

## CHAPTER 1

### MUSIC, AFFECT, AND FIRE

#### **Introduction**

During particularly dramatic musical moments performers often feel their eyes widen with intensity. At the same time members of the audience feel their skin tingle with anxiety and excitement. Personally identifying such a feeling is much easier than writing about moments that cause such visceral responses. However, the study of music requires that we describe these moments in prose. Why do critics often describe performances and pieces as “fiery”? When did such intensely affective music become commonplace?

This thesis will describe the quality of such musical fire and how the representation of fire in music began and progressed during the Baroque period. In addition to hearing beautiful sonorities, experiencing a visceral thrill is one of the basic aesthetics that makes music such an affecting art in Western culture. For the purposes of this thesis, I will define a “musical fire moment” as a musical passage in which the composer’s language elicits the quality of some fiery context. These contexts will be defined in this chapter. In music of the Baroque period, I consider fire to be an *affect* which is utilized by composers to attain moments of heightened, fire-like intensity.

There are certain musical works which have texts, characters, or titles including the actual word, “fire,” or related words, such as “burn,” “flame,” etc. Composers set such words in different ways in attempting to reflect the appropriate dramatic meaning or emotion musically. These techniques usually yield feelings of excitement, heightened intensity, and/or agitation in the listener.

Clearly, such feelings are not limited to vocal music. Purely instrumental music can and does similarly affect listeners. However, these instrumental fiery moments are not as immediately evident without the word cues of fiery moments in vocal music.

Nevertheless, one can certainly feel moments of musical “fire” in high intensity moments in pieces such as the “Summer” concerto of Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*.

The idea of fire in the Baroque period should also be considered in relation to Baroque psychology. Artists and philosophers were quite interested in the “passions of the soul.”<sup>1</sup> They were preoccupied with representing various extreme feelings, such as the ecstasy of loving and knowing God and the sorrowful depths of mourning the loss of a loved one. Just as portrait artists strove for “verisimilitude – the semblance of reality” in representing faces, so too do Baroque composers attempt to depict the passions musically as naturally and realistically as possible.<sup>2</sup>

Early representations of fire in music show that a key fire-like word was more often painted by itself rather than presented as an affect lasting for an entire section of a piece. By the late Baroque, fire is presented more affectively, in complete sections, movements, and entire arias. This chapter will first describe the musical context of the high Baroque (1700-1750), considering affect, rhetoric, and aesthetics, in addition to describing the quality and emotional affect of fire in music further. Then the concept of fire as an affect in a variety of contexts will be discussed. Finally, I will propose a framework which will serve to categorize musical examples of fiery affect in subsequent chapters.

### **Baroque Affect, Rhetoric, and Aesthetics**

In determining fire as an affect, it is important to define what the role of an affect actually entails. Affects are “rationalized emotional states or passions.”<sup>3</sup> The concept of representing a passion in music as an affect is rooted in Greek and Latin doctrines of oratory and rhetoric. Writers and orators such as Aristotle and Cicero used rhetorical devices to “control and direct the emotions of their audiences.”<sup>4</sup> In many Baroque treatises on music, such as Jochim Burmeister’s *Musica poetica* (Rostock, 1606), this

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<sup>1</sup> John Rupert Martin. *Baroque*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Martin, 91.

<sup>3</sup> George J. Buelow. “Affects, theory of the.” In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell. New York: Macmillan, 2001, 1:181.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

rhetorical concept directly applied to music, as the composer uses musical-rhetorical devices to move the listener in a manner similar to impassioned oratory.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, rhetorical concepts serve as the basis of most compositional theory and practice during the Baroque period. Baroque music endeavored to attain a “musical expression of words comparable to impassioned rhetoric.”<sup>6</sup> During the Baroque period composers sought to paint affects that expressed the texts being set to music. Sections of arias or movements of programmatic works most often expressed only one affect, which followed the inherent meaning of the text. The painting of words with musical figuration of one or more of the elements of music such as pitch level and interval, dynamics, rhythm, timbre, articulation, harmony, imitation, and repetition often produces an overriding affect, especially when the meaning of the text implies a particular passion. Word painting has been employed throughout the history of Western art music. One rhetorical term, *Hypotopsis*, is particularly applicable to the subject of fire and affect. In Burmeister’s *Musica poetica*, *Hypotopsis* is described along with many other rhetorical terms with specific relation to musical figures. The rhetorical device consists of a large group of figures which all serve “to illustrate words or poetic ideas and frequently stressing the pictorial nature of the words.”<sup>7</sup> Burmeister defines it as:

De Hypotyposi. Hypotyposis est illud ornamentum, quo textus signification ita deumbratur ut ea, quae textui subsunt et animam vitamque non habent, vita esse praedita videantur. Hoc ornamentum usitatissimum est apud authenticos artifices.	Hypotopsis. Hypotopsis is that ornament whereby the sense of the text is so depicted that those matters contained in the text that are inanimate or lifeless seem to be brought to life. This ornament is very much in evidence among truly master composers. <sup>8</sup>
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Affects such as anger, sadness, joy, and fire are all represented in music with figurations that fit into this rhetorical category.

