounding 55% in the minor mode. That is, more than half of the *Numerati* in minor mode end with a D/A progression.

Diminuito Gj75 in F minor by Durante is an exercise in double counterpoint, and should be realised as a two-voice invention. The

closing cadence is a complete D/A progression ③④⑤⑥; ③④⑤①. How to realise this double progression? I think that not only the bass progression has to be repeated, but also the right hand part should give the impression of a melodic repetition, even if not of a verbatim duplication.

4. The D/A progression meets the Stabat Mater

Durante's D/A progression found an extraordinary vehicle of global diffusion thanks to the work of one of his most brilliant students, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi. During the 18th century his music was hugely popular, and his *Stabat Mater* in particular became an iconic work, admired, arranged and imitated by generations of musicians, from Johann Sebastian Bach to Schubert. The first movement of the *Stabat* features one of the most memorable instances of D/A progression in the repertoire.

The progression appears already at the conclusion of the orchestral introduction (bb. 7—11, in the home key of f minor) and again (in c minor,) in bb. 26—28, then the third time in bb. 40—42 (home key) and the last time at the very end of the movement, bars 45—47. In all instances except the first one the progression matches exactly Durante's model: ③④⑤⑥; ③④⑤①. The first time, however, the progression is so enormously expanded that it takes 5 of the 11 bars of the introduction: that is, almost half of the section. At first we have the deceptive progression ③④⑤⑥, played *forte*; then the entire motion ③④⑤⑥ is repeated, *piano*; then the progression starts over again, *più piano*, but cannot reach beyond scale degree ⑤; after that, the progression starts over from scale degree ③ again, in *forte*, and this time succeeds in bringing a satisfactory closure. Therefore the cadential section includes four progressions: first deceptive — second deceptive — evaded — perfect authentic.

A similar D/A progression is found elsewhere in the other numbers of the *Stabat*: in n. 2 (*Cujus animam gementem*) appears three times. Here the rest on the downbeat goes immediately after

the dominant creates a transient evaded cadence, which becomes a deceptive as soon as the bass sounds.

The deceptive progression appears again in n. 4 (*Quae moerebat et dolebat*), which is in E flat *major*: and this is the only occurrence in *major* mode of this progression, and again in *minor* in n. 5 (*Quis est homo*) and 6 (*Vidit suum dulcem natum*).

In n. 5 the longest cadential progression, a complete stepwise ascent from ① to ⑤ in the bass, accompanied with the rule of the *octave*, ends on ⑥: this deceptive termination is dramatically underscored by a *fermata*. Afterwards the same progression starts over again leading to a PAC in bar 45, and is followed by a D/A progression starting from ③. The D/A progression fulfills two functions here: the first time it leads to the structural conclusion, the PAC, and may be considered an instance of OMT technique. The second time the D/A progression functions as a post-cadential *codetta*.

I think that we are now in the position to give a better definition of the cadential procedures we have seen so far. This peculiar cadential progression is defined by the following elements:

- 1) it is in the *minor* mode;
- 2) it must include at least two progressions in the bass, one deceptive and one authentic: amid the two main progressions other non-authentic progressions, such as a second deceptive or an evaded, may sound;
- 3) the reiteration of the bass progression entails an analogous repetition in the melody.

As an homage to the work that brought this cadential technique around all over Europe (British islands included), I suggest to call it the “Stabat cadence”.

5. The Stabat cadence: from cadential cliché to a topic

While it does not seem likely that Durante assigned some specific meaning to the Stabat cadence, it is nonetheless intriguing that the great majority of his D/A progressions appear in the *minor* mode. The strong “minor” implications of the Durante cadence made it a natural candidate

for his student Pergolesi as a means of depicting the suffering of Mary at the foot of the Cross.

As Richard Will put it, “[Pergolesi] suggests a manifestation of grief that is not made explicit by the text, but which emerges from the frequent halting or retarding of rhythmic motion... When first heard in the instrumental prelude [of the first movement] the pedal needs four attempts to reach the tonic, the first three undermined by deceptive motion in the bass... The same deceptions return at the end of the movement... Into the silence echo the words preceding it, *dolorosa* and *lacrimosa*. Heard here for the first time out of their usual order in the text, and the two words and the pause postpone the moment at which the ensuing line of text, with its reference to Jesus, must be linked to the symbolic finality of the cadence. Furthermore, while a reminiscence of the beginning of the movement thereafter restores the tonic (mm. 43—45), the sotto voce arrival sounds resigned at best, and a sense of reluctance lingers into the postlude. The instrumental cadence reaches its destination only after recalling, again, the deceptive motion that has plagued it throughout (m. 46)”²³.

