

Rhetoric and music essay

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Rhetoric can be defined as the art or study of using language effectively and persuasively (thefreedictionary). There have been many instances where the relationship between rhetoric and music has been close, particularly in the Baroque period (rhetoric).

Until relatively late in Western civilization, music was mainly a vocal art form and therefore words were of high importance. As a result, composers tended to be inspired by rhetorical principles when combining text with music (rhetoric). Furthermore, even after independent instrumental music gained popularity, the rhetoric principles continued to be used for both vocal and instrumental music.

Rhetoric and music have basic elements in common, for example the structured development of sound and certain aspects of performance (McCrelles). Therefore it was inevitable that links between the two would be recognized and commented on. Quintilian, for example pointed to the expressivity of music as a model for the orator (McCrelles).

Although observations in similarities between music and rhetoric occurred only rarely in the medieval era, their role grew in the sixteenth century when musicians began to use the rhetoric. By this time the rhetoric was a central factor of education and was used for the teaching musical composition.

The theorists of a German musico-rhetorical practice introduced the principles of rhetoriuc into the center of music theory. In doing this, they made it a metalanguage in the music art form as well as for general language, by naming it as a model for musical composition. This effort stood out in the history of the relationship between rhetoric and music, because it

went further than simply drawing analogies and instead progressed to an overall acknowledgement of musical substance to rhetorical concepts (McCreless).

What is still relatively uncertain is how such links served to control the craft of composition. Research developments into this topic are vague, in part because since the nineteenth century, the rhetorical disciplines have vanished from most educational systems. Therefore modern scholars and musicians are largely untrained in the subject.

Only in the twentieth century did music historians what an important part the rhetoric had played on earlier musical theoretical and aesthetic notions.

At this time, there was a rebirth of academic rhetorical study with institutions, along with a surge in foundation of professional organizations. It is generally agreed that the reason for this reawakening was the popularization of language and persuasion as important skills in the twentieth century.

Throughout the twenty-first century media attention on the analysis of political rhetoric dramatically increased. Advertising, mass media and television are just a few examples of areas which have brought the rhetoric back to the forefront of people's minds. As a result, the renewal of research into the influence of the rhetoric, in many areas, is beginning to take off once again.

The discipline of rhetoric had once been well-known along all educated individuals. However, since then it has disappeared almost entirely, and only

now the concept is reemerging as a crucial historical influence of Western music.

Works Cited

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