

# MUSICAL NARRATIVE, THEORY AND ANALYSIS

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University of Arts in Belgrade  
Faculty of Music  
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# MUSICAL NARRATIVE, THEORY AND ANALYSIS

Faculty of Music  
Department of Music Theory

**MUSICAL NARRATIVE, THEORY AND ANALYSIS**

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# Musical Narrative, Theory and Analysis

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Joan Grimalt is an orchestra conductor (Vienna University), linguist (Barcelona University), and holds a PhD in musicology (UAB) with a thesis on Gustav Mahler, supervised by Raymond Monelle. After a decade devoted exclusively to interpretation, mainly conducting opera in Central Europe, since returning to Catalonia Joan has combined practical musicianship with teaching and research at the *Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya*. His former involvement as a conductor with the Vienna Volksoper (1995–1997) stands out. As a pianist, his focus has been on German art song. Joan's main field of research is musical signification, especially those areas at the intersection with language and literature: rhetoric, prosody, and dramaturgy. In recent years, he has also been involved in research projects on performance studies, where his experiences as a performer and teacher converge in a hermeneutic, performer-oriented analysis. Grimalt is a member of the international research group on musical signification led by Eero Tarasti. He has presented and published most of his research at the regular international conferences of this group. In his latest edited book, *Mapping Musical Signification* (Springer, 2020), Joan has gathered his colleagues' and his own research on musical meaning in a systematic textbook. He is currently preparing a continuation of that volume, *Analysing Musical Signification*, focused on case studies and a theory of musical discourse and dramaturgy.

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Michael Klein serves as Professor of Music Studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, where he is also former Chair of the Department of Music Studies. Klein's publications include two books: *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, and *Music and the Crises of the Modern Subject*, both with Indiana University Press. With Nicholas Reyland, he was the co-editor of the collection *Music and Narrative since 1900*, also with Indiana University Press. He has published on a wide variety of topics, including temporality in the music of Debussy in the journal *19th-Century Music*, affect theory in the collection *Music Analysis and the Body*, literature and music in the collection *The Edinburgh Companion to Literature and Music*, and the music of Chopin in several journals, the music of Liszt in the *Journal of the American Liszt Society*, and the music of Lutosławski in several edited collections. He is best known for his work on musical narrative, having won a publication award from the Society for Music Theory for his article "Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative" in the journal *Music Theory Spectrum*. His current work centers on theories of the soundtrack, and he is working on a book about the three cinematic adaptations of Somerset Maugham's *The Painted Veil*. He has served on the editorial board of

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Konstantin Zenkin, PhD, Doctor of Science (Habil.), is a Professor of the Tchaikovsky Moscow Conservatory and Vice Rector for research. Author of the books: *Chopin's Piano Miniature* (1995), *Piano Miniature and Ways of Musical Romanticism* (1997; 2nd ed. 2019), *Music – Eidos – Time. A.F. Losev and scope of contemporary discipline of music* (2015, in English transl. 2018), and numerous articles. He has given lectures as invited professor at the universities of Philadelphia, Hong Kong, Leuven, Belgrade etc. He has served as editor-in-chief of the musicological journals *Nauchny Vestnik Moskovskoy Konservatorii* (since 2010) and *Music of Eurasia. Traditions and the Present* (since 2020). His main research interest encompass history of European music (Romanticism, Modernism, Avant-garde and Postmodernism), music philosophy (especially Russian Orthodox Christian music philosophy and aesthetics: Pavel Florensky, Alexey Losev) and piano performing art, especially the pianist Maria Yudina.

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## FOREWORD

Srđan Teparić

**Musical Narrative, Theory and Analysis**

This collective monograph on *Musical Narrative, Theory and Analysis* explores the pivotal role of narrative structures in shaping musical meaning and interpretation. The authors of chapters assert that music transcends mere structural arrangement, functioning instead as a dynamic, temporal process that engages with rhetoric, subjectivity, ideology, and specific literary models. The contributors here collectively redefine the field, establishing a unified methodological framework that stretches from the foundational dramaturgical units of the Classical style to the anti-narrative strategies of 21st-century composition. The chapters are organized into three dynamic sections that trace the evolution of the field from foundational rhetorical hypotheses to advanced morphological and phenomenological synthesis.

The concept of musical narrativity has transcended its initial role as a mere interpretive metaphor, becoming a central, indispensable category in contemporary music theory and analysis. By focusing on agency, temporality, and transformation, narrativity offers a profound pathway to understanding how musical structures generate meaning, evoke emotional responses, and engage the listener's subjective world.

The approach developed in this collective monograph is thus founded on the recognition that musical narrative is not an isolated interpretive metaphor, but a deep-seated mechanism tied to how we understand the world. As aptly formulated by Arnie Cox:

In addition to the pictorial, linguistic, and organic metaphors, we also rely upon conceptualizations of music-as-object, music-as-system (music with functional components), music-as-agent (animate or inanimate), music-as-narrative, and so forth. In each case, however, there are more fundamental and generic processes on which these depend, particularly mimetic participation and its affective consequences, and the relationship between these and the conceptual metaphor states are locations and its more specific forms, greater is higher and change is motion (Cox 2016, 76).

From this cognitive understanding, the challenge then shifts to defining the structural and stylistic limits of narrativity. The volume's comprehensive scope, spanning from Classical dramaturgy to anti-narrative strategies in contemporary music, is best framed by Eero Tarasti's definition of the narrative function, which acknowledges both the structural necessity (tonal hierarchy) and the cultural dimensions (postmodernism) of musical meaning:

Musical narrativity also presupposes both a tonal hierarchy made temporal and an actorial engagement. The antinarrativity of Minimalism coincides with a postmodern aesthetic which has also rejected narrativity... Nevertheless, even Pärt's music projects a minimum of narrativity... On the other hand, the narrative illusion is kept alive by musical signs, symbols, indexes, and icons, all of which refer to a universe of human meanings: the minor key, bells, the sound of a string ensemble with all its associations, the

figurative quality of music as a descending movement, canonic techniques, and so on (Tarasti 1994, 285).

Having established the wide stylistic applicability of narrative, this book aims to identify the fundamental analytical mechanisms by which meaning is articulated. The methodological approaches consolidated here find their historical grounding in the inherent parallels between musical organization and linguistic discourse. Indeed, music theory's reliance on rhetorical and linguistic concepts is foundational to understanding the work's communicative power:

In many cases, these properties parallel those of spoken language. Indeed, similar ways of constructing music and language have led to similar ways of describing them; we frequently analyze music in terms of phrases, statements, questions, answers, and – on a higher level – expositions and narratives, for example. When connections between successive events become tenuous, music may lose some of its discursive impact. Thus non-discursive music hypostatizes silence... inasmuch as music can continue to sound even when its discursive strength or rhetorical unfolding falters (Pearsall 2006, 44).

The linguistic and rhetorical foundations discussed above provide the necessary context for the trajectories explored in this volume. However, to understand its specific contribution, the work must be positioned within the broader historical evolution of the field. Building on Millard's (2018) survey of musical narratology's three waves – moving from archetypal adaptations (first wave), through critiques of causality (second wave), to post-tonal expansions (third wave) – this monograph advances what may be termed a fourth wave. This emerging phase is characterized by a synthesis of global methodological autonomy and phenomenological enactment, where narrative is no longer a contested metaphor but a robust, lived analytical methodology. The following chapters operationalize this shift, moving from the redefinition of dramaturgical units and the resolution of subjectivity debates to the application of narrative agency within hybrid and modernist repertoires.

The linguistic and rhetorical foundations above propel the first major trajectory explored in this volume: the structural application of rhetorical principles. The collection *Musical Narrative, Theory and Analysis* synthesizes the most potent and contrasting approaches within this burgeoning field, transcending structural reductionism to embrace music as a dynamic, temporal process that reflects deep philosophical and cultural tensions. The following sections provide a critical overview of these key theoretical trajectories, tracing the discipline's evolution from rhetorical foundations to its most radical phenomenological and ideological critiques.

### **I) Foundation: Musical Dramaturgy, Subjectification, and Structuralism (Joan Grimalt)**

This collective monograph, dedicated to contemporary approaches in musical analysis and interpretation, places a special emphasis on Joan Grimalt's work on musical narrativity, which offers a paradigmatic shift in understanding instrumental music from the Classical and Romantic eras. Grimalt's paper, "Musical Dramaturgy as Part of Musical Rhetoric", argues that understanding the musical flow necessitates adopting the concept



of *musical dramaturgy*, a term better suited than mere narration to describe the nature of instrumental discourse. *Musical dramaturgy* views the work as a significant temporal sequence with a plot and an arc of dramatic tension, thus returning music to the context of rhetoric, but with a new emphasis on the performative and listening dimensions. The central category introduced and developed in the paper is *subjectification*. It describes the historical process in which a *musical subject* emerges within music – a virtual agent that interrupts and comments upon the pre-defined, institutional, or collective musical material. This tension between the *system* (collective, predetermined) and the *subject* (personal, spontaneous) is interpreted as an artistic reflection of the broader philosophical transformation underpinning European modernity. Through the analysis of examples from the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, Grimalt defines a minimal dramaturgical unit called the *dramateme*, and highlights the archetype of the *subjective reaction*. This *dramateme* is recognized in musical sequences where an institutional *forte* gesture (e.g., the *ominous unison*) elicits a personal, plaintive *piano* response. By introducing these dramaturgical tools, Grimalt's study not only enriches the repertoire of analytical methods but also paves the way for a more hermeneutically flexible and expressive interpretation of instrumental music.

## II) The Subjective Turn: Narrative, Ideology, and Self-Reflection (Michael L. Klein)

While Joan Grimalt's work established a framework for musical dramaturgy by defining the rhetorical mechanisms and structural units, Michael L. Klein's essay offers a necessary and challenging counterpoint, moving the discussion of musical narrative beyond formal methodology and towards radical subjectivity and ideology. Klein's chapter, "Toward a Non-Methodology for Walking in the Musical-Narrative Woods", argues that music is inherently narrative because, drawing on Greimas and Jameson, narrativity is the "organizing principle of all discourse" and a core function of the human mind. However, Klein rejects the structuralist impulse to produce unassailable interpretations, insisting on a dialogue with hermeneutics, history, and psychoanalysis (Althusser, Lacan). He consciously proposes a "non-methodology": narrative metaphors (such as agency, plot, and narrator) serve only as a "ladder" to enter the interpretation, which must then be discarded.

The core distinction lies in the role of the listener. Klein moves away from the structuralist "model reader" (Eco), stressing that interpretation is always subjective, pluralistic, and historical. His key theoretical contribution is connecting musical narrative to Althusser's concept of *interpellation*: the notion that music does not just represent a subject, but actively constructs the listener's subjectivity ("the music reads us"). The act of hearing music narratively provides a temporary "stitching" of the inherently fragmented subject (Lacan), giving a fleeting illusion of a coherent self. Klein illustrates this approach by focusing on moments where music signals the presence of a *musical narrator* (often through a reduction of forces, as in Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantaisie* or Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3) or manipulates *temporality* (using lingering or a non-linear flow, as in Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand). This is used to interpret music in terms of trauma, nostalgia, and the crushing weight of history, particularly evident in the "out-of-jointness" of time that refuses the unidirectional arrow of historical progress. Ultimately, Klein

concludes that the study of musical narrative is not an academic exercise but a crucial means of self-understanding.

### III) Refiguring the Plot: Structure, Paratext, and Specificity (Michael Allis)

While preceding studies explored universal dramaturgical mechanisms (Grimalt's focus on structure/rhetoric) or the philosophical implications of music on listener subjectivity (Klein's focus on ideology/trauma), Michael Allis's work offers a third, crucial trajectory: a detailed demonstration of music's capacity to effectively refigure a specific literary narrative (plot). Allis's study focuses on the overture *The Pierrot of the Minute* (1908) by the British composer Granville Bantock, who is selected as a case study primarily due to his rejection of conventional forms in favour of creating a "correspondingly new form for every new subject" (parallel to R. Strauss). In contrast to Klein's "non-methodology", which stresses interpretive plurality, Allis utilizes paratexts (title, programme notes, and composer's correspondence) as a map for a narrative walk, proving that Bantock intended a much more precise refiguring of Ernest Dowson's verse drama than a mere creation of "atmosphere". Detailed musical analysis reveals how Bantock manipulated structure and tonality to directly engage with the narrative "trope" (Snodgrass) central to Dowson's text: the contrast between the "timebound world" of Pierrot's chaos and the "timeless world" of the Moon Maiden. The overture's musical form (a modified ternary structure) directly reflects this theme:

1. The *unstable Scherzo* represents Pierrot and the "chaotic clamor" of his world (tonal and rhythmic instability).
2. A *transitional portal* maps specific dramatic points – inebriation (the drunken waltz) and the descent into sleep.
3. The central *Molto lento cantabile* is the stable core depicting the Moon Maiden and the "arrival of love".
4. The *return* features the fragmented scherzo and the final hollow perfect fifth in the flutes, underscoring the futility of the quest and the return to mundane reality.

Allis's work effectively demonstrates that music, when supported by programmatic paratexts, not only establishes dramaturgical mechanisms (Grimalt) or affects subjectivity (Klein), but also possesses a powerful capacity for simultaneous narrative representation, wherein musical events parallel and interpret a specific, detailed plot. Collectively, these three essays define the modern landscape of musical narrative, stretching from rhetorical structure and philosophical critique to detailed programmatic representation.

### IV) Continuity and Autonomy: Serbian Theoretical Thought in Global Frameworks (Srđan Teparić and Tijana Ilišević)

The works of Serbian theorists, unified within the study "Contemporary Serbian Theoretical Thought through Narrative Walks" by Srđan Teparić and Tijana Ilišević, build upon the national tradition (the legacy of Dejan Despić and his crucial distinction between *tonalnost* and *tonalitet*), but they are positioned as autonomous and original contributions to international theoretical thought. The authors whose individual contributions comprise this collective survey are Atila Sabo, Srđan Teparić, and Tijana Ilišević.

Atila Sabo's research into the "intermediate space" between the tonal and atonal domains offers a narrative-semiotic framework for music that eludes binary classifications. Sabo's *polyspatiality* is an original model for articulating meaning in hybrid domains often neglected in earlier analytical discourses. By developing a hierarchical framework (*zero, intermediate, and high levels*), Srđan Teparić redefines the relationship between language and style in the music of the first half of the 20th century. He establishes a universal formula for Modernism through a "dual dualism" of adopting and negating the past, providing the theory of meaning with a robust analytical methodology that transcends the "naive semantic concepts" of subjective interpretation. Tijana Ilišević's approach to sound mass music, in which sound masses are treated as active agents (*actants*) that create deep linearity and plot, counteracts the global tendency to view this music as static and non-teleological. Ilišević thus unlocks the narrative potentials of a repertoire traditionally reserved for purely spatial analysis. These conceptions are multiply connected to the preceding works:

1. Sabo's and Teparić's opposition of tonal/atonal and historical/modern directly correlates with Grimalt's finding of meaning through structural antagonism (*system vs. subject*), but applied to the dissolution of traditional tonality.
2. Ilišević's focus on agency (sound masses as agents) and Klein's exploration of complex temporality share a focus on how figures within the music influence the flow of time and create a narrative feeling.
3. All three Serbian models, being dedicated to analytical precision and mapping structural characteristics onto narrative functions, reflect Allis's insistence on detailed refiguring as an analytical goal.

This introductory chapter alone presents a dynamic cross-section of musical narrative theories, providing the reader with tools for transition from rhetorical consciousness (Grimalt) to critical subjectivity (Klein) and the concrete analysis of narrative refiguring (Allis and the Serbian theorists), paving the way for future research into musical meaning.

## **Narrative Roads – Morphological and Phenomenological Synthesis**

### **I) Morphological Foundation and Structural Coding**

The monograph establishes morphology – the study of musical structure and sound material – as the fundamental starting point for narrative generation. Martin Lawrence Vishnick's chapter, "A Morphological Approach for Creating Musical Narratology in Contemporary Pedagogy", sets the theoretical ground by advocating for spectromorphological principles in music education. His focus on cultivating audiation (internal comprehension) by treating sound structures (pitch, noise, attack, decay) as a continuum establishes the material basis for narrative. This structural focus is directly paralleled by Matthew Arndt's chapter, "The Fivefold Coding of *Indiana Jones and the Abbey of Thelema*", which provides a comprehensive semiological framework. Arndt's five codes of music (*texture, memes, structure, semes, disclosure*) essentially function as structural-narrative tools, demonstrating how abstract musical organization can be mapped onto the root tropes of human inqui-

ry. Like Arndt's coding of contemporary sound, Daniel Serrano's contribution, "Baroque Features in Salvatore Sciarrino's Style Using the Example of *Il canto s'attrista, perché?*", investigates structural roots, showing that Sciarrino uses historic morphological figures (e.g., *suspiratio*, *exclamatio*) as rhetorical devices to shape the sound contour and heighten dramatic impact, confirming that the phenomenological effect is intrinsically tied to rhetorical structure.

## II) Historical Coherence and Intersemiotic Transposition

Moving from abstract structure to its narrative execution across time and media, Konstantin Zenkin's chapter, "On the Types of Musical Narrative in Opera", offers the necessary historical backdrop. Zenkin traces the evolution from the Baroque "mosaic of affects" to the unified, goal-oriented structure of Romantic music, arguing that narrative coherence emerges when morphology achieves formal independence.

## III) The Phenomenological Act: Subjectivity and Performance

The final group of chapters focuses on how the narrative is ultimately completed through the active subject (performer and receiver), highlighting the phenomenological element. Shifting from the collective subject to the individual interpreter, Caio Cezar Braga Bressan and William Teixeira's chapter, "Three Walks in the Musical Narrative Woods", uses Ricoeur's *threefold mimesis* to establish a critical hermeneutic framework. They argue that narrative is contingent upon the subjectivity of the performer, where *Mimesis III (refiguration)* is the moment of public performance that actualizes the narrative choices. Marija Dinov's chapter, "Narrativity in Piano Performance – The Case of Claude Debussy's *La danse de Puck*", provides a micro-phenomenological analysis of this refiguration, focusing on the performative gesture as the essential vehicle. Like Bressan and Teixeira's focus on the subjective process, Dinov demonstrates through comparative video analysis (e.g., Itin vs. Barenboim) that the pianist's kinesthetic movements create the music's unique "character" and the audience's subjective narrative mental images, confirming that the morphological structure gains its final meaning through the body in action.

## Narrative and Analysis – Complementary Roles in Defining Musical Narrative

### I) Structural and Morphological Coding

Extending the morphological approach, James Dennis's research, "Segmenting Chopin: A Computational Comparison of the Harmonic Structure and Minimalism of Toki Pona", provides a computational framework for narrative coding. By segmenting Chopin's Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2 and comparing its information transfer rate (approx. 22 bits/second) to the minimalist language Toki Pona, Dennis demonstrates that music's objective structure allows for broad, coherent narrative interpretation. The analysis confirms that fine-grained segmentations (Beat-level and Harmonic-event) accurately reflect structural changes, illustrating that morphological data operates within a communicative bandwidth analogous to simplified linguistic systems.

## II) Agency, Plot, and Specific Refiguring

The volume further explores the capacity of musical structure to independently carry complex narrative coding, even when shifting between different media and genres. While Michael Allis, in his chapter “A Narrative Walk through Granville Bantock’s *The Pierrot of the Minute Overture* (1908)” demonstrates that music can refigure a specific plot when supported by paratexts, the study by Marcos Amado Rodríguez, “Processes of Literature – Music Transposition in Progressive Metal. Edgar Allan Poe in Michael Romeo’s *The Dark Chapter* (1994)”, proves that this refiguration can also be achieved exclusively through morphological means. Rodríguez rigorously maps Poe’s affective phenomenology onto morphology – using chromaticism and diminished figurations to signify emotional distress, and Chopin intertexts as narrative quotes – thereby proving that intersemiotic transposition preserves the narrative phenomenology of literary tales without the need for external text.

This is further exemplified in Tijana Ilišević’s chapter, “Structural and Semantic Plot Type in *Double Concerto* by Witold Lutosławski”, which interprets sound masses as active narrative characters (*subject actants* and *helper actants*). By mapping two interwoven narratives – a primary plot of transformation and an integrative subplot – Ilišević demonstrates music’s power to generate deep linearity and plot even in repertoires traditionally viewed as static and spatial.

## III) Phenomenology, Performance, and Subjective Time

The study of subjective reception is extended by Olha Myronenko-Mikheishyna’s chapter, “The Narratives of Witold Lutosławski’s Musical Time through the Lens of Music Theory as a Psychology”. Myronenko-Mikheishyna introduces the *chronoframe* – a non-metric unit of time – to explain Lutosławski’s temporal structure. Crucially, the *chronoframe*’s properties are shown to be fluid and significantly dependent on the performer’s tempo and the listener’s perception, rather than being fixed like a metric bar. This approach bridges music theory with psychology, highlighting that the organizational features of musical time, conceived by Lutosławski as a “recorded perception”, are actualized by the subjective, phenomenological act of listening and performing.

Across all chapters, it becomes clear that authors use morphological analysis (structure, figure, coding) as a means to understand the phenomenological and subjective experience of music, thereby successfully mapping the narrative roads from rhetorical consciousness to critical subjectivity.

## IV) Critical Case Studies and Genre Expansion

This section expands the theoretical frameworks established in the preceding chapters by applying narrative analysis to critical, genre-specific case studies, focusing on the breakdown of traditional paradigms, the intentional negation of narrative, and the subjectivization of tragic expression.

Elena Rovenko’s chapter, “Text, Context, and Intertextuality in the Works of Vincent d’Indy: on the ‘Music-as-Language’ Paradigm in the Epoch of *Fin-de-siècle*. The Case of *La*

*Légende de Saint Christophe*”, investigates the breakdown of the “music-as-language” paradigm at the turn of the 20th century. Rovenko argues that d’Indy’s adherence to transmitting explicit ideological and socio-political messages (in works like *La Légende de Saint Christophe*) transforms the musical “work” into a “text” that demands active contextual interpretation rather than straightforward reception. Employing semiotic and intertextual tools, the analysis decodes how musical elements (quotations of Gregorian chant, Wagnerism) function primarily as signifiers for ideological meanings, underscoring how an overt narrative agenda can ironically lead to obfuscation and require complex analytical methods to retrieve its function.

Malwina Marciniak’s chapter, “Non-Narrative and Anti-Narrative Strategies in 21st-century Piano Concertos by Polish Composers”, analyzes the deliberate negation of narrativity and traditional dramatic logic, expanding the genre boundaries. Utilizing narratological theories (Klein, Reyland, Agawu), Marciniak distinguishes between non-narrative (lack of causality/transformation) and anti-narrative (intentional breaking of conventions) strategies. Through the analysis of Polish composers (Wielecki, Schaeffer), she demonstrates structural techniques for negation: Wielecki achieves an anti-concerto via autonomy of parts and static musical time (reflecting trauma/alienation), while Schaeffer uses constant material variability to dismantle the narrative arc. This approach confirms that the absence or negation of narrative is itself a critical statement, reflecting the fragmentariness and complexity of contemporary culture.

Dickie Lee’s chapter, “Narrative Walks through Eco’s Woods”, explores how musical tragedy is subjectivized through narrative, using Umberto Eco’s metaphor of the “fictional woods” to frame the interpretive process. The analysis centers on the rhetorical device of peripeteia (dramatic reversal) as the core agent of the tragic narrative. Lee undertakes three “walks” (Adès’s *Asyla*, Penderecki’s Symphony No. 3, and Rochberg’s Symphony No. 2) to examine different facets of loss and suffering. The study demonstrates how these symphonic “statement pieces” use narratology and intertextuality to communicate profound suffering and loss in the post-World War II landscape, illustrating how structural rhetoric is utilized to express narratives of power, loss of voice, and post-trauma across diverse compositional styles.

## **The Purpose of Musical Narrative in the Contemporary World**

Musical narrative theory provides more than just analytical methods; it offers a hermeneutic space for critical self-reflection, helping us to locate meaning and coherence precisely where it appears to be absent.

The ultimate methodological mandate of this monograph is the abandonment of purely positivist analytical goals in favour of a richer, more complex interpretive engagement. We conclude that musical analysis, particularly when focused on narrative, is an act of imaginative construction, not factual discovery. This principle is eloquently articulated by Lawrence Kramer:

Interpretation is not a matter of testing hypotheses; it does not simplify but complicates; it does not take reconciliation or integration as an elemental goal, though these things may also happen as events. The knowledge that interpretation produces is always retro-active, and its credibility rests not on conditions that precede it but on the conditions that its performance produces. The characteristic actions of interpretation are surmise, suggestion, extrapolation, conjecture, speculation, trope, confabulation, narrative, evocation, coaxing, modeling, imagining. To interpret is to think informally (Kramer 2016, 148).

Ultimately, the purpose of musical narrativity in the 21st century is not merely to discover stories in sound, but to construct a coherent self through listening. This monograph demonstrates that in an age of fragmentation, musical narrative provides a vital, necessary framework for the articulation of human meaning and resistance against the noise of history. The collective achievement of this volume is to transform musical narrative from a philosophical metaphor into a robust methodology, concluding that only through embracing music's potential for agency, dramaturgy, and refiguration can scholars truly address the fundamental human question: not just *what* music means, but *how* it helps us live.

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# PART I

## Introduction to Musical Narrativity: From Rhetoric to Analysis



## Chapter 1

Musical Dramaturgy as Part of Musical Rhetoric<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article proposes a rhetorical, dramaturgical perspective for understanding musical discourse in Western art music. Using the introduction to Haydn's Symphony No. 104 as a starting point, the author examines how contrasting settings and the interplay of collective and subjective musical gestures create dramatic arcs akin to theatrical representation. The paper introduces the concepts of the musical Subject, subjectification, and dramatemes as minimal dramaturgical units, arguing that subjectification – where a musical subject disrupts or transforms institutional or genre conventions – is central to the hermeneutic experience of listening and performance. Through analyses of works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms, it demonstrates that dramaturgical trajectories, such as “Changeover” or “Retrospect”, underpin the temporal, expressive, and representational character of music. The article contends that these archetypal plots enable music to enact meaning and agency beyond traditional structural or narrative approaches, emphasizing the co-creative role of interpretation in both analysis and performance.

**Keywords:** musical dramaturgy, musical hermeneutics, music analysis, musical Subject, musical rhetoric

Right from the start, the *Adagio* introduction to Josef Haydn's Symphony No. 104 (1795) suggests a grand scene, possibly tragic, or melancholic. It represents, in any case, a theatrical location. Two contrasting settings are presented in the first few bars:

*Fortissimo* tutti: opera seria, martial ‘call’, power;

*Piano* strings: subjective reaction, melancholy

To the repeated ‘calls’ in ‘ominous unison’, *fortissimo tutti*, a virtual ‘Subject’ seems to answer *piano* on strings, with a subjective, three-part version of the call's rhythm and a pathetic, individual *pianto*: see Example 1.<sup>2</sup>

The *Allegro* theme, starting on bar 17, represents a stark contrast in tone, transitioning from opera *seria* to comedy. This shift from a tragic to a comedic setting scene becomes even more pronounced with the *buffa* gestures starting on bar 32, and the resulting metrical irregularities they introduce: see Example 2.

This transition from an institutional, authoritarian and baroque scenery to a modern, humorous mood is the central topic of this chapter. I have labelled this process as **subject-**

<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

<sup>2</sup> For the madrigalism of *pianto* (‘weeping’) and the tragic-opera topos of ‘Ominous Unison’, see my *Mapping* (Grimalt 2020, 33, respectively 344f).

**tification**, suggesting that a subject appears to manifest itself on the musical material in a disruptive manner.

**Example 1.** J. Haydn, Symphony no. 104/I: beginning



First, I will discuss some fundamental theoretical issues regarding musical narrativity, dramaturgy, musical rhetoric, hermeneutics, and musical agency. Secondly, I will focus on four aspects of musical dramaturgy: a musical subject, subjective reactions, subjectification, and dramaturgical archetypes.

**Example 2.** J. Haydn, Symphony no. 104/I: bars 32–39



## 1. Narrative and dramaturgical issues in music: a short walk.

**Dramaturgy** in music refers to those aspects that connect the musical discourse with a *significant temporal sequence*, similar to a theatrical piece, or film. In other words, dramaturgy deals with the arc of dramatic tension and resolution. For instance, a basic dramaturgical structure could include a presentation or setup, a confrontation in the form of a contrast, more or less disruptive, and a resolution or denouement, whether comic or tragic. In 19th-century music, the dramaturgical tends to favour larger genres, particularly symphonies, concertos, and symphonic poems. In the Classic repertoire, as demonstrated in our Haydn example, dramaturgy may be less obvious but still possible, especially when examining shorter fragments and their oppositional relationships.

Visual arts can iconically imitate reality, while narrative can describe it. Music's most particular power in relating to human experience is arguably the temporal aspect. To represent this typically human – and typically hermeneutic – being-in-time, music turns to a **discourse** and a process. Schenkerian analysis, as well as new schools derived from Arnold Schoenberg's methods, were often criticised for neglecting temporality and its consequences, particularly for leaving out of analysis a significant temporal arrange-

ment of musical events. In the last decades, the issue has received increased attention as a fundamental aspect of musical expression. Oftentimes, these efforts have been labelled as *narrative*, to signal the importance of a sequence where the final outcome is different than the starting point, as in a fairy tale or a novel. Granted, narrative is something that can be ascribed to music, especially if one understands it in a broad sense. However, since music's favourite way of expression seems to be representation, and since most topical references appear to originate in stage music, even in the 19th century, I propose to call it **musical dramaturgy**. This term points to three fundamental theatrical aspects that appear to be behind the musical discourse: a representational impulse, a plot, and a listener.

Historically, the 18th-century metaphor of music as discourse evolves around the mid-19th century into the metaphor of music as drama (or plot, or narration). Besides the temporal aspect, envisaging music as drama has the notable advantage of including a listener, which could not be accounted for in the previous century. The musical work, thanks to a 'plot', becomes anthropomorphic – the themes appear as characters. That is also the main difference with the 'organic' metaphor. Imagining a musical 'plot' breaks the dichotomy between structure and expression, since the same process that makes the 'form' comprehensible also conveys its 'contents'. Seen this way, the classical, conventional forms – sonata form, rondo, variations – correspond to different dramaturgical archetypes. Historically, the idea of seeing structures such as Sonata form as 'plots' goes back to Johann Mattheson's – and his century's – idea of a musical discourse.

Moreover, I propose to include the dramaturgical aspect within the broader scope of musical **rhetoric**. After all, a significative sequence is one of the indexes of any discourse. Music as discourse tells, expresses, and above all, represents. The virtual character issuing the musical discourse can simply be called the Subject. The Subject breaks genre expectations with rhetorical figures, appears to be touched by the discourse generated of references, and often comments on what it has uttered as if it came from an external source (a typical Haydnesque device). At other times, the Subject seems to 'sing' for itself, in an inner monologue characteristic of romantic music, particularly in piano and chamber music.

When examining definitions in **narratology**, the relationship between a plot and its narration passes through a medium that is often overlooked. Narrating requires **words**, which create a unique distance between what is being narrated and how it is presented. Since the 17th and 18th centuries, instrumental music has excelled in **representation**, drawing from theatrical models and demonstrating that enactment is possible even without words.

So, what does it mean to listen to music as a significant sequence and to apply dramaturgical categories to a partly abstract discourse, like instrumental music? One implication is that the order of elements is crucial and can impact the outcome. It also involves being open to interpreting things retrospectively in a new light based on the overall process. This openness to new perspectives is a key aspect of Hermeneutics: the ability to interpret signs differently or to reinterpret an act of interpretation in a new context or arrangement. Essentially, a dramaturgical openness allows for giving a voice to the Other.

Exceptionally, in works like Chopin's or Brahms's *Ballades*, there are some introductions suggesting an ancient bard's 'lyre' (or 'harp') to frame a represented musical scene

located in a remote, legendary past. Even in such rare cases, which have been described as *bardic or ballad style*, this does not alter the representative character of music, but rather the narrating.

Calling the sequential aspect *dramaturgical* instead of *narrative* seems to fit better the phenomena of listening and performing. When I realised that, I started substituting what I had been calling narrative archetypes, strategies, or temporalities, with **dramaturgical** archetypes, strategies, or temporalities.

Summarising: music struggles to narrate without language. But she is good at **en-acting** through the voice and the discourse of a virtual Subject, or musical persona. Theoretically, the dramaturgical aspects of music fit well into two fundamental ideas: music as discourse, and a hermeneutical approach. In one sentence, hermeneutics means to embrace the certainty that things are asking for interpretation, including music, and that someone else's interpretation can be as valid as mine, at least, provided both of us can fundament it in a valid way. Granted, it is not easy to tell who and how determines what a valid interpretation is or not. But this is not our topic today.

## 2. A Musical Subject

When viewed as a represented **discourse**, particularly an improvised one, music implies the presence of a personal agent. I suggest defining the Musical Subject as *a virtual agent that appears to manipulate a predetermined material in a seemingly spontaneous manner*. It is important to remember that the musical Subject or persona should not be mistaken with the composer or the implied author.

Speaking about a Subject is typical of the 19th century, but it can be traced back to artworks of the Enlightenment. Throughout the 20th century, amidst several crises, it has been questioned in a rather radical way. The musical 'Subject', in my view, is the represented agent of *discourse*, not of any *actions*. This can include 'antagonist characters', both good and evil, as in any narrative. They belong to the musical discourse, just as an ironic tone does.

This implies the possibility and responsibility for the modern Subject to interpret the world autonomously, as dogma and tradition are no longer self-evident, nor is empirical observation. The Subject interprets, and interpretation is subjective. In Michael Klein's words: "Subjects make interpretations; interpretations make subjects" (2015, 3).

When considering subjectivity in music, **improvisation** emerges as a fundamental aspect. In the new instrumental music of the 18th century, there appears to be a deliberate conflation of improvisation and composition. The composer plays this game, of course, but does so in the guise of a musical Subject. Josef Haydn's persona is primarily ironic, showcasing a rich musical world of genres, topoi, and characters. By contrast, the Romantic musical persona resembles the representation of an inner monologue, often switching between different temporalities. Despite these differences, there is a historical continuity: the subjective handling of musical materials and topoi in the 18th century evolves into the expressive portrayal of a stream of consciousness in the nineteenth.

The temptation to incorporate improvisation as a topical reference in the sonata was irresistible to musicians who were simultaneously improvisers, performers, and compos-

ers. This was especially true considering the early instrumental Renaissance and Baroque tradition of the *Fantasia*, the *Prelude*, the Variations, and all other improvised genres, which eventually transformed into written compositions.

Nowhere is this sense of free, enlightened ‘speech’ more evident than in the strict confines of the Minuet, a holdover from the Baroque suite that found its way into classical sonatas and symphonies. Often, the classical Minuet follows traditional patterns, albeit with a touch of irony. In the Minuet of his Quartet op. 20/1, one can hear Haydn incorporating comments, interruptions, and corrections into his own discourse, creating two distinct rhetorical layers. Initially, we can imagine a preexisting danceable minuet, structured as a well-rounded period, consisting of an antecedent and consequent: see Example 3.

**Example 3.** J. Haydn, Quartet op. 20/1/ii: beginning



Now, in its staged ‘performance’ in the present, the preexisting material is being ironically called into question and commented upon. A musical Subject manipulating the original dance can be felt starting from bar 9. A few bars later, the first part of the Trio loses the metric regularity that is a trademark of the minuet. Finally, in a culmination of subjectification, the second part of the Trio introduces a *dubitatio* or hesitation, along with a minor mode version of the Minuet as a transition to the Reprise: see Example 4.

**Example 4.** J. Haydn, Quartet op. 20/1/ii: bars 57–66



Dramaturgically, we once again observe subjectification as a *process*, typically manifesting as a ‘spontaneous’ interference into preestablished musical material. In 19th-century music, this ‘spontaneous’ tone gradually becomes the hallmark of the romantic musical persona, which specialises in a distinctive inner monologue. A fine example is Sibelius’s *Romance* in F op. 78 no. 2. A pseudo-folk theme is introduced at the outset, its periodic regularity reminiscent of an *objet trouvé* – predetermined material. The ensuing ‘commentaries’ are curiously adversative, if not outright dysphoric, tending towards G minor. The piece ends with a reconciliation befitting the minor genre of salon music.

Here, Sibelius approaches the task modestly, in contrast to the aesthetic ambitions of Chopin or Liszt, who largely transcend the genre's compliant character. Despite the work's self-content circularity from F to F, dramaturgically a gradual emergence of the virtual 'Subject' can be perceived, as if someone were commenting, here and now, on the 'folksy' material in a melancholic tone. This juxtaposition of 'predetermined' material with subjective 'commentary' is arguably one of the most typical emblems of 18th-century music, but romantic music adopts it as a favourite rhetorical device.

### 3. The subjective reaction, a musical dramateme

First, let me introduce the term **dramateme**. I define a minimal dramaturgical unit as a *dramateme*, drawing on Vladimir Propp's concepts of *morphemes* and *narratememes*.<sup>3</sup> Some dramatememes are unique and seem emblematic of the dramaturgical strategy in a particular piece, while others have a recurrent archetypal character. When two or more topical or rhetorical gestures tend to recur in a specific sequence, one might give the dramateme a distinct name. One such recurrent sequence is not only frequent in common-practice music but also emblematic of Western culture as a whole. I refer to this as the **Subjective Reaction**.

Mozart's *Serenade in C minor* for wind octet, K. 388/384a (Vienna 1782), for instance, opens with an institutional, collective gesture reminiscent of a tragic opera scene. Topically, the first four bars oscillate between a dysphoric 'call' and an ominous unison 'fanfare'. This sequence is immediately followed by a *piano* gesture in bar 5, which sounds like an individual, plaintive reaction to the initial 'call': see Example 5.

**Example 5.** Mozart, *Serenade in C minor* K. 388 (384a)/I: beginning

The musical score for the beginning of Mozart's *Serenade in C minor*, K. 388 (384a)/I, is shown. It is for a wind octet, with parts for Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), and Horn (Hr.). The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The key signature is C minor (three flats). The score shows the first five bars. Bars 1-4 feature a collective, dysphoric 'call' with a fanfare-like quality. Bar 5 features a plaintive reaction marked 'p' (piano).

The institutional/subjective sequence (along with the ominous/plaintive contrast) can be observed in many other works, such as the opening of the *Fantasy* in C minor K. 475 for piano, or in the *Jupiter* symphony, this time in C major. Here is an example from Beethoven: see Example 6.

<sup>3</sup> Propp 1928: *Morphologie du conte*. See also Grabócz 1996 (1986), 9, where she translates Greimas's linguistic concepts of *sèmes*, *classemes* and *isotopies* into musical motifs, themes, and whole movements. The narratologist Werner Wolf speaks about *narratememes*, minimal narrative units. They correspond greatly to our 'dramatememes'. See Wolf 2011.



To a *forte* ‘call’ responds a *piano* plaintive, chromatic, vocal-inflected line, as if an ‘individual’ would react to a preceding threat of collective, institutional character. A similar ‘Subjective Reaction’ can be observed in both the F-minor Beethoven sonatas, Op. 2 no. 2/I and Op. 57/I.

**Example 6.** Beethoven, Sonata op. 31 n. 2/I: bars 21–24



In chamber music from both the 18th and 19th centuries, the piano often serves as the favoured vehicle for a represented Subject. In Mozart’s G-minor Quartet K. 478 (1785), for instance, the ‘Subject’ seems to react to a tragic topos – the ‘Ominous Unison’– as illustrated in Example 7.

**Example 7.** Mozart, Quartet K. 478/I: beginning



The added *diminuendo* in bar 3 would likely be taken for granted by most performers, both in Mozart’s time and today. It helps convey the transition from the initial *exclamatio* in the treble to the *tremolo* in the lower register of a represented soprano.<sup>4</sup>

The dichotomy of *impersonal versus subjective* proves to be a highly productive one in both the Classic and Romantic repertoires. It may be traced back to 17th- and 18th-century opera, where recitative and aria form a parallel pair: the recitative narrates *facts*, while the aria expresses the characters’ *emotional reaction*. This opposition between recitative and aria also reflects two distinct singing styles – declamation and singing – and two temporalities: progressive and static. In the aria, time is lyrically suspended; the action pauses. In rhetorical terms, this corresponds to Exposition and Gloss, or Exegesis: the theme is first exposed, typically within a tight-knit structure such as a period (antecedent

<sup>4</sup> See more about the rhetorical figures of *Exclamatio* and *Tremolo* in Grimalt 2020: 62f., respectively 75.

+ consequent); then followed by commentary on the theme delivered in a more vernacular, irregular, down-to-earth tone – that is, in a **subjective** key.

This principle – this dramateme – is one of the key models in the new instrumental music of the 18th century. Beginning with chamber music, the logical setting for the modern subject to unfold, sonatas, duos, trios, and quartets employ this dichotomy continuously. Beethoven's Sonata Op. 10 No. 3 (1798), for example, opens in this manner (see Example 8):

**Example 8.** Beethoven, Sonata Op. 10 No. 3/I, beginning



The main theme presents a periodic structure, with the antecedent reaching bar 4 and the responding consequent extended to six bars. Typically, the antecedent, marked *martellato*, evokes the 'Ominous Unison' topos typical of tragic opera, thus representing a collective past. Rhetorically, the first part of the period culminates in an *interrogatio* held on a fermata in bar 4. The consequent, *legato*, sounds like a contemporary, subjective response to the initial 'interrogative' four bars. Its metrical irregularity – six bars instead of four – reinforces the sense of rhetorical spontaneity, improvisation, or 'Subjective Reaction'.

A few bars later on the same page, precisely where a transition might be expected, this same sequence reappears: see Example 9.

**Example 9.** Beethoven, Sonata Op. 10 No. 3/I, b. 23–30



The surprise is twofold: first, the appearance of the minor relative; second, the structural compactness of this 4+4 period, where one might have expected a modulation to the dominant and a loose-knit structure, typical of transitional passages.<sup>5</sup> As if to compensate for these deviations, the [Exposition – Gloss] sequence seen in the Sonata's main theme is reproduced here. The continuation of Example 9, starting at bar 31, appears to offer a subjective commentary on the new theme just introduced on the dominant of B minor: see Example 10. The section's tone is adversative and loose, contrasting with the previous 'tight-knit' fragment in bars 23–30.

<sup>5</sup> More about tight- and loose-knit structures (German *fest*, *locker*) in Grimalt 2020, 10. They adapt terms used by Arnold Schönberg and his analysis school.

**Example 10.** Beethoven, Sonata Op. 10 No. 3/I, b. 31–38



The sequence we are examining here – Tight-knit, Loose-knit – can be interpreted in terms of subjectivity as Predetermined versus Spontaneous, and also as Collective versus Personal. As a minimal dramaturgical unit, or recurrent dramateme, it deserves a name, such as the ‘**Subjective Reaction**’.

Playing with conventions lies at the heart of the subjectification process we are examining. This game permeates the art of the 18th and 19th centuries. In the following example, Franz Schubert stages a ‘dialogue’ between a folkloric element (the ‘waltz’ reference) and the Subject’s own personal comments, located in the present. In a social dance setting, perhaps during a *Hausmusik* – as Schubert often played for his friends to dance – the ‘tragic’ references common in Sonatas or piano pieces have no place. However, in Schubert’s Waltzes, a distinctive ‘conversation’ emerges between these two rhetorical elements. On one side is the collective element, represented by functional music in a friendly, carefree tone; on the other side is the ‘Subjective Reaction’, expressed in a ‘pathetic’ tone.

In No. 6 of the *Deutsche Tänze* D. 783, the initial section (after deflecting to the subdominant in bar 3) surprisingly modulates to the minor relative by bar 8: see Example 11. The second part (bar 9) begins even more ‘pathetic’, featuring a sequence of diminished sevenths – chords quite unusual for a set of waltzes. The music then returns to the subdominant in bar 12 and eventually recovers the initial major key toward the final cadence, as if nothing untoward had occurred. The sheer effort deployed to ‘rescue’ the joyful dancing despite the ‘dark’ tones in the central section is marked by the *ffz*-sign in bar 13 (*forzando molto*, ‘forcing a lot’), placed precisely at the juncture between the ‘pathetic’ and the luminous resolution.

Seen (or heard) in this light, our subjectifying dramateme establishes a dialogue between two isotopies in an expressive, fruitful opposition.<sup>6</sup> On one hand, there are topical references to a collective, institutionalised world; on the other, spontaneous, personal expression. Historically, a **replacement** can be observed. The role that references to tragic opera once played in the music of the Viennese Classics is progressively assumed in 19th-century music by the mythical ‘folklore’ and by the ‘ballad style’.<sup>7</sup>

The isotopic opposition between a ‘Collective System’ and a ‘Spontaneous Subject’ roughly corresponds, *mutatis mutandis*, to another dichotomy I proposed some years ago regarding the music of the Viennese “Classics”: the contrast between references to the Ancien Régime and references to modernity.<sup>8</sup> Table No. 1 adapts and expands upon this framework.

<sup>6</sup> **Isotopy** designates here a group of heterogeneous signs, with a common semantic ground. Cf. Grimalt 2020, 16. Isotopies are also discussed in *Analysing* (2025), chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup> A ‘Ballad (or Bardic) Style’ is described in Grimalt 2025, § 2.1.3.

<sup>8</sup> A ‘Humorous’ Narrative Archetype (Grimalt 2022).

Example 11. Schubert, *Deutscher Tanz* No. 6, D. 783

Philosophically, the opposition between ‘System’ and ‘Subject’ represents the replacement of destiny and gods by human, arbitrary will. This substitution is arguably one of the foundational pillars of European modernity. In the artistic realm, the opposition we describe is a key to creative freedom and the cult to the artistic “genius” typical of 19th-century mythology, moving beyond a classical aesthetics based on the imitation of nature.<sup>9</sup> For Romanticism, beauty is no longer measured by the degree of success in imitation but by the authenticity of artistic expression.

Perhaps this explains why, from the mid-18th century onward, a ‘spontaneous’ style – fragmentary, full of interruptions and ‘subjective’ digressions – became the norm. Initially in chamber music, and soon after (see C.P.E. Bach) in orchestral music. This shift in aesthetic paradigm also entails the autonomy of art and artists, which directly leads in music to a remarkable valuation of instrumental music’s power. As a “wordless discourse”, it is endowed with a neo-Orphic vitality that transcends the rationality and functionality of traditional logos.

Timbral ‘Cross-Dressing’ is a device that resignifies a musical gesture by presenting it with unexpected instrumentation. An example can be found in the first movement of Mozart’s Concerto in B flat, K. 450. In bars 9 and following, violas and cellos perform the so-called “horn fifths”. This can be interpreted as an act of subjectification, where the original musical gesture is transferred from horns to the more human, gut-related strings.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For a critique of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century myth of the “Genius”, see Chiantore 2021: chapter 3.

<sup>10</sup> See more about the symbolic traditional meanings of wind and string choirs in Lidov 2005, 50.

**Table No. 1.** The isotopic opposition between a collective ‘System’ and a spontaneous ‘Subject’

<b>COLLECTIVE ‘SYSTEM’</b>	<b>SPONTANEOUS ‘SUBJECT’</b>
Necessity, Destiny. Predetermined norms.	Arbitrariness, Will. Subversion.
Religion	Alternative spiritualities, pantheism.
Classical aesthetics (Aristotle)	Creative freedom
Nature imitation	Subjectivity
Heteronomy, functionality.	Artistic autonomy, irony, parody.
Classical control and restraint, structure.	Realism, excess.
Opera <i>seria</i> , Tragedy.	Opera <i>buffa</i> , Comedy.
Composition (through commission)	Improvisation
Military, state authority. Institutionalisation.	Parody of the military
Gregorian chant, hymn.	Erotic love, Pastoral, Exoticism.
‘Savant’ style (polyphonic imitation)	Motivic work
Vocal + Theatre	Vocal + Chamber, Lyricism.
‘Vocal’ references	‘Instrumental’ references
Tutti, Brass	Strings, woodwinds, ‘Timbral Cross-Dressing’.
Syllabic singing	Melismatic singing, ornamentation, gloss.
Diatonic scale	Chromaticism
Minuet, Sarabande.	Waltz, Contredanse.
Regular bar groups, 4+4 (poetic metres)	Metrical, rhythmical discontinuities (prose)
Pastoral (archaic, prefixed), ‘Ballad’ style	Lyrical, spontaneous, personal, contemporaneous.

#### 4. Subjectification, another dramateme

We saw the ‘Reaction’ of a virtual ‘Subject’ in Example 5 (K. 388), a plaintive *piano* responded to a *forte*, menacing unison. The most remarkable aspect of this sequence, however, is that it can be observed on several successive layers. The transition to the second-key area of K. 388/I, beginning at bar 22, represents a second subjectification in relation to the main theme: pathetic quavers are added to the initial minims. Notably, Mozart even writes *calando* in bars 26–27, an unusually ‘subjective’ performance indication: see Example 12.

A third degree of subjectification emerges when the secondary theme appears in bar 40, on the major relative; soloists and a chamber accompaniment seem to transition into an intimate setting. Considering the Exposition as a whole, the Development section at

bar 95 marks a fourth step into subjectification. Finally, the Reprise at bar 130 incorporates variations that suggest yet another degree of subjectification – a typical feature of both Classic and Romantic sonata forms.

**Example 12.** Mozart, *Serenade* in C minor K. 388 (384a)/I: bars 24–29

Extending this progression, the second movement of the *Serenade*, *Andante*, mirrors the relationship between a first and second theme found in the Exposition, once again illustrating the sequence of represented subjectification – or perhaps a ‘subjective reaction’. Viewed from a broader historical perspective, the increasing subjectification evident in 18th-century music culminates in 19th-century aesthetics, where the expository portion of a musical discourse gradually vanishes, effectively absorbed by the ‘subject’. As our esteemed teacher Karlheinz Füssl noted, Brahms is “developing” from the outset, even during the Exposition. Rhetorically, the music enacts a Subject commenting on his material in real time.

At the far end of this historical arc, the music of Scriabin, Mahler, or Schoenberg stands even further removed from the institutional beginnings of the Renaissance or early Baroque, where the subject remained hidden behind functional purpose.

The process underlying each of these successive, self-contained steps may be termed **Subjectification**: a represented Subject initially responds to an institutional symbol and gradually asserts itself until it becomes predominant. An example of a different kind of Subjectification can be found in the exposition of the main theme in the first movement of Clara Schumann’s Piano Concerto in A minor (1835), Op. 7. The theme is first presented in a martial *tutti*; then on strings alone, *legato*; and finally on woodwinds. This three-stage sequence is immediately repeated.<sup>11</sup> Here, the music appears to follow a traditional symbolic pattern: moving from the collective to the individual, passing through the “guts” of the orchestra – the string section.

Before we continue, allow me a brief terminological clarification.

**Subjectivation** is a philosophical term. According to Foucault’s critical theory, each of us undergoes a process of self-construction, either resisting or accepting external forces

<sup>11</sup> Beatrice Rana and Yannick Nézet-Séguin recorded this demanding, beautiful piece in 2023.

of power. For Foucault, **subject** holds two complementary meanings: first, one is a subject by virtue of dependence on someone else who exerts control (*assujettissement*). Second, one becomes a subject by forging one's own identity through self-knowledge (*subjectivation*); in other words, by becoming aware of one's situation (Wiede 2020).<sup>12</sup>

**Subjectification** (or subjectivisation) is a linguistic term. It refers to an alteration that indicates the intervention of a subject. For example, Elizabeth Traugott cites the shift in the meaning of the adverb 'evidently': originally used in its literal sense as a synonym for 'clearly', it acquired, in the 20th century, a new sense – "in my opinion, this is clear to everybody" (Traugott 1989, 46f).<sup>13</sup> Subjectification in music can be understood as a historical process. The musical persona marks the emergence of subjectivity within musical discourse. This progression of subjectification can be traced through four historical stages:<sup>14</sup>

1. During the 16th and 17th centuries, instrumental music began to liberate itself from purely functional roles. However, there remains no clear separation between composer and improviser. This music is primarily designed for performers rather than an audience.
2. In the 18th century, with the rise of a new audience, musical topoi evolved from functional genres into expressive material for sophisticated, ironic, and highly autonomous compositions. Haydn's music often engages the listener with a playful challenge: *is this still improvisation, or are we already within the sonata?* The classical musical persona mainly references the music itself; its humour is directed at musicians, especially in chamber music.
3. Beethoven's instrumental music, particularly his piano works, pushes these games further. His music increasingly resembles an improvisation on limited, predefined material that is recalled and commented upon, akin to an inner monologue.
4. By the 19th century, that inner monologue tends to unfold as a stream of consciousness – a subject grappling with memories from the past – forming the basis for an expressive genre, the 'Retrospect'. This will be the focus of the next paragraph.

There are countless ways and musical dimensions in which a process of subjectification can manifest itself. One of them is texture. Typically, such a process might begin with an orchestral tutti in opera and conclude with a plucked-string accompaniment. This progression represents a shift from a public, institutional reference to a more intimate setting, with the former potentially posing an authoritarian threat to the represented Subject.

In Schubert's Sonata in C minor D. 958 (1828), the initial presentation of the theme is melodically poor, as if the 'Subject' had no place. This lack of melodic presence evokes

<sup>12</sup> See the whole article for a useful and clear overview about some of the main post-modern approaches to the crises of the modern Subject.

<sup>13</sup> See also Stewart 2014.

<sup>14</sup> A more complete historical account of musical narrativity, reaching up to the 20th century, and following Paul Ricoeur's theories, albeit without an explicit reference to a musical persona, is found in chapter 4 of Grabócz 2009.

the power of an institution, much like a theatrical orchestra asserting dominance: see Example 13.

In contrast, the second version of the same theme, beginning at bar 21, features a distinctively ‘vocal’ melodic profile, signalling the emergence of a ‘singing Subject’. Additionally, the accompaniment shifts from a reference to bowed strings to plucked strings, further enhancing the sense of intimacy – see Example 14.

**Example 13.** Schubert, Sonata D. 958/I: beginning



**Example 14.** Schubert, Sonata D. 958/I: bars 21–28



## 5. Dramaturgical Archetypes

In fact, basic dramaturgical trajectories such as *Per aspera ad astra* and *Retrospect*, as well as the dramateme of *Subjective Reaction* can all be subsumed under a larger dramaturgical trajectory, that of **Subjectification**. This process appears to be one of the defining emblems of Western culture as a whole, not just in music.<sup>15</sup>

The first point to establish is that while dramatememes are typical of 18th-century music, dramaturgical archetypes are more commonly encountered in the Romantic reper-

<sup>15</sup> I offered many examples from visual arts, literature, and philosophy in Grimalt 2023. For an analytical application, see also Grimalt 2024.



toire. In other words, plotting a narrative seems to be a hallmark of 19th-century music, whereas more concise dramaturgical units are readily identifiable in 18th-century works.

Let us start with the expression “Dramaturgical Archetype”, which can be defined as *a represented sequence interpretable as a recurrent pattern within a musical work*. The adjective *dramaturgical* refers to a dramaturgy – in classical terms, a meaningful trajectory that leads from an initial situation to a denouement, passing through moments of change or peripeteia. The term *archetype*, equally derived from Greek, means ‘the original type’. It was initially used in textual criticism to indicate an original, prototypical model for one or several manuscripts.<sup>16</sup> More recently, *archetype* has been defined as “a symbol, theme, setting, or character-type that recurs in different times and places in myth, literature, folklore, dreams, and rituals so frequently or prominently as to suggest [...] that it embodies some essential element of ‘universal’ human experience” (Baldick 2008 /1990/, 23f).<sup>17</sup>

First, those large significative sequences that can be interpreted as the unfolding of **manifestations** will be examined: *Per aspera ad astra*, ‘Changeover’, and its various forms, including the ‘Apotheosis’ and the ‘Humorous’ archetype. Second, corresponding to rhetorical ‘hesitations’ and ‘withdrawals’, the dramaturgical archetypes of ‘Retrospect’ and ‘Vision’ will be introduced and exemplified. The ‘Retrospect’ archetype can already be discerned in the mature music of the Viennese Classics, while both ‘Retrospect’ and ‘Vision’ are characteristic of Romantic repertoire, whether as a turn towards the past or as premonitions of imagined futures.

The dramaturgical archetype I term ‘Changeover’ is a political interpretation of what seems to be a recurrent plot in much mature Viennese Classical music.<sup>18</sup> For example, the transformation of a ‘minuet’ reference into a ‘waltz’ in Beethoven’s C-minor Trio Op. 1 no. 3/I, using the same thematic-motivic material, can be seen as a significant narrative, especially in the light of the revolutionary or at least Enlightened atmosphere in which Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven composed their mature works.<sup>19</sup> In a musical ‘Changeover’, a cluster of musical topoi associated with the Ancien Régime (such as marches, minuets, opera seria) is transformed or replaced by references to the modern world, including the contredanse, comedy and humour, expressed in a subjective, spontaneous tone.

A new example of such an archetypal dramaturgical trajectory can be heard in the third movement of J. Haydn’s Symphony No. 93. Here, an ironically excessive *forte tutti* ‘call’ by winds and timpani yields first to a *piano* ‘minuet’ reference on the strings (see Example 15) and eventually transitions to a *Ländler* waltz (Example 17), which was considered the most rustic of dances at the time.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See *etymoline.com*, article ‘archetype’, consulted August 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Baldick quotes N. Frye, J.G. Frazer, and C.G. Jung as contributors to the richness of this concept.

<sup>18</sup> For a thorough description of the *Changeover* dramaturgical archetype and some examples, see Grimalt 2022.

<sup>19</sup> For an analysis of this Trio, see Grimalt 2020: 297f.

<sup>20</sup> More about the *Ländler* in McKee 2014 and in Grimalt 2020: 268f.

**Example 15.** J. Haydn, Symphony no. 93/III: *Trio*, beginning

Trio

The trajectory illustrated in Examples 15 and 16 can be heard as a small triumph of comedy and popular culture over the forces of power, which are represented by the army and aristocracy. The *Changeover* dramaturgical archetype can be understood as a sociopolitical projection – an interpretation – of the compulsory *lieto fine* ('happy end') typical of traditional comedy, especially in opera *buffa*.<sup>21</sup>

**Example 16.** J. Haydn, Symphony no. 93/III: *Trio*, bars 93–98

In Mozart's "Haffner" Symphony, K. 385 (1782/83), the Minuet's first section presents a periodic phrase structure where antecedent (bars 1–4) and consequent (bars 5–8) contrast in a striking and dramatic manner: see Example 17.

**Example 17.** Mozart, Symphony K. 385/III: beginning

MENUETTO

<sup>21</sup> See chapter 4, "Comic Finitude and Comic Closure", in Allanbrook 2014, *The Secular Commedia*.

The harsh contrast of *forte/piano* and ‘institutional/subjective’ suggests the dramateme of the ‘Subjective reaction’. In essence, the dramaturgical archetype of ‘Changeover’ can already be heard in this brief fragment. The ‘martial’, authoritative, upward-directed antecedent, which seems to culminate in a rhetorical *interrogatio*, is answered by a *piano* consequent on the strings, featuring folksy, comedic ‘scotch-snaps’ rhythms.

At the turn of the 19th century, the revolutions in North America (1765–83) and Paris (1789) made many aware that major social and political changeovers were not only the ideas of Enlightenment philosophers but real and potentially swift, forceful events. This shift likely brought about a whole new mentality. The era of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven was thus marked by acceleration. The very idea of progress, which persisted until its eventual crisis in 20th-century postmodernity, transformed city dwellers’ perception of time. In Reinhold Brinkmann’s words, “the most overwhelming effect the Revolution had on its contemporaries was indeed an entirely new mode of experiencing *time*” (Brinkmann 2000, 8).<sup>22</sup>

This aligns with a productive conception of time as a quantifiable resource, alongside the exponential growth of empirical data and knowledge. Philology, for example, which had previously been systematic and treated languages as atemporal, began to adopt a historical, diachronic approach. In the 19th century, even nature was studied in terms of time, under the discipline of ‘natural history’. More broadly, Brinkmann argues that the spiral progressively replaces the pre-modern circle, or closed cycles that endlessly repeat themselves (Ibid., 20f).

The subversion of courtly hierarchies has been a fundamental premise in comedy since classic Antiquity. In the *commedia dell’arte*, whose characters populate Italian comic operas, carnivalesque inversion is a constant feature. A prime example is one of the most celebrated *opere buffe* of all times, Pergolesi’s *La serva padrona* (‘The Servant as Master’, or ‘The Maid Turned Mistress’, 1733). The plot is succinctly encapsulated in the title: the maid Serpina tricks her way into becoming the wife of the aging Uberto.

Elaine Sisman observed a similar movement – what she terms a ‘downwards’ trajectory – from aristocratic to low-key styles in the music of the Viennese Classics in general: “Indeed, Haydn and Mozart both created downward trajectories from grand style to popular style, over the course of an exposition, in ways that aroused the ire of German critics who disliked such mixtures of serious and comic” (Sisman 2014, 98).

In their magisterial book of 2006, James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy acknowledge that “musical genres inevitably implicate communities of listeners. For this reason, genres contain social and ideological connotations that may also be teased out – or proposed – by means of hermeneutic inquiry” (Hepokoski & Darcy 2006, 606). The comparative literature scholar Thomas O. Beebee, in his study of genres as ideologies, even argues that “if genre is a form of ideology, then the struggle against or deviation from genre are ideological struggles” (Beebee 1994, 18f.; quoted in Hepokoski & Darcy 2006, 606, note 9).

To be sure, a represented ‘Changeover’ should not be interpreted as a genuine challenge to authority. On the contrary, much like a momentary carnivalesque inversion, such

<sup>22</sup> The emphasis is Brinkmann’s.

instances help maintain stability by reaffirming the “correct” order in which masters remain masters and servants remain servants. In other words, the system tends to absorb its own dissidence and use it to neutralise any real will for change. That helps explain how Archduke Rudolf of Austria – hardly suspected of revolutionary tendencies – could include a parodic reference to a military march in his music, much like the esteemed composers he admired.<sup>23</sup>

Historically, the ‘Changeover’ musical archetype perhaps functioned as a represented questioning of perspectives that did not imply any real threat to the established *status quo*. This aligns with Immanuel Kant’s view on social matters. As Lawrence Kramer observes: “For Kant, the enlightened subject is one who ‘has the complete freedom, even the calling’ to exercise sceptical reason and put established doctrine into question, but who at the same time, as ‘a part of the mechanism’ of society and the state, is ready to behave in conformity with the doctrine on which the intellect has cast doubt.”<sup>24</sup>

The universally famous start of the first movement of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony (1804–1808) presents a peculiar ‘call’, evoking the old *stile concitato* and an *accompagnato* recitative.<sup>25</sup> The expressive, generic framework seems to align with that of tragic opera. This ‘call’ in ‘Ominous Unison’, however, carries a double twist: its minor mode and descending melodic contour. The tragic sense of this beginning is ultimately resolved by a triumphant *finale* in C major, featuring an upward, fanfare-like theme: see Example 18.

**Example 18.** Beethoven, Symphony n. 5/iv, main theme



Beethoven’s Fifth is arguably the paradigmatic example of ‘Changeover’. In other words, Robert Hatten described it as “the dramatic progression Tragic-to-Triumphant” (Hatten 1994, 79, 85–87). In a conceptually broader sense, perhaps more fitting to 18th-century phrasing, the ‘Changeover’ sequence could also be seen as a variant of a ‘darkness into light’ dramaturgical trajectory. Clive McClelland cites two connected examples of that course: Mozart’s *Thamos, König in Ägypten* (1776, revised and enhanced in 1779/80), and the legendary passage at the beginning of Haydn’s *Creation* “Es wurde Licht” (“There was

<sup>23</sup> Listen to Rudolf’s worthy *Serenade* for Clarinet, Viola, Bassoon & Gitar in B flat, for instance.

<sup>24</sup> Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment”, trans. Lewis White Beck, in *Kant on History*, ed. Beck 1963 (cited in Kramer 2011, 156).

<sup>25</sup> See more about references to *accompagnato* recitative and its possible interpretations in Grimalt 2020, 100, 307f., 333f., 345.

light'), which depicts the instant God creates light out of chaos and darkness, following its biblical description (McClelland 2012a, 153f).<sup>26</sup>

Similar dramaturgical sequences are represented in three different yet complementary musical settings of Goethe's paired poems *Meeresstille* ('Calm Sea') and *Glückliche Fahrt* ('Prosperous Journey'): Beethoven's cantata for chorus and orchestra, Op. 112, *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt* (1815); Schubert's song *Meeres Stille* D. 216; or Felix Mendelssohn's concert overture titled the same as Beethoven's work (1828). In all three cases, an initial state of ominous stillness is transformed into vigorous, euphoric music as the wind finally fills the boat's sails.<sup>27</sup>

All these dramaturgical plots can be subsumed under the motto *Per aspera ad astra*. Within the context of cultural history, the archetype of 'Changeover' is also directly linked to the narrative of 'overcoming' and indirectly to that of *Bildung*, i.e., education. In his review of the reception of Beethoven's music, Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, a pioneer in musical hermeneutics, argues that the dramaturgical sequence 'Struggle and Triumph' might be the central idea in the historical reception of Beethoven's music and persona (Eggebrecht 1994, 71).<sup>28</sup> In a Germanic context, Sanna Pederson connects the 'heroic' narrative with the strong idea of *Bildung* (2000, 324–326). This concept goes beyond mere training or specific skills to embrace the classical Greek idea of *Paideia*, an integral education aimed at giving meaning to human life, threatened by social institutions increasingly dominated by mechanisation and specialization. As a paradigmatic example of a *Bildungsroman* ('coming-of-age novel'), Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1795/96) can be cited.

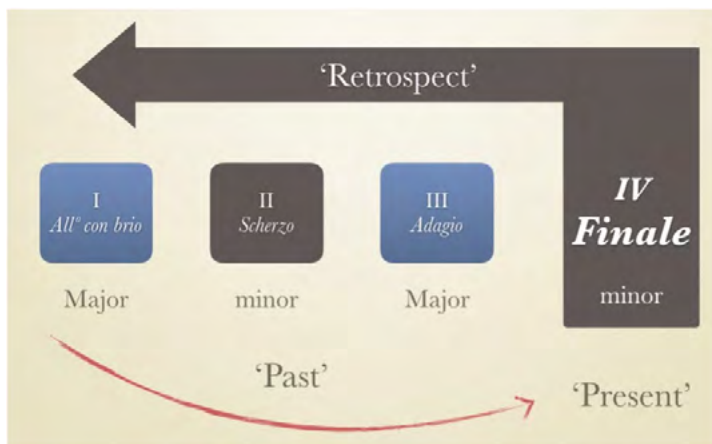
Another paradigmatic example illustrating the musical 'Retrospect' is Brahms's Op. 8 Trio. Originally composed as an early work in 1854, Brahms reworked and shortened it *in retrospect* during his maturity in 1899. Thus, the work's very genesis exemplifies a 'looking back'. In my 2018 analysis, the finale appears to be rooted in the present, from which a 'flashback' takes the musical persona through several stages of a life journey.<sup>29</sup> In the early version of the Trio, this flashback was enriched by several intertextual quotations that were removed in the 1899 version. Beginning with a first movement *Allegro* in major, followed by a macabre *scherzo* in minor as the second movement, and a third movement featuring a dialogue between the sacred and the worldly in major, the finale synthesises the entire drama of the four-movement cycle, culminating in an ultimate, irrevocable minor. A dramaturgical trajectory from major to minor is quite unusual and serves as one clue to a 'retrospective' interpretation. Another hallmark is hearing the 'loose-knit' passages as contemporaneous and the 'tight-knit' ones as representing a remembered past.

<sup>26</sup> The number in Thamos is *Ihr Kinder des Staubes*, act V, scene 3.

<sup>27</sup> See a comparative analysis of all three works in Kramer 1995, 127ff.

<sup>28</sup> More about *Beethoven Hero* in Burnham 1995.

<sup>29</sup> See Grimalt 2021 (conference held in 2018).

**Figure 1.** A diagram of the four movements of Brahms's Trio op. 8

Brahms himself placed the performer on a retrospective path by naming the fourth movement of his Sonata Op. 5 (1853) *Rückblick* (literally, 'Look back' or 'Retrospect'; in cinematographic terms, 'Flashback'). This movement is a variation in minor mode and martial tone of the earlier *Andante*, the sonata's second movement. There are countless other examples of the 'Retrospect' dramaturgical archetype in Romantic piano music. Many *Intermezzi* in Brahms's late piano works likely serve as *Rückblicke*, 'looks back' on past memories.<sup>30</sup>

The significance of the 'Retrospect' archetype in Brahms's oeuvre is further confirmed by Reinhold Brinkmann's analysis of the Second Symphony as a "Late Idyll". Rather than emphasising the work's more obvious halcyon qualities, Brinkmann highlights its subtly sombre undertones, describing the symphony as "an emphatic questioning of the pastoral world, a firm denial of the possibility of pure serenity" (1995, 79). In other words, it is a look back to an idyll that has forever vanished. This interpretation is supported by the reference in the symphony's first movement to Brahms's own song *Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze* ('How lovely to live in spring!'), which he composed earlier that spring. The composer even wrote the song's text onto his working copy of the symphony (Brinkmann 1995, 122f). Heine's poem, set to the song, embodies an ironic negation of pastoral themes, laceratingly expressed through pastoral language.

The dramaturgical archetype of the 'Retrospect' thematises the internalisation of music. It represents a reflection on what music can mean to a 19th-century subject – and to us today. It is music about (remembered) music, akin to the *mise en abyme* in narrative or painting, where the whole image is represented as part of the general picture.<sup>31</sup> For example, in Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*, a convex mirror placed in the background reflects the entire scene in miniature, along with two figures (one presumed to be the painter)

<sup>30</sup> More about Brahms's *Intermezzi* as hidden dramaturgical programmes in Grimalt 2018b.

<sup>31</sup> In narrative, Cervantes's *Don Quichotte* and André Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* stand out. There is also much theatre within theatre, as in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Molière's *Le malade imaginaire*, or Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, which includes a piece of *Commedia dell'arte*.

and other details.<sup>32</sup> In fact, both basic dramaturgical trajectories, *Per aspera ad astra* and *Retrospect*, as well as the dramateme of *Subjective Reaction*, can be subsumed into a larger dramaturgical trajectory, that of **Subjectification**. It seems to be one of the emblems of our Western culture in general, not only in music.

## Conclusion

In my analyses, especially of 18th-century music, I tend to identify dramaturgical designs and archetypes that point towards **subjectification**, i.e., the alteration or overcoming of institutional structures that might potentially oppress a represented ‘Subject’, as seen in *Changeover*. It should be clear to all involved that this is only a pattern I impose on music I love deeply because it offers me so much. By contrast, Stephen Rumph’s excellent analyses often lead to processes of ‘neutralization’, meaning the adaptation of ‘marked’ elements into ‘non-marked’ ones, following the terminology of Robert Hatten, whose framework both Rumph and I employ. Although reaching conclusions opposite to mine, Rumph uses very similar tools – a combination of semiotics and hermeneutics, with a particular focus on topical analysis.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it seems to boil down to a matter of standpoint. We share a hermeneutic approach, acknowledging that truth is complex and multifaceted, and that greater understanding arises when more perspectives contribute.

Many writers and artists have this insight more poetically. I will close with the words of the Belarusian Nobel Laureate in Literature Svetlana Alexievich, a great listener herself: *Truth does not reside in one heart only, in one mind only. It is somehow divided, multiple, diverse, and it is scattered around the world.*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> An interesting symbolic interpretation of the painting and many other details can be found in Gombrich 1982 (1950), 180.

<sup>33</sup> See Rumph 2012, Mozart and Enlightenment Semiotics.

<sup>34</sup> Nobel Lecture held in Russian in Stockholm, 7. 12. 2015. Consulted online September 2024 at <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2015/alexievich/lecture/>.

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## Chapter 2

## Toward A Non-Methodology for Walking in the Musical-Narrative Woods<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This essay takes Umberto Eco's *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* as a starting point to consider the ways in which musical interpretation can go beyond the "how" of semiotics, which was at the center of Eco's work, to the "what" of musical meaning, particularly of narrative meaning. I argue that narrative writ large offers metaphors for understanding the particularities of music's narrative impulse. These include agency, temporality, plot, setting, and a narrator, although the essay confines its observations to the narrator and temporality in music. Illustrating these metaphors of musical narrative are analyses of passages from Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3, Florence Price's String Quartet No. 2, and Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand. The essay concludes with a short argument about why the study of musical narrative is important for our understanding of subjectivity and of our place within the culture that we inhabit.

**Keywords:** musical narrator, temporality, agency, Umberto Eco, subjectivity

### Preliminary Remarks on Umberto Eco

The title of this essay makes an intertextual reference to *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, Umberto Eco's lectures in the Charles Eliot Norton series at Harvard University (1994). As the preeminent semiotician at the end of the 20th century (to say nothing of fame as an author and medievalist), Eco's work spread beyond a study of literature to inform research about musical meaning by Kofi Agawu (1991), Robert Hatten (1994), Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1990), Eero Tarasti (1994), and many others, including myself (2005). As much as I admire Eco's work, however, I have largely moved away from it because the discipline of semiotics was never meant to *produce* interpretations but to understand *how* they come about and function. Eco's work often exposes the semiotician's impulse to understand the structures of meaning rather than to form new interpretations. Reading his *Six Walks* carefully, for example, I see that he offers no interpretation of a literary work. Instead, Eco writes about structures between the author and the reader, between the fictional world and the real one, between the time of a story and the time of the plot, and so on.

Nevertheless, in the last chapter of his *Six Walks*, Eco turns to an idea that proves useful for solving a problem with musical narrative: how can we study music *as* narrative if music lacks the words necessary to tell a story? Eco offers a quote by A. J. Greimas

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

that answers this question: “narrativity is the organizing principle of all discourse” (1994, 130).<sup>2</sup> If music is a kind of discourse – and book titles by Agawu and Nattiez suggest that it is – then its organizing principle must be a narrative one. Fredric Jameson goes further in thinking about narrative as a kind of discourse (though it is that, too) by claiming that narrative is “the central function or *instance* of the human mind” (1981, 13). From this point of view, it is not only discourse but also all thought that presents itself in narrative form. Narrative is a way of organizing knowledge, giving it a beginning, middle, and end that marks it with a purposeful arc. But for Jameson, narrative is also an epistemological form that contains social and political dimensions.<sup>3</sup> As an artform imbued with a sense of direction toward a goal, then, music is quite capable of taking on the organizing principles of narrativity.

As useful as Eco can be in showing how we can rightfully consider music as a form of narrative, my perspective on his work is that there needs to be a dialogue between the semiotic concerns that he had mastered and other concerns, including those around hermeneutics, history, and subjectivity, the last of these in the form of Althusser’s concept of *interpellation*, which I will address at the end of this essay. Hermeneutic concerns mark what Hatten called the “second stage” of musical semiotics, which “reconciled the structuralist with the hermeneutic in interpreting musical meaning” (2000, xi). Lawrence Kramer addresses historical concerns, especially in terms of musical narrative, writing, “narrative rose to pre-eminence during the nineteenth century and brought music along with it” (2020, 395). Kramer’s argument allows us to circle back to Greimas and argue that music’s organizing principle became a narrative one, especially in the 19th century, when the epistemological form of knowledge changed from that of the 18th century, a taxonomic one, to a narrative one. We can find no greater example of this change in music’s epistemological form than in the works of Chopin, music’s narrative composer par excellence. Although Chopin remained reticent to express verbally the narratives behind his music, his improvisations throughout his life prompted listeners to hear stories of heroism, loss, nostalgia, and redemption in Poland’s difficult history (Bellman 2010).<sup>4</sup>

One of Eco’s main binaries, which subtly pulls in hermeneutic concerns, involves the everyday reader and what he calls the *Model Reader* (1994, 8ff). In a line of thought that is consonant with Jean-Jacques Nattiez’s conception of a semiotic tripartition (1990), Eco rightly argues that there can be no secure path of interpretation that runs from an author

<sup>2</sup> Eco is quoting Greimas and Courtés (1979).

<sup>3</sup> Jameson (1981). This claim about Jameson’s thinking on the connection between narrative, epistemology, and social/political acts runs throughout *The Political Unconscious* as the central thesis of the book.

<sup>4</sup> Bellman writes of the effects that Chopin’s improvisations had on his listeners in several passages. Of particular interest, though, is a passage where he discusses the reaction that the poet Bohdan Zaleski had to one of Chopin’s improvisations. After writing that Zaleski and other listeners felt that they “understood the story being told” in Chopin’s playing, Bellman continues with, “such programmatic conceptions, both for listeners and composers, suggest that our more modern view of absolute music in a pure, entirely nonassociative sense may not even have been imaginable at that time” (2010, 47).

through the text to the reader. To counter this problem, Eco invokes the model reader, who magically has all the historical, semiotic, and hermeneutic knowledge necessary to arrive at an acceptable meaning for a text. This model reader, though, is really nothing more than Eco himself. The concept, then, needs to be seen for what it is because a critic or scholar does not interpret a text in the same way that the everyday reader does. To the everyday reader, their interpretation of a text is every bit as valuable as that of a literary critic, whose writings the everyday reader would never consider consulting (and why should they?). The worry Eco appears to address with the model reader is that stray and unworthy interpretations might circulate. But an interpretation is not something that we can prove; it either sticks, which means that people accept it, or it fails to stick, which means that people reject it. The liveliness of our institutions rests in part on the fact that we will never arrive at the perfect interpretation, and that each generation can pick up a novel, poem, symphony, piano piece, etc. and read it anew. When we speak of musical narrative, then, we must be careful not to think of it in terms of a model listener. Other interpretations than our own, narrative or otherwise, are always possible. In what follows, I write as if the reader of this essay is willing to accept that music can be organized like a narrative and that my interpretations are not fanciful but real possibilities. If the reader of this essay is looking for an unassailable interpretation of music or any other text, then they need to move away from the humanities and toward the hard sciences.

Turning at last to a roadmap for what follows, I have written elsewhere that thinking about music as narrative offers a set of metaphors for arriving at an interpretation (2013, 11–14). These metaphors include agency, temporality, story, plot, setting, and sometimes, though rarely, a narrator. As with all interpretation, to hear these metaphors in music, I am alert for something odd, strange, out of place, or what Lawrence Kramer famously called a *hermeneutic window*, which “must be opened... through which the discourse of our understanding can pass” (1990, 6). For the remainder of this chapter, then, I will invoke just two of these metaphors, the narrator and temporality, and meld them with Eco’s structuralist outlook and the hermeneutic perspective I find necessary in arriving at interpretations of music. At the end of the essay, I will return to the promissory note I mentioned earlier about interpellation. I’ll begin with that most fraught of music’s narrative metaphors: the musical narrator.

## The Musical Narrator

Music only rarely reveals its narrator, and when it does, as Carolyn Abbate argues, it does so by making some discursive strategy to separate itself from the more conventional musical voices that surround it, often by reducing itself to a single line (1991, 19). A short but powerful example appears in Chopin’s *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, op. 61 of 1846. Late in the piece, the music turns from its variations on a polonaise theme to a dream sequence, introduced by a short chorale (m. 148) that sets the scene for a nocturnal topic (m. 152). The nocturne cannot maintain itself and begins to falter harmonically during a second statement of the theme (Example 1). Starting in m. 177 the left hand plays a descending melodic sequence while the right hand remains trapped on A#5. The agency of the noc-

turne loses itself, as if falling asleep, landing on an augmented-6th chord of E minor (m. 180) that never resolves. After a pause, a single melodic line leads the music to a new topic, a mazur in G# Minor (m. 182). I interpret that reduction to one voice in the music at m. 181 as a sign of the narrator, who directs our attention away from the nocturne and toward the mazur. So far, though, I have not offered an interpretation for this passage. I have only indicated that the music can signify a narrator in just the way that Abbate claims that music accomplishes this difficult task. What leads me to an interpretation are the topics on either side of the entrance of the narrator and their meanings in the salon culture that was Chopin's milieu. Halina Goldberg has argued that the chorale topic that often appears in Chopin's larger works signifies a prayer for a free Poland (2004), which, in the case of the *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, leads to a nocturne signifying a dream. We are given a musical portrayal of that dream, which nonetheless cannot maintain itself because it is not real. The narrator steps in to indicate the real problem, which is that Poland is not free and the Polish diaspora, of which Chopin was a member, might not ever return to their country. The mazur, a quintessential Polish dance, therefore, has its usual aura of grief, nostalgia, and loss. It is as if the music tells us by this brief entrance of the narrator that the Poles are dreaming of a future that can never be. The historical problem is well documented in Chopin's time: the loss of Polish independence with its tripartition between the Habsburg monarchy, Russia, and Prussia in 1795, and the failed November Uprising in 1830 followed by the execution or imprisonment of many Polish officers by Tsar Nicholas I dissolved Poland as an independent nation before and during Chopin's lifetime. When the musical narrator reveals his voice in the *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, then, it is as if he exhorts us to pay special attention to a dysphoric affect connected to Polish identity at the time.

**Example 1.** Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, entrance of narrator and beginning of mazur

The image displays two staves of musical notation from Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantaisie*. The top staff, starting at measure 177, features a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (D major/G# minor). It begins with a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking and a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The melody is characterized by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a *ten.* (tenuto) marking over a half note in measure 180. The bottom staff, starting at measure 182, also has a treble clef and the same key signature. It begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The melody consists of eighth notes, with a *3* (triple) marking over a group of notes in measure 183. The bass line for both staves is written in G# minor, featuring a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The notation includes various musical symbols such as accidentals, dynamics, and articulation marks.

Musical narration need not come from the reduction of its forces to a single line. In Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, op. 30 of 1909, I hear the voice of the narrator in the third movement during a passage when the orchestra drops out and the piano plays a few chords before the final section of the work (Example 2). We have just heard a series of variations, of which the last is impossibly virtuosic, and the musical plot is about to move to a short recapitulation before reaching an apotheosis of its most long-breathed melody. Before the musical fireworks can begin, though, a soft timpani roll makes space for the piano to play these chords that forego the virtuosity of the surrounding sections. This brief intrusion by a narrator, signified by the reduction in musical forces in both the orchestra and the piano, invokes the nostalgia that Jankélévitch (2003) recognized as one of music's foundational expressions.<sup>5</sup> It is as if Rachmaninoff reveals that the uplifting final section of the concerto hides the composer's lateness in musical history. The narrator in this section signifies a sorrow about that lateness, while intimating that the musical apotheosis that will soon finish the concerto only hides the true nature of things.

**Example 2.** Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 3, entrance of narrator in movement 3

The musical score for the entrance of the narrator in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3, movement 3, is shown. The score is in D minor and 3/4 time. It features a piano (p) and timpani (Timp) part. The piano part begins with a series of chords, marked with dynamics *pp*, *mf*, *cresc.*, *dim.*, *p*, and *dim.* The timpani part features a roll, marked with a *rit.* (ritardando) and a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The score is labeled "Entrance of Narrator" and "Timpani Roll". The page number 7463 is visible at the bottom.

## Lingering as Temporality in Musical Narrative

In Chapter Three of *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, Eco focuses on what he calls *lingering*, moments when the author spends an unusual amount of time on a small detail (1994, 49–73). Eco's concept ushers in the role of temporality in narrative. As the author begins to linger over details in a story instead of the plot, the temporality slows down.

<sup>5</sup> Jankélévitch associates music with nostalgia often in this book. One such passage reads, "for the past, absences and its languor, the nostalgia and remembrance, furnish music with a distant milieu..." The passage comes just before he asks rhetorically whether Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 3 is not "through and through a poem about exile and nostalgia" (2003, 51–52).

Temporality in music has been a contentious concept, since the time of music is simply the time of music: the time it takes for a piece of music to unfold may vary from performance to performance, but the time of its unfolding is its only temporality under the conventional view. Raymond Monelle (2000) has argued, though, that music is quite capable of *signifying* different temporalities, ranging from dramatic action to lyric stasis.<sup>6</sup> As such, music has the same temporal possibilities as a novel, and because music can give us a sense of stasis, it can linger over details, as in Eco's observations about fiction. One example comes from the third movement of Florence Price's String Quartet No. 2 in A minor of 1935, which is a *Juba Dance*. Frederick Douglass, the slave who gained his freedom and became an abolitionist in the United States, writes that the Juba dance was performed on plantations during holidays. He describes it this way: "The performer improvises as he beats, and sings his merry songs, so ordering the words as to have them fall pat with the movement of his hands" (1855, 185). Although Douglass later dismisses the Juba dance for its capacity to induce drunkenness among the slaves, his description makes it clear that the dance is an ebullient one.