Manipulating the desire for tonal closure is one of several strategies through which Pergolesi's setting seems to encourage listeners not simply to regard, but to enter into the emotions of its protagonist, to share the Virgin's sorrows.

With Pergolesi, the D/A progression became inextricably linked to the idea of sorrow and loss: on other words, it became a topic. In the remaining of this talk I would like to discuss some later examples of the Stabat cadence.

6. The Stabat cadence after Pergolesi

Not surprisingly, the Stabat cadence continued to be in use in Naples after Pergolesi, in sacred music and more generally in music with text expressing feelings of sorrow and loss. Naples was a center of the Marian cult, and new settings of the Stabat sequence have been commissioned and composed notwithstanding Pergolesi's huge popularity. The first movement of a Stabat Mater by the Maltese composer Girolamo Abos, another student of Greco and Durante's, has the orchestra introduction closed by a Stabat cadence.

The Stabat cadence appears also in other Neapolitan sacred works linked to the Marian cult, such as a *Salve Regina* in *c minor* by Leonardo Leo (first movement, orchestra introduction).

Pergolesi influenced virtually any other composers who attempted to set the Stabat sequence. Joseph Haydn's *Stabat Mater*, composed in 1767 is no exception. The eighth movement, *Fac me vere tecum flere* in *G minor*, presents an interesting version of the Stabat cadence. The theme proper (bb. 1—5) seems to me a period in which, due to the slow tempo, each notated bar functions as two real ones (or $R = \frac{1}{2} N$). The period attempts a first closure, but the perfect authentic cadence fails to materialize — there is a IAC instead. In bar 5 a formal cadential progression is set in motion, which should lead to a PAC; the extended progression (it includes a detour back to ③ before moving upwards) however leads to a deceptive cadence. After the first progression has reached ⑥, the corresponding harmony is expanded through a 5-6 motion, comes back to V and leads to a IAC. Afterwards, the cadential progression starts over again from ③ and eventually reaches the PAC. That Haydn took Pergolesi as an exemplar is clear also by the great amount of space allotted to the cadence. The cadential extension occupies four bars and one beat of the nine bars of the orchestra introduction, thus matching almost exactly the proportion in the first movement of Pergolesi's *Stabat* (5 to 11).

7. Mozart and the Stabat cadence

Around 1770, the Stabat cadence became so strongly associated with the idea of sorrow and loss that, even if used in instrumental music, it continued to retain its original meaning. One of the composers who exploited the possibilities of this cadential device in the most imaginative way was Mozart. He also used consistently the D/A progression in *major*, in contexts that suggest, at least, a partial retention of the meaning of the “true” Stabat.

One of the most famous examples of D/A progression in *major* is in the first movement of the so-called Kegelstatt Trio: apart from being in

major, the two progressions match exactly the Stabat description.

More problematic is the Adagio of the piano sonata in F K. 280 (composed in 1775), a kind of *trauer-Siciliana* in *f minor*. The first part modulates to the subordinate key of A flat *major*, and is closed by a repeated cadential progression (bb. 17—21) that shares some of its qualities with the Stabat, but differs in many significant ways: 1) it is in *major* mode; 2) while the deceptive progression starts on ③, the authentic does not; 3) the melody is different.

Intriguingly, when in the parallel passage in the recapitulation the possibility for a true Stabat cadence was materialized, Mozart decided for an evaded cadence.

A real Stabat occurs in the main theme of the last movement of the sonata in a *minor*, K310. When the theme appears for the first time the Stabat cadence disrupts an otherwise textbook eight-bar (with R=2N) period, extending the consequent by four (notated) bars. When the main theme returns in the refrain before the *major* couplet, the second progression of the Stabat cadence is extended with the insertion of 16 bars between its second and third bar.

