

Another Typical German Sonata Form?: Regional Preferences and Georg Joseph Vogler’s “Baierische National” Symphony

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Abstract:

Beginning at least as early as Charles Rosen’s *Sonata Forms*, much scholarship has challenged the plausibility of defining any unified sonata theory. In essence, any theory of sonata form must allow for an endless stream of caveats, admit that it is limited to a particular repertoire, or discredit pieces that behave differently. This study further complicates the issue by examining what happens when expected formal zones become partially decoupled from their expected keys and themes. The works of Georg Joseph Vogler (1749-1814), though certainly activating some of the expectations of German *Formenverlauf*, are nevertheless held together more by tonal bonds than thematic ones. Building on the research of Michael Polth, I draw three conclusions. First, Vogler’s oeuvre, though seemingly full of formal eccentricities, finds historical precedence in prior Mannheim kapellmeisters. Second, as exemplified by the first movement of Vogler’s “Baierische National” Symphony, Vogler eschews strict formal plans. Finally, since many northern audiences (especially in Scandinavia) received his seemingly-unusual forms in a positive light, the cultural currency of a unified German sonata form becomes dubious.

“Interchangeability” (Vertauschung) in the themes of the Mannheim School

“One of the most striking moments of the formal structure observed in the Allegro first movements of many Mannheim symphonies is the interchanging of formal sections—especially in the recapitulation (if the term “recapitulation” is still appropriate under these circumstances)—or the repetition of the beginning at the end of a movement...The synthesis of interchangeability and the principle of reprise cannot remain without consequences for the meaning of the formal sections Polth, 95

Symphony in Eb Major: “La Melodia Germanica” Nr. 3 Johann Stamitz (1717 - 1757) Mannheim Kapellmeister (~1741-1754)

Exposition:

Measures:	1-4	5-10	11-14	15-18	19-22	23-26	27-31
Zone (H&D): ¹	Intro	P1	P2	P2	?	P2'	TR?
Thematic Block(s): ²	1	2	3	3	4	3	5
Phrase Structure:	-	Sentence?	Sentence	Sentence	-	Sentence?	-
Cadence:	-	-	PAC	PAC	-	PAC?	-
Key:	I	I	I	I	I	I	-
Other Info:	-	-	-	-	-	-	Elides with next phrase

¹ The Zone markers used here are consistent with the terminology used in Hepokoski and Darcy’s *Elements of Sonata Theory*. Thus, a “P-zone” is a section of the form which is occupied by the primary theme.

² In this overview, the number in the thematic block row merely indicates the order in which these melodic pieces appear and reappear; it does not indicate any relationship to the theme’s role in the form. Thus, block “2” is not the secondary theme.

Measures:	31-34	35-38	38-45	46-50	51-58	59-66
Zone (H&D):	TR?	TR?	?	S? no	S	S
Theme(s):	6	6	2	7	8	8
Phrase Structure:	Sentence	Sentence	Sentence?	-	Sentence	Sentence
Cadence:	IAC (MC?)	PAC (MC?)	-	-	PAC (EEC?)	PAC (EEC?)
Key:	V	V	V	V	V	I - V
Other Info:	-	Elides with next phrase	-	-	-	Elides with next phrase

Recapitulation:

Measures:	100-108	108-111	112-119	120-127	127-131	132-135	136-139	139-144
Parallel mm. ³	~5-10	46-50	51-58	59-66	19-22	11-14	15-18	~1-4
Zone (H&D):	P1'	S? no	S	S	?	Coda	Coda	Coda (Intro?)
Theme(s):	2	7	8	8	4	3	3	1
Phrase Structure:	Sentence?	-	Sentence	Sentence	-	Sentence	Sentence	-
Cadence:	PAC	-	PAC (ESC?)	PAC (ESC?)	-	PAC	PAC	PAC
Key:	V - I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Other Info:	Elides with next phrase	-	-	Elides with next phrase	-	-	Elides with next phrase	-

³ This row indicates structural equivalence between measures of the exposition and recapitulation.

A Different Normal in the Mannheim Style

The movement charted above exhibits at least two striking elements typical of the Mannheim style that might be considered “deformations” in a strict definition of sonata form:

1. A preponderance of cadences (mostly PACs) simultaneously breaks up the form into smaller subsections and makes it challenging to unequivocally identify expected formal boundaries (MC, EEC, ESC).
2. The reuse of themes is highly flexible. In this case, the succession of themes in the recapitulation makes it difficult to accept Hepokoski and Darcy’s concept of a “third rotation.” Yet, it is also too loosely ordered to align with Timothy Jackson’s idea of “tragic reversal.”