The Juba dance in Price's second quartet begins with a habañera rhythm in the cello before the first violin plays the main melody. Price shows that she intends to dress up the dance with imitation and an equal distribution of melodic material that we associate particularly with European chamber music since Haydn. The moment of lingering happens after the first section comes to what sounds like a closing cadence, marked by a short cadenza in the viola. Now, the strings simply alternate between two chords, as if in no hurry to move on, and the section finally ends with a pentatonic flight by the first violin. The lingering in this case is a slowing of the musical action. Price takes her time at the end of the dance section of the movement to reveal the musical narrator, who pauses the narrative so we can ponder the dance we have just heard. A dance is usually a non-narrative form, although there are exceptions in Chopin and Ravel, but the hand of the narrator here makes us witness this movement from outside the framework of the dance. We are asked to hear it as one might see a historical picture: in this case, an idealized version of something from America's original sin (Example 3).

Although the Juba Dance in the music of Nathaniel Dett, Florence Price, and much later in the music of Nkeiru Okoye depicts the jubilation that Douglass describes, what these composers often leave out is Douglass's disgust with that dance. In his view, the Juba Dance was intended to keep slaves from understanding the full weight of their situation. The quiet repose in Price's dance from the String Quartet No. 2 gives us a chance to reflect on the practice as Douglass did when he was present at a holiday and realized that the fun and games were intended to make him forget, which is the problem of all history.

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<sup>6</sup> Monelle's discussion of musical temporality appears in two chapters of the cited work: "The Temporal Image" (2000, 14–40), and "Genre and Structure" (41–114). In the latter chapter, Monelle discusses music's ability to stop the action in favor of musical description, just as a novel might stop the plot to linger over the details of a setting.

**Example 3.** Price, String Quartet No. 2, moment of lingering at end of Juba Dance

35

Vn. I

Vn. II

Vla.

Vc.

mp

mp

mp

pizz.

mp

p

p

41

p

poco rit.

a tempo

[arco]

pp

**Ravel and Time's Arrow**

In this final section, I hope to show how the metaphors of agency, temporality, story, plot, and narrator work together. My starting point will come from Eco, who writes about three kinds of time involved in reading fiction: there is story time (the time that the story would take in real life), discourse time (the time an author might spend on one event or description) and reading time (which is self-evident) (1994, 54ff). It takes little thought to figure out that the three times rarely coincide. Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* may have passages that cover only a small span of story time but take the reader a great deal of time to read. And although it may feel like it takes a lifetime to read the 5,000 pages of Proust's novel, the reading time in no way corresponds to the story time, which covers most of Marcel's life. Curiously, Eco writes that in music there is "perfect congruence among the three times", which is demonstrably untrue (1994, 58).

As a counter to Eco's claim, I would like to consider Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand of 1930. Because of paratextual elements, such as the dedication to Paul Wittgenstein, the

pianist who lost his right arm in World War I, we can make the educated guess that the story is about a hero who experiences loss during the war. If we want to find signs of World War I in the concerto, we can do no better than to attend to a dramatic change of orchestration, tempo, and musical topic that begins at rehearsal 14. The entrance of the trumpets and the snare drum make the topic clear, which is reinforced by the steady marching of the accompaniment. Our musical agent is at war, and when he begins to play a theme against this military topic, it is a tarantella, a dance of death. As if to illustrate what will happen to our musical agent in the story, this whole section of the concerto with its single line in the piano really sounds like it is played by only one hand (Example 4).

**Example 4.** Ravel, Piano Concerto for the Left Hand, intrusion of war into the narrative

Tarentella Topic (several bars later)

Earlier in the concerto, Ravel makes every effort to have that single hand sound like two hands. The entrance of the piano at rehearsal 4, with its dramatic and virtuosic climb from the lowest note of the piano to a treble register, signifies the rise of the hero. As this opening cadenza continues, the acrobatic jumps between the low and high registers give us a sense that two hands are playing. Rather than simply remark that Ravel successfully recuperated the abilities of a hero who lost a hand in the war, I would like to suggest



that in terms of narrative there *are* two hands signified at the beginning of the concerto. Our musical agent is whole. Already, then, the story time of Ravel's concerto covers quite a span from a time before the war until the coming of that war, all of which would take much longer than the 18 minutes required to play this concerto. Contrary to Eco's thoughts on the matter, story time and listening time are not aligned in music's narratives.

The temporal situation of the concerto's story, though, is more complex and compelling than I have let on. After the agent rises during the cadenza at rehearsal 4, the piano immediately changes the mood of the concerto, singing a slower melody that sounds of nostalgia and loss. At this point, we can argue that the temporal position at the beginning of the concerto is not before the war but after it, as if the narrator is conjuring a memory of things past, which is certainly in keeping with the sense of time in France's early-modernist period. The temporality of the concerto, then, is quite complex. We begin with significations similar to those of a narrator introducing a character, who looks back in time before jumping forward in the narrative to a battle where the musical agent lost a part of himself. After the war-like middle section, the music moves to a long and difficult cadenza that repeats the material from the introduction while returning to the effect of two hands playing. Here we move to a temporal position after the war, when the hero tries to overcome his wounds. Just as we come to a position of triumph in the piano part, though, the orchestra returns with a final intimation of the war, as if the hero can never be healed from the devastation.

It would be easy to read this narrative as one of disability and how Ravel dealt with that problem by trying to make one hand sound like two, thus rectifying the war's disfiguring calamity. But I think a more powerful reading comes from considering this musical narrative as one of trauma, aligning with Ravel's own problem from the time of World War One to the end of his life. Writing of Ravel's music after the war, Jillian C. Rogers points to Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, where he argues that an "out-of-joint-ness" of time is an indication of spectral presences tied to loss (Rogers, 2023, 189–90). Although the Piano Concerto for the Left Hand comes more than a decade after the war, I find the spectral presence of trauma, signified by the missing hand that variously appears and disappears in the concerto. There is an out-of-joint-ness of time as the concerto moves back and forth from before the war, to the war itself, to nostalgic expressions, back to the war, and so on. Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand refuses the unidirectional imperative of time's arrow.

## Conclusion: Why Musical Narrative?

Before turning to my final point, I would like to review my stance on what the title of this essay calls a *non-methodology* for musical narrative. The reader may be thinking that I *have* offered a methodology. I simply use one of the narrative metaphors as a jumping point into a narrative interpretation. I confess, though, that I usually do not use this methodology myself, although it can be useful in teaching narrative analysis. To trope on the famous conclusion from Wittgenstein's treatise on philosophical logic, these metaphors for musical narrative simply form a ladder that has only one use (1921/1974, 74).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The exact statement comes from section 6.54 of Wittgenstein's treatise and reads (in English):

Once you have climbed into musical narrative with the propositions of agency, temporality, plot, the narrator, etc., you must discard the ladder of propositions and find your own way around.

I would like to conclude by explaining why I find musical narrative to be so important. What follows is necessarily a sketch that brings into play work I have done on Lacan and subjectivity (Klein, 2015). Most people misunderstand subjectivity as a fanciful set of ideas that all individuals have running in their minds, which, in terms of interpretation, may lead them to say something outrageous about a work of art or music. But subjectivity is the way that each of us is formed to live in a world that precedes our entrance into it. Rather than make us fanciful thinkers separate from all other people, the powers that form our subjectivity create a sameness in us, so that we can navigate the world as untroublesome citizens. Our subjectivity does not accompany us as we enter this world; rather, the subjectivity is constructed through what Althusser called *interpellation* (1971). As Pablo Vila writes about this concept, “subjects live ‘their real conditions of existence’ as if they themselves were the autonomous principle of determination . . . of those conditions, which, actually, they are not, since the cause of those conditions lies elsewhere, in the social and economic structure” (Vila 2014, 21). The social structure involves discourses both linguistic and non-linguistic, of which music belongs to the latter category. Music creates subjectivities, but it is important to note two things: first, several subjectivities inhabit the same subject; second, regarding music, the same piece or song can produce different subjectivities. The latter is the case because music, like all semiotic systems, is not singular in its meanings. One person listens to Ravel’s Piano Concerto for the Left Hand and hears how the hero overcomes the horrors of war, and another person listens to the same music and hears the crushing weight of an historical moment, while another hears only motives and melodies. In all cases, the subject has read the music, and the music has read the subject, or more properly, the music has inscribed a particular kind of subjectivity onto the subject: the music creates the one who overcomes, or the one who feels crushed by historical events, or the one who listens only to music’s structures. The last kind of subject in this example is the most dangerous, because music has read and inscribed that subject so as to make them think that music has no power at all. In this ideological moment, the music creates the one who hides from the very history that made them who they are.

Narrative comes into this dance of subjectivity as a structure that sutures the subject. Where the subject is necessarily fragmented, narrative gives the illusion of pulling everything together into a closed and satisfying whole. Characters, actions, settings, secret desires and open demands all fall into the order and power of the well-formed plot. In this temporary stitching of the subject, music adds a compelling immediacy and resonance that creates an affect in which we feel as if we have fallen into the narrative. In other words, musical narrative’s power brings us into the plot to discover ways of being

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“My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the *ladder* after he has climbed up it.)” (emphasis added). Lawrence Kramer similarly asks his readers to throw away the ladder of hermeneutical methods that he outlines in the opening chapter of his *Music as Cultural Practice* (1990, 14).

and doing that compel us to consider or re-consider who we are and where we belong in the larger narrative that is history. We study musical narrative to understand the self. In studying musical narrative, we take apart the stitches of the well-formed narrative to remind ourselves that as much as we love music, we must understand that it is doing something to us to make us feel a wholeness that we do not possess. But the situation is not as dire as it might seem. In his celebrated essay on the so-called *mirror stage*, Lacan wrote that it is not within the power of a psychiatrist to bring someone beyond the place where the true journey begins (1966/2006, 81). We all must try to pull ourselves together, so to speak, and begin a journey of self-understanding that nobody can take for us. One of our ways of coming to grips with understanding ourselves comes through studying musical narrative. I cannot give you a methodology for studying musical narrative because I cannot tell you how to go about understanding yourself. I can only tell you that if you do not interpret the music, narratively or otherwise, the music will interpret you, and your journey through this mixed-up world will be the poorer for it.

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## Chapter 3

## A Narrative Walk through Granville Bantock's *The Pierrot of the Minute Overture* (1908)<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Granville Bantock's comedy overture *The Pierrot of the Minute* (1908), based on Ernest Dowson's verse drama of 1892, offers an intriguing example of how we might understand narrative in relation to a musical refiguring of a literary text. Although the composer initially claimed that the overture had "no sequence of ideas" and simply created an "atmosphere" for Dowson's work, he went on to identify some connections between the overture and aspects of Dowson's plot; the situation was further complicated by a more detailed overview of Dowson's narrative that was included in the published full score of 1909. After noting how literary scholarship has highlighted core themes in Dowson's poetry and prose, this paper demonstrates how specific elements of Dowson's text correspond to the succession of musical events in the overture. In the wider context of Bantock's response to a wide range of literature in his orchestral works of 1890-1911 (with their distinctive approaches to structure, key relationships, and representation of character), Bantock's *The Pierrot of the Minute* can therefore be identified as a more detailed musical refiguring than might first be imagined.

**Keywords:** Granville Bantock, Ernest Dowson, narrative, music and literature, orchestral music

This keynote paper highlights some of the questions being posed in the "Narrative Walks through Music" conference. These include: What types of narratives do composers feel have potential for musical refiguring?<sup>2</sup> Can music refigure a narrative effectively, i.e., tell a story? What materials might the listener engage with in charting their narrative walks? Can the listener trace a narrative, even if a composer protests that one does not exist? And how might musical structure be manipulated to communicate particular narratives? In addressing these questions, I am going to focus on a composer who may be relatively unfamiliar: the British composer, conductor and educator Granville Bantock (1868–1946), who studied at London's Royal Academy of Music, and later became Head of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, and then Professor of Music at the University of

<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

<sup>2</sup> The term "refiguring" is one that I have used extensively in discussions of music-literature connections, given that it suggests a "translation" of a narrative into another form (e.g., Allis 2022a; 2022b).

For a more detailed exploration of Bantock's *The Pierrot of the Minute* in the context of his other literary-inspired orchestral works written c.1890–1911, see my forthcoming monograph, *Granville Bantock and the Orchestral Refiguring of Literature* (Allis 2026).

Birmingham. Unfortunately, the majority of his compositions are not regularly performed; one reason for this is that he was not interested in “Englishness” in terms of national identity – he was much more attracted by the East, or the idea of the “other”.<sup>3</sup> However, he did not assert any Western dominance over the East, noting instead the East’s superiority in terms of musical history and its importance as a creative spur: “The Eastern world feeds my imagination as with Flaubert; the West is to me barren & worn out” (Bantock 1896, 157; Allis 2017a, 139). He also learnt Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian.

Bantock is particularly suitable for a case study of music and narrative because of all the British composers working around the turn of the 20th century, he was the most significant in terms of testing music’s ability to refigure a range of literary texts orchestrally. This is evident in his pre-First World War literary-inspired orchestral projects (see Table 1). Although some of these works have not survived, the paratexts include a range of poetic genres (including the dramatic monologue, epic and satire), a novel (Bulwer-Lytton’s *Eugene Aram*), and dramatic works by Sophocles, Dowson and Ibsen. The most striking project relates to Thomas Carlyle’s published lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History* – it is a shame that Bantock’s work is not extant, as a musical representation of that text would have been fascinating. I will focus on just one of these compositions: Bantock’s 1908 comedy overture *The Pierrot of the Minute*, and want to explore how we might negotiate what Umberto Eco would call the potential “paths” through the “woods” of this musical text (1994, 6).

Our starting point is obviously Bantock’s title. As James Hepokoski has suggested, invoking Gérard Genette, titles “set up the framing conditions of a [musical] text’s reception” (Hepokoski 1992, 136). In this case, Bantock is suggesting a connection between his music and a verse drama by the decadent writer Ernest Dowson (1867–1900). Dowson’s one-act “dramatic phantasy” *The Pierrot of the Minute* was written in 1892 for the American actor and poet William Theodore Peters (1862–1905). Dowson found the creative process difficult: he described this as “a period of severe mental agony” (Plarr 1914, 67). However, the work was premiered at Chelsea Town Hall on 22 November 1892 under the auspices of the Primrose League, an organisation dedicated to the memory of the former British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. Peters played the part of Pierrot, with Ida North as the Moon Maiden – a role subsequently taken by Aubrey Beardsley’s sister Mabel at the Albert Hall Theatre in 1893.

It was Beardsley who provided the illustrations for the publication of Dowson’s verse drama in 1897 – a cover image, the frontispiece, a picture on the first page of the text, and an image in the end pages (Dowson 1897); this last image was reproduced in Bantock’s orchestral score (1909, preliminary page).

<sup>3</sup> This can be seen in works such as his ballet *Egypt*, the cantata *Omar Khayyām*, *Songs of the East*, the song cycle *Sappho*, and his refigurings of Thomas Moore’s “oriental romance” *Lalla Rookh* and Robert Southey’s poetry in his orchestral poems (Richards 2007, 129–146; Allis 2016, 143–174). See also the discussion of Bantock’s *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *Lalla Rookh* projects in my forthcoming *Granville Bantock and the Orchestral Refiguring of Literature* (Allis 2026).

**Table 1.** Bantock's literary-inspired orchestral works, 1890–1911

<b>Work</b>	<b>Paratext type</b>
<i>Satan in Hell</i> Overture (1890)	Milton, poetry; Doré illustration
<i>The Curse of Kehama</i> (1894–1901) [unfinished]	Southey, poetry
<i>Eugene Aram</i> Overture (1896)	Bulwer-Lytton, novel
<i>Thalaba the Destroyer</i> (1899)	Southey, poetry
<i>El Islam</i> (c.1901) [lost]	?
<i>King Lear</i> (c.1901) [lost]	Shakespeare, drama
<i>Comedy and Tragedy</i> (c.1901) [lost]	?
<i>Emperor and Galilean</i> (c.1901) [lost]	Ibsen, drama
<i>Heroes and Hero-Worship</i> (c.1901) [lost]	Carlyle, published lectures
<i>Hudibras</i> (1901)	Samuel Butler, poetry
<i>Dante and Beatrice</i> (1901, rev. 1911)	Dante, poetry/biography
<i>Fifine at the Fair</i> (1901, rev. 1911)	Browning, poetry
<i>The Witch of Atlas</i> (1902)	Shelley, poetry
<i>Lalla Rookh</i> (1901–3)	Thomas Moore, romance
<i>The Pierrot of the Minute</i> (1908)	Dowson, verse drama
<i>Overture to a Greek Tragedy</i> (1911)	Sophocles, drama

In terms of the plot, this concerns Pierrot who is led by a scroll to a sacred temple in a French park, where he wishes to experience an idealised love – “one hour of joy” (l. 192). After consulting parts of the scroll and commenting on it, he drinks a glass of wine to calm his nerves, and is then sent to sleep by soft lute music. The Moon Maiden appears, and although she warns Pierrot not to continue in his quest, he demands that her beauty be unveiled. A love scene follows; the Moon Maiden dances to help Pierrot “forget all weary things of earth” (l. 154), and after some discussion of the nature of Love, the two describe their respective worlds; whilst the immortal world is “too refined and rare” for mortals, Pierrot expands upon the “rout and festival” of his worldly experiences (ll. 365, 410). Birdsong heralds daybreak, and after music imitating the birds once again transports Pierrot into “soft troubled and oblivious sleep” (l. 470), the Moon Maiden decrees his fate: he will be forever haunted by her memory (“Go forth and seek in each fair face in vain, / To find the image of thy love again”, ll. 485–6). As she sings her final song confirming her influence over the still sleeping Pierrot, the curtain falls.

One area that we might explore further to understand the themes of Dowson's narrative is literary scholarship. Writers have identified a common trope in much of Dowson's poetry and prose: what the literary scholar Chris Snodgrass has highlighted as the contrast “between the chaotic clamor of the vulgar, timebound world” and the “aesthetic purity” of a “timeless, alternative world” (1992, 32). We can see this most clearly perhaps in Dowson's poem “Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration”, where the convent is a site of seclusion that contrasts with the “wild and passionate nature” of the world outside:

Calm, sad, secure; behind convent walls,  
 These watch the sacred lamp, these watch and pray:

And it is one with them when evening falls,  
 And one with them the cold return of day.  
 [...]

Outside, the world is wild and passionate;  
 Man's weary laughter and his sick despair  
 Entreat at their impenetrable gate:  
 They heed no voices in their dream of prayer.  
 [ll. 1–4, 13–16]

More striking is where Dowson's characters (or the poet-narrator) try to access, retain or recapture such timeless worlds: what Jan Gordon has described as a search for a central "paradise of art removed from the destructive ebb and flow of the world which rotates about it in a wheel-like pattern" (1967, 3). Hence attempts to recapture the bliss of springtime, to stop time by extending childhood, or as Snodgrass suggests, using "dream and revisionist memory" to create an "ideali[sed] 'remembrance' of a magical time that need not pass away" (1992, 35–36). For the central character Michael Garth in Dowson's short story "The Statute of Limitations", for example, the memory of his beloved's "eyes and her hair" was "a perceptual presence with him", rather than the reality of a recent photograph (Dowson 1895, 130). As Snodgrass notes, these quests to retain such moments ultimately fail, representing "the empty mirror" of the protagonists' "own futile, self-indulgent dreams" (1992, 41). Dowson's verse drama therefore fits this template perfectly. We have Pierrot attempting to escape the "chaotic clamor of the vulgar, timebound world" by entering the "timeless" and pure world of the Moon Maiden. Despite experiencing "one hour of love", he is not able to remain in this "other" world; we are left with the sleeping Pierrot, but once he wakes, he will return to a frustrated life in the real world, searching for a vision that he cannot recapture.

The central issue, then, is how we might create a meaningful narrative walk through Bantock's overture. First, it is useful to remind ourselves of James Hepokoski's much-cited definition of programme music:

The essence of a [symphonic poem] is situated in the listener's act (anticipated by the composer's) of connecting text and paratext, music and nonmusical image, and grappling with the implications of the connection. The genre exists [. . .] solely within the receiver, who agrees to create it reciprocally by indicating his or her willingness to play the game proposed by the composer; it does not exist abstractly in the acoustical surface of the music (Hepokoski 1992, 136).

As part of this compositional "game", then, the key phrase here is "grappling with the implications of the connection". So what might we use to help us with this "grappling"? The first area to explore is Bantock's correspondence. On 15 November 1909, Bantock wrote to the music critic Ernest Newman, and suggested: "The Overture does not attempt to represent the story, which is to follow, but only to create an atmosphere for the play, consequently there is no regular development or sequence of ideas" (letter dated 15 November 1909, in Allis 2017a, 238). So one approach might be to simply hear the overture as an "atmosphere" that parallels the general mood of Dowson's verse drama – nothing more. However, Bantock went on to say this:



Pierrot is chiefly concerned in it. His various moods, & superficial gaiety, & the pathetic little soul within him, seemed to me to require more emphasis at the beginning, or in the Prelude – in order to give the audience the key of his character.

He practically occupies the stage of the Comedy Overture until 2 bars before 38, when the action of the play is foreshadowed by his falling asleep. The birds twitter their evening song during the *Lento Sostenuto*, & the Moon Maiden appears to him in his Dream at 42. His arrival of love is in the 1<sup>st</sup> Horn & Violas as a counterpoint to the Moon Maiden. At 48 he sinks into forgetfulness, and at 50 wakes up to find it all only a Dream. [...] He slinks away abashed, & the final chord in the flutes is intended to convey the hollowness of it all. The Play now should follow, and by this means, any anti-climax is avoided. The Overture should only suggest & not attempt to describe the action of the play (letter dated 15 November 1909, in Allis 2017a, 238).

So we have a tension between Bantock's initial disavowal of a "sequence of ideas" and his subsequent highlighting of selected musical events in the score. Our second approach might therefore be to view the overture as a "suggestion" of some of the events in Dowson's verse drama.

There are two other paratexts that we might consider. First, the programme note at the overture's 1908 premiere at the Worcester Festival, which seems to confirm this "suggestive" path:

the composer has sought to suggest the main features of the poem; the character of Pierrot, his hopes and fancies, his falling asleep while the birds twitter their lullaby, the vision of the moon-maiden, coming to him in his dreams and his awakening as daylight returns.<sup>4</sup>

However, the published score of 1909 includes a more detailed overview of Dowson's plot:

Pierrot enters a glade in the park of the Petit Trianon at twilight, led thither in obedience to a mysterious message, which bids him come to sleep one night within these precincts if he would encounter Love. Half whimsical, half fearful, he wonders why he, so careless, thoughtless, and gay, should now be filled with wistful longing; and in the fast-falling darkness he lies down on a couch of fern, and falls asleep. A Moon-maiden descends the steps of the Temple of Love, and, bending over the sleeper, kisses him. He awakes and throws himself at her feet in rapt devotion, though she warns him that the kisses of the Moon are of a fatal sweetness, and that

"Whoso seeks her she gathers like a flower  
He gives a life, and only gains an hour."

But Pierrot, reckless, demands the pure and perfect bliss, though life be the price to pay. With gay laughter and sprightly jest they learn together the lore of Love; but day-break approaches, the birds awaken, and the Moon-maiden must leave him. Together they gaze at the coming dawn; then Pierrot, sinking back on his couch, falls softly asleep once more, and the Moon-maiden vanishes.

The Prelude ends with the awakening of Pierrot, his love-dream being but the illusion of a minute (Bantock 1909, preliminary page).

<sup>4</sup> Worcester Music Festival, Evening Concerts, 9 September 1908, programme booklet, p. 6. (Anon. 1908, 6).

Although Bantock provides no detailed plan here of which specific aspects of the score might relate to these details of the plot, this encourages the listener to make more overt connections between the musical events of the overture and the narrative events in Dowson's text. It is therefore this third type of approach – viewing the overture as a detailed refiguring of Dowson's narrative – that I want to explore. In fact, we can map the succession of musical events in the overture with specific elements in Dowson's text in an even more detailed way than this prompt in the score might suggest. If we also situate Bantock's overture within the wider frame of his pre-war musical refigurings, hopefully I can convince you what a fascinating composer Bantock is in terms of connections between music and literature, and issues of representation, narrative and structure.

So how might we trace Dowson's drama in our narrative walk through Bantock's overture? Let us start with the opening, and Bantock's representation of the Pierrot figure, which takes the form of a scherzo in E minor. It was Bantock's former composition teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, Frederick Corder, who suggested that the scherzo genre was ripe for development:

The Scherzo of the average German composer makes me want to cry. It is simply like any piece whatever of Schumann's played one in a bar. [. . .] What the would-be writer of Scherzos really needs is to study his Haydn and learn how to make capital out of odd accents and overlappings and omissions of bars [. . .] the best way of ensuring liveliness is to get plenty of sprightly phrases in the bass; where this cannot be done at least break up the bass and let us have as little of it as possible (Corder 1909, 55–56).

Bantock's short introductory section marking Pierrot's arrival in the glade – a dominant pedal in E minor – incorporates the dislocation that Corder suggested. Following a descending whole-tone scale, stuttering rhythmic dislocations on solo bassoon and lower strings establish the character's comedic credentials by varying the length of tied notes, introducing pauses, and offering different gradations of a chromatic ascent (Example 1).

**Example 1.** *The Pierrot of the Minute*, Introduction, m. 10–33

The musical score for Example 1, *The Pierrot of the Minute*, Introduction, measures 10–33, is presented in two staves. The top staff is for bassoon, violin, and double bass (bn, vc, db) and the bottom staff is for solo bassoon (solo bn). The score is in E minor and features a descending whole-tone scale and stuttering rhythmic dislocations. The top staff includes dynamic markings such as *p sost.*, *stacc.*, *p sost.*, *stacc.*, *p sost.*, *cresc.*, and *G.P.* (Grave). The bottom staff includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *poco cresc.*, *cresc.*, and *mp*. The score is divided into three measures, numbered 1, 2, and 3. Measure 1 starts with a descending whole-tone scale. Measure 2 continues the scale and includes a *stacc.* marking. Measure 3 ends with a *mp* marking.

This all adds to the listener's disorientation. The rhythmic instability of the introduction is matched by the tonal instability of the scherzo proper. Although this begins in E minor, after five bars the key moves to C minor, then E flat major; and although Pierrot's main theme begins in E flat, its sequential treatment adds to the sense of volatility. Example 2 outlines the tonal fluctuations at the beginning of Pierrot's E flat major theme. There is further sequential writing at the *Allegretto capriccioso* in 2/4 (described in the Worcester

Festival programme note as representing Pierrot's "whimsicality & gaiety" (Anon. 1908, 6), where several five-bar phrases continue to undermine any stability in Pierrot's music (Example 3). This whole first section therefore not only establishes the character of Pierrot, but it underlines the trope highlighted in literary scholarship: the "chaotic clamor" of the "timebound" world. Table 2, which should be referred to throughout the following discussion, places this section in context by outlining the structure of the comedy overture as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

**Example 2.** Pierrot's theme, 12:3–15:6

**Example 3.** Pierrot's "whimsicality and gaiety", 26:5–10

**Allegretto capriccioso. [♩ = 80]**

muted tpt,  
vln 2 pizz, div

From the world of Pierrot, Bantock then had to find a way to engage with the timeless world of the Moon Maiden. The composer decided to suggest a gradual transition to this other world. This transitional portal is announced by a muted ascending solo violin scale, and a sudden modulation to G flat major. Two different types of music are juxtaposed, then repeated, both based on Pierrot's chromatic motif. First, we have a descending expressive melody on oboe and muted viola accompanied by harp arpeggios, and muted string trills and tremolos, suggestive of a magical quality; second, a more playful music with subsequent *pizzicato* echoes of the scherzo (Example 4).

<sup>5</sup> In the table, upper case designates a major key, and lower case a minor key.

**Table 2.** Bantock, *The Pierrot of the Minute*, overall structure

Bar	Musical event	Key
TIMEBOUND WORLD (Scherzo complex)		
1 <i>Presto</i> , 3/8	Introduction	e (V)
4:5 <i>Allegro Vivo</i>	Pierrot	e – c – E $\flat$ – c – e – c – E $\flat$ – g – d – a – seq – a – seq
26:5 <i>Allegretto Capriccioso</i> , 2/4		G $^9$ – F – A $\flat$ – seq
TRANSITION/PORTAL		
29:7 <i>Più moto, con grazia</i> , 3/8	reading of the scroll	G $\flat$
33:5 <i>Allegretto</i>	drunken waltz	G $\flat$ – seq
37:9 <i>Poco tranquillo</i>	descent into sleep	C (chrom)
40:4 <i>Lento sostenuto</i> , 3/4	twittering birds/sleep	F (V)
TIMELESS WORLD		
42:3 <i>Molto Lento Cantabile</i>	Moon Maiden/arrival of love	F – seq
45:6 <i>Più lento</i> , 9/8	Moon maiden's dance	seq
TRANSITION/PORTAL		
48:1 <i>a tempo, Poco languido</i> , 3/8	descent into sleep	A $\flat$ , D, B, C pedals
RETURN TO TIMEBOUND WORLD		
49:9 <i>Presto</i>	Introduction (truncated)	e (V)
50:7 <i>Allegro vivo</i>	scherzo fragment	e

**Example 4.** The reading of the scroll, 29:7–30:4

**Più moto, con grazia.** [M.M. ♩ = 144]

Violins (muted) trem. *pp*

Oboe & Viola (muted) soli *mp con espress.*

Violoncello & Double Bass pizz *pp*

Violins/picc *mf cresc.*

Oboe/Flute *f cresc.*

Violoncello & Double Bass *f cresc.*

[etc.]

In searching for a parallel in Dowson's text, where a magical "otherness" is contrasted twice with something more earthbound, one passage seems to fit the bill. Here Pierrot reads from the scroll (a reference to the "other" world – italicised in Dowson's text) then comments on it:

*Pierrot.*

*"He loves to-night who never loved before;  
Who ever loved, to-night shall love once more."*

*I never loved! I know not what love is.*

*I am so ignorant – but what is this?*

*(Reads)*

*"Who would adventure to encounter Love  
Must rest one night within this hallowed grove.  
Cast down thy lilies, which have led thee on,  
Before the tender feet of Cupidon."*

*Thus much is done, the night remains to me.*

*Well, Cupidon, be my security!*

*Here is more writing, but too faint to read.*

*(He puzzles for a moment, then casts the scroll down).*

*Hence, vain old parchment. I have learnt thy rede!*

*[ll. 28–39]*

Bantock then introduces a waltz, also in G flat major. Rather than simply suggesting Pierrot's "various moods", here the music's befuddled chromaticisms and *tempo rubato* suggest Pierrot inebriated by his flask of wine. As Bantock confirmed to Newman, the interruption of the waltz by the return of the muted textures over a C pedal suggests how a "faint" music encourages Pierrot to fall asleep; the sounds of the twittering birds explain the *Waldweben* soundscape at the ensuing *Lento sostenuto*, and the heightened presence of the solo violin confirms that the journey to the "other" world is complete. So the overture's structure so far consists of an unstable scherzo reflecting the timebound world of reality, then a portal to the "other" world that includes a representation of Pierrot reading the scroll, his becoming inebriated, and falling asleep.

For the music of the Moon Maiden, Bantock mirrored the semitonal relationship in the scherzo (E minor to E flat major) by offering a central F major episode that chromatically colours the G flat of the transition. Paced at the slowest tempo in the work (a crotchet speed of 60), her *Molto Lento cantabile* theme in violins and clarinets appears in counterpoint with "the arrival of love" in the horns and violas (Example 5). References to Pierrot's chromatic material on two clarinets then echo the conversational nature of Dowson's text as Pierrot and the Moon Maiden discuss the nature of his plight:

*Pierrot.*

*Now I have lost my heart, and gained my goal.*

*The Lady.*

*Didst thou not read the warning on the scroll?*

*Pierrot (Picking up the parchment).*

*I read it all, as on this quest I fared,*

*Save where it was illegible and hard.*

*The Lady.*

Alack! Poor scholar, wast thou never taught  
 A little knowledge serveth less than naught?  
 [ll. 130–5]

**Example 5.** The Moon Maiden and arrival of love, 42:2–6**Molto lento cantabile.** [M.M. ♩ = 60]

The ecstatic quality of Bantock's music reflects how Pierrot abandons himself to his fate. This is followed by a more balletic music at the sequential *Più lento* section that surely represents the Moon Maiden's dance designed to seduce the reclining Pierrot:

*The Lady.*

What visitants across his spirit glance,  
 Lying on lilies, while he watch me dance?  
 Watch, and forget all weary things of earth,  
 All memories and cares, all joy and mirth,  
 While my dance woos him, light and rhythmical,  
 And weaves his heart into my coronal.  
 [ll. 152–7]

Having sampled this timeless world, Pierrot then has to return to normality. The obvious way to represent Pierrot's final descent into sleep was to replay some of the textures of the previous transition. There was one remaining problem, however: deciding how the overture should finish. Although Dowson's verse drama ends with the Moon Maiden standing over the sleeping Pierrot, Bantock had to find a better musical solution for the final few bars. He was helped by the fact that Dowson encouraged Theodore Peters to write his own Epilogue, where Pierrot appears in front of the curtain to address the audience directly:

The sun is up, yet ere a body stirs  
 A word with you, sweet ladies and dear sirs [. . .]  
 Then pardon my Moon Maid and me, because  
 We craved the golden shower of your applause!

Pray shrive us both for having tried to win it,  
And cry, "Bravo! The Pierrot of the minute!"

This was incorporated in early performances of the play, and was also published separately in Peters's 1896 volume of poems and translations, *Posies Out of Rings and Other Conceits* (1896, 73–74), before appearing in the 1913 edition of Dowson's play after his death. Bantock's suggestion of a return to the world of reality was therefore in the form of a truncated replaying of the opening music – first the return of the whole-tone scale over the dominant pedal, then (via a clear E minor cadence missing from the introduction) a brief, scurrying reference to the scherzo. This solution echoed the protagonist's physical return in Peters's Epilogue, creating a clear frame for the piece. The final bare fifth in the flutes underlines the futility of Pierrot's quest: what Bantock called "the hollowness of it all".

So, despite Bantock's initial claim that *The Pierrot of the Minute* had no "sequence of ideas", and was designed simply to create an "atmosphere" for any performance of the play that might follow, the overture does outline a series of musical events that mirrors details of Dowson's narrative, and which is surely more than a "suggestion": the establishment of Pierrot, his reading the scroll and commenting on it, becoming inebriated, falling asleep, encountering and conversing with the Moon Maiden, experiencing her seductive dance, and descending into sleep once more. The final truncated reference to the scherzo also parallels Theodore Peters's Epilogue, where Pierrot returns to the stage. The music itself – a central stable "otherness" that contrasts with the restless, unstable scherzo surrounding it, is also a direct representation of what literary scholars have identified as a Dowsonian trope: a central "paradise of art [...] removed from the destructive ebb and flow of the world which rotates about it in a wheel-like pattern" (Gordon 1967, 3); and the final hollow fifth highlights the futility of attempting to retain this vision. Our narrative walk through Bantock's overture, with its succession of incidents, therefore creates a clear connection between Dowson's verse drama and Bantock's overture as a musical refiguring of the narrative events.

Let us return to that list of Bantock's early orchestral projects in Table 1. Having established Bantock's ability to create a detailed musical refiguring of Dowson's narrative, it should come as no surprise that he was able to do this elsewhere. I want to touch briefly on the issue of structure in these works. What is striking is how each of these compositions has a different approach to structure as a distinctive response to the literary narrative on which it is based. Bantock was very clear that conventional musical forms were often too restrictive. Under the pseudonym G. Ransome, he wrote an article called "The Idea in Music" in the journal that he created, the *New Quarterly Musical Review*, which outlined his position:

The Sonata, or Symphony, as it stands at present, may be regarded as an arid form of abstract musical thought [. . .]. The composer of modern days who would present his work to the world in an abstract form, conceived upon no definite or titled Idea, is injuring his own position, and seriously handicapping the progress of Art, which must ever advance. [. . .] Cut away the useless encumbrances of classic form, and we find ourselves free to act. The air that we breathe is fresher, and untainted by the musty odour of the midnight lamp (Ransome [Bantock] 1896, 186–188).

There are parallels here with Richard Strauss's suggestion to the conductor Hans von Bülow: "I consider it a legitimate artistic method to create a correspondingly new form for every new subject" (Schuh and Trenner 1955, 82).

We have seen how the modified ternary form of *The Pierrot of the Minute* communicates the idea of a journey to the "other" world and back again. Elsewhere, Bantock manipulates rondo and sonata designs to create deformational structures reflective of his literary paratexts.

In *The Witch of Atlas*, for example, an introductory and closing F major frame that establishes the sense of mythmaking encloses a D flat major rondo structure (see Table 3). However, not only does the A section modulate, and transform thematically (mirroring the metamorphic imagery of Percy Shelley's poem), but its final return in bar 198 (in F major, not D flat) conflates rondo and episode material. In terms of sonata structures, one striking example is what I think is his most successful orchestral poem, *Fifine at the Fair*, written in 1901, revised in 1911 and premiered in 1912. This is based on a poem by Robert Browning that has a very complex narrative. After a Prologue, we have a main section (132 verses) where "Don Juan" walks around a country fair in France with his wife Elvire. As they walk, he offers a defence of inconstancy – being unfaithful – and focuses on the gypsy dancer Fifine, his potential mistress, to advance his argument. After much philosophising, comparing wife and mistress, he eventually decides to remain with his wife. However, Fifine places a letter into his hand; he says he needs "five minutes" to clear the matter up, and does not return. Then, in an Epilogue, "The Householder" (seen as an extension of the Don Juan character), sitting at home alone, looks forward to being reunited with his dead wife in heaven.

**Table 3.** Rondo deformation in Bantock's *The Witch of Atlas*

Bar	Section	Key
1	Introductory frame	F – D $\flat$ (V)
64	A: The witch I	D $\flat$ – D – E $\flat$
99	B (episode I: creatures; witch reference)	seq – D $\flat$ (V)
138	A': The witch II	D $\flat$
152	link	seq – f (V)
165	C (episode II: "mighty legions")	f – c
194	Harp cadenza	F (V)
198	A": The witch III/"mighty legions" conflation	F – f
217	Coda: introductory frame replayed	F

Table 4 outlines the musical structure of Bantock's orchestral poem. After a Prologue, we have an expository space with music for the fair, Fifine and Elvire – essentially a three-key exposition. The tonality is symbolic, as both wife and mistress share a key signature of four sharps: Fifine's music is in C# minor; Elvire's is in E major. There is no developmental space. Instead, to represent Don Juan's vacillating decisions, we have a recapitulatory space with multiple replaying of material. After the return of the fair, Elvire's music is revisited



in the tonic to represent the Don's decision to remain with his wife; however, this is a brief reference on a dominant pedal – not a convincing decision – and is followed by a full return of Fifine's music in the tonic, to reflect the Don's assignation with her. The Epilogue then begins with a fugato to represent the Householder's brooding. The fair music returns once more, leading to what we have been expecting all along – a full, extended replaying of Elvire's music in the tonic, suggestive of the final reunion of husband and wife.

**Table 4.** Bantock, *Fifine at the Fair*, simplified structure

Bar	Section	Key
1–10:13	Prologue	D
EXPOSITORY SPACE		
1	The Fair	D – c# (V)
20:10	Fifine	c# – D (V)
34:11	link	→ E (V)
35:1	Elvire	E – (c#) – E
RECAPITULATORY SPACE		
38:5	The Fair I	seq
42:9	Elvire I	D (V)
43:7	Fifine	D – c# (V)
55:1 (Epilogue)	Householder fugato	d
59:7	The Fair II	D (V)
63:1	Elvire II	D

Browning's poem is a dramatic monologue – the story is told by just one speaker, the Don Juan figure. How does Bantock suggest this? By using the solo cello to represent Don Juan; this instrument introduces the other characters as a dialogue with their instruments – whether Fifine on the clarinet, or Elvire on the solo violin. And just in case we underestimate what a close reading of Browning's poem Bantock's refiguring is, two poetic lines are highlighted in particular. In verse 32, Fifine declares: "I'm just my instrument". As she is associated with the clarinet, Bantock takes this line literally by representing her as a solo clarinet cadenza. The second striking poetic line is one of many references by Browning to music theory: "The augmented 6<sup>th</sup> resolved [. . .] Into [. . .] D major natural" (verse 42); Bantock's last two chords (Example 6) outline that exact progression.<sup>6</sup>

Bantock's *The Pierrot of the Minute* is therefore just one example of the composer's ability to create detailed musical refigurings of literary narratives. Not only was he keen to create distinctive musical structures to reflect the specific nature of his paratexts, but he thought carefully about symbolic key relationships, instrumentation to reflect characters,

<sup>6</sup> For discussions of Bantock's *The Witch of Atlas* and *Fifine at the Fair*, see Allis (2017b, 6–28; 2012, 133–188). Revised and refocused versions of these discussions can be found in my forthcoming *Granville Bantock and the Orchestral Refiguring of Literature* (Allis 2026).

and how a series of musical events might mirror a range of narrative plots. Of course, just as Umberto Eco suggests that readers can “make their own choices in the narrative wood” relating to a literary text (1994, 8), so the listener has options in terms of paratexts that might be accessed in charting a narrative walk through Bantock’s musical scores. However, we can appreciate these musical refigurings best – and admire Bantock’s skill in the process – by treating them as close readings of their literary sources.

**Example 6.** *Fine at the Fair*, final chordal progression

The musical score for 'Fine at the Fair' is presented in a single system. It begins with a piano (pp) dynamic and a 'Grave' tempo marking. The instrumentation includes flutes, clarinets, horns, violins, and violas. The score features a variety of musical notations, including a final chordal progression marked with 'ffz dim.' and 'sfz'. The score is written for a full orchestra and includes a vocal line with double bass.

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## Chapter 4

# Contemporary Serbian Theoretical Thought through Narrative Walks<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This chapter explores contemporary Serbian theoretical thought through narrative analyses of post-tonal music. It focuses on the work of Atila Sabo, Srđan Teparić, and Tijana Ilišević, who, building on the legacy of Dejan Despić – particularly his distinction between *tonalnost* and *tonalitet* – have developed original approaches. Sabo analyzes tonal/atonal space, Teparić examines the resemantization of tonality, while Ilišević investigates narrativity in sound mass music through cognitive transmedial narratology. This study shows that Serbian music theory is positioning itself as relevant on the international stage by exploring new forms of spatio-temporal relationships and the narrative potentials of post-tonal music.

**Keywords:** Serbian music theory, post-tonal music, narrative analysis/narrativity, resemantization of tonality, sound-mass music

## Introduction

In recent decades, Serbian music theory has increasingly focused on the exploration of meaning in 20th-century music. Three authors – Atila Sabo (b. 1980), Srđan Teparić (b. 1974), and Tijana Ilišević (b. 1988) – have directed their interest in post-tonal music from the period between 1917 and 1980 toward the study of its narrative capacities. These music theorists have researched new forms of spatial and temporal relationships as manifested in selected post-tonal works. In their efforts, they have emphasized strategies for realizing the narrative potential of music composed after the “common practice of tonality”. A unifying point where the theories of all three authors converge is the concept of tonal/atonal space. This is not coincidental, as Serbian music theory in the second half of the 20th century was notably grounded in traditional harmonic analysis, and this tendency has continued in the 21st century.

A key figure in the development of Serbian music theory was the composer and music theorist Dejan Despić (1930–2024). His most significant study is titled *Harmony with Harmonic Analysis*, the first edition of which was published in three volumes in

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1993/1994.<sup>4</sup> In this work, the author provides a historical and stylistic overview of the development of harmony. The first volume is dedicated to the harmony of the Baroque and Classical periods (including a ‘prehistory’ that explains the emergence of the major-minor system); the second volume focuses exclusively on Romantic harmony – which is to be expected, as this era witnessed the most complex expression of tonality; and the third volume addresses Impressionist harmony and the development of harmony throughout the 20th century, with chapters dedicated to atonality, dodecaphony, integral serialism, and related topics. Despić’s textbook not only influenced Serbian music theorists, but also stands as one of the key works for the study of traditional harmonic analysis across all the countries of the former Yugoslavia. It is therefore unsurprising that Serbian theorists have turned to the field of tonality/atonality, particularly within the framework of contemporary music theory.

The textbook is especially intriguing in that Despić was among the few authors who explicitly distinguished between *tonalnost* and *tonalitet* – a distinction not commonly made in the music-theoretical traditions of other countries.<sup>5</sup> In this book, Despić offered definitions for both terms. He defined *tonalnost* as a general feature of any music that possesses a tonal centre:

Since the vast majority of other music [*that which does not belong to the so-called tradition of art music – authors’ note*], whether in its historical development or in other domains – primarily folklore – is not devoid of certain tonal gravitation, the occurrence of such gravitation that does not form the relationships of classical *tonalitet* [emphasis added] is referred to, in a broader sense – as **tonalnost**. Thus, one can say that *tonalitet* is merely one specific and highly systematized manifestation of *tonalnost* in music [emphasis added] (Despić 2002, 11).

*Tonalitet*, on the other hand, is historically defined by what we understand as major and minor: “One of the most significant phenomena in music, the **major-minor tonalitet**, is commonly defined as a system of relationships among tones or chords within a given (major or minor) scale, which tend toward one of them as the center – the tonal center, the tonic” (Despić 2002, 11). From these two statements, it is evident that Serbian music theory places particular emphasis on the development of *tonalitet*, which is why members of the subsequent generation of music theorists have continued to explore this field.

<sup>4</sup> Dejan Despić, *Harmony with Harmonic Analysis*, Part I [*Harmonija sa harmonskom analizom*, Prvi deo] (Belgrade: University of Arts), 1993; *Harmony with Harmonic Analysis*, Part II [*Harmonija sa harmonskom analizom*, Drugi deo] (Belgrade: University of Arts), 1994; *Harmony with Harmonic Analysis*, Part III [*Harmonija sa harmonskom analizom*, Treći deo] (Belgrade: Association of Serbian Composers), 1994. As a long standing professor of music theory and analysis, Despić is also the author of numerous other textbooks and handbooks, which have been widely used in teaching at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade and other music academies and secondary music schools.

<sup>5</sup> Where necessary to differentiate between *tonalnost* and *tonalitet* – a distinction not present in English terminology – this text will use the Serbian terms. In general, *tonalnost* can be translated as “tonality”, but also “tonal centredness”, and *tonalitet* is commonly translated as “key”, but actually the Serbian term has a broader meaning.

Another important reason why Serbian music theory emerged as a distinct school lies in the establishment of the Department of Music Theory at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, which only happened in 2008. Music theory had been the subject of academic study in Serbia in the earlier decades; however, it was only in 2008 that it received official accreditation as a scientific discipline. Consequently, this date may be considered the commencement of a new stage in the scholarly development of music theory in Serbia. This department has been active at all levels of higher education – undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies. The first PhD in music theory was awarded in 2016 to Srđan Teparić, who defended a dissertation titled *Resemantization of Tonality in the First Half of the XX Century (1917–1945)*, under the supervision of Ana Stefanović (who had earned her doctorate from the Department of Musicology). The second theorist to earn this degree was Atila Sabo, who completed his doctorate in 2018 with a dissertation titled *The Post-Tonal Context and the Narrative Function of Harmonic Language in the Music of Shostakovich, Hindemith, and Bartók*, also mentored by Ana Stefanović.<sup>6</sup> Tijana Ilišević completed her doctoral studies in 2023 with a dissertation titled *Post-Tonal Music in the Light of Cognitive Transmedial Narratology*, supervised by Milena Medić.

Although the content of these dissertations was inevitably influenced by the candidate's mentors, their titles alone reflect a significant leap forward in Serbian music theory. What was once grounded primarily in pedagogical concerns and framed within the boundaries of traditional music theory has now shifted into the domain of scholarly discourse, fully aligned with developments on the international stage. The works of major music theorists – most notably Eero Tarasti (b. 1948), Robert Hatten (b. 1952), Kofi Agawu (b. 1956), among others – have become essential reading not only at the doctoral level but also, in some areas, within master's programs and even in the later stages of undergraduate academic study. This has allowed Serbian music theorists to bridge the gap between the practices of traditional analysis and the achievements of contemporary global scholarship. The result of this intellectual advancement is the creation of three well-developed and analytically purposeful theoretical frameworks, each dedicated to understanding tonality and atonality in 20th-century music.

## Narrative functionalization of post-tonal harmonic language

The first author to be considered is Atila Sabo, who endeavoured to establish a hierarchy of ways in which tonality is expressed as a spatial category. He defined his starting point as follows: “The narrative functionalization of harmonic language within a post-tonal context and its application to the analysis of a selected body of works has been carried out as part of this research for the first time within the field of [Serbian] music theory” (Sabo

<sup>6</sup> The doctoral dissertations of Srđan Teparić and Atila Sabo, with minor revisions, have been published as monographs: Srđan Teparić, *Resemantization of Tonality in the First Half of the XX Century (1917–1945)* [*Resemantizacija tonalnosti u prvoj polovini XX veka (1917–1945)*] (Belgrade: Faculty of Music, 2020); Atila Sabo, *The Post-Tonal Context and the Narrative Function of Harmonic Language: Shostakovich, Hindemith, Bartók* [*Posttonalni kontekst i narativna funkcija harmonskog jezika: Šostakovič, Hindemit, Bartok*] (Belgrade: Faculty of Music, 2023).

2023, 287). Based on this statement, one concludes that the author's approach to the given context is the most comprehensive, and thus, his insights may serve as an effective introduction to the theoretical perspectives of the other two authors.

Sabo identifies four spatial categories that occupy the musical space following the dissolution of classical tonality: *modified tonality*, *tonicality*, *multitonicity*, and *atonality*. However, his theoretical framework goes a step further, as he argues that the most common case involves a combination of these spatial spheres. He rightly contends that the "intermediate space" emerging from such combinations remains insufficiently explored in existing theoretical literature. Regarding narrative functions, Sabo adopts concepts developed by other scholars (Greimas, Tarasti, Lidov, Klein), yet combines them in an original manner, applying them selectively and only in contexts where they prove analytically purposeful.

The first theoretical concept that Sabo applies in his analytical method is the *mediation* of semiotic categories. As David Lidov notes, "mediation, in addition to appearing as a syntactic feature that resolves opposition, also manifests as semantic content."<sup>7</sup> Specifically, in reexamining the binary relationship between the pastoral-dancelike melody of one section and the dramatic chromatic passages in the second movement of Paul Hindemith's String Quartet No. 7, Sabo investigates the process of mediation through the formal components of this developed song form (a b a1 c a2 coda). In his analytical observations, he also employs Eero Tarasti's terminology, examining outer spatiality and inner spatiality in terms of their engagement (*embrayage*) and disengagement (*débrayage*).<sup>8</sup> Binary oppositions, of course, are nothing new; in general terms, all semantics are based on the opposition between two entities. In this regard, Sabo highlights Algirdas Julien Greimas's *semiotic square* elsewhere in his work, drawing comparisons between binary oppositions in the second movement of Béla Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*, such as *furioso* vs. *non-furioso* and *dance* vs. *non-dance*. Nevertheless, the greatest strength of Atila Sabo's theoretical method lies in his actualization of the "intermediate space" between various domains within the tonal-atonal space. *Tonalitet* and *modified tonalitet* in 20th-century music are perceived by him as something that "always evokes an association with traditional *tonalitet*" (Sabo 2023, 28). The author rightly observes that in a post-tonal context, *tonalitet* always appears in a modified form. *Tonicality* arises in contexts lacking a clearly defined system of tonal organization, wherein various compositional means are employed to emphasize a particular tonal center (Sabo 2023, 63). As

<sup>7</sup> As cited in Sabo 2023, 214.

<sup>8</sup> The discussion pertains to the spatial articulation of sonic space, as presented in Eero Tarasti's seminal work *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (1994). Internally, spatial articulation is defined by the delineation of tonal centers or tonalities. For instance, (intra)spatial disengagement refers to a rise in tension through a process of disengagement, which may be exemplified by movement away from the primary tonic. Conversely, (intra)spatial engagement can be illustrated by the opposite phenomenon – movement toward the tonic (Tarasti 1994, 117–118). Externally, spatial articulation refers to the registers music occupies within the sonic space. The categories *centripetal* and *centrifugal* are particularly apt for describing this external spatiality, where centripetal motion corresponds to engagement, and centrifugal motion corresponds to disengagement (Ibid., 119).

to the third category of *multitonicity*, as the term itself suggests, “in a multitonal musical space, gravitational pull – or the directedness of musical flow toward a tonal center – gradually weakens or disappears entirely; however, an indication of a tonal center, as the last point of reference for *tonalness*, can still be identified” (Sabo 2023, 65). Finally, Sabo defines *atonality* as a musical space devoid of relational systems, gravitational pull, or tonal anchoring, characterizing it as free atonality. In examining the spaces between the aforementioned categories, he rightly observes that 20th-century music is marked by *polyspatiality* – defined by Sabo as the intermediate space between tonality and atonality in its broadest conceptualization. In doing so, he arrives at the very essence of music itself, asserting that, since the fundamental generator of musical spatiality lies in the opposition between the tonal and the atonal, the relationships among all musical spaces may be understood through the dialectic of affirmation and negation (Sabo 2023, 71).

The principal contribution of Sabo’s analytical method lies in his elucidation of how musical meaning is articulated within the sonic space of early 20th-century music. In earlier analytical discourse, such inquiries were largely neglected, owing in part to the absence of a coherent theoretical framework capable of accounting for polyspatiality. By adopting a narrative-semiotic approach, the author can conceptualize tonality as a spatial construct, following the foundational insights of Tarasti. The originality of Sabo’s approach resides in his interpretative strategies, which open pathways toward novel modalities of spatial articulation – ones that diverge fundamentally from those associated with traditional tonal practice. Sabo’s analytical method excels in the actualization of the “intermediate space” (polyspatiality) between defined tonal spheres. He employs semiotic concepts, such as those developed by Greimas, to interpret musical spaces as narrative entities. A key aspect is the application of the semiotic square to binary oppositions in the second movement of Bartók’s *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*. Sabo examines not just the surface opposition between *furioso* and non-*furioso* or dance and non-dance, but how these contrasts manifest in the interaction of spatial categories.

1. The musical space, characterized by pronounced atonality, is occasionally ‘mediated’ by a sudden and short-lived return to elements that associate with tonality (establishing tonality or multitonicity).
2. These spatial fluctuations are functionalized as narrative actions of engagement (*embrayage*) and disengagement (*débrayage*). The unexpected tonal elements act as narrative characters that interrupt the primary atonal flow, bringing a reference to the past. Their rapid negation or transformation (transition into the ‘intermediate space’) denotes a narrative act of struggle, confrontation, or transformation, thereby translating atonality/polyspatiality into a dynamic, narrative statement.

In this way, Sabo demonstrates that musical meaning is articulated in the very dialectic of affirmation and negation between the tonal and atonal generators of musical spatiality (Sabo 2023, 244–256).



## The grammar of resemantized tonality in the music of the first half of the 20th century

Srđan Teparić's thesis on the resemantization of tonality (*tonalnost*) is, in its broadest conception, meaning-oriented; however, depending on the interpretive framework applied, it may be situated within semiotic, semantic, or narratological paradigms. As Teparić asserts, "the analytical method founded on resemantization is predicated on the assumption that *tonalnost* (emphasis added) in the first half of the 20th century appears with a transformed meaning, one that emerges through its relation to historically established tonal signification" (Teparić 2021, 23). Viewed from a historical perspective, the resemantized tonality of this period maintains a dialogical relationship with tradition, insofar as the tonal music of the early 20th century often reintroduces linguistic and stylistic patterns from the past. However, through the deployment of various compositional strategies – discussed in detail in subsequent sections – these inherited models are recontextualized, giving rise to a new grammatical framework and a novel mode of musical expression:

One of the modernist responses to the breakdown of tonality is resemantized tonality. It is a language system built on the foundations of the closest connection of language with style. In contrast to the tonality of the 19th century, whose eventual linguistic-stylistic references are fully absorbed within the framework of the already well-established system, resemantized tonality treats semantic references as integral parts of its grammar (Teparić 2016, 53).

Teparić organizes the entire spectrum of early 20th-century tonality into a hierarchical framework consisting of three levels of resemantization: the zero, intermediate, and high levels. The zero level represents literal imitation, exemplified by certain movements from Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Pulcinella*, in which historical musical language is employed without transformation. The intermediate level is defined as metaphorical, given that the historical reference is recognizable and the stylistic-linguistic signs employed are classified as semi-marked: "Semi-marked signs are those which, through resemblance and metaphorical transfer, convey the stylistic image of the source to which they directly refer and from which they are derived. In such cases, it is possible to reconstruct the 'original' source of the sign, as the semi-marked sign retains sufficient characteristics of the 'original'" (Teparić 2021, 28). Within this intermediate level, Teparić analyzes works such as *Classical Symphony* by Sergei Prokofiev, *Oedipus Rex* by Igor Stravinsky, *Le tombeau de Couperin* by Maurice Ravel, *Concert champêtre* for harpsichord and orchestra by Francis Poulenc, String Quartet No. 1 by Dmitri Shostakovich, and *Simple Symphony* by Benjamin Britten. While the terminology for the compositional strategies is borrowed from Joseph N. Straus (1990, 17), Teparić reorients them entirely: Straus's strategies are not conceived in relation to the hierarchical structuring of stylistic and linguistic relationships in early 20th-century tonal music, but are instead employed within the context of set theory. In the case of resemantization, their functions are as follows:

1. Motivization – The motivic content from an earlier work is radically intensified in the new one;

2. Generalization – A motif from an earlier work is presented in accordance with the norms dictated by the new piece (i.e., in accordance with the context of resemantized tonality);
3. Marginalization – Elements central to the structure of the earlier work (such as authentic cadences or linear progressions of successive third intervals) become peripheral in the new work;
4. Symmetrization – Traditionally directed harmonic progressions are presented in inverse order.

In contrast to the intermediate level, the high level of resemantization involves references to an old style that is suggested or implied, with the signs at this level being classified as partially marked:

Partially marked signs are those that, in a manner opposite to the original reference, suggest meaning, indirectly hinting at or evoking it. Although a connection to the reference exists, it cannot be fully reconstructed; thus, the partially marked sign acquires opposite properties or completely loses the characteristics of the sign to which it refers. Partially marked signs are considered universal in that, historically, they function as ‘archetypes’ and, having partially emerged from the reference, can be linked to a wide historical period, as their relationship to the reference is indirect (Teparić 2021, 30).

This has been examined in cycles such as *Marian's Life* by Paul Hindemith, Piano Concerto No. 3 by Béla Bartók, as well as in certain movements from the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* by Sergei Prokofiev. The strategies employed are as follows:

1. Centralization – Elements that are peripheral to the structure of an earlier work (e.g., very distant tonal areas, rare functional connections, etc.) become central in the new work;
2. Compression – Elements that appear diachronically in earlier works (e.g., two harmonic tertian sonorities in a functional relationship to one another) are compressed into a simultaneous sound in the new work;
3. Neutralization – Traditional musical elements (such as, for example, the dominant seventh chord) are reformulated in relation to their primary function by omitting the key tone, thereby devaluing their original, resolving role.

These strategies essentially represent the components involved in constructing a narrative network, although the author does not explicitly refer to it as such. Broadly speaking, the entire network unfolds within two overarching strategies that can be elevated to a higher level: one is generalization, and the other is neutralization, through which “this aspect of modernism aligns with the general characteristic of a style that maintains an intense and ambivalent relationship with the past – either assimilating or negating it” (Teparić 2016, 211).

The application of Teparić's method will be examined in the following example, where we could speak of the intermediate level of resemantization, within which semi-marked signs are employed. At the beginning of the *Rigaudon* movement from *Le tombeau de Couperin* by Maurice Ravel, an authentic cadence appears as a reference to the tonality of the 18th century. It is resemantized, as it incorporates chords based on thirds. Along with

a rapid harmonic rhythm and the motoric motion of the figures throughout the movement, the reference to the *stile concertato* of the early Baroque becomes unequivocally apparent. The initial tonality of C major, the chromaticism of the chords (mm. 10–12, major and minor chords on the VII degree, moving around the tonic, and the appearance of mediant), unexpected tonal shifts through sequences (m. 14, B-flat major; m. 18, C-sharp major; m. 20, F-sharp major, and so on, until the return of C major at m. 28), along with the motoric, toccata-like rhythm, point to similar techniques we might observe in, for example, Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*. This reflects the appearance of an expanded diatonic tonality, in which the dichotomy between diatonicism and chromaticism is manifested. In this context, Ravel employs the *generalization* of a system of chromatic tertian chords (mediants), which in this case are semi-marked signs. He uses them for rapid cadential turns within the phrase, thereby resemantizing the linguistic simplicity of the *stile galante*. The modulations here serve a function similar to those in the Baroque, referring to the elevation of affect to a higher level before the final, stable confirmation of *tonalitet* (emphasis added) in the primary key, thus affirming the new *tonalnost* (emphasis added) as stable. The relationship between diatonicism and chromaticism, the layered chords, and the already explained specifics of expanded tonality represent a stylistic intervention by the composer, who integrates characteristics of the Baroque style into the language (cf. Teparić 2016, 152–153).<sup>9</sup>

The practical application of the theory of resemantization once again represents an attempt to hierarchize how tonal practices were employed throughout the 20th century. The significance of this theory lies in its scholarly application of musical semantics: “The semantics of tonality up until the 20th century reflected naïve semantic concepts, which were limited to semantic consequences that often stemmed from subjective interpretations rather than from any well-founded scientific methodology”, notes Teparić (2021, 31). Perhaps the most significant insight offered by this framework is the strongly emphasized connection between the categories of language and style. Moreover, the author identifies within this relationship a universal formula of modernism, derived from the generalization of the two primary strategies of resemantization:

Both of these dualisms (the adopting and negating principle, or stylistic imitation and stylistic transformation, authors' note) are positioned within a unified process of resemantization and point to the articulation of two fundamental approaches to the treatment of the past in modernism – adoptive or negating. These two principles simultaneously represent the two primary strategies common to all tonal systems of the first half of the 20th century. Their dualism constitutes the essential characteristic that unites the otherwise diverse systems of this period under a single denominator: resemantized tonality (Teparić 2021, 32).

<sup>9</sup> The example is taken from the book *Resemantization of Tonality in the First Half of the XX Century (1917–1945)* [*Resemantizacija tonalnosti u prvoj polovini XX veka (1917–1945)*]. The text used to explain the example is not quoted verbatim, but has been adapted to suit the context of the present study.

## The poetics of plot in the sound mass music

Departing from the previous two methodologies which were mainly concerned with neo-classical 20th-century music, Tijana Ilišević's approach is rooted in the investigation of sound mass music. She concentrates her analytical inquiry on selected works by three composers: Edgard Varèse, Witold Lutosławski and Krzysztof Penderecki.<sup>10</sup> The author defines post-tonality in a manner distinct from that of the other two scholars discussed above. Namely, Sabo interprets post-tonality *in relation* to tonality. Accordingly, he seeks to encompass works "in which the remnants of tonality are placed within a new, modern framework; which, although they bear a consequent status in relation to the era of tonality, nonetheless retain certain connections with it, persisting within its 'orbit' (analogous to the relationship of post-impressionism to impressionism, or postmodernism to modernism, etc.)" (Sabo 2023, 32). On the other hand, drawing on the work of Joseph N. Straus (Straus 2000, 30), Ilišević employs the term "post-tonal music" to refer to 20th-century compositions that treat sound masses as fundamental structural units. These works involve the realization of various structural levels through the development of pitch-class sets and a range of goal-directed processes, all of which are shaped and guided by sound masses. In doing so, she does not exclude the possibility of centricity, which may be articulated in various ways depending on the specific work. Starting from the concept of *action* (*akcja*) as conceived by Lutosławski in reference to the specifically musical plots within his works (Reyland 2005), Ilišević's approach distances itself from scholarly positions that regard the sound mass music as static – primarily spatial and non-teleological. In her examination of selected post-tonal compositions, the author adopts a theoretical and methodological framework grounded in cognitive transmedial narratology. This entails, first and foremost, approaching the concept of medium as a "semiotic environment" (drawing on Herman 2009, xii), or, alternatively, as a "semiotic mode of expression" (following Ryan 2014, 26), and more precisely, as a communicative channel operating within the triadic relationship between composer, work, and receiver. Building on the work of Ryan, narrative elements – such as the storyworld, characters, and events – as well as the phenomenon of narrativity itself, are understood as transmedial phenomena. Narrative is conceived as a textual act of (re)presentation, a mental construct of a world populated by characters, and a cognitive framework that is essentially independent of any specific signifying medium (Ryan 2005, 4).

Conceived as fundamental constructive units, sound masses are positioned as active agents in the articulation and guidance of goal-directed processes throughout the unfolding of the composition, thereby contributing to the realization of its inherent linearity. Drawing upon Jonathan D. Kramer's typology of musical time (Kramer 1988), the author identifies two predominant temporal modalities operative within the analyzed works: "nondirected linear time", wherein the trajectory of musical motion remains indetermi-

<sup>10</sup> The ensuing works constitute the corpus selected for analytical examination: *Hyperprism*, *Octandre*, *Intégrales* by Edgard Varèse; *Symphony no. 2*, *Livre pour orchestra*, *Double Concerto* by Witold Lutosławski, *Dimensions of Time and Silence*, *De Natura Sonoris no. 1*, *De Natura Sonoris no. 2* by Krzysztof Penderecki.

nate, and “multiply-directed linear time”, characterized by discontinuities and various re-configurations of musical processes. By examining the objectives and teleological processes orchestrated by sound masses as agents of musical action, the author engages with the underlying linear structures of this repertoire. Furthermore, she discerns multiple hierarchical strata through which these processes are articulated and correlates them with multiply-directed linear time as the prevailing temporality within the analyzed compositions.

By recognizing, on the one hand, an underlying or deep linearity, and, on the other, multiple surface linearities, Ilišević establishes a meaningful correspondence between these layers and the distinction between story time and discourse time within the works in question. By tracing the actions of sound masses as differentiated agents or characters – identifying their multiple processes, goal-oriented trajectories, and the relationships they form (such as collisions, penetrations, and transmutations, in Varèse’s term) – she develops a typology that is both perceptually and cognitively grounded. Structured across three hierarchical levels – the plane (Varèse’s own term), the block, and the superblock – this typology is derived from the texture classifications proposed by Chomiński and, later, Masłowiec (Chomiński 1977, 201; Masłowiec 2008, 79).<sup>11</sup> By positing this typology as a methodological foundation for analyzing the construction, activity, and interrelation of sound masses, Ilišević lays the groundwork for interpreting the narrative capacities of their behavior – that is, their potential to govern distinct lines of action, which can subsequently be understood in terms of various structural and semantic plot types. In doing so, the author advances the narrative potential of this specific poetics of musical plotting, offering a model for its methodological application in the act of listening and the analytical interpretation of sound mass music.

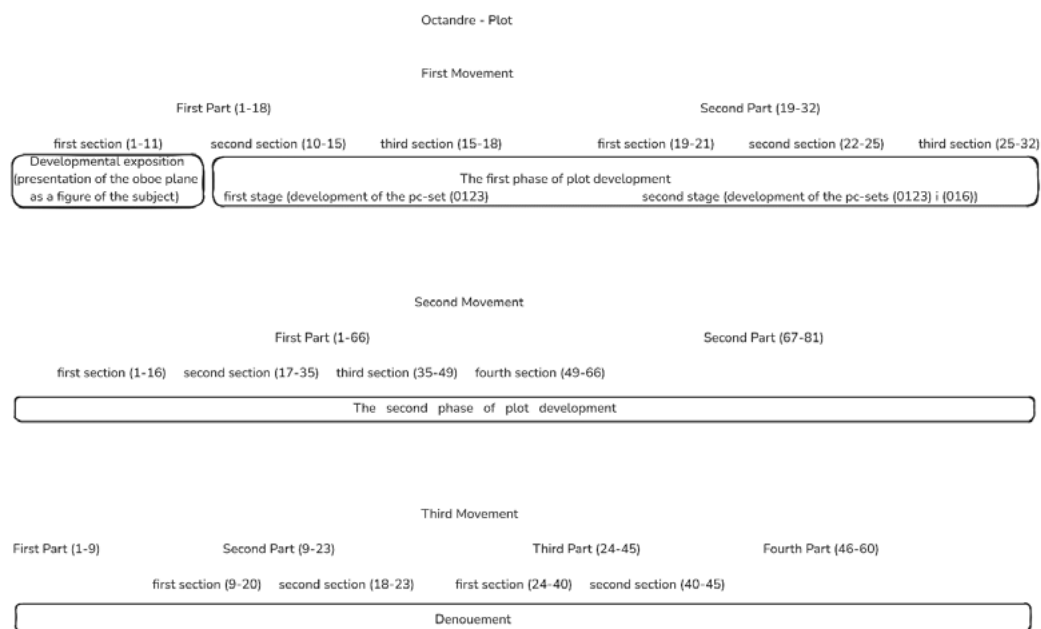
As a paradigmatic instance, the composition *Octandre* (1923) by Edgard Varèse may be adduced. Within this work, the oboe’s stratum emerges as a distinct musical character which assumes the structural role of the subject figure within the theoretical framework of the subject actant. This attribution is substantiated by the oboe’s initial exposition of the work’s “germinal cell” (Anderson 1991, 35) and its autonomous capacity to complete a linear aggregate – thus fulfilling the teleological imperative toward which it is directed.<sup>12</sup> The germinal cell articulated by the oboe – a pitch-class set (0123) – constitutes the generative nucleus of the entire compositional process across the tripartite structure of the piece (Diagram 1). All other sound masses, lacking the capacity for independent structural completion, act collectively and subordinately to either reiterate or develop this primordial construct. From this foundational collection arise the principal goal-directed processes, which disclose the dramaturgical roles of the sound masses as characters within a broader musical narrative. In the first movement, a multiplicity of sound masses coalesce in pursuit of a singular objective: the reiteration and projection of the *germinal*

<sup>11</sup> For a comprehensive discussion, see: Ilišević 2023: 23–53.

<sup>12</sup> The germinal cell is introduced in the first measure: Gb2–F1–E2–D#2 (pc-set (0123)). Through its subsequent development, the chromatic space is progressively saturated, culminating in the appearance of the final, completing tone G3 at the end of the ninth measure – a pitch that, up to that point, stands as the highest, longest, most dynamically emphasized, and most prominently articulated.

*cell* across the full spectrum of musical dimensions. This collective endeavor is indicative of their subordination to the subject figure, as they function primarily to accentuate the central musical idea, especially in moments where the subject figure is absent. This subordination is further manifested in their incapacity to bring the musical process to completion independently. Notably, even in collective action, these masses are unable to complete the linear aggregate, which remains deficient by a single pitch – G. This omission is particularly significant because G served as the final, completing tone in the oboe’s initial aggregate, thereby underscoring its privileged position as the agent of completion and thematic initiation. Consequently, these subordinate sound masses, as characters of the surface structure, occupy a homologous structural position; and insofar as the subject figure appears to “instrumentalize” them in the continued articulation of the germinal cell, it is reasonable to conclude that they fulfill the role of the object within the actantial model.

**Diagram 1.** Schematic overview of the work and its plot structure



As the musical discourse advances into the second movement, the subject figure – embodied by the oboe – appears to exhibit a degree of diminished autonomy. In addition to its ongoing orientation toward the completion of the aggregate, the oboe, through the exposition of the germinal cell (0123), inaugurates a broader developmental process: the systematic presentation of all pitch-class sets whose structure begins with interval-class 1. The initial cell contained the subsets (012) and (013); the oboe’s subsequent phrase introduces the set (016), thereby extending the developmental logic inherent in the germinal material (on the third beat of m. 6: E2 – D#2 – A1). Additionally, a sound mass is created by the horn, trumpet, trombone, and double bass in measure 19 (*Lourd et sauvage*), where the three lower parts form the set (016), and the horn part, in combination with any two

of the other three parts, also forms the same set. In turn, the sound masses that emerge in the second movement (second section, mm. 17–35) articulate the remaining members of this referential family – specifically, sets (014) and (015) (at first: the sound masses of the bassoon, horn, and double bass, and the E-flat clarinet, oboe, and trumpet; and later: the sound masses of the bassoon, trombone, and double bass, and the clarinet, oboe, and trumpet). In contrast to the sound masses of the first movement, which functioned as subordinated objects vis-à-vis the subject figure, the sound masses in the second movement operate in active alignment with the subject's trajectory. They are oriented toward supporting the subject's function and, in doing so, assume the narrative role of corrector within the structural domain of the helper actant. It is particularly significant that, upon the completion of this process, these sound masses undergo a form of structural convergence – colliding with and penetrating one another, ultimately coalescing into a singular, unified sonic entity. This fusion reinforces their shared dramatic function and affirms that, as individuated characters, they collectively fulfill a coherent and singular actantial function within the unfolding musical narrative.

Based on the foregoing analytical outline, one may ascertain that the composition is governed by a structurally unambiguous and narratively economical plot, organized around a single subject figure. The musical action unfolds along a unilinear narrative axis, structured around a singular problem-space: the systematic emergence and deployment of all mentioned trichordal pitch-class collections. This process is oriented toward a global narrative and structural crux – namely, the transformation of the subject figure. Consequently, the underlying narrative archetype may be identified as linear in form. Moreover, the prevailing semantic vector of the composition is that of transformation. All sonic entities – functioning as characters within the musical dramaturgy – and most significantly the principal subject figure, are subject to dynamic alteration throughout the progression of the work. These metamorphoses are effected through a range of relational modalities, including collision, penetration, repulsion, and transmutation, to employ Varèse's own lexicon. Accordingly, it may be inferred that the semantic configuration of the plot assumes a fundamentally ritualistic character, delineated by salient ludic attributes. These ludic dimensions are most prominently articulated through the continuous and multifaceted processes of transformation and transmutation enacted upon the sound masses, as well as through their recurrent acts of metaphorical “disguise”. Such acts of concealment and rearticulation are realized through fluid, and at times ambiguous, relational dynamics among the musical personae – specifically, those figures that occupy regulatory positions within the actantial architecture of the work.

## **Overlaps of Narrative Theories: Tonal/Atonal Space and Narrative Potential**

The primary point of overlap among all three authors lies in their shared interest in “tonal/atonal space” and the narrative capacities of 20th-century music. Although they approach the topic from different angles, the following commonalities can be identified:

1. Continuum between Tonality and Atonality: none of the authors view tonality and atonality as strictly binary oppositions, but rather as a spectrum. Sabo refers to this as

“polyspatiality” and “intermediate space”, Teparić discusses the “resemantization of tonality” which maintains a dialogue with tradition, and Ilišević acknowledges the possibility of (tonal) centricity even in sound mass music.

2. **Emphasis on Meaning and Narrative:** all strive to understand how music creates meaning and how its elements can be interpreted as part of a broader narrative process. Sabo achieves this through the narrative functionalization of harmonic language, Teparić through the resemantized semantics of tonality, and Ilišević through the concepts of plot and actants in sound-mass music.

3. **Reliance on Contemporary Semiotics and Narratology:** all three authors utilize and reference key figures in contemporary music theory and narratology (Tarasti, Hatten, Agawu, Greimas, Ryan, Straus), demonstrating their alignment with international academic standards and modern approaches.

4. **Hierarchization and Systematization:** each author attempts to systematize and hierarchize the ways in which musical phenomena manifest. Sabo approaches the subject through spatial categories, Teparić through gradations of resemantization, and Ilišević through a typology of sound masses – namely, plane, block, and superblock – as well as temporal modalities.

## **Differences and Potential Contradictions between the Three Analytical Methods**

While the authors whose works we have analyzed overlap in their goals, their paths to these goals and their primary analytical focus differ significantly. This can lead to differing interpretations of the same phenomena or to one work being better analyzed by one approach than another.

Considering the scope of “post-tonality” and its relationship to tonality, Sabo’s definition of “post-tonality” is the broadest and most directly connected to the remnants of tonality. He focuses on works “in which the remnants of tonality are placed within a new, modern framework.” His work encompasses a wide range of neoclassical and similar works from the first half of the 20th century that retain “certain connections” with tonality. Teparić focuses specifically on “resemantized tonality”, which implies that tonality still exists, but with a transformed meaning. His approach is more oriented towards a dialogue with tradition and the transformation of older linguistic and stylistic patterns, and the analytical method is applied to works from the first half of the 20th century that represent “neo” styles. Ilišević’s definition of “post-tonal music” is the most distant from traditional tonality, due to the fact that her analytical sample includes one experimental composer from the first half of the 20th century and two representatives of the “Polish School”. She relies on Straus’s definition, which refers to compositions that treat sound masses as fundamental structural units, although she does not exclude the possibility of centricity. The main difference is that Ilišević analyzes music where tonal centers, if present, are not the primary organizational principle. Ilišević’s approach, focused on sound mass music, naturally addresses a part of the post-tonal spectrum that is less dependent on tonal references. While Sabo and Teparić still seek “traces” or “resemantization” of tonality in



neoclassical and related repertoires, Ilišević focuses on the new grammar of sound masses, exploring narrativity through abstract transformations. This divergent focus does not represent a methodological conflict; rather, it reflects a conscious adaptation of analytical tools to specific musical material. All three methodologies, taken together, complementarily cover a wide range of 20th-century post-tonal music. Their value lies precisely in this flexibility and specialization: Ilišević's approach is necessary for understanding the narrative potentials of Varèse or Lutosławski, while the approaches of Sabo and Teparić are crucial for deciphering the complex dialogue with the tonal tradition in Bartók or Prokofiev. This confirms the maturity of Serbian music theory, which develops targeted and effective methodologies for different segments of contemporary musical creation.

As to the analytical level and primary narrative element, Sabo primarily focuses on harmonic language as the main carrier of narrative, exploring how spatial categories (tonality, tonicality, atonality) functionalize the narrative. His analysis aims to establish a hierarchy and understand the relationships between these spaces. Meanwhile, Teparić primarily analyzes linguistic and stylistic patterns, with a particular emphasis on how historically referential elements (through resemantization strategies) are transformed and contribute to a new grammatical framework. His narrative is more about the transformation of musical language and its relationship with the past. Ilišević, on the other hand, focuses on sound masses as active agents or "characters" in the musical plot. The narrative is constructed through their interactions (collisions, penetrations, transmutations) and teleological processes. She views sound mass music as dynamic, not static, which is in direct contrast to some earlier understandings of the genre. These approaches do not contradict directly, but are complementary in terms of their level of analysis. Sabo deals with the "big picture" of tonal/atonal space, Teparić analyzes the "grammar" of the language, and Ilišević delves into the "dramaturgy" of sound entities. A problem could arise if one methodology were attempted where another is clearly more suitable. For example, trying to apply Sabo's hierarchy of tonal space to Penderecki's sound mass music (where tonal reference is minimal or non-existent) would be less fruitful than Ilišević's approach.

Finally, regarding the treatment of "the past" and historical references, Sabo recognizes that tonality in a post-tonal context always evokes an association with traditional tonality, but views it in a modified form. He is less explicitly focused on specific strategies for transforming historical material. Teparić's entire theory is built on a dialogical relationship with tradition and the "resemantization" of historical linguistic and stylistic patterns. He explicitly categorizes the ways in which the past is assimilated or negated. Finally, while acknowledging the possibility of centricity, her focus is more on the new organization of sound and new narrative structures inherent in sound mass music, rather than its direct dialogue with historical tonal systems. Her approach is less retrospective and more focused on the inherent characteristics of the sound material itself.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we return to the initial premise of this discussion, highlighting the general scope of Atila Sabo's theoretical framework. By examining works that variously reference

tonality and tonal relationships while occupying the interspace between tonality and atonality, Sabo extends the trajectory of musical narrative research rooted in the tonal idiom and asserts:

Under the conditions of Classical–Romantic tonality, in which musical space exhibited distinctly monospacial characteristics, the strong codification of the major-minor system also shaped a mononarrative discourse. It follows that tonality, as the most refined manifestation of tonal organization, in fact functions as a guarantor of narrativity. That is, under the conditions of a codified major-minor system, it is rather difficult to negate meaning (...) The search for new modes of ‘storytelling’ (neo-narrative) becomes possible only under the conditions of an expanded musical space (Sabo 2023, 208).

Srđan Teparić, who approaches tonal space and interspace through resemantization strategies, builds upon this foundational assumption. Like Sabo, he conceives of the tonal system as a coherent semantic space. Teparić’s distinct contribution lies in his assertion that 20th-century tonal language becomes a vehicle for semantic play, articulating modernist stylistic currents through specific strategies. Of these, generalization (underlying stylistic imitation) and neutralization (underlying stylistic transformation) are paramount:

Strategies intervene in the very core of linguistic and stylistic relations, and they represent an essential factor in the process of resignification. The activation of a strategy becomes meaningful when the linguistic and stylistic relationships of an imitated or transformed utterance from the past are elevated to the level of signifiers. Between the signifier and its new meaning lies the strategy, which constitutes an integral part of the modernist, resemantized expression. Resignified linguistic-stylistic signs of the past are part of the common linguistic grammar of this period and may be treated as stylistic traits (Teparić 2020, 210).

In a comparable vein, though focusing on works manipulating sound masses, Tijana Ilišević conducts semiotic and narrative analysis of the vertical pitch dimension as a spatial parameter in her selected compositions.

All three authors engage with Michael Klein’s concept of neo-narratives, defined as “new narrative discourse” or “new ways to tell stories” (Klein 2013, 5). However, their approaches diverge significantly in *how* they construct and perceive these narratives within the tonal/atonal spectrum. Ilišević’s analytical approach inherently centers on sound mass as the primary conceptual framework, emphasizing musical parameters Klein identifies as crucial for neo-narratives: rhythm, orchestration, timbre, and register. Klein posits: “To pursue an understanding of musical narrative, one would need to disarticulate it from tonality to show that musical agency, temporality, plot, and the narrator, while often relying on tonal-formal structures, also have conventions apart from those structures” (Klein 2013, 16). Conversely, Teparić interprets the entire spatio-temporal architecture of musical works through resemantized signs, or, in Tarasti’s terminology, through actorial play. For him, tonality, imbued with centuries of semantic legacy, remains the central stage for musical narrative. Sabo, finally, highlights modified tonality as a spatial construct and the emergence of new spatial categories in 20th-century music, particularly within the harmonic dimension. As he notes:

When it comes to the means through which the neo-narrative is constructed, one of the key factors is undoubtedly tonality (...) With the dissolution of tonality as a system of pitch organization and the emergence of new forms of harmonic expression (atonality, dodecaphony), which negate meaning, the generators of musical meaning are to be found in other parameters, those which, as Klein argues, can be considered independently from harmonic language... (Sabo 2023, 207).

Sabo's method could even be applied to Teparić's framework, identifying all four modalities of tonal usage: modified tonality, tonality, multitonality, and atonality. Teparić's methodology, rather than treating musical language as a meaningless signifier, posits that harmonic progressions signify not only through their acoustic properties or tonal orientation, but precisely through their referential associations, which form an essential part of resemantized tonality's grammatical structure.

What ultimately unites all three authors is their investigation of vertical pitch structures in selected musical works. Sabo's inquiry yields four spatial categories, Teparić identifies resemantized tonal signs, and Ilišević classifies distinct types of sound masses. The primary divergence lies in each author's emphasis on spatial versus temporal dimensions. For Sabo, spatiality is theoretically central, with temporality implicitly explored through relational concepts like engagement/disengagement, transcendence, and so forth, effectively positioning modified tonality as the narrative's Bakhtinian chronotope. Teparić, while not explicitly referencing spatiality or temporality, clearly views tonal space as the framework for the flow of signifiers – acoustic phenomena bearing semantic potential through their reference to earlier stylistic codes – culminating in resemantized tonality. Conversely, Ilišević places temporality at the core of her analytical discourse, with spatiality (the domain of sound masses as characters or agents) serving primarily to articulate the temporal and narrative dimensions of the analyzed works.

The preceding discussion has illuminated the conceptual intersections that unify these three theoretical frameworks. Indeed, their principal common denominator is the treatment of 20th-century tonal and atonal music as a stage – a spatial construct – upon which narrative unfolds within the parameters of fictionalized or constructed time. All further divergences stem from interpretive variations conditioned by the specific nature of their chosen analytical examples. In this respect, these three theorists build upon the rigorously established foundation of Dejan Despić's hermeneutic perspective on tonality and harmony. Simultaneously, their theoretical contributions are firmly situated within the discourse of contemporary music theory, reflecting thematic concerns that align closely with those addressed by international scholars. It is precisely this solid foundational framework that has enabled contemporary Serbian music theorists to make a significant epistemological leap – transitioning from what might be considered traditional music theory (though uniquely formulated by Despić) towards a nuanced, methodologically robust, and scientifically grounded investigation of specific musical phenomena, all fundamentally anchored in the broader category of tonality.

