

MUSIC AND RHETORIC IN AMARAL VIEIRA'S *STABAT MATER*, OP. 240

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Resumo: Amaral Vieira (São Paulo, 1952) wrote more than three hundred compositions, including works for chamber music, piano solo, and voice, among them forty five choral works. The *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, was written in 1989 for soloists, SATB chorus and string orchestra. Music and text are closely related in this composition, highlighting relevant and distinct aspects of the narrative. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to analyze Amaral Vieira's *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, focusing on the comparison between its fundamental structure (*Ursatz*) and its discursive organization (*Dispositio*).

Palavras-chave: Amaral Vieira, *Stabat Mater*, music and rhetoric, Brazilian choral music.

Amaral Vieira's output includes two different settings of the *Stabat Mater* as op. 229 and op. 240, respectively. The former was written in 1988 and is a multi-movement work originally scored for soprano, mezzo, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass soloists, chorus and piano. In 1989 Amaral Vieira produced a second version of his *Stabat Mater* as op. 240, replacing the piano with a string orchestra. (AMARAL VIEIRA, 2004a) The *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, has twenty movements. Each movement corresponds to a different strophe of the poem, even though in the autograph manuscript there is nothing specifying such separation between movements 5 and 6, and 10 through 12. The score is still unpublished. Based on harmonic, thematic and textual elements, the *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, can be divided into two parts: movements 1 through 12, and movements 13 through 20 (Example 1).

The *Stabat Mater* was used in the Roman liturgy as both a sequence and a hymn. Its authorship is uncertain, and it has been ascribed to different individuals, including Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604), St. Bonaventura (d. 1274), and Jacobus da Todi (d. 1306). The poem was "popularized by the 14th century when the Flagellants sang it on their travels from town to town. It was much later that it found its way into the Roman liturgy." (JEFFERS, 1988, p. 205) In the late 15th century, it became part of the "Mass for the two feasts of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary: the first on the Friday after Passion Sunday and the second on September 15." (Ibid. p. 207) As an Office hymn in the Roman Breviary, "it was divided into the following sections: 'Stabat mater' (Vespers), 'Sancta mater istud agas' (Matins) and 'Virgo virginum praeclara' (Lauds)." (CALDWELL, 2004) In addition, "the hymn may be used during Lent in the extra liturgical service the Way of the Cross, in which each station represents an incident in the Passion of Christ." (CONNELLY, 1957, p. 187) The *Stabat Mater* did not survive the reforms of the Council of Trent (1543–63); however, it was restored to the Mass in 1727 by Pope Benedict XIII.

The text of the *Stabat Mater* considers Virgin Mary's suffering and grief beneath the cross on which Christ was crucified. It is based on John 19:25, Luke 2:35, Zechariah 13:6, II Corinthians 4:10, and Galatians 6:17 from the Holy Scriptures. The text is made up of ten pairs of three-line strophes modified throughout the centuries. As for meter, rhyme pattern, and grouping of stanzas, the *Stabat Mater* is typical of a more recent sequence. There are two settings of the *Stabat Mater* text included in the *Liber Usualis*. SHARP (1978, p. 21-22) says the first one is a simple strophic setting used in the service of the Way of the Cross, and the second one is the through-composed melody which is used in the Feasts of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The analysis of Amaral Vieira's *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, was done in a systematic manner, and included consideration of history, text, harmony, rhythm, texture, form, musical symbolism, and rhetoric. Each movement was studied separately and translations and flowcharts were added to the discussions, providing concise information about tempo, performing forces, tonal aspects, formal units, golden mean, and metrical organization. This detailed examination was fundamental to ratify the analytical premise that there was a parallel between the tonal structure of the composition and its textual organization. This postulation was based upon three facts. First, the composer explained that the *Stabat Mater* is tonal, though tonality is obscured by frequent modulations, harmonic ambiguity, and unusual progressions; second, he used such harmonic procedures and treated some of the structural elements rhetorically to emphasize dramatic aspects of the text; third, it was possible to find distinct affections and musical symbolism throughout the various movements of the *Stabat Mater*. (AMARAL VIEIRA, 2004b) Chromaticism, unpredictable chord progressions, and the awkward contour of some melodies intensify the expression of desolation and melancholy of the text.

