

# Exploring "Galant Style" in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century German, French, and Italian Composers' Pieces

Xiao Jing

Mannes School of Music, 55 W 13<sup>th</sup> St, NY 10011, New York

**Abstract:** This paper explores the Galant style of music, which emerged in the mid-18th century as a bridge between the Baroque and Classical periods. The characteristics of this style are simplicity and elegance, and it focuses on melody and harmony over complex counterpoint. Most people would classify the Galant style as Rococo, and this paper proves this opinion is wrong. Compared to the Galant style, the Rococo style is associated with visual arts. Comprehensive research of the Galant style illustrates that this style prioritizes clarity and musical structure rather than ornamental and decorative features. In order to demonstrate the Galant style, this paper chose pieces from three renowned composers, Domenico Scarlatti, Francois Couperin, and Georg Philipp Telemann, representing different nationalities; those composers come from Italy, France, and Germany. These pieces, including Scarlatti's piano sonatas (K.29 and K.145), "Le Bavolet Flottant" by Francois Couperin, and Telemann's Fantasia TWV33 no.8 in G minor, above of these pieces illustrate the distinct characteristics and nuances of the Galant style.

## 1. Introduction

The middle of the 18th century saw the rise of a musical style known as "Galant." The Galant style bridged the gap between the Baroque and Classical periods, distinguished by simplicity, elegance, and naturalness. This paper aims to examine the distinctive aspects of the Galant style and separate it from the Rococo style. The Rococo style is most described in visual arts like painting and sculpture. Galant music is distinguished by clear, singable melodies and uncomplicated harmonies, prioritizing melody and harmony above intricate contrapuntal methods.

In contrast, the Rococo style exemplifies a visual arts and sculpting style distinct from the Galant style, which expresses music with simplicity, elegance, and clarity. This paper emphasizes that the Galant and Rococo styles display separate fields of description, and the two should be distinguished. Their emphasis on the description of items and styles differs, and there is no relationship of identity or inclusion between them. The Galant style exhibits symmetrical and balanced structures.

This paper will explore the characteristics of the Galant style in Italian, French, and German by analyzing three prominent composers' pieces. Domenico Scarlatti is from Italy, Francois Couperin is from France, and Georg Philipp Telemann is from Germany. The selected pieces encompass various genres, including Scarlatti's piano sonatas (K.29 and K.145), Couperin's "Le Bavolet Flottant," and Telemann's Fantasia TWV33 no.8 in G minor. This paper will analyze how these composers employed the Galant style, exploring the characteristics of this style in different nations. By analyzing the musical

elements, they use in their piece, they discuss each composer's unique interpretations and contributions from their respective countries. This paper will give us a comprehensive understanding of the Galant style and its unique attributes. Through this exploration, this paper aims to make a statement about the significance of this musical aesthetic and its lasting impact on these specific pieces.

## 2. Background

*Composers:* Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757) was an Italian composer famous for his keyboard sonatas. Domenico Scarlatti wrote approximately five hundred and fifty-five piano sonatas that are today regarded as some of the best examples of Baroque keyboard music. His sonatas influenced the development of keyboard music and were studied and played by many musicians. Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas are often short; several are composed in binary form, and his sonatas frequently include complicated quick arpeggios and other music textures. He revolutionized the harpsichord with his innovative compositions, and his work greatly influenced composers like Mozart, Beethoven, and Chopin. Scarlatti also wrote operas, chamber music, and other genres of music.

Francois Couperin (1668-1733) was a French composer and harpsichordist. He was the nephew of the well-known composer and organist Louis Couperin and was born into a musical household. He was a prolific composer, and some of his works are keyboard, voice, and chamber music. He wrote a treatise called "Art of Playing the Harpsichord,"<sup>[1]</sup> this book took a significant role in keyboard performance and pedagogy; it demonstrates the

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jingxiao0220@gmail.com

ornamentation, phrase, style, expression, and other elements.

George Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) was a German composer known for his church compositions. He wrote sacred and secular music, but his church compositions, ranging from small cantatas to large-scale works for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, were particularly renowned. Telemann's music showcased his mastery of counterpoint and ability to create rich and expressive compositions.