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<sup>5</sup> George J. Buelow, Blake Wilson, and Peter A. Hoyt. “Rhetoric and music.” In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell. New York: Macmillan, 2001, 21:262.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Buelow, “Rhetoric and music.” 267.

<sup>8</sup> Joachim Burmeister. *Musical Poetics*. Translated, with Introduction and Notes, by Benito V. Rivera. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, 174-5.

Burmeister's treatise details musical-rhetorical terms, giving examples of each. Burmeister seems to have used classical oratorical authorities, such as Cicero, in defining affect in music. In his *De Inventione, Liber I* (ca. 88 B.C.), Cicero wrote:

Affectio est animi aut corporis ex tempore aliqua de causa commutatio, ut laetitia, cupiditas, metus, molestia, morbus, debilitas et alia quae in eodem genere reperiuntur

Affect is a temporary change in body or spirit due to some cause, such as joy, desire, fear, vexation, illness, weakness, and others things which are found in the same category.<sup>9</sup>

Burmeister defines musical affect as:

Affectio musica est in melodia vel in harmonia periodus clausula terminata, quae animos et corda hominum movet et afficit.

A musical affection is a period in a melody or in a harmonic piece, terminated by a cadence, which moves and stirs the hearts of men.<sup>10</sup>

When describing his list of musical ornaments (figures or parts of speech), Burmeister qualifies his work, explaining that "their variety is known to be so wide and great among composers that it is hardly possible for us to determine their number."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the beginning of the seventeenth century saw the addition of many innovations in the expression of text and affect in music, far beyond the Renaissance examples cited by Burmeister.

While many German musicologists strove to create a consistent doctrine of affect, *Affektenlehre*, recent research has shown that Baroque theorists did not establish a single overarching theory of affect.<sup>12</sup> Many theorists did attempt to classify affect in their treatises, examining the emotive connotations of musical figures, instrumentation, forms, and styles. Baroque theorists realized that the effort to base musical affect on impassioned rhetoric was a common element in the craft of most composers of the time. We cannot be sure that terminology was consistent in the various countries, but the fact that "musical-rhetorical emphases exist in their music cannot be questioned."<sup>13</sup> Regardless of nationality, most Baroque composers aimed to arouse focused emotional

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<sup>9</sup> Burmeister, xlix.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Burmeister, 157.

<sup>12</sup> Buelow, "Rhetoric and music." 267.

<sup>13</sup> Buelow, "Rhetoric and music." 263.

states, affects, in the listener. The musical representation of affect was “the aesthetic necessity of most Baroque composers.”<sup>14</sup>

This necessity is reflective of the state of philosophical thought during the time period. The concept of affect was greatly shaped by writings of seventeenth-century philosophers. René Descartes’s *Les passions de l’âme* (*The passions of the soul*, Amsterdam, 1649) is a work which may have most decisively influenced musical representation of the passions, because of Descartes’s rationalist, scientific notion of giving a physiological nature to the passions.<sup>15</sup> The idea of affect pervaded all the arts as a result of this natural philosophy of the 1600s. Descartes confirmed earlier theoretical writings, such as those of Giulio Caccini, Michael Praetorius, and Charles Butler, which all referred to the moving of the affects of the soul.<sup>16</sup> These earlier works described music’s power to arouse the passions in listeners. Descartes provided a rational, scientific explanation for the physiological nature of the passions, thereby giving philosophical reasoning for the listener’s physical response to musical sound intended to arouse an affect. Composers during the Baroque period used an intense painting of one passion to arouse that same passion in the audience. Subsequent composers continued using musical affect to express words and passions.

### **Fire as Affect**

Most studied affects deal with concrete emotions or passions, such as intense sadness (a lament affect), joy, anger, and so forth. The idea of studying and labeling fire as an affect is new, and is both more broadly defined than the above passions, and also more focused as an affect deeply connected to textual indications, i.e., the word fire and its associated terms, such as “burn,” “flame,” etc. It is more broadly defined in the sense that the fire affect encompasses a variety of emotive contexts which include a mixture of passions. To avoid confusion, all examples in this document will have a clear textual relation to fire. This will focus fire as the affect because of the explicit text relation to the intense feeling elicited. Most passionate musical affects do not rely on explicit textual clues to be interpreted. One would easily deem Dido’s lament in Henry Purcell’s *Dido*

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<sup>14</sup> Buelow, “Rhetoric and music.” 269.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

and *Aeneas* (1689) as portraying a sad affect, even without the textual inclusion of “sorrow” in the lyrics.