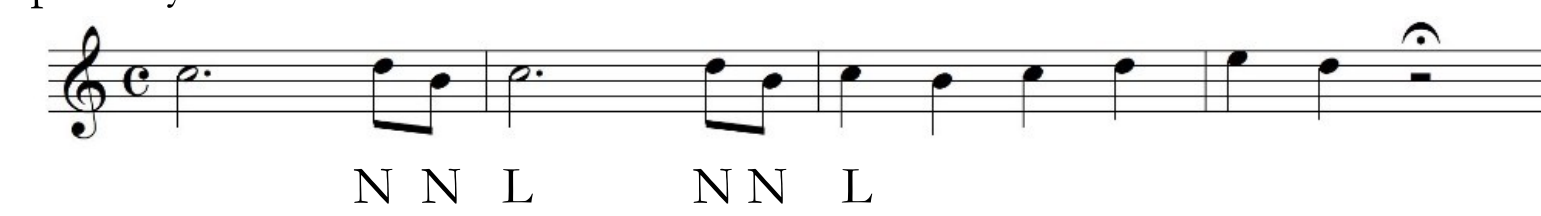
As I show presently, the first of these items is strongly preserved in Vogler’s repertoire. Furthermore, though Vogler does not “reorder” themes in the “Baierische National” Symphony, his methods of thematic redeployment still problematize the recapitulation.

The “Baierische National” Symphony: I. Allegro Georg Joseph Vogler

The Main Themes

The “interchangeability” of the primary and secondary themes is enhanced by their melodic similarity: namely, a double-neighbor figure (N N) followed by a longer note value (L). The themes are listed in order of appearance.

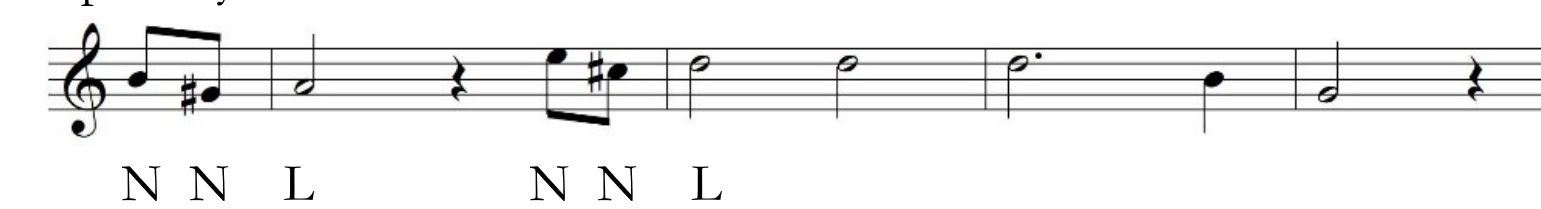
- 1) Primary Theme – Incipit only



- 2) “Ich bin ein Baier” – two sub-modules that often appear one after the other. This theme also usually appears in counterpoint with either the primary or secondary theme.



- 3) Secondary Theme – Incipit only



Exposition:

Measures:	1-4	5-8	9-17	17-26	26-36	37-44	44- 52
Zone (H & D):	Intro or P?			TR? no	P' or TR	P' or TR	TR
Theme(s):	1			2	1 and 2	1 and 2	1 and 2
Phrase Structure:	Sentence?			-	-	-	-
Cadence:	HC?	HC?	PAC	PAC		PAC (MC?)	PAC (MC)
Key:	I (C Major)	ii?	I	I	I	V	V
Other Info:	Ends on a half-rest with fermata		-	-	-	-	-

Measures:	52-53	54-77	78-100	100-114	115-126	126-129
Zone (H & D):	-	S	S	C?	C?	C
Theme(s):	-	3	3 and 2	1	1	-
Phrase Structure:	-	Sentence	Sentence	-	-	-
Cadence:	-	PAC (EEC?)	PAC (EEC?)	PAC	PAC	-
Key:	V	V	V	V	V	V
Other Info:	caesura fill	-	Elides with the next phrase	-	-	cadential extension

⁴ The numbers in the theme row directly correspond to those listed in the “Main Themes” section above.

