

16. TRUMPET AND ORCHESTRA CONCERT IN D MAJOR BY GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN IN INTERPRETATION VISION OF WYNTON MARSALIS AND RAFAEL MÉNDEZ

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Abstract: *Like most baroque concerts, the Concerto for trumpet and orchestra in D major by Georg Philipp Telemann raises particular problems of interpretation. It is a concert written in the head register of the trumpet, with frequent references in the acute register. I should mention that the head register of a trumpet depends on its size. At a normal trumpet in and flat (and not piccolo), the acute register is from do (and flat from the first octave) to the next do ascendant. The head register continues from do² to do³. In the trumpets in do, re, mi flat, fa, sol, the principle remains the same, with a variability depending on the size of the trumpet, except that in the acute record the other notes correspond to that of the flat, but the upper limit is generally the same.*

Key words: *style and interpretive technique, trumpet, baroque music*

1. Introduction

Two giants of the trumpet are Wynton Marsalis and Rafael Méndez. Wynton Marsalis, born in 1961, is a musical jazz director within the Lincoln centre, New York. Marsalis has won his reputation for his interpretations in the jazz repertoire and not only. Wynton Marsalis has made his first appearance in 1980 with *Jazz Messengers* group, becoming the most important trumpeter of the era. Later on, he organised a septet, interpreting his parts. He launched, amongst others, *Blue Interlude* in 1991 and *Village Vanguard Box*. Rafael Méndez (1906, Mexico – 1981) was one of the greatest Mexican trumpeters who dedicated his career only to soloistic activity. Mendez has acquired his fame due to his sound, but especially the instrumental technique. He approached both the classical repertoire, the popular Mexican repertoire, and jazz.

2. Comparative Analysis between Wynton Marsalis and Rafael Méndez

In the Baroque music, only in *Brandenburgic Concert no. 2* of Johann Sebastian Bach we find a passage where there is only one reference to note A in the second octave, passage raising problems to everyone singing this concert. Theoretically, the superior limit of the supra-acute register of the trumpet is unlimited, practically however, the ones who can reach up to *B flat, do, D (A flat, B flat, do* from the second octave of the piano) are very few. The explanation consists in the fact that the diameter of the exit orifice of the diaphragm air column must be smaller and smaller, as we reach the supra-acute register, reaching to a few microns, which is very difficult to achieve.

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Of course this is also achieved with a very high pressure of the air column; the higher we get in the head register, the higher this pressure becomes. This supra-pressure is much easier to be achieved in order to obtain a vibration of the lips of a very high frequency for the generation of these head sounds, taking into account that the natural tendency to tighten the lips emerges more and more, as well as a pressure of the lips which put a break on obtaining these high notes. The balance between the air pressure, the tightening of the facial muscles as needed, the diameter of the orifice for the exiting of the air column, all lead to the limit where one can sing in the supra-acute register of the trumpet. It is also the reason for which there are few people who can sing Baroque music at the trumpet. Returning to the greatest trumpets, Wynton Marsalis and Rafael Méndez, a higher lightness in the head register of Wynton Marsalis is noticed than in Rafael Méndez, which implicitly leads to, as a general remark, to a much more successful interpretation of the *Trumpet and Orchestra Concert in D Major* by G. Ph. Telemann, in the vision of Wynton Marsalis.

The explanation for the legerity in the head register of Marsalis can be the fact that he is one of the greatest jazz trumpeters in the world, musical genre where one sings very much in the head and supra-acute register of the trumpet. In Rafael Méndez, the Latin-American influences have taken their toll, his sound being much more ample, warmer, in comparison to the quite narrow sound of Wynton Marsalis. Moreover, also as a general remark, Marsalis is much more easy in passages of instrumental technique in comparison to Rafael Méndez, and Marsalis has a higher attack finesse, regardless of the shade, while Méndez is slightly more rough, feeling the style influences of folk Mexican music.

Coming back to Telemann's concert, in the two interpretations, as general aspects, there are few objections to be made in terms of the technical-instrumental aspect. Being two peaks in the series of contemporary trumpeters, there is not a question of finding false sounds or changes of tempo in the two interpretations of this concert. The level at which the concert is sung by the two trumpeters is a hard to reach level, both proving a very good mastery of the instrumental technique. But since nothing is perfect, the personal ego of each sets its stamp on the interpretations of the two trumpeters, differentiating them.

For a good tuning, the concert must be sung with a trumpet in A, tonality *F Major* is appropriate for this part, which the two of them use, Wynton Marsalis and Rafael Méndez, who sing this concert with a trumpet in A. In the original part, written for a trumpet in *do* (tonality in *D Major*, the trumpet does not have the same brightness as in tonality *F Major* with the trumpet in A. Returning to the differences between the two interpretations, Rafael Méndez, due to the Latin-American influences, even in the measures in the beginning of the concert, makes a *crescendo* in the passages in the supra-acute register, while Wynton Marsalis prefers a constant shade of *mezzoforte*.