These theories enable a more detailed and nuanced analysis of musical works composed after the classical tonal system. Instead of viewing post-tonal music as "atonal" or "non-tonal" by definition, Sabo's "polyspatiality" and "intermediate space", Teparić's

“resemantization”, and Ilišević’s sound mass narratology provide frameworks for understanding the inherent logic, coherence, and expressive potential of such works. Analysts can more precisely identify how tonal traces are transformed, how new centers of gravity are established, or how sound masses function as narrative agents. For example, conductors, instrumentalists, and vocalists can use these theories to gain a deeper understanding of a work’s structure and narrative flow. Grasping the concept of “resemantized tonality” in Prokofiev or Ravel, or the “plot of sound masses” in Varèse, can directly influence dynamic articulation, phrasing, balance, and overall interpretive strategy, leading to a more informed and compelling performance. Also, these theories aid in classifying and understanding the stylistic diversity of the 20th century. They provide criteria for distinguishing various approaches to tonality and atonality, enabling music historians to more precisely map the development of musical language and aesthetic ideas. Essentially, the practical application of these theories lies in their ability to demystify and illuminate the complexities of post-tonal music, making it more accessible for analysis, performance, understanding, and further creative exploration. They transform how we think about 20th-century music, recognizing within it not just abstract systems, but also rich sources of meaning and narrative.

So far there has not been much critical engagement with these approaches within the international community of music theorists. This chapter, therefore, serves as a call to fellow researchers to pay attention to the latest achievements in Serbian music theory. The presented theories are complex, and their practical application could be modified depending on the specific goal. It is precisely due to their potential flexibility, which future music theorists could leverage, that these theories significantly contribute to global musical narratology.

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# PART II

Narrative roads:  
morphological,  
phenomenological





## Chapter 5

# A Morphological Approach for Creating Musical Narratology in Contemporary Pedagogy<sup>1</sup>

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Independent researcher

## Abstract

This chapter introduces pedagogical tools grounded in morphological and narratological approaches to music education. The method encourages musical thinking as a dynamic process, engaging the perception of spectral energies and sound configurations. Emphasising the holistic nature of acoustic production, the methodology centres on audiation by understanding morphologies in relation to auditory events that precede and follow perception. The objective is to develop an all-inclusive comprehension of all facets of sound and gesture as they occur. Through a narrative-based framework, the discussion culminates in the presentation of a series of Audiation Exercises designed to enhance perceptual awareness.

**Keywords:** pedagogy, audiation, spectromorphology, narratology, improvisation

*The world of reality has its limits; the universe of imagination is boundless. – Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)*

## Introduction

This study presents a theoretical inquiry in music pedagogy, employing an experimental methodology to examine the causal relationships between musical gestures and the resonant effects of sound objects and events. At its core, the research emphasises the role of inventiveness in music education. Ikeda (2003, 2) describes it as “the bridge across which our ideals travel to become new realities.” Through creativity and practice, a continuous experiential process emerges, connecting perception, performance, and reflection.

The primary objective is to cultivate listening skills across a broad range of people. By integrating spoken narrative with signs derived from structural properties, we develop pedagogical tools that strengthen both musical ability and conceptual understanding through a narratological route. To achieve this, a series of Audiation Exercises are introduced where participants engage in a progressive dialogue. These exercises are grounded in the spectromorphological principles articulated by Denis Smalley (1997). They provide a structured framework for connecting perceptual listening with creative sound-making while also providing opportunities for evaluative analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

The approach is to explore and progress through dialogic interaction prompted by musical improvisation, with subsequent application of systematically chosen techniques for reflective analysis of discerning outcomes. Narrative procedures emerge as musical phenomena, reflecting morphological events in space and time, connected by cause and effect. Elements of improvisation are examined through the manipulating of sounds. The findings inform educational strategies that support progressive musical development.

When perceiving pitch-based designs, the sonic outcome is immediately apparent. However, when the interaction involves noise-biased resonances, apprehending the contours of pitch content becomes a subtle experience: the noisier the morphology, the more understated the melodic shape. This sound-based dichotomy – capturing and maneuvering spectral content in relation to pitch and noise – is utilised as a basis for classifying sounds as either archetypes or variants of the archetype. This perspective enables engaging with music not only as notated symbols but also as a morphological continuum.

This work builds on sonic-form principles established in earlier research. Its central theoretical foundation is the assertion that musical structures can be understood in relation to morphological organisation: the apprehension of sound-event behaviour over time derives from the archetypal attack/resonance model and its variants. As Martin Vishnick notes, musical contours are “derived from manipulating single, consecutive, merged, and combined morphologies, allied to shaping phrases formed by using archetypal or variant morphologies” (2015, 150).

The work is intended for a broad audience, including music students, professionals, teachers, researchers, and anyone seeking to enhance their musical skills. As Olena Pikhtar argues, “individual self-development creates the favourable conditions for self-realization of the creative potential of future musicians-performers and for activation of their musical thinking” (2019, 1). The focus is on shaping a practice that enables musicians to engage with the holistic acoustic qualities they encounter.

In the terminology of the Audiation Exercises, “players” refers to the collective group of participants, “student” designates the individual following the instructions (regardless of their stage of musical growth), and “supervisor” denotes the tutor figure who takes an active role in the proceedings. In some cases, the supervisor may possess less musical ability than the students. This role may be understood as one that provides the guiding expertise needed towards a positive outcome and progression to the next stage. Ultimately, it is essential that all work towards developing a sense of shared commitment and unity.

In designing these exercises, attention is given to diverse member profiles. The purpose is to bring about a concrete means of engaging with salient listening issues by connecting internal musical routines with the external environment, within an all-encompassing view of sound. The aim is to bridge gaps in the musical skills of many learners (including the author). These exercises are drawn from scenarios from my many years of musical teaching experience, designed to provide essential support during the learning process.

Examples of learner profiles illustrate how the exercises can be adapted:

- A young person who is inherently interested in music, from initial curiosity to the first steps of reading notation. They may have been captivated by the sonic

encounters when beginning to study an instrument. However, the transition from these resonances to standard Western notation can appear almost insurmountable. The supervisor can encourage the student to develop their own unique syntax in a playful manner – perhaps by relating sound to narrative – which may eventually lead to a connection with the standard notation system.

- An intermediate-level classical musician who wishes to engage with improvisation. For example, the student may have been diligently playing appropriate repertoire but encounters difficulty with a piece that includes a brief improvisatory section. With the supervisor's guidance, the student can gain first-hand experience in manipulating morphologies and learn how to remain performatively present while generating musical phrases in real time.
- An accomplished classical performer who wishes to engage with music that incorporates sound-based material and elements of freedom. This musician may be studying a contemporary composition that requires the execution of freely performed extended techniques, and the notation symbols are unconventionally portrayed.<sup>2</sup> Success depends on developing improvisatory skills. A gradual approach – beginning simply and building complexity over time – is recommended. The supervisor can also point the student toward existing helpful repertoire and relevant resources.
- Musicians are sometimes asked to emulate extra-musical sounds, such as a blown whistle. This task may not come easily and often requires inspirational guidance. Possessing the ability to analyse the properties of a resonance and to imagine and recreate its spectral components is invaluable. In addition, tracing sonic events through morphological evaluation can prove highly beneficial. The Audiation Exercises pose an effective framework for achieving these goals.
- A mature, self-taught free improviser with only basic formal training who wishes to move toward understanding note-based music. Such a person may need support in committing to the challenging task of effectively starting again. A musical narrative path can be especially useful. By engaging in the Audiation Exercises, this student may be guided toward discovering a unique set of personal symbols that serve as a bridge to more conventional notations.

Comprehending resonances through narration connects creativity with discovery, revealing relationships among styles, genres, expressive meanings, and theoretical concepts. Players may find a way to comprehend combinations of sound events unfolding over time into coherent structures. They can also consider analytical methods to examine the fundamental elements shaping musical language. This study focuses on the causes and effects of acoustic objects and events from the perspective of the frequency spectrum.

The Audiation Exercises provide a concrete means of engaging with listening as a central musical skill, linking internal processes with external sonic environments. We encourage learners to apprehend sounds holistically, bridging theoretical understanding and

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<sup>2</sup> Extended techniques are unconventional, unorthodox, or non-traditional methods of sound making.

practical application. In this way, the work aims to enrich contemporary pedagogy by offering tools that integrate improvisation, analysis, and narrative engagement with sound.

By prioritising hearing as a creative act, the study demonstrates how musicians can cultivate heightened sensitivity to sonic properties. This awareness provides a foundation for both technical development and artistic expression, situating audiation as a vital practice within contemporary music education.

## Background

To outline the foundations, we look at the properties of sound and performance, the concept of audiation, existing research, and examples of outcomes. Auditory events may be described as a phenomenon. Smalley's term *spectromorphology* refers to the descriptive analysis of morphological developments in spectra over time. It implies that the "spectro" cannot exist without the morphology – something has to be shaped and that something must have sonic content. By applying his principles, we support the cultivation of a comprehensive pathway of understanding emergent sonic phenomena.

Audiation, a term coined by Edwin Gordon in the 1970s, refers to the ability to hear and comprehend sound internally, much as visualization allows us to see images in the mind's eye. Unlike imitation or basic observation, audiation involves a deeper, more nuanced understanding of music and its structure, extending beyond replication. It is a proactive cognitive procedure – the musical equivalent of thinking in language. As Gordon states, "Audiation is to music what thought is to language" (1989, 42).

We concentrate on Audiation Exercises through a narratological route, drawing on soundscape-based, note-based, and sound-based music as a foundation. The concept of a soundscape has long been applied to urban settings. It was made notable by Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer in 1977. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has defined soundscape as, "[the] acoustic environment as perceived or experienced and/or understood by a person or people, in context" (ISO 2014: 12913-1). Within the Audiation Exercises, soundscapes refer to specific resonances that attract attention because of their salient use as auditory objects.

Note-based music relies on traditional notation to represent pitch and duration, while sound-based music emphasises sonic properties themselves, often extending beyond conventional Western notation. Music grounded in notes is constructed on the standard Western paradigm, fixed on a grid scheme. Trevor Wishart calls it a 'lattice' system; however, he reminds us that "music does not have to be lattice-based at all" (1998, 11).

Leigh Landy explains the dichotomy between sound-based and note-based music: "Sound-based music typically designates the art form in which the sound—not the musical note—is its basic unit" (Landy 2007, 17). For the acoustic domain, this may take the form of extended techniques in vocal and instrumental music. In practice, an amalgamation of the two systems is inevitable, especially as contemporary listeners are accustomed to both. Moreover, many contemporary genres utilise sound-based elements. For the Audiation Exercises, the spectromorphological characteristics are consistently treated in soundscape-based, sound-based, and note-based contexts.

Most existing Audiation Exercises focus primarily on note-based music, emphasising pitch, intervals, and rhythm. Within this methodology, there is little connection to the intrinsic qualities of the frequency spectrum. They do, however, engage with understanding and anticipating sonic events, especially working with vocal expression, active listening, and improvisation. These studies begin by prioritising the holistic features of a single resonance before incorporating additional morphologies.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of outcomes, the intention in this study is to develop a tradition grounded in natural musical expression, a nuanced acoustic language informed by spectromorphological and narratological considerations. Taking inspiration from the real world, we can explore soundscape-based languages. Here we can question the nature-based multidimensional expression of culture, environment, and identity found in Tuvan throat-singing language, as it is more than a vocal technique. It emerges from the resonance of mountains, rivers, and the human body. Furthermore, it is rooted in and covers all aspects addressed in the Audiation Exercises.

For the Tuvan people, overtone singing is a sonic heritage that transforms the human voice into a bridge between nature and communication, with the environment regarded as both alive and expressive. This practice embodies narrative structures, including themes, conventions, and symbols, and its survival relies on acoustic storytelling. Similarly, this exploration examines audible narratives through the framework of sound architecture.<sup>4</sup>

## Theoretical Framework

In this study we are concerned with the integral possibilities inherent in the comprehension of resonances. In learning environments, educators are expected to teach pupils to be creative, and most professional or amateur musicians are aware of the need for continual improvement. Therefore, to enable musicians to reach their full potential, an ever-developing set of tools is essential for future outcomes and instructional practices. In this section, we investigate musical morphology, narrative theory, as well as psycho-physical and gestural factors.

For these studies, players engage with realising the sonic events they encounter. Morphological musical thinking is a dynamic activity involving the perception of spectral energies and spatial configurations. I advocate moving beyond a pitch-centred approach toward one that accords equal importance to the morphology of sounds, the innate qualities in spectra, and other musical factors, including psycho-social elements. Later, we will contemplate how these factors interact.

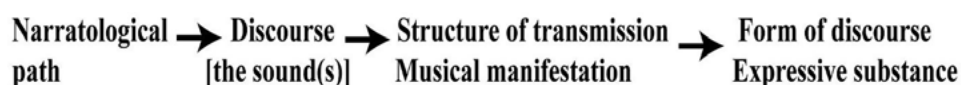
In contemporary music, where an open soundworld exists, there is a need to re-evaluate traditional sound-making, cultivate aesthetic sensibility, and encourage cohesion. Attention is also given to the impact of gestural activity on musical performance, particularly its physical and psychological effects.

<sup>3</sup> For an example of typical Audiation Exercises, see 8 Ways to Develop Your Audiation Skills – <https://www.performanceup.com.au/blog/audiation>

<sup>4</sup> Here is a link to the Smithsonian Folkways, where sound examples of Tuvan throat music may be found – <https://folkways.si.edu/search?query=throat+singing>

From a narratological perspective, Figure 1 illustrates that the overarching objective is to establish guidelines for the creation, analysis, and interpretive application of narratives. This framework draws on the formalist–structuralist theory of narrative developed by Seymour Chatman (1978, 26). Chatman divides narrative structure into four principal components. The first applies to the elements of the story – the events and their existence. The second concerns discourse, focusing on the organisation of events and their structural arrangement. In the third, we consider what is transmitted, while the fourth addresses form and substance, particularly the ways in which content can be expressed. For our purposes, the diagram depicts the content, followed by a chain of events, the performed material, and the manner in which the structure is presented and communicated.

**Figure 1.** Objectives



The narratological path describes music as it unfolds during creation, an inquiry into the artistic aspects by connecting with the stories in our minds. This leads to a discussion encompassing the content of sonic occurrences and their interconnections. It then examines how the transmitted narrative structure manifests in musical terms, and finally, how the expressive substance within the form of events contributes to musical coherence.

In the Audiation Exercises, the musical narrative is approached as a systematic procedure through which players recognise, evaluate, and trace the value of morphological relationships across a temporal span. We explore how to assess the characteristics of sounds in isolation and in context, how these elements interact over time, and how to discern their overall effect and potential continuation.

By integrating the above perspectives, the framework supports a pedagogy that values both detailed sonic analysis and broader narrative interpretation. It positions audiation as a practice that engages with sound at multiple levels, from the microscopic to the structural, from the immediate to the referential.

## Methodology

For the methodology section, we question the importance of auditory perception, relevant details about the Audiation Exercises, the interplay of inherent and external aspects of sound, and the significance of gestures and resonances. Also, we situate these ideas within broader musicological discourse, referencing narrative theory and virtual agency, underscoring the intrinsic–extrinsic dynamics of sound, narrative potential, and the role of agency in shaping musical experience.

Understanding the entirety of a sonic event is paramount, as is perceiving sounds both before and after they are heard. In order to forge helpful pedagogical models, we must regard how resonances unfold over time. Accordingly, players in the Audiation Exercises engage in refining listening skills, crafting technique, adopting a comprehensive perspective to morphologies, exploring elements of freedom, and making experiential ob-

servations. In this section, deep listening, reduced listening, and the inherent and external aspects of sound are central to the discussion.

For this all-inclusive strategy, a method for aurally registering subtle changes in timbre is useful. In relation to understanding sonic characteristics, Pauline Oliveros' concept of Deep Listening represents an aesthetic grounded in improvisational principles and teaching. She explains: "Deep has to do with complexity and boundaries. Deep coupled with Listening is learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space/time continuum of sound" (Oliveros 2005, xxiii). By engaging with this principle, we can nurture deeper forms of audition.

Electroacoustic research further contributes through the concept of Reduced Listening.<sup>5</sup> This mode of concentration involves focused and sustained listening. As Smalley explains: "It is an investigative process whereby detailed spectromorphological attributes and relationships are uncovered" (Smalley 1997, 111).<sup>6</sup> To refine attention to the detail and quality of sonorous events, the listener seeks to suppress distractions, engaging in a critical immersion in the acoustic properties of the sound.

Priority is given to essential features as a means of describing sonic occurrences and their relationships within a musical context. The aim is to deepen awareness of sonic perception by attending to the detail of resonances, recognising intrinsic changes, and discerning spectral differences. Morphologies can be understood in two aspects: inherent and external. This entails examining sound events in relation to their integral properties. Smalley reminds us, however, that there is a referential basis to music: "A piece of music is not a closed, autonomous artefact: it does not refer only to itself but relies on relating to a range of experiences outside the context of the work" (Smalley 1997, 4). Consequently, in the Audiation Exercises, an external basis is necessary if the inherent is to carry meaning. In this sense, the core narratological qualities and relationships created by the players shape the impact of references coming from outside. The key point is that the intrinsic and extrinsic operate within a dynamic and interactive relationship.<sup>7</sup>

Perceptual listening is commonly utilised in the creative process. While introducing reduced listening in both performer-listener and audience-listener contexts is valuable, it is equally important to balance reduced and deep listening alongside inherent and external threads. For example, over-analysed morphological listening can negatively affect intrinsic–extrinsic aural observations, as reflected in the comment: "I sometimes want to allow the music to play on my senses and not be thinking analytically" (Vishnick 2021,

<sup>5</sup> Reduced listening is a Schaferian concept. See Schafer (1977) and also Chion (1983) for a full discussion.

<sup>6</sup> Denis Smalley talks about Spectromorphology in his chapter "Spectro-morphology and Structuring Processes", which can be found in the *The Language of Electroacoustic Music* book of 1986. Since then there have been numerous publications relating to this term and a number of extensions by other scholars within the field of electroacoustic music. In 1997 Smalley publicised a revision of "Spectromorphology" (the revision is also available in both French and Italian) in the *Organised Sound* article "Spectromorphology: explaining sound-shapes".

<sup>7</sup> There is a detailed discussion on the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of music in *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music* (Nattiez 1990, 102–129).

309). The listener focuses on refining the detail and quality of sounds while seeking to suppress distractions. In this sense, reduced listening is a microscopic and useful mode of listening, and abstract in nature. Thus, alongside analysing and describing the listening experience, cultivating awareness of resonance characteristics plays a central role.

In practice, music-making generates extensive psycho-physical information through the interpretation of human activity embedded in acoustic events. Physical activity, together with gesture, produces sound, forming a causal chain that links action to source; the resulting consequences from morphologies arise directly from human actions. Pitch content articulated in an instrumental phrase may evoke associations with singing, creating a vocal presence that carries both physical and psychological impact for the listener, for instance. Interpreting this tendency to relate sonic events to causes – and extracting meaning from it – constitutes a main goal of this strategy, alongside grasping the expressive and emotional significance of inherent and external musical properties. Employing morphological value to describe musical gesture enables listeners to identify significant behaviours.

Research on human and virtual agency in music continues to advance considerably. Byron Almén observes that the application of narratology to music has become an important aspect of recent theoretical research, telling us that “the application of narrative theory to music has generated a substantial body of scholarship” (Almén 2003, 1). Since the early 2000s, research in this field has expanded through significant articles, books, and conference papers.

Particularly notable relevant contributions come from Kofi Agawu (2009) and Robert Hatten (2018). Agawu addresses the nature of musical narratives, noting: “The idea that music has the capacity to narrate or to embody a narrative, or that we can impose a narrative account on the collective events of a musical composition, speaks not only to an intrinsic aspect of temporal structuring but to [a] basic human need to understand succession coherently” (Agawu 2009, 102). In other words, morphological gestures invite the interpretation of any demarcated sequence in time inherently carrying narrative potential. Hatten, in turn, asserts that virtual agency is “crucial to the understanding of Western art music” (2018, 14). He situates gestural encounters with music within the framework of human development, emphasising how they underpin our connection to musical expressiveness and embodied meaning.

The writings of Agawu and Hatten focus primarily on Western classical music. For example, Agawu’s *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (2009) demonstrates the relevance of a semiological approach to understanding the richly expressive language of Romantic music. Similarly, Hatten (2018) looks into interpretive traditions shaping the work of Niccolò Paganini and Franz Liszt, illustrating how these interpretations engage deeply with virtual agency.

Of particular relevance here are parallel proceedings in acousmatic music, especially those engaging with spectromorphology and the research of Smalley.<sup>8</sup> One case in point is Adam Stansbie (2013), who explores the fundamental constituents of acoustic events

<sup>8</sup> Acousmatic music is a form of electroacoustic music that is specifically composed for presentation using speakers, as opposed to a live performance. It stems from a compositional tradition that dates back to the introduction of *musique concrète* in the late 1940s.



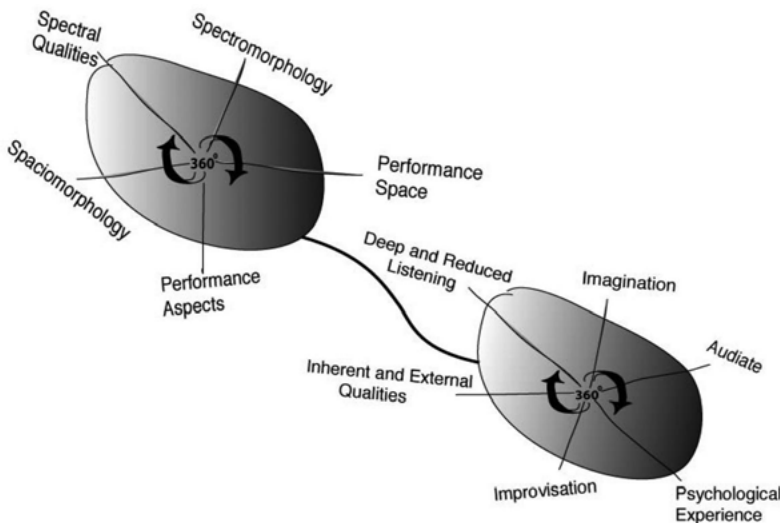
both before and during performance, framing performance agency in terms of the performer or sound diffuser. Similarly, Joanne Thomas (2003) examines human agency in electroacoustic contexts, highlighting both the performer or diffuser and the performance systems they operate.<sup>9</sup> Although these perspectives are central to understanding agency in sound-based practices, a detailed inquiry lies beyond the scope of this study and will be pursued in future research.

# Application

In theoretical modeling, we focus on audiation in relation to morphology and comprehension. Piccardi, Palmiero, and Nori tell us that, “the impact of auditory stimuli on our emotions and cognition is influenced by various factors, including the characteristics of the stimuli, the nature of the tasks being performed, and individual differences in processing sounds and music” (2024, 1). We investigate the interaction between spectral qualities and temporal flux, framing these within a comprehensive model that integrates what is perceived and understood when a musical gesture occurs.

To support this method, Figure 2 represents sound events as three-dimensional forms on a two-dimensional surface, a pedagogical model that is applicable to all instruments and audible environmental events. These visualizations offer an accessible way of understanding how sonic gestures unfold in time, highlighting dynamic changes in timbre, intensity, and texture. The aim is both analytical and pedagogical: by visualizing resonance as form in motion, students acquire tools to describe and anticipate sonic transformations across varied musical contexts.

**Figure 2.** The morphological and audiative interconnectedness

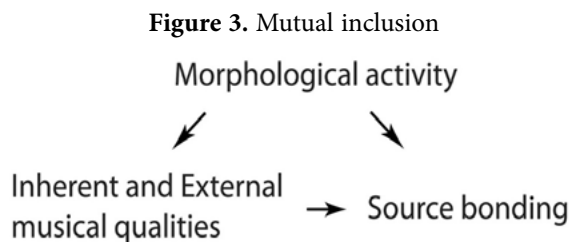


<sup>9</sup> In acousmatic music, a sound diffuser is a person who disperses sonic events throughout a space, creating an immersive and balanced listening experience. The idea is that through this diffusion listeners can perceive a natural and spatially expansive sound environment.

This work draws on my recent theoretical research into sound and audiation. It constitutes an exploration of the equal value of sounds functioning within multilayered settings. The objective is to develop a learning methodology that assigns equal weight to all of these topics.<sup>10</sup> Looking ahead, I envision explanatory figures that incorporate additional dimensions – for instance, four-dimensional designs rendered as holographic spatial creations.

The relation between the frequency spectra characteristics of sounds and their changes and shaping through time is mutually inclusive. Smalley explains: “Although spectral content and temporal shaping are indissolubly linked, we must conceptually separate them for discursive purposes – we cannot in the same breath describe what is shaped and the shapes themselves” (1997, 107). This approach provides a framework for understanding structural relations and behaviours as experienced in the flow of music.

In Figure 3, mutual inclusion is the central tenet, illustrating morphological activity, inherent and external musical qualities, and source bonding. The elements show the mutual aspects that contribute to refined listening. Smalley uses the term source bonding to represent the activity of morphologies from inside the work to the sounding world outside. His definition relates to the natural tendencies of sonic sources and causes, and to the relationships among resonances, which give the impression of mutual or associated origins. Smalley’s descriptions encompass the link between fundamental resonant features and the external referential associations of acoustic instruments. Moreover, his theories of source bonding help us understand the flexible relationships between sounds and their perceived sources (Smalley 1997).



In terms of educational development, my contention is that source bonding should be more explicitly incorporated into the study of instrumental music. It is already clearly present and can be discovered through the physical activities involved in sound-making; in other words, whenever human agency is involved, source bonding will occur.

It is helpful to connect the mutual inclusivity of inner and outer hearing with morphological activity. Earlier, we noted the importance of inherent and external threads (see pages 7–9 of the chapter). Furthermore, connections to personal feelings can form the basis for discussions related to extrinsic threads and source bonding. Such inquiries may also reveal visceral connections. For example, one might recall the sensation of vibrations transferring from an instrument to the body, evoking nostalgic associations.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed explanation of how this model supports teaching as well as theoretical understanding, see Vishnick 2023, 141.

## Pedagogical Implications

Audiation engages the full scope of listening as a creative act. Developing musical aptitude enables the realisation of musical creativity. According to Gordon, “musical aptitude represents one’s potential to learn to audiate” (Gordon 1989, 75). It requires understanding how auditory perception shapes the senses and deepens awareness of sonic experience. In the ensuing studies, models of creative thinking in music are built from the exploration of acoustic events through voice and instruments, manipulation, and environmental elements; we look at relationships between imagination and invention by linking to sound and imagery.<sup>11</sup>

I believe that the players will learn a lot more about the music itself by cultivating a sense of the musical resonances in the mind before interpreting them physically. Therefore, evolving and advancing practices are essential for forward-looking pedagogical thought, providing instructions that help students bring out and realise their inner potential. Knowing the details and sensing a sound from one’s inner ear before hearing it played or sung is undoubtedly useful. Teaching people to hear and comprehend music rooted in the imagination is key, as this is the point at which modes of experience may be expanded.

Collaborative sound-making is intended as a means to create musical narratives, developed through both dialogue and sonic production. We introduce a system that uses portrayal as well as the abstract and representational features of music to strengthen learners’ oral and written representation.

Ultimately, the pedagogical implications extend beyond technical skill. The exercises cultivate musical inventiveness, encourage reflective learning, and enable students to make connections between sound, gesture, and meaning. In this way, audiation becomes not only a method of internalising music but also a pathway toward richer artistic and educational practice. Furthermore, we value the importance of fostering an expressive and supportive person-based learning environment, and this leads us to consider the practical pedagogical implementations.

## Audiation exercises

The Audiation Exercises are structured to integrate perceptual listening with creative sound-making, providing participants with a structured framework for engaging with musical morphologies. Drawing on Smalley’s concept of spectral activity, the exercises guide students to recognise how morphological events evolve over time and how their underlying causes shape musical outcomes.

As we have seen earlier, the exercises are organised into a series of progressive stages, with students guided throughout by the supervisor. To elaborate further, in the first stage students focus on perceiving and mentally representing the fundamental qualities of sound, such as attack, resonance, and decay. The second stage emphasises working with acoustic events, where learners explore both the mental and physical dimensions of resonances, attending to features such as contrasts and continuities. In the third stage, students

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<sup>11</sup> For further clarification on the meaning of audiation, see Gordon (1989).

engage in improvisation and creative manipulation, generating musical narratives based on their observations and inner representations. Finally, the process culminates in reflection and documentation, as the players compare imagined and actual sonic outcomes, articulate insights, and integrate these experiences for subsequent exercises. Through this method both analytical listening skills and creative musical expression may be acquired, bridging theoretical understanding and practical application in contemporary pedagogy.

The goal of the exercises is to examine musical outcome through progressive task-oriented behaviours within various listening and performative settings. The results are used as a starting point for the next musical initiative, forming a continuous learning cycle. We start the exercises from a fundamental position of comprehension, then investigate ways of discovering the musical attributes inherent in sound. For example, in Soundscape-based Exercise No. 1, the attention is on spectra, memory, vocal facility, and musical inventiveness.

Each participant assumes a specific role within the exercise. Students follow directions provided by a supervisor. The group of students may consist of a single individual or a number of members; however, a smaller group is generally recommended to enhance focus and interaction. This approach accommodates musicians across a wide range of musical abilities, from beginners to advanced practitioners. Depending on the exercise, students may engage through vocalisation, instrumental performance, or a combination of both. The supervisor acts as a mentor, providing guidance, support, and coaching throughout. All participants are engaged in a collaborative learning environment, working collectively toward the achievement of optimal musical outcomes.

The exercises proceed in stages under the guidance of a supervisor as follows, an initial instruction, the morphology and discussion, using the sonic events, and reflection on the work. Four stages form the basis of each exercise:

### *1. Initial Instruction (Imagining Sound)*

The first phase emphasises the process of audiation. This means mentally hearing and interpreting a particular acoustic event, or group of morphologies; in essence, “thinking in sound”. Students are guided by the supervisor in forming a clear and detailed mental representation of the sound event under consideration, thereby enhancing their perceptual and cognitive understanding. The development of this skill allows musicians to envision and integrate resonances, and ultimately with greater proficiency, to generate musical ideas independently of external auditory stimuli.

Before producing the morphology, the student engages their inner ear and imagination to describe, in narrative form, what they are going to hear to the supervisor. The student is encouraged to articulate this description as precisely as possible, essentially forming the resonant event in their mind. To support these techniques, the supervisor discusses both the intrinsic spectral changes in sound event spectra over time and their extrinsic referential qualities. In this way, a creative and descriptive narrative develops through each exercise, functioning as a form of narratological fiction. It is here that the essence of the method begins.

## *2. Sound Production and Comparison*

The student then produces the sound(s) using available means, such as voice or instrument. They subsequently compare the previously imagined narrative (from step 1) with their perception of the actual resonance in dialogue with the supervisor. Priority is on the accuracy of the morphological content in the mind to the portrayal given by the student of a narrative. For instance, how does the initial imagined inner-ear description compare with the descriptive elements after the performance?

## *3. Improvisation and Development*

In the next section, all participants engaged with using the sound event(s). This initial sound serves as the starting point for extemporization, incorporating insights from the preceding discussion. Improvisation is linked with invention to create spontaneous music inspired by imagery, with the aim of cultivating fantasy further through various improvisatory techniques that build a coherent musical section. A musical narrative thus emerges from the chosen events.

The players draw on experiences from the information explored in the instruction, morphology and discussion sections to produce improvisatory elements, structured around using the archetypal attack/resonance/termination and variants of that model. Numerous possibilities arise as the musicians evaluate and engage with the placement of single, consecutive, merged, and combined morphologies.

One example of a basic phrase comprising consecutive morphologies may begin with the repetition of the opening sound, followed by shorter (diminished) then longer (stretched) versions, forming a string of four sonorous events. This whole sequence is played again with a different order before a variant is employed. Such a variant might involve prematurely terminating the opening morphology or interfering with the resonance phase (like partial muting or tremolando on a stringed instrument). Pitch and dynamic alterations can also become part of the procedure.

With practical experimentation, a series of well-articulated phrases soon emerges, revealing how choices of sound objects in the indeterminate world can be used to set up a musical narrative. This may lead to musical stories that have elements of surprise. Many other musical devices may be called upon, like imitation, inversion, and glissandi.

## *4. Reflection and Documentation*

The final stage centres on deliberation, as it provides a space for considering and recording various aspects of the work. Written, audio, or video commentaries can be used to capture all the causes and effects, serving as resources for future inquiry, research, and progression to subsequent steps; an ongoing cycle of understanding is established over time.

This concept closely parallels David Kolb's theories of experiential learning, which frame discovery as a continuous cycle of thinking, acting, experiencing, and reflecting. As Kolb defines it: "Learning is a process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb 1984, 38). In this light, best practice would be active involve-

ment in each step of the Audition Exercises. This involves engaging experimentation with conceptualising, experiencing, and reflecting; the results can be assimilated, distilled, and lead to new experiences.

### *Pedagogical Outcomes*

By moving through these stages, participants develop dual capacities:

- Analytical acuity, through the precise evaluation of sound events and morphologies
- Creative fluency, through improvisation and narrative construction.

The players learn to engage in sonic events production, discussion focusing on intrinsic qualities such as attack, resonance, and decay. Reflective dialogue with the supervisor helps students link their perceptions to broader musical narratives. Students are guided through short improvised sequences, attending to morphological contrasts and continuities, where they apply their new skills, integrating audiation with performance practice.

Through this sequence, students develop the capacity to understand sound by combining analytical listening with creative experimentation. The exercises, therefore, are designed with two primary aims: they cultivate perceptual sensitivity while also engendering imaginative engagement, supporting a pedagogy that bridges theory and practice in contemporary music education.

The exercises encourage students to internalise sound, compare inner and outer hearing, and transform perception into expression. Offering a pedagogical approach that strengthens both technical understanding and imaginative engagement. The first set of Audiation Exercises is presented in instructional diagram form in the Appendix.

## **Conclusion**

The Audiation Exercises are designed around the idea of building musical narrativity through examining attributes of acoustic events. In order to achieve pedagogically valuable outcomes, the learners participate in a musical journey that explores the subtleties of cause and effect. The benefit of these effects may be apparent immediately, or only emerge later. For example, after completing the first attempt at Note-based Exercise 1, the player may immediately see an improvement in listening skills. Alternatively, progress may be delayed and only become evident later, when the student realises they can audiate in a real musical setting.

**Figure 4.** Performance-based learning and assessment

**Outcome → Cognitive action → Conception → Comprehending → Practice**

Figure 4 shows the criteria for performance-based learning and assessment, we align these characteristics to morphological principles. This is a form of testing that requires a performance task rather than working from a predetermined list. This system is structured around demonstrating knowledge and skills in an insightful environment. It embraces the application of knowledge to real situations through critical thinking. “This type of

learning is an on-going process that allows student-centred learning and progress monitoring where teachers and students collaborate and adjust their learning where needed” (Hollandsworth and Trujillo-Jenks 2020, 1). In our context, students are encouraged to take ownership of what they have learned, while the supervisor delivers guidance and support. The assessment framework is organised into five categories:

**Outcome** – which focuses on students’ overall musical understanding, including knowledge of spectromorphology, general musical features, sound manipulation, and imagination.

**Cognitive Action** – where students’ critical reasoning, deep thinking, and problem-solving skills are assessed.

**Conception** – how well the supervisor has evaluated task expectations, alongside students’ perspectives on the given guidance.

**Comprehending** – a space where the supervisor assesses the extent to which students have engaged with and understood the material.

**Practice** – reflecting students’ grasp of concepts through sustained rehearsal and critical reflection.

After completing the exercises, musical achievement will be assessed using parameters connected to soundscape-based, note-based, and sound-based music within a performance-based learning environment. For note-based music, for example, assessment may focus on the inventiveness of rhythmic and tonal elements. Analyses will be tied to overall musical attainment and aptitude, including awareness of relevant soundworlds, listening ability, and performance skills. Moreover, creativity may be evaluated by comparing data across the three aforementioned musical areas, which can highlight levels of achievement. Importantly, by enhancing improvisational skills, musicians can learn to articulate their musical thoughts spontaneously.

A key influence on this framework is the *Perception* chapter in *The Tuning of the World* by R. Murray Shafer. He tells us: “The only way to check perceptions is to devise routines by which the listeners can produce exactly what they hear” (Shafer 1977, 153). To achieve this, each exercise is designed with a clear emphasis and contextual framework.

These Audiation Exercises may serve as a useful supplement to current conventional training. The intention is that they provide a foundation for further audiative development, accessible to all those interested in music theory and practice. Looking ahead, attention should be placed on deepening understanding and internalising a more expressive musical narrative. Further studies building on the present work would contribute significantly toward these goals. Additionally, improvement of audiative skills will undoubtedly enhance musical confidence and communication.

Beyond immediate pedagogy, the work also invites engagement with hermeneutical value and semiological syntax in order to comprehend a broader musical context. For Galyna Zavgorodnia, music semiology “can be considered a necessary basic discipline for the professional training of musicologists and practicing musicians of any programme” (Zavgorodnia 2021, 2512). Engaging with musical syntax is particularly relevant to the study of communication. This perspective aligns with how musical semiotics can help in

establishing some level of cognizance present within the temporal flow of music, thereby supporting performative skill. The function of musical hermeneutics in the formation of comprehension skills and interpretational knowledge is a rich area of future educational research. In particular, hermeneutical analysis methods applicable to pedagogical practice hold potential enhancement of visual thinking, sensory perception, and the skill of cognition within the semantic depths embedded in resonance.

A morphological approach to creating textures in the Audiation Exercises, whether or not they are internally represented, can encompass a wide range of associations. Ultimately, human agency is required to produce musical narrativity. In addition, narration appears to require an element of indeterminacy in order to create suspense. This process highlights the characteristic musical attributes of shaping outcome and progression. It plays out within various aspects of stylistic improvisational conventions and normative practices, which can operate deterministically or teleologically; for it is here that we garner the emergence of significant discursive reflection.

Cultivating audiative capability may be seen as an ever-developing skill, where imagination is used for nurturing listening experiences, improvisation, and reflective thinking. Through these studies, students and supervisors engage in practical experimentation to explore, observe, and retain salient information. These skills and knowledge are then carried forward to support further audiation-based experiences.

By contributing to the literature on audiation and musical narrativity, and grounding the work in the morphology of sound, the aim is to offer a rich alternative outlook. This research does not replace the importance of existing audiation exercises; rather, the objective is to broaden current thinking. The premise has been to provide an understanding through the principles of spectromorphology.

To establish validity, the Audiation Exercises must be tested. The goal is to engage a community of interest in exploring these ideas and principles, grounded in the belief that humans possess the capacity to invent musical narrative fictions. The desire is to strengthen the audiative and narratological abilities of musicians, with the expectation that these studies will foster a wide range of meaningful personal connections, some of which may endure. It is anticipated that the dynamic energy of future participants will enable their musical journeys to flourish.

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# Appendix

## Audiation Exercises A

<b>Soundscape-based Exercise No. 1</b>	
<u>Instruction</u>	<u>Imagination</u>
A - You are digging sand	Without making the sound, imagine you are forming it in your mind. Then as best as you can describe what you are going to hear.
1 - The Morphology	Make the sound, capture it, then in relation to A describe the accuracy of your description.
2 - Discussion	Discuss issues arising. It will be helpful to connect your thoughts with the concepts of <i>deep listening</i> , <i>reduced listening</i> , <i>extrinsic threads</i> , <i>source bonding</i> .
3 - Using the sound	Improvise using the sound from 1 by engaging with single, consecutive, merged, and combined possibilities. Integrate morphologies that are variant to the archetype attack/resonance. Incorporate your experiences from the discussion.
4 - Reflections	Make a written, audio or video commentary, a resource for future current thinking and research.

<b>Note-based Exercise No. 1</b>	
<u>Instruction</u>	<u>Imagination</u>
A - Pitches	Choose a specific note on your instrument (tuned conventionally), or voice. Share the one you have chosen with those present. Then before playing the note, describe the sound you are going to hear. Relate your description to the archetypal model and to personal feelings. Archetype - <i>attack/resonance/decay</i> .
1 - The Morphology	Play the note and record it in some way, then describe the accuracy in respect to A.
2 - Discussion	Discuss issues arising. It will be helpful to connect your thoughts with the concepts of <i>deep listening</i> , <i>reduced listening</i> , <i>extrinsic threads</i> , <i>source bonding</i> .
3 - Using the sound	Improvise using the sound from 1 by engaging with single, consecutive, merged, and combined possibilities. Integrate morphologies that are variant to the archetype. Incorporate your experiences from the discussion.
4 - Reflections	Make a written, audio or video commentary, a resource for future current thinking and research.

<b>Sound-based Exercise No. 1</b>	
<u>Instruction</u>	<u>Imagination</u>
A - Extended technique	Choose a specific appropriate sound on your instrument, share it with those present. Then before playing the note, describe the sound you are going to hear. Relate your description to the archetypal model and to personal feelings. Archetype - <i>attack/resonance/decay</i> .
1 - The Morphology	Play the extended technique, record it in some way, then describe the accuracy in respect to A.
2 - Discussion	Discuss issues arising. It will be helpful to connect your thoughts with the concepts of <i>spectromorphological</i> , <i>extrinsic threads</i> , <i>source bonding</i> , <i>inherent</i> and <i>external qualities</i> .
3 - Using the sound	Improvise using the sound from 1 by engaging with single, consecutive, merged, and combined possibilities. Integrate morphologies that are variant to the archetype. Incorporate your experiences from the discussion.
4 - Reflections	Make a written, audio or video commentary, a resource for future current thinking and research.

## Audiation Exercises B

<b>Soundscape-based Exercise No. 2</b>	
<u>Instruction</u>	<u>Imagination</u>
A - You are digging gravel	Without making the sound, imagine you are forming it in your mind. Then as best as you can describe what you are going to hear.
1 - The Morphology	Make the sound, capture it, then in relation to A describe the accuracy of your description.
2 - Discussion	Discuss issues arising. It will be helpful to connect your thoughts with the concepts of <i>deep listening</i> , <i>reduced listening</i> , <i>extrinsic threads</i> , <i>source bonding</i> .
3 - Using the sound	Improvise using the sound from 1 by engaging with single, consecutive, merged, and combined possibilities. Integrate morphologies that are variant to the archetype attack/resonance. Incorporate your experiences from the discussion.
4 - Reflections	Make a written, audio or video commentary, a resource for future current thinking and research.
<b>Note-based Exercise No. 2</b>	
<u>Instruction</u>	<u>Imagination</u>
A - Pitches	Choose two specific notes on your instrument (tuned conventionally), or voice. Share the chosen pitches with those present. Then before playing them, describe the sounds you are going to hear. Relate your description to the archetypal model and to personal feelings. <i>Archetype - attack/resonance/decay.</i>
1 - The Morphology	Play the notes and record it in some way, then describe the accuracy in respect to A.
2 - Discussion	Discuss issues arising. It will be helpful to connect your thoughts with the concepts of <i>deep listening</i> , <i>reduced listening</i> , <i>extrinsic threads</i> , <i>source bonding</i> .
3 - Using the sound	Improvise using the sound from 1 by engaging with single, consecutive, merged, and combined possibilities. Integrate morphologies that are variant to the archetype. Incorporate your experiences from the discussion.
4 - Reflections	Make a written, audio or video commentary, a resource for future current thinking and research.
<b>Sound-based Exercise No. 2</b>	
<u>Instruction</u>	<u>Imagination</u>
A - Extended technique	Choose two specific appropriate sounds on your instrument, share it with those present. Then before playing the techniques, describe the sound you are going to hear. Relate your description to the archetypal model and to personal feelings. <i>Archetype - attack/resonance/decay.</i>
1 - The Morphology	Play the extended techniques, record it in some way, then describe the accuracy in respect to A.
2 - Discussion	Discuss issues arising. It will be helpful to connect your thoughts with the concepts of <i>spectromorphological</i> , <i>extrinsic threads</i> , <i>source bonding</i> , <i>inherent</i> and <i>external qualities</i> .
3 - Using the sound	Improvise using the sound from 1 by engaging with single, consecutive, merged, and combined possibilities. Integrate morphologies that are variant to the archetype. Incorporate your experiences from the discussion.
4 - Reflections	Make a written, audio or video commentary, a resource for future current thinking and research.

## Audiation Exercises C

<b>Soundscape-based Exercise No. 3</b>	
<u>Instruction</u>	<u>Imagination</u>
A - You are digging snow	Without making the sound, imagine you are forming it in your mind. Then as best as you can describe what you are going to hear.
1 - The Morphology	Make the sound, capture it, then in relation to A describe the accuracy of your description.
2 - Discussion	Discuss issues arising. It will be helpful to connect your thoughts with the concepts of <i>deep listening</i> , <i>reduced listening</i> , <i>extrinsic threads</i> , <i>source bonding</i> .
3 - Using the sound	Improvise using the sound from 1 by engaging with single, consecutive, merged, and combined possibilities. Integrate morphologies that are variant to the archetype attack/resonance. Incorporate your experiences from the discussion.
4 - Reflections	Make a written, audio or video commentary, a resource for future current thinking and research.

<b>Note-based Exercise No. 3</b>	
<u>Instruction</u>	<u>Imagination</u>
A - Pitches	Choose three specific notes on your instrument (tuned conventionally), or voice. Share the chosen pitches with those present. Then before playing them, describe the sounds you are going to hear. Relate your description to the archetypal model and to personal feelings. Archetype - <i>attack/resonance/decay</i> .
1 - The Morphology	Play the notes and record it in some way, then describe the accuracy in respect to A.
2 - Discussion	Discuss issues arising. It will be helpful to connect your thoughts with the concepts of <i>deep listening</i> , <i>reduced listening</i> , <i>extrinsic threads</i> , <i>source bonding</i> .
3 - Using the sound	Improvise using the sound from 1 by engaging with single, consecutive, merged, and combined possibilities. Integrate morphologies that are variant to the archetype. Incorporate your experiences from the discussion.
4 - Reflections	Make a written, audio or video commentary, a resource for future current thinking and research.

<b>Sound-based Exercise No. 3</b>	
<u>Instruction</u>	<u>Imagination</u>
A - Extended technique	Choose three specific appropriate sounds on your instrument, share it with those present. Then before playing the techniques, describe the sound you are going to hear. Relate your description to the archetypal model and to personal feelings. Archetype - <i>attack/resonance/decay</i> .
1 - The Morphology	Play the extended techniques, record it in some way, then describe the accuracy in respect to A.
2 - Discussion	Discuss issues arising. It will be helpful to connect your thoughts with the concepts of <i>spectromorphological</i> , <i>extrinsic threads</i> , <i>source bonding</i> , <i>inherent</i> and <i>external qualities</i> .
3 - Using the sound	Improvise using the sound from 1 by engaging with single, consecutive, merged, and combined possibilities. Integrate morphologies that are variant to the archetype. Incorporate your experiences from the discussion.
4 - Reflections	Make a written, audio or video commentary, a resource for future current thinking and research.

## Chapter 6

# On the Types of Musical Narrative in Opera<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the problem of musical narrative in the history of opera, which developed in the eras of Baroque, Classicism and Romanticism. The gradual formation of the musical narrative itself is traced from the operas from Classicism to Wagner, in which the romantic feeling of musical form as a process played a special role. The chapters on the operas of Berg and Zimmermann demonstrate the specifics of the synthesis of the arts in post-Wagnerian opera, when the musical narrative forms the dramaturgy of the entire performance.

**Keywords:** opera, musical narrative, Richard Wagner, Alban Berg, Bernd Alois Zimmermann

### Introduction

As a form of musical narrative, the characteristics of a musical text are considered, which can be interpreted as a form of verbal expression presenting a coherent and comparatively holistic flow of information. The establishment of narrative techniques in European music is linked to the adoption of rhetorical principles, which became widespread during the Baroque era. Although the use of rhetorical principles in the arrangement of musical compositions lost its relevance in the 19th century, the orientation towards speech as a model for musical expression remained significant. In many respects, it persists even today, although the music of the 20th century, in particular its second half, has introduced considerable innovations and made changes to the general paradigm. The issue of musical narrative itself is complex and controversial. This chapter focuses on the genre of opera, which is marked by both verbal and theatrical narrative forms, while music is intended to work in concert with these elements. That is why it is logical to suppose that the unique types of narrative emerge in opera.

The musical narrative of an opera should be viewed in terms of the unification of the following factors:

- The individual nature of contrasting musical topoi that accompany extra-musical, verbal and theatrical narrative (libretto), as well as considerably enriching it;
- The presence of the unified musical process that embraces the entire opera;
- As follows, the presence of the unified musical dramaturgy with a continuous development of topoi and leitmotifs.

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

The aforementioned is typical for the highly developed musical narratives found in 19th-century opera. It is worth noting also that it is all the more interesting to analyse the relationships between musical and extra-musical narrative in Baroque and Classical operas.

## From Classicism to Wagner: Musical Narrative as an Entire Process

Without delving into the unique early examples of the genre that predated the emergence of the term “opera” (in particular, Monteverdi’s compositions), let us note the characteristic features of Baroque opera.

The typical forms of this opera were predetermined by the peculiarities of the music of the era, specifically, the structure of musical time, moment, and process (narrative). The well-known descriptive qualities of Baroque music, on the one hand, and, its emphasis on rhetoric, on the other hand, demonstrate its significant narrative potential. However, the process-related qualities of Baroque music were realised within the framework of a single state or affect, i.e., within an “expanded” moment of higher order. The unified musical process was completely out of question, while in Baroque aesthetics the whole was perceived as a sum (Mikhailov 1997, 120), which found reflection in the practice of adapting numbers from one opera to another, as well as the general free treatment of a composition. Yet, when considering the arrangement as a whole, the laws of perception were taken into account, e.g., it was customary to pair contrasting arias. Arranged as a sequence of arias, Italian opera seria was characterised in the 18th century as a “concert in costumes”. Its compositional principle was indeed similar to that of a concert programme, but it was the abrupt plot peripety that prompted the musical embodiment of affects. The libretto of a Baroque opera resembles an intense verbal narrative, while the musical composition represents a “mosaic” of thoroughly elaborate moments/affects.

Music could translate narrative as movement only in secco recitatives, the musical significance of which is not comparable to that of arias. And the intensive musical elaboration of a single moment in arias could not transgress their limits and embrace the composition of an opera as a whole.

The Viennese classical era introduced a new perception of the whole, which was no longer a sum but a hierarchically arranged system. The latter manifested in such innovations as symphonic cycle, sonata allegro, and symphony orchestra. Differentiation of exposition, development, and recapitulation (not only of different topoi) was projected onto the musical composition of these operas. The independent expressiveness of music is particularly obvious in operas related to mystery plays. These are *Orfeo* by C. W. Gluck and *Die Zauberflöte* by W. A. Mozart. Mystery play is usually distinguished by little action, while in the centre there is not the action itself but the higher meaning that guides it. Therefore, first, the plot focuses on the main sacred events and does not fix details; and, second, the quality pertaining to mystery supposes a greater specificity of musical semantics (there are not so many mystical topoi). As a result, listening to either of those pieces mentioned above allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the entire composition in its development due to the music itself. Here it is possible to discuss musical narrative *per se*. The entire *Die Zauberflöte* is united by four topoi. Two of

them are represented by superhuman entities: the domain of Sarastro with priests and the Queen of the Night. The other two topoi are human in nature: the realm of subtle love and lyrics of Tamino and Pamina, as well as the simple and unassuming, yet attractive world of Papageno and Papagena. Every topos has genre, rhythmic and melodic musical idioms of its own. These idioms subordinate the intricate libretto to the logic of Mozart's musical composition that emphasises the essence of action. For music to become the central narrative, it was sufficient to remove the plot, overloaded with a multitude of details.

From this perspective, Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* is of particular interest; its plot can be interpreted as a transformed model of the mysterious archetype (Kirillina 2009). Interestingly, the development of the opera is distinguished by the gradual reduction of everyday details and the musical affirmation of higher meaning. Larissa Kirillina writes, regarding the modulation of the genre, "In the third version, the opera begins as an unpretentious Singspiel, evolves in Act 2 into a higher drama, and concludes as an oratorio or a cantata" (2009, vol. 1, 396). Thus, the closer the narrative approaches the generally significant semantic outcome, the more importance the music gains. The verbal and theatrical narrative transform into elements composed of both the musical and the mysterious.

The Romantic opera of the first half of the 19th century took a significant step forward. For the aesthetic principles of Romanticism, the whole was no longer merely a hierarchical system, but also a unified and focused process of development. The use of 'through development' and leitmotifs resulted in the emergence of a mature musical narrative, which reached its pinnacle in the Wagnerian musical drama of the second half of the 19th century. Even in the Romantic operas of K. M. von Weber, Mikhail Glinka, as well as Wagner's early operas, musical narrative as a process in terms of the interaction with the topoi was distinct, although it did not embrace the entire work. An overture serves as the initial point of this process. Thus, in the Overture to Weber's *Der Freischütz*, an original symphonic narrative emerges, subordinating and deforming the symmetrical form of the sonata allegro. The disappearance of Max's theme in the recapitulation, replaced by Samiel's theme, along with the transformation of Agathe's graceful theme into a hymn-like one in the coda, initiated the Romantic poetic forms of Chopin's Ballades and Liszt's symphonic poems. Within the opera itself, the idea of the Overture and its conflict continues in the aria of Max, who is torn apart by the forces of good and evil, in the scene in the Wolf's Glen, and in the finale. The entrance of the Hermit in the final scene, as well as the disappearance of the forces of evil, introduces a certain mystical element to the opera.

Wagner's operas prior to *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, particularly *Der fliegende Holländer*, develop Weber's model. The outcome of the thematic and dramaturgical interactions between overtures (or preludes) and the essential scenes is that one may perceive these operas as a musical whole of a higher order than operas by Mozart and Beethoven. These interactions are: Overture, Ballade of Senta, and Finale in *Der fliegende Holländer*; Overture, Bacchanalia with songs of Tannhäuser, and the Finale in *Tannhäuser*; Prelude, entrance of Lohengrin, and his disappearance in the Finale in *Lohengrin*.

Similar to operas of the 18th century, the mystical element endows the music of the essential scenes with a more definite meaning, comprehensible even without words.

Glinka, in his opera *A Life for the Tsar*, also built on *Der Freischütz*. The continuous conflict of Russian and Polish motto themes and, in particular, the gradual shaping of the theme of the final choir “Glory” throughout the entire opera, create a unified musical narrative process based on the model of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. The principal elements of this narrative are understandable without words as well. Glinka’s other opera, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, originates from Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* and *Oberon* by Weber, distinguished by a chaotic plot development and mosaic dramaturgy. Glinka’s epic opera features a framing arch between the Overture and the Finale, but it almost lacks scenic action. Moreover, even between tableaux and separate arias, there are neither recitatives nor causal links. It may appear that Glinka not only adapted the model of Baroque opera with its numerical structure, but also brought it to a climax. In fact, the composer introduces a unique dramaturgical solution, related to the specifics of fairy-tale narrative telling. At the beginning of the opera, the kidnapping of Lyudmila suspends the flow of real time (the canon “What an Enchanted Moment”); the characters enter the fairy-tale space and time, wandering through it in search of Lyudmila for three acts. It is no coincidence that Glinka applies the harmonic techniques that were extreme for the era, such as the use of a whole-tone scale and unresolved seventh chords. It is not only the canon that indicates the suspension of time, but also the numbers which have the form of “Glinka’s variations”, i.e., the variations on a constant melody. Only Lyudmila’s awakening in the Finale of the opera returns reality and real time. Thus, the peculiar dramaturgy of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* implements the mystery of the lost and found time, deconstruction and reconstruction of the narrative.

The peak of musical narrative development was in the Wagnerian musical dramas and the contemporary late Romantic operas (Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Mussorgsky, Verdi and Bizet), as well as in the late Romantic symphony (Berlioz, Liszt, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Mahler). The narrative quality was presupposed by the structuring of form as a unified process (Dahlhaus 2019, 179), the individualisation of musical elements (e.g., leitmotifs, as opposed to the typified rhetoric narrative of 18th-century music), and the overall intelligibility of musical language, based on genre models. As before, the particular semantic clarity of musical imagery was achieved through a reliance on myth and mystical features as its actual realisation. Wagner’s preference for mythological libretti was related not only to the universal significance of myth (which he indicated in his theoretical works), but also to the fact that the mythological imagery, if implemented in music, becomes comprehensible almost without need for words (a concept that he did not mention).

Arguing that musical development should reflect the causal relationship of the drama, Wagner declared the parallelism of verbal and musical narratives. However, in practice, music gained the utmost freedom through the embodiment of mythological imagery. But music and word in the Wagnerian operas do not always develop in parallel, but rather complement each other; e.g., at the beginning of *Das Rheingold*, the poetical text spoken by the Mermaids does not narrate the nascent world, depicted in the orchestral introduction. Likewise, at the end of *Götterdämmerung*, it is music that declares not only the return of the world into its initial state, but also the main idea of the tetralogy, which



is the redemption through love. In fact, for a listener to perceive the profound meaning of the operas by listening to music, only one element is ‘missing’: numerous plot events.

That is why the emergence of *Tristan und Isolde* can be compared to *Orfeo* by Gluck; notwithstanding the well-known programme statements of their authors, both operas affirm the supremacy of music as the main bearer of meaning. To prevent leitmotifs from being perceived as a self-presentation of the characters in a madhouse (as Debussy jokingly noted), there should be, first, a limited number of them. Second, their meaning should be utterly clear. These conditions can be most naturally achieved in a mystery play, which has become one of the outcomes of the evolution of late Romantic opera. *Tristan und Isolde* by Wagner contains a significant amount of metaphysical elements (which Debussy referred to as “dubious”), which is why it is possible to consider the opera as another manifestation of a mystical archetype, albeit on a Romantic basis, namely, a night mystery play of love, death and self-sacrifice. Wagner’s final opera, *Parsifal*, is a mystical play *per se*, with an appropriate description of its genre – “a sacred festival stage play”. Both in *Tristan und Isolde* and in *Parsifal*, the semantically related leitmotifs form, to a much greater extent than in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, a unified topoi, thus arranging symphonic dramaturgy. The aforementioned also concerns Rimsky-Korsakov’s mystery *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*.

The fate of d’Annunzio’s mystery play *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien* constitutes an illustrative example in this respect. Due to time constraints, Debussy found it possible to compose music only for those episodes of the play that he considered worthy of musical implementation. As a result, a musical quintessence of the mystery play had emerged that has gained a life of its own, while d’Annunzio’s overly prolonged and pretentious play has since fallen into obscurity.

In the process of the evolution of the Wagnerian narrative, other transformed models of mystical archetype emerged, e.g., the explicit anti-mystery *Salome* by O. Wilde and R. Strauss. Since it is an anti-mystery, it is possible to consider its distortion and, therefore, the distortion of the universally significant musical meanings. Thus, listening to Salome’s final monologue without words and theatrical action, it is impossible to imagine that this enchanting Romantic music is accompanying a passionate love confession to the severed head of John the Baptist.

During the 20th century, particularly its second half, the general speech paradigm of music was giving way to a more ritualistic or naturalistic form. It has an impact on narrative, which began to acquire new, uncommon forms and was often rejected as a musical technique. Narrative mystery plays from Classicist or Romantic periods were replaced by those closer to the plotless archaic rituals, where both verbal text and music as its projection represented a sacred, incomprehensible language. Among the examples are *The Rite of Spring* by Stravinsky, *Licht* by Stockhausen, and, to a degree, *Die Soldaten* by Bernd Zimmermann. In Stockhausen’s and Zimmermann’s operas, music no longer sought to convey information about extra-musical events but rather formed a “post-narrative” of its own, based on the deconstruction of linear time that manifested in Stockhausen’s moment form and Zimmermann’s spherical time. The profound essence of music is in both cases inextricably linked to the essence of the universe. All these performances are a triumph of

absolute music and, simultaneously, a transgression of narrative – its transformation into a pre-verbal and extra-verbal action.

## Verbal and musical reflections on the eternal in *Wozzeck* (*Woyzeck*) by G. Büchner and A. Berg

This part explores how Alban Berg's music reflects the thoughts of eternity, both intrinsic to Georg Büchner's drama and introduced by the composer's interpretation of the plot. Büchner's drama *Woyzeck* (1837) presents negative images of eternity, first, as 'mill wheels', i.e., cyclic rotations and 'evil infinity' (Captain) and, second, as the illusory 'immortality' of an inventor (Doctor). Contrary to Büchner's drama, Berg's opera involves the concept of eternal as unconditionally valuable, as an ideal, which will also be considered in this chapter.

The plot of Büchner's *Woyzeck* as such (the murder of a lover out of jealousy) is completely trivial and could become the basis for a simple opera of the *verismo* type. However, this simple plot is conveyed in a very complex text, saturated with philosophical thought and extreme states, approaching almost the theatre of the absurd. This was the reason why Büchner's drama became the basis for the libretto of the most significant expressionist opera of the 20th century – Berg's *Wozzeck*.

One of the manifestations of the depth and dramatic expression of the text is the collision between the flow of everyday reality in which, it would seem, there is nothing but an elusive moment of the present, instantly disappearing into the past, on the one hand, and the presence of the idea of the eternal in various forms, on the other. The theme of eternity arises from the very first words of the play. The captain, a narrow-minded and primitive man, who is shaved by his subordinate, soldier Wozzeck, tries, to the best of his understanding, to talk about eternity: "Fear takes over our world when you think about eternity. All is vanity of vanities. And what is eternity? Eternity is what is eternal, it is clear to everyone; but it turns out wrong – no, and the eternal is not eternal, but one moment, yes, just one moment."

What is important here? After these confused arguments with tautology and faltering logic, it turns out that eternity is understood not as a timeless value, but as an endless cycle (bad infinity), the symbol of which is the mill wheel: "When I think that our earth turns around in a day. It is a waste of time! What is all this about? I cannot see the mill wheel." (*Wozzeck*, the Captain, in a dialogue with Wozzeck).

Other references to eternity are frankly negative or even grotesque. Just before the murder of his beloved, Wozzeck says to Marie: "How sweet your lips are, Marie! I would forget Heaven and Bliss if I could kiss them often" (*Wozzeck*, Act 3, Scene 2, measures 86–91). So, eternity is not worth the moments of love for Wozzeck. And here are the words of the Apprentice from the scene in the tavern: "My soul, my immortal soul smelled of brandy all over! It stinks for no reason!" (*Wozzeck*, Act 2, Scene 4, measures 455–460).

How does Berg's music react to verbal references to eternity? The musical embodiment of the Captain's words is remarkable. On the words "I think about the eternal", a rather comical stop is made on a high note (*b* of the first octave, in Helmholtz notation),

and then a move down to the 'endless' chain of pure quarts symbolizing 'bad infinity'. But another thing is noteworthy: in the words "I do not heat mill wheels" (protest), one of the key motifs of the opera sounds, the succession  $b - a - e - g$ . This motif anticipates Wozzeck's leitmotif "We are poor people" ( $d\# - b - e - g$ ) and at the same time contains the theme that opens the third act when Marie reads the Bible ( $g - d - f$ ). This same interrogative intonation is included in one of the most important themes of Wozzeck.

Another image of the imaginary 'eternity' is associated with the Doctor's dreams of immortality, which, in his opinion, will be provided by the theory he created. This surrogate of immortality has received a grotesque musical expression. At the end of the Passacaglia on a twelve-tone theme (as it is known, the opera *Wozzeck* was written before Berg turned to the dodecaphony), the Doctor repeats the word "immortal" four times in ecstasy, and at the last repetition of a twelve-tone theme is played, harmonized by sharp dissonant chords.

However, unlike Büchner's play, Berg's opera has moments that really create a sense of eternity with the help of music. One of them is associated with Marie, whose image is ambiguous. But her best side is related to motherhood. After the lullaby that Marie sings to her son, the child falls asleep, and the music also 'falls asleep' in a bright, blissful moment of peace – time seems to stop, on the harmony of  $f - a - c - e$ . This stopped moment is perceived as a sign of eternity, the eternity of motherhood. There is nothing like it in Büchner's play, and it is the most romantic moment of the opera, the only moment embodying the ideal. This ideal is extremely fragile, and already at subsequent appearances, right up to the very end of the opera, this light chord is clouded and becomes more dissonant: under the fifth  $a - e$  in the high register, not the pure fifth  $f - c$  is 'laid' in the bass, but the tritone  $b - f$ . Other moments symbolising eternity and eternal values will be discussed below.

It is important to understand how Berg builds the form of opera as a whole. The surface layer is well known and obvious: the composer used instrumental forms of past eras. On the one hand, *Wozzeck* continues the tradition of 'literary operas' such as Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Strauss's *Salome*, which, in turn, go back to Wagner's musical dramas, where music, as is commonly believed after Wagner himself, follows the literary text and its form is determined by this the text (which, of course, cannot be taken literally – and Wagner's music shows the highest degree of independence). On the other hand, Berg wanted to present the music of his opera as something independent of the text. The instrumental forms were organised in such a way as to give the whole composition firmness. Did Berg achieve the desired result? And if not, what result did he achieve? And what is the deep meaning of using certain traditional forms?

As we know, Berg purposefully designed the musical composition of the entire opera as a ternary form (A-B-A): "Acts I and III (despite the fact that the latter, of course, does not represent a musical repetition of the first) reveal a certain architectonic parallelism. Both surround, precisely because of their short playing duration, I could say temporal symmetry, a much longer and more full-fledged middle act. And while it – as we will see – reveals a musically complete image from the first to the last bar, the forms of both extreme acts are much looser" (cited in: Tarakanov 1976, 265).

Berg also made changes to the text of Büchner's play. They mainly concern the reduction or exclusion of several scenes, as a result of which the actions of the main character look more unexpected and less prepared in the opera. Therefore, the scenes of buying a knife and leaving a will are excluded – in the opera, the murder looks like a more spontaneous and less thoughtful and prepared action than it was in the original source. In this regard, we must recall that Berg, when composing his opera, was guided by Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* based on the symbolist drama of Maeterlinck, in which, according to the idea of French composer, "the characters will not argue, but live their lives and work out their destinies" (cited in: Vallas 1933, 85). Berg built the structure of *Wozzeck* and the number of scenes on the model of Debussy's opera (see Veksler 2009, 487). However, the most noticeable change concerns the end of Berg's opera, which is also connected with *Pelléas et Mélisande*. In the last scene, when Mélisande dies, her daughter is brought in, and the line is spoken: "It's the baby's turn." The tragic fate of the mother will continue in the next "cycle" – the fate of her daughter.

Büchner's text, more precisely, its completed part (for the play was never finished) ends with the suicide of the main character. In the opera, this scene is followed by an orchestral episode, which Berg calls the epilogue. This is a tragic epitaph for *Wozzeck*. However, after the epilogue (which, by definition, is placed after the main narrative), another scene is given, which Berg synthesized from two sketches by Büchner that were not included in the text of the play. One sketch is a completely indifferent conversation of children who are running to take a look at the dead Marie – just as an unusual phenomenon. In another sketch, a character, named "The Fool" by Büchner, rides a toy horse. But Berg passes on his role to Marie's son, who plays with the children. And when the children are going to look at the dead Marie, her son continues to ride a horse, not understanding what has happened. Thus, the idea of the ending of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* does not just develop, but is elevated to a degree: an unambiguous image and forecast of the next 'cycle' are given – the son of the deceased character will take an equally difficult, tragic and largely meaningless path. Büchner's unfinished play became the basis of the opera – quite finished, but with an 'open ending' (in the sense of H. Wölfflin).

Now let us return to Berg's thoughts on the integral composition of the opera:

These two extreme acts, thus architectonically constructed a little more freely, whose sequence of scenes, therefore, follows more than one mental unity (the five characteristic pieces of Act I, the five principles of unity of [Act] III), these two extreme acts, therefore, surround, like the two 'A's' of a ternary song form, the middle act, musically designed much more firmly, the five scenes of which are inextricably linked as parts of one (in this case dramatic) symphony (cited in Tarakanov 1976, 265).

As we can see, Berg is quite consciously trying to build a composition with looser extreme acts and a firmer middle one – in this case, he uses the terminology of his teacher Schoenberg: *Fest – Locker*. But, firstly, the 'ternary form' of the opera, which Berg even compares with the song, in practice becomes inversion (when a firmer section takes the place of a loose, developing one). Secondly, Berg's point of view on his opera needs to be commented on, since it not only sheds light on the author's intention, but also indicates

the difference between the result and what the author himself declared. Therefore, contrary to Berg's comments, the second act is slightly larger than the first, and the fact that the last act is the shortest is a long-standing operatic tradition. Apparently, the image of the five-movement symphony as a form of the second act gave this act a much larger duration in Berg's eyes than it actually was. Interestingly, in order to convey the actual action (and not the exposition of the characters, the plot, or the outcome), Berg chose the form of a symphonic cycle – such an understanding of the symphony as a single process of development aimed at the finale is completely natural for a follower of Mahler, as Berg was. However, to what extent does this symphony turn out to be 'firmer' than the extreme acts? And to what extent do instrumental forms dominate operatic ones in extreme acts? "Five characteristic pieces" of the first act: 1) the "ancient suite", which itself consists of five movements (*Prelude*, *Sarabande*, *Gigue*, *Gavotte*, *Air*), not counting the reprise of the *Prelude*; 2) *Rhapsody on three chords*, 3) *Military March* and *Lullaby*, 4) *Passacaglia* and 5) *Andante affettuoso (quasi rondo)*. They are not connected in any way with each other by the change of characters and stage situations and do not form any integral structure by themselves. Integrity is determined by the logic of the theatrical action, as it has always been in opera. A military march and a lullaby are traditional genres for operas of the 19th century, and the *Air* from the "ancient suite" turns into an operatic aria – Wozzeck's arioso "We are poor people". For the scene of Tambourmajor's violence against Marie, Berg chooses the form of a rondo (*quasi rondo*), the refrain of which becomes the primitive, 'hammering' theme of the Tambourmajor – a musical cyclic rotation, 'mill wheels'. The second act ends in the same way: the finale of the 'symphony' is an *Introduction* and *Rondo martiale* (where the refrain is still the same theme of the Tambourmajor). It should be noted that the scherzo of the symphony (the scene in the tavern where Wozzeck watches Marie dancing with the Tambourmajor) contains as many as three trios and thus very expressively supports the idea of an aimless circular movement (it is there that they talk about a soul that smells of brandy). After this scherzo, the final scene (a drunken Tambourmajor beats Wozzeck for no reason) is perceived as the apotheosis of violence, destroying itself, as well as the form of the finale, and thus the form of the entire symphony of the second act. This form becomes open and thus 'loose'. Paradoxically, the finale of the symphony (and the second act) turned out to be one of the loosest episodes. And, of course, Berg does this quite purposefully, deconstructing classical genres and forms. In general, it is important to emphasize that the conditions of atonality prevailing in *Wozzeck*, the contrast of firm and loose, as well as the degree of hardness itself, are quite relative.

The 'loose' construction of the third act, consisting of six 'inventions', is also purposefully built. At first glance, six different, unrelated episodes tell us that the whole is falling apart. And to some extent it is. But it is still interesting to see how these 'inventions' are connected. The "invention on one note" (scene 2, the murder of Marie) and the "invention on a six-note chord" of six tones (scene 4, the death of Wozzeck) contain constant sound elements, as if stopping time, presenting existential moments close-up and from the inside, so that they become proportionate to eternity. The prototype of such stops was the "Rhapsody on three chords" from the first act, the music of which is repeated in the introduction for the finale (chorus of sleeping soldiers) of the second act.

The “invention on a theme” (scene 1, Marie reads the Gospel) and the “invention on a key” (the orchestral epilogue between scenes 4 and 5) give images of the eternal in the Christian sense – as a higher world, transcendent to the real world. Along with Marie’s *Lullaby* from the first act, these are the ‘firmest’ episodes of the opera. Even the scherzo (the fourth movement of the symphony) and the triple fugue of the second act (the second part of the symphony), not to mention the *Passacaglia* of the first act, are just attempts to build “firm” forms, but in fact, these are their deconstruction (in fact, the twelve-tone theme of the *Passacaglia* is barely audible and therefore quite ghostly, like the Doctor’s dreams of immortality). The ‘firmness’ of the scherzo, despite its tonal certainty, is shaken both by the excessive number of trios (as many as three), which creates another image of ‘mill wheels’, and by the ‘dissolution’ and almost disappearance of the main theme in the repetitions. On the contrary, these ‘inventions’ are distinguished by the clarity of tonality and tonal plans (C minor and D minor, respectively), as well as the concentrated relief of the thematic material. Of course, this is due to their semantic functions: the appeal of the Gospel as the highest value and the mourning generalization of Wozzeck’s fate. It is only in the orchestral epilogue, when Wozzeck is no longer alive, that *post factum* music makes sense of what has happened. The form of the epilogue is a logically structured process, a synthesis of the most important themes of the opera, leading to a tragic climax. This is an extremely firm construction, distinguished by tonal and thematic certainty, the only time in which the opera embodies a high tragedy, and therefore catharsis, which is possible only in a world with a centre. This is the non-effective and timeless quintessence of the entire opera, the most striking sign of eternity in its text. But this is also the clearest exception against the background of the rest of the text – due to the fact that this text is predominantly atonal.

The “invention on a rhythm” (scene 3, in the tavern, after the murder of Marie) and the “invention on the quaver rhythm” (scene 5, children playing – recall the expression of Heraclitus: “Eternity is a child playing”) create an image of continuous but aimless movement in a circle.

Thus, the ‘inventions’ of the third act form three arches or ‘rhymes’ by creating various images of eternity: 1) a stopped moment in an existential situation, 2) a firm structure bearing a transcendent eternal meaning, or, conversely, 3) aimless circularity. It is for the latter image that the ‘last word’ remains, despite all the weight and significance of the tragic epilogue-epitaph. At the level of the entire opera, cyclicity is expressed through the end of each act with the same harmony, which returns us to the same thing, preferring an ellipsis to a full stop.

Thus, Berg, using traditional forms, but often quite unconventionally disposing of the contrast of ‘firm’ and ‘loose’, complete and open, purposefully forms a world that aimlessly and senselessly spins like a mill wheel, but still contains (unlike Büchner’s original source) a passionate and hopeless appeal to God, as the highest point of meaning and Eternity.

## The musical form of B. A. Zimmermann's opera *Die Soldaten*: Meanings of Spheroidal Time

The analytical study of *Die Soldaten* by B. A. Zimmermann concerns the musical form of the opera as a whole. The main objective is the author's concept of 'spheroidal time' as applied to various aspects of musical composition. *Die Soldaten* emerged from a two-century-long dialogue between literature and music, and its genesis warrants a thorough analysis.

The original source of the opera is the eponymous play by Jakob Lenz. The genre of the play was designated as comedy, despite the presence of a murder and a suicide in the plot. Yet, in Zimmermann's opera, the original source – a story about a young woman who is prone to embrace the attention of men – has been transformed into a catastrophe of almost global proportions. In the finale of the opera, Mary has fallen so low that her own father cannot recognise her when passing her in the street. In contrast, in Lenz's play, the father initially fails to recognize his daughter but eventually does, leading to a joyous reunion witnessed by the audience. Later, in the final scene, the Colonel argues that, in order to lift the morale of the military, who are constantly out on campaigns and cannot have normal families, some women ("amazons") sacrifice themselves, becoming temporary companions of the "defenders of the fatherland". Thus, this unthinkable project in its own way creates a semblance of the classical 'social harmony'. The conclusion of Zimmermann's opera is quite different. The episode called *The Tribunal* resembles the Last Judgment on Earth, while the final parade of modern soldiers and military equipment marching into infinity creates the sense of a mysteriously apocalyptic play with a negative connotation.

How did such a transformation become possible? Another pairing of a play and an opera was of crucial importance in this regard. Georg Büchner, an adherent and researcher of Lenz's oeuvre, the author of the story Jakob Lenz, in his play *Woyzeck*, further develops the theme of *Die Soldaten*. However, Woyzeck kills, not his rival, but his beloved, which for him is equal to the destruction of the world. Büchner has intensified not only the dramatic, but also philosophical aspects of the play: from the very beginning the theme of eternity emerges (if only in the Captain's platitudes). The plot of Büchner's play is quite typical also for a Verist opera, yet, its semantic structure, language and style provided Alban Berg with a basis to create the best expressionistic drama of the 20th century. Berg has significantly extended the idea of eternity, which, due to music and musical forms, turned out to be interpreted in various ways (but this is a subject for another study).

Zimmermann returns to Lenz's plot, but skilfully, through minimal changes, renewing it, taking into account the experience of Büchner and Berg. Lenz, a representative of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, rejected the classical three unities (time flowing linearly within a single day), where Zimmermann had, in fact, already seen the signs of "spheroidal time". Let us note that Zimmermann's idea of all moments of past, present, and future existing simultaneously, thus forming a certain sphere, has a very long history. Along with the presence of eternal ideas, Platonic philosophy presupposes the presence of the Aeon (as an aspect of the One in Platonism), i.e. eternity, uniting all the moments of time. Furthermore, Eternity becomes a sign of God, whose all-embracing Knowledge cannot fail to unite all of these various moments. A new essential facet of comprehension of spheroidal time is the idea of a sphere, which is a geometric representation of eternity.

roidal time was introduced by Augustine; it was this aspect that has played a crucial role in the emergence of Zimmermann's philosophy of time. Augustine views time as inseparable from human consciousness and places man at the centre of the entity, which had earlier been called the Aeon. Through his consciousness, man actualises certain moments of the past, which turn into the "present of the past", as well as reflecting on the future ("the present of the future"), not to mention the more common "present of the present".

This configuration, derived from the Aeon, which realises the "comprehensiveness of time", differs from the latter in the fact that not all moments exist simultaneously; most of them exist only potentially. In Zimmermann's interpretation, Augustine's concept has acquired enormous tenseness, consistent with the 20th century. Modernist culture is concerned, not only with 'static' moments transformed into space (a sphere here being space), but also with the continuous flow of time, where a single moment can be almost imperceptible, integrated into the moving flow or static duration (*la durée*), or can counterpoint to other, equally elusive moments of the temporal sphere. This already alludes to the specifics of the modern era, the era of Husserl and Bergson, who associated the duration of time with melody (although there are almost no such melodies in Zimmermann's opera).

One of the closest models to Zimmermann's concept of the manifestation of nonlinear simultaneity is found in stream of consciousness literature, such as *Ulysses* by James Joyce. In the novel, the classical principle of the unity of time is paradoxically deconstructed: although the events occur within a single day, the reader feels the co-presence of all times, the enormous tension of the multitude of time "intervals" – to reword the title of the famous article by Zimmermann. But does this multitude of intervals form a sphere, as Zimmermann suggested?

One of the manifestations of a sphere is a cycle – cyclic time. This theme is central in Berg's *Wozzeck*, where eternity (as perceived by Büchner) appears as a pointless rotation of 'mill wheels'. However, music allows Berg to create several episodes, which represent eternity as the supreme value. Yet, one of these episodes (the Interlude of the third act in D minor, referred to by Berg as the Epilogue) is paradoxically followed by a final scene. This scene seems to act as an ellipsis, signalling the beginning of yet another cycle of meaningless existence. To achieve this, Berg has even included a fragment from drafts into Büchner's unfinished play. Zimmermann has developed the idea: *Die Soldaten* opens with a Prelude, featuring ostinato on D. This musical matter is revisited in the climactic scene, Toccata 3 in the fourth act. In the finale of the opera, the sounding on D gradually fades away, leading into the future. The sense of cyclicity and openness of the composition is emphasised by the periodic recurrence of certain forms of instrumental music, such as toccata, chaconne, nocturne, and *ricercar*. It is important to note that the use of these forms is quite dissimilar to that in *Wozzeck*. If we recall the structure of *Wozzeck*, we will notice that the unity of the opera is created not by instrumental forms per se, but by their combination in the three acts of the opera. Indeed, even if the sequence of scenes is endowed with designations of ancient dances or symphonic movements, this in itself would not intensify the musical unity. Instead, unity emerges as a result of the differentiation between the phases of the dramaturgical process: exposition in the first act, development in the second (symphony as a directed process of development), and individual episodes



in Act 3. Berg has deliberately chosen to create a 'looser' connection between episodes in the final act in order to highlight the openness of form.

In *Die Soldaten*, the logic of instrumental forms differs. Cyclicity is the first that attracts one's attention. However, what is the role of these forms in the arrangement of musical matter? What is, e.g., the form of the nocturne, or, the form of the toccata? One can say that a Baroque toccata consists of contrasting sections, which indicates not the unity of a whole, but, in fact, its opposite. Ricercar and chaconne have specific formal characteristics. In Zimmermann's opera, the rhythmical canons of *ricercari* and ostinato on a single tone (mainly on D) in quintuplets in the chaconne indeed correspond to the features of older genres. Yet, in general, the role of these instrumental forms in terms of their arrangement of their own matter should not be overestimated, similar to *Wozzeck*. It is at the level of the entire opera that they become significant form-structuring factors. But if, in Berg's opera, each act has its own principle of form, in *Die Soldaten* each act represents a variation on a number of forms. The connection of these forms with literary and dramatic narrative has long been referred to: chaconnes refer to Stolzius, toccatas – to officers' society, nocturnes are associated with dialogues of parents and children, *ricercari* – with scenes of seduction. Thus, Zimmermann, through the use of instrumental forms, emphasised and intensified a certain degree of cyclicity, inherent in Lenz's plot (a sequence of men in the girl's life). If eternity is present in Zimmermann's opera, it is only in the shape of infinite cyclicity. The notion of eternity, particularly the value of enduring meanings, is almost entirely absent here. In *Die Soldaten*, there is nothing comparable to episodes from *Wozzeck*, such as the theme of Marie's motherhood, her lullaby, or the inventions on the theme and tonality in the third act. The symphonic synthesis of *Wozzeck* arises as the tragic outcome of the opera, following the model of the Funeral March from Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. These symphonic episodes are closely related in meaning, despite the characters displaying significant differences.

Zimmermann applies in *Die Soldaten* another Wagnerian technique, that of an arch between the orchestral introduction and the climax of the opera (Toccata 3 from the fourth act, the scene of Marie's rape by a gamekeeper of Desportes, her first lover), the only scene introduced in the libretto but absent from Lenz's play. It is accompanied by a series of film projections that combine events of different time periods. However, in Wagner's overtures (*Der fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), the contrasting musical dramaturgy contained a synthesis of the essence of the entire opera and affirmed the ideal. The preludes (*Lohengrin*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*) focus on the images associated with the ideal. As regards Zimmermann's opera, it not only lacks an ideal, but the introduction forms an arch with the most appalling (not tragic, but appalling) rape scene.

Finally, there is another significant nuance related to the perception of the music from the opera. To compare, in *Wozzeck*, on the one hand, there is a stream of dissonant textures. Yet, against this background, individual episodes (listed above) arise, which can be distinguished from the flow of becoming and memorised: it is these episodes that fix the musical image in eternity. In *Die Soldaten* there are almost no such episodes, with perhaps the exception of the final tone D. Music is arranged based on serialism; each scene is distinguished by its own version of the series, which constitutes the basis of the

entire form-structuring. However, the compositional logic is hardly perceived by the ear: one can hear the logical connections between chords and rhythms, but not the musical narrative as a recounting of extra-musical events. The lack of distinctiveness in the vocal portrayal of the characters has long been criticized by scholars.

Berg's *Wozzeck* is a literary opera, paradoxically combined with the forms of instrumental music that specify the narrative. *Die Soldaten* is a literary opera of the avant-garde and post-modern era; its music was no longer created in the paradigm of narrative. It establishes the order between man and time (in Stravinsky's terms), shapes the structures following stick logic; but, within this logic, there is no place for creating the moments of the present. Even the quoted chorales of Bach, in the context of the whole, are perceived rather as associative thoughts than the affirmed ideals. The latter distinguishes the opera from Berg's Violin Concerto and *Ekklesiastische Aktion* by Zimmermann himself. The chorales are interpreted as the moments of the "past in the present" and not as those of eternity. Zimmermann himself viewed stylistic pluralism as a manifestation of the idea of spheroidal time. He saw the simultaneity of scenes as another example of this. Indeed, they significantly depart from the idea of narrative, whose initial form is linear and assumes a sequence of events rather than their simultaneity. It is this polyphony of narratives that creates the most intensive tensions within the musical drama.