**The origin of Galant:** The word "Galant" comes from French and has been used since at least the 16th century. In the early 18th century, a galant homme was considered a fashionable person who was elegant, intelligent, and virtuous. Johann Mattheson, a German theorist, is fond of the term.

**The Influence of the Enlightenment:** The Enlightenment had a significant impact on the Galant style of music. The late 17th and 18th century European intellectual movement emphasized reason and individualism rather than tradition. The scientific authority displaced the religious authority. During the 18th century, the Enlightenment movement emphasized reason, clarity, and a rejection of excessive decoration.

**Galant Style<sup>[2]</sup>:** Galant style is a light and elegant free homophonic style of musical composition in the 18th century, mainly in 1720-1770; it took a significant role in European music. The "Galant" style significantly influenced the development of classical music in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was an essential factor in the emergence of the Classical style and the transition from Baroque to Classical. The primary person who used the "galant style" in music was Mattheson, in his *Das forschende Orchestre* of 1721. Composers such as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven utilized the "Galant" style in their compositions. Additionally, the "Galant" style impacted the development of Romanticism, as it provided a foundation for the more expressive and emotional style to come.

The galant style represented an aesthetic departure from the bombast of rationalist music. The social background of the galant style is the separation of church and state, and society gains equality. This new music style is similar to the city music rather than the court music.

**The Crucial Characteristics of the Galant Style:** The galant stressed charm and grace, focused on simplicity, clarity, balance, and symmetry. The texture is lightness and rhythmic flexibility. Melodies were often ornate and elaborate but retained a sense of order and structure. The style also incorporated various musical devices, such as sequences, harmonic progressions, and tonal modulations. The galant style is closely associated with keyboard pieces, but other vocal and instrumental genres represent it well.

**The Musical Form of The Galant Style:** Musical form is vital in the instrumental music of the eighteenth century. The conventional binary form of dances fascinated composers. At the same time, other musical forms reflect the qualities of lighter, elegant, gallant style, such as the ternary form, minuet, trio form, and rondo form.

**Pieces:** The keyboard sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti are renowned for their technical virtuosity and unique musical style. Piano Sonata K.29 and K.145 were composed in the Galant Style period. K.29 and K.145 are both in D major and have different time signatures. The texture of the rhythm is distinct.

Francois Couperin<sup>[3]</sup> wrote a harpsichord piece called "Le Bavolet Flottant," which is also known as the thirteenth "Piece de Clavecin" from his second book (Pieces of the harpsichord). This title for French is "The Floating Bonnet." The French word "bavolet" describes a piece of leather or fabric fastened to the rear of a hat or bonnet and could be adjusted to shield the wearer's neck and ears from the sun. The title of this work would imply a sense of motion. This composition is an excellent example of the Galant music style, which originated in the mid-18th century in response to the richness and elaboration of the Baroque style.

Georg Philipp Telemann produced thirty-six keyboard fantasias, divided into three volumes, two for the Italian clavichord and one for the French clavichord. This fantasia TWV33:8 in G minor is a solo work for an instrument, sometimes performed in the flute. This piece is full of the features of the gallant style, a musical style of fantasy. The term "fantasia" means full of drama, belonging to the free-form composition. Telemann's fantasias are known for their imaginative and virtuosic elements. Telemann's keyboard fantasia exemplifies many of the qualities of the Galant style.

### 3. The Characteristics of Galant Style in Italian: Researching by Domenico Scarlatti's Piano Sonata K.29 and K.145

Domenico Scarlatti took a significant role in developing and popularizing the Galant Style. Scarlatti's piano sonatas<sup>[4]</sup>, such as K.29 and K.145, are excellent examples of the Galant style; they show emotion and technical mastery of the form. His mastery of the Galant Style is evident in his K.29 and K.145, which are excellent examples.