Eg. 1 – p. I (ms. 1-5)



Personally, I prefer the vision of Wynton Marsalis, which is harder to achieve from a technical point of view, than the one of Rafael Méndez. Singing in the head and supra-acute register is done by increasing the air pressure and reducing the diameter of the orifice for the exit of the air column, but without increasing the dynamics together with the ascending movement of the sounds. A constant shade in the head register, regardless of the height of the notes, is harder to achieve than different shades on different sounds. The constant shade of *mezzoforte* achieved by Marsalis seems more natural in this passage in the beginning of the concert, taking into account that it is a Baroque work, where shades are generally constant, without increases and decreases. As a general sonority, Rafael Méndez sing in a fuller, more sonorous shade, than Wynton Marsalis. Moreover, the trills are sung by Méndez more presently, with more nervem than Marsalis. Eg. 2 – p. I (ms. 14-17)



In the head register, in both soloists, a great rhythmic continuance, sonorous equality, is remarked. Eg. 3 – p. I (ms. 11-13)



If until now Telemann did not indicate any shade, in the second part, *Allegro*, we find the first agogic indication, *piano*. In Wynton Marsalis this *piano* is *dolce*, of a great finesse, and in Rafael Méndez it is a *piano* towards *mezzoforte*, full of lust and nerve. Eg. 4 – p. II (ms. 9-11)



The next passage raises the issue of breathing, dosing the air volume. Both have a very well-trained breathing, the moment when they breathe in this passage being indistibguishable. Eg. 5 – p. II (ms. 13-15)



Wynton Marsalis uses, in this fragment, the double breathing, a rare thing amongst the trumpeters, but especially very hard to achieve. The double breathing consists in inhaling through the nose, while, in order to not be a pause in the singing, the air in the oral cavity is used. This re-feeding must be done very rapidly, as the air volume in the oral cavity is very low. It is much harder to achieve this with the trumpet, if we take into account the fact that pushing the air from the oral cavity towards the mouthpiece is done by modifying the position of facial muscles, which can very easily lead to the emergence of wash-outs or false notes. This process is much easier to achieve in wooden instruments (flute, oboe, clarinet). This is exactly why, a fact noticed even with Wynton Marsalis, this double breathing is practised when a higher note in value is sung (but not in the head or supra-acute register) or regardless of the values of the notes, but in the medium register of the trumpet.

Double breathing is not used in the head or supra-acute register because the tightening of facial muscles is higher than in the medium register, which would generate an oscillation of the height of the sound in the case of higher values of the notes, or in the case of lower notes in value, imprecision in attack. Regardless of how well a trumpeter mastered this double breathing, the moment of usage is, however, slightly distinguishable. The notes do not have the same sonorous clarity, sudden changes of shade emerge. Returning to the interpretative analysis of the concert, in this passage, Wynton Marsalis, by using the double breathing at the end of the two half notes in *legato*, the height of the sound is lowered, almost indistinguishably. Rafael Méndez uses the simple breathing, and, in order to replenish his air volume, shortens the total value of the two half notes bound by the eighth. Eg. 6 – p. II (ms. 10-12)



Moreover, even if the two have the same special attack clarity and sonorous equality throughout a passage, the *forte* shade of Rafael Méndez is much fuller, more present, in comparison to the shade of *forte* of Wynton Marsalis which is chamber-like, much more fanned out.

Eg. 7 – p. II (ms. 41-45)



Another reason for the difference of sonority between the two is also the fact that they use trumpets of different brands. But, even if they had used the same brand of trumpets, the sonority would not have been the same. This is due to the different manner of playing the trumpet. Even if apparently the correct position of playing the trumpet is the same in the entire world, the differences of sonority emerge due to the following factors:

- density of the fibres of the facial muscles
- their stiffness
- degree of pressing on the facial muscles
- differences of diaphragm pressure of the air column
- degree of relaxation or tightening (working) of those muscles. Even if they had used the same brand of trumpet, the beginning of the last part of the concert with Rafael Méndez would have been brighter, more open, more heavy in terms of sonority. Eg. 8 – p. IV (ms. 1-4)



The difference of sonority is due to the fact that, for the same unit of time, Rafael Méndez uses a larger air volume than Wynton Marsalis. To this difference in the air volume in singing the other factors mentioned above are added. Actually, it is a generally valid aspect. It is very rare that two instrumentalists shall have an identical sound, exceptions being very rare. And even if this happens, the sonorous identity is, in terms of time, relatively short. Maturing in singing, the approach of other musical genres, as well as variety of factors of other type finally lead to the emergence of differences of sonority. And in the next passage, Wynton Marsaalis prefers a chamber sonority, even if the composer's indication is *forte*. Alternatively, Rafael Méndez plays in an open *forte*, much more present in shade. Eg. 9 – p. IV (ms. 28-33)





3. Conclusions

A general remark would be the fact that the Northern-American school (one of the best in the world) has set its stamp on the sonority, timbre and manner of interpretation of Wynton Marsalis. The soft and warm, silky sound, the imperceptible attack - are characteristics of the Northern-American school for brass instruments. Wynton Marsalis is no exception to these, all the impressions, all his concerts maintaining a warm, soft, pleasant sonority. In Rafael Méndez, the Latin-American blood takes its toll, his sonority being ample, open, filled with nerve, feeling the music influences of his culture. These particularities of each of them generate, as in this concert, differences in interpretation. Wynton Marsalis transmits a feeling of peace, balance and calm through the sonorities obtained, while Rafael Méndez gives a warrior feeling to his interpretations through his ample and open sonority.

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