Perhaps the more pervasive use of the Stabat cadence in any Mozart's music is in the D *minor* piano concerto K. 466, first movement. The closing section of the first *tutti* begins in bar 44 with a four bar ascending sequence leading to the ③ in the bass. This note launches the first cadential progression (bb. 48—51) that reveals itself as a deceptive one, and is followed by a two bar evaded cadence. This block (deceptive 4 bars plus evaded two bars) is repeated again and, together with the first block, constitute the first cadential string, one that leads to no PAC but to an evaded cadence instead.

The second cadential string begins with a modified repetition of the four bar ascending sequence returns, now shortened to three bars. The sequence leads to an evaded cadence, now expanded from two to four bars by means of an *indugio* realized with as a voice exchange. The following cadential progression sets out as a

replica of the previous one, but after a slackening of the *indugio* (three bars instead of two) leads to the first PAC of this closing section.

The third, post-PAC string, consists of a double Stabat cadence: deceptive 2 + deceptive 2 + authentic. This is the first real Stabat cadence in the whole closing section, but it sounds as it had been prepared and anticipated by the deceptive cadences in the first string and by the insistence on ⑥ in the *indugi*. The *indugi* in the second string, by the way, match exactly the *cadenza finta* as shown by Valente.

8. Dalla sua pace

My last example is the aria composed by Mozart for the Viennese performance of *Don Giovanni*, "*Dalla sua pace*". This aria is sometimes considered of lesser importance than the rest of the opera, for several reasons. Don Ottavio is not exactly the most popular character in *Don Giovanni*; *Dalla sua pace* is an attachment to the authentic core, the Prague version; its static quality weakens the dramatic tension. Despite all this, its musical quality is so outstanding that the aria belongs to the central repertoire of any Mozart tenor. The reason for my inclusion of *Dalla sua pace* in this work is that this aria includes one of the most compelling examples of a Stabat cadence I am aware of.

The form of the aria is a slightly modified *da capo* form, ABA' plus coda, where A and A' are in G *major* and B in the parallel minor. The Stabat cadence occurs towards the end of the B section, and is almost complete: that is, the first progression, the deceptive one, features the normative ascent from 3 to 6; the second progression, however, fails to lead to the PAC and breaks down at the second step. What is more shocking here, however, is that the Stabat cadence is in the wrong key: B *minor* instead of G *minor*.

Conclusion

The Stabat cadence owed its fortune to the eighteenth century taste for sentimentality. In addition to its original meaning of suffering and loss, later in the century a more mundane version

of it became fashionable after the huge success of Niccolò Piccinni's opera *La buona figliuola*, based on Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela, or the Virtue Rewarded*. This new Stabat did express innocence, and more specifically, harassed innocence. With the onset of Romantic ideology the eighteenth century sentimental taste lost much of its grip. I could find a few examples of Stabat cadence in Beethoven (for example, in the piano sonata op. 90), but none in Schumann.

Point for conclusion

- The stabat cadence originated as one among several possible solutions to the problem of how to repeat a cadential progression.
- Already in its early stages, it showed a certain inclination for the minor mode, albeit without specific meanings
- With Pergolesi it became a topic of loss and suffering, and later of innocence
- Mozart had a certain fondness for it, but apparently it disappeared with the onset of the Romantic era
- The status of exemplar — that is, of model for imitation — of Pergolesi's Stabat Mater was crucial for the establishment of the Stabat cadence as a topic

As music theorists, we are still very much influenced by Romantic ideology, that put the greatest value on originality, and scorned imitation as non artistic. But we know that imitation was highly valued in pre-romantic aesthetics, and masterworks were considered not works-of-art, but models for imitation. I think that the research on the use of exemplars in music might be a rewarding field for music theorists.

Notes

- ¹ Ralf Krause. Introduction to Leonardo Leo, *Le composizioni per tastiera: tomo I*, ed. by Cosimo Prontera. — Roma: Edizioni musicali il melograno, 1996, iv.
- ² Bernardo Pasquini. *Regole per accompagnare il cembalo et al.* Ms. Bologna (I-Bc) D. 138.
- ³ Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater" and the Politics of Feminine Virtue Author(s): Richard Will Source: *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 87, № 3 (Autumn, 2004). — P. 570—614.