Why, then, is fire to be considered an affect? The answer lies in the age-old connection between fire and emotion. Particularly excited emotions have historically been compared to fiery feeling. “Heated passion,” “ardent desire,” and “burning rage,” all are single emotions without the fiery adjective. With such a descriptor, the affect becomes a fire affect, a generally intensely felt, excited or agitated passion. To see that fire can indeed be viewed as an affect during the Baroque period, we only need to look at Descartes’s work on the passions.

In Descartes’s writing on the passions of the soul, he explains five of the primitive passions (Love, Hatred, Desire, Joy, and Sadness) in terms of the excitations of the soul and the physiological cause. He connects all causes to variable actions of the heart. The heart is powered by a fire that is extinguished in death. The fire fluctuates in level (heartbeat, level of warmth, valve opening, etc.), controlled by a fine wind called animal spirits. Descartes describes this fire as essential to one’s very being:

Art. 8. Quel est le principe de toutes ces fonctions.	What the principle of all these functions is.
. . . pendent que nous vivons il y a une chaleur continuelle en notre coeur, qui est une espèce de feu que le sang des veines y entretient, et que ce feu est le principe corporel de tous les mouvements de nos membres.	. . . while we live there is a continual heat in our heart, which is a species of fire that the venous blood maintains in it, and that this fire is the bodily principle of all the movements of our members. <sup>17</sup>

Descartes states that the primitive passions are affected by the state of the heart and blood in characteristic ways. The fire in the heart helps to cause these passions through the movements and changes in the heart. For example, with Hatred, there is an accompanying “sharp and prickling heat”; with Joy a quicker pulse and pleasant warmth; with Desire “it agitates the heart more vigorously than any of the other Passions”; and with Love it excites a strong heat.<sup>18</sup> Descartes’s notion of affect was very much in the minds of composers and theorists, as performer, composer, teacher, and theorist Johann Mattheson writes in his *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739):

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<sup>17</sup> René Descartes. *The Passions of the Soul*. Translated and Annotated by Stephen Voss. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*. 72-74.

Die Lehre von den Temperamenten und Neigungen, von welchen lektern Cartesius [de passionibus animae] absonderlich deswegen zu lesen ist, weil er in der Music viel gethan hatte, leisten hier sehr gute Dienste, indem man daraus lernet, die Gemüther der Zuhörer, und die klingenden Kräfte, wie sie an jenen wiriden, wol zu unterscheiden.

The doctrine of the temperaments and emotions, concerning which especially Descartes [the passions of the soul] is to be read because he dealt with music a lot, serves very well here since it teaches one to distinguish well between the feelings of the listeners and how the forces of sound affect them.<sup>19</sup>

Mattheson confirms that affect is still the overriding compositional principle during the early eighteenth century, writing that in both vocal and instrumental works “the purpose of music is to stimulate all affections solely through tones and through their *rhythmum*.”<sup>20</sup>

Mattheson also confirms that an awareness of fire represented musically existed during his time. He examines exclamatory texts, such as:

Eröffne dich, Rache, der schmauchenden Hölle!  
Reiss mich zu deiner Glut hinein!  
Ich liefre dir meine verzweifelte Seele!

Vengeance, open yourself, to densely smoking hell! Draw me to thy fire!  
I deliver unto thee my despairing soul!<sup>21</sup>

While Mattheson seems to dislike such heated negative emotions in music, he states that such texts should be properly portrayed musically, with “confused intervals which have an unruly relationship with one another” or “a frenzied tumult, fiddling and whistling for accompaniment . . . for which a Pyrrhic meter is well suited.”<sup>22</sup> Mattheson refers to Pyrrhic meter, which is a reference to a poetic meter in which the foot consists of two unstressed syllables. In music, this refers to a war-like meter that tends to be quite quick or speed up.<sup>23</sup> Mattheson clearly refers to string tremolo and quick figuration and tempo as being key textures in expressing such a fiery affect. His mention of a standard compositional technique to express intense feeling and Descartes’s ideas of affect and fire in the heart supports the interpretation of fire represented in music as an intensifying

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<sup>19</sup> German from Johann Mattheson. *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*. Edited by Margarete Reimann. Kassel and Basel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1954, 15. English from *Der vollkommene Capellmeister A Revised Translation with Critical Commentary* by Ernest C. Harriss. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981, 104.

<sup>20</sup> Mattheson, 291.

<sup>21</sup> Mattheson, 401.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas J. Mathiesen. “Pyrrhic.” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed [18 June, 2003]), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

affect. The idea of fire as essential to the feeling of intense emotion substantiates the idea that fire itself is a powerful affect, evident in a variety of contexts.