Scarlatti exemplifies the Galant style in K.29 with its balanced phrasing, broken chords, light and delicate melody, and syncopated beat. A poetic theme that is performed slowly and sensitively introduces the composition. This composition has several ornamentations, including turns, mordents, and trills. Each word flows naturally into the next, giving the writing a sense of grace and consistency. Scarlatti's melodic choices, combined with his ornamentation, create a perfect balance between sophistication and accessibility, embodying the essence of the Galant Style. The musical form of K.29 and K.145 was the typical structure of the musical of galant style features. Both of them were created in binary form, which consists of two distinct sections. Each section explores different thematic material or tonalities in the context of these sonatas. In his famous piano sonatas K.29 and K.145, the composition techniques involve the innovative use of melodies, harmonic progressions, and expressive ornamentation, and these music textures influenced contemporaries, such as Johann Christian Bach,

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Furthermore, author Paul Moravitz Sherrill reviewed this article: "Music in the Galant Style by Robert O. Gjerdingen,"<sup>[5]</sup> and then proposed some ideas. The author emphasizes the status of the Galant Style in Italian. Paul thinks this style was Italian-centric and profoundly influenced European musical styles. The central feature of the Italian style is the modularity of its approach to composition, that is, the quick and easy construction of musical elements through the combination of pre-made musical modules called "schemata." These modules are composed of a vocal guidance framework of melody and bass parts simultaneously, often including typical scales. For example, the classic "Romanesca" pattern may be expressed as a scale of 1-5-5-6 in the bass, while the melody corresponds to it. In teaching the Galant style, this style emphasizes the cantus firmus and then builds up the upper voice and layer.

Overall, simplicity, clarity, and melodic beauty emphasize the Italian Galant musical style. The Galant style permitted expressive dynamics and embellishment even though its goal was simplicity. In addition, the harmonic progressive and single melody contrast with the contrapuntal and polyphony music in the Baroque period. It signaled a change in direction toward a more approachable and expressive musical language.

#### **4. Distinguish the Characteristics of Galant Style in French by Investigating Francois Couperin's "Le Bavolet Flottant" and Treatise**

"Orfeo ed Euridice" by Christoph Willibald Gluck <sup>[6]</sup> was a notable composition that captured the essence of the Galant musical tradition. Many composers, like François Couperin, took the vital role of the Galant style in France and were affected by Gluck's opera in their works.

First of all, Francois Couperin demonstrates his use of delicate ornamentation in "Le Bavolet Flottant," a composition that reflects the Galant aesthetic and features refined melodic lines, a light, transparent texture, and the combination of trills and mordent to add elegance and grace to the piece—the beginning of this piece with a lovely, lyrical tune enhanced in beauty by subtle embellishments. The organization of this piece into clear sections, each with its distinct character and mood. In addition, he frequently changes dynamics, textures of rhythm, articulations, and tempos, creating a sense of variety and contrast. This attention to formal structure and contrasting elements is typical of the Galant style, which has the power to captivate the listener through a constant flow of new ideas and emotions.

Through the distinctive harmony, the creative use of grace notes, the contrast between the symbol of dynamics, and the clever use of piano playing skills presented in the score, this piece of his work reveals his profound awareness of stunning style. The richness of melodic emotions, inherent layering, and abundant color variations distinguish the French Galant style.

#### **5. Unveiling the Characteristics of Galant Style in German: An Analysis of Telemann's Fantasia TWV 33:8 in G minor**

German composer Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's "Essay on the Real Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments" (1753) was a treatise that provided a thorough exposition of keyboard playing and composition in the "Galant" style.

First, the Galant Style in Germany's characteristics received influences from the Italian and French. Analysis of Telemann's piece, the prominent features of the influence of the Italian style are readily apparent in Telemann's fantasia TWV 33:8 in g minor, mainly through the use of virtuosic passages. Furthermore, the rich ornamentation and quick scales woven throughout the work prove the Italian influence. Aside from the virtuoso parts, the lively rhythms used in this composition emphasize the Italian influence even more. The composition's rhythmic vibrancy and energy generate a sense of movement. Moreover, an examination of the structure of this composition revealed that the Italians affected the Germans.