To conclude, it should be mentioned, first, that the composition of *Die Soldaten* implements the idea of spheroidal time. Second, that spheroidal time is perceived as the deconstruction of Eternity as a divine attribute and the affirmation of it as an endless rotation. What constitutes the meaning and beauty of Zimmermann's opera? The only lasting and eternal aspect of the opera is the musical form *per se*, based on serial principles and cyclic repetitions. This form has a 'genome' of its own – the initial series. Yet, it is implemented in the structure that contradicts not only eternity but also narrative as a sequence of events. The form of the opera rather shapes a specific order of time, similar to natural cycles such as the growth of crystals or living organisms. This is a steady and regular expansion of the sphere of time, reaching its climax and continuing over eternity (as noted in the score, the events of the opera take place "yesterday, today, and tomorrow").

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## Chapter 7

## Baroque Features in Salvatore Sciarrino's Style Using the Example of *Il canto s'attrista, perché?*<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Similar to many early Baroque opera composers, the contemporary Italian composer Salvatore Sciarrino based his stage work *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* on a theme from ancient Greek mythology. However, unlike most composers around 1600, Sciarrino always wrote his own libretti. This is also the case here, in his 'Aeschylus opera', which was completed in 2019 and jointly commissioned by the Stadttheater Klagenfurt and Wuppertaler Bühnen. In addition to the narrative from Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sciarrino uses other elements here that connect him with composers from the Baroque period. This includes the written-out dynamic vocal ornamentation of the *Messa di voce* on a particularly long sustained note. As many scholars have acknowledged, Sciarrino's music is characterized by the use and combination of various figures and gestures, many of which can be traced back to the Baroque, and so my research is dedicated to identifying elements representative of the Baroque style that also appear in Sciarrino's *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* This should enable a better understanding of his compositional approach and the manner in which he integrates such elements into his style.

**Keywords:** Salvatore Sciarrino, musical rhetoric, early Baroque influence, rhetorical devices, *Oresteia*, Christoph Bernhard

*Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (*The singing becomes sad, why?*) is one of the most recent operas by Salvatore Sciarrino, who by 2025 has composed a total of seventeen theatrical works.<sup>2</sup> His latest operatic phase can be distinguished not so much by changes in his compositional style – which still retains many traits of his earlier works – but rather by his choice of subjects. Since 2019, Sciarrino has consistently turned to themes from ancient Greek mythology, beginning with *Il canto s'attrista, perché?*, followed by *Venere e Adone* (*Venus and Adonis*, 2021), and in 2025 *L'Agamennone* as well as *Il novello Perseo. Opera in un atto*. Originally scheduled for March 2020 at the Stadttheater Klagenfurt in Austria, the premiere of *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* was postponed to 4 February 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup> As this opera was not allowed to be performed in front of

<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bole, T. (2025). Catalog of works by genre. In *Salvatore Sciarrino*. Retrieved September 22, 2025, from <https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Stadttheater Klagenfurt OG. (n.d.). *Il canto s'attrista, perché?*. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from <https://www.stadttheater-klagenfurt.at/produktionen/il-canto-sattrista-perche-2/>

an audience due to Austrian legislation as a result of the pandemic, it was only premiered for media representatives.<sup>4</sup> The Austrian Broadcasting Corporation recorded the dress rehearsal of the production and broadcast it on 23 February 2021,<sup>5</sup> while in October of the same year it was given its first performance in front of an audience at the Erholungshaus Leverkusen in Germany.<sup>6</sup>

The libretto was written by Sciarrino himself and is based on the first part of the *Oresteia*, in which Aeschylus describes the transition from archaic customs such as blood sacrifices and family feuds to the democratic society of the Attic polis.<sup>7</sup> The plot takes place after the Trojan War, whose origins trace back to the abduction of Helena, wife of the Spartan king Menelaos, by Paris. This event prompted Agamemnon to launch an expedition in support of his brother against Troy. However, the fleet was prevented from departing due to the interference of the goddess Artemis, who, angered by Agamemnon's slaying of a deer sacred to her, sent adverse winds against him. Following the advice of a seer, Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to be able to sail to Troy.<sup>8</sup> After ten years of siege and the destruction of Troy, a light signal can be observed on the horizon from Mykene announcing Agamemnon's victory over Troy, after which King Agamemnon returns to his hometown, victorious but troubled by dark forebodings, with concubine Cassandra at his side. Clytemnestra is furious, for she can neither forgive Agamemnon's sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia, nor his infidelity.<sup>9</sup> Cassandra laments to Apollo for having guided her into a house overshadowed by death and slaughter. Soon after, she envisions Agamemnon's murder, orchestrated by Clytemnestra. The people, however, dismiss her words as the delusions of one scarred by war, yet she resolutely upholds her prophecy. Conscious of her own approaching end, she surrenders to her fate with solemn acceptance. As her final plea, she asks the people to bear witness as she crosses the threshold of the house.<sup>10</sup>

As far as the structure of the composition is concerned, it is supposed to be symmetrical according to Sciarrino, in contrast to the plot.<sup>11</sup> The prologue, the intermezzo and the *congedo* (Italian for *farewell*) are the pillars that divide the plot into two parts. What is particularly interesting about the choice of this plot is that Salvatore Sciarrino, like

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Cerha M. (2021, February 10). *In der Geisterbahn: Neue Sciarrino-Oper am Stadttheater Klagenfurt*. Der Standard. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000124009074/in-der-geisterbahn-neue-sciarrino-oper-am-stadttheater-klagenfurt>

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Theaterkompass. (n.d.). *Deutsche Erstaufführung: »Il canto s'attrista, perché?« von Salvatore Sciarrino – Wuppertaler Bühnen*. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from <https://theaterkompass.de/beitraege/deutsche-erstauffuehrung-il-canto-sattrista-perche-von-salvatore-sciarrino-wuppertaler-buehnen-55865>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Stadttheater Klagenfurt OG. (n.d.). *Il canto s'attrista, perché?*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Pippert. (2021). *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* [Programmheft Oper Wuppertal].

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Cerha. (2021). *In der Geisterbahn: Neue Sciarrino-Oper am Stadttheater Klagenfurt*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Pippert. (2021). *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* [Programmheft Oper Wuppertal].

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Sciarrino S. (2019). *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (Introduzione all'opera). Edizione Musicali Rai Com.

many early Baroque opera composers, took a topic from ancient Greek mythology as an inspiration for his stage work *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* In addition to the choice of this story from Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, there are other characteristics that Sciarrino shares with his fellow composer from the early Baroque period. According to Regine Elzenheimer, for example, the specific vocal style he developed is characterised by seemingly baroque ornamentation and a monodic gesture, which refers to the early vocal traditions of opera.<sup>12</sup> Also the German scholar Jörn Peter Hiekel recognises a certain Baroque affinity in Sciarrino's style, pointing out that hardly any other well-known composer of the 20th and 21st century has created a repertoire of gestures and figures that refers to baroque models with comparable consistency, yet simulates and thoughtfully develops them.<sup>13</sup> Building on this observation, the present study does not seek to measure the frequency of such figures, but instead to examine their typology, variety, and rhetorical function in relation to early Baroque practices.

By means of the aforementioned repertoire of gestures and figures, Sciarrino incorporates compositional strategies as well as rhetorical devices that were central to the repertoire of the early 17th century. My analysis is therefore grounded primarily in rhetorical and theoretical writings from the early decades of opera, especially the treatises of Bernhard, Burmeister, and Kircher, while also drawing on later sources such as Mattheson. These authors were chosen because they explicitly theorize the relationship between music, rhetoric, and affect, which provides a useful comparative framework for Sciarrino's use of figures, similar to that employed by Monteverdi. Indeed, Sciarrino himself has acknowledged that attending a performance of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* as a teenager left a lasting impression on him, underscoring the relevance of early Baroque models for his musical language.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, these writings provide not only the methodological framework for the present study, but also highlight Sciarrino's continuity with early Baroque traditions. Although Sciarrino's own writing *Le figure della musica: da Beethoven a oggi* (1998) also engages with the notion of rhetorical figure, his focus lies on different kinds of processes whose implications are broader than those described by Baroque theorists. He refers, for instance, to *trasformazioni genetiche*, *processi di accumulazione*, *processi di moltiplicazione*, 'little bangs', and *forma a finestre*.<sup>15</sup> The first three of these share certain conceptual affinities with Baroque figures such as those described by Bernhard, which often involve either the elaboration of a melodic line or a condensation of the musical material.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Elzenheimer R. (2019). »Das vom Leben abgetrennte Leben«: Perspektiven sozialer und politischer Gegenwart in Salvatore Sciarrinos »Superflumina«. In U. Tadday (Ed.), *Musik-Konzepte / Sonderband*. edition text+kritik, 90.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hiekel J. P. (2019). Brodelnder Reduktionismus: Salvatore Sciarrinos Musiktheaterstücke »Luci mie traditrici« und »Infinito nero«. In U. Tadday (Ed.), *Musik-Konzepte / Sonderband* (17–36). Edition text+kritik, 20.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Clements A. (2013). Interview: Salvatore Sciarrino – 'My problem is I want to change the world'. In *The Guardian*. Retrieved September 28, 2025, from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/jul/15/salvatore-sciarrino-interview-andrew-clements>

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Sciarrino S. (1998). *Le figure della musica: da Beethoven a oggi*. Ricordi.

Although Sciarrino's own terminology points to larger-scale processes, his practice remains closely aligned with the Baroque notion. It is therefore instructive to return to these historical figures in order to trace their presence in *Il canto s'attrista, perché?*. Just as in early opera, where music often acted in service of the libretto and its affective expression was reinforced by specific melodic gestures and harmonic structures, a comparable approach can be observed in Sciarrino's operatic writing. This becomes evident in *Il canto s'attrista, perché?*, whose very title (*The singing becomes sad, why?*) already hints at the sorrowful affect that pervades the work. Indeed, melancholy is an affect that often arises here, as Example 1 shows, where one can read "svanisce anche l'ombra", in English: "Even the shadow disappears."

**Example 1.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 253).

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A closer look at the text in this entrance of the choir reveals a certain longing and despair, which are reinforced by the sliding melodic descent and the separation of the motifs by rests, including the fragmentation of the words in "svanisce". Sciarrino's frequent use of this strategy is also emphasised by Elzenheimer, who refers to it as the sigh figure,<sup>16</sup> in reference to the rhetorical device *Suspiratio*, which is frequently encountered in the Baroque repertoire. According to Kircher, the "Seufzer" ("sigh") is a motif interrupted by short pauses and functions as the affect of a groaning and sighing spirit.<sup>17</sup> In 19th-century music, however, beyond the framing of a motif by rests, the descending second is often associated with the sighing figure, suggesting the sound of a lament.<sup>18</sup> This is also the case here in the four short motifs by the soprano, which demonstrates that Sciarrino's style also displays characteristics of musical rhetoric in a similar way to the compositions of the first half of the 17th century.

Beyond the sigh, other distinct inflections can be identified in Sciarrino's melodic writing, such as those employed in the *stylus luxurians communis*. Christoph Bernhard describes it as follows: "I call it this because of the many different types of uses of dissonances, which others call licenses."<sup>19</sup> This style is based on the music of the *seconda pratti-*

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Elzenheimer. (2019). »Das vom Leben abgetrennte Leben«: Perspektiven sozialer und politischer Gegenwart in Salvatore Sciarrinos »Superflumina«, 90 & 93.

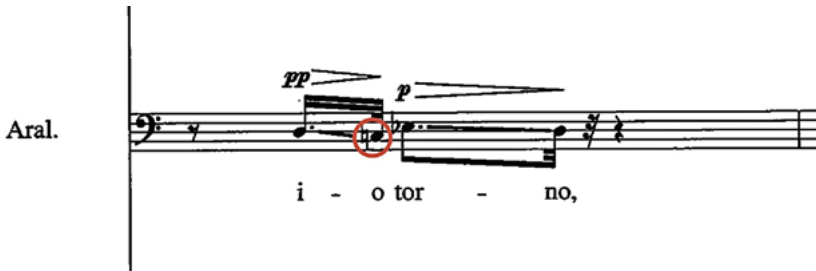
<sup>17</sup> Cf. Kircher A. (1650). *Musurgia universalis*. Günter Scheibel (Trans.), Vol. VIII. Retrieved September 30, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14979230>

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Eusterbrock L., Barzen J. & Hentschel F. (2017). Eine Ontologie symphonischer Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts. In *Institut für Architektur von Anwendungssystemen*. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from <https://www.iaas.uni-stuttgart.de/publications/TR-2017-02-MUSE4Music.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> 'Ich nenne ihn so wegen derer vielerley Arten des Gebrauchs derer Dissonantzen, welche andere Licentias nennen, [...].' Translation by author from: Cf. Bernhard, C. (n.d.). *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus*. B. Lang (Ed.). accessed March 4, 2025, <http://www.bassus-generalis.org/bernhard/bernhard-tractatus.html>

ca and very much inspired by the oeuvre of Heinrich Schütz, but also by Monteverdi and his contemporaries. In some of his descriptions, Bernhard is primarily concerned with the use of non-harmonic tones, taking into account the melodic and harmonic levels. In his *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus*, he often shows an upper ornamented version consisting of melody and bass together with the corresponding lower unornamented version of both voices. For instance, he refers to an escape tone downward added to an ascending stepwise passage as a *Subsumtio*.<sup>20</sup> In Sciarrino's melodies, a similar outline can often be recognised, as Example 2 illustrates. However, it is important to point out at this stage that we are clearly dealing with different styles, as this unaccented note can be interpreted differently in each epoch. Whereas the *Subsumtio* is regarded as a non-harmonic note in the Baroque, it does not represent a dissonance in *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* Besides this aspect, the melodic inflection generated by the *Subsumtio* also typifies Sciarrino's musical language.

**Example 2.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 66).  
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This figure represents the setting of the text “io torno” (“I return”), which is emphasised by the musical motif used by Sciarrino, in which the opening and closing notes are the same. In between the two, the lower and upper notes are recognised. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that this motif is also strongly reminiscent of the figure *Kyklosis*, sometimes also called *Circulatio*, described for instance by Kircher, in which according to him “the voices seem to run in a circle and is used with words that express circular movements.”<sup>21</sup> In addition to the note *Subsumtio*, Sciarrino frequently utilises its inversion, which is called *Superjectio*<sup>22</sup> and refers to an escape tone upward. Similarly, Sciarrino's melodies very often exhibit a similar contour to the one produced by the note *Superjectio*, as Example 3 illustrates. As in Bernhard's treatise, it is placed in unaccented time in the middle of a melisma, although this is not the case in this example, as each note shown here has its own syllable. The musical motif underlines the hesitation of the choir, which addresses Fortune with the words “O sorte” (“Oh fate”).

<sup>20</sup> See Bernhard's already mentioned treatise, ‘Dass 24te Capitel. Von der Subsumtion’.

<sup>21</sup> Author's own translation from: Athanasius Kircher. (1650). *Musurgia universalis*, 192.

<sup>22</sup> Bernhard. (n.d.) *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus*, ‘Daß 22te Capitel. Von der Superjectione’.

**Example 3.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 249).

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Another musical figure described by Bernhard is the *Quaesitio Notae*, which has the function of reaching the following note by a second step from below.<sup>23</sup> According to the examples given by Bernhard, the *Quaesitio Notae* often occurs in combination with a large downward leap. Musical phrases that integrate this particular note are frequently employed in *Il canto s'attrista, perché?*, for instance in the passage from scene 6 depicted in Example 4, where the *quaesitio notae* appears a semitone below the next note, as in Bernhard. An interesting aspect of this passage is that this leap of a minor sixth downwards simultaneously represents another figure alongside a *Quaesitio Notae*, namely the *Saltus Duriusculus*. This involves a large, augmented or diminished leap, which Bernhard himself describes as “unnatural” due to the fact that it is slightly more challenging to sing than other intervals such as the perfect fourth or fifth. However, these “unnatural” intervals are characteristic of the so-called *stylus luxurians communis*.<sup>24</sup> Sciarrino’s downward leap of a minor sixth here coincides with Cassandra’s words “anche nel pianto” (“even in weeping”), so that the interval’s strained and challenging character might musically enact the gesture of lamentation.

**Example 4.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 171).

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In addition, there are stylistic devices, both in rhetoric and in music, which are particularly intended to draw the audience’s attention to what has been said and expressed. These include the *Interrogatio*, which serves to underline a question as the end of the line displayed in Example 5 illustrates, where the alto and tenor question each other “Perché?” (“Why?”). Meanwhile, the melody ends with a rising melodic interval, which is intended to imitate the intonation of a question in speech. Johann Mattheson already refers to this frequently recurring musical realisation of the *Interrogatio* by Baroque composers, although he also emphasises that this is not the only possible means.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., ‘Daß 33ste Capitel. Von der Quaesitione Notae’.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., ‘Daß 30ste Capitel. Vom Salta duriusculo’.

<sup>25</sup> “Many typesetters stand firm in the idea that the question mark must necessarily always be expressed in singing, by one or other raising of the voice; but one must not regard such a statement as



**Example 5.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 118).  
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Example 5 shows a musical score for two vocal parts, C (Cantante) and T (Tenore). The lyrics are: per- ché il mio can - to s'at - tri - sta, per- ché?. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *pp*, *p*, and *mp*, and phrasing slurs.

In addition to questions, there are also exclamations, which are musically realised by the next figure, the so-called *Exclamatio*. Mattheson distinguishes between three different types of exclamation, whereby he associates these three types with the use of sometimes larger, sometimes smaller leaps. Based on the lyrics, Sciarrino's example shown in Example 6 can be defined as a lament with an exclamation mark, which can be assigned to Mattheson's second type of exclamation, referring to sighs and lamentations. Regardless of which interval is used for the exclamatory leap, it should, as Mattheson suggests, be executed with certain tenderness in order to emphasise the character of longing.<sup>26</sup> Similar to Bernhard and his contemporaries, Sciarrino uses a (fourth) leap upwards to emphasise the typical lament of Cassandra from Aeschylus' text, which sounds as follows: "IÒ POPOI". This leap is intended to support her exclamation, which reflects the unspeakable horrors of Cassandra's visions.

**Example 6.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 160).  
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Example 6 shows a musical score for the Cass. (Cassandra) part. The lyrics are: IÒ PO-PO - I IÒ PO-PO - II co - sa,. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *pp*, and *mp*, and phrasing slurs.

Elzenheimer also points out another characteristic element of Sciarrino's musical language that links him with his composer colleagues from the early Baroque period, namely the use of gestures that resemble the so-called *fiorituras*,<sup>27</sup> which in music is the flourishing ornamentation of melodic lines. An example of this can be found in Example 7, which shows Clytemnestra's voice and the violin. The former first sings a note with a crescendo, which is followed by the *fioritura*-like gesture shown in blue. The first half of this *fioritura* is performed by the first violin on the same note, and later the second half. Such *fiorit-*

infallible in any way. It is true that in common speech and pronunciation the raising of the voice is always more or less inherent in a question." Translation by author from: Mattheson, J. (1739). *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*. Christian Herold, 192.

<sup>26</sup> "Depending on the circumstances, sometimes large, but not ordinary, sometimes small and extraordinary intervals must be applied." Translation by author from: Mattheson. (1739). *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 194.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Elzenheimer. (2019). »Das vom Leben abgetrennte Leben«: Perspektiven sozialer und politischer Gegenwart in Salvatore Sciarrinos »Superflumina«, 90.

uras in Sciarrino's music are very similar in contour to those that were very common in 17th-century improvisation. Sciarrino, for his part, takes up this figure and modifies it by using larger intervals. Interestingly, there is evidence that fiorituras could be executed in the so-called *passaggi*, as Bernhard describes in his chapter on variations.<sup>28</sup> In the first half of the 17th century, this ornamentation of the melody line could either be improvised by the performer or set down by the composer.<sup>29</sup> The second type can be recognised in Sciarrino's passage, for after Clytemnestra's note has reached the climax of the crescendo, the blue melody begins to descend by means of an alternating movement. The large leaps that must be performed are particularly demanding due to the speed and may well give rise to the desperate words used here by Clytemnestra: "occhi ho consunto" ("eyes I have consumed").

**Example 7.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 104).

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Among the musical and rhetorical figures, there are also certain compositional principles and development techniques, the use of which plays an increasingly important role around 1600, but also in Sciarrino's style. One of these rhetorical stylistic devices is the repetition of certain motifs which, in literature, aim to reinforce a certain word, motif, or idea. As the end of the staff in Example 8 demonstrates, Sciarrino frequently repeats motifs, both in terms of rhythm alone as well as in terms of rhythm and pitch together. Burmeister calls this type of figure *Palillogia*, in which a musical motif is repeated in the same voice using the same pitches.<sup>30</sup> When the Herald (*Araldo*) proclaims "Lasciamo i lamenti ... Un giorno felice", this rhetorical device acquires particular significance: the repetition reflects the performative insistence of his announcement and musically reinforces the decisive affective turn from lament to joy.

**Example 8.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 82).

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Bernhard. (n.d.). *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus*, 'Daß 25ste Capitel. Von der Variation'.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jander, O. (2001). Fioritura. In *Grove Music Online*. Retrieved 30 Mar. 2025, from <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000009704>

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Burmeister, J. (1993). *Musical Poetics*. B. V. Rivera (Trans.). Yale University Press, 179.

Beyond that, repetitions do not always occur in the same voice, for in Sciarrino's music there are also frequent dialogues and imitations between different vocal parts as well as between vocal and instrumental parts. Other types of repetition are also very often represented, for example, in the sequence (repetition and transposition at the same time) in Example 9, to which Burmeister refers with the term *Climax*: "Climax is that which repeats similar pitch on gradations of pitch levels."<sup>31</sup> Whilst the alto flute and the second clarinet respond to each other in unison (f) in the first bar, this motif is taken up and transposed by other instruments one bar later, for example by the 1st clarinet (a) and bass clarinet (b). Again, one bar later, only the end of this motif, namely the chromatic descent, is played transposed by the piccolo, flute in C and oboe in unison (c). This climax is therefore not only the result of the transposition of the motif but also of its more frequent appearance. Occurring immediately after Clytemnestra's words "i vincitori barcollare affamati" ("the victors stagger, famished") and just before the entry of the Chorus, the rhetorical figure gains particular dramatic force in this instrumental passage. The sequential intensification of the descending motif sonically mirrors the instability evoked by Clytemnestra and thereby heightens the musical tension at this point in the scene.

**Example 9.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 50).

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There is now a special kind of repetition, namely the *Anadiplosis*, which occurs particularly often in rhetoric. However, it is also associated with music, for example, by Burmeister, who used it to refer to the duplication of an idea that had already been heard immediately before.<sup>32</sup> What is very often performed by several voices in the imitative repertoire of the 16th century is here reduced to one voice by Sciarrino. In this rhetorical device, the beginning of a sentence is the same as the end of the previous sentence. Sciarrino also

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 167.

makes use of this, as the violet boxes of Example 10 demonstrate. The text itself does not seem to determine the use of this figure, since only the musical motif is repeated, but not the words. Rather, Sciarrino employs *Anadiplosis* to emphasize the gesture and to create musical continuity between successive phrases, thus connecting the end of one sentence with the beginning of the next and reinforcing the expressive flow.

The repetition and its various forms occur frequently in Sciarrino's melodic writing and lend his melody lines a certain organicity and naturalness, as those that Mattheson attributes to these rhetorical figures in music. He writes about this: The *Epanalepsis*, *Epistrophe*, *Anadiplosis*, *Paranomasia*, *Polyptoton*, *Antanaclassis*, *Ploce*, etc. have such natural places in the melody that it almost seems as if the Greek orators had borrowed such figures from the art of music.<sup>33</sup>

**Example 10.** Il canto s'attrista, perché? (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 31–32).  
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This also applies to the *Anaphora*, which Mattheson categorises as very common in the art of melodic composition,<sup>34</sup> and which is also used in Sciarrino's *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* In the examples of *Anaphora* given by Mattheson and Burmeister,<sup>35</sup> several sentences with the same introductory motif are depicted. Similarly, in Example 11 are three marked sentences with the same beginning, after which the continuation always looks different. Sciarrino presumably wants to draw attention to the words “Passata è la guerra” (“The War is Past”) by repeating them three times.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Mattheson. (1739). *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 243.

<sup>34</sup> Ib.: “What is more common than the anaphora in the melodic art of composition, where the same sequence of sounds that has already occurred is repeated at the beginning of various subsequent clauses, creating a relationship.”

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Burmeister. (1993). *Musical Poetics*, 185–187.

**Example 11.** *Il canto s'attrista, perché?* (fragment). Sciarrino (2019, 83–84).  
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The image shows a musical score for a fragment of Salvatore Sciarrino's work. It is written in bass clef and 4/4 time. The score consists of two systems. The first system starts at measure 110 and contains the lyrics: "gior - no fe - li - ce non è da sciop - re. Passata è la guerra, pas - sa - ta." The second system starts at measure 111 and contains the lyrics: "passata è la guerra, la guerra, passata è la guerra, pas - sa - ta." The score is marked with various dynamics (p, pp, ff) and includes a measure number 110. The lyrics are written below the notes. The score is reproduced with permission from Rai Com.

## Conclusion

As this study reveals, Sciarrino has created a musical language consisting of compositional strategies as well as rhetorical figures and gestures that exhibit similarities with the repertoire of the first half of the 17th century. In addition to the *Messa di voce* tones that he frequently uses, there are also figures that refer to melodic inflections such as *Subsumtio*, *Superjectio*, *Quaesitio Notae* and *Passaggi*, those related to punctuation such as *Suspiratio*, *Interrogatio* or *Exclamatio*, as well as various types of repetition such as *Palillogia*, *Climax*, *Anadiplosis* and *Anaphora*. Furthermore, the Sicilian-born composer has developed a way of ornamenting melodies that strongly resembles the vocal improvisation of the 17th century. Nevertheless, all these strategies are not adopted verbatim, but rather modified so that they can be integrated into his aesthetics and musical language. Yet Sciarrino's aim with these strategies is similar to that of his Baroque composer colleagues, which is to emphasise important parts of the plot and text in order to give them enhanced meaning, which also helps the audience to better understand the narrative.

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## Chapter 8

# The Fivefold Coding of *Indiana Jones and the Abbey of Thelema*<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This chapter introduces the five codes of music (both audio and visual) that are the equivalent of Roland Barthes's five codes of language or narrative, in that both are based on the five root tropes of inquiry identified by Stephen C. Pepper. It illustrates these codes with reference to a music-film mashup, *Indiana Jones and the Abbey of Thelema*, the combination of Jean-François Charles's new album *Missa brevis Abbaye de Thélème* with the visuals of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

**Keywords:** Roland Barthes, Jean-François Charles, Indiana Jones, musical meaning, music and film, mashups

## Introduction

Studies of music and meaning have often been premised on the separability of these two terms in the first place, which naturally hampers efforts to rejoin them again through interpretation. As Dylan Principi has shown (2024), this binary thinking is rooted in the 19th-century ideal of absolute music, and as Daniel K. L. Chua illuminates, this ideal is ideologically problematic (1999). To theorize musical meaning carefully, it is instructive to consider the parallel situation of language as understood by Roland Barthes. In *S/Z*, Barthes confronts an analogous problematic opposition between a text and its authoritative meaning by collapsing the presumed object and its meaning into a single complex of codes traversed by the reader, who is also in effect a writer, to the extent that the text approaches the ideal of an “absolutely plural text” (Barthes 1974, 6).

This chapter outlines what I have found to be the five codes of music, the equivalent of Roland Barthes's five linguistic codes – or narrative codes, as they are also called – using a case study of music-film mashup. This genre, typified by *The Dark Side of Oz* (the combination of Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon* with the visuals of MGM's *The Wizard of Oz*), involves a pluralistic, serendipitous blending of elements from its source materials. As musico-linguistic text, music-film mashup vividly demonstrates how, according to Barthes,

the text comes about, as soon as, for example, the scriptor and/or the reader begin to play with the signifier, either (in the case of the author) by ceaselessly producing ‘word-plays,’ or (in the case of the reader) by inventing ludic meanings, even if the author of the

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

text had not foreseen them, and even if it was historically impossible for him to foresee them: the signifier belongs to everybody; it is the text which, in fact, works tirelessly, not the artist or the consumer (Barthes 1981, 37).

In highlighting the productivity of the text, the music-film mashup demonstrates the death of the author; no one has predetermined how the materials align.<sup>2</sup>

Other music-film mashups or syncs include (1) *The Dark Side Odyssey* (the combination of *The Dark Side of the Moon* with MGM's *2001: A Space Odyssey*; klozitrokstar 2011), (2) the combination of the end of *2001: A Space Odyssey* with Pink Floyd's "Echoes", and (3) *The Blart Side of the Mall* (the combination of *The Dark Side of the Moon* with Columbia Pictures' *Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2*).<sup>3</sup> People either produce a given mashup live, using an identified starting point in the film for the music, or use a prerecorded version, and they either play the music once or let it loop for the rest of the film.

Intrigued viewers of *The Dark Side of Oz*, having no way to account for its peculiar fittingness but being "addict[ed] to explaining" (Fort 1919, 191), have floated the question of whether Pink Floyd secretly planned the mashup, huddled around a film projector in the back of the recording studio. The answer is obviously no (Harris 2005, 13), and few have argued otherwise. But in the absence of an adequate semiological framework, this absurd hypothesis has been so absorbing that *The Dark Side of Oz* has been categorized by many as an "urban myth" (Barron & Inglis 2005, 58), rather than a concrete phenomenon that anyone can experience.

Even sympathetic studies of *The Dark Side of Oz* have discussed it only in terms of "revised meanings" of the film resulting from new sound being projected onto the old frame of the screen (Middleton 2007, 75; see also Richardson 2012, 190). Michel Chion describes this "sound on screen" arrangement as axiomatic in music with film (1994). But music-film mashup does not abide by what Chion calls the "audiovisual contract" to regard sound on screen as a unity (1994, 214). Rather, it embodies Nicholas Cook's "contest" model of musical multimedia with very different constituents (1998, 103). To put the matter in terms of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's theory of conceptual blending as the basis of all perception and cognition (2002), sound on screen presents a single-scope blend framed only by the filmic narrative, whereas the music-film mashup presents a double-scope blend, framed by both the sound and the imagery (see Zbikowski 2002–2003, 266). In such an equally weighted context, both sound and screen can be recognized as having musical and linguistic aspects. That is to say, the sound is musical as rhythm and linguistic in its lyrics, and the images are likewise musical as rhythm, and linguistic if read pictographically as narrative. Music-film mashup accordingly facilitates parallel analysis of musical and linguistic codes.

More specifically, I conduct a case study of *Indiana Jones and the Abbey of Thelema*, the combination of Jean-François Charles's recent album *Missa brevis Abbaye de Thélème*

<sup>2</sup> On the death of the author in mashups, see Gunkel (2012, 82).

<sup>3</sup> See McCarrick (2023) for additional suggested mashups. A related genre is represented by Philip Glass's *La Belle et la Bête*, an opera that adapts Jean Cocteau's film by the same name and also serves as a new soundtrack (see Richardson 2012, 172–189).

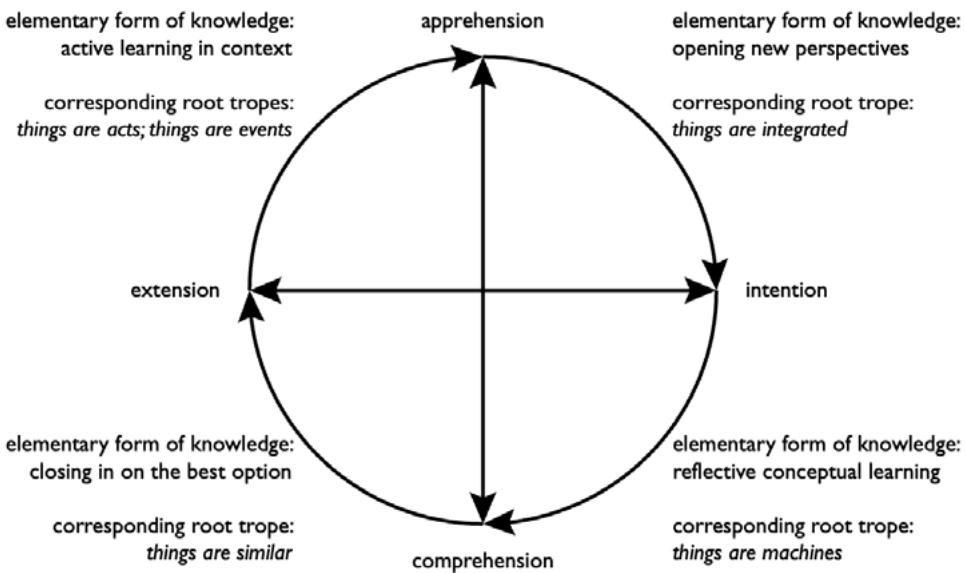


(2023) with the visuals of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (Spielberg 1989).<sup>4</sup> I discovered this mashup by chance while studying the music and musing on a suitable cinematic mate. As an analogous case to the more familiar *The Dark Side of Oz*, this music-film mashup with its double-scope blend helps one to understand the different musical and linguistic codes and their affordance of plurality.

# Musical and Linguistic Codes

Some studies have suggested musical analogies to Barthes’s codes (McCreless 1988; Novak 1997; Whiteley 1997; Ellis 1998); however, without an epistemological basis, these analogies can be no more than impressionistic, nor do they recognize the profundity of Barthes’s hypothesis, which goes beyond heuristic interpretive method to reflect the nature of learning and knowledge in general. The codes of both music and language, the channels of their signification, are parallel in that they are both based on the same five root metaphors that according to David A. Kolb transform the elementary forms of knowledge arising from the polar dialectics of experiential learning into social knowledge (2015, 174).

**Figure 1.** The polar dialectics of experiential learning, elementary forms of knowledge, and root tropes (adapted from the conceptual framework in Kolb, 2015, 68.)



Experiential learning involves a pair of orthogonal dialectics, so to speak, like the electric and magnetic fields around light beams (Figure 1): apprehension versus comprehension as polar forms of grasping, and extension versus intention as polar transformations of these experiences. The product of these perpendicular pairs of processes is a set of four

<sup>4</sup> Videos of the first hearing of the album, edited by Charles, are available at Anika Kildegaard Missa brevis (2023b).

elementary forms of knowledge: “active learning in context”, “opening alternatives and perspectives on experience”, “reflective conceptual learning”, and “closing on the single best option for action” (Kolb 2015, 146; see also 51). These four forms of knowledge at different degrees of turn around the circle align with five root metaphors or *tropes* (from *τρόπος*, turn), identified by Stephen C. Pepper (1942; 1966): the *purposive act*, *integration*, *machine*, *similarity*, and *event*. These tropes develop elementary knowledge into written, social knowledge that can characterize the world with great precision and scope (cf. Kolb 2015, 164–166).<sup>5</sup> The trope of the purposive act, together with that of the event, undergirds “the world of practical affairs in business, politics, and the social professions”, the sphere of concrete activity. The trope of integration, as we find in organisms, for example, underlies “the humanities, arts, and social sciences”, which are about finding new perspectives that conduce towards social or personal harmony. The machine trope underlies all work in the pure sciences and mathematics, all analysis according to functional interaction. And similarity is the basis for all measurement (all quantifiable similarity to a unit of measurement) and hence all work in the empirical and applied sciences (Kolb 2015, 171; see also 174).

These root tropes, I suggest, are not arbitrary but are born of music and language as they alternate between event mode and data-storage mode. According to the Intergalactic Music Theory of Everything, inaugurated by Daniel K. L. Chua and Alexander Rehding, music’s primary state is an apparently purposive “activity” (2021, 200), it changes modes across a media interface while maintaining its “integrity” (31), it persists as information or writing in a “machine” (132), it is reconstituted as something “similar” through inscription of its traits across another media interface (74), and it thereby loops back as another “event” (191). Language has the same cyclicity, except that its prototypical form is data-storage mode or writing, which most clearly exemplifies what Jacques Derrida calls *différance*, both the differing of words from one another and the deferring of meaning through definitions that only ever refer to other words, for *différance* differs from *différence* in both appearance and meaning but not in sound (1982).

So the tropes are extrapolated from music and language, but on the other hand, they fold back onto the *disc course* of our encounters with music and language around the four elementary forms of knowledge, developing the *discourse* through which we attempt to communicate these encounters with one another. Accordingly, there is in both music and language an act code, an integration code, a machine code, a similarity code, and an event code. In this way, musical and linguistic semiology recapitulate ontology (insofar as we can tease these apart).<sup>6</sup>

These codes help to explain how “everything can be music” (Chua and Rehding 2021, 72): regardless of which trope is primary in one’s field of study, the more any phenomenon is mused over with all of the tropes in a spirit of awe, the more it rings as music.

<sup>5</sup> Kolb does not mention the root trope of the purposive act, which Pepper introduces separately from the other four (1966).

<sup>6</sup> On the inseparability of meaning and being, see Barad (2007).

## ***Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade***

Before diving into these musical and linguistic codes in the mashup, let us gain some points of orientation on the source materials, starting with *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. This 1989 movie directed by Steven Spielberg follows archaeologist and adventurer Indy as he becomes embroiled in his father’s and the Nazis’ competing quests for the Holy Grail. The Indiana Jones franchise was originally intended to end with this third film, but it was extended by a television series, two more films, and stories in other media.

The plot can be articulated into three imputed acts that align with the three hearings of the Mass. What can be considered a first act includes an introductory account of Indy’s loss of the Cross of Coronado as a child and his subsequent recovery of it. Antiquarian Walter Donovan hires Indy to find the Grail by finding his father, who has gone missing while searching for the Grail in Venice. Meanwhile, his father sends him his Grail diary for safe keeping. Intrigue ensues as Indy teams up with Elsa Schneider, who had been his father’s research partner. They discover that his father is being held at the Castle of Brunwald, and that the Grail is held in a temple outside Iskenderun, where Indy sends his colleague Marcus Brody with a map from the diary.

In what can be considered the second act, Indy and Elsa head to the Castle, where Indy is captured by the Nazis while trying to rescue his father. Meanwhile, Marcus is also captured by the Nazis in Iskenderun. Indy and his father manage to escape, retrieve his father’s diary, and head to Iskenderun, where the Nazis are mounting an expedition with the captured map to retrieve the Grail. Indy and his father intercept the Nazis, and his father is captured again while rescuing Marcus.

In the imputed third act, Indy rescues both his father and Marcus, and they follow the Nazis to the temple. The Nazis wound Indy’s father to coerce Indy into penetrating the temple’s challenges to reach the life-giving Grail. Some find life in the revealing of the Grail, and some find death.

The plot is driven, so to speak, as much by the quasi-realistic actions synopsized above as by what Barthes describes as enigmas (1974, 17): secrets doled out piecemeal. For example, Donovan’s commission of Indy turns out to be an implausibly prescient exploitation of his future overcoming of still unknown deadly obstacles. The film is not, as might be supposed, merely a colorful story embodying this or that cultural ideology, but a brew bristling with codes drawn from what we might with Jason Horsley call “collective dreams” (2009, 3), superficially arrayed into a linear format for ease of transmission. Like a chalice, the mashup serves as a transmuting receptacle in which the film’s veneer of realism dissolves, such that codes freely blend between the two sources moment by moment, carrying with them their dream logic. Please note that for the purpose of explaining musical codes in relation to linguistic ones, I will focus on blends based on the same trope, without meaning to exclude other possibilities.

## ***Missa brevis Abbaye de Thélème***

The album is a setting of the Mass Ordinary, with three improvisatory, electro-acoustic movements (Introitus, Offertory, and Ite, missa est) and six vocal movements (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei). The instrumental movements are

performed by Wombat Trio with Charles, and the vocal movements are sung by Anika Kildegaard, with additional vocals by Jhe Russell. The Latin texts are abbreviated and interleaved with French poems from the 15th to 19th centuries.

The title refers to a utopian abbey described by the ex-Franciscan friar François Rabelais in the first book of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1952), a kind of Grail-quest parody featuring two giants (Probst-Biraben 2020). The Kyrie includes Rabelais's inscription over the entrance to the abbey, and the six vocal movements map onto the six stories and six sides of the abbey. The time of the album thereby becomes the space of the abbey, bringing to mind Gurneman's line "Here time becomes space", in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*, another Grail drama (Arndt 2024). Borrowing a line of thinking from Carl Gustav Jung (1968, Fig. 88), the mass can be said to engage with the abbey-shaped Grail as an image of the unknowable self, like a mandala.

The sole principle of the abbey is "Fais ce que voudras" ("Do what thou wilt"), which are the first words on the album. Readers may recognize this principle as likewise that of the spiritual movement Thelema, fashioned by Alistair Crowley after Rabelais's Thelema Abbey (Crowley, n.d.).<sup>7</sup> This principle is reflected in an openness to interpretation, to continuing the Word, as explained in the inscription over the entrance of the abbey, which is quoted in the album booklet (translation mine):

*Let the holy Word  
Never be interred  
In this place revered.  
Let all here be girt,  
Let each one be stirred  
With the holy Word.*

Charles calls the album "an ode to tolerance" (2023), or love, which, according to Crowley, is the flipside of the principle of will. Interpretive will and tolerance inhere in the ecumenical sentiments of the poems as well as in the album's intertextuality and polystylism. Being already a kind of open-ended mashup of texts and styles, and having a music video by Charles for one of its movements (the Agnus Dei; Anika Kildegaard Missa brevis 2023a), the album invites further audiovisual blending such as we find in the mash-up. Both sources, as well as their combination, can be seen as rebellious yet reverential Christian art, playing off of the capacious theme of the Grail and other codes.

In the mashup, the album runs three times against the film. The music can start at the crossfade between the Paramount Pictures logo and the opening scene; however, the exact timing can be adjusted from track to track, as Charles has done in his edited version of the mashup on YouTube.

## Texture

Texture is a spinning and weaving of frequencies, including sound, that figures music as a *purposive act*, either real or imaginary. Texture is like Barthes's code of actions and behavior that are woven into narrative (1974, 18). Just as we imagine fictional agents in

<sup>7</sup> In fact, Crowley ran his own little Abbey of Thelema in Italy 1920–1923.

narrative, so we imagine fictional agents behind changes to textural elements (Monahan 2013), which to a greater or lesser extent are themselves fictional, virtual (Bregman 1990, 460). We speak of sounds as rising, falling, speeding up, slowing down, and so on. Such perceptions involve differences of *tone*, *timbre*, and *timing*, within and between sounds. Tone has to do with how high or low a sound is (to adopt a Western metaphor). Timbre concerns the quality of sound, characterized as getting brighter or darker, and so on. And timing concerns the temporal position and duration of sound. As with narrative action, musical texture can involve complex networks, such as of chords, scales, and background collections (on which see especially Tymoczko 2023). Texture accordingly is not limited to categories such as homophony and polyphony but includes the entirety of what many people encounter as music theory, if they encounter it at all: harmony, counterpoint, rhythm, meter, and so forth.

Let us observe musical texture and narrative action in the first hearing of the first piece in *Indiana Jones and the Abbey of Thelema*, the Introitus, which is liturgically a hymn for the procession of the clergy into the sanctuary (Anika Kildegaard Missa brevis 2023b). We cannot help but notice the analogous procession of a band of scouts on the screen, two of whom – Indy and a friend – enter a cave. As Indy and a friend watch a group of raiders dig up a box and pull out the Cross of Coronado, the sonic music features warbling feedback (03:10), which is joined by a high buzzing like crickets chirping (03:23), which passes over into a lower, more intense buzzing. The visual music features light shimmering on the cross (03:25). In the double-scope blend, we can imagine there to be a paranormally buzzing cross, which can be framed in terms of the entrance procession for the Mass or the scene in the cave. The cross begins to warble as its box is lifted up and carried across the cave. It buzzes as it is extracted from its box. And the buzzing reaches its maximum intensity as Indy reaches for it, as if there were an energetic field around it.

## Memes

Memes are units of cultural memory that constitute the communal unity of their communities, figuring music as something *integrated*. They are equivalent to Barthes’s “cultural codes” (1974, 18; emphasis removed). However, I use the term *culture* more inclusively than either Barthes or Richard Dawkins, the inventor of the term *meme*. Barthes does not discuss non-human culture, while Dawkins discounts non-human cultural memory, such as birdsongs, as “just interesting oddities” (2016, 246). But in my view, all that is required for a culture is a mind and some matter, such as a musicker and an instrument.

Musical memes involve *samples* and *symbols*. Samples are not just sound clips but any recognizable sounds or other frequencies, such as songs, styles, patches, riffs, and again chords from another perspective. Symbols include not only topics (conventional musical allusions, a prominent concept in musical semiotics) but all evocations of associated ideas, such as instruments, identities, images, institutions, people, places, and practices. The bulk of so-called extramusical meaning consists of memes and is therefore not actually extramusical.

Let us observe musical and narrative memes in the first hearing of the Gloria (Anika Kildegaard Missa brevis 2023b), which features a poem by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore

titled “Veillée” (“Vigil”). (Note that the album is lined up with the film slightly differently in different videos.). The Gloria glorifies God. The poem glorifies the Virgin and expresses hope and awe during a dark time. The second stanza reads as follows:

*No! It is not all bad luck on the floating Earth:  
Restlessly agitated by the fickle sea,  
This immense vessel, ready to sink in the evening,  
Rises at dawn, heading towards hope.  
Every soul finds there a mast to put its wing on,  
Before returning to their eternal homeland.*<sup>8</sup>

The music (through the lyrics) calls to mind the Earth as a storm-tossed ship that sinks, rises, and heads toward hope. And the filmic narrative shows a storm-tossed ship that sinks; Indy rises, and he heads toward a life preserver. In the double-scope blend, the life preserver shows up as an image of hope, or Indy appears to be hopeful. Incidentally, we also recognize the sampled style of a devotional ballad.

## Structure

Structure is an intuition of complementary forces, figuring music as a *machine*. This metaphor plays off of music’s (relatively) literal machine mode in instruments, scores, and other forms of data storage, be they human or non-human, organic or artificial. Structure is like Barthes’s code of antitheses, such as Father and Son (1974, 17–18).<sup>9</sup> Barthes does not extend this code to the phenomenon of grammar. But if “meaning is never anything but the trip lever of a counter-term” (1977, 140), and if – with cognitive grammar theorists – we recognize grammar itself as meaningful (Langacker 2013), then this code has a broader field of application, comparable to the ubiquity of structure in our musical universe.

We perceive musical structure in the quasi-mechanical cycling from beginnings to endings and back in fractal layers. But there are more than just these poles. As R. Buckminster Fuller demonstrates, all structure everywhere is triangle: “Structure is a self-stabilizing, pattern-integrity complex. Only the triangle produces structure and structure means triangle; and vice versa” (Fuller 1975, 318). Further, every triangle is paired with its polar opposite: “Each triangle has both a positive and a negative triangle congruently coexistent and each visible triangle is two triangles: one visible and one invisible” (Fuller 1975, 318).

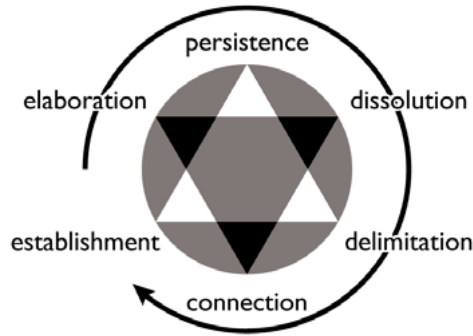
With every visible triangle being paired with another invisible triangle, one can imagine a light-dark six-pointed star as a schema of structure (Figure 2). In keeping with this principle, I find there to be three primary structural functions, corresponding with the light triangle, and three secondary, for the dark triangle. To be exceedingly brief, the primary functions can be described as establishment, persistence, and delimitation, the secondary functions as elaboration, dissolution, and connection. Leaving aside connection as

<sup>8</sup> The translation is from the subtitles in Charles’s edited version of the mashup (Anika Kildegaard Missa brevis, 2023b).

<sup>9</sup> To avoid confusion with memetic symbols, I am avoiding Barthes’s term symbolic code.

a framing function, the remaining five structural functions are analogous to a rhetorical pyramid or a narrative pyramid, except that the latter schemas are associated with entire speeches or stories, whereas structure can accrue to music across all timeframes from the momentary to the monumental.

**Figure 2.** Structural functions in music



Let us consider structure and antitheses in the first and third hearings of the Introitus in the mashup (Arndt 2025a). As music for the Entrance procession, the Introitus has a secondary, connective structural function (specifically a preparatory one). However, the two desert treks seen with it are antithetical: the first is American, the second Nazi. The association between the Introitus and antithetical desert treks contributes to the delineation of three parts to the mashup, as illustrated earlier, where the first hearing of the Mass has an establishing function, and the third has an opposite delimiting function.

## Semes

Semes are musical *gestalts* figured as *similar* to each other and to physical *gestures*, according to a creature’s physiology.<sup>10</sup> The invocation of gestures would seem to point us back to the metaphor of the purposive act and, to be sure, gestures are predicated on texture; however, gestures themselves, such as breath, need not be intentional. Being definite in form but diffuse as to agency, musical semes are like Barthes’s linguistic semes, or connotative signifiers, which are not necessarily connected to characters: “We allow them the instability, the dispersion, characteristic of motes of dust, flickers of meaning” (1974, 19; cf. McCreless 1988, 11–12; Whiteley 1997, 262). With large language models, we have witnessed astonishing efficacy of coding language on the basis of connotation-like similarity of linguistic motes, according to their vectors in a semantic space, with no intentionality at all. In light of this efficacy, it comes as no surprise that Barthes calls the seme, which in principle includes all such coding of similarity, “the signifier par excellence” (1974, 17). In music, semes are equally ubiquitous. Semes include not just motives but all thematic identities whatsoever, which have frequently and erroneously been taken as synonymous

<sup>10</sup> For this reason, *gestalts* are also called musical gestures (e.g., Levinson 2022).

with structure. They come in different sizes relative to a creature's psychological present, and they can metamorphose in various ways through variation of their primary and secondary features. Through gestures, *gestalts* also resonate with a similar *Geist* or spirit.<sup>11</sup> Semes have equal claim to being so-called extramusical meaning while remaining distinct from the cultural signification of memes.

Let us observe similarity at work in the first hearing of the Benedictus (Anika Kildegaard Missa brevis 2023b), which includes Baudelaire's poem "L'examen l'examen de minuit" ("Midnight Examination of Conscience"). The Benedictus blesses "he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Psalm 118:26) – that is, first Jesus, and second those who would serve the liturgy – while the poem, a vivid litany of psychologically sharp self-recriminations, seems to complicate this blessing. The poem includes the following passage:

*We have, to please the brute,...  
Saluted enormous folly,  
Folly with the brow of a bull;  
Kissed with great devotion  
Stupid and unfeeling matter  
And bestowed our blessing on  
The wan light of putrefaction.*<sup>12</sup>

During this confession, Elsa beckons with her eyes, and we hear and see thrusting gestures with the repeated word *baisé* or "kissed", which has a strong sexual connotation. In the double-scope blend, "kissing" matter appears as penetrative thrusts, or Indy "kisses" the wall. Incidentally, we also see a wan light cast upon putrefaction, exactly as the lyrics describe; this latter connection can be considered memetic, somewhat like the hopeful life preserver.

## Disclosure

Disclosure is firstly the proper moment when confounding difference can be experienced in rhythmic conjunction, as when the Sun and Moon come together in an eclipse, like a hole or aperture in the sky. Music's degree of plurality – its plenitude of meaningfulness and influence – is conditioned by the fullness of its eclipse-like proper moment of disclosure. To put forward another image, this moment frames the blending of music's codes or voices, as the apex of a pyramid cinches its four corners together with itself.

By connecting with, in the words of J. F. Martel, the "kernel of singularity, of pure difference, in every experience" (Cardin 2015), disclosure expands our reality tunnel, yet only by degrees. It is like exiting Plato's cave only to find oneself in another, larger cave. It is accordingly a paranormal experience, as Martel explains:<sup>13</sup> "Art discloses our own

<sup>11</sup> *Geist* in music is closely connected to ethos, on which see Kramarz (2016).

<sup>12</sup> The translation is by William Aggeler (Baudelaire n.d.), used for the subtitles in Charles's edited version of the mashup (Anika Kildegaard Missa brevis 2023b).

<sup>13</sup> On music and the paranormal, see Willin (2022). On the academic study of the impossible, see the Archives of the Impossible (<https://impossiblearchives.rice.edu>).



mystery even as it lays bare the mystery of consciousness and the mystery of the world. It is *paranormal*, an anomaly casting doubt upon our most cherished certainties about the nature of reality” (Martel 2015, 13–14).

Just as texture can involve both real and imaginary action, so disclosure can involve both real paranormal events and the imaginary presentation of musical puzzles, curious imbalances. Musical puzzles are like textual enigmas, what Barthes calls the hermeneutic code, whereby strange circumstances provoke the reader to inquire as to their resolution, and a disclosure is staged, akin to how a text reveals itself to the hermeneut (1974, 17 and 30).

Let us observe musical puzzles and narrative enigmas in the last hearing of the Credo, which features two poems by Paul Verlaine (Arndt 2025b). The music presents a puzzle in its choral hook (Example 1), which sets a line from “Le ciel est par-dessus le toit” (“The Sky Above the Roof”) fused with the first word of the Mass text: “Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, Credo mon Dieu, la vie est la” (“My God, my God, I believe in my God, there is life!”). The first gestalt in the hook, labeled *credo1*, inverts and expands in *credo2*, suggesting that more about it may be revealed, which is the case.<sup>14</sup> For example, in the quasi-a capella breakdown, *credo1* is subject to partial inversion in *credo3*, and *credo2* is subject to permutation in *credo4*.

**Example 1.** Musical puzzle in the Credo. Reproduced with permission from the composer.

The image displays musical notation for a choral hook, divided into two systems. The first system shows a melody in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first part, labeled 'credo1', consists of a sequence of eighth notes. The second part, labeled 'credo2 (inversion, augmentation)', shows the melody inverted and augmented. A bracket labeled 'expansion' indicates a transition between the two parts. The lyrics 'Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, cre-do, mon Dieu, la vie est la,' are written below the notes. The second system shows a similar melody, labeled 'credo3 (partial inversion of 1)' and 'credo4 (permutation of 2)'. The lyrics 'Cre - do De - o, cre - do De - o, cre - do De - o.' are written below the notes.

<sup>14</sup> Adapting Rick Altman’s theory of narrative to music (2008), we can say that this puzzle is of the single-focus variety. Also possible are dual-focus and multiple-focus.

As is generally the case in music with tonality (including suspended tonality), there is a tonal dimension to this credo gestalt's curiousness: beginning with an accented G appoggiatura, the fourth scale degree in the key of D major, raises a question of whether G or D is the tonic. This question is intensified by the prominent placement of G's own fourth scale degree C as the high point of the refrain. This puzzle unfolds further and begins to find some resolution in the quasi-a cappella breakdown, where the two vocal lines focus on F in the sense of F major, yet another fourth removed from D, but the lines are harmonized in D minor, another side of the overall tonic. Appropriately, the final flourishing of the credo gestalt ends harmonized by G with D as its fifth, or G-d, a scrupulous way of writing "God".

At the second high point in the song, Indy decides to take a leap of faith, which is justified by the bridge that is revealed. This revelation is a partial disclosure of the enigma of the Grail, which is set up when Indy sees a picture in his father's office that foreshadows his own leap. At that time, Marcus says: "The search for the Cup of Christ is the search for the divine in all of us." Indy's acknowledgement of the divine in stepping off the ledge takes him closer to the mystery of the Grail. In the double-scope blend, this partial disclosure highlights the unfolding of the credo gestalt, and conversely Indy's leap of faith amounts to saying, "*Credo mon Dieu*."

## S/Z-Style Reading/Writing

Now that we have outlined the five codes of music, allow me to give an S/Z-style reading/writing of a song/scene from *Indiana Jones and the Abbey of Thelema*. In S/Z, Barthes annotates successive segments of text with codes that they evoke. He stresses that, although the categories of codes are exhaustive, any analysis of them is necessarily "arbitrary" (1974, 13). I will continue to highlight codes that imply blending between the music and the narrative, but I leave it to the reader to actually effect the blending and find additional, personal meaning. The purpose here is not to impose an interpretation but to illustrate the mercurial workings of the codes. I will represent the album through lyrics, and I will represent the film through screenplay-like narration.

As an entry point into the mashup, I have selected the first hearing of the Kyrie, whose lyrics, incorporating Rabalais's inscription over a gate to the Abbey of Thelema, ward or welcome the listener, depending on whether they are base and prejudiced or noble and open-minded. This reading is based on the edited version of the mashup produced by Charles.

- (1) *Indy hops from a horse onto a circus train.* ★ ACTION. "Train": 1: to hop aboard.
- (2) "*Fais ce que voudras*" (*Do what thou wilt*). ★ TEXTURE. Chugging meter. ★★ MEMES. Bell, the law of Thelema. ★★★ STRUCTURE. Introduction (connection). ★★★★★ SEMES. Banging, scuffling.
- (3) *Indy runs along train cars, chased by bandits.* ★ ACTION. "Train": 2: to run along train cars. ★★ ANTITHESIS. Good folk and scoundrels. ★★★ SEMES. Clanking, whooshing.
- (4) *Indy enters a train car and kicks the man following him.* ★ ACTION. "Train": 3: to enter a train car, to deny entry.

- (5) “*Ci n’entrez pas, hypocrites, bigots*” (*Here enter not, vile bigots*). ★ ACTION. “Abbey”: 1: to deny entry. ★★ ANTITHESIS. Scoundrels. ★★★ STRUCTURE. Verse 1 (establishment).
- (6) *Indy is confronted by a cobra and falls into a pit of snakes, losing his hat*. ★ ACTION. “Snakes”: 1: to fall into a pit of snakes. ★★ ACTION. “Hats”: 1: to lose one’s hat. ★★★ HERMENEUTIC. Indy’s snake phobia: disclosure.
- (7) “*Hères, cagots, cafards empantouflés*” (*Cursed snakes, dissembling varlets, seeming sancts*). ★ MEMES. Snakes.<sup>15</sup>
- (8) *Indy exits the train car and locks the door on the bandits*. ★ ACTION. “Train”: 5: to exit the train car, to deny exit.
- (9) “*Ci n’entrez pas, mâchefoins praticiens*” (*Here enter not, attorneys, barristers*). ★ ACTION. “Abbey”: 2: to deny entry again.
- (10) *Indy takes a snake out of his shirt. The Cross of Coronado is tucked under his belt*. ★ ACTION. “Snakes”: 2: to take a snake out of one’s shirt. ★★ ACTION. “Cross”: 1: to have the cross. ★★★ MEMES. The cross, Jesus, the serpent.
- (11) “*Scribes et pharisiens*” (*scribes, nor pharisees*). ★ MEMES. Scribes and pharisees, who condemned Jesus to the cross. ★★ ANTITHESIS. Good folk and scoundrels.
- (12) “*Ici n’est fait excès / dont en vos cours on dût mouvoir procès*” (*We are not for attendance or delays / But would with ease and quiet pass our days*). ★ ACTION. “Abbey”: 3: to refuse delays.
- (13) *A brigand catches Indy with a snake hook*. ★ ACTION. “Snakes”: 3: to be caught (delayed) by a snake hook.
- (14) *Indy is pinned to a train car, threatened by a knife and a rhino horn*. ★ ACTION. “Train”: 4: to be pinned to a train car. ★★ MEMES. Beast, mortal threat.
- (15) “*Kyrie eleison*” (*Lord have mercy*). ★ MEMES. Prayer for mercy. ★★ STRUCTURE. Chorus (establishment).
- (16) *Indy swings away on a pipe, but it brings him face to face with the Garth, the chief bandit, who wants the Cross of Coronado back*. ★ ACTION. “Train”: 5: to swing onto another train car. ★★ MEMES. The (golden) Cross of Coronado.
- (17) “*Ci n’entrez pas, ... grippeminaux*” (*Here enter not, ... gold-graspers*). ★ ACTION. “Abbey”: 4: to deny entry again. ★★ MEMES. Gold. ★★★ STRUCTURE. Verse 2 (elaboration).
- (18) “*La male mort en ce pas vous défasse!*” (*Hell-mastiffs gnaw your bones, you rav’nous dogs*). ★ MEMES. Hell-beasts.
- (19) *Indy falls into a train car with a lion and wards it off with a whip*. ★ ACTION. “Train”: 6: to fall into a train car. ★★ MEMES. Pit, beast.
- (20) “*Ci n’entrez pas, vous rassotés matins*” (*Here enter not, unsocialable wight*). ★ ACTION. “Abbey”: 5: to deny entry again. ★★ MEMES. Beast, mortal threat.

<sup>15</sup> The translation is by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter Motteux (1952, 62–63), modified by Charles in his edited version of the mashup (Anika Kildegard Missa brevis, 2023b).

- (21) "*Christe eleison.*" ★ MEMES. Prayer for mercy. ★★ STRUCTURE. Chorus 2 (elaboration).
- (22) *Indy grabs the Cross of Coronado and is pulled out of the train car with his whip.* ★ ACTION. "Train": 7: to be pulled out of a train car. ★★ MEMES. The cross, Jesus, mercy.
- (23) *A brigand tries to wrest the cross out of Indy's hands, but he gives up when a snake crawls out of Indy's shirt.* ★ ACTION. "Cross": 2: to nearly lose the cross. ★★ ACTION. "Snakes": 4: to have a snake come out of one's shirt. ★★ MEMES. The cross, the serpent. ★★ SEMES. Giving up, hissing.
- (24) "*Written in the sky: capital J. H. E. / Give it up for Jhe—the rapper from Venus.*" ★ SEMES. Giving it up, hissing.
- (25) *Indy enters a train car and shuts the door behind him.* ★ ACTION. "Train": 8: to enter another train car, to deny entry.
- (26) "*Here enter not, twisted zealot!*" ★ ACTION. "Abbey": 6: to deny entry again. ★★ ANTITHESIS. Scoundrels. ★★ STRUCTURE. Breakdown (persistence, dissolution).
- (27) *Indy enters a magic box and through it exits the train. Garth opens the box, but the exit is closed.* ★ ACTION. "Train": 9: to exit the train, to deny exit.
- (28) "*This door is closed to the fiddler.*" ★ MEMES. Closed door.
- (29) "*Take a hike and get lost.*" ★ MEMES. Leaving by foot.
- (30) *Indy runs from the train.* ★ ACTION. "Train": 10: to run from the train.
- (31) "*Welcome! / Make yourself at home, you special, you smile!*" ★ ACTION. "Abbey": 7: To grant entry. ★★ MEMES. Bell, home. ★★ ANTITHESIS. Good folk.
- (32) *Indy runs to the front door of his house and goes inside.* ★ ACTION. "House": 1: to approach, to enter. ★★ MEMES. Home.
- (33) *Indy goes into his father's study. A fellow Boy Scout rides by, blowing a bugle.* ★ ACTION. "House": 2: to go into a back room. ★★ MEMES. Horn.
- (34) "*Come aboard this sanctuary of Joie de Vivre.*" ★ TEXTURE. Thin, burbling timbre. ★★ MEMES. Electronic horn.
- (35) "*Ci entrez, vous, et bien soyez venus / Et parvenus, tous nobles chevaliers*" (*Here enter you, and welcome from our hearts, / All noble sparks endow'd with gallant parts*). ★ ACTION. "Abbey": 8: To grant entry again. ★★ MEMES. Knight (*chevalier*). ★★ STRUCTURE. Verse 3 (delimitation).
- (36) *Indy's father copies a picture of a knight.* ★ MEMES. Knight.
- (37) "*Ci est le lieu où sont les revenus / Bien advenus, afin qu'entretenus, / Grands et menus, tous soyez à milliers*" (*This is the glorious place which nobly shall / Afford sufficient to content you all; / Were you a thousand, here you shall not want / For anything; for what you ask, we grant*). ★ ACTION. "Abbey": 9: To offer goods to guests.
- (38) *Indy goes into the front room and meets the Scout and the Sheriff at the door, to whom he gives the Cross of Coronado. The bandits enter, to whom the Sheriff gives the cross.* ★ ACTION. "House": 3: to go back into the front room. ★★ ACTION. "Cross": 3: to give

away the cross. ★★★ MEMES. Guests. ★★★★★ ANTITHESIS. Good folk and scoundrels. (39) "*Kyrie eleison*" (*Lord have mercy*). ★ MEMES. Prayer for mercy. ★★ STRUCTURE. Chorus 3 (delimitation).

(40) *The men exit. Garth gives Indy a kind word and his hat.* ★ ACTION. "Hats": 2: to receive a hat. ★★ ANTITHESIS. Good folk and scoundrels. ★★★ DISCLOSURE. What did I just watch?

I have already mentioned parallels and antitheses between the first and third hearings of the Introitus. Such connections continue through the rest of the third hearing of the Introitus and the Kyrie. As in the first hearing, Indy's eyes are glued to a cross; only this time it is the set of crosshairs on a periscope, and his face is literally smashed against it. At the start of the Kyrie, Indy gets a solid mount on the side of a tank, like the train in the first hearing. He then fights Nazis on top of it, as before he fought bandits. We hear "welcome, make yourself at home", as Indy and his crew enter the valley leading to the temple that houses the Grail and the Grail Knight, as before he entered his house, full of Grail lore, with a picture of a knight. The mashup is replete with the kind of coding analyzed here.

## Conclusion

To review, the five codes of music, in order of correlation with the experiential learning cycle, are: *texture*, *memes*, *structure*, *semes*, and *disclosure* (or *disc closure*). Texture is a spinning and weaving of frequencies. Memes are cultural codes, integrative lenses. Structure is an intuition of complementary forces. Semes are gestalts, similar to each other and to gestures and *Geist*. And disclosure comprises real paranormal events and the imaginary presentation of musical puzzles. A rough idea of the complementarity of the codes may be gained through consideration of their representation in western music fundamentals: aural identification deals with textural elements, staff notation is a meme, analytical symbols – boiling down to this versus that – represent structure, and singing and playing the keyboard represent semes; disclosure is not yet found in fundamentals. The codes of music can be analyzed in music's machine mode, but in no way does analysis exhaust the plurality of codes that present themselves in music's event mode, especially in such an open-ended phenomenon as *Indiana Jones and the Abbey of Thelema*.

In outlining the five codes of music in this mashup, I have represented its meaningfulness in a purely formal manner, indicating the nature and interaction of the codes just as we would find them in regular films, save that the blending is double-scope instead of single-scope. But despite this evident equivalence, the reader may object to finding meaning beyond culturally sanctioned objects like albums and films that orient the act of interpretation and give it relevance. One can respond to this objection by carving out a cultural niche for music-film mashup, as Jason Middleton (2007) and John Richardson (2012) have done especially well with regard to *The Dark Side of Oz*. But there is more to meaning than culture.

To insist on the cultural mooring of musical meaning is to retrench a binary notion of the musical and the extramusical, which has obscured the field of signification by set-

ting one of the codes, that of memes (cultural codes), against an obscurely delineated remainder. What we need to overcome binary thinking is quinary thinking: five codes. Once one recognizes the codes as simply channels of signification, as semiological interfaces, unaffiliated with any particular object – indeed, unaffiliated with any particular *species* – then the musicality and narrativity of the mashup versus a regular film become non-issues. Can you use a straw for apple juice? Yes. Can you use it for orange juice? Yes. We are not comparing apples to oranges; we are just using a straw.

But this binary thinking, which as I mentioned has a long history, goes deeper. It correlates with the two main intellectual paradigms of our time as analyzed by Ian Bogost: “scientific naturalism”, which attributes all phenomena to material bits that can be analyzed for human ends, and “social relativism”, which similarly attributes everything to human culture (2012, 13). The meaning encountered in music-film mashup is not left there by humans for other humans to recover like Easter eggs. It is just there, like a buzzing cross; no one can say how, and no one can verify it scientifically.

Some readers, I hope, will be willing to step off the bridge with Indy, so as to undertake or at least entertain “shamanic journeys”, as it were, a function of film in general (Horsley 2009), where what Barthes calls the “subject” is lost (1981, 38), and one connects with the larger, non-human information field in which the text works. But some readers will not. Meaningful coincidence not attributable to causality,<sup>16</sup> which Jung calls *synchro-nicity* (1973), has been dismissed by what Barthes calls “doxa”, public opinion (1981, 37), including in studies of music-film mashup. Andrew Zimmerman Jones writes, “However meaningful we may believe a coincidence to be, if there is no causal link between the apparently related items then any meaning or significance they seem to have is created by ourselves” (2007, 47; see also Richardson 2012, 191). But according to Barthes, meanings are created neither by an author nor by us but by “their *systematic* mark” (1974, 11). It is out of step with interpretive practice to require that every speck of meaning be causal. But to each their own. You drink the apple juice – the movie ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You drink the orange juice – you enter the Abbey of Thelema, and you can see how deep the rabbit hole goes.

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## Chapter 9

# Processes of Literature – Music Transposition in Progressive Metal. Edgar Allan Poe in Michael Romeo's *The Dark Chapter* (1994)<sup>1,2</sup>

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## Abstract

Michael Romeo released *The Dark Chapter*, his first solo instrumental album, in 1994. In this album we see multiple transtextuality relationships with works by Edgar Allan Poe. The musician develops in this album a meticulous narrative construction of each of the works and makes a critical reading of them and highlights some of the semantic, narrative and affective values that he puts into operation in the new sign register. He develops, therefore, a conscientious exercise of literature–music transposition. In this chapter I will analyze the composer's literature–music transposition strategies, as well as the results they generate.

**Keywords:** Michael Romeo, *The Dark Chapter*, Edgar Allan Poe, semiotics, literature–music transposition

## Introduction

Michael Romeo is a very interesting and distinct personality in the world of metal music. Without getting into the fact that he is one of the greatest virtuosos of the guitar as an instrument, his disruptive start with *The Dark Chapter* (1994) and his membership in the progressive metal band Symphony X, with albums such as *Paradise Lost* (2007), *The Odyssey* (2002), *Iconoclast* (2011) or *The Divine Wings of Tragedy* (1997) makes him one of the most revered guitarists of the international scene.

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank the people who have given me support in the preparation of this work. To Joan Grimalt in the first place, for his kindness and for recommending the reading of Kostka, Castro and Everett, fundamental to elucidate many of the confusions that came to me, as well as to Dickie Lee for the recommendation of Serge Lacasse, whose magnificent work I was unaware of, and Eduardo Viñuela, who recommended some readings that further my understanding of urban popular music. Juan Miguel González Martínez has also been kind enough to share his work with me, without which I would not have been able to articulate this study in the first place. Also, to the anonymous and altruistic people who shared openly their transcriptions of the pieces, which have served me as a guide to elaborate my own transcription. Finally, to my dear Rubén Reinaldo, who more than ten years ago introduced me to this extraordinary musician, about whom we have spent hours and hours chatting, which has led me to this chapter – and other future approaches, I hope.

In this study, I will focus on that first work, *The Dark Chapter*. Published in 1994 with the Japanese company Zero Corporation, this instrumental album shows a great density of transtextual relationships with works by Edgar Allan Poe, especially in the homonymous themes: *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Masque of The Red Death* and *The Premature Burial*.

The deep connection of this album with the American writer is more than evident, but it is not reduced to the vague scope of inspiration and aesthetic evocation; it is not a simple “concept album”. Romeo develops in this work a meticulous narrative construction of each of the works. The musician makes a critical reading of them and highlights some of the semantic, narrative and affective values that, through the hypotext, he puts into operation in the new signic register, the musical one. It develops, therefore, a conscientious exercise of literature–music transposition. In this chapter I analyze narratologically the transposition strategies of the composer, as well as the results they generate. I intend, in the same way, to clarify the relationship of the texts generated with the gothic aesthetics of Edgar Allan Poe and to frame the album in the context of the progressive metal of the late 20th century.

## Review of Theoretical Elements: Meaning, Transposition and Narratology

*Mapping musical signification* through the processes of literature–music transposition, and on top of that, in popular, urban, contemporary and purely instrumental music – progressive metal, if that were not enough – has forced me to justify the analysis through an extensive bibliographical review. As Monelle warned: “Drawing together the many aspects of musical semiotics is like rounding up a flock of particularly wayward sheep” (1992, preface).

Beginning with the elemental, Tarasti (2002, 5-6) pointed out – taking up Lotman’s concept – that there is a semiosphere in which the particular musical work must be inscribed in order to be understood. Numerous authors have also explored this idea of signification as a productive social process (Cook 1994; Molino 1986; Small 1998; González Martínez 2009, 261; Meyer 2001, 60).

While the idea of the qualified listener is already to some extent surpassed, it is still being necessary a concept that embodies the convention on emotion and meaning in music – the common discursive universe in art, as Meyer (2001, 60) called – so we could indeed talk about an intersubjective coincidence (Lerena 2018, 201) – although there are some authors who problematize this concept in relation to intertextuality, such as Kristeva herself (in Kostka, de Castro and Everett 2021, 2). It is necessary to indicate that in the context of mass culture this intersubjective coincidence is widely accredited by the authors, who consciously seek clearer, broader and more stable signifiers through the use of musical resources already fixed in the language, stereotyped to the extreme, which facilitate the acceptance and dissemination of the works.

However, as I already mentioned in the veiled quotation to at the beginning of the section, the meanings articulated in the works that we will examine come from multiple sources (Grimalt 2020). This has forced me to juxtapose approaches in order to compre-

hend these works to their full extent. Semiotic analysis has indeed allowed me to gain access to *how* they are signified, but in order to understand in depth this *how*, I had to take into account the origins of these meanings. Obviously, a topic is not the same thing as a *mood*<sup>3</sup> from film music studies; rhetorical gesture is not the same as descriptivism. Cook (2021) has been very beneficial insofar as it describes this eclectic mentality in the use of signifying strategies. That non-autonomous mentality of music in Romeo – the *Read/Write*, as Cook would say – is what allows him to employ such a variety of resources from such a variety of traditions, as we shall see below.

Hermeneutics, exegesis, *what* it means, was also quite elusive. Since these works are transtextually related to literary texts, I focused my attention on the phenomena of literature–music transposition and, by extension, narratology. For this narratological approach, both the readings of González Martínez (2006; 2009) and the readings of Grabocz (2012) – especially his studies on the organization of meanings within the musical work and his differentiation of inner and outer narrative programs – were decisive.<sup>4</sup>

Grimalt's readings also provided me with some valuable reflections, which undoubtedly influenced my approach to the composer. Two ideas still resonate powerfully in my mind: “the musical discourse does not only incorporate from the theatre ‘situations’ and ‘characters,’ but also a ‘dramaturgy’: a certain narrative, sequential sense” (Grimalt 2024, 39) and “a theory of rethorical performance implies a theory of musical agency and dramaturgy, and vice versa” (Grimalt 2024, 29). Another idea of Grimalt, powerfully related to this welter of the pristine in the meaning, found in this work on Romeo, would be as follows: “Paradoxically, whereas the term ‘rhetoric’ becomes more and more derogative, music radically enhances its rhetorical sense to move its audiences by mimicking the inflections of a represented, psychologically distressed speaker/singer. This musical ‘persona’ can be seen as a figure of the modern subject” (Grimalt 2024, 42).

In order not to leave any loose ends, I must point out that my idea of transtextuality and its constituents, which we will see throughout the text, stem from Genette (1989) and his magnificent *Palimpsests*, as well as from the outstanding monograph edited by Kostka, de Castro and Eveett, entitled *Intertextuality in Music. Dialogic Composition* (2021), especially de Castro's chapter. Lacasse (2000; 2018) also powerfully influenced my concept of trans- and intertextuality in popular music. I retrieve from his work with Burns a quote that synthesizes the approach to the object of study: “Musical intertextuality is not just a creative practice or a process but rather a network of songs, styles, artists, and consumers influenced, directly or indirectly, by the music and artists that came before: by this definition,

<sup>3</sup> Michael Romeo is a musician hugely influenced by film and audiovisual compositions, as he demonstrates in his latest solo works – *War Of The Worlds, Pt. 1* (2018) and *War Of The Worlds, Pt.2* (2022) – and stresses on it in various interviews. Although it is entirely very revealing, I extracted an excerpt from an interview with Vera Matthijssens for *Arrow Lords of Metal*, published on March 30, 2022: “It is heavy, it is metal, some of it is a little darker, it is cinematic, that's all in the cover artwork, it kind of sets the tone.”

<sup>4</sup> As Grabocz (2012, 129) notes, Greimas and Courtés pointed out that narrative structures can be defined as constituent components of the deep level of semiotic process.

popular music is intertextual”<sup>5</sup> (2018, 4). Having said that, in this study I will focus mainly on the elements of literature–music transposition, which build the narrativity of the work.

The first element of transposition that I analyze will be that of transvaluation (Genette 1989, 432). Following the quotations, Victor Sklovski (in Lerena 2018, 197) pointed out that the role of art should be to offer a renewed vision of reality through the manipulation of the significance of objects and ideas. In the same way, González Martínez qualifies Sklovski’s idea, adding that the process of transposition “even affects to a certain extent the original meaning of the verbal text, since it will highlight some values and neutralize others. The result will not be, then, the musicalization of a text, but the musicalization of what a musician has understood from a text, that is, the result of an act of interpretation”<sup>6</sup> (2006, 181). He continues: “The musician will have to make a series of decisions in relation to what I have pointed out: what interests him most in the hypotext, where its musical virtualities lie, which part of the original meaning he wishes to maintain at all costs and which can be dispensed with, what he wants the music to contribute at any given moment, which transformational mechanisms he prefers to apply, etc.” (González Martínez 2006, 185). Grabocz also pointed out this phenomenon in relation to the external narrative program: “The composer observes the integrity of the linear (syntagmatic) development of the narrative, selecting, however, only certain moments of it for musical representation, relying on the possibilities offered by the reservoir of existing historical expressive genres” (2012, 133).

Another element of marked interest will be that of transmodalization. One of the major problems facing an analysis of this kind is that we find a completely different sign register, so we could opt for an intersemiotic approach. From inter-artistic studies it is well founded that artistic disciplines share the same content, based on a common mytho-symbolic background (González de Ávila 2019, 181), which allows us to search for and analyze *sufficient transference of meaning*. I must mention that some authors such as Klein (2021) or Kostka (2021) – the latter taking up and analyzing the proposal of Nycz’s *intertextual poetics* – propose the same position from the field of intertextuality, something that has revealed very positive results.

The shift in register presents in these works a major difficulty, the unicity of the voices. Something similar happens with the transmodalization in lyric theater, saving distances, where we see that “various gentlemen of the drama [...] become the chorus of the opera, [...] an undefined mass that nevertheless maintains its function of commentator and interlocutor” (González Martínez 2006, 173). However, in the case of the lyric theater one of the sign registers, verbal language, is maintained. The added difficulty, both in instrumental music and in this specific case of *The Dark Chapter*, is that the voices of Poe’s different characters are represented instrumentally by Romeo’s solo guitar; although keyboards, rhythm guitars or drums also make signifying contributions, they exercise mainly, but not exclusively, other types of functions – environmental, contextualizing, to acclimatize the guitar’s narration, etc. We will see in some cases a synthesis of voices without the

<sup>5</sup> In the following section we will see a similar quote by Walser.

<sup>6</sup> If not directly specified, all translations in this chapter from Spanish language are my own.

work losing its narrative value, and in others, how Romeo interprets the characters and their emotions. As Mirka pointed out, “this close relation between characters and sentiments makes possible musical representation of characters” (2014, 20).

To conclude this section, there are several comments that we can make. The first would be that the analysis of these works allows us to approach the cognitive and compositional processes of the guitarist. Secondly, it goes without saying that the hypotext will determine some formal aspects of the musical work, and there will always be a connection. We are presented with an ontological paradox, in which, as López Cano (2011, 64) remarks, the new work claims its own independence and identity while at the same time is being irremediably tied to its hypotext.

And thirdly, although it may seem obvious, some texts have a higher facility for being put into music than others. Poe’s exquisite works – which, by the way, are very visual and descriptive, which is the main reason for why they exist with so much presence in the cinematographic world – give a guitarist like Romeo, with an enormous lyrical and melodic capacity, a dark, aggressive and dissonant style, a wide margin to develop a musical narration, a field in which the guitarist feels very comfortable, as I pointed out earlier. The choice of Poe as the main thread is no coincidence, as it responds to the generic demands in question, which I will develop in the following section.

And all this theoretical development for what? To substantiate that this is indeed what Romeo does with Allan Poe’s texts. Romeo’s work will be primarily one of interpretation and transvaluation, a reading and narration of the hypotexts, through the signifying strategies I have indicated. We cannot, under any circumstances, reduce this development to a simple ‘programmatic’ or ‘conceptual’ approach. I have been partly obliged to give this justification because, unlike the excellent analyses of all the people I have quoted so far – apart from Lacasse and Burns – what I bring here is a work of contemporary urban popular music,<sup>7</sup> often vilified by some sectors of the academy.

## 19th-century Gothic Literature and Metal

I would like to make a small digression on the relationship between gothic literature and metal – in this case, progressive metal. I have pointed out that the choice of Poe as the common thread of the album is no coincidence, and this is mainly due to the discursive elements common to both artistic representations, both located in different traditions. As

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<sup>7</sup> It may be necessary to briefly explain this concept. I consider the term *popular* in relation to mass culture and the means of dissemination of this works. In this case, instrumental progressive metal and neoclassical metal may seem to appeal to a community with a highly intellectual taste, distant from the general public and consumed in ways that diverge from the usual urban life, so the term could be discussed. I consider the term *urban* in the historical sense, referring to music that is originated, primarily consumed and experienced within cities. Both parameters are clearly troubled by globalization and other phenomenon, making it relevant to discuss how popular and urban these genres really are. There has been an interesting ongoing discussion in academia over the years about the semantics of the term “popular music”. We highly recommend the reading of Jordán González and Smith (2011).

Robert Walser remarks: “Heavy Metal musicians explore images of horror and madness in order to comprehend and critique the world as they see it [...]. They appropriate material for their music and lyrics from the myriad sources made available to them by mass mediation, selecting those they can fuse into a cultural alloy that is strong and conductive” (2014, 170).

Musical tradition in the generalist sense, as Burkholder has so fittingly described in his *Making Old Music New* (2021, 80), is constructed by assimilating and integrating the resources and elements it finds within its reach, forming a multidirectional and multidimensional web of interweaving meanings. This is evidently not limited only to the musical register, something that Walser was already very clear about. In rock and heavy metal as urban popular music we see this very clearly, and in the case of the so-called neoclassical and progressive metal – of which Michael Romeo is one of its most significant representatives – even more so, especially in relation to the European classical musical tradition, where we find a wide importation of materials.<sup>8</sup>

Returning to the idea of importation, it is worth mentioning that Romeo, given his character and his voice as a composer, frequently resorts to artistic, historical and conceptual intertexts.<sup>9</sup> I already mentioned some titles in the introduction, but I want to highlight now briefly *Paradise Lost*, which Vunić analyzed in 2021. John Milton’s poem, one of the most dense and complex literary works in the Anglo-Saxon world, was *musicated* by the band, who demonstrated in their performance a sharp understanding of the original text and a brilliant exercise of literature–music transposition in which they emphasized the themes, both implicit and explicit, that exist in Milton’s text (Vunić 2021, 137). The lyrics are based on the emotions projected by Milton’s work – betrayal, revenge, desire – and the music supports that affectivity, as it is presented as aggressive and dark (Vunić 2021, 125). As a summary, we can note that Symphony X “had intended [...] to explore several underlying themes in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* [...] maintaining something of the poem’s basic metaphysical meaning” (Vunić 2021, 132). I bring it up precisely because Milton’s work also shares affective relations with our object of study.

Returning to the aesthetics of Edgar Allan Poe’s gothic literature, it has numerous points in common with heavy metal: the dialogue with their respective modernities or the artistic treatment of violence, cruelty or madness, the aesthetic enjoyment of horror... Those visual evocations, those dark, gloomy, grim, ominous atmospheres... Those macabre imageries, gathered in the lyrics – and the music – of some songs invoking the most abject aspects of humanity and its psyche... (Walser 2014, 167–168). As Elizabeth MacAndrew (1979, 3) states, the literary gothic world is defined as:

<sup>8</sup> There is a clear influence of Yngwie Malmsteen, both in his virtuosity and his melodic-harmonic palette. As Walser pertinently states: “Malmsteen signals the reliance of his music on the gothic aura of classical music” (2014, 95).