### The Term “Fire”

What does the term “fire” encompass? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word has many meanings. To present a basic idea of the breadth of these meanings, some definitions, contexts, and etymologies are listed below:<sup>24</sup>

1. a. The natural agency or active principle operative in combustion; popularly conceived as a substance visible in the form of flame or of ruddy glow or incandescence.  
1622 MABBE tr. Aleman's Guzman d'Alf. I. 49 With a face as red as fire.  
1781 GIBBON Decl. & F. III. lxxi. 802 Fire is the most powerful agent of life and death.
- b. as one of the four ‘elements’.  
1576 BAKER Jewell of Health 170a, Mans blood...out of which draw, according to Art, the fowre Elements... But the fyre purchased of it is more precious... This fyre is named the Elixir vitæ.  
1700 DRYDEN Fables, Pythag. Philos. 517 The force of fire ascended first..Then air succeeds.
- c. with reference to hell or purgatory; sometimes in pl. Also in Alchemy, Fire of Hell = ALKAHEST.  
1667 MILTON P.L. I. 48 In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire.
- d. Volcanic heat, flame, or glowing lava; a volcanic eruption.  
1734 POPE Ess. Man IV. 124 Shall burning Ætna..Forget to thunder and recall her fires?  
...
2. a. State of ignition or combustion. In phrases: on fire (also of a fire, in (a) fire): ignited, burning; fig. inflamed with passion, anger, zeal, etc. to set (or put) on fire (also in (a) fire, on a fire): to ignite, set burning; also fig. to inflame, excite intensely. To set the Thames on fire: to make a brilliant reputation.  
1697 W. DAMPIER Voy. I. xv. 414 The Sea seemed all of a Fire about us.
- b. transf. and fig.; also in phr. near the fire. Phr. fire in the (or one's) belly: ambition, driving force, initiative.  
1611 BIBLE Jas. iii. 6 The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquitie.  
1633 P. FLETCHER Purple Isl. V. iii, So shall my flagging Muse to heav'n aspire...And warm her pineons at that heav'nly fire.

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<sup>24</sup> J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, ed. *Oxford English Dictionary, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) [Accessed 28 May, 2003]



- 1709 POPE *Ess. Crit.* 195 Some spark of your celestial fire.  
 c. fire of joy: a bonfire; = FEU DE JOIE 1.  
 c1674 CLARENDON *Relig. & Policy* (1711) I. vi. 314 Preparations...by  
 the magistrates for making fires of joy.

...

7. Lightning; a flash of lightning; a thunderbolt. More fully, levenes fire, fire of heaven. Electrical fire: the electric fluid, electricity.  
 1747 FRANKLIN *Lett. Wks.* 1840 V. 186 He imagined that the electrical fire came down the wire from the ceiling to the gun-barrel.  
 1748 *Ibid.* 215 Vapors, which have both common and electrical fire in them. 1820 SHELLEY *Ode W. Wind* ii. 14 From whose solid atmosphere  
 Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst.

...

10. a. Luminosity or glowing appearance resembling that of fire.

1591 SHAKES. 1 *Hen. VI, I. i.* 12 His sparkling Eyes, repleat with  
 wrathfull fire.

1605 *Macb. I. iv.* 51 Starres, hide your fires, Let  
 not Light see my black and deepe desires!

1735 POPE *Prol. Sat.* 5 Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand.

- b. fires of heaven, heavenly fires: (poet.) the stars; fires of St. Elmo:

1607 SHAKES. *Cor. I. iv.* 39 Or by the fires of heauen, Ile leaue the Foe.

1667 MILTON *P.L. XII.* 256 Before him burn Seaven Lamps as in a  
 Zodiac representing The Heav'nly fires.

11. Heating quality (in liquors, etc.); concr. in jocular use, 'something to warm one', ardent spirit.

1737 FIELDING *Hist. Reg. II. Wks.* 1882 X. 223 We'll go take a little fire  
 for 'tis confounded cold upon the stage.

...

13. In certain figurative applications of sense.

- a. A burning passion or feeling, esp. of love or rage.

1598 SHAKES. *Merry W. II. i.* 68 The wicked fire of lust.

1694 F. BRAGGE *Disc. Parables* xii. 408 Rage, and fury, and  
 impatience...are frequently attended with the epithet of fire.

- b. Ardour of temperament; ardent courage or zeal; fervour, enthusiasm, spirit.

1601 SHAKES. *Jul. C. I. ii.* 177, I am glad that my weake words Haue  
 strucke but thus much shew of fire from Brutus.

1709 STEELE Tatler No. 61 1 Among many Phrases which have crept into Conversation...[is] that of a Fellow of a great deal of Fire.

c. Liveliness and warmth of imagination, brightness of fancy; power of genius, vivacity; poetic inspiration.