Amaral Vieira establishes tonality in the *Stabat Mater* by using different methods. Each movement of the *Stabat Mater* has some kind of pitch centrality – in many cases more than one – that is established by orthodox and/or unconventional manners, contributing to the definition of the *Ursatz* and its correlation with the structure of the discourse (*Dispositio*). The tempo of each movement also emphasizes this parallel. The various parts of the *Dispositio* have distinct *tempi*: the *exordium*, *propositio*, *confirmatio*, and *peroratio* are slower than the *narratio* and *refutatio*. The composer set the most important parts of the text in a solemn manner in order to captivate the listener's attention. The narrative and argumentative sections, on the contrary, are faster and in agreement with the urgent and clamorous mood of the text.

In the first two movements, the composer presents tonic harmony (D *dorian*), the main theme in the descending violin solo, the passacaglia basso ostinato, and the topic of the medieval sequence. Therefore, the *exordium*, which basic function is to lead the audience into the discourse (CORBETT, 1990, p. 282), inserts important textual and musical ideas and alludes to the grieving Mother, standing and weeping beside the cross while on it hung her Son (Example 2, *exordium*).

Movement 2 ends in B \flat minor and movement 3 begins in E minor, hence a tritone, a disquieting key relationship, separates introduction and narration (Example 2, *narratio*). Amaral Vieira exploits new tonal areas between movements 3-8 as the text depicts Virgin Mary's distressed feelings. The descriptiveness of the text is enhanced because the events are presented orderly, moving from the general to the particular, enhancing the comprehensibility of the text, as CORBETT (1990, p. 298) points out. The verses included in the narration first consider her affliction and suffering and then, Jesus' torments, desolation, and death. This illustrative part of the discourse is represented musically by the ascending fifth-progression that extends from movement one through four. The fifth-progression is an inversion of the descending fifth-progression which synthesizes the primary theme presented in the opening movement.

The questions "who is the man who would not weep if he should see the Mother of Christ in such great distress?" and "who could not be saddened if he should behold the Mother of Christ suffering with her only Son?" are represented harmonically. It is important to remember that these questions are presented in movements 5-6, which are set together without pause. The cadence that defines B minor as the new tonal center between movements 6-12 is figuratively used to represent an *interrogatio*, a musical question rendered through imperfect or *Phrygian* cadences. (BARTEL, 1997, p. 312) This modulation increases musical interest

and strengthens the *pathos*, contributing to persuade the audience by arousing the emotions. The technique of increasing the emotional appeal of the text (*enargeia*) is useful when the statement of facts lends itself more to a narrative treatment than to an expository treatment. As CORBETT (1990, p. 298) comments, if one can paint a word-picture of the scene instead of merely telling what happened, he/she can produce that vividness which will etch the facts and the imaginations of the readers/listeners.

The proposition of the main argument occurs at movement 9, when the narrative focuses on the first person and directly addresses to the Holy Mother (Example 2, *propositio*). The fifth-progression that starts at movement 7 demonstrates how the composer expands “the fundamental structure in various ways and on different levels.” (CADWALLADER & GAGNÉ, 1998, p. 123) Furthermore, it establishes B minor a secondary tonal center.

The thirteenth movement of Amaral Vieira’s *Stabat Mater* is structurally important because the composer introduces an ornamented version of the opening violin theme, connecting two important parts of the speech, *exordium* and *confirmatio*. Moreover, D *dorian* is reestablished as the tonal center and the soprano solo starts with an ascending fourth. Although the composer does not use any fragment of the medieval sequence in his *Stabat Mater* (AMARAL VIEIRA, 2004c), it is necessary to point out that stanzas 13 and 14 are the only ones in the chant that start with an ascending fourth. This new melodic pattern is relevant because it adds contrast and heightens the climax of the sequence. Indeed, stanza and movement thirteen highlight the climax of the medieval sequence and Amaral Vieira’s *Stabat Mater*, showing the ubiquity of the golden mean in both contexts.