<sup>9</sup> The musical intertexts Michael Romeo presents in his works with Symphony X diverge completely from the norm. Romeo’s classical and compositional education leads him to include in his compositions fragments of Bach, Mozart, Mahler, Verdi, Bartók, Holst, Beethoven, Chopin, Paganini... And not only instrumental fragments, but also choral works, such as Bach’s *Mass in B minor* or Verdi’s *Requiem*.

(...) dream landscapes and figures of the subconscious imagination. Its fictional world gives form to amorphous fears and impulses common to all mankind, using an amalgam of materials, some torn from the author's own subconscious mind and some the stuff of myth, folklore, fairy tale, and romance. It conjures up beings – mad monks, vampires, and demons – and settings – forbidding cliffs and glowering buildings, stormy seas and the dizzying abyss – that have literary significance and the properties of dream symbolism as well. Gothic fiction gives shape to concepts of the place of evil in the human mind (MacAndrew 1979, 3).

As I noted above, Poe's exquisite works give plenty of room for a guitarist like Romeo, with an enormous lyrical and melodic capacity and a dark, aggressive and dissonant style, to develop a musical narrative.

I should also note that the choice of Poe's anti-aristocratic tales would make sense insofar as metal, as Weinstein (2011, in Walser 2014, viii) states, should be seen as the music of the global proletariat, which is framed within the class struggle culture of late capitalism.<sup>10</sup> This would also lead us to an analysis of power and its overwhelming nature, but we do not want to overextend ourselves in this section.

### ***The Dark Chapter (1994)***

Edgar Allan Poe himself emphasized that his works focused on the impressions they produced in the reader, a "consideration of an effect" (Poe, in Miquel Baldellou 2010, 60). In Edgar Allan Poe's gothic literature, as Pang et al. observe, "horror and ugliness grasp our aesthetical vision. In the parts about horror and evil, Poe achieves the aesthetical functions of sublimation and purification of human morality and spirit" (2015, 18). Romeo, like Allan Poe, invites the listener to explore the characters, their psyches and walk through the gothic scenarios he creates throughout this album. Romeo, like Allan Poe, seeks to provoke, to induce sensations and effects.

I mentioned earlier that this work shows a great density of transtextual relationships – in the sense of Genette (1989) – with Allan Poe's works. On the visual paratextual level, we highlight the cover (see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Dark\\_Chapter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dark_Chapter)), where references such as *The Raven* or *The Pit and the Pendulum* can be found, as well as evocative narrative elements that introduce us to those conceptual gothic spaces. Among these spaces we can highlight the gloomy atmosphere, wrapped in the darkness of the night, only illuminated by candles on the left of the composition. Meanwhile, in the foreground, rests a score entitled "Fantasy", accompanied by a black feather of the raven. The cover projects a very specific semantic field. Not only that, but it acclimates us for listening. Michael Romeo's intention is very clear, already providing a concrete reading of the work, which we must understand as a correct macro-interpretation of the musical texts.

<sup>10</sup> Should be noted that Romeo's album, as well as the texts of Walser and Weinstein, belongs to the 1990s, when it was common ground that the metal genre was a proletarian genre – which possibly led the musician to the anti-aristocratic tales of Poe, a label not established by the author, but later. Nowadays, that affirmation cannot be sustained, but we should consider it within the context of production.

I must also mention the themes that make up the album. In addition to the three homonymous themes that I will analyze in a moment, we have others of special discursive and semantic interest. In order of appearance, they will be *Carpathia*, reminiscent of the Carpathian Mountains, which relate to Vlad Tepes, Count Dracula; *The Cask of Amontillado*; *Psychotic Episode*, an invitation to the obscure mysteries of the human psyche, as usual in the gothic literature; *The Masque of The Red Death*; *Sevil Alucard*, retrogradation of “Dracula Lives”; *The Premature Burial*, MJR #13, acronym of the guitarist’s name, Michael James Romeo – I do not yet know what #13 stands for; *Concerto in B Minor*, arrangement of Paganini’s piece and *Noit Al Ever*, which is a retrogradation of “Revelation”.

Regarding the analysis, a few last remarks must be made before starting. The album is studio recorded. This may seem a mere triviality, but we are dealing with a musical object mediated by production, which will be one more parameter of the analysis. Romeo also takes advantage of this kind of resources as significant and narrative elements, which demonstrates his vast compositional capacity and control of the medium. We must analyze from the *Soundbox* and the proxemics to the general sonic structure, in which are framed, evidently, both the timbre and the guitar effects that modify it.

The second would be to state that there is no authorized score of the works by the composer. This undoubtedly alters the conclusions I can draw from the analysis. Bearing in mind my own identity and abilities as a researcher, I must admit that since my ear is not sufficiently developed to be the only tool that guides me in the analysis, the absence of an authorized score has been a real problem for me. I am certain that if there were a score by the author, new meanings would appear, and that some of the ones I have presented in this text would be dismantled.

Continuing with this non-existence of the score, and in relation to the structure of the works, I have decided not to establish a taxonomy of the sections. I follow the marking used by the author in other works edited by himself, published by Sheet Happens.<sup>11</sup> In the same way as the form, musical tonalities have not been generally established.

Third and last, we will only focus on the moments that are narratively significant in the construction of the work, since it is not in our interest in this text to elaborate an exhaustive analysis of other constituent elements of the work, which would lengthen this chapter unnecessarily.

### ***The Premature Burial***

*The Premature Burial* is one of the stories within Poe’s slapstick gothic. As Stuart and Susan Levine (Poe 1990, 295) observe, this work stands out in the American author’s oeuvre because it is intended to be a story, not a work of fiction. It is a collection of anecdotes about premature burials. The narrator, who lives in fear, only becomes important in the second part of the story, and serves Poe not so much as a totem to mock this phobia, but to propose another affective relationship with it.

<sup>11</sup> Up until now, there are four authorized editions of Romeo in *Sheet Happens: The Odyssey*, *Paradise Lost*, *Iconoclast* and *Underworld*. I include one in the list of references as an example.



In Michael Romeo's interpretation we see some elements of interest. Of the three works I am going to analyze in this chapter, it is the only one that is to some extent circular. It is clearly an alteration of the original sense of the work, deliberately on Romeo's part, for while in Poe's text the narrator, in passing through the imaginary experience of premature burial, is freed from both the fear of it and his catalepsy, Romeo's work invites us to think that the cycle has not been broken at any point. As Genette rightly asserts, "there is no innocent transposition, I mean, that does not modify in one way or another the significance of its hypotext" (1989, 375).

The work begins with a four-bar acoustic guitar arpeggiation, 2+2, which is repeated cyclically. As it progresses, it begins to appear from a distance – that is, in the proxemic analysis, the back of the *Soundbox* – the rhythm guitar, which makes a tremolo figuration over the low E, usual in heavy metal. This configuration is maintained in time, only interrupted by two solo phrases of Romeo, of two bars each, which, like desperate screams, present the *ethos* of the piece.

As a closing of this first section – A [0:00 – 1:01], an intertextuality, whose hypotext I have not been able to locate, appears. Romeo incorporates in the piece a voice sample – I presume from a movie – which, accompanied by an organ-sounding keyboard, announces theatrically: "This is the end of the [*not audible*], just the beginning of a nightmare". This organ accompaniment that Romeo conceives to accompany this voice (Figure 1) presents a timbre that constitutes a clear signifier of the Western musical tradition which, along with the diminished chords, aims to place us in the gothic landscapes.

**Figure 1.** Keyboard accompaniment. Reproduced with permission from the author.



The second section – B [1:01 – 2:24] – begins with a heavy riff on the sixth string, with the guitarist performing a melody on the scale F# phrygian  $\natural 3$  – or mixolydian  $b9\ b13$  – (Figure 2). Quite interesting is the proxemic approach of the guitarist, who again includes the lead guitar in the background, making a F# with a very marked vibrato, like a distant scream, which, in the context of premature burials, may remind us of that muffled scream of someone suffocated by the earth.

**Figure 2.** Phrygian  $\natural 3$  riff. Reproduced with permission from the author.



He then begins to develop the melodies of the section, accompanying them with diminished fills, with some added chromaticisms, which he intersperses between the melodies.

We will see in the three works this resource with enormous regularity – I am referring to the use of chromatic melodic elements, diminished and whole-tone, usually doubled and in extremely fast figurations. At first, and given the character of these works, I thought of them as guitar fills. A deeper reflection led me to think of them as a kind of question-and-answer game to the melodic development of the piece. However, ‘improvisation’ in the discourse may be a more accurate approach. It is not a typical improvisation, but a mediated, edited one; it is the composer’s opportunity to present a discourse as spontaneous, crossing the melodic development, and therefore, controlling the flow of the work (Grimalt 2024, 38).

The melodic ideas that the author develops throughout the work obey the development of the work itself, as I mentioned before. I do not think that a formal analysis is within our task in this work. But in relation to the solos, although they respond to the generic conventions of progressive metal, like many other virtuosic resources – speed, cleanliness, scale runs and ostentatious permutations, harmonic-melodic elements from the tradition of European classical music, etc. – can also be interpreted as a vehicle for the madness of the characters (note that one of the chapters of Walser’s *Running with the Devil* is entitled “Can I play with Madness?”), or moments of lucidity, of liberation, of raw emotion of the characters who find themselves trapped in the narrative. The answer that most satisfied me was Grabocz’s internal narrative program, which points out that “the historical musical structure assimilates an external subject, without being thereby constrained to make compromises with a view to its integration” (2012, 134), reinforcing that first intuition of generic conventionality, although I do not categorically rule out the other two options.

In the case of this first solo – section C [2:24 – 3:04] – a lot of instability makes itself felt. However, after a silence, a sort of interlude begins – section D [3:04 – 3:41] – which appears to be based on permutations of an E mixolydian  $\flat 13$  scale with the  $\sharp 11$  (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** D section permutations. Reproduced with permission from the author.



After this tense section, Romeo ends with a very evident intertextuality, as he quotes Chopin’s *Funeral March* (Figure 4). This fragment, what Burkholder (1994, 854) in his well-known study of borrowing would call *narrative quotation*, is an intertextuality after all. This quotation is clear and easily identifiable, both by professional musicians and – I suppose – Japanese metalheads of the end of the 20th century, huge fans of virtuoso guitarists and neoclassical metal. This melody has an extremely concrete meaning in our

society, death. Yet another example of Romeo's understanding and interpretation – and transvaluation – of the hypotext.

**Figure 4.** Quotation from Chopin's *Funeral March* (1837)



It also serves to return to an earlier section – B' [3:41 – 4:54] – which the guitarist repeats and develops melodically and formally. He then presents the next section – E [4:54 – 6:18] – beginning with a reminiscence of the intro with different figuration, for only five bars, to enter the second guitar solo. It is a solo that, unlike the previous one, is very tonal, and more aggressive thanks to the use of the idiomatic resources of the guitar. In Romeo's virtuosic madness, there is also melodic development, as the guitarist reserves four intermediate bars to perform a descending and ascending scale with an equally curious accompaniment, an ostinato consisting of triads of C minor, B major, A major and G# major. After this solo, and with another reminiscence of the initiatory arpeggio, he ends the work in fade-out.

As a brief conclusion, this work presents a more than evident transvaluation of the hypotext. I am not only referring to the clear establishment of a circular work, but also the fact that, through the intertexts, it substantially modifies Poe's narrative. The inclusion of a sample that narrates the "beginning of the nightmare", followed by a quotation from Chopin's *Funeral March*, alters the narrative Poe established about the healing of his anonymous protagonist. In this case, the fate suffered by this *musical persona* is evidently more dreadful.

### ***The Masque of The Red Death***

*The Masque of The Red Death* appears within the anti-aristocratic tales of Allan Poe. In this tale the author explores the idea of the inevitability of death and human arrogance through Prospero, a nobleman who shuns the Red Death through isolation, only to be killed by a personification of it at his lavish costume party.

The piece begins – section A [0:00 – 0:57] – with organ-sounding keyboards over a pedal note (Figure 5), elements that remind us not only of the fantastic world, but of the gothic soundscape of the abbey.

**Figure 5.** Introduction. Reproduced with permission from the author.



Unlike the other pieces, he does not introduce this work with melodic motifs on the guitar but goes straight into the first solo. It leads us without batting an eye into a fragment

in which the tempo increases, the drums perform faster figurations, and the guitar develops some phrases over diminished chords, leading to a feeling of enormous emotional distress.

Our uneasiness does not cease, for after this the guitarist performs a disconcerting melody, completely detached from a stable tonal center, whose measures are divided by a guitar punctuation – a diminished chord from the D – and which ends in a chromatic descent (Figure 6). I interpret that it functions as a sort of presentation of the character of the Red Death, relating the ‘atonal’ with the inhuman, whose correspondence we will see reaffirmed later.

**Figure 6.** Presentation of the Red Death. Reproduced with permission from the author.



We then move on to the next section of the piece – B [0:57 - 2:37]. It is an arpeggio on the acoustic guitar that functions as a dance topic, undoubtedly referring us to the masked ball (Figure 7). However, by reserving the ternary structure and deforming it into a 7/4, we sense a certain sarcasm, or at least an ironic play. It is a deformation of the norm, appealing almost literally – musically – to Bakhtin’s definition of carnival. Likewise, the gloominess of this melody could also be a cryptic foretaste of the fateful ending, of which Prospero’s guests are not yet aware.

**Figure 7.** Masked ball music. Reproduced with permission from the author.



This arpeggiated section is only interrupted by staccato strokes of the rhythm guitar in communion with the drums. Two beats are reiterated repeatedly at a constant rhythm, as if it were the beating of a heart. Romeo is iconically representing the ebony clock. It is not surprising that he has chosen an iconic sign related to the heart, since the clock is personified in Poe’s story. However, there is one difference with Poe’s story, and that is that in this case people are not stopping to listen to it – *And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock* (Allan Poe 1990, 463).

While the rhythm guitar is kept with the arpeggio in the front, the lead guitar performs a solo in the back of the *Soundbox*, quite tonal, dialogic with the dance music, and that nevertheless, is taking more presence, ending in front with some dirty harmonics with the *whammy bar*, an usual idiomatic resource of the electric guitar, as well as by whole tone phrases, as if intended to signal that a certain uneasiness is becoming increasingly present at the masked ball.

He will return, after an intermediate section – C [2:37 - 3:46] – characterized by a melodic development to an arpeggio for just one or two measures, to introduce a solo – D section [3:46 - 4:29] – that is very detached from a tonal center, in which he mainly employs the whole-tone scale, although it is not his only resource. It is truly a very hard solo to hear, even uncomfortable. It is more than evident in this case that the masked ball, previously depicted by that dance topic, is interrupted by the appearance of the Red Death, represented by that dissonant solo, which reaffirms the comment I made at the beginning of the piece about how the composer personifies this character.

Right after, almost as a response to the invocation of the Red Death, Romeo performs a choleric solo, angry, fast, with the *wah* pedal, adorning everything with vibratos, bends, double stops, all very aggressive idiomatic resources of the guitar, very much in the aesthetics and discourse of hard rock and heavy metal. This is indeed Prospero's choleric response – section E [4:29 - 5:10] –. The last part of the solo is scalar, as if representing Prospero's indexical advance, through the halls of the abbey, until he reaches the Red Death, only to fall before it.

At the end of this, and after a recovery of material – section C' [5:10 - 5:59] – he develops the final solo – section F [5:59 - 6:59] – virtuosic, tonal, with a lot of melodic material, even repeating some ideas. This last solo can be interpreted as the conclusion of the piece, as an element of the language of heavy metal, which recreates itself in this macabre imagery and, in the face of horror, shows aesthetic enjoyment.

Through proxemic analysis, we see that the element that takes the front in the last solo section is the bass drum, which survives in the fade out, and could be the personification of the ebony clock, which, let us remember, also dies out at the end of the story, thus not only confirming the inevitability of death, but also standing as a – musically – literal interpretation of Poe's last passage: "And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all" (1990, 464).

Structurally, the piece is bizarre. Poe's narrative invites us to make a linear reading of the work; however, after the solos which represent the appearance of the Red Death, Prospero's wrath and his death, it seems strange to me to recover earlier materials.

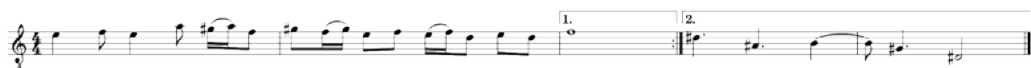
Harmonically and melodically, without going into too much detail, it is the most complete piece I have analyzed; tonal and atonal elements coexist in this piece, just as life coexists with death, insofar as Prospero's guests, while living, were reminded that their final destiny was death. That dialectic is faithfully captured in that tonal–atonal dichotomy. The language Romeo employs in this piece is, without a doubt, much more ostentatious and complex than in the others. Very melodic, tonal figurations appear, framed in the gloomy airs of the piece, locating the gothic soundscape of the abbey, with other sections completely far from tonality, of incredible auditory and emotional tension.

### ***The Cask of Amontillado***

*The Cask of Amontillado*, included in Allan Poe's anti-aristocratic tales, is the story of revenge, in which the author explores the limits of human cruelty. Montresor, gravely offended by Fortunato, plans a meticulous revenge that he carries out during the carnival, locking his rival in his family's crypt, luring him through his weaknesses, wine.

The piece begins – section A [0:00 - 0:34] – with a tremolo on the low E of the sixth string, a resource that accumulates tension on the listener, also common in metal as a rhythmic element. The melodic cell with which it opens (Figure 8) is characterized by the tension exerted through the use of the harmonic minor scale, a resource that inevitably refers to the classical European musical corpus. We can glimpse once again the pretension of musically relating the narration around gothic soundscapes.

**Figure 8.** Initial motif. Section A. Reproduced with permission from the author.



After this introduction, we move on to the second section – B [0:34 - 0:59] – with a theme (Figure 9) that is divided into two half-phrases, the first ascending and tonal, and the second descending on the whole-tone scale. It is clearly significant; could it be the initial meeting and discussion between the two characters while cryptically advancing Montresor's intentions?

**Figure 9.** Thematic motif. Section B. Reproduced with permission from the author.



After a frenetic section – C [0:59 - 1:23] – and a solo – section D [1:23 - 1:49] – Romeo takes us back to the second section – B' [1:49 - 2:04] – which he repeats identically, to end in a sort of interlude – section E [2:04 - 3:07]. In this section an arpeggio figuration of the acoustic guitar develops, while the lead guitar elaborates melodies on the back of the *Soundbox*, with such a pronounced use of delay, creating an echo chamber effect, that it can only be interpreted as the voices of the protagonists as they descend through the catacombs, Fortunato's pilgrimage to his fateful destiny. We can see that Romeo makes excellent use of both the technical resources of the recording and those of the guitar: those aggressive bends, the voices overlapping through the delay effect, etc.

As the section progresses, the speed of this solo increases, generating tension, which leads us to a second solo – section F [3:07 - 3:37] – agitated, leading to a melodic cell as a new thematic unit.

The second interlude – section G [3:37 - 4:00] – is, on the contrary, very calm. Over an acoustic guitar in the background, with the keyboards in the front emulating the timbre of the organ, it takes us back to an uneasy sense of peace, possibly to the silence of the intoxicated Fortunato, prior to realizing his fearful situation. It ends with his terror at the realization of his position as a captive – section H [4:00 - 4:45] – and with a new melodic cell (Figure 10) with an ostinato accompaniment.

**Figure 10.** Thematic motif. Section H. Reproduced with permission from the author.

This theme will be interspersed with virtuosic solo phrases, as if it were a kind of question-answer between the characters, symbolizing Fortunato's demands for liberation, while Montresor impassively raises the wall – although I have already mentioned the different interpretations of this scheme. This pattern is repeated three times, with their respective answers, to finally repeat it one last time, reiterating the first pulse to further demarcate it.

Finally, we come to the final section – I [4:45 - 5:05] – where we find a descending chromatic motif, which closes the work (Figure 11). It can be perfectly signified as an indexical sign, the descent, the pilgrimage to Fortunato's future sepulcher, as well as the descent into madness, the perdition of alcohol, or the descent into hell, claiming the God in whom he does not believe. The semiosis is very evident. It is also an abrupt closure, as if the wall erected by Montresor had just been completed, with an airtight closure that would prevent the unfortunate Fortunato and the sound emitted by him from ever escaping. *In pace requiescat!*

**Figure 11.** Outro. Section I. Reproduced with permission from the author.

*The Cask of Amontillado* stands out as the most complex of the three works, the most difficult to analyze. My analysis has been more descriptive than interpretative – and even so, the interpretations can seem unconvincing. I could barely perceive the differentiation of the characters through the successive melodies and sections that articulate the work, as well as the solos, which, while in *The Masque of the Red Death* were very evident, here not so much, as both characters are human, since Romeo does not resort to atonal resources to represent them.

As for Romeo's interpretation, he demonstrates great eloquence when applying the elements of transposition. The motifs he develops throughout the piece develop a narrative reading of some specific moments, such as the descent through the catacombs.

It is also the most tonal piece of the three analyzed, with a preeminence of various minor scales and a very restrained use of whole-tone scales, chromaticisms, or diminished chords. The use of melodic-harmonic resources of European classical music is also clearly seen in this piece, especially in relation to the accompaniment.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have hopefully proved that this music – contemporary, urban popular, instrumental and soloist – has the capacity to narrate. As Frits Noske said, “Music [...] may communicate the gist of a dramatic action in a more exact and penetrating way than words are even capable of” (1973, 91; cited in González Martínez 2006, 174). In this case, the approach from narratology and intertextuality allows us to verify in a more effective way those processes of literature–music transposition through which we have verified to what extent Romeo understands, interprets and imbues the works with narrativity, as well as his own processes of composition and creation, of transmodalization and transvaluation.

On the other hand, the recurrence to certain musical elements, both formal – diminished chords, chromaticism, whole-tone scales – and timbre or production, among others, function not only as narrative locators within the gothic spaces and soundscapes, but also as affective locators. In the same way, the resources from the classical European musical corpus – minor scales, harmonic progressions, ostinatos – function as elements that relate to and engage in a dialogue with Poe’s literature. Furthermore, I do not know whether to interpret the latter as simple generic musical resources, already appropriated by heavy metal, or as intertextual elements, which the guitarist uses to contextualize the dramatic action, or even as architextual devices, extending Genette’s definition towards inter-artistic frontiers, or even all at once.

Something that all three works have in common is that “gothic soundscape” constructed through the very diverse elements and resources already mentioned. However, I have not emphasized throughout the text one of the most important resources for the musical narrative employed by Romeo: the use of topics – specifically, the topics of *ombra* and *tempesta*.<sup>12</sup> Having listened to the works, the reader will have been able to recognize with more than high recurrence these topics, and can even verify them in some of the examples I brought up. The themes of Poe’s texts undoubtedly invite the guitarist to move around these two significant figures. As McClelland points out in one of his superb works on these topics, “when there is a need to create a sense of awe and horror, the *ombra* music is employed” (2014, 286). The *tempesta* topics are also quite clear in the analyzed pieces, both responding to the demands of Poe’s texts. In the future, it would be interesting to undertake the analysis of such topics in the complete album of *The Dark Chapter*, and in the same way, to investigate how such topics are updated in the generic register of heavy and progressive metal.

What also remains to be analyzed is the role played by the cinematographic discourse in Romeo’s approach to Poe’s texts, since in the last century very famous versions

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<sup>12</sup> I highly recommend reading McClelland (2014) for a further understanding of these topics. For those readers unfamiliar with these *opera seria* topics, here is a brief definition: *tempesta* is a style derived from depictions of storms, fire or any kind of devastations, and, following McClelland, “is to be regarded as the counterpart of *ombra*, a menacing style of music associated with the supernatural. Both styles are often juxtaposed in infernal scenes, where the creeping terror of *ombra* is contrasted with the fast frenzy of *tempesta*” (2014, 279). Grimalt (2020) summarizes it well in his work.



were adapted for the cinema, such as those directed by David Wark Griffith (Jiménez Calderón 2013) or Roger Corman (Miquel Baldellou 2010). It would not surprise me at all if Romeo's experience, and therefore, his interpretations, were mediated by the film work.

As I have pointed out above, the conclusions reached are certainly circumstantial, due to the very nature of the texts analyzed. Nevertheless, the approach taken in this work has shown very satisfactory results, so it might be appropriate to introduce this type of analysis in contemporary urban popular music, and above all in genres that were poorly studied until relatively recently, such as heavy, neoclassical and progressive metal.

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## Chapter 10

Three Walks in the Musical Narrative Woods<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract**

This chapter proposes an inquiry on the interplay between Paul Ricoeur's narrative theory and interpretative practices in music. Following the premise that mimesis, as delineated by Ricoeur in three stages, transcends mere imitation to encompass figuration, the chapter explores avenues for representing subjective connections within musical compositions, wherein narrative mechanisms interact within the musical structures. Central to this exploration is the inquiry into whether Ricoeur's hermeneutics can provide a framework to develop interpretative and performative endeavors. Conceiving of narrative as the enactment of a plot, drawing from the French word *récit* as 'narration', the chapter contends that understanding a musical work hinges upon comprehending oneself, the subject. From this vantage point, it is elucidated with Umberto Eco that interpretative outcomes are manifold and contingent upon the subject's expressive engagement with performance, informed by their subjectivities. The chapter aspires to foster a conceptual body for musical interpretation wherein the subject apprehends the structural dynamics of the work and situates themselves within their relationship with the world.

**Keywords:** musical performance, interpretation, music theory, Paul Ricoeur, hermeneutics

**Introduction**

The use of literary criticism and philosophy of language in music analysis, especially with a focus on interpretation and performance, provides epistemological paths to understanding the works of different origins, broadening how they are considered and performed. Retrieving his *Lector in Fabula* (1993) book, Umberto Eco introduces his *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994), remarking that "every text is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work" (Eco 1994, 3). In this sense, we aim to work towards an understanding of the musical work so that the interpreter's work occurs from an understanding of the aspects necessary for an expressive refiguration, (re)signifying the musical narrative, bearing in mind that "in a story there is always a reader, and this reader is a fundamental ingredient not only of the process of storytelling, but also of the tale itself" (Eco 1994, 1).

From our perspective as solo performers, understanding musical works goes beyond structural limits. Their meaning also depends on the inherent personality of the interpreter. The analysis presented here helps us search for a meaning that corresponds to the subject within a multiplicity of meanings, without basing it on other performances that are often considered "successful". Based on this idea, seeking theoretical and methodolog-

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

ical support in literary criticism provides an opening in musical practice. This approach respects the “limits of interpretation” and avoids “overinterpretation”.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, we are inspired to reflect on the “three walks” as expressive paths and to understand the “landscapes” seen on these walks so that we can narrate them from our own perspective.

To support our understanding of performance, we will use the concepts present in Paul Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative*, especially with regard to the Threefold Mimesis, a systemic concept that, when analyzing the musical work, crosses both expressive and structural aspects. Firstly, when dealing with musical narrative, we keep our thoughts focused on narration, which is validated by the book’s original title, *Temps et Récit*. Next, the concept of narration in music is not based on narrating facts or fictional narratives, but on an assemblage of sounds and movements (Brelet 1951) as a non-verbal language, in which it is not possible to transpose a literality into the discourse, in other words, there is no translation into verbal language.

The development of the Threefold Mimesis is referenced by two main theories: the conception of time as developed in the book XI of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, while narrative draws from mimesis and intrigue (a term used in accordance with the concept of *mythos*) in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The characteristic of mimesis is not just imitation, but figuration, demonstrating that, in a way, we have a way of figuring reality.

The structure of this article alludes to Umberto Eco’s *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* because, based on his conception of narrative, we can organize each mimesis as a walk, exploring the possible approximations between Eco’s walks and musical interpretation. This discussion is made possible by looking at Paul Ricoeur’s theory, which will be explained in the following topics. In order to understand it, we initially divided the topic into Ricoeur’s influences on the construction of *Time and Narrative* and then arrived at what we call “three walks in the woods of musical narrative”. In a Ricoeurian sense, these are figuration, configuration and refiguration, his definition of the threefold mimesis.

With this research, we aim to pursue a new reflection on the unfolding of narrative theory, especially in Paul Ricoeur, in musical interpretation, in order to help in the processes of understanding performance and thus seek an execution that is pertinent to the expressiveness of the subject, without mischaracterizing the possible work.

## Six Walks in the Fictional Woods: The Music Woods

In Umberto Eco’s six Norton lectures, which were later transcribed in the eponymous book, the author uses the woods as a metaphor for narrative texts. But most remarkable, the notion of interpretation as a walk stresses the fact that it is a participatory action, in which each subject gives their own steps and chooses their own directions. This points to the importance of expanding the idea of narrative from Ricoeur, noting that the mimetic operations enable the subject to engage in a dialog with the world of the work. Before presenting Ricoeur’s mimetic theory, we will explore Eco’s book as a reflection on the possibilities of its applicability to music in ways that are close to Ricoeur’s idea of narrative.

<sup>2</sup> In keeping with the rest of the text, we adopt these two terms based on Umberto Eco’s *The Limits of Interpretation* (2021).

In the first walk, Eco points to an important path for those of us who focus on musical interpretation. The reader exemplified in the text has their obligations, including making choices within the process. The author states that:

(...) in a narrative text, the reader is forced to make choices all the time. Indeed, this obligation to choose is found even at the level of the individual sentence – at least, every time a transitive verb occurs. Whenever the speaker is about to end a sentence, we as readers or listeners make a bet (albeit unconsciously): we predict his or her choice, or anxiously wonder what choice will be made (Eco 1994, 6).

Choosing is a constant activity in musical interpretation. Bringing it to music making, it is necessary to make a series of decisions that re-signify the work from the perspective of the subject who is performing it. This way of looking at performance shows us that the interpreter's actions are constant and result in an expressive particularity that cannot be repeated by other interpretations.

Using literary references, the author discusses the concepts of model reader and empirical reader, ideas that will be repeated in the other chapters. These issues will permeate the rest of the text, so there is no need to describe them at this point. In fact, the types of reader can also be considered for the performer, but these characteristics can encompass structural issues, which will lead to another way of understanding musical interpretation.

The second walk starts with this text, that for us sounds like a provocation:

There are two ways of walking through a wood. The first is to try one or several routes (so as to get out of the wood as fast as possible, say, or to reach the house of grandmother, Tom Thumb, or Hansel and Gretel); the second is to walk so as to discover what the wood is like and find out why some paths are accessible and others are not. Similarly, there are two ways of going through a narrative text (Eco 1994, 27).

We can also say that there are two ways of going through music. Experimenting with one or more paths can be mainly related to technical aspects, as the goal is to get out of the woods as quickly as possible. Finishing the reading of a musical work by its mere conclusion harbors interpretive processes, which can, however, be consolidated without reflection and without a broad understanding of the work. This way of experimenting demonstrates the search for problem-solving. Treading the woods in search of accessible paths is in itself a reflective activity, as seeking a technical resolution can be an attempt to find an expressive path that makes sense of the subject/work's world in an immanent way.

Still in the same woods, the author addresses the issue of the temporality of history and the plot. The changes between past and future in a non-linear way are justified by the author on the basis of the Russian formalists, with the concepts of story and plot. The story, or fable, is the fundamental scheme of narration, while the plot is the story as it is actually told, with its temporal shifts (Eco 2020). Ricoeur broadens the idea of plot somewhat by bringing its dialogical relationship together with the organization of acts. For Ricoeur "narrating consists of the process of talking about facts, people and relationships by constructing a plot, in other words, a web of meanings that dialogically interrelates its components and structures a reasonable order of acts" (Silva & Nahur 2020, 58).

In this case, it is necessary to reflect on music as a narrative process without accusing it of causality. It does not talk about facts, but establishes dialogic relationships and its or-

dering depends on aspects that are different from the principle of oral language, and for this reason it also communicates and expresses on a level that orality doesn't reach. Based on these particularities, we can understand the elaboration of the plot without seeking objective communication, but rather a way of expressing what other languages are not capable of.

When he discusses the techniques of delay, especially in the third wood, Eco gives us important clues for musical interpretation. In general terms, the author talks about the techniques of delay in literature. When the temporality of the reading creates a different temporal space, either through long descriptions or by adding passages that are of no interest to the text in order to modify time, in other words, to delay in order to create another temporality. Can music change our perception of time?

The author points to a negative answer, and we notice in his clipping that, to justify its use in literature, he talks about physical time, in other words, clock time. When he mentions music in his text, Eco states: "Usually it is said that there exist forms of art where the duration of time plays a specific role, and where the discourse time coincides with the 'reading time'; this happens in music, above all, and in film" (Eco 1994, 58).

If we consider it this way, what lasts two minutes really only lasts two minutes. Still speculating on physical time, the author also briefly discusses the possibilities of treating time as a resumption of themes or variations, which includes a possible delay. But then he gives us a clue to another view of time.

When he starts discussing what he calls inferential walks, he basically argues that in these walks the reader can try to predict the development through their own experience. The delay demonstrates a way for the reader to place himself in the text and seek resolutions through his experiences. A text can set the pace of reading and at this pace the reader can make inferences, trying to arrive at possible outcomes before the actual ending.

We can think of two ways of interpreting music. The first concerns inferential walks. There is no musical interpretation without the performer's experience. The search for resolutions (not formal aspects) occurs throughout the dialogical process of reading. Are these the inferential journeys of music? If we start from the idea of experience, possibly yes. As for the second sense, which interests us because of its proximity to Paul Ricoeur, it concerns physical time. Music can cause a delay in experience, causing a sensation of modification of physical time (or at least it can try to) through its formal and expressive elements. An example can be drawn from Olivier Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps*, especially in its fifth movement, called "Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus": the work's tempo marking is "infinitely slow, static", the variation of time signature formulas (which are not written down) and the shifts in accents create a different sensation in the work. From the title, we can see the attempt to achieve the concept of eternity. In an Augustinian conception, the work tries to refigure time in such a way as to suspend the sensation of it. This fluctuation may be capable of generating a temporal experience that is different from physical time, in other words, its delay, its shifting of accents and its constant modification of time signature patterns can alter our perception. The delay itself of physical time differs from the sensation of delay that this work expresses to us.

In the fourth woods, Eco points to the issues of a treatise made with fiction for the reader to understand as reality, not in the sense of realism, but in the sense of accepting

what is described (even if it is inconceivable) in order to follow the story and understand the narrative.

What interests us here, as performers, is the open discussion about experience. The fictional universe is completed by the reader's experiences. So is the idea of musical interpretation. The world of the reader, in this case the interpreter, is strictly linked to the world of the work. Their previous experience is part of the agreement with the text. This agreement has the function of "to find a shape, a form, in the turmoil of human experience" (Eco 1994, 87). The musical text also has the particularity of saying things in a way that words cannot, and we can understand the idea that it is possible "to infer from texts things that they don't explicitly say" (Eco 1994, 92).

Despite the possibility of establishing a dialog between the fifth grove and the idea of music, we don't think it's necessary at this point to open a discussion that will guide a new path. In this grove, it is easy to find a relationship with the composer's intention, and how some rules for interpretation are created later in time. When Eco describes cases in which rumors come true, it is possible to bring this idea closer to interpretation, but here, we may come up against the process of musical composition.

The final chapter of the book analyzes narratives in which fiction is made to resemble reality. Although this type of perception doesn't make sense with musical interpretation, the author explores in one passage what can also give meaning to musical works. Eco says: "At any rate we will not stop reading fictional stories, because it is in them that we seek a formula to give meaning to our existence. Throughout our lives, after all, we look for a story of our origins, to tell us why we were born and why we have lived" (Eco 1994, 139). This is a clue as to why we also make music, because with sounds instead of words, we try to give meanings to our existence and experiences that we can't express in any other way. Quoting Francisco Goya indirectly (but we believe intentionally), making music can also "constitute a form of therapy against the sleep of reason that generates monsters."

## **Time and narrative: the threefold mimesis**

Based on the reflections made on the woods of fiction and music, we will take the liberty here of constructing three walks through the woods of musical interpretation based on Paul Ricoeur. Using his threefold mimesis for each walk, we will explore musical interpretation through this theory. In order to trace a path to the entrance of the forest, we will repeat here, by way of comprehension, which paths Ricoeur points out he took to arrive at these results.

As previously mentioned, Ricoeur bases his narrative theory on Aristotle's *Poetics* in order to delimit narrative and on Volume XI of Augustine's *Confessions* in order to conceptualize time. To link the Aristotle and Augustine theories, Ricoeur starts from the thesis that time becomes human time insofar as it is articulated in a narrative way, and the narrative reaches its full significance when it becomes a condition of temporal existence. To this end, the author created a model called threefold mimesis.

Rancière argues that in fiction, from an Aristotelian perspective, "events do not happen by chance, but with the necessary or credible consequences of a chain of causes and



effects” (2021, 7). We can see the similarity of this chain in the construction of a musical narrative, where the mimetic process takes place through the experiences of the performer, but understanding the play of causes and effects outside the meaning of the written text or the spoken discourse. Mimesis can be literally translated as imitation. Imitation of the world, or imitation of what can be seen, of what has been seen by someone and narrated or of an ideal, that is, of how the narrated object should be.

As the author of representations, like any artist, the poet invariably imitates things, based on one of the three possibilities open to him: either he represents them as they were or are, or as others say they are and they seem to be, or as they should be. This deontological rule highlights the link between Aristotelian mimesis and an external referent, which is not exclusive to the poet and is characterized by not having fixed limits, since it encompasses the field of the possible made up of present and past references (things as they are or were), public opinion (how they are said to be or seem) and the ideal situation (how they should be)<sup>3</sup> (Aristotle 2017, 41).

Mimetic processes are also highlighted by the author as immanent to all human life. Aristotle also argues that the action of mimicking occurs from the first years of life and in the first forms of learning, and is therefore an immanent action of human existence (2017, 119).

By analyzing mimesis from this Aristotelian perspective, we can see that, in this case, what is narrative and what is art is figured by the imitation of nature or the imitation of various human actions. It should be noted that, for Ricoeur, “Aristotelian mimesis must be understood not in terms of copying, of replicating the identical, but of imitation or representation” (Barros 2023, 125). At the same time, we can say that, in carrying out a mimetic process, we are also creating, in other words, the construction of an artistic or literary work, even if, within the process of a figuration or repetition of an existing element in the world, there is the creation of the subject who expresses himself through this object.

In musical interpretation, this dialogue is even closer. When you play a work that has already been put into the world, the game between the rules of the work and the subjective creation of the instrumentalist takes place in all instances. There is no mimetic process as a mere imitation of what is already real. Paul Ricoeur considers Aristotle’s mimesis when developing his narrative theory, but for the author, it develops over time, in the Aristotelian sense:

The whole is what has a beginning, a middle and an end. ‘Beginning’ is what in itself is not, by necessity, preceded by another, but after which something different naturally exists or manifests itself; on the other hand, ‘end’ is what is naturally preceded, by neces-

<sup>3</sup> Translated from: Sendo autor de representações, como qualquer artista plástico, invariavelmente o poeta imita coisas, a partir de uma das três possibilidades que a ele se oferecem: ou as representam como eram ou são, ou como os outros dizem que são e elas parecem ser, ou como elas deveriam ser. Essa norma deontológica evidencia a vinculação da mimese aristotélica com um referente exterior, não exclusivo do poeta e caracterizado por não apresentar limites fixos, uma vez que abrange o campo do possível integrado por referências presentes e passadas (as coisas como são ou foram) pela opinião pública (como dizem que são ou parecem) e pela situação ideal (como deveriam ser).

sity or in most cases, by another, but after which nothing comes; ‘middle’ is what in itself comes after another and after which something different comes. Thus, well-composed plots should neither begin nor end according to a point chosen at random, but should conform to the ideas mentioned here<sup>4</sup> (Aristotle, 2017, 91).

We realize that the conception of time constructed above demonstrates an idea based on structures. The beginning, the middle and the end delimit the temporal experience, but this structured outcome is not referred to just one way of being constituted, because the composition “must not only have its parts subject to a certain order, but also to an extension that is not the result of chance; in fact, beauty is found in extension and ordering”<sup>5</sup> (Aristotle 2017, 91).

The paradoxes of time discussed by Augustine in *Confessions* are central to the development of the threefold mimesis, through the conception of a non-categorical time and the process of constructing the object:

First, they offer us two independent ways of entering into the circle that constitutes our problem: one from the side of the paradoxes of time, the other from the side of the intelligible organization of a narrative. Their independence does not lie solely in the fact that Augustine’s *Confessions* and Aristotle’s *Poetics* belong to two profoundly different cultural universes separated by several centuries and involved problematics that are not identical. What is even more important for my purpose is that the first author inquires into the nature of time without any apparent concern for grounding his inquiry on the narrative structure of the spiritual autobiography developed in the first nine books of the *Confessions*. And the second constructs his theory of dramatic plot without paying any attention to the temporal implications of his analysis, leaving it to *Physics* the problem of how to go about analyzing time. It is in this precise sense that the *Confessions* and the *Poetics* offer two independent of one another, to our circular problem (Ricoeur 1983, 3).

Based on the relationship between the two authors and the circular problem between time and narrative that permeates the three volumes of the book, Ricoeur relies on his now threefold mimesis to achieve an analysis that, considering mediation, encompasses both problems, seeking an understanding of narratives, whether fictional or historical.

The three mimeses take place successively through the stage of practical experience as pre-figurative effects, that is, from a pre-understanding, through the weaving of the intrigue that is positioned by the configuration of the narrative, its existence and how it is arranged, and through the stage that succeeds the experience of the intrigue, a stage also called refiguration. Mimesis II operates from a mediation, in other words, the weaving of

<sup>4</sup> Translated from: Todo é o que possui começo, meio e fim. “Começo” é o que em si não é, por necessidade, antecedido de outro, mas após o qual algo de diferente naturalmente existe ou se manifesta; ao contrário, “fim” é o que naturalmente é antecedido, por necessidade ou na maior parte dos casos, de outro, mas após o qual nada advém; “meio” é o que em si vem após outro e após o qual algo de diferente advém. Assim, os enredos bem compostos não devem nem começar nem terminar em função de um ponto escolhido ao acaso, mas se conformar às ideias aqui mencionadas.

<sup>5</sup> Translated from: não deve ter suas partes submetidas apenas a uma certa ordem, mas também a uma extensão que não seja fruto do acaso; de fato, o belo se encontra na extensão e na ordenação.

the intrigue has a mediating characteristic between the stage of practical experience and the stage that follows the experience and the intrigue. This mediation occurs in a circular fashion, which does not demonstrate a hierarchy between the processes, but neither does it offer a vicious circle between the stages.

### **First Walk: The figuration stage**

As interpreters, we can observe characteristics in this first stage that will help us understand the work before reading the symbols, which will be mimicked in some way. Initial questions of a structural nature are relevant to this construction. The “what” refers to the meaning that can be attributed to the work. The “how” refers to the musical and extra-musical resources that can be used in the interpretation. The “who” refers to the immanent relations between subject and object, or the approximation of “who plays” with “who works”, in addition to the subsequent reception. All these questions are related to action and are initiated from the moment prior to our interpretive construction.

The previous conceptions of the work that occur in symbolic order are listed in its period of composition, its rubrics that are not actually part of the score, in other words, all the clues that go beyond the limits of the written text so that we can understand what state the work is in and how it can be constructed in the interpretation processes. Here, it is up to the interpreter to examine which symbolic contexts should be considered before constructing the musical reading.

Still in pre-comprehension, the use of Heideggerian intratemporality is justified “in the break this analysis makes with the linear representation of time, understood as a simple succession of nows” (Ricoeur 1983, 63). As a narrative not yet conceived in fact, but already idealized on other planes, temporal thinking also lacks a logical and formalized space. At this stage, the involuntary relationships, concerns and desires of the pre-structuring of the intrigue play out in a game in which, for example, the concept of the triple present doesn’t fit either. The key to mimesis I is to understand human action within its structures, symbols or temporalities.

The mimesis I is considered a pre-understanding. It is the figuration stage before the work is performed. It shows that the narrative is not born from scratch, but that it has a pre-symbolic point. For Ricoeur, “to imitate or represent action is first to preunderstand what human action is, in its semantics, its symbolic system, its temporality. Upon this pre-understanding, common to both poets and their readers, emplotment is constructed and, with it, textual and literary mimesis” (1983, 64). Mimesis I can then be considered as a pre-narrative structuring, or figuration. This is when the perception of the work takes place.

In the figuration stage, it’s important to understand the temporal stage of the work’s construction through a pre-understanding of the musical text. We can see, for example, the expressive charge of the work, according to the indications of dynamics, the use of fermatas and the texts of expression. Combining these aspects with the period of the work, the text opens up the possibility of making musical time more flexible, an aspect which, added to the performer’s experiences, can open up a range of narrative constructions capable of interweaving meanings in different ways.

## Second Walk: The configuration stage

Mimesis II can be summarized as a stage of configuration. Configuring the plot and the temporal configuration given to the work. By modifying the figuration into a configuration, the world of the text is created.

The moment of mimesis II is basically where the elaboration of the narrative takes place. This elaboration takes place not only in the process of initial creation, but when interpreting a musical work, considering the point of view and world of the musician who is performing, he also creates and makes decisions according to the world of the work and his world in a relationship of dialogical (re)construction. At this stage, in a form of analogy with written text and orality, the elaboration of the musical narrative “must go beyond the limits of mere linguistics and move towards analysis of the general conditions under which a language is spoken”<sup>6</sup> (Ullmann 1962, 58).

As mentioned above, the textual configuration (mimesis II) mediates the practical field and its refiguration through the reception of the work. In short, when reading from mimesis II, the reader is also the author of mimesis I and III (Ricoeur 2020).

In the configuration, the narrative meaning of the work begins, according to what is obtained in the pre-comprehension, that is, in the act of figuration. Here, the construction of meaning from the text already observes a dialogical relationship between the subject and the work. At this stage, it's up to the interpreter to bring his reading of the whole expressive character, constituting a narration that shows the transition blocks or melodic lines and their expressive traits, and how he intends to configure the effects of the narration.

We will briefly demonstrate this stage's potential using the introductory excerpt from Leo Brouwer's *Canticum*. By observing the chord formed in the first line of the piece, which is not divided into measures, we can seek nuances that develop a long excerpt conceived in the same structural way, which makes the piece attractive. At this point, we may ask, if the forms of the same theme are modified by inflection, are they considered one word or multiple words? (Ullmann 1972). By replacing the words with the chord formation of the piece, we can determine the nuances through variations in tempo and dynamics. Despite the aforementioned absence of division into bars, the introduction is divided into seconds of each chord attack. Interpretive decisions must consider this aspect, as the expressive potential of the passage depends on the instrumentalist.

## Third Walk: The refiguration stage

The process of refiguration already observes the act of performance as a result of the processes that took place in the previous stages. From understanding through mimesis I and mimesis II, this stage takes place through exteriorization, or the act of interpretation, where the narrative results in meaning for itself and for the other. Here, the musical work demonstrates the effects of the narrative created through sounds, and no longer through

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<sup>6</sup> Translated from: deve ultrapassar todos os limites da mera linguística e mover as análises das condições gerais sob as quais se fala uma língua.

writing. In this case, the decisions made by the interpreter considering the figuration and constructed in the configuration, are refigured beyond narrating the meaning, but communicating through the mimetic process.

Mimesis III finally constitutes refiguration as an effect of the narrative. The refiguration from the configuration, which is also a refiguration of the work from the reader, the author or the interpreter, which in music has different meanings when compared to the literary text.

The refiguration process already observes the act of performance as a result of the processes that took place in the previous stages. From understanding through mimesis I and mimesis II, this stage takes place through exteriorization, or the act of interpretation, where the narrative results in meaning for itself and for the other. Here, the musical work demonstrates the effects of the narrative created through sounds, and no longer through writing. In this case, the decisions made by the interpreter considering the figuration and constructed in the configuration, are refigured beyond narrating the meaning, but communicating through the mimetic process.

What is refigured in the performance demonstrates the musician's interpretative choices, whether in the transitions he chooses to emphasize between chords and melodic lines, or in the conceptions of musical time he considers using expressively in chords, melodies or in the general constitution of the narration discourse. For each refiguration, a narrative creation will lead to an interpretation, which means something different, given the time, space and context in which the subject expresses himself.

## Final Remarks

The reading of Umberto Eco's walks alongside with Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* fosters insightful directions to think about musical interpretation from a perspective that goes beyond the traditional models of structural analysis. This interplay supports the process of understanding the work and to place ourselves as performers with a critical outlook of musical performance, seeking meaning in the interpretation, with an active voice in the process with overshadowing the intentions recorded in composition.

Using this model to support the construction of performance helps to understand the interpretative processes that can be developed from the work, thinking of figuration as pre-understanding, configuration and refiguration in a circular movement, as Ricoeur argues, and not as enumerated stages to be followed carefully, giving an intention of beginning, middle and end of the interpretative process. Just as traditional hermeneutics uses the circle as an understanding of the parts by the whole and the whole by the parts, here the proposal is formulated on the same basis, but within the mimetic process.

Relating mimesis to time, Ricoeur arrives at a hypothesis where "the work of thought present in every narrative configuration culminates in a refiguration of temporal experience" (Ricoeur 2010, 4). The author also states in his conclusions, specifically in the chapter "The First Aporia of Temporality: narrative identity" that "narrated time is like a bridge thrown across the gap that speculation never ceases to dig between phenomenological time and cosmological time" (Ricoeur 2010, 415).

From these reflections, we can see that the application of Paul Ricoeur's narrative theories to musical interpretation offers a new perspective on the performative process, providing an understanding of the narrative structures that can emerge in music. Through hermeneutics and the three mimesis – pre-figuration, configuration and refiguration – the research outlines a path to understanding how temporality and narrative intertwine in the interpretative act, allowing the interpreter to take a more reflective and conscious approach to their own expression and the work in question. This integration of narrative theory and performance is capable of highlighting the complexity of musical discourse, which transcends a simple sequence of notes to become an expressive and meaningful narrative the time, space and context in which the subject expresses themselves.

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## Chapter 11

## Narrativity in Piano Performance – The Case of Claude Debussy’s *La danse de Puck*<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

In this chapter, the way narrativity works in the context of piano performance is explored. To explain the role that performative gestures play in creating expressive musical content, four performances of the opening theme of Debussy’s prelude *La danse de Puck* are analyzed from the observer’s perspective. The individual pianists’ gestures carry a unique expression that can be perceived as a specific “character” of the performed music, and this characterization implies narrativization. It is shown that music does not contain a fixed narrative, but that a narrative can be subjectively created through performance and its reception.

**Keywords:** performative gesture, musical phrase, characterization, perception, narrativity

### Introduction

The concept of narrativity, as the quality or mode of presenting a narrative, is commonly associated with the universal human need to communicate with others and to make sense of the world (Miler 1995, in Klein 2003, 65). The narrative paradigm, although not under this terminological designation, is as old as the sharing of thoughts among people and is deeply rooted in human cognition. Narrative, or story, is regarded as “a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted” (White 1987, 1).

Narration, as the art of storytelling, is inherently tied to the ability to speak and to understand the words of others. The capacity to share thoughts through semantic codes – so-called “natural language” – is unique to humans. Modern theory of mind has shown that human perception is a broader category, structured through organized spatiotemporal narrative forms. At the same time, although narration seems to play an essential role in the formation of meaning within human consciousness, in the case of music this question “leads us into perplexity and doubt” (Paderson 1996, 179). For literary theorists, from whom narratology as a discipline originates, music represents a “metaphysical enigma” because it is “obscurely cloaked in nonverbal, nonrepresentational material” that appears “to elude narrative comprehension” (Ibid.). Music – especially instrumental music – belongs to the realm of the human spirit, where meaning is not shaped through semantically

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articulated patterns or visually represented content. Recognizing this unique nature of musical expression prompted the emergence of narratological research in music, inspiring music theorists “to begin their own inquiry” (Ibid.). Consequently, if music cannot be seen, touched, or understood as a conventional cultural semantic pattern, the fundamental task of theorists becomes explaining how the reception of musical content operates.

Since the 1970s, music theory has seen the development of works addressing the question of how music may be understood as narrative in its various modalities. These studies make it clear that, from the outset, theorists have held divergent views – especially concerning whether, and in what way, music in general and instrumental music in particular (as a non-verbal art form in contrast to vocal music) can convey meaning (Pederson 1996). Although it may be unrealistic to expect musical thinkers to arrive at a unified position on this issue, it is evident that all theorists engaged with musical narratology recognize the possibility of perceiving certain “narrative aspects” in music (Meelberg 2009, 255).

In his essay on classical instrumental music and narrative, Fred Everett Maus (2005, 467) discusses different perspectives on the problem of narrativity in music. He observes that some theorists reject analogies between music and narration, insisting – “perhaps overemphatically” – on particular claims, such as: “musical form typically involves extensive repetition of events (Kivy 1993); music has no past tense (Abbate 1991); music has no subject and predicate (Nattiez 1993).” Yet these objections do not prevent many listeners and critics from perceiving “narrative-like conceptions of instrumental music” (Maus, 468). Given this wide range of arguments, Maus suggests that researchers should clearly define their own position regarding analogies between music and narrative – that is, whether to pursue exploratory essays, as he does, or polemical works aimed at challenging concepts that allow for music to be treated as a narrative art (Dinov Vasić 2017, 341).

In the chapter titled “Narrative and Performance”, Maus seeks “to exemplify a certain kind of thinking” (2005, 480), which he regards as central to his conception of the relationship between music and narrative. He argues that “rather than hoping to associate a determinate story with a particular work, it may be more accurate, and ultimately more pleasurable, to recognize the diversity of the dramatic successions that different performers may create, even when starting from the same score” (Ibid.). In the concluding chapter of the essay, he similarly advises us to “ponder diverse performances, rather than interpreting a stable consistent work” (Ibid.), and calls for “an experimental exploratory approach to the performances of music-critical thought” (Ibid., 481).

Following the model proposed by Maus, this article discusses four different performances of the same composition, with the aim of explaining how narrativity functions in the context of piano playing. The argument is that, through performance, the pianist’s individual physical gestures generate a unique expression that can be perceived as a specific “character” of the music. This characterization, in turn, implies a form of narrativization, at least at a descriptive level. The intention is to show that a musical work does not contain a narrative fixed in the score, but that the narrative associated with a given compositional structure can be subjectively created through performance and reception.



## Methodological Considerations

In contemporary interdisciplinary musicology, theoretical aspects of piano playing are primarily considered within the academic field of music performance studies. With its long tradition in musicology – particularly in historical performance practice and the psychology of performance – scholarly research on musical performance “has been gaining in momentum to the point that ‘performance studies’ might now be regarded as a musicological discipline in its own right” (Rink 2017, 37). In recent decades, an increasing number of internationally renowned scholars and practitioners have explored the cultural, institutional, theoretical, methodological, epistemological, ethical, and practical dimensions of the rapidly evolving area of artistic research in music. Their work offers a valuable and critical contribution to practice-based research, grounded in their own experiences, theoretical developments, and empirical evidence (Doğantan-Dack 2015, xviii). These studies often revolve around the central questions of how music is created and how it is performed. Because the scope of this discipline is broadly defined and inherently trans-disciplinary, it grants scholars wide freedom in the choice of topics while simultaneously challenging them to find adequate conceptualizations, methodologies, and even terminologies. In a sustained effort to reconceive music as performance by rethinking familiar assumptions and developing new approaches, scholars examine perspectives that range from close listening to computational analysis, from ethnography to the study of recordings, and from the social relations constructed through performance to the performing and listening body (Cook 2013).

Despite a more or less cohesive discursive plurality, the primary focus of music performance studies is on performative interpretation,<sup>3</sup> that is, on examining the relationship between musical notation and its realization through specific, transparent body movements. According to the theory of musical gesture – first proposed by Robert Hatten and later developed by other scholars – any movement, whether physical (bodily) or mental (imagined), can be understood as a gesture,<sup>4</sup> while the body movements of musical performers are specifically referred to as performative gestures. In the present study, the concept of narrativity in piano performance is primarily considered through the prism of pianistic performative gestures. Methodologically, the analysis is based on observing the correlation between the pianist’s physical gestures in performance and the narrative framework suggested by the score.

In piano playing, the performative gesture is the essential means of transmitting musical and poetic content to the recipient. In pianism, the performative gesture functions as a rhetorical phenomenon and can be defined as a bodily, kinesthetic movement that pianists use in order to embody musical-poetic content in a corporeal, synergistic, audible, and visual form.<sup>5</sup> The physical movement of the pianist’s hand and the (notated) audible

<sup>3</sup> See the article “Performative vs Critical Interpretation in Music” (Levinson 1993).

<sup>4</sup> The definitions of gesture “range from using gesture more or less as equivalent to body movement, to using gesture in a purely metaphorical sense” (Jensenius 2007, 41).

<sup>5</sup> Davidson and Correia (2002) proposed the qualification of performative gestures according to their identification functions. They identified technical movements as the only necessary ones,

musical phrase it produces are mutually dependent and interrelated. The position and motion of the hand, as the material carrier of the musical gesture, are shaped by the form of the musical phrase as a symbolic musical idea, while the articulation and expression of that gesture are directly related to the connotative field that the particular musical idea or phrase can symbolize (Dinov Vasić 2019, 4).<sup>6</sup>

The analysis of performers' gestures can be approached from two research perspectives. The first is introspective, in which the performer acts as both executor and researcher – an artist engaged in a heuristic search for an adequate realization of the musical notation.<sup>7</sup> The analysis of performers' gestures can be approached from two research perspectives. The first is introspective, in which the performer acts as both executor and researcher – an artist engaged in a heuristic search for an adequate realization of the musical notation. The second perspective treats the performer as the object of study, observed from the outside. Here, the researcher's focus extends beyond the measurable qualities of the performers' gestures to include the reception of the expressive potential conveyed by the performance. Reception is a capacity shared by all – listeners as well as professional musicians, including performers, composers, and theorists – who are themselves listeners. This fact is often overlooked in studies addressing the issue.<sup>8</sup> This study adopts an observer perspective, as it allows anyone to verify the reliability of the observations by watching the selected videos themselves.

Researching musical phenomena through the analysis of video recordings raises important methodological questions, as it can appear highly subjective and may lack the rigor expected in scientific work. Nevertheless, studying performers' movements captured on video is an established and validated method in musicological research (Davidson 2006).

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claiming that all other categories – biomechanical, cultural, and expressive – can be understood as qualitative extensions of technical gestures. In other words, every bodily movement that pianists use in performance to produce sound – that is, to create musical-poetic content or a musical gesture – can be qualified as a technical movement that simultaneously encompasses biomechanical, cultural, and expressive functions.

<sup>6</sup> This concept corresponds with François Delalande's definition of gesture, which "may be seen as a combination of the definitions that focus on gesture as mental imagery evoked by sound, and the definitions based on meaning conveyed by visible body movement" (Jensenius 2007, 40). In a study of pianist Glenn Gould, Delalande (1988) notes that "the term musical gesture lies in the intersection between observable actions and mental representations" (Ibid.).

<sup>7</sup> In recent decades, a significant number of books and articles have been published adopting innovative research approaches aimed "to engage music practitioners and demonstrate the many potential links between research and practice" (Davidson 2017, 1). In addition to *The Music Practitioner: Research for the Music Performer, Teacher and Listener* (2017), edited by Jane Davidson, notable works include *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (2015), edited by Mine Doğanatan-Dack, *Sensorial Aesthetics in Music Practices* (2019), edited by Kathleen Coessens, and individual articles such as John Rink's "The Work of the Performer" (2018), in which the performer is directly positioned as a researcher of the music (s)he performs.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the author of this article is an active performer and pedagogue, holding an MA in piano and a PhD in interdisciplinary studies of art theory and media (Dinov Vasić 2019); however, these qualifications do not make her a more credible listener of music than others.

While much of the early empirical research on music performance focused on laboratory experiments – particularly piano performances of the Western classical repertoire (Palmer 1997) – some scholars prefer to investigate material from real performances, using “examples from commercial music DVDs to illustrate the various types of music-related movement” (Jensenius 2007, 58). Analyses based solely on MIDI data “result in a focus on sound-producing actions, omitting the other types of music-related movements”, whereas “more recent performance studies, on the other hand, are often based on motion capture recordings which reveal more of the full-body movement of the subjects” (Ibid.). Studies confined to laboratory settings miss many of the communicative movements found in stage performances, as “there is a big difference between performing in a laboratory in front of a few researchers, and performing on stage in front of an audience” (Ibid.). Although controlled motion capture experiments on stage could provide valuable insights into these movements, video recordings remain a useful tool for capturing the richness of music-related movement in live performance (Ibid.).

Critics of this method – the analysis of recorded performances – point out that recordings, like any historical documents, provide selective and incomplete information. They argue that “knowing what can be deduced from them depends on knowing about the circumstances of their production and circulation”, because “it is in the nature of sound reproduction technology that it divorces sounds from their social and historical contexts” (Cook 2013, 49–50). On the other hand, ethnomusicology is a recognized scientific discipline that regularly employs the ethnographic method, which relies on capturing musical experiences through qualitative reflection. Ethnomusicologists commonly use fieldnotes to document what occurred and when, and these notes – whether written or recorded in audio or video – are context-sensitive, richly descriptive, and reflective (Kruger 2008).

The role of performative gestures in the creation of expressive musical content can be examined using an ethnographic method applied to the observation of live performances documented on video.<sup>9</sup> In this way, it is possible to highlight the synergy between the narrativity of the musical phrases written in the score and the gestures of the individual pianists who embody them. The score is a written transcription of the kinetic movements that realize the music. It consists of a sequence of choreographed motions with defined spatial coordinates on the keyboard, performed within specific temporal frames. To perform a written musical phrase on the piano means to press the key corresponding to the notated pitch with a finger, sustain the note for the indicated duration using the finger or pedal, and connect it to the following note in accordance with the articulation marks (Dinov 2023, 42). These are compositional elements that every performer plays the same.<sup>10</sup> The pitch, duration, and articulation of the notes composing a musical phrase, together with the values of meter, dynamics, and tempo, create its unique expression, which can be perceived as a specific ‘character’ of the performed music (Ibid.). Although this “character” is defined by the score as a kind of narrative matrix proposed by the “text” of

<sup>9</sup> The videos were downloaded from the YouTube platform, and links are provided to allow readers to verify the accuracy of the descriptions. Due to copyright restrictions, it was not possible to include screenshots that would visually support all the characteristic descriptions.

<sup>10</sup> This principle also applies to performances generated by artificial intelligence software.

composition,<sup>11</sup> the analysis of video recordings shows that each performance imparts different expressive nuances – varied forms of narrativization suggested by the score. These differences can occur even when the same performer plays the same piece on different occasions, for example, at different ages, speeds, or with alternate fingerings.<sup>12</sup>

The content of a musical work unfolds within a specific time frame, which can be described in terms of its character, spirit, mood, or atmosphere. Instructions that outline the basic character of a piece are placed at the very beginning of the score, in the upper left corner above the first bar. In classical textbooks and in musicians' everyday language, these terms are typically regarded as tempo indications – an Italian word that literally means “time” – signaling the speed at which the composition should begin. However, it is important to emphasize that tempo markings are also verbal expressions of character: in addition to indicating speed, they convey the prescribed qualities, features, and distinctive attributes of the performed music.<sup>13</sup> This relates to the premise that shaped sound expression can be perceived as a specific character phenomenon. The purpose of the analysis is to confirm this claim.<sup>14</sup>

The piece chosen for analysis is the opening theme of Debussy's prelude *La danse de Puck* (*Puck's Dance*). It is a short composition that offers an imaginative, charming “musical portrait” of the restless, playful spirit immortalized in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a comedy written by William Shakespeare around 1595–1596. Puck is a well-known literary character who has been brought to life on stage countless times over the centuries. He serves as a jester to Oberon, the fairy king, and is described as a clever, mischievous elf – a sprite embodying the archetype of the wise knave. In Shakespeare's play, he is introduced as the “shrewd and knavish sprite” and “that merry wanderer of the night” (Act II, Scene 1). On stage, Puck constantly flares up, leaps about, and whirls around before vanishing into the air. These lively traits are reflected in Debussy's prelude. Although the piece lacks a textual template in natural language, as Shakespeare's play provides, it presents a “musical portrait” that evokes a visually imaginable character.

<sup>11</sup> According to David Lidov, a composition's score contains certain “potentials”, and the main goal of theoretical analysis is to identify these potentials, which should not be subject to arbitrary variation by the performer (Hatten 1994, ix). Lidov's position corresponds with Leach-Wilkinson's observations on multiple recordings of Chopin's *Berceuse*, Op. 57, which note that “there is much less work being done by the score and much more by the performer than is implied by the way we habitually talk about scores” (Leach-Wilkinson 2015, 345). While the composer provides a “starting point” in the form of a finished score, “the greater part of the musical work is done later” through the process of performance (Ibid., 344).

<sup>12</sup> The subjectivity of different pianists – shaped by personal characteristics, feelings, tastes, and affections – is most evident in “their repertoire of tone colours, which are directly related to the movements and gestures of their performing body” (Doğantan-Dack 2011, 250).

<sup>13</sup> For example, the tempo marking most commonly used to indicate fast playing is *allegro*, an Italian word meaning “cheerful”, while *veloce* literally means “fast”. More precise tempo indications also exist, such as *allegro furioso*, *allegretto con spirito*, *allegro ma non troppo*, and *allegro maestoso*, etc.

<sup>14</sup> Although this claim could be confirmed by analyzing any other work, the example chosen for this article illustrates it particularly vividly.

Imagination – the human ability to form new ideas, images, or concepts of external objects not present to the senses – plays an indispensable role in the reception of music. Performance and its reception are often realized as a conceptualization of musical content through “an imaginative creative process [which] is represented with narrative, story, fantasy or fairytale-like story with personal or external content and meaning” (Popović Mladjenović et al. 2014, 213). Performers’ gestures communicate with the audience through fictional, virtual cognitive narratives (Ibid., 215), demonstrating that the “imaginary is the place of unique integration of emotional response and expression, cognitive appraisal and music comprehension, connected to internal and/or external contents and happenings” (Ibid., 216). Listening to music is an introspective process that engages cognitive mechanisms in the recipient’s consciousness similar to those involved in the performer’s mental sphere during the embodiment of the music notated in the score. While the images or ideas that listeners associate with music may differ, the underlying thought processes involved in music reception are comparable.

A similar approach to understanding musical interaction and gestural communication with the audience is offered by Mark Leman in his book *The Expressive Moment: How Interaction (with Music) Shapes Human Empowerment*. Leman argues that expression drives this type of interaction and proposes a general framework for understanding expressive exchanges. He emphasizes the dynamic, rapid, and pre-reflexive processes underlying our interactions with music – whether we play an instrument, dance, listen, or engage with new interactive technologies (Leman 2016, 1).

Along with imagination, all recipients – whether performers or ordinary listeners – share the experience of kinesthesia. Kinesthetic experience relates to a person’s awareness of the position and movement of the parts of the body by means of sensory organs (proprioceptors) in the muscles and joints (Reason and Reynolds 2010, 52). This sensation, through which bodily position, weight, muscle tension, and movement are perceived, allows humans to understand their own gestures (Sheets-Johnstone 2010, 123). For this reason, a performative gesture is considered a kinesthetic phenomenon. In the reception of a musical performance, there is a connection between the sensations the performer experiences and conveys to the audience through body movements, similar to watching a dance, where, according to Foster (2011), a synergy exists between the choreography, the kinesthetic sensations it evokes, and the empathetic connection it establishes with viewers. (Dinov 2023, 137–138).

With the ability to empathize, which enables emotional understanding of another person’s experiences, people can also associate certain sounds with certain colors, smells, and bodily sensations (Dinov 2023, 139). This perceptual phenomenon, in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to involuntary experiences in another, is called synesthesia (Cytowic 2002, 6). Humans share the capacity for analogous representation across all sensory and motor systems, a competency crucial for interpreting human gesture in general (Hatten 2004, 97).

The interpretation of performative gestures through analogous representations forms a field of connotative meanings which includes the images, feelings and ideas that people may connect with the expression of the gesture they are exposed to (Dinov 2023, 140).

Reception emerges from the sensory, bodily, and affective levels.<sup>15</sup> It is a subjective emotional experience that occurs as a reaction to the atmosphere of music emitted by the performer. This experience can be translated to the cognitive level through processes such as evocation, contemplation, and sublimation, and can be verbally expressed in the form of a narrative. Bearing this in mind, the next section demonstrates how the performative gestures of four pianists can be interpreted through the prism of mental images, as structured spatiotemporal narrative forms created in the process of observing their performances of the same compositional score.

## The Narrative Potential of Piano Performance

In the following section, different piano performances are discussed, with attention to their potential to function within a narrative framework. The analysis focuses on four video recordings of the same piece – the opening theme of Debussy’s prelude *Puck’s Dance* – from the observer’s perspective, in order to illustrate the role of performative gestures in creating expressive musical content. The discussion highlights the synergy between the narrativity of the musical work and the gestural “score” of individual pianists. The aim is to show how kinetic movements embody the music written in the score, and how, through performance, the pianist’s gestures form a unique expression perceived as a distinct “character” of the music. Although this character is outlined in the score, the video analysis shows that each performance conveys different expressive nuances, generating varied forms of narrativization in the listener’s mental images.

First, it should be noted that performance entails the execution of all textural and expressive elements indicated in the score. Observations of the chosen performances show that all pianists play Debussy’s prelude with complete fidelity to these elements. *Puck’s Dance* is built around a melody with a distinct “profile”, rich in characteristic dotted rhythms and a palette of playful motifs (see Example 1). The prelude lasts approximately three minutes, is in E-flat major, 2/4 time, and is marked “Capricious and light” with a metronomic marking of 138 eighth notes per minute. The apparent diversity of musical flow – achieved through refined, occasionally bitonal harmonies, freedom of discourse, fluid rhythms, and unexpected harmonic turns – conceals a profound unity reflected in the character of Puck. The tonal center, E-flat, is constantly challenged by D-flat (or C-sharp), leaving the tonality implicit and unsettled, much like Puck himself, who is never fully grounded. The diatonic motif of Oberon’s horn (bars 6–7) periodically restores tonal balance (Lockspeiser & Halbreich 1980, 579–593).

The opening scherzo theme of the prelude (quoted in Example 1) is chosen for discussion because it is played with both hands but without accompaniment. This texture gives pianists considerable artistic freedom in shaping fingering. By directing the listener’s focus entirely to movement in time, Debussy emphasizes the prelude’s central thematic element – Puck’s dance. Freed from spatial constraints, the scene evokes an oversized, ethereal figure of the elf existing in boundless time. This heightened focus on the dancing elf is mirrored in the pianists’ hand movements, gestures, and postures, making the piece

<sup>15</sup> See the chapter “On the Sensorial of Imagination” in *Sensorial Aesthetics in Music Practices* (Coessens and Tomlinson 2019, 169–182).

particularly suited to illustrate the central thesis of this work: narrativity in music can be subjectively created through performance and reception. This thesis is supported by observations of various pianists as they create the “sound image” of Puck’s dance.

**Example 1.** *La danse du Puck*, Measure 1–13, Urtext (Debussy, 1910, 43)

-XI.



The recordings selected for discussion are performed by pianists of different ages, genders, sensibilities, and educational backgrounds: Ilya Itin, Lili Bogdanova, Daniel Barenboim and Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli.<sup>16</sup> These four recordings provide an optimal sample for highlighting both the shared characteristics and the intriguing individual differences in performance, illustrating the central aim of this chapter: to show that the narrative associated with a given compositional structure can be subjectively created through performance and reception.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The videos are available on the YouTube platform, with links provided at the end of the article under the heading “Webography.” The discussion focuses on the opening 19 bars of the prelude, and each cited recording in the Webography includes the exact timestamp of the segment being analyzed. If any recordings become unavailable or are removed from the internet, the author maintains private copies and can provide access to interested readers.

<sup>17</sup> To highlight differences, it would suffice to compare just two performances of the same score, which could even be two performances by the same pianist, since each performance varies to some degree. However, to reliably identify similarities that may indicate potential “regularities” in

The recording of Ilya Itin is from 2016, captured at the Golandsky Institute International Piano Festival at Princeton University, making it the most recent of the four chosen performances. Lili Bogdanova's recording is from 2014, Daniel Barenboim's from 1999, and Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli's from 1978, the earliest. In terms of total duration, Itin performs the prelude in just 2 minutes and 19 seconds, while the other three pianists take very similar times: Bogdanova, 3 minutes 7 seconds; Michelangeli, 3 minutes 9 seconds; and Barenboim, 3 minutes 11 seconds. For the initial segment (mm. 1–17), the durations are also similar but in a slightly different order: Itin, 27 seconds; Michelangeli, 29 seconds; Bogdanova, 30 seconds; and Barenboim, 32 seconds.

Ilya Itin, a Russian concert pianist born in Yekaterinburg in 1967 and residing in Tokyo and New York, was 49 years old at the time of this recording.<sup>18</sup> He had established a reputation as “a brilliantly insightful pianist” whose playing exemplifies “a rare and exciting artistry [...] poised, pure, and ravishing in its range of colour [...] a prime example of superb technique serving an inquiring and imaginative mind.”<sup>19</sup> In his performance of *Puck's Dance* – as in all four selected recordings – dominant gestures convey the lightness of the elf's “bouncing” and the flickering of his wings, like sparkling flashes in a boundless, gravity-free space. The video reveals intricate hand crossings and the varied distribution of long passages (mm. 3 and 5) that resemble glissando effects, executed with active finger technique. Notably, Itin begins the prelude immediately after *The Sunken Cathedral* without preparation. He consistently plays sextuplets (mm. 2, 4, and 6) with both hands, creating the impression of urgency – as if the music emerges spontaneously. His hand movements are compact, economical, and technically precise; from an observer's perspective, they appear controlled and calculated, yet they convey an underlying nervous energy through latent tension.

Bulgarian pianist Lili Bogdanova recorded Debussy's *Préludes* two years before Itin, in 2014, at the age of twenty, the same year she was voted Young Musician of the Year by the Bulgarian National Radio.<sup>20</sup> Of the four performers selected for discussion, she is

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pianism, it is necessary to analyze as many examples as possible. Because this chapter emphasizes the differences that shape each performance's distinctive “character”, the four recordings – varying in the parameters mentioned above – constitute a suitable selection, though any other choice of recordings could serve the same purpose.

<sup>18</sup> According to his biography (available at <https://ilyaitin.net/bio>), Ilya Itin began his piano studies at the Sverdlovsk School for the Gifted under Natalia Litvinova, and later graduated with the highest honors in 1990 from the Moscow Conservatory, where he studied with the legendary Lev Naumov. He distinguished himself in several international competitions, winning second place at the 1990 Russian National Rachmaninov Competition, top honors at the William Kapell Competition, First Prize and the Special Chopin Prize at the Casadesus Competition in Cleveland, and Third Prize at the Gina Bachauer Competition. In addition to his career as a concert pianist, Itin is a sought-after pedagogue. He is currently on the teaching faculties of the Musashino Academy in Tokyo, the Academy of the Miami International Piano Festival, and the Golandsky Institute at Princeton University, and has also taught in the piano departments of the Juilliard School (prep and college divisions), Peabody Conservatory, and the Graduate Program at CUNY.

<sup>19</sup> See the link <https://ilyaitin.net/bio>.

<sup>20</sup> Lili Bogdanova is an acknowledged Bulgarian pianist, born in Sofia in 1994, where she began her education and career (available at <https://www.actualno.com/music/mladata-pianistka-lili-bog->



both the youngest and the only female pianist. Unlike Itin, Bogdanova’s performance of *Puck’s Dance* demonstrates a more balanced approach to metrics and agogics. In this respect, the subtle slowdown in m. 6, followed by the re-establishment of motion in m. 7, is particularly indicative when compared with Itin’s treatment of the same passage. Whereas Itin plays this fragment in a capricious manner, at times in contrast with Debussy’s indications, Bogdanova’s playing appears agogically moderate, closely aligned with the prescribed pulsation.

Her performance is characterized by greater finger flexibility and fluidity. She plays the first sextuplet (m. 2) exclusively with the right hand (unlike Itin), but, like him, she performs the sextuplets in mm. 4 and 6 with both hands. This gives rise to an image of a more playful and whimsical Puck, whose movements are indecisive yet imaginative, constantly shifting direction. Her gestures are softer, more fluid, more charming, and wider in trajectory than Itin’s, producing a more lyrical physicality. An especially striking moment occurs when she articulates the syncopation in the lower register (m. 18), accompanied by a subtle bodily movement marked by a restrained, feminized caprice, which emphasizes the seductive rhythm of the elf’s dance. In her performance, the prevailing impression is that Puck assumes the qualities of a gentle, youthful figure – evoking associations with Peter Pan or even Tinker Bell.

Using the examples of Itin’s and Bogdanova’s performances, both recorded in the second decade of the 21st century, it is possible to observe how the impressions left on the listener differ when the same score is interpreted by pianists of different gender and age, even though their education stems from culturally similar piano traditions. In contrast, the performances of Barenboim and Michelangeli stand as exemplary models of masterful 20th-century pianism, serving as indispensable reference points for anyone interested in the history of piano performance.

From several available recordings of Barenboim performing the prelude,<sup>21</sup> the present discussion focuses on a segment from the documentary *Entre Quatre-z-Yeux (Between Four Eyes)*, directed by Paul Smaczny. The film was released in 1999 and produced by EuroArts Channel. At the time of the recording, Barenboim was 57 years old. The accompanying text to the film’s release on the YouTube platform states that it features Daniel Barenboim “interpreting the first book of these delicate musical pieces in surroundings reflecting the composer’s ambiente of the turn of the century.”<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the film, Barenboim displays his remarkable pianistic artistry, and his interpretation of the prelude *Puck’s Dance* stands out as one of the most captivating performances. He employs a wide range of pianistic gestures to craft a carefully organized musical

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danova-predstavja-debutnija-si-album-news\_61674.html). She currently lives in Berlin, where she has developed an extensive concert career (see the link <https://lilibogdanova.com/>).

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Barenboim is a renowned Argentine-Israeli classical pianist and conductor, currently based in Berlin, who also holds Spanish and Palestinian citizenship. Born in 1942 in Buenos Aires to Jewish Russian immigrant parents, he has developed a brilliant international career and is widely regarded as one of the most significant and influential musicians of our time (available at <https://danielbarenboim.com/>).

<sup>22</sup> See the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ5h10GIT04>.

and scenic narrative that evokes the agility of this fantastic creature. Barenboim's performance of the prelude is slightly longer than the other three discussed, which might suggest a slower or less animated character. However, his playing never appears heavy or lethargic. On the contrary, his movements are economical and measured, marked by rational control and refined discretion. His rounded hands and characteristically plump fingers remain in close contact with the keyboard, yet his touch is consistently soft, flexible, and playful. Visually, these hand movements recall the image of Shakespeare's elf as imagined by 18th-century painters: a plump, childlike figure with a leprechaun's head (see Example 2).

**Example 2.** *Puck* (1789), a painting by Joshua Reynolds (downloaded from Wikipedia)



A similar image is suggested by Barenboim's distinctive "dancing" gestures, in which his fingers move in coordination with the gently swinging forearms as they articulate the dotted rhythm of the opening motif. This gestural quality permeates the entire prelude. The movements appear natural and "comfortable", radiating a sense of ease, pleasure, and delight in the act of shaping sound through performance – qualities that make his interpretation especially captivating. It is important to remember that Barenboim is not only a pianist but also a conductor. This dual identity arguably deepens his awareness of the expressive and communicative power of bodily gesture in the transmission of musical ideas.

Unlike Itin and Bogdanova, Barenboim never divides the sextuplets between the two hands, performing them exclusively with the right hand. However, his skipping of the left hand over the right when executing ornamental arpeggios (mm. 8–12) is unusually inventive. Another particularly striking gesture occurs in the Oberon's horn motif (mm. 6–7), where he plays all the tones with a single finger of the left hand. The resulting hand shape creates a visual impression – an allusion to an elf – embodied in the movement of the middle finger. The surrounding fingers, which tremble freely around it, evoke the flutter-

ing of the elf’s wings. This passage represents perhaps the most convincing “embodiment” of the prelude, where musical and gestural imagination merge seamlessly.

The final reference performance dates from April 29, 1977, recorded in the Sala Nervi of the Vatican – ten years before Itin was born and seventeen years before Bogdanova’s birth. This legendary recording was made by the Italian pianist Arturo Michelangeli.<sup>23</sup> According to *The New York Times* (Gruen 1977), Michelangeli was perhaps the most reclusive, enigmatic, and obsessive among the handful of the world’s legendary pianists. His recordings of Debussy’s *Preludes* are regarded as some of the most significant pianistic achievements of the late 20th century. A noted perfectionist, Michelangeli combines technical mastery with extraordinary clarity, control of tone color, and meticulous attention to compositional structure, particularly in counterpoint, all while maintaining an aura of mystery and reserve.

In the famous Vatican recording, Michelangeli was 57 years old, the same age as Barenboim at the time of the filming of *Entre Quatre-z-Yeux*. Although both pianists are superb artists with a highly sensitive approach to Debussy’s *Preludes*, their performances of *Puck’s Dance* leave distinctly different impressions on the observer. Unlike Barenboim, who at first glance evokes the image of a cultured satyr in a somewhat informal, housecoat-like jacket, Michelangeli’s unconventional artistic persona is suggested by his slightly eccentric attire, which also carries a symbolic connection to the atmosphere of the recording setting (see: <https://www.discogs.com/master/218572-Claude-Debussy-Arturo-Benedetti-Michelangeli-Pr%C3%A9ludes-Volume-1>).

Michelangeli’s performance of *Puck’s Dance* is marked by a refined fluidity, in which occasional unexpected and capricious pirouettes remain perfectly controlled. The result is a performance that can be described as a marvel of grace, elegance, and style. Particularly striking is the subtle wit with which he engages the audience, evoking a sense of laughter tempered with kindness. This is evident, for example, in moments when a raised eyebrow hints at delicate irony or discreet sarcasm. In short, Michelangeli’s interpretation, fully imbued with his strong personality, masterfully unites seemingly incompatible qualities, blending profundity with ethereality. The recording remains a masterpiece, whose power continues to captivate listeners almost half a century later.

## Closing Remarks

In this chapter, the concept of narrativity in piano performance is examined through the prism of pianistic gestures. The primary aim – to demonstrate that the narrative associated with a given composition can be subjectively created through its performance and reception – is achieved through a comparative analysis of four video recordings. Methodologically, this analysis is based on observing the correlation between the pianists’ physical gestures and the narrative potential embedded in the score. The study shows

<sup>23</sup> Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (1920–1995) was an Italian pianist (see the link <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arturo-Benedetti-Michelangeli>), widely regarded as one of the most prominent pianists in history, particularly celebrated for his interpretations of Romantic repertoire and the music of Claude Debussy.

that a musical work possesses a certain “character,” generated through the integration of all musical parameters indicated in the score. However, a musical work does not contain a “fixed” narrative; it cannot be reduced to a single, unchangeable semantic meaning. Rather, it can be said that a musical work holds the potential to express its character through a process of “narrativization” – the transformation of musical content into a narrative – which can be subjectively shaped by both performance and reception.

The analysis revealed that the performative gestures of the four pianists – the essential means of transmitting musical and poetic content – vary in both fingering and expressive character. By describing each individual performance, it becomes clear how each pianist, through their unique gestural rhetoric, leaves a distinctive impression on the observer and how subjective narrative forms emerge in the mental sphere during reception. The characteristics of Puck and his dance, suggested by the score, are interpreted and embodied differently in each performance. Itin’s gestures embody a hurried, rational elf, acting like a strictly calculated modern businessman, at times frustrated and capricious. Bogdanova, in her measured and agile approach, presents a feminized elf with soft, flowing movements. In Barenboim’s performance, Puck appears as a plump dwarf reminiscent of figures depicted by 18th-century “Grand Style” painters, while in Michelangeli’s rendition, the elf takes on the aura of a living marble statue, captivating with beauty and elegance. Across all four performances, the pianists demonstrate creativity and vivid imagination, confirming that piano performance is not merely a technical or reproductive skill, but a fully developed creative artistic discipline.