1680-90 TEMPLE Ess. Poetry Wks. 1731 I. 237 The Poetical Fire was more raging in one, but clearer in the other.

1737 POPE Hor. Ep. II. i. 274 Corneille's noble fire.

1847 Illust. Lond. News 10 July 27/1 As an actress, she has fire and intelligence.

The common definition of fire as the “natural agency or active principle operative in combustion” is useful as a starting point, because this idea of activating or inflaming may be extrapolated to many other contexts.<sup>25</sup> Beyond language – “*feuer*,” “*le feu*,” “*fuoco*,” or “fire,” among other variations (burn, flame, rage, incensed, ignite, etc.) – fire in music can be taken in literal and often figurative contexts. Following is a table of terms associated with fire in the languages of the countries discussed in this thesis:

Table 1.1. Terms associated with fire.

<b>English</b>	<b>Latin</b>	<b>Italian</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>German</b>
Fire	ignis (lit.); fax (facis); ardor (fig.);	Fuoco (foco); incendio	feu; incendie	Feuer; Brand; Glut
Flame	flamma	fiamma	flamme	Flamme
Fiery	igneus (lit.); ardens (fig.)	ardente; infocato	de feu (passion); plein (blazing sun)	feurig
To fire	accendere	infiammare	enflammer (fig.)	brennen; feuern
To flame	scintillare	andare in fiamma; infiammarsì di rabbia (fig.)	s'enflammer; s'embraser;	flammen
To ignite	accendere; flammam concipere (fig.)	accendere	enflammer	zünden
To burn	urere; cremare; flagrare; ardere	bruciare; in fiamma (burning)	incendier; bruler; ardent (burning faith)	brennen; verbrennen
To be on fire	ardere	in fiamma	être en feu	in Brand
To set on fire	incendere	dare fuoco	incinère; incendier	anfeuern
To light up (fig.)	hilaris fieri	illuminarsi	s'éclairer; briller de joie	entzünden; aufleuchten
To inflame	inflammare; incendere (fig.)	infiammare	enflammer; exacerber; aggraver	entzünden
Ardor	ardor	ardore; fervore	ardeur	Eifer; Inbrust; Glut
Ardent	ardens	ardente	passioné; fervent	feurig; eifrig

<sup>25</sup> Simpson, 942.

<b>English</b>	<b>Latin</b>	<b>Italian</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>German</b>
To excite	excitare; incendere (fig.)	eccitare; agitare	exciter; enthousiasmer; animé (excited)	erregen; aufregen
To agitate	agitare; perturbare	agitare; turbare	faire compagne	agitieren; beunruhigen
Agitated	tumultuos; turbulentus (fig.)	agitazione	agité; inquiet	agitorisch (inflammatory)
Heat	calor; ardor; fervor; aestus	calore; intenso (fierce); (fig.) - fuoco; ardore	chaleur; feu; animé (heated)	Hitze; Wärme; Heizung (heating); Brunst (sexual); Eifer (battle); brunsten (to be in heat)
Hot	calidus; fervens; aestuos; acer; ardens	caldo; fig. - accanito; ardente; violento; focoso	chaud; fiévreux (fever)	heiss; stechen (sun);
Lightning	fulgur; fulmen (destructive effects)	lampo, fulmine	éclairs; fulgurant	Blitz
Thunder	tonitrus	tuono; fulmine (thunderbolt)	tonnerre; foudre (thunderbolt);	Donner; Gewitter (thunderstorm)
To thunder	tonare	tuonare	tonner	donnern
Rage	furor	collera; furia	rage; colère	Wut
To rage	furere; saevire	infuriare (storm)	faire rage; tempêter	wüten; toben; in Wut geraten; wütend machen (to enrage)
To incense (to anger)	incendere	infuriare	outré (incensed)	erzürnen; aufhetzend (incendiary)
Mad	furios	matto; pazzo; furioso	fou/folle; furieux	verrückt; böse
Anger	ira	rabbia	colère	Zorn
To anger	irritare	arrabbiare	en colère	erzürnen
Angry	iratus	arrabiato; furioso; infiammato	furieux; de colère	zornig; böse; entzündet
Hatred	odium	odio	haine; aversion	Hass
To hate	odisse	odiare; detestare	détester; haïr	hassen
Rapture	exsultatio	esaltato	ravissement	Entzückung
To enrapture	rapere	rapire	s'extasier	hinreißen
Ecstasy	ecstasis; elatio	estasi	extase	Verzückung
Fervor	fervor	fervore	ferveur	Inbrust
Fervent	ardens	fervido	fervent	inbrüstig
Proud (roots related)	Superbus	Fiero	Fièrément	stolz
Love	amor	amore	amour; le coup de foudre (love at first sight)	Liebe
To fall in love with	amorem incendere	essere innamorato	être tomber amoureux	sich heftig verlieben in
Heart (fig.)	Animus	cuore (core)	coeur	Herz; Mut fassen (take heart)

From the various sources consulted, these applicable contexts will be grouped into the six basic qualitative categories which follow.