In spite of its harmonic stability, movement 13 ends with an open fifth on B, suggesting either a B major or B minor chord. This submediant substitution for the tonic chord in the last measure accentuates the unfinished character of the movement and is used as a bridge that links movements 13 and 14. The root movement by descending thirds, the indication of *attaca* at the end of movement 13, and the differences in tempo reinforce the connection that exists between them. In fact, these elements highlight the contrasts between the restatement of the primary textual and musical elements and their refutation (Example 2, *confirmatio*).

The debate that characterizes the refutation (movements 14-19) is marked by the juxtaposition of conflicting arguments (Example 2, *refutatio*). Accordingly, the composer uses imitative polyphony and polytonality to underscore divergence while he uses the unifying motive based upon the soprano solo (movement 13) to create convergence. All the movements included in this section are short, fast, and rhythmically driven. The composer comments that the circularity of the work was established based upon the outside movements. In spite of their common elements, they also have almost the same length, balancing the structure of the composition. “The five movements that precede *Quando corpus morietur* are short. Therefore, the final movement appears as the culmination of the *Stabat Mater* and seems to be longer than it really is.” (AMARAL VIEIRA, 2004c)

The composer starts the peroration (movement 20) with the restatement of the initial key (D *dorian*), the principal theme in the violin, and the passacaglia basso ostinato (Example 2, *peroratio*). Like Bach in the *Crucifixus* of his *B-Minor Mass*, Amaral Vieira employs the passacaglia form – “a series of variations over a constant, repeating bass theme” – to show that “he interpreted the text as an article of faith too important to mention only once. Rather, it is the constantly recurring, central tenet of the Christian faith.” (RILLING, 1984, p. 76) The modulation to F major accentuates the meaning of the

closing verse. As MELO (1997) observes, “despite the tragic and somber character of the text, the work concludes with a tone of victorious optimism as a symbol of human redemption through the suffering and martyrdom of Christ.”

Three reasons compelled the selection of the *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, as the topic of this study. First, it is necessary to develop theoretical studies discussing stylistic and interpretative aspects of Brazilian choral music to support conductors and singers in their professional activities. Second, Amaral Vieira has been considered an important figure in Brazilian musical life. Finally, the *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, is a well-crafted work that gradually has become part of the contemporary choral repertoire.

The *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, has a neo-baroque appeal that is reinforced by its eighteen-century elements such as ritornello, counterpoint, polychoral style, musical symbolism, and the passacaglia basso ostinato. Nonetheless, Amaral Vieira avoids stereotypes and explains that his musical language is diverse. In times of globalization, he says, the music of the 21st century should reflect the fusion between different cultures, languages and aesthetics, including the avant-garde. “The experimental will always have its legitimacy, but it should not dominate the creative process. It is only one of the innumerable tendencies of the music of our time.” (AMARAL VIEIRA, 2004c) Amaral Vieira conciliates tradition and rupture in his *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, in a very personal and modern way. Tonality is not established in its classical perspective because his harmonic language is challenging and marked by unpredictable progressions. Musical symbolism is used to depict different affections. Stepwise melodies highlight the introspectiveness of the text while passages with awkward contours reinforce its mood of desolation. The abrupt contrasts in dynamic and articulation and the use of imitative counterpoint and polytonality also accentuate important aspects of the text.

Indeed, the comparison between the fundamental structure (*Ursatz*) and the textual organization (*Dispositio*) displays how music and text are closely related in the *Stabat Mater*, op. 240, and how Amaral Vieira emphasizes drama in music. The analytical techniques employed highlighted the framework of the composition and brought out distinctive examples that show creative ways that Amaral Vieira used rhetoric and music to complement and strength each other. Furthermore, it is essential to notice that the main goal of rhetoric is the delivery and organization of the text “in terms not of grammatical parts but of whether you repeat words for emphasis and so forth. It is a kind of taxonomic business, on the level of sentence, and also in terms of parts of an oration, showing how B follows A and how C follows B.” (SHERMAN, 2002) By recognizing the fundamentals of *Ursatz* and *Dispositio*, choral conductors will have a chance to enhance the interpretative process since the core of choral music is the text and its message.