Studies addressing questions related to creative processes make an important contribution to the humanities. Narration, understood as the act or process of creating a story or a structured spatiotemporal narrative form (such as mental images), is a fundamental mode of creative thinking. Narrativity is inherent to communication – every form of communication carries some element of narrative. Narrativization can be approached in countless ways. In the context of music, and piano performance in particular, it can be explored through the prism of performative gestures, which are the physical manifestations of a performer’s interpretation and expressive intent. This article represents one such approach, showing by example how the narrative potential of a composition can be subjectively realized through performance and reception. The analysis focuses on the opening theme of Debussy’s prelude *Puck’s Dance*, demonstrating how the pianist’s gestures embody the music’s character and create distinct narrative impressions in the minds of listeners.

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# PART III

## Narrative and Analysis





## Chapter 12

# Text, Context, and Intertextuality in the Works of Vincent d'Indy: on the 'Music-as-Language' Paradigm in the Epoch of *Fin-de-siècle*. The Case of *La Légende de Saint Christophe*<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This chapter aims to analyse the principles underlying the “dissolving” of the “music-as-language” paradigm at the turn of the 20th century, as exemplified by Vincent d'Indy, whose strategy of “communication” with the listener was typical for that period (e. g. Mahler, early Schönberg, Stravinsky). The methodology combines modern approaches to the sense-generating qualities of music (Mark Evan Bonds, Sanna Pederson, Jean-Jacques Nattiez) with Roland Barthes's and Michael Riffaterre's ideas, due to the specificity d'Indy's semiotic strategies, which involve the use of musical elements as real signifiers for a layer of extra-musical meanings (the signified) and the construction, on this basis, of an artwork as a system of signs. *La Légende de Saint Christophe* serves as the most complex and illustrative example of the realisation of these strategies.

**Keywords:** Vincent d'Indy, “music-as-language” paradigm, music semiotics, intertextuality in music, *La Légende de Saint Christophe*

## Introduction

The figure of Vincent d'Indy (1851–1931) and his works had already become attractive to critics (Camille Bellaigue, Michel Calvocoressi) and musical writers (for example, his contemporaries-composers, among them Claude Debussy, Camille Saint-Saëns, Paul Dukas) during the composer's lifetime. That was due, in the first instance, to the significance of his activities in musical institutions, secondly, to his tangible contribution to the development of the genre system of French music, and thirdly, to his complex search for ways to rejuvenate national art, *Ars Gallica* (the motto of *La Société nationale de musique*, founded in 1871). Such pursuits led to d'Indy's paradoxical reinterpretation and, later, to the synthesis and continual development, towards the end of his life, of anachronistic Wagnerism, French Baroque music, folk music, and a complex of medieval Catholic chants. At the same time, among contemporary composers – and not only the French – d'Indy did not distinguish himself by stunning stylistic innovation; nor did he create a new technique of composition, nor represent a new type of artistic thinking, unlike Claude Debussy, for instance, whose opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, according to André Messager, opened a window onto a new art (Opstad 2009, 5).

<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

However, the widely noted aspects of d'Indy's work, considered in their interconnection and as a whole, render him an original musician and an influential personality during the period of his creative and social activity. It has become possible to comprehend d'Indy's role in the development of French musical culture thanks to the historical distance; therefore, it was perhaps Léon Vallas who produced the first complete monograph in which the features of d'Indy's creative manner, his stylistic evolution, aesthetic views, and contribution to culture were problematised, considered comprehensively, and identified as a subject for further study (Vallas 1946; 1950). Vallas knew the composer intimately and had the opportunity to follow his role both in the broader context of the *fin de siècle* era and through the smaller phases of this historical period.

In this process of historical contextualisation and scholarly problematisation of d'Indy's heritage (in every sense of the word), the contributions made by subsequent generations of researchers (in all the variety of perspectives and methodologies they employed), e.g. Steven Huebner, Stefan Keym, Manuela Schwartz, James Ross, Gilles Saint Arroman, among others, gradually began to identify a sociopolitical, and more specifically, a nationalist paradigm (e.g.: Fulcher 1990; Suschitzky 2001–2002; Ross 2003).

Indeed, such an ideological and explicitly non-artistic component determined not only some of the decisions and initiatives d'Indy undertook in the field of socio-cultural life (such as his role in the *Schola Cantorum*), but also his theoretical views on the historical process in musical art, as well as his ideas elaborated in specific works, such as *La Légende de Saint-Christophe* or the Third Symphony. This component added a specific semantic layer to the composer's aesthetics as well as to his compositions, a layer that was impossible to perceive directly and required extensive commentary. This applied not only to *la musique symphonique et pure*,<sup>2</sup> but also to *la musique dramatique*, where the presence of a verbal layer might seem to guarantee clarity and a transparent articulation of the artistic message. Evidence from music critics and experts has demonstrated a certain degree of bewilderment on the part of the public when encountering some of these works; this was the case, for example, with the *Troisième Symphonie* (Buch 2006, 31–34).

Hence, the complex problem concerns not only the extra-musical, but, more generally, the extra-artistic layer of meanings in d'Indy's works. The latter is *de facto* programmed by the composer himself and inserted into the texts (letters, commentaries); it interacts with the immanently artistic meaning (which includes extra-musical<sup>3</sup> components in the case of *la musique de la parole*, namely, besides opera, cantata, oratorio, also “transitional” genres: overture, fantasy, symphonic poem (d'Indy 1933, 7–8)). It partly defines this meaning and influences the arrangement of the whole not only in its semantic, but frequently also in its constructive aspect (for example, in the symphonic poem *Saugefleurie*, the modification of the sonata form, the specifics of the interaction of motives result from

<sup>2</sup> On the genre classification proposed by d'Indy see: d'Indy (1909, 5–6).

<sup>3</sup> This term can be discussed as indicating the presence of a layer of sense, which is paradoxically separated from the musical elements that bear it (due to the prefix “extra-”). On this term, its relation to Eduard Hanslick's ideas, and the essence of the phenomenon of extra-musical meaning see: DeNora (1986, 87).

the disposition of the characters and from the plot of the original source – a fairy tale by Robert de Bonnières).

This issue has not yet been the subject of a special study. Meanwhile, on the one hand, the conditioning of the meaning of a work by its historical context, and even the definitive role of this context in the formation of the “semantic core” of an artwork, as one of the essential features of the semantic strategies of the 20th century, raises questions about the role played by d'Indy in the process of their formation. On the other hand, the extreme complexity of the semantic “dialogue” between a work and its context, and its opacity to the “uninitiated”, was a consequence of the development of a logical limit of the “linguistic” paradigm of music to which d'Indy adhered and of which he became a “victim”.

My chapter does not aim to resolve all the problems that arise from d'Indy's approach to the creation of artistic sense, but to substantiate the relevance of applying semiotic and even structuralist analysis to the principles of the composer's artistic thinking. Afterwards, this approach can be developed and applied for a more detailed analysis of specific works by the French composer.

## Methodology

D'Indy's adherence to the “verbal” paradigm is the main factor determining the set of research methods, which should correspond both to the composer's own views on the principles of meaning-generation in music (and critically reflect them), as recorded in his texts, and to modern approaches to music as a meaning-producing system e.g., Erwin Panofsky's idea of “the system that makes sense” (Panofsky 1974, 19) and, more broadly, to any artwork as a text, with due regard for its specificity.

To combine authentic approaches to music comprehension, concurrent with its existence in historical development, and the modern understanding of it as a kind of artistic practice constitutes the main problem in studying the paradigm of “music-as-language”. Theoretical reflection on music as a phenomenon has its own rich history, which is covered, for instance, in the works of Mark Evan Bonds (2014, 48–69) and Sanna Pederson (2009). In contemporary musicology, the view of music as a “language” and the work as a “message” is considered anachronistic, having vanished along with the “linguistic” paradigm. Thus, for example, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, refuting the idea of the musical work as a “text” and as a whole composed of “structures” (1990, IX), contrasts these two aspects with “three large categories”: “the procedures that have engendered” an artwork; the act of its interpretation; and the act of its perception, which together constitute the “immanent level” of music: “The essence of a musical work is at once its genesis, its organisation, and the way it is perceived” (Nattiez 1990, IX).

However, within the “music-as-language” paradigm, these three components are refracted through the intellectual procedure of discursive metaphorisation of music: the composer organizes, and the recipient perceives, the musical material, projecting onto it the patterns of syntagmatic structuring and arranging large sections in accordance with the rules of rhetorical disposition. As a kind of quintessence of these experiments, one may cite the Enlightenment ideal (e.g. Jean-Jacques Rousseau) that music, through all its

expressive means, should function as a correlate to speech – whether as a “gallant” conversation or as an oratorical address. That is why it is necessary to apply linguistic analytical methods when analysing the “music-as-language” paradigm.

Furthermore, we must also consider the notion of the work as a mobile semantic structure (regardless of whether this work belongs to the “music-as-language” paradigm), whose transformations over time are shaped by cultural memory; the idea of a dialogue between the author and the recipient, in which both parties influence the result (developed, for instance, by Hans Robert Jauss); the gradual “displacement” of the author by the recipient in the process of semiosis; and the distinction between “text”, “work”, “speech”, and “discourse”, which is important for understanding the work as a semiotic system – all this scientific apparatus had already emerged at the moment when the “linguistic paradigm” of music, having reached both its culmination and, simultaneously, its self-negation in Schönberg’s *Ausdrucksbedürfnis* aesthetics, entered into history (even if one takes the beginning of Mikhail Bakhtin’s activity as a starting point, i.e. the 1920s).

It is symptomatic that in this period, even a decade earlier, the notion of “language” and “text” was extrapolated to a new kind of art: thus, D. W. Griffith introduced the idea of a language of images in cinema, employing the notion of “language” not as a metaphor but in its strict, literal meaning. Griffith believed that the language of images constituted a genuine counterpart to verbal communication – universally intelligible and capable, as he himself noted, of overcoming the Babylonian confusion of languages (Iampolski 1998, 56). And while the Warburgian method of art-historical criticism, which gained momentum at the beginning of the 20th century, treated convention as a research tool applied to visual art systems already shaped by an “art-as-language” conception, the emerging idea of “cinema-as-language” demonstrated that this principle could function not only analytically but also creatively, and could be extended to other art forms. It’s worth noting that Griffith relied on a pluralistic range of philosophical sources that extended the “linguistic” specificity to the world at large, from Swedenborg and Hobbes to Baudelaire and the transcendentalists (Iampolski 1998, 87–90). This situation testified both to the presumption that each kind of art, being fundamentally oriented toward communication, necessarily passes through a “linguistic” stage in its development, and to the fact that the “art-as-language” paradigm continued to be realised in parallel with the new understanding of language, that is to say, structuralist and post-structuralist.

This new understanding was believed to apply to works of art through verifying the cultural situation of the *fin de siècle* and the beginning of the 20th century. As for music itself, just as the new understanding of language *in toto* was at odds with what came to be called “traditional” linguistics – so too were the new modernist and avant-garde practices at odds with it, albeit without completely breaking with the “music-as-language” paradigm, but rather transforming it.

First of all, the redistribution of the character and functions of the extra-musical and immanently musical layer of meaning in a work was modified: the extra-musical part expands to such an extent that it can absorb cultural memory of any historical depth and

encompass any number of cultural codes (according to Roland Barthes<sup>4</sup>), in their mutual influence, collision, and fragmentation. The importance of the “work” really begins to be reduced to the “trace” of the text that gave rise to it, or, in Julia Kristeva’s terms, the phenotext becomes a consequence (or a full equivalent) of the genotext<sup>5</sup> turned inside out, as if emerging from the shadows. Here, one can interpret a “work” as a self-valuable system of meanings forming a semantic whole; and the “text” presupposes the complex of connections between itself and its context, generated by signs that may possess a difference essence, but are unified in the recipient’s consciousness. At the end of such a process, one may observe a reality with inverted relations between the sense as produced by the “work” and that which is programmed by the “context”.<sup>6</sup>

This process eventually led to a paradoxical situation, which was best presented by Pablo Picasso in the form of a verbal “gesture”: “The only thing that’s important is the legend created by the picture, and not whether it continues to exist itself” (Picasso & Ashton 1977, 124) – if by “picture” we mean the work as a fact, and by “legend” the symbiosis of the text (according to Barthes) and its reflection in the minds of the public (the recipient). As a result, the “work” becomes only a reason, a pretext for meaning, but not its real bearer, or, as it were, an “empty meaning”.<sup>7</sup>

This problem of the “absence of meaning”<sup>8</sup> has led to a unique situation. In avant-garde music, the shift from the “work” towards the “text”<sup>9</sup> was complemented and partly substantiated by the implicit problem of the impossibility of expressing and translating meaning as a message (due to the absence of such a message as a necessary condition for creating an artwork) through organised sound matter, which either led to the identification of this meaning with form as structure (the object of perception, but neither a subject nor an instrument of influence), or to a splitting of meaning. The meaning could be split (1) into a layer formed by cultural codes that does not lose its symbolic nature, and therefore can be interpreted at the moment of perception and ends up being displaced into the extra-musical field, and (2) into the immanently musical layer – something between Immanuel Kant’s *Ding-an-sich* and Martin Heidegger’s *Dasein* – a layer that can be perceived and articulated intelligibly, but not interpreted.

<sup>4</sup> Realising that music from the beginning of the 20th century can be considered in accordance with other concepts of language and text, we prefer Barthes’ ideas because they correspond to the essence of the paradigm shift in the understanding of music as a kind of art.

<sup>5</sup> Concerning these terms see, for example, McAfee (2004, 25).

<sup>6</sup> See on this problem the famous essay by Barthes (1977b).

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, on this subject, Thao (1986, 81).

<sup>8</sup> This does not, however, contradict the fact that the Romantic notion of the author’s intention had already been carried to its extreme in movements such as Expressionism.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, nothing prevents any work from being considered solely as a “text” (the procedure that Barthes calls “new criticism”), from the point of view of both its structure and all the meanings that this structure has or may potentially have. A “work” understood within symbolic discourse is equated with a “text”. See in detail: (Barthes 2015). The point is that, in some cases, the “work” cannot be approached except through the lens of the older aesthetics that understood art as an “objectification” of the author’s self.

It can be said that the extra-musical semantic layer (context) requires the listener to adopt hermeneutical strategies (dialogic interpretation) in relation to the cultural field surrounding the author and assimilated by the listener's consciousness; the immanently musical semantic layer requires the transformation of the listener into a Barthesian "subject", coinciding with this layer as its predicate (in the listener's mind, the meaning asserts itself autonomously in the course of its unfolding and structuring).

Similar epistemological procedures are required when approaching the late works of d'Indy, whose creative practice becomes particularly intense and ambivalent when viewed against the backdrop of his own theoretical positions. On the one hand, the composer's theoretical views and intentions suggest that he adhered to the idea of the author's control over the meaning of his work, the ability of music to convey an extra-musical message and the public's competence to read it. That is to say, d'Indy was operating within the framework that we would now call "traditional linguistics" as applied to music. On the other hand, the highly semantic structure of d'Indy's compositions, especially those created after 1900, and the history of their reception indicate that overcoming these limits and going beyond the traditional relationship between the author, his work, and the listener were potentially embedded in the composer's most creative practice, a practice in which musical semantics, and, more generally, the ability of music to designate something beyond itself, are called into question.

Therefore, it seems that, in the case of d'Indy's creative practice, structuralist and post-structuralist approaches have explanatory power, while the composer's theoretical views require primarily contextual and historical analyses. In the first case, the methodological basis can be provided by the works of Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Gérard Genette, and those authors who have already explored the problem of the relationship between music and language within the framework of modern musicology (Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Sanna Pederson, Mark Evan Bonds, Lawrence Kramer, Violetta Kostka, Paolo F. de Castro, William A. Everett, Léon Stefanija, Tijana Popović Mladenović, Constantin Floros, Steve Larson, Eric Isaacson, Byron Almén et al.). In the case of d'Indy's music, "language" should be understood as a musical sociolect, from Renaissance to late Romanticism (taking into account the palette of historical styles that the composer assimilated). D'Indy's musical "idiolect", defined by a set of stylistically significant expressive means, becomes his authorial "speech", and the work becomes a "statement", which, from the composer's own point of view, cannot be deprived of a meaningful form of communication with the audience – that is to say, a "message".

At the same time, depending on d'Indy's creative period, from early to late, the work can be interpreted as a proper "work" (in the sense in which Barthes understood it), carrying a fixed set of meanings programmed by the author, or as an intellectual construct approaching Barthes's "text" (but not becoming it, due to d'Indy's communicative intentions and the "irreducibility" of the author's figure in his case). In the latter situation, the socio-cultural field of extra-musical meanings, which, like Charles S. Peirce's "index", points to the cultural and historical memory of the recipient, activated upon contact with the opus, plays a major role in constructing the meaning of that opus.

A separate aspect of this problem is the concept of *intertextuality*, which makes it possible to explain the principles and variants of contact between d'Indy's own "idiolect" and the "idiolects" of other authors and, more broadly, the "sociolects" of different epochs (style practices) at the levels of: (1) specific works (with precise quotation of thematic material) and (2) specific styles (stylistic allusions and reminiscences).

This decisive role of extra-musical factors in d'Indy's work allows us to define them through the concept of *the interpretant* proposed by Michael Riffaterre. In the general sense, "the interpretant is the mediating sign that governs the meaningful relationship between a sign and its object" (Riffaterre 1981, 231). As Riffaterre observes, "Peirce distinguishes among the sign that conveys meaning (he calls the sign representamen), the object the sign stands for, and the idea the sign gives rise to in our minds. This idea is the interpretant" (1981, 240). Since, according to Peirce, semiosis can continue infinitely, "the interpretant itself is also a sign, either simply equivalent to the first one or more fully developed" (Ibid.).

While projecting this logical construction onto d'Indy's music, one can take into account that the main function of the interpretant is to endow the sign with its qualities, a particular meaning and sense, to permeate it so to realise its role. In the latest scores of d'Indy, the entire ideological complex, serving as a self-valuable semantic layer, allows the quoted styles to become the "signs" of the ideas, and not merely references to "someone else's words" (e.g., Wagner's scores, or Palestrina's madrigals, or Gregorian plainchant) for the sake of a "dialogue" with them. Thus, this extra-musical complex serves as the "interpretant", while different styles and techniques act as "signifiers" or "connectors" – markers and catalysts of the realisation of intertextuality, which take the text beyond the limits of its own structures. In d'Indy's case, being also a sign by its nature, the interpretant creates an intertextual "bridge" or "field" between d'Indy's own scores and the cited works of other composers.

## The Main Aspects of d'Indy's "Language" Thinking and Meaning-Generating Strategies

### 1. The Paradigmatic Aspect

The composer's creative career spans the period from 1869 to 1931. Despite the shifts within the "music-as-language" paradigm over more than half a century, d'Indy continued to adhere to "linguistic" ideas (d'Indy 1912, 12, 29; 1933, 6, 48–49).<sup>10</sup> Convinced that musical matter could be arranged syntactically and semantically in a way similar to verbal language, d'Indy interpreted structural elements from "cells" to "ideas" (d'Indy 1909, 234, 333, 241) as being analogous to linguistic structures (from morphemes to syntagms in modern terms). He considered them capable not only of arranging musical syntax and

<sup>10</sup> There is an "eloquent" example in the history of music of a situation in which paradigm shifts concerning the status and essence of music led to the end of a composer's creative career: for instance, Gioachino Rossini continued to write "for himself" in his later years, but accepted the "anachronistic" approach.

transmitting intrinsically musical meaning, but also of forming quasi-symbolic structures, i.e. of functioning as signifiers for a certain extra-musical signified. The extra-musical meaning is “activated” by the sound of a particular musical element or a set of them only on the condition of the conventionality of this meaning, originating in the collective *cultural memory*. It can also be activated through specific algorithms recorded in particular sources – such as the Baroque tables of musical-rhetorical figures – which are intelligible to at least a certain group of recipients. These mechanisms of the activation of cultural memory are relevant for any kind of art, and it is no coincidence that in the same era – a turning point for understanding the principles of meaning formation *in toto* – Aby Warburg laid the foundations for the search for and analysis of conventional meanings in visual art.

However, in his endeavour to “encode” his message, d’Indy gradually moved towards complicating the nature of expressive means, to the point where they lose their communicative capacity, i.e. the possibility of being endowed with conventional meanings. In his early period, d’Indy used the “vocabulary” of the Classical-Romantic era, understandable to a wide audience: this concerns typical thematic elements, harmonic progressions, and the varied timbres of Berlioz’s and Wagner’s orchestras. Examples include his first symphony; the symphonic poems *Harald* (*La Forêt enchantée*, 1878, after Ludwig Uhland) and *Saugefleurie* (1884, after Robert de Bonnières); *Wallenstein* (three symphonic overtures after Schiller, 1870–1881); and *Le Chant de la Cloche, la légende dramatique* (1879–1883) with a prologue and seven scenes, text by d’Indy after Schiller. Even the quotations from Wagner’s works embedded in the harmonic material of the last piece do not disrupt its overall ease of perception: the “Tristanesque” motifs and harmonies were perfectly “read” by the French audience, especially thanks to Charles Lamoureux’s concerts (since 1881): this conductor included Wagnerian music in his repertoire. And even when a verbal layer is incorporated into the scores, they can be perceived only through the typical meanings associated with musical structures of the sociolect of that epoch.

Nevertheless, the change in the very nature of his “utterances”, starting perhaps with the Second Symphony in B-flat (1902–1903), indicates a gradual liberation, in *la musique symphonique* (instrumental music), from the correlation between the pitch-rhythmic structure of musical elements and the analogous profile of speech elements.<sup>11</sup> The difficulty of listening to the symphony arises from the fact that the very nature of the musical elements signals a “departure” from the classical-romantic sociolect. The two “antagonistic” “cyclic themes” (“*deux thèmes cycliques*”) (d’Indy 1933, 175) that serve as the basis of the symphony have pitch and rhythmic structures that far removed from typical intervallic sequences (there are no progressions of fifths and thirds, of seventh chords, nor passages of fourths and sixths followed by seconds). At the same time, the metre and rhythm do not clearly articulate the strong beat, which “blurs” the melodic contour. The chromaticism, in turn, obscures the sense of tonality and prompts the listener to search for a “semantic” justification for this passage. Finding it is hindered by the absence of a program (that is,

<sup>11</sup> They serve not as concrete samples but as standards, as models for building a structure, that is to say, not as actual elements but as ways of organising the material.

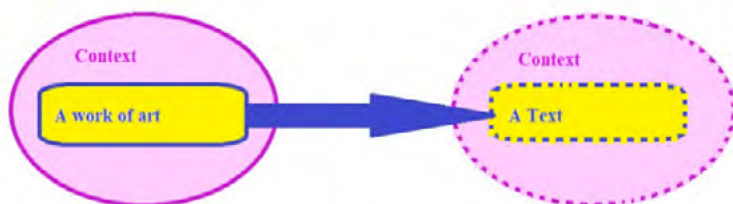


in fact, of an explicit verbal layer). Therefore, researchers sought to recreate the sphere of extra-musical meanings in order to facilitate the understanding of the music, to form a meaning, and to consider the “cyclic elements” as signifiers for a signified (that would be logical and could be articulated in familiar aesthetic categories. For example, according to Joseph Canteloube, these elements serve as a metaphorical representation of opposing forces: the first one has a “quasi-satanic” (“*quasi satanique*”) nature and symbolises “the principle of evil” (“*le principe du mal*”), while the second, more expressive one, embodies an “idealistic impulse” (Canteloube 1951, 30). Esteban Buch appears to develop this concept further by correlating “mal” with the “moderns” (“*les modernes*”) and goodness (“*bien*”) with tradition (Buch 2006, 26–27).

This statement can serve as one of the semantic keys to the *extra-musical* sphere of artistic sense: Léon Vallas regards the première of the Second Symphony on February 28, 1904, as part of the Lamoureux Concerts, as an episode in the aesthetic war between the followers of d'Indy and those of Debussy (Vallas 1950, 246). Subsequently, in November 1912, d'Indy himself reproached French composers, particularly the adherents of Debussy and Ravel, for being “proclaimers of false dogmas and propagators of serious errors” (“*proclamateurs de dogmes faux et propagateurs d'erreurs graves*”), and for methodically employing these “curious sequences of fifths and seconds”, as well as the “whole-tone scale [sic], which can be called atonal since it eliminates any possibility of modulation” (“*curieuses suites de quintes et de seconds*”, as well as “*gamme par tons-entiers [sic!], qu'on peut nommer atonale puisqu'elle supprime toute possibilité de modulation*”) (cited in: Buch 2006, 25).

In the first movement of the Second Symphony, as the material evolves, the initial element, which first sounded within a tritone, transforms into a whole-tone scale that gradually saturates the musical texture. The dynamics and the orchestration where brass, percussion, or low strings and woodwinds are employed, further enhance the effect. One can see here the starting point for the modification of d'Indy's strategies of semiosis: the structural elements, which serve as a basis of d'Indy's idiolect, appear as uncommon, highly individualised components of musical “language”. Although d'Indy himself designated two primary themes as “antagonists” (Indy 1933, 175), their difference is marked at the *constructive* level and does not imply going beyond the immanent sense. The extra-musical layer connected with these elements is also very specific; the listener would be unable to grasp its meaning without additional contextual cues.

As we can see, the idea of musical *syntax* still lies at the core of the “utterances” and remains a tool for creating structure, while at the same time no longer allowing for the transmission of a clear “message”. The listener is forced to create it himself. The result of this ambivalence, although not reaching the level of paradox or internal conflict, shows that as d'Indy's forms of artistic thinking and creative manner changed, the “work”, in terms of his aesthetic system, tended to become a “text” (following Barthes), but does not completely transform into one (Figure 1). As an additional factor of semiosis, one can consider the context of d'Indy's process of composition (in the case of the Second Symphony, the struggle against the “debussysts”).

**Figure 1.** Semiosis in d'Indy's works from the Second Symphony onwards

In this case, a musical “work” (following Barthes’s theory) can be understood as an opus that functions as a “ready message” containing the author’s “intention” in itself. The listener’s strategy is to perceive this message and find the “right key” to reading it. In contrast, a musical “text” can potentially be interpreted in various ways, and listeners’ cognitive strategies can modify depending on their understanding of the author’s aims, their cultural memory, and even their state of mind. The semantic core laid down by the author can be “brought out” into the sphere of extra-musical context, or it can be made equivalent to the structure of the work.

From a cognitive point of view, epistemological tension is created by the asymptotic approximation of the “opus”, which can be perceived directly by the recipient and should even be grasped as a complete, self-sufficient artistic unity, to the “text”, whose mere perception is insufficient to produce even a purely aesthetic effect and, in some cases, is not possible at all. Such tension does not lead to the complete substitution of an immanent sense by the contextual continuum of connotative meaning, but instead leaves the listener on the threshold of traditional perception, provoking intellectual reflection through alienation. Such an epistemological “balance” is internally contradictory and uncomfortable, since it forces the combination of different strategies of working with music<sup>12</sup>: the listener must be both a Barthesian “reader” and a Barthesian “critic” at the same time (that is to say, someone who looks for an immanently musical message in a work as a “ready meaning”, and someone who independently creates meaning by drawing on a complex of extra-musical connotations during the listening process).

This epistemological situation already takes place in *Le Chant de La Cloche* (performed in 1886) due to d’Indy’s conscious intention to transmit a specific aesthetic message to the audience on two levels: (1) at the level of the libretto, by intensively reworking Friedrich Schiller’s poem, introducing characters that refer to Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Destranges 1890, 14), and accumulating, in the verbal layer, the Romantic

<sup>12</sup> In the first case (a musical “work”), music conveys connotative meaning while simultaneously functioning as a perceptible sound structure. In the second case (music as a “text”), music does not convey anything; it is an immanent sonic structure whose significance is intrinsic, while the connotative continuum of extra-musical meanings becomes the second side of a Möbius strip (it shapes the meaning of the music, inseparable from it, yet not manifested in the structure and not transmitted through it, – always the reverse side, situated behind and connected to the first, but without the ability or possibility to take its place or to manifest through it).

ideas of the unity of love and death (the idea of *Liebestod*, borrowed from *Tristan und Isolde*), the power of art (this idea can be designated as *Ars longa, vita brevis*), and Christian allegiance to the ideals of goodness and the welfare of the people; (2) at the level of the musical material, through stylistic references to Wagner's scores – since d'Indy considered *Le Chant de la Cloche* his most “Wagnerian” work (d'Indy 1930, 71) – as well as through the introduction of precise quotations: the Gregorian hymn *In Paradisum* and the folk song *J'ai du bon tabac* (d'Indy 1950, 313).

Over the years, this tendency has intensified: if in *Le Chant de la Cloche* the range of extra-musical ideas is still “read” more or less clearly, then, when listening to *Fervaal*, a recipient must navigate extremely complex socio-cultural circumstances, as well as the composer's own aesthetic-cultural views. In approaching *L'Étranger*, one should not lose sight of the autobiographical subtext of the work and its correlations with *Der fliegende Holländer* (Huebner 2006, 268–271, 274–278). *La légende de Saint Christophe* cannot be perceived at all unless one is familiar with d'Indy's anti-Semitic and anti-Republican views,<sup>13</sup> and the Third Symphony requires knowledge of the entire list of d'Indy's “enemies” and “opponents” in musical art. And if Joseph Canteloube (1951, 29) believed that the triad of Christian virtues could serve as the “key” to the composer's work<sup>14</sup> (it is symptomatic that at the premiere of *Christophe*, the audience, as well as the critics, focused almost exclusively on the religious aspect of the opus<sup>15</sup>), then a century later, it became clear that the composer's extra-musical program was remarkably wide-ranging, encompassing virtually all the essential dimensions of both social life and inner experience. D'Indy's music is still a language, but not a language of feelings (as it has been understood since the late Renaissance): rather, it is a communicative means capable of translating *any* meaning. And the main factor of the creation of such meaning is the composer's will and intentions – a trace of the type of artistic thinking characteristic of the Romantic attitude, albeit under completely different conditions.

## 2. The Aspect of Subjectivity. Subjectless

The author's (non-anonymous) paradigm of the creative process presupposes a semantic intention rooted in the author's “self” – in the cultural, ideological, and other coordinates that define its “metric”. From this perspective, the meaning of a musical work, understood as not just an individual, but an individualised utterance, must include such an extra-musical “catalyst”.

<sup>13</sup> Huebner, putting aside the psychological prerequisites for understanding d'Indy's antisemitism, presents the factual data on this theme, in particular concerning *La légende de Saint-Christophe* (Huebner 1999, 306–307). On the possibility of correspondences between the ideological content of *Fervaal* and d'Indy's antisemitism, see: Ibid. (333–334).

<sup>14</sup> Canteloube refers to a fragment from the First Epistle to the Corinthians of St. Paul the Apostle (chapter 13 verse 13), which d'Indy quotes in Latin and then provides a translation into French: “*Maneant in vobis Fides, Spes, Caritas, Tria hæc: major autem horum est Caritas*” (d'Indy 1912, 16). See also Huebner (2006, 270) on this subject.

<sup>15</sup> See: Fulcher (1990, 295).

At the *fin de siècle* era, the “dissociation” of the author’s “self” plays a huge role in the process of transforming a “work” into a “text”, since the degree of connection between its subjectivity and the sense produced within the work – the measure of the “presence” of this subjectivity in the artistic material – is directly proportional to the degree of stability of the artistic fact as a “work”, i.e. as an artistic whole that is sufficiently closed both formally and semantically to be separated from its context. The strong subjectivity of d’Indy’s creative intention is one of the factors that prevent his “works” from being transformed into “texts”. This factor manifests itself not only in the deliberate assertion of intention, but also in its very nature: unless it is the case of *la musique pure*, d’Indy always comments in detail on the *extra-musical aspect* of the work’s idea and *derives* the character of the musical elements from it, or at least draws an indissoluble correlation between them. He does the same when analysing the works of other composers.<sup>16</sup>

In the case of *la musique pure*, d’Indy’s goal is to characterise the thematic material and the principles of its elaboration (e.g.: rhythmic modifications, variable repetition), the most important of which is the well-known cyclic principle (*le principe cyclique*), consisting of the varied repetition of selected elements (d’Indy 1909, 99, 118–119, 375, 378, 380, 388, 390–391; 1930, 60; 1933, 6, 197, 258, 266–267). But even in this case, the concept of the “theme-character” (*le thème-personnage*) (d’Indy 1909, 241–243, 262, 265, 268, 289–290, 312, 376–377; 1911, 85; 1933, 133, 164, 327), together with the clear traces of rhetorical articulation in the musical texture, renders d’Indy’s intentions distinctly literary (that is, extra-musical) and positions him as a fully present authorial agent – whether in the work itself or in its reception. Conversely, authorial intentionality may also be oriented *exclusively* toward principles of structural organization *per se*. An example here is Debussy’s famous statement concerning the development of musical material,<sup>17</sup> which illustrates the idea of “the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who, until then, had been supposed to be its owner” (Barthes 1977b, 143) – an idea perfectly embodied, according to Barthes, by Stéphane Mallarmé, who was, not at all by chance, a friend of Debussy (Barthes 1977b, 143–144).

“It is language which speaks, not the author” (Ibid., 143) – this idea becomes an aesthetic maxim if the musical matter “self-arranges” according to its own principles, following the idea of modifying the initial cells (*les cellules*<sup>18</sup>), i.e. if it realises the possibilities of development and form-construction inherent in its melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, timbral, etc. structure. In addition to the method of “renewing” the generating “motif”,

<sup>16</sup> For example, here is d’Indy’s analysis of the correlation between extra-musical meanings of keys and their immanent expressiveness in César Franck’s oratorios *Ruth*, *Rédemption* et *Les Béatitudes* (d’Indy 1906, 99, 100, 123–124, 130, 198, 202).

<sup>17</sup> “Je voudrais qu’on arrive, j’arriverai à une musique vraiment dégagée de motifs, ou formée d’un seul motif continu, que rien n’interrompt et qui jamais ne revienne sur lui-même” – “I would like one to arrive, I will arrive at a music truly free of motifs or formed by a single continuous motif, which nothing interrupts and which never comes back on itself” (cited in: Wenk 1976, 164).

<sup>18</sup> A cell is “the smallest indivisible group of a succession of sounds” (“*le plus petit groupe indivisible d’une succession de sons*”) (Indy 1909, 234).

the method chosen by Debussy, Paul Dukas's variant-variation method, used in his Piano Sonata and the opera *Ariane et Barbe-bleue*, or the principle of harmonic derivatives in Ernest Chausson's *Le roi Arthus* possess a similar self-generating force. D'Indy, following his teacher Franck, proposes a balanced approach. On the one hand, the composer should actualise the potential for transformation inherent in the sound material itself – that is, allow artistic meaning to unfold according to its immanent laws. On the other hand, this process must be guided by established models: either by syntactic patterns and pre-compositional schemes – predetermined structural, and therefore meaning-generating, principles – in the case of *musique pure* (symphonique), or by the extra-musical layer of meaning, which steers and adjusts musical becoming (*le devenir*), in the case of *musique dramatique*. In both cases, (1) the logical regularities, principles, and intentions existing at the pre-compositional stage govern the immanent development of the material; and (2) all these ideas, whether purely constructive, narrative, figurative, or philosophical, are usually clearly articulated by d'Indy and *precede* the compositional process itself, and therefore cannot be arbitrarily eliminated or ignored.

Thus, the problem lies not so much in the phenomenon of “pure music”<sup>19</sup>, but in the observation that d'Indy's opuses, *de facto* irrespective of their nature, cannot attain full meaning without a causal-genetic explanation<sup>20</sup> through the composer's intentions, the structure of his personality, the context of the era, and the aesthetic principles of the “Franck school”.<sup>21</sup> All this requires a complex methodological apparatus, including the latest methods of creative psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and comparative analysis.

The monologism (Mikhail Bakhtin's term<sup>22</sup>) of d'Indy's “statement” determines (1) the relevance of the systematic equivalence of music and language that he asserts (d'Indy's intention implies a communicative orientation towards the audience, from which follows the correlation between the composition and the message, i.e. the derivative of the sign system); and (2) the selection of those contextual elements that form the extra-musical meaning, i.e. the foundational semantic sphere of the composition, which then enters into complex relations with the intrinsically musical sense: it should point to these elements (i.e. function as the signifier), but remains independent of them insofar as they are *individualised* by the composer's *creative consciousness*.

Indeed, in the 19th century, the “code” and “formulaic” nature of musical matter, which has its origins in Renaissance practices, implies definitive associations between cer-

<sup>19</sup> On the sense and the principles of affecting a consciousness corresponding to this type of music, which is called “pure” or “absolute”, see: Bonds (2014, 12–13, 15, 45, 53, 64, 73–78, 103–108, 117, 122, 125–126, 128, 141–209).

<sup>20</sup> On the ways of meaning formation in a “work” and in a “text”, see: Barthes (1977a).

<sup>21</sup> D'Indy spoke of the circle formed around Franck and praised it as a new French school of composition. See: (d'Indy 1909, 390). Thus, the “Franck school” is largely a construction of d'Indy himself.

<sup>22</sup> Bakhtin introduced this term in his famous book “Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics” (*Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*, 1963). He investigated “a monologically perceived and understood word”, which is connected with an “objectified” world, “a world corresponding to a single and unified authorial consciousness” (Bakhtin 1984, 7, 9).

tain expressive means and extra-musical concepts, whose essence is regulated not only by the peculiarities of perception as such and by the status of music (“music is number”, “music is the language of affects”), but also by the functioning of art as a semiotic system within that particular era. There is a path from the clear articulation of conventional meaning that correlates with specific musical-rhetorical figures codified in treatises, through the classicist concept of musical formulas inherent in a particular style (or “genres”, as they were termed in the Baroque epoch), from gallant to pathetic<sup>23</sup>, to the “language of feelings” built upon this foundation, which elucidates extra-musical meaning *via* a set of typical rhythmic and melodic elements (according to Boris Asafyev: the “intonational vocabulary of the epoch”<sup>24</sup>), analogous to the phenomenon of *sociolect* found in language.<sup>25</sup>

This path turns out to be a movement, *within the realm of sensory reactions and responses*, from affect, as a broadly understood basic feeling (like fear or *tristesse*) that, in line with the “linguistic” paradigm, can be readily verbalized – toward a more differentiated spectrum of barely identifiable emotions (and, by extension, already at the beginning of the 20th century, of subconscious and inherently *non-verbalisable* impulses). The diminishing clarity of extra-musical connotations is directly proportional to the growing individualisation of a composer’s language (*idiolect*) and style; however, in the *fin de siècle* era the range of recognisable, semantically “readable” expressive means remained sufficiently broad and shared to predetermine, at least to some extent, an emotionally-coloured aesthetic response to a work.

D’Indy, with his conviction concerning the sensual nature of the musical message, with the *monologism* of his musical-discursive practice and his strong author’s stance, poses the question more radically – see, for example, his statements on Wagner’s *Parsifal* in this respect (d’Indy 1930, 67). In fact, he frequently confirms that such a reaction to a work is a consequence of *the composer’s own* mental organisation and lived experience (d’Indy 1909, 385–386). In other words, the extra-musical layer of connotations is formed not so much by generally recognisable, typical emotive “responses” to the nature of expressive means, but rather by the structure of the composer’s personality and his idiolect, which *de facto* presupposes a certain degree of originality in the correlations between elements of musical language and extra-musical meanings.

This ambivalence is captured by d’Indy himself: “la musique [...] évoque [refers to the recipient – E. R.] ou exprime [refers to the author – E. R.] des sentiments de l’âme” – “Music [...] evokes or expresses feelings of a soul” (d’Indy 1909, 386). One difficulty here is that, firstly, with the strong individualisation of the “idiolect”, “deciphering” the author’s emotive message becomes a demanding task for the audience (this can already

<sup>23</sup> For example: Rousseau (1826, 81–82).

<sup>24</sup> On this term see: Viljanen (2017, 123). The concept introduced by Asafyev is very rarely translated into other languages. Under the “intonation” the scientific meant the structure organised by raising and lowering the register of the voice when speaking or singing and changing expression in this process.

<sup>25</sup> On sociolect and idiolect see: Riffaterre (1981, 228, 231, 233, 236–239, 241; 1984, 148, 152, 160).

be observed from the Second Symphony onwards), since the connection between the original expressive means and the emotional meaning they are intended to “translate” becomes quite unclear. Secondly, the direct impact of the musical material itself (and the sensory response *should* be immediate, like the empathic “entry” into the book as “work” by the Barthesian reader) is impeded by the rejection of standard “sociolect-generating” elements of language (for instance, Tchaikovsky or Brahms have never renounced them). Thus, the difficulty lies both in the formation of compound meaning and its perception. D'Indy's stylistic evolution will therefore result (probably against his will) in the *disintegration of the very structure of the emotive message and, therefore, in a withdrawal from the paradigm according to which music becomes a language of feelings*.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, the broader paradigm of “music-as-language” is being eroded; d'Indy's compositional practice in the early 20th century and thereafter calls into question the capacity of music to be a semiotic system, or at least its metonymic counterpart, endowed with quasi-symbolic algorithms for the formation of artistic sense. When the composer moves from the emotive layer of extra-musical meanings into the sphere of *intellectual concepts*, which can be signified by music under the condition of its linguistic paradigm, he can, according to this paradigm, express the essence of a phenomenon or idea purely by musical means (one may observe that d'Indy introduces an important “shift” into the algorithm of semiosis).

On the one hand, d'Indy quite rightly rejects the correlation of a particular theme, harmony, or timbre with objects of the phenomenal world: “Une fois pour toutes, la musique ne représente pas un objet” – “Once and for all, music does not represent an object” (d'Indy 1909, 385–386) – this being the very logical substitution of the signified (the object instead of its notion), which prevented Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov or Leo Tolstoy from understanding Wagner's leitmotif technique (Nisnevich 2018, 113–114; Tolstoy 1904, 83, 97, 110, 121–123, 128–142). The concept of “significant keys” (*Les tonalités significatives*), which d'Indy developed in relation to the oeuvre of Wagner and Franck (d'Indy 1930, 50–51, 62; Saint Arroman 2019, 16)<sup>27</sup> and later applied to his own works, illustrates the composer's desire to move beyond any vulgarisation of musical semantics: this concept presupposes the correspondence with a particular tonality to a particular extra-musical concept (war, native land), an image (e.g., light in *Fervaal* and *La Légende de Saint*

<sup>26</sup> It is enough to compare the structure of thematism in *Harald* or *Saugefleurie* and in *Poème des rivages* or *Diptyque méditerranéen*, or in *Le Chant de la Cloche* and in *La légende de Saint Christophe*.

<sup>27</sup> D'Indy believes that Wagner created the concept of “significant keys” and credits the German composer with this discovery, along with the discovery of chromaticism and intense modulation. But there is no evidence that Wagner himself assigned extra-musical values to particular tonalities. On *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Parsifal*, and the tetralogy, see: d'Indy (1950, 145–149, 151–152, 162, 174–175, 286–287). In the case of Franck, the situation was more likely that he experienced manifestations of synesthesia (hence, for example, the “luminous” B major). See: d'Indy 1906, 96. However, this is not the same as consciously constructing semantically significant series of keys. The non-sonic sense of tonality associated with cross-modal correspondences and other sensory systems is involuntary.

*Christophe*), an idea (heroism, prophecy), or a feeling (female and male love, or hatred in *L'Étranger*).<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, unlike the Baroque semantics of tonalities, for example, d'Indy's process of signification is arranged in such a way that tonality is *de facto* regarded as the signifier, the essence of which (i.e. its expressive value and immanent meaning as a component of artistic thinking) is not identical to the essence or meaning of the signified. For instance, in Johann Mattheson's concept, the characteristics of keys point to the perception of tonality itself as bearing properties that allow it to function as a symbol of an extra-musical idea;<sup>29</sup> in other words, a purely musical phenomenon and an extra-musical concept have correlating characteristics based on their own qualities and a cross-modal transfer (that is to say, on the acoustic structure of non-tempered intervals and on brightness, light intensity, or the sharpness of colour tone). On this basis, metonymic transformation and the index-type sign (in Peirce's terms), which presupposes an immediate correlation between signifier and signified, are realised.

D'Indy necessarily assigns a certain meaning to a key, apparently based on subjective experiences and associations, without seeking to present it as an immanent quality of a mode grounded in a set of its characteristics. By constructing the extra-musical connotations of a key out of subjectivity, out of the intention of his own "self", d'Indy effectively acts like a Barthesian "critic": he introduces into the "text" whatever semantic overtones he wishes, without relying on the traditional semantics of keys, their "sociolect" meanings and "colours", which in the past rested on an acoustic-perceptual foundation. In other words, in seeking to establish a sign with a clearly functioning signified and signifier, d'Indy abandons the requirement of conventionality and thereby calls into question the very capacity of the sign to "work". Can those who are not familiar with his treatise or the explanations of Lioncourt provided in the footnotes "read" the sign – that is, decipher it?

Or was d'Indy – as Alban Berg later remarked with regard to the constructive schemes he laid down in *Wozzeck* (1956, S. 389) – convinced that his "signs" could operate against the will of the listener, on a subconscious level? In this case, there is a shift from semiotics to the psychology of perception – at least if one takes into account the ideas proposed by Carl Stumpf, a contemporary of the composer. Under these circumstances, did d'Indy envisage that, in order to create a specific field of music that would be perceived involuntarily, he had to construct a "complex sign" in which the signified is a set of expressive means that program and enhance the intended semantics of a key (for example, timbre or harmony serving in a leitmotif function can act as such means)?

<sup>28</sup> The observations and the schemes concerning *Le Chant de la Cloche*, *Fervaal*, *L'Étranger*, *La légende de Saint Christophe* are represented in: d'Indy (1950, 312, 202, 210, 216–217).

<sup>29</sup> For instance: F-sharp minor, "it leads to great sadness, is somewhat languid and amorous rather than lethal. It is also somewhat abandoned, singular, and misanthropic". See more and other examples in: Lenneberg (1958, 234–236).



### 3. The Intertextual Aspect. *La Légende de Saint Christophe*

If we consider a work of art as a text, we can agree with the observations of Michèle Lagny and Mikhail Iampolski, according to which “the meaning of a work is linked both to the historical context of its creation and to the position of a given text within the evolution of art. The semantic fullness of any text is surely the result of its ability to establish a connection with the texts that came before it, and occasionally with those that came later” (Iampolski 1998, 8). At the same time, the preceding texts and the texts that follow may belong to the authors themselves and represent different creative periods, or they may be understood within a broader historical and cultural context. If one considers the problem of the preceding text *in toto*, taking into account all the components of the musical language as conditions and means of expressing a certain sense, it becomes clear that three subjects emerge as the *intra-textual object* of the author's work.

1) **The principles of organisation (syntax) and the development of musical material (strategies of form operating on different syntactic levels).** In this case, d'Indy's points of reference were primarily Beethoven, Wagner, and Franck; and, in assimilating, generalizing, and interpreting the ideas of those composers, he deduced the structural formula of the cyclic principle (*le principe cyclique*). By establishing an equivalence between the leitmotifs in opera and the “leading motifs” (*les motifs conducteurs*) in symphonic music (Indy 1909, 385), d'Indy focuses on the structural properties of “cyclic motifs” that allow for the formation of an artistic whole through compositional rhymes. By endowing these motifs with extra-musical connotations, d'Indy creates semantic rhymes that directly affect the artistic meaning of the whole.

2) **The essence and character of the material (determined by the specifics of the expressive means that “set the coordinates” for the realisation of the phenomenon of style).** Stylistic allusions and quotations occupy a significant place in d'Indy's works. In his First Symphony, which follows the model of the similarly conceived first symphonies of Gounod and Bizet, the classical style is perceived by d'Indy as a sociolect, as a complex of “ready-made words” that can be combined in accordance with his taste. Already in *Le Chant de la Cloche*, d'Indy reaches the level of a stylistic dialogue with Wagner, using a “foreign word” as an object not only of assimilation for the sake of enrichment of his own “idiolect”, but also as a subject of dialogue endowed with its own meaning (both extra-musical and immanently musical). This dialogue never turns into a complete overcoming of the monologism of characteristic of d'Indy's utterance, but it allows him to build an intertextual bridge on two levels: on the level of correlation between the expressive means of his own language and those of Wagner; and on the level of correspondence between the extra-musical layers of their semantic structures.

An example is the so-called “landscape theme” (d'Indy 1950, 311), which accumulates “Tristanesque” chromaticisms and is simultaneously associated with B major, the key in which Wagner's opera ends and which activates the *Liebestod* concept. This concept becomes integrated into an extra-musical layer of meanings that shapes the artistic sense of the work and is reflected on the level of the implicit plot – the death of Lénora, Wilhelm's beloved, and her symbolic transformation into the image of “eternal harmony” (*l'harmonie éternelle*), to which the main character must unite (d'Indy 1924, 14, 18).

In d'Indy's oeuvre, the type of intertextual connections shifts towards an increasing modification of the original extra-musical meanings that were initially embedded in the cited stylistic material by its author. For example, in the Third Symphony (*Sinfonia brevis de bello gallico*, 1916–1918), d'Indy borrows elements from the individual styles of composers such as Debussy, Richard Strauss, and Stravinsky (Buch 2006, 23, 25–27), designating them as foreign or even alien stylistic components struggling against what he considered to be genuinely French art (*Ars gallica*). The latter is marked by the introducing of the hymn to Saint Michel – an exact quotation. One can discern here a specific strategy: the “foreign” stylistic elements in the original scores of Strauss and the Russian composers do not carry this negative meaning and are associated with their own extra-musical fields (e.g., the specific area of pagan rituals in *Le Sacre du printemps* or autobiographical references in Strauss's works).

3) **Specific thematic elements (motifs, themes, and, more generally, structural elements, ranging from the primary “cell” to the “idea”).** It may be observed that the way of working with a “foreign word” depends on its essence and on its own extra-musical connotations. Thus, Gregorian quotations (Biron 1941, 43) are directly related to the liturgical context; quotations from folk songs activate cultural and historical memory and employ specific genre models that must be taken into account when being integrated into one's own “text”; and quotations from specific works (“the author's word”) require an interpretation of their extra-musical “aura” and its involvement in the process of meaning formation. Within the framework of d'Indy's work with his own compositions, this aspect produces auto-quotation. It is used ambivalently: as a “ready-made word” with semantics attached to it – that is, with an extra-musical layer – and as an immanently musical element, employed and developed in different ways each time.<sup>30</sup>

From the point of view of intertextual strategies of sense formation, the third point is especially important; the other two function simultaneously as both a catalyst and an indicator of the creative process and of the ways in which it changes throughout the author's life. In the case of working with the “foreign words” and the “alien text”, the composer may borrow each of the three aspects. The first is then associated with the assimilation of creative strategies, i.e., it requires the interpretation of someone else's artistic thinking; the second leads to stylistic allusions; and the third establishes a layer of quotation.

To illustrate all of these strategies, *La Légende de Saint Christophe*, a *drame sacré* in three acts (1908–1915), with a libretto by d'Indy after J. de Voragine's *Légende aurea*, can serve as the most striking example.

### ***La Légende de Saint Christophe*. General observations**

On the one hand, the meaning of this drama is determined by the ideological layer intentionally emphasised by d'Indy; on the other hand, the musical styles of particular eras (e.g., Renaissance polyphony) and of individual composers (Wagner, Debussy, Ravel,

<sup>30</sup> This perhaps brings to mind the seconds with grace notes (*Jour d'été à la montagne*, first movement, *Aurora*, and *Diptuque méditerranéen*, *Soleil vespéral*, or the theme of *la bien-aimée* in *Poème des montagnes* et and *Souvenirs*).

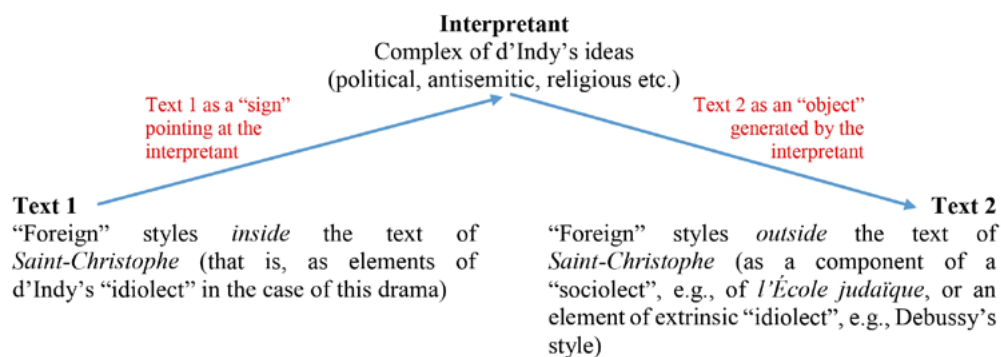
Meyerbeer, etc.) are deliberately used as polysemic “codes”, meta-symbols that refer to specific extramusical ideas.<sup>31</sup> These ideas, as well as the “foreign styles”, are well-known: “As presented at the Opéra, the libretto (completed during the First World War) was strongly anti-Semitic, anti-intellectual and anti-Republican” (Fulcher 1990, 295); these aspects are highlighted by all researchers, regardless of their perspective. According to Fulcher, the ideological issue and the stylistic features reflecting it takes us “inside two intertwined histories: that of d’Indy’s own ideological evolution, and that of the educational institution he directed, the Schola Cantorum” (Fulcher 1990, 296). The “Jewish” thematic formulas (the King of Gold), Debussy’s harmonic techniques from the period after *Pelléas* (the Queen of Voluptuousness’s companions, the “false artists”), thematic material and orchestration reminiscent of Richard Strauss (the Prince of Evil), and quasi-Italian *bel canto* (the Queen) – all these elements are of particular importance as part of the “foreign” stylistic models, whereas among those considered “related” are the Gregorian chants and the neo-modal harmonies that refer to the Renaissance modes.

Alternating with the fragments that represent d’Indy’s own mature style, the “foreign” fragments, quotations, and allusions create a semantic “second layer”, a separate text within the composition as a whole. They aim to articulate “linguistic” and thereby ideological dissimilarity rather than to integrate it into the composer’s own language and make it an intrinsic part of that language (as, e.g., the “Tristan” intonations in *L’Etranger*). Moreover, they become a means of conveying meanings not immanent to them; that is, they function not as self-sufficient phenomena, but as a kind of “indicating sign”, somewhat analogous to Peirce’s “index”. Thus, the dialogue between the “own” and “foreign” stylistic layers realises the intertextual principle within the composition itself, while referring to the ideological, extra-artistic layer as the “third” text, i.e., the interpretant, which semantically regulates the emergence of the “foreign” layer.

In Riffaterre’s conception, the interpretant is a polysemantic notion. The main role of the interpretant is to endow the sign with its qualities, a particular meaning and sense, to allow it to realise its function. In *La Légende de Saint Christophe*, the entire ideological complex, as a semantic layer with intrinsic value, allows the quoted styles to become “signs” of the ideas rather than mere references to “someone else’s word” (e.g., Wagner’s scores or Palestrina’s madrigals) for the sake of a “dialogue” with it. Similarly, the ideological complex regulates the emergence of allegorical characters (absent from all the original sources) – as well as their appearance – and lines, presupposing their importance for d’Indy’s contemporary sociocultural context<sup>32</sup> and articulating ethical and cultural values, sometimes through contradiction.

<sup>31</sup> The verbal and visual allusions have a similar function (e.g., the modelling of a scenic situation by means of a quotation). Among the examples is the scene in the Queen of Voluptuousness’s palace (Act 1), which clearly alludes to the Venusberg Scene from Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*. See: (Fulcher 1990, 304).

<sup>32</sup> Probably, in this case, visual, verbal, and actual musical signs combine the functions of an index, indicating extra-artistic ideas, with that of a symbol, since the indication is implicit, intended (deliberately or not) only for connoisseurs and requiring knowledge of a conventional meaning – not generally accepted, but presupposed by the composer.

**Figure 2.** The process of sense-making in *Saint-Christophe*

It should be noted that Fulcher has also applied the term "interpretant" in relation to *Saint-Christophe*: for d'Indy, ideology could be unequivocally communicated through music by means of styles and techniques that carried meanings within the context, or, in the language of semiotics, through the "interpretant". We see this not only in his professed "anti-Dreyfusard opera", begun during these years, but also in his symphonic music, particularly in his Second Symphony (Fulcher 1999, 65).

However, Fulcher does not clarify in what sense she uses the term, from which research tradition she borrows it, or to what degree it can be applied to *Saint Christophe* as well as to d'Indy's music in general. From our point of view, it is the ideological layer that functions as the "interpretant", while the styles and techniques serve as its "signifiers". This scheme, in fact, corresponds to the very algorithm that Fulcher seeks to examine – namely, how the composer "translated" his "evolving ideological intentions" "stylistically within the world of musical meanings in pre-war France" (Fulcher 1990, 296).

Moreover, it is possible to state that the ideological complex, as the interpretant, creates its object<sup>33</sup> (in Peirce's triad: object – sign – interpretant), which is indicated by the stylistic means. The foreign style becomes such an object not only as an autonomous idiolect, but also as an element of the musical sociolect – that is, as the foreign style outside the text of *Saint Christophe*, integrated into the musical sociolect of a particular era. For d'Indy, a composer's style always refers to a broader cultural phenomenon (thus, Meyerbeer's stylistic features refer to the so-called "Jewish school", and Debussy's style to that of his followers).

The foreign style also functions as a sign, but this time within the text of *Saint Christophe*, i.e., as an element of d'Indy's idiolect: despite being an alien element, the foreign style nonetheless becomes part of the musical development. From a general perspective, we can agree with Riffaterre: "intertextuality is a linguistic network connecting the existing text with other preexisting or future, potential texts. It guides reading" (1994, 786). Correspondingly, the actual "text" in music – including quotations (both thematic and stylistic) – refers to a piece (or the totality of pieces) by the quoted composer as an extrinsic text. In this aspect, intertextuality arises from the dialogue of two extrinsic texts,

<sup>33</sup> In fact, the word is used in the semiotic sense rather than in a concrete-mimetic one.

which, however, correlate by means of quotations. Yet in the case of *Saint Christophe*, the text has a different function, as both the object and its sign. This can be represented in the form of a scheme (Figure 2).

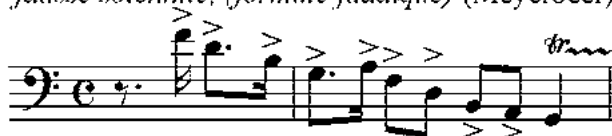
To serve as a “sign” for the interpretant, Text 1 must contain markers and catalysts of intertextual realisation that lead the text beyond the limits of its own structures; Riffaterre calls these “connectors” (1994, 782). The elements that have different syntactic functions within d’Indy’s musical text act as such connectors because they belong to different aspects of the musical material. These elements may be represented by three types of quotations.

1) Stylistic quotations, which, when arranged by the composer into separate thematic structures, function as leitmotifs (e.g., the “Jewish formula”<sup>34</sup> – the theme of false solemnity, Example 1).

These quotations permeate the entire texture of *Saint Christophe*; they emerge whenever the corresponding character is mentioned and generate a network of thematic elements connected through melodic and harmonic elements (e.g., the theme of the King of Gold, based on a segment of the whole-tone scale, refers to the theme of war; see Example 2 and Example 3).

**Example 1.** The theme of false solemnity (d’Indy 1950, 219)

*Q fausse solennité, (formule judaïque) (Meyerbeer)*



**Example 2.** The theme of the King of Gold (d’Indy 1950, 217)



<sup>34</sup> According to d’Indy, the features of the “Jewish school” (*l’école judaïque*), which he believed to be borrowed from Spontini’s style, include ignoring the laws of musical form and constructing a work without connections between its components; unexplained modulations, or their complete absence; and, most important, a lack of “dramatic truth” (*la vérité dramatique*) (d’Indy 1950, 90). Another feature of this “school” is the attempt to adapt Rossini’s style to France (d’Indy 1950, 97). A third feature is the transformation of expressive means into “clichés” (see Fulcher 1999, 32). For details on the “Jewish period” (*la période judaïque*) represented by Daniel Auber, Ferdinand Hérol, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Fromental Halévy, Adolphe Adam, Félicien David, and Jacques Offenbach, see: (d’Indy 1950, 103–117). Since “cosmopolitan Judaism” (*le judaïsme cosmopolite*) does not imply any particular style (d’Indy 1950, 238), d’Indy also includes musicians of non-Jewish origin who, in his view, adopted the aesthetic principles in question (e.g., Richard Strauss and Massenet: (Fulcher 1999, 32); (Schwartz 2006, 58)). The reason for including the latter among the representatives of the “Jewish school” may have been artistic jealousy. See: (Schwartz 2006, 49–50).

**Example 3.** The theme of war (d'Indy 1950, 218) (its main element, containing a segment of the whole-tone scale, is highlighted here by a circle)



This peculiarity of d'Indy's technique was noted, though without particular admiration, by Camille Bellaigue: "As for musical mathematics, he has studied it sufficiently. He knows it thoroughly; he has been one of its masters for a long time. If it is true, as some maintain, that *La Légende de Saint Christophe* is a masterpiece, it could well be one of science, or technique, or mastery."<sup>36</sup> The already mentioned entr'acte *The Search for God* is the most illustrative example of this "musical mathematics."<sup>37</sup>

**Example 4.** V. d'Indy, *La légende de Saint-Christophe*, Act 1, Scene 1, rehearsal number 48, first bars (vocal score).<sup>38</sup> Auférus refuses to help The Queen and to fight against the King of Gold.

The musical score for Example 4 is a vocal score for the first bars of rehearsal number 48 from Act 1, Scene 1 of *La légende de Saint-Christophe*. It features three vocal parts: La Reine (soprano), Le Roi de l'Or (bass), and Auférus (tenor), along with a piano accompaniment. The score is written in G major and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked "Lent" (Slow). The dynamics range from *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *pp* (pianissimo). The lyrics are in French. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

**48** LA REINE  
 Au-fé - rus, dé-fends-moi! Sau - ve-moi de cet

Le Roi de l'Or  
 ser... en - i-vrai-te prin - ces-se!

*mf* *sfz* *f*

La R.  
 retenu **Lent**  
 hom-me!

AUFÉRUS  
 retenu **Lent**  
 Da - me de Vo-lup-té, tu sais le ser-ment qui me lie:

*f* *pp* *p*

<sup>36</sup> "pour la mathématique musicale, il l'a suffisamment étudiée. Il la possède à fond ; il en est, et depuis longtemps, un des maîtres. S'il est vrai, comme d'aucuns l'assurent, que la Légende de saint Christophe soit un chef-d'œuvre, ce pourrait bien n'en être un que de science, ou de technique, ou de métier" (Bellaigue 1920, 422).

<sup>37</sup> See: d'Indy, V. (2019). *La Légende de Saint Christophe. Drame Sacré en trois Actes et huit tableaux*. Partition d'orchestre. Preface by Clémence Destribois and Peter Dietz. München: MPH, 230–265.

<sup>38</sup> D'Indy, V. (1918). *La Légende de Saint Christophe. Drame Sacré en trois Actes et huit tableaux*. Paris: Rouart, Lerolle & Cie.

**Figure 3.** The semantic meaning of keys in *Saint-Christophe* (d'Indy 1950, 216–217), original and translated versions.

*The key structure in La légende de Saint Christophe (Cours, III, pp.216-217)*

- *Si* et *SI* : tonique principale; le personnage d' Aufé-  
Christophore, centre du drame :
- *Si* s'applique surtout à Aufé-  
Christophore, centre du drame :
- *SI* sera le ton de Christophore (épanouissement véritable);
- *RE* : sainteté, vie profonde et complète; accessoirement :  
royauté ;
- *FA* dièse : saint Amour ;
- *fa* dièse : recherche de ce saint Amour ;
- *MI* : patrie (d'abord les montagnes ; plus tard la patrie  
céleste);
- *mi* : haine;
- *SOL* : sens pratique, c'est le ton favori du Roi de l'Or;
- *SI* bémol : guerre ;
- *SOL* bémol : volupté (ton enharmonique de *FA* dièse, comme  
l'amour sensue, est la caricature de l'amour véritable) ;
- *MI* bémol : attrait (le charme de la Reine de Volupté, la fausse  
lumière provenant du ruissellement de l'or, etc.) ;
- *ut* : ton froid, qui est le plus souvent celui du Mal;
- *UT* : lumière de la foi, vérité ;
- *FA* : gloire, cloches de Pâques ; plus tard ton de la mission de  
Christophe;
- *LA* bémol : parfois ton de l'illusion de l'esprit (faux-savants,  
faux amour intellectuel de la Reine de Volupté);
- *ré* en 1<sup>er</sup> mode : prophétie ;
- *si* bémol et *mi* bémol : fureur ;
- *ut* dièse : malédiction.
- *h-moll* and *H-dur*: main tonic; the character of Aufé-  
Christophore, center of the drama:
- *h-moll* applies especially to Aufé-  
Christophore (search for the true light);
- *H-dur* will be the tone of Christophorus (true evolution);
- *D-dur*: holiness, profound and complete life; incidentally:  
royalty;
- *Fis-dur*: holy Love;
- *fis-moll*: search for this holy Love;
- *E-dur*: homeland (first the mountains, later the heavenly  
homeland);
- *e-moll*: hate;
- *G-dur*: practical sense; it is the favorite tone of the King of Gold;
- *B-dur*: war;
- *Ges-dur*: voluptuousness (enharmonic tone of *Fis-dur*, like  
sensual love, is the caricature of true love);
- *Es-dur*: attraction (the charm of the Queen of Pleasure, the false  
light from the stream of gold, etc.);
- *c-moll*: cold, which is most often connected with Evil;
- *C-dur*: light of faith, truth;
- *F-dur*: glory, Easter bells; later tone of Christophe's  
mission;
- *As-dur*: sometimes tone of the illusion of the spirit (false  
scientists, false intellectual love of the Queen of Pleasure);
- *d-moll* in 1st mode: prophecy;
- *B-dur* and *Es-dur*: fury;
- *cis-moll*: malediction.

D'Indy combines the most important themes: the themes of greatness, the Cross, power, the search for God, royalty, and war. In addition, each theme bears its own modal system and timbral arrangement. Thus, the first two themes are “submerged” into a chromatic “Wagnerian” tonality (caused by the beginning of Aufé-Christophore’s wandering); the leitmotif of power is associated with F-sharp major (horns); the theme relating to the search for God presupposes F-sharp Aeolian (strings); the woodwind consort marks the celestial status of Christ’s reign (the theme of royalty, D Lydian → D Ionian); and the middle section of *La Symphonie Descriptive*, resembling a scherzo, is based on the whole-tone mode (with B-flat as the “tonic”) and the leitmotif of war (rehearsal numbers 117–124). Moreover, this section “streams in” suddenly, like a hostile force that prevents Christophe from carrying out his search.

As can be observed, a frequently used basis for endowing thematic material with extra-musical connotations is the semantics of keys. It is the combination of a certain key or mode with a specific theme that allows one to assign a syntactic character to the former and turn the latter into a stylistic quotation. On the one hand, the use of key or modal semantics is natural in a work that has its roots in medieval and Renaissance-Baroque theatre and in the oratorio tradition.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, d'Indy employed the method of “significant keys” (*tonalités significatives*) or “leading keys” (*tonalités conductrices*) in all his

<sup>39</sup> On the issue of semantics of keys and modes, see: Steblin (2002). The genre question concerning *Saint-Christophe* and d'Indy’s designations “le drame sacré” and “le drame-mystère” is discussed in: d'Indy (1950, 145, 215; Vallas 1950, 327; Fulcher 1990, 305–307; 1999, 70). Fulcher connects the scenery of the entrance of “the army of errors” (“l’armée de l’erreur”) not only with the *cortège* from *Die Meistersinger*, but also with “Baroque conventions” (Fulcher 1990, 305).



theatrical compositions. The aim of the method was to correlate a given key with a specific extra-musical idea. In an intertextual paradigm, a key becomes a “sign” and an idea becomes an “interpretant”: e.g., D major – holiness (“*sainteté*”), F-sharp major – sacred love (“*saint Amour*”) (d'Indy 1950, 216). In *Saint Christophe*, d'Indy creates the most extensive and elaborate system of keys in comparison with his other Wagnerian works (Figure 3).<sup>40</sup>

However, it is not difficult to conclude that in this case there is no “object” in the semantic system: one might assume that such an object would be the semantics of keys (from d'Indy's point of view) in Wagnerian dramas or in Franck's oratorios such as *Ruth*, *Rédemption*, or *Les Béatitudes*, as analysed by d'Indy himself (d'Indy 1906, 99–100, 121–125, 130–131, 198, 202);<sup>41</sup> but there is no correspondence between the semantics of specific keys in *Saint Christophe* and in the works of Wagner and Franck. For example, D minor is considered the “sorrow key” (*ton triste*) in *Tristan* (d'Indy 1950, 152); the key of “preoccupation” (*la préoccupation*) in *Die Meistersinger* (d'Indy 1950, 162); “the favourite key of Klingsor”, “the evil spirit” (*le ton favori de Klingsor, l'esprit mauvais*) (d'Indy 1950, 174), and the key of “death” (*la mort*) (d'Indy 1930, 51) in *Parsifal*; and the key of “misfortune” (*le malheur*) in the *Tetralogy* (d'Indy 1950, 287).

B major, allegedly Franck's favourite key (d'Indy 1906, 96), and F-sharp major are semantically closer in Franck's oratorios and in *Saint Christophe*, respectively; however, given that d'Indy himself indicated the semantics of these keys, even the smallest discrepancies do not seem wholly accidental.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, the meaning of each key in Wagner's or Franck's works is determined by context and cannot always coincide. Nevertheless, nothing prevented d'Indy from recreating in *Saint Christophe* the semantics of a key adopted from the works of other composers. In such a case, an identical key with an identical meaning – but within the framework of a foreign style – would serve, from a semiotic perspective, as an “object”. D'Indy does not follow that path, probably because he perceived classical-romantic tonality primarily as a “colour” (d'Indy 1906, 123–124).<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> D'Indy does not borrow the specific semantics of keys from Wagner's oeuvre, although the *Cours de composition musicale* contains corresponding schemes (these schemes represent semantics of Wagner's keys according to d'Indy's interpretation, not Wagner's own), for example, for *Tristan und Isolde* (d'Indy 1950, 151–152), *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (d'Indy 1950, 162), *Parsifal* (d'Indy 1950, 174–175), and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (d'Indy 1950, 286–287).

<sup>41</sup> It is also important that it was Franck who revealed to d'Indy the role of a tonal structure of a work as “the fundamental and vital principle” (“*le principe fondamental et vital*”) (d'Indy 1909, 261; 1933, 151, 318; Saint Arroman 2019, 16).

<sup>42</sup> According to d'Indy, Franck considered B major the “absolutely luminous” (*absolument lumineuse*) key (d'Indy 1906, 100, 130), and F-sharp major was associated with the idea of “heavenly light” (*la lumière paradisiaque*) (d'Indy 1906, 198). In *Saint-Christophe*, B major is interpreted as the key related to the idea of searching for God.

<sup>43</sup> While analysing Franck's *Rédemption*, d'Indy describes the logic of tonal development as a movement “from darkness to clarity” (*de l'obscurité à la clarté*), speaks of “the cold and dull key” (*la tonalité froide et terne*), and notes that Franck himself had been searching for “the luminous effect of Redemption” (*l'effet lumineux de la Rédemption*) (d'Indy 1906, 124, 130). In other words, for d'Indy, the key was perceived primarily as a kind of colour possessing definite qualities, and this perception determined its semantics – not vice versa.

More specific modal systems, clearly dissimilar to Romantic tonality in general, become the semiotic “object” in *Saint Christophe*: these are the whole-tone scale and the Renaissance modes,<sup>44</sup> which relate to opposite interpretants – the idea of delusion and falsehood (whatever their specific referent) and the idea of truth and its acquisition. It is the application of these modal systems as sign-connectors that clearly presupposes not only the presence of interpretants, explicitly indicated by the composer in his letter to Pierre de Bréville (Schwartz 2006, 58–59), but also the reference to “foreign objects” – analogous stylistic models outside the musical text of *Saint Christophe*: in the first case, the “idiolects” of particular composers, and in the second, the musical “sociolect” of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Moreover, it is the whole-tone scale that generates leitmotifs, is integrated into them, or is linked to stylistic quotation in the form of “blocks” (the second of the above-mentioned types of stylistic connectors), while quasi-Renaissance polyphony, together with modality, is associated with Gregorian quotations (the third type of connectors), which serve as a *cantus firmus* for the other voices forming the counterpoint. The theme of the King of Gold (Example 2), in which a fragment of the whole-tone scale functions as a complementary thematic element, becomes an “emblem” of this style. Like the theme of war (Example 3), it represents the idea of the power of money, as well as the delusions and absolute evil (the “interpretant”) generated by it.

The use of a fragment of the whole-tone scale in the theme of war is especially notable, given the military past of the composer and his family (Buch 2006, 21). According to Buch, the whole-tone scale that appears in the last scene of Act I of *Saint-Christophe*, at the entrance of the “false artists” (*les faux artistes*, rehearsal no. 89), designates “bad art” (*mauvais art*) and is, at the same time, related to the rejection of the patriotic war (Buch 2006, 30). This connection allows Buch to draw a parallel between the episode from *Saint-Christophe* and the “grotesque march” in the third movement of the Third Symphony, which symbolises the art of the *boches* through whole-tone elements and savage orchestration (including celesta and xylophone), and the opposition between the Germans and the French during the First World War.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Although for d’Indy, “the Renaissance initiated the decay of craft, ushering in the mere manipulation of materials: an excess of virtuosity, devoid of sincerity and cut off from tradition,” he “espoused also a concomitant musical aesthetic centered on Gregorian chant, Renaissance sacred polyphony and the operas of Wagner”; and “erratic condemnation of the Renaissance” (Fulcher 1990, 298–299) thus coexists with homage to “the sacred polyphony of certain approved composer” (Fulcher 1990, 302), especially to “the Renaissance motet style” (Fulcher 1990, 308). Concerning the composer’s rejection of the strict metre system, the emergence of which he associates with the Renaissance, see also: (Huebner 1999, 304).

<sup>45</sup> See d’Indy, V. (1919). *Troisième Symphonie (Sinfonia brevis de bello Gallico). Partition d’orchestre*. Paris: Rouart, Lerolle & Cie., 73. The subject of parody is complex: in the Third Symphony, the styles of not only R. Strauss, Mahler, and Stravinsky, but also Ravel and Debussy, are parodied (Buch 2006, 23, 25–30), owing to the false function, in d’Indy’s view, of the whole-tone system as an equivalent for tonality. The “harmonic cell” represents this whole-tone pattern, which appears in the Introduction of the Symphony (rehearsal no. 3, trumpets and bassoons), and subsequently determines the main stages of the development of the thematic material in the first part. In *Saint*

On the other hand, the “false artists” themselves, along with the “false thinkers” (*les faux penseurs*), “false scholars” (*les faux savants*), aggressive “distant voices” (*les voix lointaines*), and “proud upstarts” (*les arrivistes orgueilleux*), led by the Prince of Evil, declare war on all true values,<sup>46</sup> and the King of Gold conquers peoples by means of his treasures<sup>47</sup> – the theme of war thus points to these unjust annexationist aims as to the interpretant.

As can be seen, the first type of “connectors” – stylistic quotations arranged as themes – functions as an actual “foreign word”, which is sharply separated from the context by its syntactic articulation and is introduced mostly through “gluing”. This “mosaic” technique of gluing different themes by direct juxtaposition and counterpoint (often accompanied by sudden changes of metre, rhythm, mode, and timbral arrangement) is intrinsic to *Saint Christophe*. This is why the penetration of the “foreign word” appears natural, as a characteristic feature of d'Indy's musical thinking.

Moreover, this “cento” method of developing musical material is reflected in d'Indy's method of composing verses in the libretto: each character (including the Historian – *L'Historien*) has a standard set of lexemes (“signs”) pointing to a particular idea (“interpretant”), as well as a distinctive manner of expressing himself (defined by syntax, types of interjections, means of phrase construction, etc.). The transition from one verbal style to another can be deliberately abrupt (as in, for example, Auférus's dialogues with his antagonists), since all the characters ultimately become embodiments of a particular “extra-textual” idea-interpretant. The contrast of their verbal expressions, as well as of their musical characteristics, serves to convey the opposition and conflict among the interpretants.

Thus, Auférus and the Hermit (*L'Ermite*) are typically distinguished by compound sentences with simple vocabulary; they often use words such as *hommage*, *puissant*, *le Roi des rois*, thereby articulating the idea of Divine might, while the Queen of Voluptuousness, being the queen of the senses, expresses herself in epithets and interjections that convey the idea of sensual delights. As for the King of Gold and the Prince of Evil, the method of aposiopesis is applied, corresponding to obscure hints at “the obscure vow of Hiram”

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*Christophe*, the semantics of the whole-tone scale is akin to that in the Third Symphony: it constitutes an antithesis to the sound of neo-modal scales connected with the idea of true art and associated with the images of the Holy Cross, the Divine Infant, and the protagonist. The instances of its application are numerous and relate primarily to the images of the King of Gold and the Prince of Evil. The entrances of these characters are accompanied by whole-tone harmonies or by a whole-tone scale used as a complementary thematic element, combined with the harmonies of chromatic Romantic tonality.

<sup>46</sup> The Prince of Evil declared, that he is the personification of Hate («Et, la Haine, c'est moi!»), so all these characters glorify war and hatred. See: d'Indy, V. (1918). *La légende de Saint-Christophe*. Paroles et musique de Vincent d'Indy. Paris: Rouart, Lerolle & Cie., 88–106. See also Fulcher (1990, 305–306).

<sup>47</sup> D'Indy considered this feature as one of the manifestations of Jewish mentality and gave his King the appearance of a Jew (Schwartz 2006, 59–60; Grivel 2011, 167–168). On parallels with Wagner's Alberich see Fulcher (1990, 305, 308).

(*l'obscur serment d'Hiram*),<sup>48</sup> which was probably important for d'Indy in light of the ideas of the "Judeo-capitalist conspiracy" (*le complot judéo-capitaliste*) (Schwartz 2006, 60).

Finally, this "mosaic" technique is closely related to the style of Maurice Denis, the artist who worked on the scenography of *Saint-Christophe*.<sup>49</sup> While creating the scenery for *Saint-Christophe*, Denis preferred Gauguin's *cloisonnism*, with forms separated by outlines and each form corresponding to a particular local colour. Although Denis's aesthetic was not predetermined by the specifics of the musical material, it nevertheless proved to be akin to it. The principles of working with musical material and with pictorial material were very similar: both relied on the "gluing" of selected patterns (musical motifs or locally coloured "spots") as a "mosaic" juxtaposition of syntactically primary compositional elements. The technique of repeating leitmotifs with timbral transformation in the scenes featuring the King of Gold is analogous to the variant replication of coloured spots in Denis's works ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ALa\\_l%C3%A9gende\\_de\\_Saint-Christophe\\_-\\_Acte\\_II\\_-\\_Le\\_torrent%22\\_-\\_maquette\\_de\\_d%C3%A9cor\\_en\\_volume\\_-\\_Maurice\\_Denis\\_-\\_btv1b550066772\\_%28of\\_15%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ALa_l%C3%A9gende_de_Saint-Christophe_-_Acte_II_-_Le_torrent%22_-_maquette_de_d%C3%A9cor_en_volume_-_Maurice_Denis_-_btv1b550066772_%28of_15%29.jpg)); such a "kaleidoscopic" equilibrium is not foreign to the idea of polystylistics and even stylistic eclecticism, to which both artists were inclined.<sup>50</sup>

Another point is that, in the case of *Saint Christophe*, Denis executed the scenery and costume sketches in strict accordance with the wishes and descriptions of d'Indy, who also tried his hand at fine art (Grivel 2011, 167–171) and took into account the relationship between the musical and visual aspects of his drama. One of the most important sources of inspiration for both artists lay in their particular interest in the art of medieval painters (*les primitifs*) (Fulcher 1990, 299, 308; Vaughan 1984, 45) – that is, in the art of pre-Renaissance composers and painters (Fulcher 1990, 299). D'Indy "could contemplate paintings by Flemish and German *primitifs* such as Beham, Grünewald, Altdorfer for hours" and "por-

<sup>48</sup> See d'Indy V. (1918). *La légende de Saint-Christophe*. Paroles et musique de Vincent d'Indy. Paris: Rouart, Lerolle & Cie., 73.

<sup>49</sup> For the scenery and Denis's "semiotic contribution," see Fulcher (1990, 295, 314) and Grivel (2011, 170–171, 249–259). Several illustrations representing Denis's *esquisses* are included in Grivel's book as insets. As Gerard Vaughan mentioned, "Denis, like the other Nabis, regularly worked on symbolist theatrical enterprises, painting *abstracting* large-scale décors (where form and colour tonalities were theoretically *tuned* to the rhythm of movement, language and musical accompaniment) as well as the design of costumes" (Vaughan 1984, 43). On the conversations, meetings, and collaborations between Denis and d'Indy, see Ibid. (44–48); Fulcher (1990, 298–299; 1999, 49); Huebner (2009); Grivel (2011, 244–248). The artist professed the same ideas about the connection between art and religion and decorated the chapel of his house in Saint-Germain-en-Laye with a fresco depicting the three virtues so dear to the composer.

<sup>50</sup> As for Denis, Alexandre Nikolayevich Benois believed that "the technical means used by Denis were directly borrowed from dreams: it is the same simplicity, the same unceremonious juxtaposition of the most heterogeneous things, the same bright, and at the same time calm, lulling colourfulness" ("*Техническая средства, которыми пользуется Денись – прямо заимствованы из снов: это та-же простота, то-же безцеремонное сопоставление самых разнородных вещей, та-же яркая и в то-же время спокойная, убаюкивающая красочность*") (Benoua 1907, 55).

trayed Franck as a '*primitif*, untainted by Renaissance art' (Huebner 1999, 304, 315); Denis oriented himself towards Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, and Giotto (Huebner 2009, 352).<sup>51</sup>

Working on the costumes and scenery for *Saint-Christophe*, Denis used early book illustrations,<sup>52</sup> namely engravings, as an inspirational source. It is noteworthy that one of the first wood engravings depicting Saint Christophe was reproduced on the cover of the vocal score of the opera.<sup>53</sup> Looking at the sketch of the curtain (Huebner 2009, 350; Grivel 2011, 249) – a “sign” with regard to the general artistic meaning of the opera,<sup>54</sup> – one can see that Denis was guided by that engraving, representing the Infant Jesus and the giant who bears him; it served as an “object” for the artist, indicated by the idea of faith (the “interpretant”). The artist’s reliance on the engraving, distinguished by contour lines, and probably also on the images from illuminated manuscripts with their local colours, becomes especially evident if one compares the sketch of the curtain with his variation on the theme.<sup>55</sup> In the latter case, while preserving the brightness of the colours and their isolation within geometric outlines of forms, Denis makes the poses of the characters more unconstrained and realistic; they resemble Renaissance sculptures and terracotta more than figures from medieval manuscripts or stylised engravings from early printed books. Moreover, the difference in the choice of the colour scheme is also apparent: working on

<sup>51</sup> Admiration for medieval painters (*les primitifs*) was a broader tendency of the era (Huebner 2009, 352–353).

<sup>52</sup> In general, in elaborating the scenery, Denis also relied on his experience in the area of book illustration. He completed several such projects; the illustrations for the new editions of *L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ* by Thomas à Kempis (1903) and *Petites fleurs* by Saint Francis of Assisi (1913) were the most famous among them.

<sup>53</sup> This is *St. Christopher with the Infant Jesus* (ca. 1476), one of the first woodcut engravings, belonging to an unknown German engraver. The technique presupposes the presence of large white areas and a thick outline separating them. Another source of inspiration for Denis may have been the frontispiece of the same edition; it represents the giant with Jesus on his shoulders in a manner reminiscent of the Florentine school of the 14th and 15th centuries. But, as Huebner notes, at present no one can establish the origins of this image (Huebner 2009, 348). According to Vallas, while working on *Saint-Christophe*, d'Indy decorated his *Château des Faugs* with photographs of works created by *primitif* painters (Vallas 1950, 328), which, in my view, may indicate that the composer wished to attune himself to the appropriate visual style while composing the music. See Huebner's opinion regarding the possibility of using one of these photographs as the source for the frontispiece of Durand's vocal score (Huebner 2009, 347–348); see also Saint-Arroman (2018, 39).

<sup>54</sup> In Huebner's opinion, this image looks like an icon and refers to Byzantine art, the art of the *primitifs*, and that of the late Middle Ages because of its flat linear perspective, stylised representation of water, and “rigid” clothing (Huebner 2009, 347). Delphine Grivel notes that the same image was chosen for the *affiche*, owing to the importance of an “expressive silhouette” (*une silhouette expressive*), a “symbol” (*un symbole*) (Grivel 2011, 169) – that is, owing to the semantic potential of this image, which refers to the idea of service to God (the “interpretant”) through stylisation.

