

*Abstract*

Richard Wagner's musical declamation is strongly influenced by the theatrical declamation style of 1820s and 1830s Saxony, as I have shown in my doctoral thesis. This has consequences for the analysis of his music because the artistic speech of the actors – a historical acoustic phenomenon that can be reconstructed roughly – determines his singing parts in many instances. In my paper, I present a new type of musical analysis, one that enables the systematic comparison of the sound of spoken language with the composed vocal melody. Positing similarities and differences between musical and theatrical declamations requires a multipronged approach. Toward this aim, I have developed an analysis consisting of eighteen different methods. The prosody – that is, the rhythmical organization of long and short syllables – the melody, the shift of tempo, the accentuation and dynamics of the spoken German language will be among other elements considered in this analysis. As I can demonstrate, all these language parameters have informed Wagner's works to a great extent. In his case, the theatrical declamation became the germinating element of his music. To prove my thesis and to illustrate my method, I will present an analysis encompassing the entire vocal solo parts of all of Wagner's works for the stage, finished works as well as fragments. Since this type of analysis is useful in describing and evaluating not only the final product of composition, the full score, but the composition process as well, all of Wagner's sketches will be considered. Finally, I will reflect upon whether this kind of analysis could be applicable to other forms and styles of vocal music too.