PART I						
<i>Movement</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Strophe</i>	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b
<i>Form</i>	A ¹ A ²	A ¹ A ²	A	A	A ¹	A ²
<i>Time signature</i>	2/2	2/2	3/4	5/4	4/4	
<i>Tempo</i>	Andante religioso		Moderato	Mosso	Lento	
	$\text{♩} = 56$	$\text{♩} = 63$	$\text{♩} = 72$	$\text{♩} = 112$	$\text{♩} = 92$	
<i>Forces</i>	Mz sl, SATB, Str	S sl, SATB, Str	SAB sl, SATB, Str	S sl, SATB, Str	SATB sl, SATB, Str	S, T, sl, SATB, Str
<i>Tonal area</i>	D dorian	D dorian, B \flat m	Em	Gm	Fm	EM
<i>Length</i>	76 measures	47 measures	23 measures	36 measures	22 measures	41 measures

<i>Movement</i>	7	8	9	10	11	12
<i>Strophe</i>	4a	4b	5a	5b	6a	6b
<i>Form</i>	AB	A ¹ A ² A ³	A	A ¹ B ¹	A ²	B ²
<i>Time signature</i>	2/2	2/2	3/2	2/2		6/4
<i>Tempo</i>	Allegro	Moderato	Andante	Poco agitato	Tranquillo	
	$\text{♩} = 144$	$\text{♩} = 60$	$\text{♩} = 52$	$\text{♩} = 72$		
<i>Forces</i>	SATB, Str	T sl, SATB, Str	SATB	SATB sl, SATB, Str	SAB sl, SATB, Str	SATB
<i>Tonal area</i>	Bm	A \flat M	F \sharp m	Bm, EM	Bm	EM
<i>Length</i>	53 measures	62 measures	12 measures	35 measures	24 measures	8 measures
<i>Duration</i>	0'47"	3'04"	1'26"	1'21"	1'28"	1'02"

PART II				
<i>Movement</i>	13	14	15	16
<i>Strophe</i>	7 ^a	7b	8a	8b
<i>Form</i>	A	A ¹ BA ²	A ¹ A ²	A ¹ A ²
<i>Time signature</i>	3/4	4/4	3/2	4/4
<i>Tempo</i>	Molto lento, doloroso	Deciso, allegro agitato	Deciso	Andante
	$\text{♩} = 56$	$\text{♩} = 132$	$\text{♩} = 66$	$\text{♩} = 72$
<i>Forces</i>	S sl, SATB, Str	SATB, Str	SATB, Str	SATB sl, SATB, Str
<i>Tonal area</i>	D dorian	GM, F \sharp m, D \flat m	GM	Dm
<i>Length</i>	23 measures	39 measures	21 measures	32 measures
<i>Duration</i>	1'38"	2'22"	0'45"	1'40"

<i>Movement</i>	17	18	19	20
<i>Strophe</i>	9a	9b	10a	10b
<i>Form</i>	A	A ¹ A ²	A	A ¹ B ¹ A ² B ² A ³
<i>Time signature</i>	6/8	2/2	2/2	2/2
<i>Tempo</i>		Allegro molto	Deciso, marcato	Andante
	$\text{♩} = 132$	$\text{♩} = 126$	$\text{♩} = 66$	$\text{♩} = 56$
<i>Forces</i>	S Mz sl, SATB, Str	ST sl, SATB, Str	SATB, Str	Mz sl, SATB, Str
<i>Tonal area</i>	Bm	BM	GM	D dorian, FM
<i>Length</i>	10 measures	38 measures	17 measures	117 measures
<i>Duration</i>	0'45"	0'36"	0'38"	4'29"

Example 1: Flowchart of the *Stabat Mater*, op. 240.

Movements: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Exordium Narratio Propositio Confirmatio Confutatio Peroratio

3 prg 3 prg 3 prg

5 prg 5 prg 5 prg

d:i B:V I V I IV i F:vi I V I

Example 2: Parallel between the *Ursatz* and *Dispositio*.

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