<sup>55</sup> See: Denis Maurice. *L'Enfant Jésus baptisant Saint Christophe*. 48 x 37 cm. 1920. Watercolor, gouache, pencil strokes on two sheets of paper mounted on cardboard. France, private collection (<https://www.alexis-bordes.com/fr/oeuvres/nouvelles-acquisitions/dessin/article/l-enfant-jesus-baptisant-saint-christophe/>).

the scene, Denis applied almost Fauvist colours, which intensify contrasts and look effective from a distance, from the audience. On the contrary, in his drawing he used milder, more delicate colours. This difference suggests that Denis took into account the specifics of the stage, as well as the peculiarities of d'Indy's style and the semantic algorithms elaborated by the composer. There are direct correspondences between Denis's scenery, engravings, and the frescoes of the *primitifs* and the ideas of the opera.

## Stylistic quotations and their semantic role in d'Indy's scores

The second type of “connectors” presupposes a stylistic “modulation” within d'Indy's own style (which is characterised by the use of late-Romantic tonality and dense counterpoint involving various thematic and timbral elements). One example is the gradual incorporation of chromaticism or extramodal elements into a diatonic texture (as in the case of “madrigal”-style quotations: for instance, the appearance of the Heavenly choir at the end of Scene 3 of Act I, or Christophe's vocalise before his death).<sup>56</sup> The most striking example, demonstrating that the nature of the foreign style as an “object” depends on the idea expressed through the stylistic quotation, is Scene 1 of Act I (in the Palace of the Queen of Voluptuousness).

Here, as in the already mentioned scene of the “false artists”, the interpretant is the idea of “false” modernist art. But the true, unnamed addressee is Debussy. The whole-tone scale functions as a “sign” of Debussy's style – that is, as an “object”. For d'Indy, the whole-tone scale and mode were illustrative “emblems” of Debussy's language.

First, there was a rivalry, and whole-tone structures did not yet have negative connotations. D'Indy emphasised that he had used the scale before Debussy (d'Indy 1950, 208). In Scene 1 of Act II of *Fervaal*, a whole-tone scale depicts the clouds of smoke at the Celtic altar. It had also been used earlier, in *Le chant de la cloche*, although d'Indy did not mention it. Afterwards, a whole-tone scale was actively applied in various harmonic functions and different contexts by d'Indy's students Albéric Magnard and Guy Ropartz. In *Fervaal*, the semantics of the whole-tone scale imply nothing negative: it is treated as a correlate of the mysterious magical force, as an indicator of the supernatural (the episode of Kaito's invocation and prophecy, referring to Wotan's summoning of Erda in *Siegfried*, is the only example of a manifestation of the otherworldly in the opera). But later d'Indy came to view the whole-tone scale as a trait of musical “modernism”, i.e., the false path of musical evolution, finding its embodiment especially in Debussy's style.

As we have already seen, the premiere of the Second Symphony (1904) was marked by a fierce struggle between the “d'indystes” and the “debussystes” (Vallas 1950, 246); at that time, Debussy was perceived as a composer who stood in opposition to the “formalism” of the Schola Cantorum (Saint-Arroman 2012, 27). In 1905, this opposition was

<sup>56</sup> See: d'Indy, V. (2019). *La Légende de Saint Christophe. Drame Sacré en trois Actes et huit tableaux*. Partition d'orchestre. Preface by Clémence Destribois and Peter Dietz. München: MPH, 200–204 (rehearsal number 95); 501–502 (rehearsal number 262), 517–518 (10 bars before rehearsal number 271). But all these cases are based on quotations of Gregorian chant and therefore belong to the third type of “connectors”.

reinforced: on the one hand, Louis de Serres and Louis Laloy, former students of the Schola, published articles in *Le Mercure musical* praising *Fervaal*; on the other hand, Jean Marnold (*Mercure de France*) and Henry Gauthier-Villars took the opposite stance. The latter praised “chains” of parallel fifths, “garlands” of fourths, unexpected resolutions of tritones, “endless ribbons” of ninth chords, and complex “agglomerates” of intervals forming “sound columns” (*colonnades sonores*). Thus began the “musical war” (*une guerre musicale*), which lasted a decade, in which the opponents of the so-called “harmonic style associated with the new debussysme” (“style harmonique affilié au nouveau debussysme”) were adherents of strict counterpoint (*style contrapuntique*) and elegant harmony with clear voice leading (Vallas 1950, 60–61) – qualities noticed in d’Indy’s symphony by, for example, Pierre Lalo (1909, 145–146).

In *Saint-Christophe*, such contrapuntal technique is treated as a stylistic emblem of true art, in contrast to all the aforementioned “debussyst” expressive means (“signs”), which emphasise the idea of sensory pleasure (the “interpretant”) in the first scene of the drama (Example 5).<sup>57</sup> The allegorical figure of the Queen of Voluptuousness, also named *La Reine des sens*<sup>58</sup>, becomes the correlate of the idea of sensual delight, or, in semiotic terms, the sign for the interpretant – that is, a second-order sign.

**Example 5.** V. d’Indy, *La légende de Saint-Christophe*, Act 1, Scene 1, rehearsal number 14, last three bars (vocal score). Harmonic planing à la Debussy

The image displays a musical score for the vocal parts and piano accompaniment of a scene from *La légende de Saint-Christophe*. The vocal parts are for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The piano accompaniment is for Strings, clarinets, and bassoons. The score is in 4/4 time and features harmonic planing, a technique associated with Debussy. The vocal parts have lyrics: "Ha! ha!" for the Soprano and Tenor. The piano accompaniment consists of a series of chords, with some notes marked with 'x' to indicate specific articulation or emphasis. The score is divided into three measures, with a double bar line at the end of the third measure.

<sup>57</sup> See: d’Indy, V. (2019). *La Légende de Saint Christophe. Drame Sacré en trois Actes et huit tableaux. Partition d’orchestre*. Preface by Clémence Destribois and Peter Dietz. München: MPH, 22 (4 bars before rehearsal number 15).

<sup>58</sup> On the connection of the five senses with the idea of *Vanitas* see, e.g., Battistini (2005, 36–38).

As has been noted, according to Peirce and later Riffaterre, the process of semiosis is in fact infinite. Not without reason does the most recognisable reference to Debussy's style appear at the moment when the allegorical figures symbolising the central one among the five senses (*Le Goût* – Taste, *L'Odorat* – Smell, *L'Ouïe* – Hearing, *La Vue* – Sight, *Le Toucher* – the Touch), namely Hearing, enter (Example 6):<sup>59</sup> after all, Debussy's music was supposed to delight the ear with all kinds of violations of the laws of art.

**Example 6.** V. d'Indy, *La légende de Saint-Christophe*, Act 1, Scene 1, rehearsal number 18, first bars (vocal score). In the Palace of the Queen: musicians-women play Pan flutes, representing Hearing.

**L'OUIË**  
**18** Même Mouvt.  
 8 FLÛTES DE PAN (sur la scène)

Entrent des musiciennes, jouant de la flûte de Pan.  
 Elles défilent en deux lignes et se rangent suivant une figure d'angle dont le sommet est dirigé vers l'avant-scène.

Moreover, it is through the idea of sensual pleasure that the identification of Debussy's style (and not that of any other composer) is achieved as an "object" in the process of semiosis: this constitutes the justification for the functioning of this idea as an interpretant. The whole-tone mode, recalling Debussy's *Les Voiles* (1909) from the first book of his preludes, returning to the same tone, which acquires the status of a tonic,<sup>60</sup> and the timbre of the Pan flutes (possibly referring to Debussy's *Syrinx* (1913) for solo flute, originally called *Flûte de Pan*<sup>61</sup>) serve as stylistic "markers", or "signs".

<sup>59</sup> See: d'Indy, V. (2019). *La Légende de Saint Christophe. Drame Sacré en trois Actes et huit tableaux. Partition d'orchestre*. Preface by Clémence Destribois and Peter Dietz. München: MPH, 28–35 (rehearsal number 18).

<sup>60</sup> The Queen of Voluptuousness, is, *inter alia*, characterised by a whole-tone scale until her conversion to Christianity under the name of Nicéa (Act 3).

<sup>61</sup> D'Indy might have had in mind the importance of the flute timbre for Debussy in general, beginning with *Le Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un faune*.



It was in the process of working on *Saint Christophe* that d'Indy formulated his view on *debussysme*. According to Esteban Buch, in 1912 “d'Indy had rebelled, in the name of ‘common sense’, ‘French genius’, and ‘Latin genius’, against the ‘misguidance’ of the ‘Debussysts’ and ‘Ravelists’, ‘proclaimers of false dogmas and propagators of serious errors’” (“*d'Indy s'était insurgé, au nom du 'bon sens', du 'génie français' et du 'génie latin', contre l'égarement des 'Debussystes' et des 'Ravelistes', 'proclamateurs de dogmes faux et propageurs d'erreurs graves'*”), and condemned the use of sequences of parallel fifths and the whole-tone scale (“*gamme par tons entiers*”) – the latter “can be called atonal since it eliminates all possibility of modulation” (“*on peut nommer atonale puisqu'elle supprime toute possibilité de modulation*”), because fashion for these leads to the destruction of “the true spirit of our country” (“*le véritable esprit de notre pays*”) (Buch 2006, 25).

To strengthen this spirit, the composer applies a dialectical strategy of semiosis when dealing with extrinsic styles in *Saint Christophe* and later in the Third Symphony (1916–1918). On the one hand, in his drama he seeks to surpass both Debussy's opera (Vallas 1950, 327; Schwartz 2006, 59) and *Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien*.<sup>62</sup> When composing his Third Symphony, he declares that in the third movement there is “nothing at all, not from *Pelléas*, not from *Schéhérazade*, not from *Le Sacre du printemps*, not even from Strauss's new *Alpen-Sinfonie*” (“rien du tout ni de *Pelléas*, ni de *Schéhérazade*, ni du *Sacre du Printemps*, ni même de la nouvelle *Alpen-Sinfonie* de Strauss”) (cited in Buch 2006, 23). In other words, he “pushes” inorganic musical idiolects away from his own.

On the other hand, he intentionally integrates “foreign” words into his “musical text”, using them as a “sign” for the parodied “object” – the extrinsic style – and almost playing with it *à la* postmodernism (a whole-tone scale was used as a means of the “negative” transformation “distorting” the thematic material (Buch 2006, 27–30)<sup>63</sup>). Is it possible to combine these two aspects into one semiotic strategy without contradictions? According to Esteban Buch, with regard to the symphony, there is no way “to place in the right location the imaginary quotation marks which, in the project of this work, separate the musical discourse from the representations it contains” (“*placer au bon endroit les guillemets imaginaires qui, dans le projet de cette oeuvre, séparent le discours musical des représentations qu'il contient*” (2006, 33–34)). Doubtless, the dialectical function of the “extrinsic” elements of musical discourse only complicates the situation.

<sup>62</sup> Since d'Indy considered his work to be similar in genre to the oratorio (d'Indy 1950, 215) and to the mystery play (*drame-mystère*) (Vallas 1950, 327), he did not miss the chance to compare it with *Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien* as well. D'Indy proclaimed: “I was encouraged by reading *St Sébastien*, which I find abominable music, as old-fashioned as it is pretentious. All the same, without vanity, *St Christophe* will be better...” (“J'ai été encouragé par la lecture de *St Sébastien* que je trouve de l'abominable musique aussi vieillotte que prétentieuse. Tout de même, sans vanité, *St Christophe*, ça sera mieux...” (d'Indy 1961, 131)).

<sup>63</sup> Concerning the whole-tone mode in *Pelléas*, d'Indy might have been referring to the so-called theme of Golaud, which appears in the fifth bar of the orchestral prelude. As for *Saint-Sébastien*, the presence of such a modal system is less frequent, but it can be noted, for example, in the following passages: [Debussy C.]. (1911). *Le martyre de Saint-Sébastien : mystère en cinq actes de Gabriele d'Annunzio* : Musique de Claude Debussy: Partition pour chant et piano. Transcription par A. Caplet. Paris: A. Durand & fils, 52, 60, 72–73, 77, 87.

## Stylistic quotations presented as exact quotations

The third type of “connectors” is linked with the composer’s aspiration to preserve the characteristic qualities of a quotation (such as mode, rhythm, etc.) while, at the same time, integrating it into the complex polyphonic musical text. If the meaning of such a quotation-connector, both immanently musical and extramusical, is crucial for a scene, then its qualities are not radically altered (as, for example, the properties of the Gregorian chant in the choir of heavenly voices accompanying Christophe to his death).<sup>64</sup> Moreover, Gregorian quotations constitute the thematic source of most of the opera’s themes (Example 7, the theme of prophecy borrowed from the *Alleluia* of the *Posuisti Domine* chant and its derivatives (d’Indy 1950, 217, 218, 220)), which convey positive ideas.

That is why their impact is not limited solely to the particular scenes: their influence on the opera’s thematic material *as a whole* clearly marks the work, in addition to the verbal component of the drama and its immanently musical dimension, as a “big religious project” (*grande œuvre religieuse*) – as Maurice Denis called it (Grivel 2011, 171). In other words, the textual quotations are the strongest variant of the “connectors”, consistent with their relation to the religious meanings of the opera, which were the most important for d’Indy.<sup>65</sup> It is the most powerful and most important version of the “interpretant”, in accordance with d’Indy’s special understanding of the spirit and character of Gregorian chant as expressive (d’Indy 1912, 74), reflecting the deep religious emotion awakened by reading the Gospel and hagiography (Huebner 2009, 355).

Moreover, being exact quotations and not quotations of expressive means, this type of “connector”, as an element of musical syntax, always possesses a more evident extramusical semantic layer. In the case of *Saint Christophe*, they symbolise the dialectics between the true values represented by the *Foi – Espérance – Charité* [Faith – Hope – Charity] triad, and the false ones (the *Orgueil – Jouissance – Argent* [Pride – Enjoyment – Money] triad).<sup>66</sup> Correspondingly, the *idea* acts as the “interpretant”. The importance of Gregorian

<sup>64</sup> See: d’Indy, V. (2019). *La Légende de Saint Christophe. Drame Sacré en trois Actes et huit tableaux*. Partition d’orchestre. Preface by Clémence Destribois and Peter Dietz. München: MPH, 517–518 (10 bars before rehearsal number 271). This choir is based on the melody of the Communion *Qui vult venire* (see *infra*).


<sup>65</sup> The composer was very proud of using Gregorian chant in musical drama for the first time, as he believed (d’Indy 1930, 71). On this subject (in particular, on the role of Gregorian rhythms in d’Indy’s technique and on the ideological function of plainchant) see also Canteloube (1951, 44–45).

<sup>66</sup> See d’Indy’s letter to Pierre de Bréville (Schwartz 2006, 58–59). Such opposition was inherent to the mind and soul of the composer, who proclaimed: “Without Faith, there is no Art” (“*Sans la Foi, il n’est point d’Art*”) and “The principle of all the arts is the religious order” (“*Le principe de tout art est d’ordre religieux*”) (d’Indy 1912, 10, 83). On the three theological virtues (Faith, Hope, Charity), see d’Indy (1912, 16). Joseph Canteloube correlates three slightly different virtues (Love, Charity, Faith) with the general ideas of *Fervaal*, *L’Étranger*, and *Saint-Christophe* (1951, 29), possibly taking into consideration d’Indy’s concept of “charitable Love” (*le charitable Amour*) (d’Indy 1912, 16).


chant for all of d'Indy's theatrical compositions<sup>67</sup> was already noted by Calvocoressi (1921a, 322) and, for *Saint-Christophe*, by Guy de Lioncourt (d'Indy 1950, 216).

**Example 7.** The theme of prophecy and several of its derivatives: the theme of greatness (applicable to Auférus); the theme of power; the hymn to Death<sup>68</sup>


J (*prophétie*)




A (*la grandeur* : applicable à Auférus)



B (*puissance* : applicable également à Auférus)  
Ce thème se trouve aussi renversé



Z (*hymne à la Mort*)



The Gregorian quotes are particularly numerous in this work, and their rhythmic and melodic structure affects various themes, while the liturgical meaning associated with them influences the extramusical connotations. Guy de Lioncourt and later Jane Fulcher identified seven Gregorian quotes (d'Indy 1950, 220; Fulcher 1990, 307). Obviously, this number was not chosen without reason.<sup>69</sup> The way they are actualised in *Saint-Christophe*, as noted by Fulcher, corresponds exactly to the usual function of textual “connectors”, which “split” the meaning into immanent (inherent to them in themselves) and contextual:

<sup>67</sup> D'Indy also quoted the Gregorian antiphon of the Feast of the Assumption in his “Symphonic Triptych” *Jour d'été à la montagne* (1905). On the semantics of this opus see, e.g., Grivel (2011, 173).

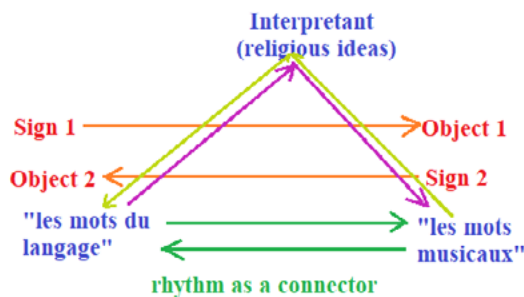
<sup>68</sup> Circles and squares (added to the examples by the author of the article) denote motifs that are common to different themes (formed by melodically or rhythmically accented tones) and are borrowed from Gregorian formulas (for example, a fourth with a major second filling it or adjacent to it).

<sup>69</sup> These are: the hymn *Vexilla Regis*; the fragment of the *Alleluia Posuisti Domine*; the Communion *Qui vult venire*; the Gradual of Easter Day; the fragment of the first *Alleluia (Confitebuntur)* of the Mass of the Martyr; *Credo I* of the Vatican *Kyrie* (“to represent faith” – “pour représenter la foi”); and *Ubi Caritas* (d'Indy 1950, 217–220; Vallas 1950, 337–338; Grivel 2011, 17). In *Saint-Christophe*, the ternary structure (three acts, each consisting of three scenes: “the ‘trptych form’ was the only truly national one” (Fulcher 1999, 70), as d'Indy believed) was shaped under the influence of the symbolism of sacred numbers, which was important to the composer.

"D'Indy had occasionally used Gregorian chant in his previous operas, but here the seven chants bring with them specific liturgical associations: several, for example, are taken directly from the Common of Martyrs and from the Common of Martyrs Who Are Not A Bishop" (Fulcher 1990, 307). Furthermore, this binary semantic division of Gregorian quotations is followed by the formation of a double extramusical reference at each level: this "splitting" of reference is one of the properties of textual "connectors".

1) The immanent meaning of Gregorian chants is related both to extramusical factors (the source text and its place in the ritual<sup>70</sup>) and to the properties of musical content, its modal structure (e.g., in the antiphon *Ubi Caritas* – Mode VI) and its melodic outline (smooth motion along the diatonic scale). They carry a strong emotional charge, evoking the recipient's cultural memory. As noted by Calvocoressi, the function of any Gregorian motif "as a mere unit within a general scheme, to be judged on its own merits and not with reference to its origin, can less than ever be questioned" (1921b, 614). The factor influencing this is d'Indy's own view of the semantic connections between text and music in liturgical melodies. Thus, the composer correlates the "words of the language" ("*les mots du langage*") and the "musical words" ("*les mots musicaux*", melodic formulas constructed from neumes) and regards them as self-sufficient components whose meanings reinforce each other (d'Indy 1912, 74). They are linked through rhythm (d'Indy 1912, 28), which in this case serves, in turn, as a "connector". Each of these languages, becoming for the other a "sign" and an "object", and *vice versa*, is able to point to a religious idea as an "interpretant". This mutual reversibility of the function of each language, musical and verbal, is the very reason for the appearance of the double extramusical reference (Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** The "words of the language" (*les mots du langage*) and the "musical words" (*les mots musicaux*) influencing each other

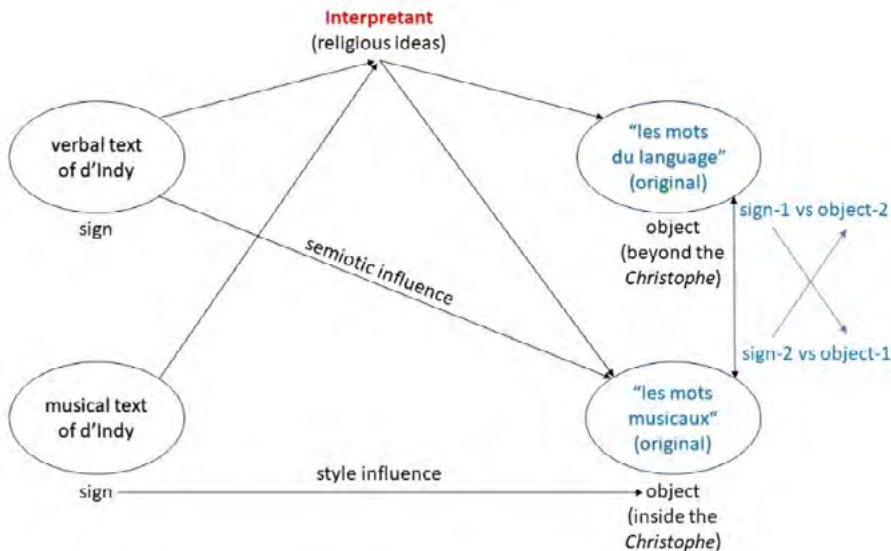


2) The contextual meaning of the quotes, therefore, corresponds to the extramusical aspect (the stage situation, the characteristics of the images accompanied by the sound of the quotation) and to their integration into stylistically different material (harmonisation within the system of chromatic Wagnerian-style tonality, counterpoint with other themes, incorporation into the structure of broader thematic units that presuppose specific rhyth-

<sup>70</sup> Calvocoressi believes that those unfamiliar with Roman liturgy will not understand all the subtleties of the allusions generated, for example, by the antiphon *Ubi Caritas* (1921b, 614).

mic, metric, articulatory, and textural arrangements). Moreover, the sense of the “words of language”, initially present in Gregorian melodies, even if only implied, becomes an “object” to which the real-sounding text composed by d’Indy points as a “sign” through religious ideas as an “interpretant”. The sense of the “musical words” functions in quite a different way: being the “objects” for d’Indy’s style (the “signs”), and while imitating modal structures and counterpoint techniques, they exist as given material which, contrary to the medieval “words of language”, is not taken from outside the “text” of *Saint Christophe* but is integrated into it. In such a case, the “sign”, referring to its “object”, begins to alter the latter and to influence it; in addition, this influence is reinforced by the connection of the medieval themes with new words that have a substitutive function in relation to the original verbal layer. This tensional, dialectical attitude to the musical component of Gregorian chant generates, *de facto*, multi-level relations among all the components of semiosis, reflecting one another like mirrors (Figure 5).

**Figure 5.** The reflection of sense within the process of semiosis



Not without reason did Jean d’Indy, the son of the composer (Grivel 2011, 173), and Léon Vallas compare *Saint-Christophe* to an “artistic building” (“*édifice artistique*”) or a “sounding cathedral” (“*cathédrale sonore*”) (Vallas 1950, 334). It is based on a strategy of “reflection” and multiplication: each ornamental “cell”, each sculptural “theme”, changes its sense depending on the context and on its position among the other details and their meanings. Each structural function of the architectural patterns supports their implementation into a context of both the stone material and the constructive matrix.

D’Indy himself designates the cyclic sonata form as a “sounding cathedral” (d’Indy 1909, 377), bearing in mind the principle of musical development. It presupposes the recurrence of initial “cells” and motifs, combined with their renewal and transformation.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> See also: Keym (2013, 16–17).

The same principle – but more complex because of the verbal layer – can be observed in the case of the Gregorian quotations functioning like leitmotifs. From a philosophical standpoint, the image of the Cathedral can be interpreted as a visual representation of the aesthetic law of “Diversity in Unity” (*“la Variété dans l’Unité”*) (d’Indy 1912, 43; 1909, 377–378) – and, in the case of *Saint Christophe*, this idea is transferred into the sphere of semiosis. That is why *Saint Christophe* constitutes a semiotic masterpiece, independently of its concrete content (hardly acceptable from historical, cultural, and sociological perspectives): the main aesthetic principle is embodied in this artwork both structurally and semiotically.

In total, it is possible to represent the method of semiosis for the Gregorian quotations by two layers of meaning (Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** The binary “divergence” of the sense of the Gregorian quotations

**Gregorian quotations:**

**Immanent meaning** > extramusical factors (a certain place in the liturgy, a verbal layer) + properties of the musical material *per se*;

**Contextual meaning** > extramusical aspect (stage situation + images) + stylistic aspect (the musical context of the quotation).

As we can see, the extramusical reference of the quotations (that is, the “interpretant”) is “divided” into the external one, with respect to the meanings of this text (the context of the Catholic service), and into the one generated by its meanings. Calvo Coressi, analysing d’Indy’s method of working with quotations, notes: “Motives borrowed from plainsong may be utilised in their original form, or altered in some particular. Or again, the vocabulary that goes to the building of plainsong may be used to construct original motives. Whichever the case, it stands to reason that the artistic value of the results will depend solely upon their unity and fitness” (Calvo Coressi 1921b, 614).

Several such examples are cited in the article in question, including a melody whose origin is clearly indicated by Guy de Lioncourt: this is, as Lioncourt calls it, the theme of prayer, based on the Communion *Qui vult venire* (Example 8) (d’Indy 1950, 218).

**Example 8.** Communion *Qui vult venire*



What is the process of sense-making in this case? The double extramusical reference of this theme, as can be seen from the title given to it by Lioncourt (which, apparently, reflects d'Indy's own thoughts), is predetermined by its immanent meaning:

- by its position in the liturgy (the antiphon of the Mass, which is performed during the Communion);
- by the text of this Communion:

Qui vult venire post me,  
abneget semetipsum:  
et tollat crucem suam,  
et sequatur me.

If a man wishes to come after me,  
let him deny himself,  
and take up his cross  
and follow me.

Evidently, both factors – the position of the antiphon within the service and the text – indicate the same idea of communion and the pursuit of God and thereby motivate the contextual application of the quotation. That is, the immanent semantic aspect of reference determines the contextual one. This hierarchy of the components of the double reference also appears to be characteristic of the functioning of textual connectors.

The contextual character of the reference is maintained by ideas that are transmitted through images and scenic situations of a specific nature. In this case, it refers to the most important philosophical mode of the opera – the idea of an appeal to God, of following God, in accordance with the text of the Communion.

#### Example 9. The theme of prayer



Thus, the theme of prayer (Example 9) appears in the Prelude to Scene 2 of Act 2 (Example 10). It accompanies the entrance of the Hermit in Scene 2 of Act 2 and various stages of his conversation with Auférus. It then leads to the latter's repentance and his promise to serve in the name of God (see rehearsal numbers 132–134, 140, 144, 148, 157, 160, and the fifth bar after 162 – the choir of heavenly voices sings it in its entirety with the original text of the Communion). This also marks the moment when the Queen of Voluptuousness becomes Nicéa in Scene 2 of Act 3 (it appears in Christophe's part, as he advises the Queen to pray – see rehearsal number 234). It continues further in the episode of Christophe's promise to baptise Nicéa with his blood in the morning (the second bar after rehearsal number 246, in the final bars of the scene).

In the final scene of the opera, the theme of prayer, given to the celestial voices, serves as a counterpoint (like a *cantus firmus*) to Christophe's appeal to God before death (a plea for Paradise; seventh bar after rehearsal number 270, Example 11) and is incorporated into Nicéa's part at the moment of her final testimony to the miracle and to eternal life (see rehearsal number 279, a generalisation of the religious meaning of the musical drama).

**Example 10.** V. d'Indy, *La légende de Saint-Christophe*, Act 2, Scene 2, rehearsal number 132 (vocal score). The theme of prayer (before the meeting of Auférus and the Hermit) in E-flat minor – the key of false light (d'Indy 1950, 216)

The intrinsic musical meaning of the theme of prayer is predetermined immanently by the properties of the musical content of the source – the antiphon. Among these are the first mode (*tonus primus*), the chant *Qui vult venire*, and a melody outlining a tritone, which is untypical for Gregorian chant and sounds rather tense. In the contextual aspect, the musical meaning of the theme of prayer is related to the placement of the antiphon within a stylistically different context: it is this correlation of the quotation with d'Indy's own musical language, and their mutual influence, that makes this theme function as a textual connector.

**Example 11.** V. d'Indy, *La légende de Saint-Christophe*, Act 3, Scene 3, rehearsal number 270 (excerpt from the vocal score). The theme of prayer in the final scene



On the one hand, the theme of prayer includes a range of melodic motifs (intonations) that are integrated into other themes (not liturgical ones: e.g., the themes of the miracle, royalty, the search for God, the King of Heaven, Example 12)<sup>72</sup>, and thereby gives the latter a peculiar semantic vector. Thus, through musical impact, these themes are endowed with specific extramusical associations, fixed in their author's designations.

**Example 12.** Different themes of the drama and the most important thematic cells (circled)

a) the theme of prayer



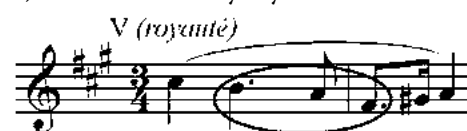
b) the theme of miracle



c) the theme of the King of Heaven



d) the theme of royalty



On the other hand, the context affects the transformation of the theme of prayer and influences its immanent meaning, which can serve as a “connector” through extramusical ideas (“interpretants”). Calvocoressi notes how the meaning of the theme of prayer<sup>73</sup> changes depending on what is happening on stage. The examples cited by Calvocoressi should be supplemented with the semantics of keys indicated by the composer himself (d'Indy 1950, 216–217), as well as with the obvious rhythmic and timbral transforma-

<sup>72</sup> It is obvious that the theme of prayer is related to the other Gregorian quotations, which is due to their origin and to the unique historical and cultural sphere of their formation.

<sup>73</sup> This designation, given by Lioncourt, evidently much later than Calvocoressi's article was published, was not used by the latter.

tions of the themes. As for the choice of timbres, the composer probably considered the semantics of those that originate in early Baroque theatre. Thus, in the last scene (see Example 11), six saxophones are used to imitate the acoustic effect of a church organ.<sup>74</sup> This solution, first, addresses the image of the Cathedral that appears before the Prince of Evil (at the end of Act 1) and establishes connections between the sense generated by the musical layer of *Saint-Christophe* and the sense realised visually and verbally.

Other Gregorian quotations in *Saint-Christophe* are subject to similar analysis. With all this, it is evident that, in the case of Gregorian quotations, their own meaning and the one that arises in the opera (both extramusical and immanently musical) belong to congenial semantic spheres that complement each other. This is quite often the case with musical quotations in general. However, when the connector produces meanings that are contradictory to those immanent to it (even to the point of transforming into its own opposite), this indicates a special method of generating the semantic layer of the musical drama – one precisely inherent to *Saint-Christophe*.

The only textual connector of non-liturgical origin provides such an example. It is a quotation from an Italian folk tune (Example 13) heard by d'Indy at the age of nineteen during his trip to a Roman village, which Lioncourt names “the song of a shepherd” (“*chant de berger*”)<sup>75</sup> (d'Indy 1950, 221).

**Example 13.** The so-called song of the shepherd



The immanent meaning of the melody, with its unpretentious character and tarantella-like rhythm, stands in stark contrast to its meaning within Scene 2 of Act 1. The shepherd's theme, which according to Lioncourt becomes an *idée fixe* (“une obsession affreuse”) (d'Indy 1950, 221), functions as an “interpretant”. It accompanies the entrance of the Prince of Evil in the guise of a goat, intensifying the fear of the King of Gold, who realises that it is not a shepherd calling his goats, as Auférus assures him, but Satan who, in fulfilment of his oath, is coming to take him to Hell (Example 14).<sup>76</sup>

This contradiction is reinforced by the conflict between the immanent properties of the Italian melody, its simple motivic structure (the “object”), and its orchestral treatment, with the eerily unusual timbre of clarinets and oboes and grotesque trills (d'Indy's style as the “sign”). The semantic inversion of the theme's extramusical connotations oc-

<sup>74</sup> The saxophone is not an uncommon member of d'Indy's orchestra. The composer greatly appreciated the instrument's ability to blend with other timbres and, despite its limited popularity, used it in *Fervaal* (1889–1895), *Choral varié* (1903), and *Poème des rivages* (1919–1921).

<sup>75</sup> Vallas incorrectly states that it appears in Scene 2 of Act 2 (Vallas 1950, 337).

<sup>76</sup> See: d'Indy, V. (2019). *La Légende de Saint Christophe. Drame Sacré en trois Actes et huit tableaux*. Partition d'orchestre. Preface by Clémence Destribois and Peter Dietz. München: MPH, 126–134 (rehearsal number 62).

curs through *metonymy* (the transfer of meaning into an adjacent sphere: a shepherd and goats) and subsequent metaphor formation (the goats symbolise the goat's head of the Prince of Evil, a motif apparently deriving from medieval allegories) (Figure 7).

**Example 14.** V. d'Indy, *La légende de Saint-Christophe*, Act 1, Scene 2, rehearsal number 63 (vocal score). The King of Gold notices goats in the herd (the goat being the guise of the Prince of Evil)

The musical score for Example 14 consists of three vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The top part is for Auféus, the middle for Le Roi de l'Or, and the bottom for Le R. The lyrics are in French. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics like *p subito* and *tr*.

Auféus: -ger qui ra-mè-ne ses chè-vres.

Le Roi de l'Or: Ses chè-vres! Oui. c'est bien ce-

Le R.: la. Des chè-vres et des boucs: il y a aus-si des boucs! Les

**Figure 7.** The operation of double extramusical reference in Scene 2 of Act 2 (see Example 14)

**Double extra musical reference:**

**Immanent meaning:** origin in a shepherd's song;

**Contextual meaning:** an allegorical entrance of the Prince of Evil;

**Double musical reference:**

**Immanent meaning:** monodic Ionian mode;

**Contextual connotations:** C major + A major (A lydian), the elaboration of the theme with *tirati* and trills, grotesque counterpoint (the King of Gold's disquiet and the increasingly loud sounding of a mockingly cheerful melody).

Such a type of semiosis is based on the assignment of a figurative sense and, moreover, of an opposite meaning through the use of immanent musical means: the very "quotation



This type of historical modernisation, in d'Indy's case, was brought about by an ideological *aggiornamento*,<sup>78</sup> a semiotic process that led to a transformation of the idea layer as an "interpretant". For Maurice Denis, the integration of images of people close to him into the context of sacred subjects was a consequence of his conviction that religious meanings exist in eternity and therefore can unite any two epochs.<sup>79</sup> The composer needed not so much a dialogue between epochs as the use of medieval images as a semiotic object of metaphorisation, or as a "translator" for new meanings that were not originally inherent in them. And this semiotic strategy of semantic inversion is the opposite of the one that places modern clothes on the Magi-kings in paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Not to clothe the old meaning in new robes, but to transform it with the help of those robes, to make the "metaphorising quotes" stronger than the "semantic core" – this almost postmodern method of working with the quoted material seems to contradict the composer's stated aim of creating an opera in which meaning would be expressed solely through music.<sup>80</sup> However, the semiotic system created in *Saint-Christophe* cannot function – and cannot be understood – without the interpretant as its main component. In other words, it cannot function without the ideological layer, without its influence on the visual dimension, the libretto, and the music itself. This interpretant places the latter in "quotation marks", which means that it can scarcely act or be perceived as "pure music".

## Conclusion

Our aim is only to outline a specific way of investigating d'Indy's artistic thinking, creative process, and semantic strategies. As a starting point, we choose d'Indy's statements on the correspondences between the phenomena of language and of music as interrelated systems of sense-making. D'Indy's example is representative and unique in terms of specific semantic concepts, but at the same time a similar "communicative situation" was typical of the oeuvre of, for example, Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, and Arnold Schönberg (in his tonal period), that is to say, composers who used the 19th-century lexicon but modified it to the point where it transitioned into a new quality (in regard to thematic structure and the principles of developing the sounding material). This situation was connected with the gradual abandonment of the "linguistic paradigm" at the *fin de siècle* and with its replacement by paradigms asserting that "music is an equivalent of gesture" and "music is an immanent self-developing structure".

It is symptomatic that the specificity of d'Indy's communicative strategies, set against this background, consisted, among other things, in their focus on *structure*. This was carried out on the basis of a stylistically ambivalent musical language – a "statement" that

<sup>78</sup> By placing pine trees in the foreground of the curtain (Huebner 2009, 347–348), Denis not only made a reference to the Cévennes legend used by the composer, but also reinforced this *aggiornamento*.

<sup>79</sup> An example of this is the stained-glass window in the chapel of the artist's own house: in the sacred space of the Nativity scene, the shepherds who came to worship Jesus and members of Denis's family (including his already deceased first wife, his second wife, and his children) are united.

<sup>80</sup> In d'Indy's opinion, contrary to *Pelléas* (Schwartz 2006, 59).

could be understood as the realisation of a “French” musical discourse, encompassing the nature of thematic elements, methods of constructing musical syntax, and the layer of extramusical connotations. D’Indy was not alone in emphasising the issue of national art: it is useful to recall the ideas of Dukas or Debussy; moreover, this corresponds to the question of French musical “taste”, which had been relevant since the Baroque era.

One of the paradoxes in the case of d’Indy is that he consciously sought to shape a renewed French musical language not only on the basis of the French musical tradition – both the professional one, originating in *Ars antiqua*, Gregorian chant, and folklore – but also on the basis of the musical language of representatives of the German tradition (Beethoven and Wagner). On the one hand, this paradox is resolved by the very existence of a pan-European Classical-Romantic musical lexicon, a kind of super-sociolect. On the other hand, d’Indy chooses innovative composers who could propose models for renewing musical syntax or for redefining the relation between the immanent musical and extramusical layers. D’Indy applies these models to the French musical tradition, which is more important than simply adopting a modified version of the Wagnerian idiolect; moreover, the complex of musical meanings – even those related to borrowed stylistic elements – ultimately proves to be d’Indy’s own and not, in the least, Wagnerian.

It was the conscious construction of the author’s field of extramusical meanings, correlating either with elements of a musical sociolect or with highly individualised musical structures, that became both d’Indy’s discovery and, in part, a tangible obstacle to the perception of his works. The listener must search for a semantic key that may not even lie within the sphere of extramusical meanings but rather go beyond the sphere of artistic sense as such. This situation is observed in *La Légende de Saint Christophe*. This layer of meanings, acting as an interpretant, enters into a tense relationship with elements of musical syntax, which either correspond in their genesis and properties to a layer of Romantic ideas and feelings, or are “read” only with difficulty when they diverge from the typical Romantic sociolect. Such a contradictory semantic strategy could, in principle, call into question its own foundations: the hierarchical division of genres into pure music and music with a verbal layer. When composing pure music, should one take care of the extramusical connotations it evokes and even cultivate them deliberately? Thus, we should problematise d’Indy’s own adherence to this dichotomy – a dichotomy that is not, in fact, particularly useful for his artistic (and social) project.

A separate issue is the examination of d’Indy’s paradoxical (and likely unconscious) attempt to come as close to the “text” as possible by using the set of expressive, semantic, and constructive means inherent in the musical “work” (Classical-Romantic themes, motifs, timbres, and even forms, which are normally interpreted as elements of a musical sociolect and associated with specific spheres of extramusical meaning). Thus, the process of semiosis can achieve its aim when the listener perceives the semantic and structural completeness of the composition. The Classical-Romantic principles of form construction imply precisely such completeness of meaning, and the development of elements of the musical sociolect serves this goal. Their transformation should lead to the acquisition of a new quality and, consequently, to the emergence of a new sense of stability. D’Indy, however, in rejecting the sociolect of his epoch, does not offer immanently musical com-

pleteness. Therefore, the completeness of the development of the extramusical layer of meanings is often only implied, and not perceived as a correlate of musical form-building.

An additional complication is created by the dialogue, hidden or explicit, with other composers who were developing their own idiolects related to their own fields of extramusical meaning. This field functions as a second, additional interpretant, which makes semiosis almost a puzzle for an unprepared audience. Similar creative strategies were developed by d'Indy's colleagues. It is relevant to note that, for example, Saint-Saëns never transgressed the understanding of a "work" as an artistic statement whose meaning is contained within itself. By contrast, Debussy began to approach the level of "text" from his very first works, and this trend was fully realised, for instance, in *Jeux*. In the long term, such comparative analysis will help articulate the undeniable difficulties concerning the perception of d'Indy's works belonging to the 20th century – difficulties that have been recognised by their intended audience for as long as these works have existed. These issues remain relevant today,<sup>81</sup> since they are conditioned by the very structure of (extra) artistic meaning, while comparative analysis should establish ways to overcome them, that is, to posit possible forms of adequate perception (in all senses of the word) of d'Indy's pieces.

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<sup>81</sup> In fact, the greater the historical distance between the audience and the composer, the more difficult it becomes for the former to grasp the "authentic" cultural field of the "text" with all its nuances. Therefore, today, a recipient requires a considerable amount of knowledge that allows them to virtually 'reduce' this distance and 'simulate' immersion in the socio-cultural environment in which d'Indy's contemporaries lived.

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## Chapter 13

# Non-Narrative and Anti-Narrative Strategies in 21st-century Piano Concertos by Polish Composers<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The chapter discusses non-narrative and anti-narrative strategies in the works by Polish composers of the 21st century. It shows how they are included in the structure of the work, how they influence its form and the form of the concerto genre, as well as the meanings. The analyses draw on the concepts of Michael Klein (*Map of Narrative Discourse*), Nicholas Reyland (*Narrative Negations*), Kofi Agawu (*Beginning-Middle-End Paradigm*) and Vincent Meelberg. The materials presented here constitute an excerpt from the author's doctoral dissertation on contemporary piano concertos in the context of genre transformations and theories of musical narrative (2024).

**Keywords:** narrative, piano, concerto, 21st-century music, genre

## Introduction

Concerto is a musical genre with particularly narrative predispositions, immanently inscribed in its characteristic assumptions, stemming from the relationship between two opposing sound subjects, the tendency to build an overarching dramatic-architectural whole, as well as the virtuosic, showpiece endings, which are a kind of narrative gesture inherent in the nature of the genre.

The 20th century – by transcending the classical form-shaping determinants – brought new ways of shaping narrative in concertos. Modernist tendencies to negate traditional values also brought attempts to negate the narrative character of the concerto, as exemplified by the compositions of Cage (*Concert for Piano and Orchestra*), Feldman (*Piano and Orchestra*) and Berio (*Concerto per due pianoforte e orchestra*). Currently, there is a noticeable return to the idea of narrative, which is in line with the assumptions of the postmodern era and also illustrates the actuality of the concerto genre and its basic paradigms.

My recent research focused on narrative strategies employed in 21st-century Polish piano concertos, exploring the variety of compositions comprising both traditional and new narrative patterns, as well as – still retaining some relevance – solutions negating the narrative course of the pieces. The article concentrates on the last group of ideas, namely non-narrative and anti-narrative strategies. I will discuss two representative pieces to an-

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

swer the following research questions: how are the aforementioned solutions included in the structure of the work? How do they influence its form and the form of the concerto genre? What kind of meanings do they bring and how they reflect important contexts of contemporary culture? The following issues will be accompanied by a reflection on the 21st-century manifestation of the concerto genre and its boundaries. The analyses draw on the concepts of Michael Klein (*Map of Narrative Discourse*), Nicholas Reyland (*Narrative Negations*), Kofi Agawu (*Beginning-Middle-End Paradigm*) and Vincent Meelberg.

## Narrative Theories – Methodological Considerations

It is worth starting the considerations with defining basic assumptions of the issue of narrative in music with the two questions: What is narrative in music? And – is all music narrative? Theories of musical narrative have been emerging in cultural and music studies since around 1970. Nowadays, we can observe a multiplicity of methodologies, some of them excluding, some complementary. Authors who have addressed the question of the narrativity of a musical work include Eero Tarasti, Marta Grabócz, Robert Hatten, Michael Klein, Nicholas Reyland, Byron Almén and Vincent Meelberg. They have proposed specific definitions of musical narrative, understood as “the way in which the signifieds are organized within a musical form” (Grabócz 2008), “the representation of a temporal development” (Meelberg 2006, 1), “articulating the dynamics and possible outcomes of conflict or interaction between elements, rendering meaningful the temporal succession of events, and coordinating these events into an interpretative whole” (Almén 2008, 13). On the basis of the aforementioned methodologies, it is possible to define the narrative in terms of five main elements: time – events – relationship – change – plot. The most important element of a narrative is time, shaped in a linear, teleological and discursive<sup>2</sup> way, in which events that remain in a relationship occur one after the other. A significant development (change) of the initial set of values, followed by a moment of climax or transvaluation<sup>3</sup> also plays an important role in creating the course of a narrative. Ultimately, it forms a coherent and complete whole – a plot – with the essential phases of development: beginning, middle and end, accompanied by their assigned functions.<sup>4</sup> A musical work is thus defined as narrative if it fulfils the specified criteria.

Some of the works (including the majority of classical compositions from the 18th and 19th centuries) fit very easily within the above criteria, others may question them, at least to some extent. Music scholars mention certain types of music that seem to resist narrative qualities: background music, café music, advertising music, wedding, marching or funeral music, noise and field music (Almén 2008; McClary 1997; Cutileiro 2014) – are they all meant to tell a story that the listener can follow, or rather to create a mood or fulfil a certain function? In particular, some of the avant-garde styles and compositional tech-

<sup>2</sup> For further reflections on musical time see Kramer 1988; Pearsall 2006; Meelberg 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of transvaluation occupies a central place in Byron Almén's narrative theory (2008).

<sup>4</sup> *Beginning-Middle-End Paradigm* was introduced into musical analysis by Kofi Agawu (1991; 2008).

niques of the 20th century reject narrative organisation or even deliberately deny some of the determinants of narrative: minimalism, serial music, chance music, aleatoric music... Examples may be listed among the works of John Cage (4' 33"), Karlheinz Stockhausen (*Kontakte*), Steve Reich (*Piano Phase*).

To describe the aforementioned issues scholars have introduced the terms: non-narrative and anti-narrative, usually used quite freely and alternatively. In his *Musical Semiotics*, Eero Tarasti emphasized the anti-narrative qualities of minimal music, achieved through the repetitive organisation of musical time and the absence of basic phases of musical plot (such as beginning, middle and end), as well as its aesthetic assumptions, in line with the ideas of postmodernism, an era in which "one no longer believes in grand stories and master narrative" (Tarasti 1994, 285). In an article published in 1997, Susan McClary described the majority of 20th-century music (with its new, non-tonal structures of musical language) as ANTI-narrative (McClary 1997, 21) – a viewpoint that has been superseded by subsequent scholars, e.g. Klein, Reyland, Meelberg. A reflection on narrative strategies in 20th-century music was also proposed by Jann Pasler (2008), who – along with new forms of narrative observed in music composed after 1980 – defined strategies as anti-narrative, non-narrative and nonnarrativity. In his very broad view of narrative, inspired by Mieke Bal's literary theory, Vincent Meelberg (2006) claimed that it is practically impossible to compose a completely non-narrative work – as its only example the researcher considered a single, continuous, uninterrupted sound. This statement is complemented by the composer's point of view presented by Tiago Cutileiro (2014), who notes that it is not so easy to achieve a fragment of music completely devoid of narrative qualities.

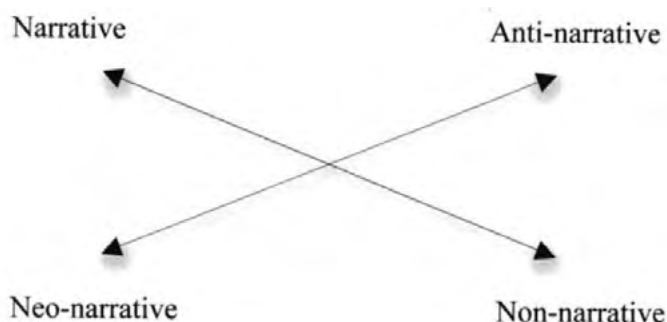
In the view of the aforementioned theories, it is worth considering a pair of oppositions: narrative – non-/anti-narrative not as a simple binary contradiction, but rather as a spectrum within which different styles, composition techniques, and musical pieces may be placed, based on their larger or smaller narrative potential. This interpretation corresponds to Vera Micznik's concept of *degrees of narrativity*: "music, on the basis of its distinct characteristics, may present qualities and processes that render it closer to, or farther from, the condition of narrative" (2001, 244).

The diversity of 20th- and 21st-century music provides a significant challenge for narratological analyses and interpretations. A methodology that aims to cover the variety of narrative solutions identified within contemporary compositions has been proposed by Michael Klein, as the *Map of Narrative Discourse*. The American author introduces the terms narrative and neo-narrative to name – successively – traditional (in the sense of the language of the 19th century) and new ways of creating musical narratives. As examples, Klein quotes, consequently, the music of Sergei Rachmaninov and solutions found among works of Arnold Schoenberg, Claude Debussy, Györgi Ligeti. For the solutions that negate the narrative characteristics of a musical discourse the American author distinguishes between non-narrative, as music that does not possess narrative qualities ("music with no tonality, no themes, no sense of causality or transformation, no organizing principle whatsoever, in fact: just a set of independent sound worlds, textures, or blips of acoustic matter" /Klein 2013, 4/) and anti-narrative, defined as music that plays with traditional determinants of the narrative, breaking with classical conventions and the listener's

narrative habits (for example – a sudden, interrupted ending of a musical piece). The examples attached discuss non-narrative qualities of Morton Feldman's *Projection 4* and Earle Brown's *Folio*, as well as anti-narrative strategies adopted by Debussy, Strawinsky, Shostakovich, Prokofiev and Lutosławski.

Klein's terminology served as the basis for my concerto-related study. The following analyses illustrate the non-narrative and anti-narrative solutions in the two distinct concertos from the oeuvre of contemporary Polish composers.

**Example 1.** Michael Klein, *Map of Narrative Discourse* (Klein 2013, 5).  
Reproduced with permission from the author.



### **Tadeusz Wielecki *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (2009)**

*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* by Tadeusz Wielecki (b. 1954) is a 15-minute, single-movement piece with a traditional for the concerto setting of the soloist and symphony orchestra. The piece was commissioned by the Hiroshima Symphony Association, hence the work's dedication ("To Hiroshima City"), which refers to the tragic history of the Japanese city, but also carries an evocative message of a more general nature, as the composer has explained: "It is a general dedication to a city whose history has been marked by trauma. As a Varsovian by birth, it was not difficult for me to make such a gesture" (Wielecki 2023).

The beginning of the piece is written in the author's characteristic technique called "the composed trill", which consists of rhythmically free structures based on polyphonic timbres revolving around several pitches – as if imitating a trill. Its impact is already apparent at the beginning of the piece – the composition opens with a bright, vibrant orchestral texture, constructed from overlapping sound layers. A chromatic motif derived from a trill figure stands out in the foreground, carried out in successive instrument's parts (trumpet, violin). Orchestral introduction is followed by introduction of the solo instrument which leads a chromatic motif in the technique of "composed trill" in a two-voice layer.

In the following section (from m. 58), a distinctive feature emerges in the way of leading solo-tutti relations. Set against the backdrop of a monotonous piano part, a few-measure intercourses of selected instrumental groups occur. At the same time, there is very

little relationship between the two characters of the musical narrative. Although they are created from the same musical material, their parts do not respond to each other. The piano part remains still (on a constant dynamic level – *piano*) and does not react to the orchestral climaxes, does not take up the narrative thread, does not participate in the dialogue. The consecutive orchestral interpolations explore the diverse palette of orchestral sounds, however, the internally mobile and sonorously modified texture is full of repetitive monotony and could be considered static in terms of temporality.

Following a moment of silence (m. 206), there is a greater diversity of ideas and a divergence between the piano and the orchestra. Two orchestral climaxes characterised by a dense, static, sonorous sound texture occur. After the first one (from m. 251), the piano part once more takes up the initial chromatic motif, shaped in an uniform and continuous manner, devoid of major expressive changes or more clearly marked relationships with the orchestra, which diversifies the course with original instrumental effects. The musical discourse is characterised by a nondirected movement, intensified expression, and subcutaneous tension. The structure of the piece is extended by a collection of musical gestures (mostly appearing as two alienated piano solos) which are not connected by the logic of the following events and do not form a sequence of tensions, relaxations and climaxes. Also surprising and even anti-narrative is the ending of the *Concerto* – in a disappearing piano solo.

**Table 1.** Tadeusz Wielecki *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*. Tabular analysis.

Mm.	1	21	58	206	208	251	310	352	375
Orchestra	<b>Introduction</b> texture composed with use of the 'composed trill' technique	-	a few-measure interpolations of different instruments (‘composed trill’ technique) bring dramatic variety	GENERAL REST	<b>Culmination 1</b> sonoristic texture	continues to develop musical ideas non-goal directed motion intensified expression conflict / asynchrony with the piano part	-	<b>Culmination 2</b> sonoristic texture	-
Piano	-	<b>Introduction</b> texture composed with use of the 'composed trill' technique	continues its part on a similar expressive level does not react to plot development in orchestra's part		-	continues its part with use of the „composed trill” technique on an unchanged expressive level provides a minimal response to the orchestral part	<b>Gesture 1</b> short series of dissonant intervals and poly-rhythmic figurations articulated <i>staccato</i>	-	<b>Gesture 2</b> singular chords dispersed across the keyboard gradually fade away

The temporal organization of the piece, through utilization of structures filled with non-directed motion and repetitiveness, does not evince substantial indication of narrative.<sup>5</sup> Also, the very little interaction between piano and ensemble exceeds the very primary feature of the concerto genre – the idea of the relationship between the soloist and the

<sup>5</sup> Following J. Kramer’s methodology, we may use the expression *nondirected (linear) time* (Kramer 1988, 453).

orchestra.<sup>6</sup> It is an essence of the concerto – if there is no relationship, an *anticoncerto*<sup>7</sup> or concerto *à rebours*<sup>8</sup> is created. The independence of the piano and orchestra parts also allows one to recall Nicholas Reyland's category of bifurcated narration, in which “a second, seemingly tangential narrative intrudes upon the first, generating a range of relationships between them” (Alan Soldofsky, quoted in Reyland 2013, 41). Reyland thus proposed a set of narrative strategies adapted from literary theories that refer to the postmodern reality, modifying or negating the traditional, linear, goal-directed plot development. Following Reyland's methodology, the narrative in Wielecki's *Concerto* may be interpreted as consisting of two simultaneous narratives shaped in a largely independent, separate manner,

**Example 2.** Tadeusz Wielecki, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, fragment of the music structure created with use of the “composed trill” technique, mm. 86–90. Reproduced with permission from the composer.

The image displays a page of a musical score for Tadeusz Wielecki's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, specifically measures 86–90. The score is written for a full orchestra and includes staves for Oboe (ob), Clarinet (cl), Bassoon (fb), Horn (Hr), Violin I (Vln I), Violin II (Vln II), and Viola (Vcl). The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a prominent 'composed trill' technique. The score is written in a single system, with measures 86–90 clearly marked. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, key signatures, and dynamic markings.

<sup>6</sup> As defined by Joseph Kerman: “in general one knows exactly who is who in a concerto and who is doing what (...) The characters or agents exist in some kind of a relationship (...) and what is traced in a concerto is the course of a relationship” (Kerman 1992, 95–96).

<sup>7</sup> The term was introduced by Wolfram Schwingner in 1979 in relation to the most radical works of the 1960s.

<sup>8</sup> The term concerto *à rebours* was introduced by Wielecki to describe solutions applied to his 1998 *Violin Concerto*, with an aim to overcome the most basic idea of the concerto with dramaturgical and structural independence of soloist's and orchestral part (Wielecki 1998).

which overcomes the narrative unity of the soloist and orchestra, providing the basis for the concerto development. Following Reyland's elaborate esthetic though, this metaphor might be seen as representing dualistic forms of postmodern reality.

Furthermore, in his study on narrative, drawing on several psychoanalytical studies, Vincent Meelberg states that a musical structure can be seen as a representation of a traumatic event (2006, 175–194). This involves the shaping of the narrative, on the one hand with a kind of movement and development, and on the other hand with the negation of its course, with sudden breaks in the context, as well as the inability to resolve the course of the musical plot. Concerning the dedication and the contexts related to the piece, I would like to interpret the narrative structure of the Wielecki's *Concerto* as referring to or reflecting traumatic events in the history of the modern (post-trauma) world. The strongly independent part of the soloist shows the situation of an individual who does not enter into relations with the society, who shapes its course separately and is unable to create a logical relationship that gives meaning to his existence. By implying non-narrative and anti-narrative solutions the composer seems to take up relevant contemporary contexts, he also seems to “refer to such fundamental, existential problems of a man such as loneliness, misunderstanding, otherness, individuality or indifference” (Mądro 2008, 220).

### **Bogusław Schaeffer *V Klavierkonzert für Klavier und Solistenchoir* (2003)**

Further examples of concertos highly influenced by ideas transcending their narrative character can be found among works by Bogusław Schaeffer (1929–2019). The Polish composer is the author of numerous instrumental concertos for various settings, in which he remained faithful to the characteristics of the avant-garde of the 1960s.<sup>9</sup> One of the representative examples is *V Klavierkonzert für Klavier und Solistenchoir*, scored for piano and a group of 15 choral soloists (5 sopranos, 4 altos, 3 tenors, 2 baritones and a bass), without orchestra. The unusual means were expressed by the composer in his commentary: “It's worth experimenting, so I'm doing it. Something like that has never ever been done. Piano concerto for piano and the choir of fifteen vocal soloists” (Jutrzenka-Trzebiatowska 2016, 51). The underlying ideas of constant exploration, experimentation, and discovery of uncharted composition areas constitute the composer's artistic *credo*.

The ca. 45-minute piece consists of five movements. Each of them is divided into several shorter sections (see Table 2), varied with changing groups of voices, as well as piano cadences (although their soloistic character is not always respected in a strict manner). The main idea dictating the course of the work is the constant change of musical material and textural arrangements. The composer constantly explores both atonal, highly chromatic sequences of piano figures, as well as almost tonal or even jazzy choral chords as well as avant-garde performance measures – clusters, improvised graphic fragments, mostly centered in the sections marked *senza misura*. These ideas are already outlined

<sup>9</sup> Bogusław Schaeffer's piano concertos have been discussed in: Atys, 2019.



in *Cadenza I*, which opens the concerto. Written in free metre, it encompasses successive textural ideas in the piano part, such as rapid four-note figurations predominantly based on the interval of a second, diverse motifs with variable articulation, various types of triads, glissandos and trills. The incorporation of the choir (no. 7) outlines another of the concerto's overarching ideas: the juxtaposition of contrasting timbral and textural patterns. Long and static vocal layers emphasize harmony, while fast, constantly modified figures in the piano part highlight motion and virtuosity. The term "15 choral soloist" in the title of the piece reveals Schaeffer's characteristic approach to the performing apparatus. The vocal ensemble is treated as a group of soloists who perform either individually or in various chamber ensembles throughout successive sections (their vocal parts consist of selected vowels, consonants or single syllables that interact with their phonic and sonic layers).

The subsequent movements of the concerto are filled with sections that explore unorthodox textural arrangements and peculiar types of timbre possible to achieve with piano and choir. In the course of the work, there is almost no return to previously presented material and the listener is constantly surprised with new, original ideas, exploring the textural possibilities of different arrangements of the voices and the piano (supplemented by some extravagant ideas such as the insertion of a bass solo in cadence No. 2, and a larger number of singers in cadence No. 5). In passages of greater dramatic force, there is also an intense conflict, clash or even lack of coordination between the piano and the vocal group.

**Table 2.** Bogusław Schaeffer *V Klavierkonzert für Klavier und Solistenchoir*. Tabular analysis.

	MOV. 1					MOV. 2					MOV. 3				MOV. 4						MOV. 5									
Score number	1	7	17	26	29	31	33	39	44	48	52	56	59	62	64	70	79	81	85	87	89	93	98	101	104	106	115	121	130	
Cadenza	No.1		No.2												No.3											No.4		No.5		
Senza Misura	✓		✓								✓				✓	✓				✓						✓	✓		✓	
Pfte	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Soprano		5	5		5				3			5		5	5				3		5	5	5	5	1			5	5	
Alto		4		3	4	4		3				4	1	4								4	4	4			4	4	4	
Tenor		3			3		3			3		3		3			2	3				3	3	3	1			3	3	
Baritone		2			2		2			2	2	2	1	2						2		2	2	2				2	2	
Bass		1	1		1		1			1		1	1	1								1	1	1				1	1	
	Ending gesture																													
Cast	Tutti (dominant)					Cast reduction					Tutti (dominant)				Cast reduction						Tutti (dominant)									

The dramaturgy of the piece seems to be determined by a sequence of contrasting sections, constant change and maximum diversity of elements. In the arrangement of the movements, the idea of alternating the vocal cast can be discerned (tutti in the odd-numbered parts and chamber in the even-numbered parts), while the gentle and subdued types of expression used in the second part allow us to detect a distant echo of the second, slow part of the sonata cycle. Besides, there are no further references to traditional formal patterns, especially those for the concerto genre: sonata form and cycle. The composition

seems to transcend the idea of (cyclical) dramaturgy as well as narrative qualities, which are so deeply rooted in the tradition of the concerto genre.

Instead, on the basis of the composer's previous aesthetic experiments, it is possible to look for speculative ideas (typical of the composer) underlying the construction of the piece – *Klavierkonzert No. 5*, with 5 movements, 5 cadences, using 5 different human voices. It is also possible to search for graphic arrangements – most of the consecutive segments end exactly at the end of the page (sometimes with an almost outstanding, deliberately “added” cadence that breaks the monotony of the ever-changing figurations), some of the structures were also notated on small pieces of paper and look as if they had been glued into the full score of the concerto using the collage technique and do not really fit in with the surrounding ideas (it is worth noting that musical graphics were one of the composer's strongest interests).

This allows the *V Klavierkonzert für Klavier und Solistenchoir* to be seen as strongly influenced by non-narrative and anti-narrative ideas. The constant variability of the musical material does not allow us to follow musical events linked with causal relations. The listener is disoriented by following more and more new motivic ideas, loses the sense of the logic of the plot and is unable to perceive an overall narrative arc. At the same time, in the middle of the *Konzert* (at the end of the 3rd movement, nos. 62–63), there is a deliberately prolonged single note – a kind of parody of a traditional final gesture. Concurrently, beginnings of the consecutive sections (when the piano part “gives” the initial pitches for the singers) and their endings (marked with distinct cadences) have been exaggerated, standing out from difficult to perceive in the narrative sense, constant flow of changeable motives. Furthermore, the ending of the piece is cut and closed with a single, resolved dissonance that does not seem to fulfil the role of a logical conclusion. The concerto is almost 50 minutes long and the listening experience is an unusual one.

The range of solutions indicated in the work exceeding the basic characteristics of the genre related to the development of dramaturgy and the narrative nature of the musical discourse places *V Klavierkonzert* by Schaeffer at the far pole of the generic determinants of the concerto. It may even raise a question of whether the concept of “anticoncerto” should be considered. On the other hand, with so many contradictions in the determinants of the concerto, including its narrative and logic of form development, the piece exploits the most fundamental idea of the genre – the juxtaposition of contrasting masses of sound, almost to the point of exaggeration. Extravagant contrasts between the piano and various choral parts seem to be a solution that goes back to the roots of the concerto, with late 16th and early 17th-century vocal and vocal-instrumental pieces as its primary sources. In this way, Bogusław Schaeffer's piece seems to be related to the tradition of the genre and its most fundamental assumptions.

**Example 3.** Bogusław Schaeffer, *V Klavierkonzert für Klavier und Solistenchor*, Cadence No. 5 with vocal parts, score no. 121–122. Reproduced with permission from the Fundacja Przyjaciół Sztuk Aurea Porta.

[illegible]

**Example 4.** Bogusław Schaeffer, *V Klavierkonzert für Klavier und Solistenchoir*, virtuosic piano figurations over static vocal lines, no. 81. Reproduced with permission from the Fundacja Przyjaciół Sztuk Aurea Porta.

Example 4 shows a musical score for piano (P) and vocal (T) parts. The piano part features complex, rapid figurations with triplets and sixteenth notes. The vocal part is static, with long notes and rests. A tempo marking of 3/4 = 52 is present. The measure number 81 is circled at the bottom left.



**Example 5.** Bogusław Schaeffer, *V Klavierkonzert für Klavier und Solistenchoir*, *senza misura* fragment – aleatoric and graphic arrangement, no. 87. Reproduced with permission from the Fundacja Przyjaciół Sztuk Aurea Porta.

Example 5 shows a musical score for piano (P) and vocal (T) parts. The piano part is aleatoric and graphic, with many notes and rests connected by lines. The vocal part is static, with long notes and rests. A tempo marking of 3/4 = 52 is present. The measure number 87 is circled at the bottom left.



## Conclusion

The 21st-century piano concertos (including those created by Polish composers) demonstrate how composers are constantly searching for new forms and means of expression within the genres established in tradition, including solutions that transcend basic generic determinants. The analyses presented in the article demonstrate how composers have created original and intriguing exemplars of the concerto by negating some of the essential features of the genre.

In Tadeusz Wielecki's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, the negation of the fundamental idea of the relationship between the soloist and the orchestra resulting in a considerable degree of autonomy for both parties is combined with the nondirected or even static way of shaping musical time. These solutions became the basis for creation of a narrative referring to important contexts of contemporary reality, marked by traumatic events and their socio-cultural consequences. In contrast, Bogusław Schaeffer's *V Klavierkonzert für Klavier und Solistenchor*, a composition that emerged from the ideals of the 1960s avant-garde and the idea of the continuous exploration of novelty, is comprised of a series of contrasting segments. They are based on the constant variability of the material and the presentation of original sonoral ideas that do not form a coherent narrative. The negation of the principles of narrative and dramatic development, achieved through the linking of successive structural elements or the logical arrangement of successive phases or climaxes, represents a departure from the centuries-old tradition of the genre. The incorporation of piano and choir within the concerto yet signifies a reference to the origins of the concerto, wherein proponents of the Venetian school proposed unprecedented textures and sonoral elements within a novel vocal-instrumental genre designated as the concerto. The notion of constant exploration of innovative solutions appears to allude to a pivotal era in the trajectory of musical culture, specifically the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque period. At the same time, the concerto, as a leading exemplar of modernism<sup>10</sup> introduced novel and revolutionary concepts that delineated the trajectory of instrumental music for an extended period.

The compositional solutions presented are, of course, not the only examples of non- and anti-narrative ideas that appear in a group of piano concertos by Polish composers of the 21st century. In Piano Concerto No.3 (*Fragments of Memory* /2019/) by Zygmunt Krauze (b. 1938) a sequence of isolated, contrasting segments constitutes a collection of individual, static moments, supplemented by scattered words in the piano part reflecting the title "fragments of memory". The structure of *Multimirrors* for piano and symphony orchestra (2022) by Kamil Cieślík (b. 1991) is subordinated to the basic compositional premise of the piece, written in retrograde technique (there is a title "mirror" in the middle, followed by a "reflection" of the structures used). Ideas of narrative are also clearly challenged by the compositional solutions used by Franciszek Araszkiewicz (b. 1986) in his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (*Monoliths 2:3:5* /2015/), which structure was created according to algorithmic processes and combinatorics. The aforementioned examples show the intense interest in the concerto genre and compositional experiments within

<sup>10</sup> "...the word *concerto* itself signified a special modernity at the time" (Daunoravičienė 2021, 18).

it, which yet constitute a minority of the numerous (ca. 120 pieces written after the year 2000) piano concerto-related oeuvre of the Polish composers. It is important to notice that the above-listed pieces coexist with many other presenting a fairly traditional, conventional approach to the genre as well as those introducing new narrative ideas. This phenomenon results in the plurality of approaches to the concerto genre. Today's concerto is a synthesis of memory of the genre and new ideas, as well as new narrative strategies. Among them there are above-described strategies that negate traditional determinants of the concerto, seek for new solutions and also push the boundaries of the generic space of the concerto by contradicting its basic features. They also carry significant cultural values. Non- and anti-narrative ideas presented in the article reflect important contexts of contemporary world and – as mentioned by Jann Pasler “respond to the modern desire for expressing the multiplicity of existence, fragmentary and seemingly irrational orders, and meanings that go beyond those that are known” (Pasler 2008, 46). They expand the generic space of the concerto with new solutions, broadening the scope of compositional exploration.

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## Chapter 14

Narrative Walks through Eco's Woods<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract**

This chapter explores the tragic symphonic genre through the metaphor of Umberto Eco's fictional woods. Following Eco, I take a narrative "walk" through symphonies by Thomas Adès, Krzysztof Penderecki, and George Rochberg. Throughout, musical narrative emerges via a rhetorical device called *peripeteia*, a dramatic reversal that embodies the essence of the tragic. I examine power relations (and loss of voice) in Adès's *Asyla*, two deaths (and the space between) in Penderecki's Symphony No. 3, and past soldiers (and belatedness) in Rochberg's Symphony No. 2. These interpretations speak to a broader concern of how we process and subjectivize tragedy through musical narrative.

**Keywords:** tragic expressive genre, fictional composer, peripeteia, two deaths, belatedness

**The Woods***Tragic Symphonic Expressive Genre*

Paraphrasing Heraclitus, you never walk through the same woods twice, for it is not the same forest and you are not the same you. Heraclitus's statement embodies the idea that life is in a consistent state of becoming, an idea that I transpose to Umberto Eco's *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994). There, Eco explores the art of narrative from readerly and writerly perspectives. Eco's woods are more than a powerful metaphor for navigating narrative, they represent a psychological battlefield of signifiers and meanings that emanate from the listener and accelerate outward. Eco's woods are where we find the model listener, lost in space and time, drawing a map of musical meaning from lines traversed through the forest. In Eco's woods, listeners are subjects-in-process.

Eco's woods are intertextual. Intertextuality requires listeners to "hypothesize, rebuild, or just wonder, a task they are not at liberty to avoid, since it is dictated by the gaps in the fabric of the text of by linguistic anomalies that the hypothesis of figurality fails to solve" (Riffaterre 1984, 781). Intertextuality champions what makes us human, making it an appealing strategy for unpacking powerful expressions, like those associated with tragedy. In this essay, intertextuality is an informant for the study of narrative, serving as a narrativity in Lawrence Kramer's (1991) tripartite model of musical narratology in which narrativity (what drives narrative) is the mediating force between narratology (the

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.



interpretation at large) and narratography (the discoursing of the narrative). Viewed this way, narrativities operate as referees between two interpretive layers that contribute to our own, human, musical story.

This essay speaks of tragedy in three symphonies, taking Eco's musical-fictional woods as a narrative guide. I construct my narratography by questioning how musical semiotics and *tragic expressive genres* intertext-paint codes of meaning into these symphonic utterances. For Robert Hatten, expressive genres involve either a "change-of-state schema" such as the shift from oppression toward spiritual grace or are a method of organizing "expressive states in terms of an overarching topical field (pastoral, *tragic*)" (1994, 290, emphasis mine). This type of non-transformative expressive state is core to Byron Almén's (2008, 65–67) conceptualization of the tragic narrative archetype (inspired by the work of Northrop Frye), defined by the victory of a negatively viewed *order-imposing hierarchy* over a *positively viewed transgression*, coinciding with a rise and fall in that transgression's rank value. The *tragic symphonic expressive genre* builds on these ideas by establishing a trajectory that is dramatically cut short, a moment that resembles an important rhetorical device found in classic narratives of tragedy – the *peripeteia* – a term that comes from Aristotle's discussion of tragedy in *Poetics* (335 BCE). Michael Klein states that "moments of suffering often coincide with peripeteia, which may clue the listener to a musical narrative" (2005, 140). Even though tragic symphonic utterances offer an endless sign system that explores suffering and loss in as many ways, the idea of peripeteia is fundamental.

I take three "walks" through the tragic symphonic expressive genre, a section of Eco's musical-fictional woods, following peripeteia as my rhetorical compass. The three symphonies, while belonging to composers of different generations, cultures, and musical styles, were chosen because they each narrate tragedy in unique ways. And although two of the symphonies are from the end of the 20th century and one is from the middle of the same century, they all speak to a post-World War II condition associated with grief. I begin by interpreting Thomas Adès's *Asyla* (1997) as intertextual narrative of power and loss of voice. That reading initiates with a dysphoric pastoral topic and trends toward larger questions of institutionalized power and how prison-structures organize our subjectivity (e.g., drug-infused raves and counterculture, captivity and imprisonment, and compositional influence). I then move to a reading of Krzysztof Penderecki's Symphony No. 3 (1995) as an intertextually minded, post-Freudian Lacanian-Žižekian scenario involving what are called the "two deaths". That analysis is interested in the order of the two deaths as well as the space between, where a subjectivity has symbolically died and exists in a state of waking death, anticipating their ultimate fade into nothingness. Lastly, I unearth soldiers of the past in an analysis of serialism and belatedness in George Rochberg's Symphony No. 2 (1955–56), a story that interweaves a biographical theory of musical narrative with serialism, sonata form, and the anxiety of influence (via intertextuality). By following the structuration of how these symphonies narrativize tragedy, the model listener learns how to walk in the dark sylvan soundscape.

## Walk One: Loss of Voice

### Power Relations and Panopticism

This interpretation posits Thomas Adès as the composer of power. Power is ubiquitous – it reveals domination/subservience, it organizes forces, it drives. One way that musical power emerges is through ambiguity (*i.e.*, the composer is withholding something from the listener). “Asyla” is an ambiguous term that lies at a threshold of meaning between exclusion (*e.g.*, society’s “outcasts”) or protection (*e.g.*, political asylum). The term is highly fitting for Adès’s Grawemeyer-winning, large-scale orchestral work, and points to a broader cultural concern that is taken up by Edward Venn’s references to Michel Foucault’s analyses of asylums and power:

Foucault’s well-known thesis is that the modern conception of insanity descends from the Classical model, in which madness was treated as a subcategory of unreason, and for which internment functioned as a means of keeping such elements away from the reasoned main body of society. This results in a concept of the asylum not as a haven for the mad, but as a means by which society might exclude those who, for whatever reason, do not conform to social norms (Venn 2006, 99).

In such a reading, nonconforming subjects become normalized through power relations, which exist on all levels. *Asyla* is not merely about the concept of the asylum and how Adès musically paints that frozen landscape, it offers insight into Foucault’s idea that asylums evolved as a function of cultural and social power. Interpreting a dramaturgy of power in *Asyla* teaches us about how we imprison ourselves, both from outside and from within.

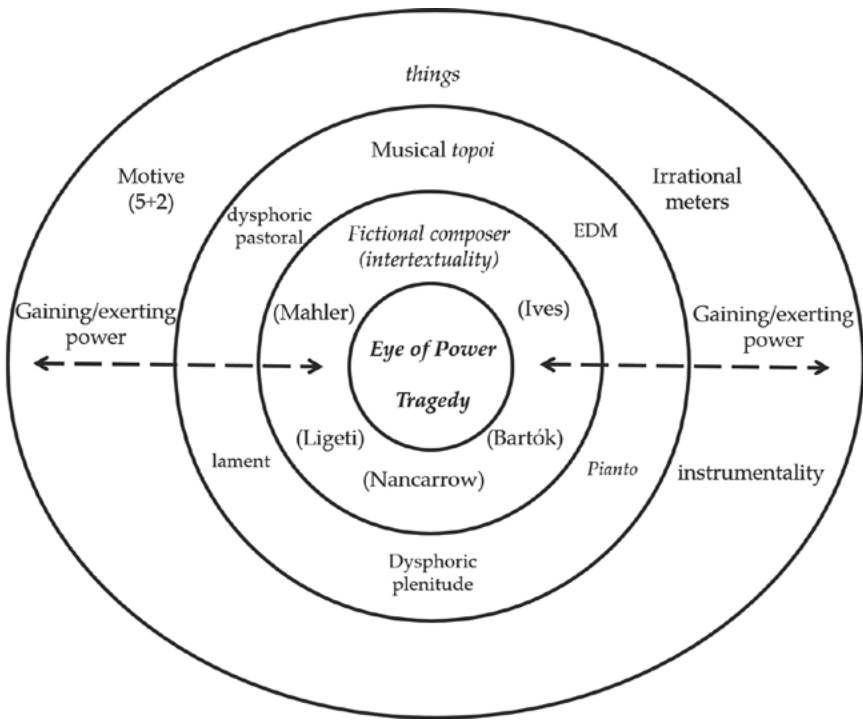
For Foucault, power and knowledge are caught up in the observation and examination of others. To clarify this concept, Foucault offers Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon as an example of that kind of observation-becoming-power:

A perimeter building in the form of a ring. At the center of this, a tower, pierced by large windows opening on to the inner face of the ring. The outer building is divided into cells each of which traverses the whole thickness of the building. These cells have two windows, one opening on to the inside, facing the windows of the central tower, the other, outer one allowing daylight to pass through the whole cell. All that is needed is to put an overseer in the tower and place in each of the cells a lunatic, a patient, a convict, a worker, a schoolboy. The back lighting enables one to pick out from the central tower the little captive silhouettes in the ring of cells (Foucault 1980, 147).

The architectural design allows for one guard to oversee all. In a panopticon, inmates are in a constant state of surveillance, not knowing when, or if, they are being observed – they actually police themselves as a result. Foucault (1984, 211) discusses the “panoptic modality of power” in which power exists on a near infinite number of levels, and we are all agents continuously exerting and succumbing to various forces of power. Borrowing Seth Monahan’s (2013) concept of the *fictional composer*, I interpret a *fictional Adès* agential class in *Asyla* that is caught up in a discourse of power relations composed of an intertextual code of semiotics (*e.g.*, musical *topoi*, plenitude, motives and metrical signatures) and agency (*e.g.*, other fictional composers). *Fictional Adès* is more than a “paranoid watch-

man of a shepherd”, he is the faceless Other that watches over all. Figure 1 lays out the narrativities in *Asyla* found throughout this analysis in the shape of a panopticon.

**Figure 1.** Narrativities in *Asyla*



In the figure, tragedy is centered in the “eye of power”. Expanding outward, the voices of others are found in an intertextual exertion of power, which then extend toward topics, as part of the expressive genre, and eventually toward musical features that are signatures of *fictional Adès*.

### A Dysphoric Pastoral, and the Horn of Nocturnal Mystery

*Asyla* begins in a supernatural forest. A brief introduction, replete with cowbells and otherworldly percussion (including an Ives-style piano detuned by a microtone), establishes a dysphoric pastoral setting. The first theme, shown in Example 1, sounds on a distant horn. Its first phrase is a mostly conjunct passage that outlines part of an OCT1,2 (octatonic) collection until its last pitch, F#, which is approached by a falling fifth. F# bridges to OCT0,1, which encompasses the majority of the second phrase’s pitch content. The last ascending-descending gesture completes the pitch aggregate in concert with a descending and dysphoric horn call.

**Example 1.** Reduction of *Asyla's* horn of nocturnal mystery

call: OCT<sub>1,2</sub>      response: OCT<sub>0,1</sub>      aggregate completion

(-1)      (+1)

horn of nocturnal mystery      A second horn joins, at a distance

This horn signifies distance through a hushed register; elongated, expressive phrasing; and instrumentality – that is, the history of the medieval hunting horn as a conveyor of messages, a “signaling instrument” that was used to “communicate certain messages” over a “wide area” and had a particular role in “stimulat[ing] the hounds” (Monelle 2006, 39). At once, the use of this instrument conjures up a signification chain that deepens through intertextuality with the Romantic-era German image of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. *Asyla's* horn signifies what Raymond Monelle (2006, 91) describes as *the horn of nocturnal mystery*: the instrument takes on some select associations of the hunt, especially the mysterious depth of the woodland, but abandons others in favor of other referents. In such an interpretation, the evocation of sylvan areas comes with a sense of danger and threat alongside images of sorcery and mystery that might befall a noble hunter in the woods. *Fictional Adès* is establishing a dark, magical story in movement 1 that will play out across the symphony.

### A Plenitude of Piantos

Movement 1's dysphoric pastoral is followed by a prolongation of anguish. The main theme for movement 2 (shown in Example 2) is structurally tight-knit and seeded with *pianto* topics (*i.e.*, a descending semitone associated with despair and sorrow). If we learn about pain in music by listening to music about pain, then constructing the theme of this particular movement as a chromatic *ricercar* saturated with *piantos* suggests that a tragic expressive genre might express itself through the blending of a dysphoric pastoral with solitary agony.

The lamenting theme is powered by chromaticism, octatonicism, and hexatonicism that merge in different streams, articulated as horizontal step-progressions whose linearity also corresponds vertically. John Roeder's (2006, 127) analysis of this theme displays how the composer holds a tight grip on the theme through strict counterpoint and strategic deployment of scalar collections that arise from a process-based composition. This theme shows *fictional Adès's* emergence as a figure preoccupied with control and power, which can be further interpreted through instrumentality and compositional idiosyncrasies. Movement 2's theme is heard on the bass oboe, a less commonly encountered, darker shade of its pastoral-aligning colleague from a higher register, which marks this movement, instrumentally. The combination of a descending minor second with a perfect fifth is a signature of *Adès* (Wells 2012), as is the non-dyadic 2/6 meter (*i.e.*, a time signature that does not divide beats into powers of two). *Pianto* topics unfold within each layer of the compound melody, and between them. As the theme creeps throughout the ensemble, the *piantos* travel from

voice to voice, increasing in frequency and saturating the texture. Plentiful are aspects of mourning, weeping, and suffering that enhance the mysticism of the supernatural pastoral first movement. In movement 2, *fictional Adès* is discovering his voice.

**Example 2.** Reduction of *Asyla's* Lamenting theme

Adès's intervallic signature  
(5<sup>th</sup> + semitone)

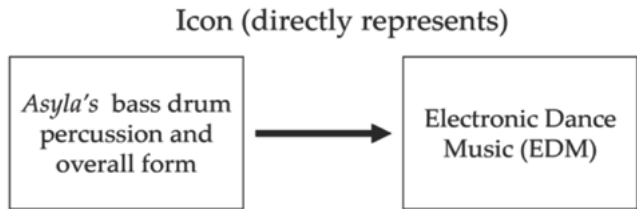
demonstration of compositional power: linear collections and *pianto's*

Adès's metric signature:  $\frac{2}{6}$   
(not shown on example)

*Ecstasy*

Movement three is the only movement for which Adès ascribes a title. “Ecstasio” provides topical and expressive contrast to the previous movements by loosely imitating electronic dance music (EDM). This is achieved via a “four-to-the-floor” bass drum, predictable formal markers (such as continuous processes, risers, and drops), and stylistic use of texture, timbre, and repetition. The signification system associated with EDM is vast and ranges from very high highs to very low lows, and *fictional Adès* shows us both worlds, cast through a power relation between the individual and the collective. In Figure 2, I construct EDM as an iconic signifier that results from these musical features.

**Figure 2.** EDM as an icon



Topically, EDM is indexical on at least two levels. Shown in Figure 3, EDM indexes rave (counter)culture, which subsequently points to substance abuse, specifically ecstasy (MDA and MDMA). In discussing rave culture of 1990s Britain (the context in which *Asyla* was composed), Venn describes how EDM and ecstasy were demonized by mainstream media and society, and that drugs and music combine to “create an environment within which one is rendered anonymous and depersonalized” (2014, 77). In becoming depersonalized and anonymous, participants in a rave take on a role as liminal beings directed by a shamanistic leader, the DJ, who guides them through the experience. The liminal participants become engaged in a larger *communitas* where all are on the same level of being: panoptic

participants are observers insofar as they are performers, borrowing tomorrow’s happiness for the bodily pleasures of the present.

**Figure 3.** EDM’s indexical signification

Index (A correlates or points to B)



“Ecstasio” climaxes when the orchestra splits in half: one group follows the conductor and the other joins the bass drum in articulating the EDM topic. At this crucial moment, power becomes the means by which narrative occurs, subsuming the work’s narrativities as they combine in a chaotic depiction of a drug-fueled rave. In Example 3, EDM is shown on the bottom staff and the conductor’s cues on the top staff, mm. 111–112 (m. 111 is shown in its entirety in the example). In just two measures, there are several “sub-measures” that fragment the ensemble, texture-painting the intersubjectivity of a rave into the orchestra. The conductor’s cue shows a disjointed ensemble: virtuosic subdivisions occur with both dyadic and non-dyadic meters as the conductor leads the way through a crowded metric space as the other half of the orchestra projects the EDM topic. It is at this point that *fictional Adès* assumes a position of power-conductor that is at the center of the panopticon, which is indicated by the abundance of non-dyadic metrical signifiers for *fictional Adès*. Adès and the ensemble are in a play between DJ and rave members – they are all choreographed, fractured, and the composer’s agency is in a powerful position of mediation between being and doing. *Fictional Adès* is at the center of the chaos, gazing outward at the prisoners policing their own sense of musical temporality.