Recapitulation:

Measures:	245-248	249-250	251-252	253-276	277-299	299-315	315-331 ⁵
Parallel mm.	1-4	-	-	54-77	78-100	~100-114	-
Zone (H & D):	P	?	?	S	C?	C?	C?
Theme(s):	1	-	-	3	3 and 2	1	1'
Phrase Structure:	Sentence?	-	-	Sentence	Sentence	-	-
Cadence:	HC?	-	-	PAC	PAC (ESC?)	PAC	PAC
Key:	I	-	I	I	I	I	I
Other Info:	Ends on a half-rest with fermata	Timpani solo	Strings join timpani	-	Elides with next phrase	Elides with next phrase	-

⁵ These measures are followed by a relatively short P-based coda (mm. 332-336).

Tradition and Innovation

This overview exhibits several ambiguities that threaten the solidity of the movement’s form. Some of them follow the pattern of Vogler’s predecessors, such as the breaking up of the form through a plethora of cadences. Yet, others are noticeably different. For example, the appearance of the timpani solo at m. 249 is surprising for two reasons:

1. This event is unique to the recapitulation and therefore does not participate in any recollection of expositional materials.
2. It completely replaces the majority of the P-Zone as well as the entire transition area. This also results in the complete removal of the medial caesura typically expected in Viennese works.

Like in the Stamitz, one must also question whether or not this recapitulation can be considered a “third rotation.” The previously-mention culling of the P-Zone, along with the fact that this movement has no Crux, is troubling to such an effort. Similarly, one might point to the fact that the closing area and coda are P-based, and argue that the movement is a candidate for a “tragic reversal.” However, the primary theme has already appeared in the same part of the exposition, thus canceling the possibility of a reversal of any sort.

Thematic Return vs. Tonal Return:

Vogler’s forms are admittedly unusual by the standards of the Viennese classicists, and his theoretical writings are remarkably silent about formal procedures. This might lead a listener to believe that Vogler was unaware or unconvinced of the importance of form in musical works, or even that Vogler was lax in defining or deploying musical elements. However, his treatises are quite clear that, in his opinion, music is, first and foremost, a science. He deems composers who follow his well-defined “rules” to be creators of great works; those that are unaware of these rules, or who consciously ignore them, may at times produce passable compositions but can never attain the mastery of true musicians. Yet, if music is a science, why does Vogler not even mention form? The answer lies in the musical attribute that Vogler believes to be of paramount importance in a piece: tonal closure. For him, the purpose of any work is to intelligently play out the demands of tonality itself. Ergo, however compelling a musical theme may be, it must take a lower priority than the organization of cadences that assures tonal closure. For Vogler (like Stamitz and other previous Mannheim composers), there is no need for any particular theme to be tied to a key area or formal section; the two movements shown herein testify to this, as do several of Vogler’s idiosyncratic binary preludes. It would therefore seem that, in the Mannheim tradition, any given musical form is a natural result of the compositional process, not a mold that needs to be filled with pre-determined musical materials.

Regional Preferences and Composition (Conclusion):

During his career, Vogler made trips to various parts of Europe (and perhaps also northern Africa). In some of the more typically-discussed cultural centers of his day (Vienna, Paris, London, etc.), Vogler was unable to achieve the level of popularity enjoyed by his more canonic contemporaries, especially Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart. This could be taken to mean that Vogler’s compositional strategies (such as his formal procedures) were perceived as inferior when compared to those of his fellows. However, this idea is difficult to support if one focuses on other geographical regions. Vogler was hired as Mannheim’s Kapellmeister even though Mozart interviewed for the same position. Similarly, though Beethoven and Mozart spent time in Prague and published several works there, Vogler was the only one who was asked to complete a two-year guest lectureship at Prague University. Finally, in Scandinavia (particularly Copenhagen and Stockholm), where the Viennese composers rarely visited, the name of Vogler assured a sell-out crowd. Thus, a nuanced view of this repertoire must admit to different musical expectations for audiences in different areas. Indeed, an interesting point for further research would be to explore how these alternate cultural centers came to possess those preferences.

It is also advisable to reexamine the modern expectations surrounding eighteenth- and nineteenth-century formal plans. Of late, many scholars have begun to diversify our understanding of this area through the inclusion of repertoires from Spain, Italy, Latin America, etc., especially those by underrepresented cultural groups. While this effort is absolutely commendable, it could lead to the false understanding that, though diverse across the world, forms were more or less unified within the borders of a given country. Worse still, it might be assumed that sonata form (or “first-movement” form) was pioneered in the Germanic lands and simply modified later to meet the expectations of other populaces. Vogler’s oeuvre shows there was no formal procedure with universal support even within the relatively narrow bounds of German-speaking territories. Thus, there is no reason to assume such a unity in any other area. This evidences the potential for even greater musical diversity than might be assumed concerning this already well-represented period of music history.

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