
MUSICAL-RHETORICAL PROSOPOPOEIA AND THE ANIMATION OF THE DEAD IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY GERMAN FUNERAL MUSIC*

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Funeral music accounts for more than half of the occasional music written in Germany in the seventeenth century (Weinhold 1972: 172), yet as a genre it has received critical attention from very few scholars. Commenting upon this relatively unexplored body of music, Günter Graulich, Paul Horn and Klaus Hofmann state in the preface to Graulich's edition of Heinrich Schütz's *Musikalische Exequien* that "an investigation of the genre itself and its musico-rhetorical content would certainly uncover much of interest" (Graulich 1973: xxiv). Indeed, Protestant funeral music of the seventeenth century embodies a rhetoric as eloquent as it is diverse. The present essay is a survey of a single rhetorical trope known as *prosopopoeia* (προσωποποιία), which may be defined briefly as an oratorical device whereby abstractions or inanimate objects are invested with human qualities or abilities (Corbett 1971: 485) — in short, personification. Rhetorical personification of the dead was frequently employed in Baroque funeral oratory of the Lutheran Church and, as will be shown here, was likewise used extensively and to good effect by German composers of Baroque funeral music.

Personification was already recognized as an effective oratorical trope during rhetoric's formative years in ancient Greece and Rome, and in judging from Baroque rhetoric manuals, it had lost none of its persuasive force by the seventeenth century. In the *Triumphus Bibliorum Sacrorum* of 1625, Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638), rhetorician, composer and champion of Calvinism, observes that *prosopopoeia*, "in serious matters, for instance in admonitions

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