On the other hand, the influence of French music is evident in the ornamentation found in Telemann's piece. Telemann uses ornamentation elements such as trills, mordents, acciaccatura, and appoggiaturas, adding elegance and sophistication to the composition. These ornamental elements are reminiscent of the French Baroque style and showcase the influence of French music on Telemann's work. At the same time, the graceful phrasing in TWV 33:8 reflects the influence of French music. The French style emphasizes smooth and flowing melodic lines, creating a sense of elegance and refinement. Telemann's legato phrasing and lyrical melodies in this fantasia exemplify this characteristic. Furthermore, the Italian influence manifests in strong harmonic progressions and bold gestures, adding an element of excitement and intensity to the music. The combination of French elegance and Italian virtuosity gives the Galant style its unique and distinct characteristic in German.

#### **6. The Comprehensive Analysis of Rococo and Galant Style**

Many people often refer to the magnificent style as the Rococo style<sup>[7]</sup> because the Rococo and magnificent style appeared in the same period. However, some resources support and disagree with this opinion. This part aims to distinguish these. Although there is a close relationship between music and art architecture, the specific objects of description of the two styles are different, but there are still differences between them.

Reviewing the first secondary source, in the article "In the Name of Rococo," Nicholas Newman illustrates the original Rococo and the meaning of this style. The author explains that the word Rococo first appeared as a pejorative term to describe the artistic and decorative styles of the mid-18th century. The origin of the word is not entirely clear, but it may be related to the French words "rocaille" (meaning "rock") and "coquille" (meaning "shell"). These two elements were widespread in Rococo-

style decorative arts. The Rococo style originated in France and later spread to other European countries, especially Germany, Austria, and Italy. This style is often considered a reaction to the more serious, grandiose Baroque style, which was more relaxed, elegant, and decorative.

Secondly, George Poe in his paper: "The Eighteenth-Century French Rococo: Some Terminological, Methodological, and Theoretical Considerations" talks about the characteristics of the Rococo style in French in the 18th century. He considers the Rococo style, seen as an emblem of the Age of Enlightenment, to be an artistic and decorative style primarily embodied in interior decorating, painting, sculpture, and architecture. According to the text, the Rococo style is temporal, consisting of distinct stages such as "Rococo-Rocaille," "Rococo-Pompadour" in the heyday, and "Rococo-Louis XVI" in the degradation period. The author emphasizes the use of the Rococo style in literature and the visual arts, underlining the significance of the concept of style as a timeless, enlightening tool for understanding literature and art. The Rococo style is considered a "same but different" formula that shows the subtle creativity of the artist while following tradition. This style is not just a repetitive and dull expression but a complex and delicate art form.

The Rococo and Galant styles have the same characteristics as elegant, and they desire to express emotion, but Rococo mainly uses it to describe the visual arts, painting, and architecture. Architecture during the Rococo period was characterized by its embrace of asymmetry. Unlike the balanced and symmetrical designs of the previous Baroque style, Rococo architects sought to create a sense of movement and dynamism in their buildings. The aesthetics of the Galant style emphasize the balanced form. On the other hand, the Rococo style focused on elaborate decoration, intricate ornamentation, and whimsical, playful themes. It often portrayed scenes of love, pleasure, and nature. However, the Galant style emphasized simplicity and naturalism. It depicted scenes from everyday life, portraying people in relaxed and natural poses.

In conclusion, the two styles have similarities, but completely different characteristics, and their subject objects are entirely different. These two styles appeared in the 18th century in Europe but distinguishing them is significant.

**The Difference Between the Baroque and Galant Style:** The characteristics of the Baroque music style illustrate that these elements, the contrapuntal complexity and its emphasis on the polyphony, created for organ and church music, took an important role, the genres of compositions, mostly the fugue, toccata, suite. Notably, the characteristics of the galant style, the textures get simple, and the voices of music from the polyphony transformed to the homophony, the melody and short phrase take an essential role in the music composition. The accompaniment textures from the complex get simple. The genre appeared in the sonata, and most composers began creating music from the organ, and Italian opera transformed into instrumental music. In the past, vocal works took a central role in music. The music experts

include serial and church music, appearances, and salon music.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has explored the characteristics of the Galant style in Italian, French, and German music by analyzing three notable compositions: Scarlatti's piano sonata, Couperin's piece, and Telemann's fantasia. Moreover, in this paper, the emphatic statements of Rococo and Galant's styles differ, but distinguishing them is more important.

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