## **Literal Fire - The Four Elements**

Aside from the definition above, fire literally constitutes one of the four elements, along with earth, water, and air.<sup>26</sup> During the Baroque period, the successful imitation of nature was one of the highest artistic aims. With their origins in Greek philosophy and science, the four elements serve as aspects of nature from classical antiquity that have often been represented artistically. The ancient Greeks viewed fire as the single primal element which made up the whole of matter. Fire to them was both rational and divine, “with no distinction between its spiritual and material aspects.”<sup>27</sup> Aristotelian physics held that fire was hot and dry, air, hot and moist, water, cold and moist, and earth, cold and dry. By the Baroque period, the four elements still functioned as basic divisions of matter. Descartes refers to the four elements as basic to nature, and to a species of fire as essential to the life of the human heart.<sup>28</sup> While fire began to be considered a process by which elements and materials transform in science and alchemy, many seventeenth-century scientists and philosophers still perceived fire as the basic natural element.

In nature, fire is a physical phenomenon associated with the burning sun, heat, volcanoes, lightning, and other intense lights.<sup>29</sup> Common synonyms in this context include “combustion,” “flame,” “incandescence,” “ignition,” “conflagration,” and “radiance.”<sup>30</sup> Texts of pieces musically depicting this type of fire include the corresponding language’s word or related word for “fire.” The power of fire to destroy, to provide light, to burn, and to flame provided composers with ample imagery to paint in music.

## **Fire as Rage**

As already mentioned, fire is also associated with many emotive qualities. Most people can easily relate to feelings of intense, burning anger, and this aspect of fire is also reflected in many pieces of music. Descartes describes Anger as a type of Hatred that is often mixed with Desire to avenge, and with Love for oneself, yielding a vengeful rage.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Robert B. Todd. “Stoicism.” In *The History of Science and Religion in the Western Tradition: An Encyclopedia*. Edited by Gary B. Ferngren. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2000, 132.

<sup>28</sup> Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Hans Kurath, ed. *Middle English Dictionary*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1952, 579-581.

<sup>30</sup> Addison Wesley Longman, ed. *Longman Synonym Dictionary*. New York: Rodale Press, 1979, 411.

Rage creates an agitation which enters the heart and “excites a heat more sharp and burning than that which can be excited there by Love or by Joy.”<sup>31</sup> Baroque rage arias often contain this type of musical fire, where the heat of vehemence, hate, wrath, jealousy, or vengeance is clearly evident in the music.<sup>32</sup> Very often, the texts of such pieces, when in Italian, contain the word *vendetta*, which indicates vengeful action. Composers during the Baroque period frequently use sweeping motivic gestures and driving pulses to set up such agitated feelings.

### **Fire as Love**

Love is sometimes associated with sweet melodies in music, but the type of fiery love applicable to this topic is a passionate, burning emotion. In fact, the Latin idiomatic expression for “to fall in love” is *amorem incendere*, which literally translates as “to burn with love.” The type of love varies, depending on the context. It may be a lusty, desirous love, which “agitates the heart more vigorously than all the other Passions” according to Descartes.<sup>33</sup> It may be a deep ardent love, exciting a strong heat in the heart agitating the brain.<sup>34</sup> In song, it is sometimes the god Cupid who fires an arrow to incite characters to feel such ardent love. In other texts, the feeling is simply an intense passionate feeling (e.g., the Italian *amore*) between lovers. Other phrases which are roughly equivalent to this feeling of fiery love in this context include “burning passion,” and “full of ardour.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Spiritual Fire**

Possibly one of the most powerful of fires is the spiritual kind, in which people are changed by the power of God. Christianity heavily influenced the musical culture of the Baroque period. Many composers made their livelihood by working as church musicians in various capacities. Consequently, powerful spiritual transformations such as those performed by the grace of the Holy Spirit were often depicted musically.

According to Christian doctrine, the liturgical color of Pentecost is red, the color of the Holy Spirit. This is because Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Holy

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<sup>31</sup> Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*. 126.

<sup>32</sup> Kurath, 582.

<sup>33</sup> Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*. 73.

<sup>34</sup> Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*. 74.

<sup>35</sup> Longman, 411.

Spirit in the form of tongues of red fire over the heads of the Apostles gathered together in a space safe from hostile street crowds.<sup>36</sup> After being infused and inflamed by those flaming tongues, the Apostles left their refuge and boldly preached the risen Christ to any people they would encounter.<sup>37</sup> The inspired, aroused, and exalted state that the apostles exhibited showed such a great external lack of contact with reality that they were judged to be in a drunken, otherworldly condition.<sup>38</sup> Fervent religious attitudes are often associated with this type of passionate fire. Fiery religious devotion can create an ardent desire to convert others as the Holy Spirit has transformed the minds and hearts of believers in Christianity.

Divine love can cause spiritual fire through influence and inspiration, especially in the case of the arts. St. Cecilia, patron saint of music, has been the object of many artistic works, often inspiring artistic creativity as an intermediary with fiery influence. The complex Greek mythological character, Orpheus, has also been an inspiration for the arts. The subject of at least three pioneering operas at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Orpheus is the voice of Music, and “presides over the transformations and interaction of poetry and science in the period 1600-1800.”<sup>39</sup> Orpheus as a myth metamorphosed through the centuries into a figure with Christian and pagan implications. As a singer who moved animate and inanimate creatures with his music, Clement of Alexandria interpreted Orpheus to be a character who aides in the understanding of Christ and His power.<sup>40</sup>

During the Renaissance, the Orpheus myth took on a fiery affect which influenced subsequent artistic works. The writer Marcilio Ficino compares the power of the sun to the power of God, and thereby burns divine inspiration into the eyes of Orpheus:

The singer (or artist) performs in an inspired state ‘aroused by the Muses’ frenzy.’  
‘Then his eyes burn, and he rises up on both feet and he knows how to sing tunes that he has never learnt...’ It is this state of God-given frenzy, this *furor divinus*, that enables the mind to perceive and understand the symbolic structure of the universe. It is *divinus* because it comes from God and raises to God. The artist under the influence of this madness is free to range beyond his normal limits, he is lifted

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<sup>36</sup> G. Paul Parr, ed. *St. John the Baptist Book for Catholic Worship*. Reading, PA: St. John’s Press, 1974, 260-261.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> John Warden, ed. *Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Warden, 51.

to the height of heaven like Ganymede on the back of the divine eagle. The state of inspiration is visible in the rapt expression on the face and the 'Orphic' pose.<sup>41</sup>

Orpheus is said to possess the four phases of *furor*: the poetic, which calms the agitation of the soul, the sacerdotal, which prepares the soul for exaltation, the prophetic, which raises the soul to the level of the angels, and the erotic, which unites the soul with God.<sup>42</sup>

The Holy Spirit, Orpheus, and St. Cecilia are exemplars of the type of spiritual love which can burn, change us like a fire, or inspire us to create. During the Baroque period, the power of Christianity mixed with the spiritual overtones of well-known myths provided a source of deeply affective concepts for artistic expression.

### **Fire of Hell**

These last two emotive categories are combinations of the above fire qualities. Fiery rage combined with religious fire leads us to the fiery pits of Hell, where sinners are punished eternally for their evil actions.<sup>43</sup> Artists were certainly aware of the Biblical implications of Hell. Texts which reference this fiery place often contain the word "Hell." The fires of Hell are depicted as extremely intense, as are musical settings of such ideas.

### **Fiery Love for God**

The final category of fire used here is a combination of the ardent passionate love for God by the religiously fervent. Deep, burning love for God, showing ardent devotion and Christian ideals, is characterized as having the capacity to purify one's soul.<sup>44</sup> In a book on the Catholic liturgy, William Zumbar further describes this fire: "The Holy Spirit helps to move our hearts to feel the love of Christ and to realize that this fire is communicated not only from the Holy Spirit to the person, but also between the person and his neighbors."<sup>45</sup> Many liturgical texts, especially the *Stabat Mater*, include words such as *inflammatus*, *accensus*, and *ardeat* that have often been interpreted as this type of fire and set to music in an appropriately corresponding manner. In Baroque terms,

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<sup>41</sup> Warden, 98.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Simpson, 942.

<sup>44</sup> Kurath, 582.

<sup>45</sup> Parr, 260-261.

understanding the greatness and glory of God led to spiritual ecstasy, such as when St. Theresa described herself as “all on fire with a great love of God” after an angel thrust a golden spear into her heart.<sup>46</sup> The fire-like ecstasy of comprehending the glory of God is very often represented by a profound intensity in music.

### **A Framework for the Fire Affect**

From the time of Plato, music has impelled the human heart to momentary emotional states and to permanent shaping of character. The power of music to express passion became known as a device of musical affect during the Baroque period. The connection between passion and bodily causation led composers to attempt to elicit emotional and bodily response through music in a single, focused affect.

The philosophical writings of the Baroque point to fire as a key concept in the causation of such affect. The heat and agitation caused by the excitation of fire changes the quality of the passion felt. Fire is an affect on its own in pure form, or as an intensifier of a passion or mixture of passions. Composers and musical theorists of the Baroque period were well aware of Descartes’s writings, as well as the idea of using music to depict an affect vividly in a manner similar to an impassioned rhetorical delivery.

The French composer and theorist Jean-Philippe Rameau affirms this idea of music and affect stirring the audience in his *Observations sur notre instinct pour la musique, et sur son principe* (1754):

Pour jouir pleinement des effets de la Musique,  
il faut être dans un pur abandon de soi-même,  
& pour en juger, c’est au Principe par lequel  
on est affecté qu’il faut s’en rapporter.  
Ce principe est la Nature même,  
c’est d’elle que nous tenons ce sentiment qui  
nous meut dans toutes nos Opérations musicales,  
elle nous en a fait un don qu’on peut appeller  
*Instinct*.

The full enjoyment of the effects of music  
calls for a sheer abandonment of oneself,  
and the judgment of it calls for a reference  
to the principle by which one is affected.  
That principle is Nature itself;  
it is through Nature that we possess that  
feeling which stirs us in all our musical  
instinct.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Martin, 103.

<sup>47</sup> French from Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Observations sur notre instinct pour la musique, et sur son principe*. From Facsimile of 1754 Paris edition. New York: Broude Brothers, 1967, aij.  
English from Edward A. Lippman, *The Philosophy and Aesthetics of Music*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999, 111.



### **A Transitional Example**

Before delving into Baroque examples of fire and affect, it is important to note that Renaissance composers were already concerned with expressing ideas of fire in their compositions.

#### **Thomas Morley (1557/8-1602) “Fyer, Fyer!” (1595)**

This musical example from the Renaissance period serves as a bridge to the Baroque. The text is fairly explicit in describing burning love and desire, including cries for help (“Ay me”). Morley uses polyphonic imitative technique to achieve a sense of this burning desire. One voice consistently enters just a bit earlier than the rest to drive the madrigal forward. The “my heart” entrances are also staggered and the placement paints an anxiously beating heart. Instead of using typical polyphonic technique with voices entering at even rhythmic intervals, Morley chooses to offset just one voice for the “fyer” entrances, and then offset more of the voices, but in quick succession for the beating heart entrances. The unpredictability of these imitative entrances and their close proximity to each successive entrance give this piece its fiery quality of love desperate for fulfillment.

Composers during the Baroque continued to paint words in manners similar to Renaissance style and in more innovative ways. The framework of categories of fiery affect described above will serve as an aesthetic framework for the following chapters. It is important to qualify carefully what constitutes an idea that has not been defined previously, especially when that idea has such affective/emotive qualities. The idea of music and affect combining into a concept of intense, exciting musical fire has been presented in this chapter. The following chapter will focus on the musical, cultural, and social background of the Baroque period leading up to 1700. It will begin by examining some musical examples, both literal (when the text contains “fire” or related words) and figurative (implied fire). Use of the framework to establish clear cases of the fire affect leading up to the early eighteenth century will commence with this chapter.

# 17 FYER, FYER!

THOMAS MORLEY

**Forcefully**

[S.] CANTUS  
1. Fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy -  
2. O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me!

[S.] QUINTUS  
1. Fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy -  
2. O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me!

[T.] ALTUS  
1. Fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy -  
2. O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me!

[T.] TENOR  
1. Fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy -  
2. O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me!

[B.] BASSVS  
1. Fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy -  
2. O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me!

fy - er! my heart! (my heart!) my heart!  
burn me! a - las! a - las! a - las!

- er! my heart! (my heart!) my heart!  
me! a - las! a - las! a - las!

- er! my heart! (my heart!) my heart! Fa la la la  
me! a - las! a - las! a - las!

- er! my heart! (my heart!) my heart! Fa la la la  
me! a - las! a - las! a - las!

- er! my heart! (my heart!) my heart!  
me! a - las! a - las! a - las! Fa la la

8 *p* Fa la la la la la la la la la, fa la la la la la. *ff* Fy-er, fy -  
O, I burn

*p* Fa la la la la la la la la la, fa la la la la la. *ff* Fy-er, fy -  
O, I burn

la, fa la la la la la la, fa la la la la la.

la la la la la, fa la la la la la la, fa la la la la la.

la la la la la la la la la la la la, fa la la la la la.

10 *mf* - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) my  
me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me! a -

*mf* - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) my  
me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me! a -

*ff* Fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy - er! my heart!  
O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me! a - las!

*ff* Fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy - er! my heart! (my  
O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me! a - las! a -

*ff* Fy-er, fy - er! (fy-er, fy - er!) fy-er, fy - er! my heart!  
O, I burn me! O, I burn me! O, I burn me! a - las!

Example 1.1. Morley "Fyer, Fyer!" 1595.

Source: *Oxford Book of English Madrigals*. Ed. by Phillip Ledger. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.