**Example 3.** Power in “Ecstasio”

Conductor beats

m. 111 | 3 | 2 | 111b | 2 | 111c | 4 | 111d. | 2 | 111e. | 2 | 111f. | 5 | 111g.

winds | brass | winds | brass | etc.

m. 111i | 111ii | iii | iv

EDM Topic: 4 beats per bar in quarter-note pulse

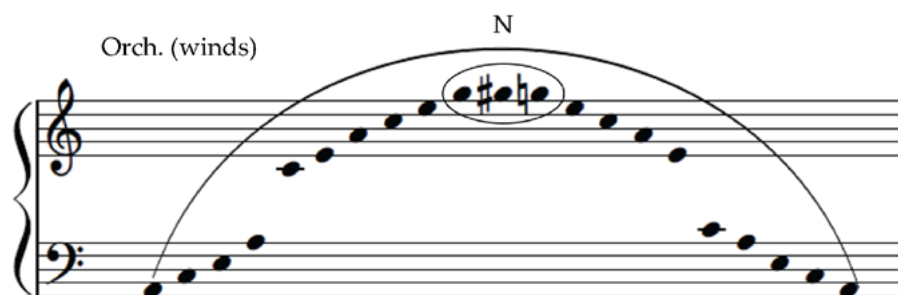
v | vi | vii | viii | 2x

EDM Topic continued...

## The Loss of Voice

After *fictional Adès's* ecstasy comes peripeteia and tragedy. The fourth and final movement is bookended by intertexts that tell the story of a *fictional Adès* that retreats from his own narrative and returns to the dysphoric woods from the first movement. There are two primary intertexts in this movement that I interpret in terms of panoptic power. The first reference is to Béla Bartók's opening to the "Lake of Tears" scene from *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911); the second recalls the Scherzo from Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 3 (1896).

**Example 4.** Opening to Bartók's "Lake of Tears" (reduction)



Emphasizing A minor: arc gesture in the winds

The first sounds of the movement recall Bartók's "Lake of Tears" scene from his only opera (Example 4). Sweeping arpeggios in the winds recur throughout the "Lake of Tears" as an iconic refrain that separates statements of the main characters. Frozen in A minor, the motive features a half-step upper neighbor motive (G–G#–G) before descending back down the arc to its origin, iconically signifying the waves of a lake. Shown in Example 5, Adès also uses A minor as a tonal area in his intertext, but rather than having the same chromatic neighboring motion as in the "Lake of Tears", Adès recomposes the gesture as a passing motion through a chromatic trichord that strings *Asyla's* movements together – specifically recalling the chromaticism of Movement 2.

*Asyla* ends with a moment of languish that forcefully intrudes on the discourse – Mahler's conclusion to the Scherzo movement of his Third Symphony (Example 6). Like Mahler's Scherzo, the tragic outburst contains an E-flat minor triad, Adès misreads Mahler. Horns anticipate the sonority, with a detuned piano preparing them with a sonic signifier of *fictional Ives* (particularly from Ives's Symphony No. 4). Rather than transcending upward in pitch space after the E-flat chord, as in Mahler, the final gesture of Adès's idealized noble horn is a descending octave leap, evoking the horn calls that conclude the dysphoric horn theme from earlier. Instead of writing a true breakthrough, *fictional Adès* concludes *Asyla* with tragic loss in the form of a peripeteia, which reverses the positive trajectory that the "Ecstasio" movement embraced. The frozen grief from the opening two movements suddenly becomes anguish; this intertextuality in *Asyla's* closing moments is a culmination of the drama, powerful enough to suggest that *fictional Adès* loses his own

voice at the conclusion, leaving nothing in its wake except for the mournful acceptance of instruments falling into silence.

**Example 5.** *Asyla* Mvmt. IV and “Lake of Tears” (reduction)

A minor framework, as in Bartók

P instead of N

Continuation of trichordal elaboration

Orch. (winds)

**Example 6.** Mahler intertext

8ve leap down

horns

*ff*

(detuned pno.)

*ff*

fragmentation of Mahler

full orchestra

The fictional composer is not the only agential class caught up in the narrative of *Asyla* – the analyst, Monahan’s (2013) highest ranking agential class, is also present in every decision, acting as a quasi-narrator to the narratography. Throughout, power and panopticism dominate *Asyla*, leading the analyst to consider the question of which power this particular discourse serves. Through writing, the analyst’s voice, like the fictional composer’s is lost. A twin narrative is formed between an account of *fictional Adès* (caught up in the dysphoric woods of the anxiety of influence, intertextually referencing Bartók, Ives, and Mahler in a series of misreadings) and a narratographical account in which the analyst is engaged in the same struggle to navigate Eco’s fictional woods in search of meaning. In the end, this first walk through the woods teaches the model listener an important lesson: not to trust narrators.

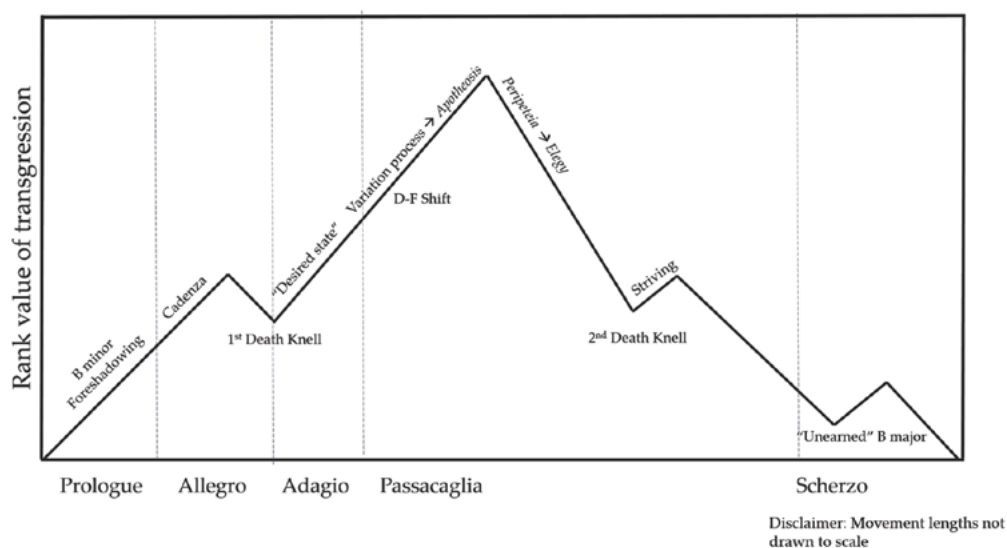


## Walk Two: You Only Die Twice

### A Symphony with Two Deaths

The next walk through the tragic expressive symphonic genre, an analysis of Penderecki's Third Symphony, involves a direct encounter with death. The overall narrative trajectory of the work is snapshotted in Figure 4, showing the rise and fall in rank value of what Almén (2008, 51) calls the positively viewed transgression (the *peripeteia*), and two deaths associated with this particular form of *peripeteia*.

**Figure 4.** Two Deaths in Penderecki's Third Symphony



The figure depicts a tragic narrative encumbered by death. The positively viewed transgression begins with low rank value that increases into the Passacaglia, where it turns back and retreats into an unearned finale. *Peripeteia* emerges through the symphony's *a priori* composed movements, the Allegro and Passacaglia, and how they constitute what is called the *two deaths* of the *work-persona*, which is an agential class composed of "the work itself, personified" (Monahan 2013, 328). This analysis unpacks the narratological implications of the two deaths and characterizes the space between them as one defined by lack-based desire.

Like any symphonic work, Penderecki's Third Symphony is a colossal amalgam of pitches and sonorities, but one pitch class: F, and the 3-cycle built from it 4–28 (0369), a fully diminished seventh chord, helps to shape the overall tonal plan of the work, shown in Figure 5.

F dominates the symphony and frequently opposes B at four strategic moments in the discourse: (1) the pitch-class relationship between the Prologue's closing and the opening of the Allegro, (2) the thematic gesture of the Allegro itself (timpani hold F while strings sound the repeated B), (3) the tragic, militarized apotheosis in the Passacaglia, and (4) the

final, unearned B major conclusion to the work. F is treated as a discursive focal pitch: the opening of the first movement is occupied by a consistent two-bar, low-strings ostinato on F2; a trumpet cadenza strives upward in the Allegro movement, ultimately finding stable ground in F5 as a goal; the Passacaglia's bass ostinato makes an intense shift from D2 to F2 at the pivotal discursive moment; the Scherzo contains many repeated gestures and ostinati that frequently and obsessively return to F2, and so on. This list is by no means exhaustive, but F frequently aligns with negativity and obsession in the symphony. Of secondary importance are the pitch classes D and A $\flat$ , which are seen in other places throughout (notably the repeated D2 that embodies the death-knell gesture). The salience of D in the passacaglia serves F as its lower third – F dominates much of the *work-persona's* story, yet D is where it is born and dies. Figure 6 illustrates these various pitch-class relationships at work throughout the entirety of the multi-movement symphony.

Figure 5. Tonal relations of 3-cycle

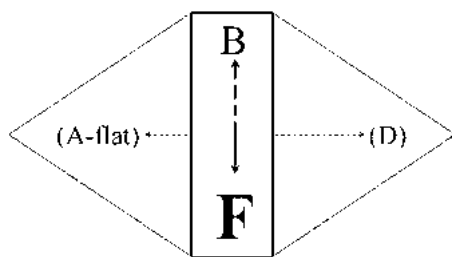
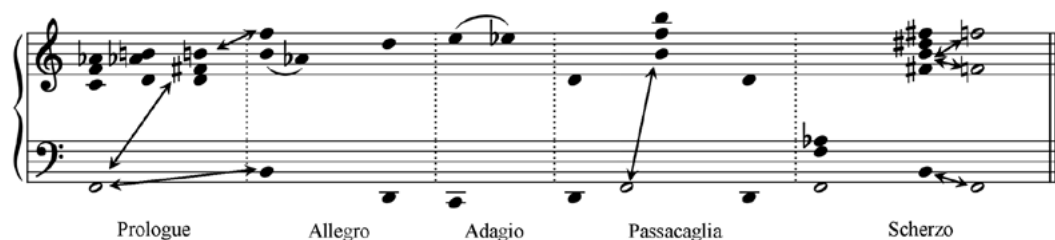


Figure 6. Tonal plan for Penderecki's Third Symphony



The figure maps significant pitch content in each movement (it is not meant to be a reduction of structural pitches). F bookends the symphony, and its significant moments of opposition to B are traced throughout with two-sided arrows. The B-minor triad that closes Movement I (Prologue) paves the way for the “unearned” B-major triad to emerge at the conclusion of the Scherzo. This unprepared, major chord resembles what Hatten describes as a “moment of grace” in Beethoven’s Op. 106 (1994, 18) – though this moment’s grace is subsumed in a dramaturgy of loss and death.

## The First Death

Formerly composed as an external movement, *Rondo*, the Allegro is a locus of tension in the symphony that forms a twin narrative with the later Passacaglia. After the Prologue movement concludes on a hushed F in the low strings, the Allegro foregrounds a repeated-note, war-machine gesture that embeds a motivic interval-class (IC) 6 (F–B dyad) into the texture (Example 7), aggressively asserting the interval as a conflict in the discourse. The repeated-note gesture recalls other openings such as Witold Lutosławski's Symphony No. 3.

### Example 7. A Military Topic Emerges<sup>2</sup>

Krzysztof Penderecki, SYMPHONY NO. 3.

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The musical score for Example 7 shows three staves: Timpani, Violin, and Contrabass. The Timpani staff is in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. It features a repeated-note gesture (F-B dyad) in the lower register, with a red arrow pointing to the F-B interval. The Violin staff is in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. It features a repeated-note gesture (F-B dyad) in the upper register, with a red arrow pointing to the F-B interval. The Contrabass staff is in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. It features a repeated-note gesture (F-B dyad) in the lower register, with a red arrow pointing to the F-B interval. The score is annotated with 'Tempesta with shades of military topoi' and 'F - B opposition defines repeated-note thematic gesture'.

A *tempesta* topic's presence throughout the movement comes in two shades: one features the repeated-note, war-machine gesture as a refrain while the other contains freer, energetic cadenzas.

After the blistering, cadenza-laden Allegro winds down comes a codetta that I interpret as the symphony's first death knell (Example 8). D octaves and an added 5th in the violins are held and maintained as the repeated-note gesture loses wind, diminishes dynamics, and shortens its utterances from five to one, like a dying heart. Horns intrude on the moment, sounding A-flat at the distance of a tritone, signifying a death that lacks closure: it is incomplete.

## The Second Death

For Penderecki, passacaglias are an important compositional device. The Third Symphony's deployment of this continuous variation structure is so dramatic in character that the passacaglia movement accompanies the suspense film *Shutter Island* (2010). As an element of the virtual environment (Hatten 2018), the commanding ostinato – embodying gravity

<sup>2</sup> The author gratefully acknowledges European American Music Distributors Company, a member of the Schott Music Group, for granting permission to reproduce excerpts from Symphony No. 3 by Krzysztof Penderecki (Examples 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11).

via a bass ostinato that drones on D natural – imposes on the entrances of the ensemble, pulling down on willful agencies that are striving to escape its territory. Gravity magnetically draws pitches near and suppresses them in an ongoing ascent-descent conflict. Above the ostinato, a theme and variations unfolds with an identifiable  $< + - + >$  contour, an “up-down-up” N-shape that often comes in the form of a disjunct IC1 leap followed by an IC6 leap, creating a jagged contour (Example 9).

**Example 8. The First Death knell**

Krzysztof Penderecki, *SYMPHONY NO. 3*.

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(Vln.) 8.....  
Reh. 37

*pp* (Vc.) *pesante*  
*f* *pesante* (Hn.) *mf* *p* *pp*

**Example 9. Ostinato and N-shape contour in the Passacaglia**

Krzysztof Penderecki, *SYMPHONY NO. 3*.

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initiator energy      willful agency associated with transgression (+)

*mf* *f* ostinato & gravity as the order-imposing hierarchy (-)

The *work-persona* transforms during the fourth variation in which tension reaches a breaking point. The positively viewed transgression-agent lashes out in frustration against the domination of the ostinato's gravitational pull: a militarized topic takes hold, forever casting the variations into prolonged abeyance. The ensemble blares the octave-dividing B–F dyad, casting it as the subject of a dramatic and defiantly tragic apotheosis of the repeated-note gesture that is underscored by a military drum-led militarized *topos* (Example 10).

**Example 10.** Apotheosis of the repeated-note gesture*Krzysztof Penderecki, SYMPHONY NO. 3.*

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Military Topic

Snare Drum

Violin

Double Bass

B - F opposition

8va

ff

f

Military Topic

Etc.

(Hn., Trp., Trb.)

According to Edward T. Cone, an apotheosis is a “special kind of recapitulation that reveals unexpected harmonic richness and textual excitement in a theme previously presented with a deliberately restricted harmonization and a relatively drab accompaniment” (1968, 84). An apotheosis is essentially a theme’s recontextualization, often transforming its status in a positive, transcendental way. Inverting that direction, thus creating a *tragic* apotheosis, is a marked moment that carries dramaturgical consequences. A tragic apotheosis of a musical theme intensifies the emotional weight of a symphony by transforming its core idea into a grand yet devastating climax, magnifying the sense of inevitable loss and making the overall narrative feel even more tragic and profound.

**Example 11.** The Second Death Knell*Krzysztof Penderecki, SYMPHONY NO. 3.*

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Bell

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

f

mf

p

fp

f

mf

p

attacca

One might expect a variation form to continuously elevate discourse until its conclusion, with that conclusion being a victorious culmination of all the previous variations compiled into one. This set of variations does not obey such formal fetters of expectation. After a post-apotheosis canonic striving for control, the repeated-note thematic gesture returns in the form of a death-knell codetta, the second death of the *work-persona* (Example 11).

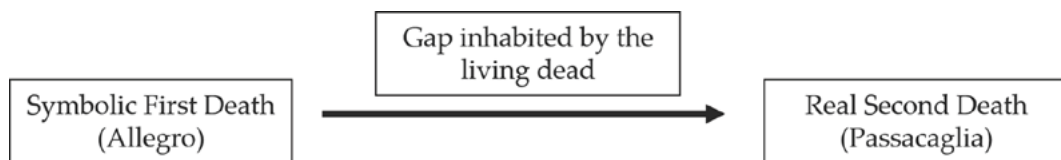
### The Space Between

Interpreting a musical story of the two deaths contextualizes death as the symphony's master signifier. Slavoj Žižek's interpretation of Jacques Lacan's work provides a method for opening a hermeneutic window into the Adagio, following the trends of psychoanalysis and philosophy. Per Sarah Reichardt Ellis:

For Žižek, the two deaths register the cultural difference between actual and symbolic death; the interval between spans the time from death to burial. In most cases the first death is "merely" literal: something ceases to exist. The second death, by contrast, is figurative, a symbolic rite that recognizes the actuality of the first death... [I]f we properly lay the dead to rest, they continue to live figuratively through memories... But what if we fail to bury the dead? ... According to Žižek, when the second death – usually a proper burial – does not occur, a gap forms that is inhabited by the living dead (Reichardt Ellis 2008, 50–51).

When reversed, this concept of the two deaths allows for a strategic reading of the space between them. When mapped onto Penderecki's symphony (Figure 7), the Adagio third movement becomes the gap between the two deaths that is inhabited by the living dead.

**Figure 7.** The two deaths in the Third Symphony



In this symphony, the symbolic death occurs after the *work-persona* wrestles with an Allegro that falls apart. The real death follows in the Passacaglia after a tragic apotheosis and peripeteia, offering a glimpse into the splintered subjectivity that is the *work-persona* agent. As a form of conclusion, an analogy: one might imagine a situation where a symbolic death precedes a real death, such as terminal illness, a severe injury, lifetime incarceration, etc. In those cases, the support system around the subject tends to accept death long before the subject actually dies, resulting in the symbolic death occurring first as the subject exists in a state of waking dead in preparation for the real death to finally arrive. This second walk through the tragic symphonic expressive genre teaches the model listener about grief, loss, and devastation.

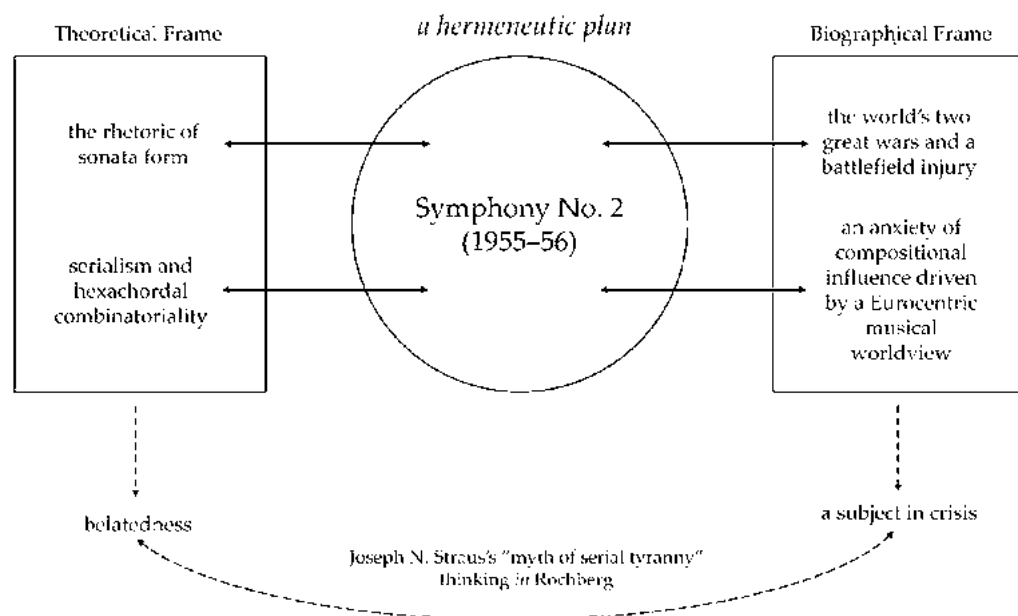
## Walk Three: Reviving Fallen Soldiers

### Historicizing a Biographical Narrative

This third and final walk explores Rochberg's Second Symphony (1955–56) – the first twelve-tone symphony composed by an American – analyzed as a narrative of trauma, anxiety, and belatedness that emerges from the composer's biography, his reliance on tradition (form), and his theorizing/deployment of serialism within a mid-20th-century compositional trend.

I organize hermeneutic elements into two interpretive frames: theoretical and biographical (Figure 8). These frames take inspiration from Umberto Eco's (1985) work on cult films, which involves the distinction between intertextual and common frames of reference. In the figure, the theoretical frame contains elements of Rochberg's musical language, specifically the rhetoric of sonata form and serialism, and implies a notion of belatedness. The biographical frame represents fragments of the composer's life and an interpretation of the anxiety of influence in this composition's language and style, which stands-in for a subjectivity in crisis. When these implications are read next to one another, one can infer a relationship through what Joseph Straus (1999) calls the myth of serial tyranny that "emerged" mid-century.

**Figure 8.** Symphony No. 2's Theoretical and Biographical Frames



### Serialism and the Sonata Principle

Symphony No. 2 signifies postwar trauma in several ways. The work is a stated response to World War II, making a biographical account of musical narrative into an increasingly appealing interpretive strategy. Rochberg was drafted in 1942 and his composition

teacher, Hans Weisse, was driven out of Europe by the Nazi regime. In 1950, Rochberg went to Rome to study with Luigi Dallapiccola, later telling Richard Dufallo that “one of the most powerful impulses toward twelve-tone, serialism, whatever you want to call it, was my reaction to my war experience which began to take over after the war” (1989, 63). Rochberg’s military service left an impression, and serialism was the tool that best represented the disturbances to which he was exposed; it is as if he exerts a form of total control over complicated, traumatic emotions with serialist techniques.

Trauma and anxiety exacerbate one another. Harold Bloom (1973) explores the role that influence plays in creating a Freudian sense of anxiety within a poet as they engage with the past. Kevin Korsyn (1991), Adam Krims (1994), Joseph Straus (1999), Lawrence Kramer (2011), and others analytically adapt Bloom’s theory in music. In Symphony No. 2, Rochberg anxiously turns toward serialism in search of a way to express trauma for his “modernist” symphony. For Rochberg, the role of a modernist is to “compose a music which, because its structure is clear and directly immediate to the ear, its shapes are indelible, as perfect in their delineation as humanly possible, its emotional scenario is rich, humanly felt – humanly perceivable, *can be remembered*” (1983 336, emphasis mine). Serialism provides the expressive range that Rochberg desired.

In terms of compositional language, Rochberg conflates serialism with traditional twelve-tone methodology – his technique is better thought of as aggregate-based music where the principle of the row serves as a general framework for the music, rather than a governing entity. Rochberg claims that this process of taking the “principle of the series” and making something recognizable to the listener comes from Schoenberg (Rochberg 1984, 323), and it is evident that Rochberg’s traumatic language is influenced by a Eurocentric view of compositional technique, what Jonathan Kramer (1984, 344) calls a bias that Rochberg held, directly or indirectly.

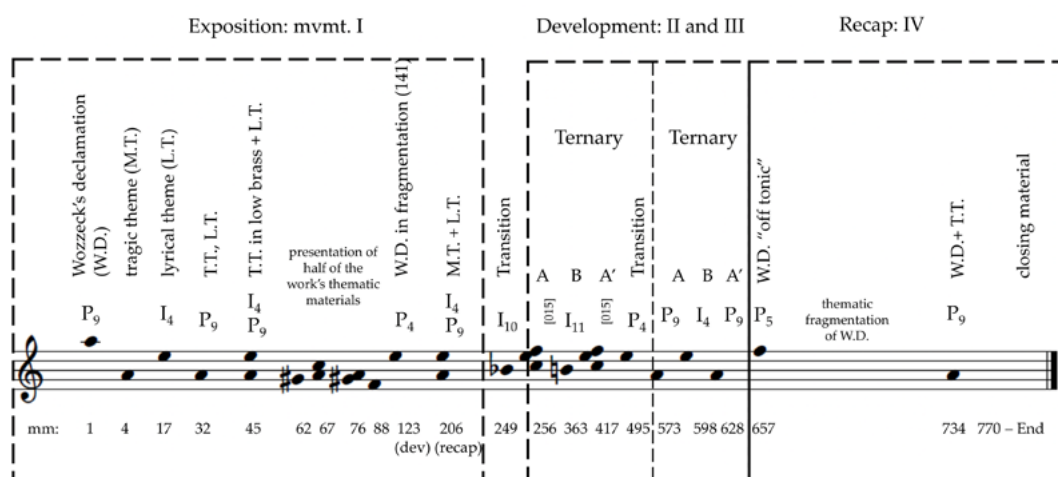
One can pull this interpretation into a larger idea that Joseph Straus calls the “myth of serial tyranny”, which helps shape a reading of belatedness in Symphony No. 2. That myth describes how *everyone* was composing serialism in America from 1950–1970, yet Straus says that the “idea of serial domination is essentially false” (1999, 302). It makes sense that the “first twelve-tone symphony composed by an American” would be one that is acted upon by the myth – the composer with a “European bias” looked anxiously to the past (in the Second Viennese School), ultimately composing a work that finds itself in a fiction, out of time and place.

In addition to dodecaphony, anxiety and belatedness in the symphony emerge through Rochberg’s use of sonata form. The formal design of Symphony No. 2 is a sonata cycle in which each movement contributes to a larger sonata principle: the symphony’s form divides into an exposition (Movement I), a development (Movements II and III), and a recapitulation (Movement IV). This design is actualized by Rochberg’s use of serialism, as if certain row forms themselves were tonal areas, demonstrating that Rochberg was searching for ways “to employ a total chromatic palette, melodic and harmonic, on a large scale true to what the term ‘Symphony’ has come to mean after Beethoven, without losing a sense of proportion, continuity, [and] growth” (Dixon 1992, 155). Figure 9 lays out an overview of the entire symphony’s series content and form.



In the figure, themes are clarified in terms of row selection, with each note on the staff representing the starting pitch class of the series (listed above the note for clarity). The three main themes, the declamatory theme (D.T. in the diagram), the catastrophic theme (C.T.) and the lyrical theme (L.T.) are labeled in the figure. Rochberg's employment of the form is exemplified by his way of "organizing the row based on hexachords in such fashion that its transpositions through inversion could take on an analogical relation to tonal centers through locus ... [that is] a scheme of tonal loci ... that had the status of 'keys' in the old sense" (Rochberg, in Lyndon-Gee 2005, 2–3). In other words, themes are associated with particular forms of the series, with their starting pitches analogous to tonal centers, to generate the form.

Figure 9. Symphony No. 2's Sonata Structure



Through the rhetoric of sonata structure, Rochberg confirms an older method of narration and its established forms of discourse. This interpretation of the form exists as a Bloomian "misreading" in the modernist music of the Second Viennese School (Straus 1990, 96–132). By that, Rochberg misreads the composers of the past in order to assert himself in the discourse of symphonists, and this misreading suggests that *fictional Rochberg* is already behind his own time, working with dated tools of composition. In terms of lateness, Edward Said points to how modernist works are out of their own time, "returning to ancient myth or antique forms... for their inspiration" (2006, 135). Serialism and sonata form are the primary ways in which Rochberg's Symphony No. 2 falls out time with itself, only finding itself in the "right" time as part of a mythos that emerged after the fact.

### Hexachords and Mirrors

Rochberg spent considerable energy unpacking how hexachords imply harmonies (Rochberg 1959), but his theorizing was not always well received. George Perle (1957, 55) criticizes the scope of Rochberg's *The Hexachord and its Relation to the 12-Tone Row* (1955), saying that it was "limited" and "restricted", thus its meaningfulness "suffers considerably". Perle is likely referring to the extensive treatment of hexachords and combina-

toriality that already existed in the scholarly literature by 1955, and his critique captures Rochberg's belatedness as a composer-theorist that discusses seemingly new, inventive topics well after they have already received elaboration in scholarly discourse.

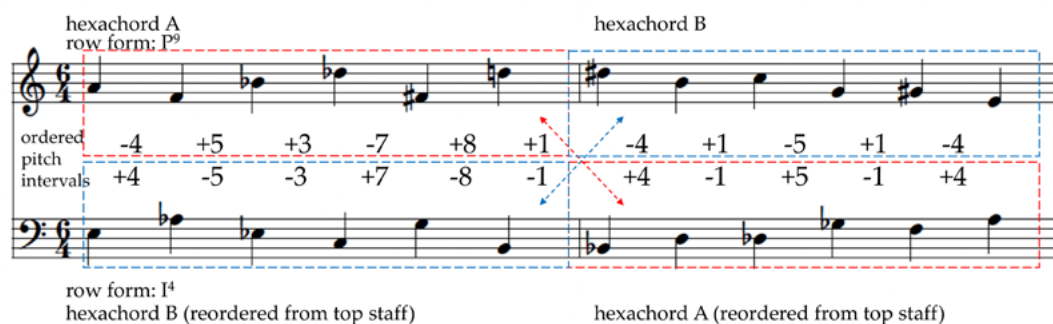
Figure 10 shows the hexachordal content for the symphony, which is based on one of the six all-combinatorial hexachords, 6–20 (014589). Rochberg's 1955 monograph focuses on a theoretical concept found in several compositions that come from the Second Viennese School: inversive hexachordal combinatoriality – or in Rochberg's terms, “mirror inversion”. The two hexachords in the example, labelled A and B, comprise the complete series in which hexachord B is a literal derivation from hexachord A through inversion, both forms are juxtaposed in an acoustic (and visual) mirror of their intervallic structure. This is shown by ordered pitch intervals between the staves. For Rochberg, the combination of P9 and I4 row forms, especially in the symphony's thematic content, showcases mirror inversion as an *a priori* compositional principle.

### Soldiers of the Past

Rochberg's Symphony No. 2 begins with the declamatory theme (Example 12) in unison/octaves, which is a sonic signifier of a narrating presence emerging – all voices are as one.

The *declamando* theme conjures up a narrator that is fiery, violent, and militant. It is fragmented and interrupting. In the example, order numbers are shown with reiterations in parenthesis, indicating that the narrator is continuously halting and restarting, with each reset progressing further into the series. The declamatory theme serves as a statement that enacts a soldier's tale of war – a frantic and frustrated cry – which suggests that the virtual/fictive agent is exemplifying overbearing pain, gesturally.

Figure 10. “Mirror Inversion” in the Series



Example 12. The “Declamatory Theme” (mm. 1–4).  
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The opening tetrachord, 4–19 (0148), strategically links to the past via musical borrowing and influence. Straus (1990, 76) contextualizes 4–19 as “the principal harmony associated with the character Wozzeck, the set-class from his famous declamation, ‘*Wir arme Leut!*’ [We poor folk!]” (Example 13). Rochberg’s symphony opens with a T6 variant of Wozzeck’s (1922) declamation, which is associated with trauma and tragedy through the evocation of an operatically famous World War I soldier. Here, Rochberg demonstrates belatedness by clinging to an early example of modernist music for source material, transposing that sign system to his own wartime experience; the reference to Wozzeck is a Bloomian misreading of the past.

### Example 13. Wozzeck’s Declamation



Immediately following the declamatory theme, the catastrophic theme continues the trajectory of violence and aggression (Example 14). Developing the previous theme, its jagged contour and glissandos project a quality of wailing and shrieking. A *pianto* sigh-gesture between PC2 and PC1 signifies added pain as the theme continues the halting rhetoric of Wozzeck’s borrowed gesture. The catastrophic theme achieves series completion at its most intense point, its zenith, eliding with the following lyrical theme (the exposition’s subordinate theme).

### Example 14. The Catastrophic Theme (mm. 4–18) Reproduced with permission from the Carl Fischer Music

row form: P<sup>9</sup>

quasi-military *topos* with percussion      violent disjunct motion      halting, reattempting

Viol. *ff* 2 3 4 jagged contour 5 6 (4) (5) (6) 7 8 9 *p* < *f* climax 10 (8 9 10) 11 (10 9 11) 12 13 *ff*

The lyrical theme (Example 15) contrasts sharply with the previous content, establishing a new *dramatis personae* through its *cantabile* style. Unlike the declamatory and catastrophic themes, the lyrical theme completes its series before its conclusion, which is then extended with a step-progression codetta, indicating that it feels more whole than the previous theme. It is as if this subordinate theme is a desire of the catastrophic theme.

Rather than having strings dominate the scene, winds take precedence, and the lyrical theme relies heavily on the conventions of tonality: consonant melodic intervals pervade and help to project a *cantabile*, yet uncanny quality. As shown in the example, the first six tones in the series reveal a hexatonic pole relationship between enharmonically spelled E-major and C-minor outlines. Richard Cohn (1996, 2004) discusses this uncanny triadic relationship's abundance in Romantic music, and the direct statement of this relationship positions Symphony No. 2 as out of time and full of anxiety (Cherlin 1993).

The declamatory theme's repeated-note gesture is integral to the sonata cycle's retransition: after its fragmentation and removal from the context of the opening, it is developed in a furious manner as the recapitulatory finale approaches. As the fragmentation of Wozzeck's utterance is transposed throughout the ensemble, it becomes clear that energy gain is driving the music forward. What was repressed – the declamatory theme and past experiences with war – is emerging as uncanny through compulsive repetition in this retransition.

**Example 15.** The Lyrical Theme (mm. 17–23)  
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Row form: I<sub>4</sub>

E<sup>♭</sup>/C- hexatonic pole relationship

ordering reversed

1 2 3 4 5 6 (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) (3) (2) (1)

17 winds ff 3 3 3

series complete

(3) (2) (4) (5) (6) 7! 8 9 10 11 12

22 3 3

As demonstrated by Sigmund Freud (1919, 297–324), the uncanny is a class of terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar, and can take several forms that dialogue with our own psychological state. The uncanny effect released in Rochberg's recapitulation is enhanced through compulsive repetition. Klein says that "[r]epetition both conjures up the uncanny from the primal mind and forces the uncanny back down to the subconscious. The mind traps itself in cycles of repetition" (2005, 79). Instead of simply stating the notes of the leitmotif, Rochberg repeats the initiating pitch in a repeated-note gesture that established the uncanny long before it became interpolated between hexatonic pole sonorities in the lyrical theme. As the sonata's exposition unfolds, the declamatory theme becomes repressed by the catastrophic and lyrical themes (at the end of the first movement). What ensues is a declamatory theme's compulsive repetition throughout the development (approaching textural saturation of the repeated-note gesture) before resurfacing in a moment of terror.

Movement IV serves as recapitulation to the sonata cycle, yet comes with a problem – it returns “off tonic” in m. 657. Marked as “Tempo Primo”, the declamatory theme returns, but rather than sounding the expected P9, it is restated with the row form P5. What was once familiar was repressed and dramatized. The narrating presence, having been weakened by the development, returns after being suppressed, fragmented, and compulsively revisited. Its return is Wozzeck’s return – it is the traumatic resurgence of innumerable war experiences that Rochberg summons through that particular World War I soldier.

Serialism and trauma, anxiety and sonata form, the uncanny, and Rochberg’s life experience generate a reading of lateness in the symphony. Straus tells us that sonata form in the 20th century is “not revived, but created anew” (1990, 98). The presence of the sonata principle organizes this large-scale orchestral composition, yet Rochberg misreads sonata form: he uses ideas of false recapitulation and undercuts schematic expectation, as many Classic composers have done. His reliance on traditional elements paints him as a belated composer caught up in following the trend of serialism, unwittingly contributing to the formation of the myth of serial tyranny. Additionally, Rochberg’s writing about serialism demonstrates a belatedness that spawned criticism. Many of Rochberg’s theoretical terms that set the stage for Symphony No. 2 were already expressed in theoretical discourse (using more nuanced and technical language). Being belated, in a sense, is uncanny for a “modernist” like Rochberg. In attempting to elevate the moment, he struggles to find his style and ends up being locked out of his own time as he gazes at his inversion in the mirror. The third walk teaches the model listener what it is like to walk in the shoes of the dead.

## Summary

This study examined the tragic symphonic expressive genre through the metaphor of Eco’s fictional woods. Each symphony presented here approaches tragedy differently, which means that these interpretations, when grouped, speak to a broader concern of how we humans process and subjectivize tragedy through musical narrative. The concept of peripeteia highlights the essence of the tragic, but it never returns in the same way in these pieces – it is not a transcendent model to apply to a range of works, but a rhetorical strategy that actualizes tragedy in each unique utterance. The analysis of power relations and loss of voice in Adès’s *Asyla* accomplishes a different type of goal than the concept of two deaths and the space between in Penderecki’s Symphony No. 3, and both of those examples contrast with themes of past soldiers and belatedness in Rochberg’s Symphony No. 2. Studying the characteristics and tendencies of these dramatic reversals allows the analyst to take themselves out of their own story, focusing on *how* music narrates, rather than attempting to state *what* it narrates (if anything at all).

This brings the story back to Heraclitus, and the idea that we never step in the same river twice. The analyses presented in this essay suggest that the metaphorical river runs parallel to the type of fictional woods in which we find Eco’s model reader. Like the river, the woods are different every time we enter them, and so are we. If we allow ourselves to become the model listener, we are also differentiated from previous versions of ourselves via entry to the woods in the first place, with each listening experience serving as a new

mapping, either of a novel segment of the woods or of one that is familiar. While it might seem as though the model listener is lost in abeyance, relegated to wandering the woods indefinitely in search of musical meaning, the real tragedy of this analytical story might be that we have an expectation that this model listener will emerge from the woods in the first place, or that they will find *a meaning* in these works at all. Ultimately, if we are the model listener, and we have learned not to trust narrators, have come to understand loss and grief through the two deaths, and have walked in the shoes of the dead, it seems as though we are the ones left in a state of waking dead – belated and anxious after losing our voice. Luckily, the tragic expressive symphonic genre is really instructions for listening; we ought to read between the lines.

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## Chapter 15

# Structural and Semantic Plot Type in *Double Concerto* by Witold Lutosławski<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Approaching narrative and its categories as transmedial phenomena and cognitive schemas stored in long-term memory, this study explores the interpretation of a musical composition as a narrative or a text endowed with narrativity. In doing so, it proposes a transmedial and cognitive framework for analyzing narrative categories such as character, event, temporality, and storyworld. Drawing upon Aleksandar Pejčić's (2019) structural and semantic typology of plots, as well as his dynamic model of interstructure – situated between the deep actantial model and the surface-level characters of the plot – the analysis focuses on identifying the structural and semantic plot type in Witold Lutosławski's *Double Concerto* (1980).

The three principal sound masses in the composition are interpreted as narrative characters. The sound mass of the string orchestra emerges as the main character, corresponding to the subject actant in the deep structural layer. The interactions and relational dynamics of the oboe and harp with the string mass identify them as secondary but significant characters, occupying the role of helper actant. The interrelations among these three sound masses suggest the presence of two distinctive narrative plots: a primary plot centered around the string mass as protagonist, and a secondary, integrative plot driven by the oboe and harp, which supports the progression of the primary plot. This secondary plot facilitates the main character's overcoming of obstacles and thus contributes to the narrative coherence of the piece. The chapter will further investigate the interplay between these two plots, examining their structures and respective semantic typologies.

The materials presented here are drawn from the author's 2023 doctoral dissertation, *Post-tonal Music in the Light of Cognitive Transmedial Narratology*.

**Keywords:** *Double Concerto*, narrative, sound mass, structural plot type, semantic plot type

The initial impetus for examining the narrative potential within the music of Witold Lutosławski is profoundly shaped by the composer's own articulated creative poetics. Lutosławski conceptualized his compositions as narratives, framing them through the notion of *akcja* (action), understood as a distinct and intentional musical plot (Reyland 2005, 1). Within this framework, Lutosławski aimed to underscore the inherent linearity of his compositions, wherein *akcja* is conceived as a musical plot unfolding over time. This chapter seeks to elucidate the narrative potential of the *Double Concerto* (1980), a work composed during Lutosławski's mature creative period.

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.



In examining the transmedial nature of narrative as it emerges from deep, immutable structures – namely, the signified – Marie-Laure Ryan proposes a cognitively grounded definition of narrative as a mental image or cognitive template that exists independently of specific signifiers (Ryan 2005, 4). This narrative template encompasses three fundamental components: first, the formation of a mental representation of a world populated by individuated agents (characters) and objects, thereby foregrounding the spatial dimension. Second, these agents, through their actions, actively shape the emergence and progression of events, thereby articulating the temporal dimension. Finally, the unfolding of events must result in transformations of state, with these changes interconnected in such a way as to form a coherent network of relations. This network organizes events into a unified and intelligible plot, thereby constituting the third dimension: logical, cognitive, and formal. Lutosławski’s compositional approach, marked by his distinctive construction of linear musical trajectories, invites an interpretation of his works as *possessing narrativity* – drawing on Marie-Laure Ryan’s conceptualization<sup>2</sup> – insofar as they elicit narrative understanding. Accordingly, this chapter investigates how the selected composition elicits a narrative script in the mind of the analyst. The concept of *akcja* as a ‘purely musical plot’ will be examined through the analytical lens of the actantial model and the structural-semantic typology of plots, as methodologically articulated by Serbian literary theorist Aleksandar Pejčić (2019).

Uri Margolin defines the minimal and constitutive conditions for the cognitive construction of a character as the presence of a “referring expression” (2007, 76) that designates the character, coupled with the recognition of this expression as referential in nature.<sup>3</sup> In recognizing the concept of a character as a “text- or media-based figure in a storyworld” (Jannidis 2009, 14) the reader assumes a pivotal role in the narrative process. Through the attribution of specific qualities to the character, the reader actively participates in the act of “characterization”, as theorized by Fotis Jannidis.<sup>4</sup> In this process, the

<sup>2</sup> “To account for the narrative potential of life, I propose to make a distinction between ‘being a narrative’, and ‘possessing narrativity’. The property of ‘being a narrative’ can be predicated of any semiotic object produced with the intent to evoke a narrative script in the mind of the audience. To be more precise, it is the receiver’s recognition of this intent that leads to the judgment: this text is a narrative, though we can never be sure that sender and receiver have the same story in mind. ‘Having narrativity’, on the other hand, means being able to evoke such a script, whether or not the author of the text intended to do so, and whether or not there is an author” (Ryan 2005, 6–7).

<sup>3</sup> “Whether characters are considered artifacts or non-actual individuals, we must first form mental images of them in order to be able to make claims about them. The cognitive-psychological approach views characters as just that: text-based mental models of possible individuals, built up in the mind of the reader in the course of textual processing. More precisely, characters are conceptualized here as complex readerly mental representations (constructs, portraits, mental files) (...) Reading for character is triggered or initiated by the reader identifying in the text a referring expression and opening a mental file bearing this name in which all further information about the corresponding individual will be continuously accumulated, structured, and updated as one reads on, until the final product or character profile is reached at the end of the reading act” (Margolin 2007, 76).

<sup>4</sup> “Characterization may be direct, as when a trait is ascribed explicitly to a character, or indirect, when it is the result of inferences drawn from the text based partly on world knowledge and espe-

reader interprets the character in a specific manner, construing it as a coherent conceptual entity, wherein the character's actions and transformations over time function as essential components of narrative progression.

Within the analyzed musical storyworld, the designated referring expression is the sound mass. The construction of a mental representation of the character is governed by "rules of inference" (Margolin 2007, 77–78) grounded in the listener's familiarity with the genres and stylistic conventions of the period in which the work was composed. Additionally, this construction is informed by inferential rules grounded in the existence of a cognitive model – or mental schema – that represents the character as an active agent within the story. The sound mass is discernibly set apart from its surrounding context, exhibiting distinctiveness, internal coherence, and a stable identity, as well as maintaining temporal continuity throughout the narrative, despite undergoing transformation.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, it may be regarded as a referring expression capable of activating a cognitive script in which the character is construed as an agent of causality – one who initiates events and transformations, thereby embodying the concept of action.

The analysis of sound masses as active agents is grounded in Aleksandar Pejčić's actantial model, which advances the discourse on the concept of character by proposing a dynamic framework of interstructure. This interstructure mediates between the deep structure – populated by actants such as subject, object, helper, opponent, sender, and receiver – and the surface structure, which encompasses characters and their actions. The interstructure within this model facilitates the translation of the deep structure into the surface structure through transformational interstructural figures, including the subject, corrector, instigator, director, trigger, object, and static figure. In the context of the present analysis, particular emphasis will be placed on figures of the subject – especially those corresponding to the subject actant and the helper actant – as they emerge as central agents within the examined work.

The dominant sound mass, which propels the majority of musical processes and asserts itself as the principal agent within the musical storyworld, embodies the figure of the subject and corresponds to the subject actant within the deep structural level. Its activity conveys a discernible intent to direct the unfolding of the narrative as a whole; the actions of other sound masses are structured in relation to it, with their respective roles ultimately defined either as facilitating the realization of its objective or as impeding its progression. Functioning as the principal character, this sound mass achieves a series of localized objectives – such as the completion of chromatic aggregates, the completion of the family of interval classes, or the attainment of other idiosyncratic goals – en route to addressing

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cially the different forms of character knowledge mentioned above. The term 'characterization' can be used to refer to the ascription of a property to a character, but also for the overall process and result of attributing traits to a given character. The process of characterization can have different forms: e.g. a character is attributed specific traits at the beginning of a narrative, but other traits are subsequently added that may not conform to the original characterization, such subverting the first conception of this character" (Jannidis 2009, 15).

<sup>5</sup> According to Margolin, these are the minimal and constitutive conditions for the cognitive development of the character (2005, 53).

the central problematic nexus of the plot. This overarching, or global, objective pertains to the semantic dimension of transformation, encompassing notions of change, growth, development, or conflict.

The identification of the plot typology in the analyzed composition is informed by both structural and semantic criteria. These classifications are determined by factors including the number of subject figures, the quantity of objectives pursued by the principal subject figure (as aligned with the domain of the subject actant), and the manner in which these objectives are realized. The means by which obstacles are surmounted in the pursuit of the primary objective – along with the number and nature of these obstacles encountered by the principal subject figure – serve to define the structural typology of the plot. This typology may be classified as linear, parallel, nested, fan-shaped, intersecting, or any other such configuration. The symbolic dimension of the progression toward the global objective serves to illuminate the semantic layer of the plot, encompassing themes such as transformation, conflict, play, judgment, and others. Moreover, the internal construction of sound masses, the number of processes in which they participate, and the hierarchical levels across which they operate collectively indicate the degree of complexity inherent in the action. This complexity is evaluated through the interrelations among characters, the quantity, velocity, and directional flow of action trajectories, as well as the structural interpretation of these actions within the narrative framework. The action encompasses the entirety of events extending from the exposition through the plot to the resolution. Predominantly, the action is constituted by the plot itself, which comprises events spanning from the initial exposition to the final resolution, with the potential for the plot to be initiated during the exposition phase. Typologically, the action may be classified as *simple* when it consists of a single plot, or *complex* when it comprises multiple hierarchically related plots interconnected through one or more recurring characters.

The present study demonstrates that the analyzed composition exhibits a complex action structure, characterized by the presence of two distinct plots: a principal plot, which is most prominently focalized and articulates the central thematic trajectory, and an integrative plot, functioning as a subordinate subplot that contributes to and propels the progression of the principal plot. A defining feature of the integrative subplot lies in its interweaving with the principal plot, typically becoming active at a later stage in the narrative. It frequently serves a functional role in facilitating the resolution of obstacles encountered within the main plot, as will be subsequently demonstrated. Furthermore, this chapter elucidates the manner in which a developmental type of exposition is identified within the *Double Concerto*. This form of exposition is characterized by its integration into the unfolding action of the plot, thereby producing a parallel configuration in which the plot progresses concurrently with the gradual revelation of introductory information regarding the characters and their interrelationships. Consequently, the dissemination of information traditionally associated with the exposition phase transpires in alignment with the evolving structural trajectory of the plot.

Pejčić contends that the subject is embodied by a character (or characters) motivated by desire, guided by the intention to act, and engaged in the pursuit of a specific goal

(Pejčić 2019, 145). The subject of the plot is, therefore, defined as a figure driven by desire and agency, through whom the narrative action is oriented and framed. Accordingly, the figure of the subject does not necessarily correspond to the subject actant; this role may also be assumed by other actants, such as the antagonist or the helper. For the figure of the subject to be recognized as such – regardless of which actant occupies this position – there must be a discernible articulation of desire, will, and intention, manifested through goal-directed action. As such, the figure of the subject may be embodied by any character who seeks to initiate action for their own direct or indirect benefit and who remains actively engaged throughout the narrative in advancing toward their objective. This implies that the role is not confined to the traditionally conceived main hero (Pejčić 2019, 147).

In the *Double Concerto*, the most significant relationships and directed processes are articulated through the dynamic interplay of the string orchestra's sound mass, in conjunction with the contributions of the oboe and harp. Initially, the sound mass is presented in a fragmented state, with several discrete groups emerging within the string section, each characterized by its own internal processes. Over the course of the work, this fragmented texture gradually coalesces into a unified sonic entity. From this initial presentation, it may be inferred that the sound mass – positioned as the figure of the subject – will encounter specific objectives that it cannot attain independently, thereby necessitating the intervention of other regulating figures within the narrative structure. Conversely, the oboe and harp undertake their own independent processes, while simultaneously orienting their activity toward shared objectives. Both the string ensemble – particularly the most dynamically active sound mass constituted by the first six violins – and the oboe and harp demonstrate a high degree of agency in pursuing both individual and collective goals. As such, these distinct sound masses may be understood as embodying three separate figures of the subject. Within this context, the string sound mass – by virtue of its central role in shaping the most extensive and sustained processes throughout the work – assumes the position of the subject actant. While the final movement serves as the structural and expressive culmination of the cycle, it is in the first part of the first movement that the most intricate processes unfold – processes that are essential for understanding the narrativity of the composition, as they function as an exposition of the action (Diagram 1). Consequently, a thorough consideration of the introductory movement is indispensable for identifying and interpreting the various plot structures present within the work.

In the first movement, the sound masses of the string orchestra coalesce into a unified entity only during the cadential moments, specifically at the conclusions of Rehearsal Numbers 1 and 5. This movement is characterized by an alternation between two contrasting musical forces: the string orchestra on one side and the pairing of oboe and harp on the other. These two iterations of the subject figures function as mutual discontinuities; the musical processes initiated by one are interrupted by the appearance of the other, only to be resumed upon the subject's return, continuing from the point at which they were previously suspended. The activities of the string orchestra – serving as the principal figure – and those of the oboe and harp – as secondary figures of the subject – are, though seemingly disparate, interconnected in multiple ways, both within this movement and throughout the subsequent two. It is within the dominant sound mass formed by the first

six violins that the central idea of the work is initially introduced. Within the dominant sound mass of the first six violins, the key idea of the work is introduced. This idea is articulated through a tetrachord constructed from interval classes 1 and 2, which manifests in six distinct pitch-class sets ((0123), (0135), (0124), (0235), (0134) and (0246)). Significantly, the only tetrachord absent from this collection is the one comprising three instances of interval class 1 – namely, the pitch-class set (0123). This set is implicitly alluded to in the aforementioned cadential moments, where its quality is suggested solely through the presence of interval class 1. However, this extended process initiated in the first movement reaches its true resolution only at rehearsal number 11, with the explicit appearance of this pitch-class set in the second violin part (A–G#–G–F#). A secondary process facilitated by this sound mass is directed toward the emergence of the only initially absent interval class 3. As the movement progresses and this segment is reiterated at rehearsal number 3, two pitch-class sets – (0123) and (0235) – remain absent, a detail that will become significant for the subsequent development of the musical narrative.

With respect to the appearances of the oboe and harp (rehearsal numbers 8 and 10), the harp engages in an independent process directed toward a local goal: the realization of the final possible transformation of the four-note pitch-class set (0145). This set establishes multiple points of connection with the principal musical idea articulated in the string sound mass. Most notably, it functions as a tetrachord, and it highlights the intervallic content of interval classes 1 and 3 – elements that previously served as the principal carriers of the main sound mass process. It is, however, significant to consider the simultaneous appearances of the oboe and harp within these sections. While each instrument pursues its own distinct musical trajectory, they also participate in a collaborative process culminating in the completion of a linear aggregate – wherein pitch classes absent in one part are supplied by the other. Moreover, the appearances of the oboe and harp at rehearsal numbers 8, 10, and 12 are further interconnected through a secondary process, characterized by the discontinuities introduced by the interjections of the string orchestra at rehearsal numbers 9 and 11. Within this process, both the oboe and harp realize their respective independent linear aggregates. Consequently, an intrinsic relationship between the two parts is established from the very outset of the composition. This connection is subsequently reaffirmed throughout the structural unfolding of the work and proves to be of considerable significance for comprehending the overall musical trajectory.

It may thus be concluded that the string orchestra, on one hand, and the oboe and harp, on the other – functioning as temporally distinct entities – do not impede or interfere with one another in the realization of their respective processes. Furthermore, an examination of the pitch structures assigned to the oboe and harp, represented by the pitch-class sets (01267) and (0123678), respectively, reveals that both parts – grounded in the predominance of interval class 1 – serve to support the process initiated by the principal musical figure. While this relationship remains somewhat implicit in the first movement, subsequent developments in the second movement progressively unveil the oboe and harp's latent orientation toward the main figure of the subject – the string orchestra.

The transformation of the oboe and harp in the second movement (rehearsal numbers 28 and 32) reveals a latent interconnection with the principal musical figure, sug-

gesting that their association has been embedded since the outset of the composition. At this point, the pitch structure of the oboe has evolved into the set (01234), while the harp articulates the pitch-class set (0235). Notably, these are the very sets previously identified as absent in the first movement, thereby emerging as essential components in the completion of the main figure's overarching processes. Moreover, the pitch content of the oboe – comprising the notes A–G♯–G–F♯ – corresponds precisely to the tetrachord that concluded the process initiated by the principal figure at rehearsal number 11 in the first movement. Through this shared pitch material, the respective roles of the oboe and harp within the plot become discernible. Initially present alongside the string sound mass – the principal figure and actant subject – these two subsidiary figures gradually emerge over the course of the composition as active agents (two figures of the subject) operating within the sphere of the helper actant, thereby reinforcing and supporting the progression of the main musical action. It is important to observe that the two pitch-class sets – (0123) and (0235) – whose prior absence served as a driving force behind the processes of the first movement, first emerged shortly after moments of structural discontinuity, specifically following the appearances of the oboe and harp at rehearsal numbers 8 and 10. Their functional significance was thus foreshadowed during the exposition and is only now beginning to attain clarity. At rehearsal number 28, neither the oboe nor the harp exhibits a clear orientation toward an independent or mutual objective; instead, their presence at this juncture in the dramatic trajectory appears to function primarily as a means of disclosing their true roles in the plot. Furthermore, it is particularly noteworthy that the string sound mass, for the first time, is presented as a unified and compact entity – manifested as a single, homogeneous sonic mass.

Despite this momentary sense of cohesion, the string sound mass ultimately fails to achieve its goal – namely, the completion of a linear aggregate – independently at rehearsal number 29. The absence of the pitch classes C♯, E, and A♭, which are instead articulated and highlighted by the oboe and harp, further reinforces their role as agents within the helper actant function. As the musical plot progresses, the interrelationship between the oboe, harp, and string sound mass becomes increasingly apparent, suggesting that their respective activities and seemingly autonomous processes are, in fact, more intricately interconnected than their initial appearances in the first movement might imply. In this context, the presence of the oboe and harp in the opening movement can be understood as a catalyst, subtly prompting the string sound mass toward the realization of its long-standing goals. Their primary function, therefore, lies in encouraging, guiding, and assisting the principal musical figure in the fulfillment of its objectives. Given that both instruments function as distinct yet complementary characters aligned with the same structural type and performative role – as agents of the helper actant – their interdependence and coordinated processes, evident since their initial introduction, are entirely consistent with their narrative significance. It appears that the harp, in conjunction with the oboe, plays a guiding role in the continued development of the string sound mass as the principal musical figure. This influence becomes most apparent at the onset of the second movement and, more decisively, in the third. The interdependence of the oboe and harp, as well as their collaborative actions throughout the composition, is formally af-

firmed in the recapitulation section – specifically at rehearsal number 71 – where the two instruments merge into a single, homogeneous sound mass. From this point of confluence and transformation, the unified entity articulates the pitch-class set (01267) which originally defined the oboe's pitch content in the first movement. Subsequently, at rehearsal number 74, the oboe presents the pitch-class set (0123678), originally associated with the harp, while the harp in turn presents the set (01267), thereby assuming the pitch content previously attributed to the oboe. This mutual exchange of pitch material further underscores their deep structural interrelation and reinforces their joint function as agents of the helper actant within the broader formal and narrative design of the work. Although their respective pitch contents differ in appearance, the oboe and harp now articulate largely identical pitch-class material, with the harp presenting a subset that omits two pitch classes found in the oboe's content. In the third stage of plot development (rehearsal numbers 49–67), the relationship between the string sound mass and each of these two instruments is rendered with even greater clarity. This phase appears to serve a structural and narrative function: to present the string sound mass in direct interaction with each of the two auxiliary characters. The sequence unfolds with a pairing of the strings and oboe, followed by a pairing of the strings and harp. Each of these interactions culminates in an identical cadence, articulated through vertical sonorities in the string texture representing the pitch-class set (0145). At this juncture, it is essential to recall the initial, implicit indication that the presence of the harp and oboe was intended to support and facilitate the development of the string sound mass. In the first movement, specifically at rehearsal number 8, the process initiated by the harp culminates in the articulation of the pitch-class set (0145). Furthermore, it is of particular significance that, for the first time since the opening of the composition – including the exposition – all three figures (corresponding to the two actants) converge in a shared cadence, in contrast to the previously separate cadential articulations that had characterized their interactions. This moment of convergence anticipates the final culmination in the closing three measures of the work, wherein, for the first time, the string sound mass and the two auxiliary instruments collectively realize a unified nonlinear aggregate.

The exposition – the first part of the first movement (rehearsal numbers 1–16) – serves to introduce the principal characters of the musical narrative, gradually illuminating the nature of their relationships. Initially, this involves the interplay between the oboe and harp, followed by the gradual emergence of their connection to the prominently featured string sound mass, which conveys the key musical idea. Functioning as a developmental exposition, this section is integrally embedded within the unfolding plot: it both shapes the dramatic trajectory and provides foundational insight into the characters and their interrelations. Importantly, the relationships among the three figures of the subject can only be fully understood in retrospect, due to the simultaneous unfolding of both the exposition and the plot. While the relationship between the oboe and harp is explicitly articulated from the outset, their connection to the string ensemble remains merely implied throughout the first movement. The cohesive interaction between the two instruments – clearly delineated from that of the string ensemble – establishes a framework for observing two parallel yet intersecting lines of development. As such, the exposition affords a

dual perspective: one that follows the processes of the string sound mass, and another that traces the independent yet interconnected trajectory of the oboe and harp, whose mutual relationship is only subtly suggested in this early phase.

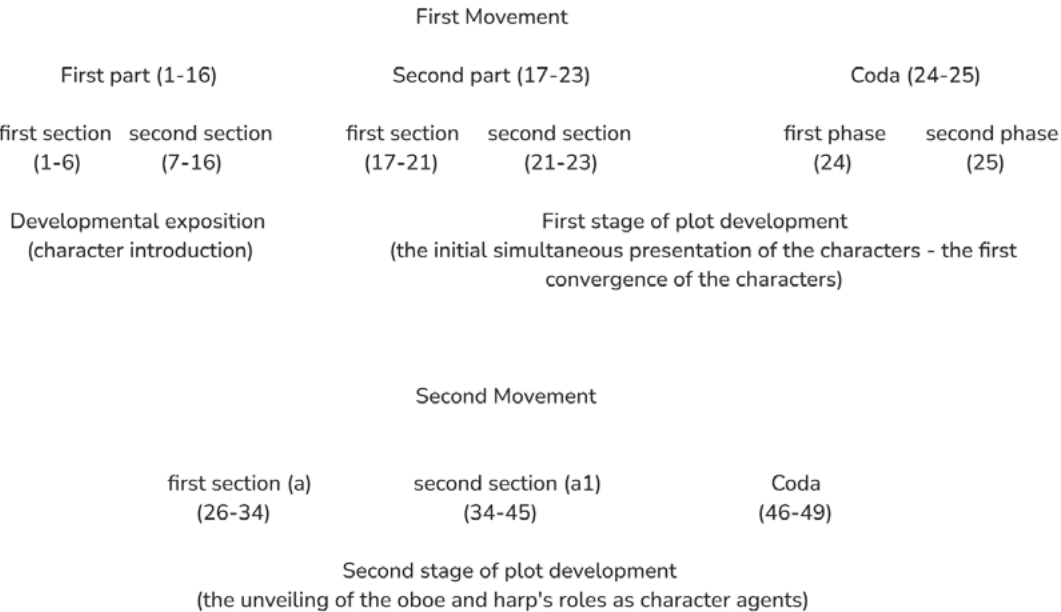
Drawing upon the activity of the string sound mass as the principal figure of the subject, alongside the oboe and harp functioning as the two subsidiary figures, and considering the evolving nature of their interrelationships, it may be concluded that the work presents a complex narrative architecture characterized by the presence of two distinct yet interwoven plots. The primary plot centers on the string sound mass as the actant subject, with the oboe and harp assuming the roles of helper actants. The secondary, integrative plot is concerned exclusively with the relationship between the two instruments themselves. These figures remain present throughout the entire narrative arc, exerting continuous influence on the development and behavior of the main figure. In this capacity, they provide critical support to the string sound mass on its trajectory toward a global structural objective, while simultaneously contributing to the realization of localized goals. The nature of their supportive role is revealed incrementally – sometimes implicitly, at other times explicitly – across the various stages of narrative development. Throughout the three movements, one can discern three distinct phases of narrative progression, within which the roles of the oboe and harp in relation to the central figure become increasingly articulated and structurally significant. Parallel to the main plot, the integrative plot provides critical insight into the evolving relationship between the oboe and harp. As this relationship develops, both instruments undergo transformations analogous to those experienced by the string sound mass within the main plot. As previously noted, a pivotal moment occurs in the third narrative stage, wherein the relationship between the string sound mass – as the principal figure – and each of the two instruments, occupying regulatory roles within the narrative structure, is distinctly articulated. This individualized interaction between the main figure and each of the two supporting characters underscores the importance of the integrative plot, which serves to differentiate between the two instruments, despite their shared actantial role. Accordingly, the resolution of the narrative necessitates, as a first step, the reuniting of the oboe and harp (rehearsal numbers 77–80), who collectively embody a single helper actant within the framework of the main plot. In the second phase of the resolution (rehearsal numbers 81–96), the unity of all three transformed characters – each representing one of the three figures of the main plot – is both depicted and reaffirmed, thereby bringing the compositional and narrative arc to a coherent and conclusive close.

The main plot may be characterized as structurally fan-shaped, as each of the three characters operates as an autonomous figure, pursuing individual goals throughout the course of the narrative. Pejčić observes that this structural type frequently employs “a system of constructing and deconstructing the situational triangle, and even redirecting arrows in a fan shape, which affects the dynamics of obstacles” (Pejčić 2019, 233). Within this framework, the redirection of arrows is manifested in the shifting narrative focus – from the relationship between the string sound mass and the oboe and harp as a collective unit, to the distinct relationships formed between the string sound mass and each of the



two instruments individually. Additionally, this structure draws attention to the internal interaction between the oboe and harp themselves, further reinforcing the complexity and dynamism of the narrative architecture. The second, integrative plot – which specifically centers on the relationship between the oboe and harp – serves as a driving force behind the main plot, actively contributing to the realization of the primary objective faced by the central figure: its transformation. It is characteristic of integrative plots to emerge later within the narrative arc, a structural feature exemplified in this composition. The integrative plot assumes a parallel configuration, involving two non-competing figures of the subject – the oboe and harp – who are oriented toward a shared objective. Their respective, independently unfolding trajectories are unified by a common problematic situation: the imperative to support and facilitate the transformation of the principal figure. In light of the overarching theme of transformation and maturation evident in the developmental processes of all three characters – most notably that of the main figure – both the main and integrative plots exhibit ritualistic semantic qualities. These ritual connotations function as a foundational thematic layer, underpinning the structural and narrative design of the work.

**Diagram 1.** Schematic representation of the form and structure of the plot in a composition  
*Double Concerto* by Witold Lutosławski





## Chapter 16

# Segmenting Chopin: A Computational Comparison of the Harmonic Structure and Minimalism of Toki Pona<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

I introduce the concept of music as a *narrative shell* – a structured but non-referential framework into which both performer and listener can project experiences or fictions. It is an ordered emotional plan that accommodates various actions, moods, and environments. The specifics cannot be portrayed in enough detail to represent a story. In this chapter I will frame Chopin's Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2 as such a shell. The goal is to determine the extent to which the music allows for simple communication, such as that which is possible in the language Toki Pona. The approach will be first to break down the music into phonemes, with various metrical granularities considered. These will be combined into words, fed into an LLM, and compared to Toki Pona.

**Keywords:** music and language, musical semiotics, harmonic segmentation, formal analysis, Frédéric Chopin

## Introduction

Music has long been considered one of the most expressive forms of human creativity. While music is often associated with emotional and aesthetic experiences, scholars and theorists have debated whether it can be classified as a language (Langer 1942; Meyer 1956). Unlike spoken or written language, music lacks a fixed lexicon and explicit referentiality, making its function as a communicative medium more ambiguous. Despite this, music exhibits structural and organizational properties akin to language, with hierarchical elements like syntax (Jackendoff 2009). Composers and performers rely on conventions of harmony, melody, and rhythm to create patterns that listeners recognize and interpret. These patterns often evoke emotions, create moods, and establish certain expectations, reinforcing the idea that music communicates in a manner distinct from, yet comparable to, human language. The concept of music as a “narrative shell” suggests that while it does not convey specific meaning, it provides a framework within which listeners can impose their own interpretations.

This chapter explores this idea by examining Chopin's Mazurka in C-sharp Minor, Op. 6 No. 2 and analyzing the extent to which it can function as a communicative system. Through this I aim to draw parallels between music and Toki Pona, a constructed language known for its minimalism and conceptual flexibility. Toki Pona simplifies language

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<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

to a set of essential words, encouraging broad, context-driven interpretation rather than precise description. Similarly, music often relies on tonal relationships and thematic development rather than explicit semantic content to generate meaning.

The central question this study seeks to address is whether the underlying structure of music, when broken into abstract identifiers treated as discrete phonemes and words, can approximate the simplicity and efficiency of Toki Pona. By segmenting Chopin's Mazurka at different levels – individual beats, measures, and harmonic events – I analyze how information may be encoded and transmitted. This approach allows us to evaluate music's potential as a linguistic analog and explore whether it can function as a simplified communication system akin to Toki Pona.

Ultimately, this research contributes to broader discussions in music cognition, linguistics, and information theory. It challenges the traditional dichotomy between music and language, proposing instead that music functions as a structured but abstract communicative medium. While it may not convey concrete meaning in the same way that spoken language does, its capacity for structural coherence and interpretative depth suggests that it operates within a communicative framework that is both flexible and deeply expressive. As a dynamic narrative shell, music allows us to individually and personally fill its gaps with our imagination.

## Literature Review

The question of whether music can function as a language has been explored by numerous theorists and researchers. Leonard Meyer (1956) argues that musical expectation and deviation from those expectations shape how listeners perceive meaning in music. He contends that much like syntax in language, music relies on structured patterns and conventions that provide coherence and predictability. Similarly, Susanne Langer (1942) suggests that music functions as a symbolic system, one that conveys meaning through form rather than direct linguistic reference. While these perspectives reinforce the idea that music is structured and interpretable, they also emphasize that its meaning is inherently abstract and lacks the specificity of verbal communication.

Researchers such as Steven Pinker and Ray Jackendoff have examined the cognitive foundations of both systems, noting that music and language share neurological processing pathways (Jackendoff 2009; Pinker 1997). Studies in music cognition indicate that humans process harmonic progressions and melodic patterns similarly to how they process grammatical structures in language. Jackendoff, for example, suggests that hierarchical structuring in music mirrors the deep structure of syntax in linguistic theory. This supports the idea that music, while not a conventional language, exhibits certain features of structured communication that can be analyzed using linguistic models.

Other theorists, such as Philip Tagg, argue that music's communicative capacity depends heavily on cultural context and listener familiarity (Tagg 2013). Unlike language, which relies on a more universal set of cognitive principles, musical interpretation varies significantly across cultures, time periods, and individual experience. This contextual dependence makes it difficult to standardize musical meaning in the way language meaning

is standardized. This perspective reinforces the idea that while music has structured elements like language, its communicative function remains fundamentally different.

Toki Pona represents an extreme simplification of language, reducing complex ideas to a small set of fundamental concepts (Lang 2014). Created by Sonja Lang in 2001, Toki Pona consists of only 120–130 root words, designed to force users to communicate in broad, general terms rather than specific, detailed descriptions. This simplification provides an interesting counterpoint to music, as it demonstrates how minimal structure can still allow for meaningful communication. By comparing Toki Pona to music, we can examine whether music's structural properties allow for a similar form of condensed, yet meaningful, expression.

Research on information theory provides additional insight into the comparison between music and language. Shannon's (1948) *Mathematical Theory of Communication* introduces a framework for measuring information transfer, which has been applied to both music and language. Studies suggest that spoken languages typically transfer information at around 40 bits per second. Toki Pona operates at a lower range of 14–21 bits per second, reflecting its reduced vocabulary and conceptual breadth. Information transfer calculations from Chopin's *Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2* show a rate of approximately 22 bits per second. This comparison suggests that while music may not function as a detailed language, it operates within an information bandwidth comparable to simplified linguistic systems like Toki Pona.

Taken together, these perspectives indicate that while music shares many features with language – such as structure, expectation, and processing mechanisms – it ultimately functions as an abstract narrative shell rather than a precise communicative tool. Its reliance on listener interpretation and cultural context suggests that while it can convey structured meaning, it does so in a fundamentally different manner than spoken or written language.

## Methodology

This study employs a structured breakdown of musical elements into phonemes and words, following a systematic approach based on different levels of rhythmic granularity. Each unique phoneme is given an identifier, such as a1, a2, a3, etc., and the phonemes are then grouped together at the 1-measure level. These “words” are then fed into an LLM and translated to Toki Pona, which is then easily converted to English. Because LLM outputs are unpredictable, these translations are treated as exploratory rather than conclusive.

## Segmentation into Phonemes and Words

The segmentation of the musical material is performed at three levels of abstraction:

1. Beat-level – each beat is treated as an independent unit, with the entire vertical harmony being assigned a unique identifier.
2. Measure-level – all notes within a measure are grouped together to form a single phoneme.

3. Harmonic-event – every change in harmonic content is assigned a distinct phoneme, providing the finest resolution out of the three methods.

Each segmentation introduces certain inaccuracies that are difficult to quantify. The beat-level and measure-level abstractions combine all notes into a group, so even something as innocuous as a beat with a neighbor tone would be treated as a separate harmony than if the neighbor tone were not present. The measure-level segmentation does this to an even greater extent. However, much of the musical material is reused verbatim, so small- and large-scale structural relationships are maintained in the abstractions. The harmonic-event abstraction is the most detailed and provides an accurate time slice view of musical content.

The limitations mentioned above are allowed by considering existing analysis methods. Traditional Roman numeral analysis introduces an unquantifiable error caused by the difference between the music itself and the chordal reduction. It is often difficult to find all 3- or 4- note chords played consistently throughout a piece of music. Various methods alleviate these issues, such as: the idea of chords being arpeggiated, ignoring grace notes, implied harmonies, etc. However, it is not commonly agreed upon how to quantify these techniques, and the degree to which they affect the analysis.

## Segmentation Example

The excerpts below show the same two measures segmented into phonemes at each of the three levels of abstraction.

**Example 1.** F. Chopin, Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2, mm. 1–2 (Beat-level)

**Example 2.** F. Chopin, Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2, mm. 1–2 (Measure-level)

**Example 3.** F. Chopin, Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2, mm. 1–2 (Harmonic-event)

At first glance, one might assume the beat-level segmentation would follow what traditional Roman numeral analysis would likely produce. A harmonic reading of this example could be as follows:

**Example 4.** F. Chopin, Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2, mm. 1–2 (Harmonic analysis)

This reading gives preference to strong beats, ignoring the weak non-chord tones at the ends of both measures. However, while the Roman numeral analysis identifies three separate instances of the **V** chord, the beat-level segmentation produces different phonemes for each beat, as shown below:

**a1a2a3 a4a5a6**

The measure-level segmentation produces:

**a1 a2**

And the harmonic-event segmentation produces:

**a1a2a1a3 a4a5a3a2**

This sequence shows the return of the G# B# D# triad on beat 3 of mm. 1, as well as the return of the **Vsus4** idea on beat 2 of mm. 2, and the **Vsus2** on beat 3.5 of mm. 2. So while perhaps the least interpretable of the three methods, the harmonic-event segmentation does capture all slices of harmonic/melodic content and in that sense does not lose any information.

## Segmentation Issues

These methods of segmentation naturally introduce subtle and perhaps overt discrepancies with traditional analysis. Consider the following two examples:

**Example 5.** F. Chopin, Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2, m. 13



**Example 6.** F. Chopin, Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2, m. 29



A common harmonic reading of both excerpts would be simply:

**V65/V**

However, the beat-level segmentation treats all three beats as separate phonemes, the measure-level segmentation considers both measures to be different, and the harmonic-event segmentation would only capture the similarity between beat 1 in m. 13 and m. 29, and beat 1.75 in m. 13 and beat 1.5 in m. 29. This means that while beat- and measure-level segmentations introduce differences that do not likely align with traditional perception, the harmonic-event segmentation captures information that is ignored by traditional analysis. In addition, m. 13 presents the melodic line without notated emphasis, while m. 29 includes accents. To the best of my knowledge, elements such as accents, articulations, dynamics, rubato, and other “expressive” features of music are not rigorously considered in traditional harmonic analysis, though they undoubtedly create qualitative differences that may contribute to perceived functional differences. This study does not explore the implications of these differences, though these considerations present interesting potential for future study.

Another important aspect of the proposed methodology is the potential of equating two instances of the same harmonic-event phoneme that may or may not function in the same way. One obvious example of this is the appearance of the same voicing of a triad in a completely different context. One can easily imagine this happening as a C Major triad



will be interpreted differently in C Major than in F Major. While a concrete example of this cannot be found in this mazurka, other potential issues can be identified. Consider the following cases:

**Example 7.** F. Chopin, Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2, m. 9 (with pickup)



**Example 8.** F. Chopin, Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2, m. 24



The G# pickup to m. 9 is assigned the same phoneme as the G# on beat 1.75 of m. 24. While phonemes in a language such as English are reused, implying they do not necessarily have meaning alone, there are languages that do assign different meanings to the same sound – such as Mandarin Chinese. Thus, the two instances of G# above may be completely different in musical terms but would nevertheless be treated as the same by the harmonic-event segmentation.

## Translation to Toki Pona and English

After each phoneme is assigned to various segmentations of the piece, they are grouped into words and sent to a Large Language Model for translation. The beat-level segmentation is shown below:

a1a2a3 a4a5a6 a7a2a3 a8a9a9  
a7a2a3 a10a11a12 a7a2a13 a14a9a15  
a16a17a18 a9a20a21 a16a17a22 a23a24a25  
a26a27a28 a29a30a31 a32a33a30 a34a35a36  
a37a38a39 a37a40a41 a42a43a44 a45a43a44  
a45a38a39 a37a40a41 a46a43a44 a47a47a47  
a16a17a18 a19a20a21 a16217a22 a23224a25  
a48a49a50 a51a30a52 a32a33a30 a34a35a53

a54a55a56 a57a58a58 a54a55a59 a57a58a58  
 a60a61a61 a62a61a61 a60a61a61 a63a64a65  
 a66a67a68 a69a70a70 a71a67a72 a69a70a70  
 a73a74a74 a75a74a74 a73a74a74 a73a74a76  
 a1a2a3 a4a5a6 a7a2a3 a8a9a9  
 a7a2a3 a10a11a12 a7a2a13 a14a9a15  
 a16a17a18 a9a20a21 a16a17a22 a23a24a25  
 a26a27a28 a29a30a31 a32a33a30 a34a35a36  
 a77a17a22 a78a20a21 a79a80a22 a81a24a25  
 a26a27a82 29a30a52 a32a33a30 a34a35a83

Each sequence is given to ChatGPT with these prompts:

### *Beat-level prompt*

“Here is an abstraction of the beat-level harmonies in a Chopin mazurka. Each unique beat is assigned an identifier such as a1, a2, a3, etc. Every group of 3 identifiers forms a word. Every 8 words are grouped together as a stanza. Please translate this sequence to Toki Pona: [sequence] and translate to English.”

### *Measure-level prompt*

“Here is an abstraction of the measure-level harmonies in a Chopin mazurka. Each unique measure is assigned an identifier such as a1, a2, a3, etc. Every identifier forms a word. Every 8 words are grouped together as a stanza. Please translate this sequence to Toki Pona: [sequence] and translate to English.”

### *Harmonic-event prompt*

“Here is an abstraction of the harmonic events in a Chopin mazurka. Each unique harmonic event is assigned an identifier such as a1, a2, a3, etc. Every group of identifiers... Every 8 words are grouped together as a stanza. Please translate this sequence to Toki Pona: [sequence] and translate to English.”

ChatGPT rarely produces perfect output on the first attempt at complex tasks, so on the first attempt, it was necessary to guide it to output in a format I expected. Here is an example of that interaction:

ChatGPT: “Translating this abstract harmony sequence into Toki Pona...requires representing the same structure...so we will describe the harmonic motion in conceptual terms using perception, movement, emotion, and balance.”

**Table 1.** Translations of beat-, measure-, and harmonic-event segmentations to Toki pona and English

mm.	B-lvl Toki	B-lvl Eng.	M-lvl Toki	M-lvl Eng.	HE Toki	HE Eng.
1-2	Mu toki	Sound, talk	Toki pona	Talk good	Mu toki	Sound, talk
3-4	Ilo lape	Tool, rest	Moku sulì	Food big	Ilo lape	Tool, rest
5-6	Ilo pana	Tool, give	Kili kasi	Fruit plant	Ilo pana	Tool, give
7-8	Ilo poki	Tool, container	Suno jan	Sun person	Ilo poki	Tool, container
9-10	Kili moku	Fruit, eat	Telo esun	Water market	Kili moku	Fruit, eat
11-12	Telo suno	Water, sun	Mi sina	Me you	Telo suno	Water, sun
13-14	Kama musì	Come, fun	Toki moku	Talk food	Kama musì	Come, fun
15-16	Kute ijo	Listen, thing	Sulì kili	Big fruit	Kute ijo	Hear, thing
17-18	Mama mama	Parent, parent	Pona telo	Good water	Mama mama	Parent, parent
19-20	Jan sulì	Person, important	Kasi suno	Plant sun	Jan sulì	Person, important
21-22	Mama sulì	Important parent	Pona telo	Good water	Mama mama	Parent, parent
23-24	Jan sulì	Important person	Kasi jan	Plant person	Jan sulì	Important person
25-26	Kili moku	Fruit, eat	Telo esun	Water market	Kili Moku	Fruit, eat
27-28	Telo suno	Water, sun	Mi sina	Me you	Telo suno	Water, sun
29-30	Kama wawa	Come, strong	Moku sulì	Food big	Kama wawa	Come, strong
31-32	Musi kute	Fun, listen	Toki kili	Talk fruit	Musi kute	Fun, listen

Each word (3 identifiers) will be translated as a conceptual musical phrase, and each stanza (8 words) will be structured as a poetic representation of the harmony flow.

Stanza 1

pali musì li tawa  
meli kute li kalama  
toki lili li ante  
meli sulì li pilin

*[further output hidden]*

Me: “No, each group like a1a2a3 should be translated to a word in Toki Pona. Here it is again: [sequence]”

There are components of Large Language Models that are opaque. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to attempt an in-depth analysis of potential issues with LLM translations. However, a few aspects of this can be briefly addressed. First, one notes the possibility that a translation output by an LLM using one prompt will likely be different than if it were output after a meticulously crafted prompt sequence. Further, as Toki Pona is a minimalist language whose words are heavily context-dependent, there are many, many possible translations of an abstract sequence to Toki Pona. Additionally, when translated to English, this introduces another transaction where error may be introduced. Attempts at direct translation to English would likely prove useful to compare, but were not explored in this study.

## Results and Analysis

The results suggest that different segmentation approaches yield varying degrees of communicative effectiveness. The table below presents for all segmentations, the Toki Pona translations and English translations for mm. 1–32:

An important and unexpected result is ChatGPT's translation of both beat-level and harmonic-event segmentations to phrases with commas, such as mm. 1–2 to *Mu toki* (Sound, talk), and the translation of measure-level segmentations to phrases without commas. To find an explanation, I asked ChatGPT to justify the decision:

Me: "Why did ChatGPT output translations of beat and harmonic event levels to phrases with a comma? And not the measure level translations?"

ChatGPT: "ChatGPT generated translations with commas for the beat-level and harmonic-event-level segmentations because each of these segmentation methods grouped multiple phonemic identifiers (such as a1a2a3) into a single 'word'. These groups inherently represented compound concepts, resulting in Toki Pona translations that reflect two distinct ideas combined into a phrase. For instance, a translation like '*Mu toki*' ('Sound, talk') naturally suggests two related but separate concepts – sound and communication – resulting in a phrase that intuitively uses a comma to indicate two aspects of a single compound meaning.

Conversely, the measure-level translations consisted of single identifiers per word (such as a1 or a2 alone), which led ChatGPT to interpret each measure as representing a simpler, singular concept rather than compound meanings. Therefore, the measure-level translations appeared as unified concepts without commas (e.g., '*Toki pona*' translated simply as 'Talk good' rather than 'Talk, good').

This difference arises primarily from how the input data was structured and how ChatGPT handles linguistic translation and interpretation tasks. When ChatGPT sees multiple combined identifiers, it naturally tries to translate the group into coherent but composite concepts, resulting in comma-separated translations. Single identifiers at the measure-level lack this complexity, prompting simpler, unified translations without commas."

Further research and potential collaboration with experts in LLM training and architecture would likely shed light on exactly how the translations were processed. However, the results and discussion of translations will focus primarily on how effectively each segmentation allows for simple communication.

Overall, these translations reveal notable conceptual metaphors that effectively illustrate how musical structures can parallel minimal linguistic expressions. The use of Toki Pona, a language deliberately simplified to essential meanings, enabled the abstract musical identifiers to be interpreted in broad yet coherent ways. Each segmentation level – beat-level, measure-level, and harmonic-event level – resulted in distinct metaphorical interpretations, capturing varying degrees of structural granularity and conceptual depth.

## Beat-level Effectiveness

At the beat-level segmentation, the translations consistently emphasized fundamental actions, sensory experiences, and emotional states. For example, mm. 1–2 was translated to the phrase “Mu toki” (“Sound, talk”), implying an inherent conversational or communicative quality in the music. One may also assume that ChatGPT “knows” its assignment is to translate abstract sequences from music, so is explicitly injecting that meaning into the translation. However, the measure-level segmentation does not mention sound at all in its translation of mm. 1–2, so perhaps an unknown factor is at play. Regardless, the resulting translation aligns closely with the perspective that music is a form of abstract dialogue or interaction. Subsequent measures, such as mm. 3–4 with the translation “Ilo lape” (“Tool, rest”), convey a sense of functional closure. Indeed, with a traditional analysis of mm. 1–4 it is easily seen that the phrase acts as an antecedent to mm. 5–8. There is a rhythmic arrival on beat 2 of measure 4 before restarting a variation of the opening motive in measure 5. Also, the “tool” idea is present throughout mm. 3–8, implying that ChatGPT found a sense of continuity through the phrase. The beat-level sequence displays this continuity:

**a1a2a3 a4a5a6 a7a2a3 a8a9a9**  
**a7a2a3 a10a11a12 a7a2a13 a14a9a15**

M. 5 (second row) has two elements from m. 1, and mm. 7–8 both have elements from mm. 3–4. The entire 8-bar phrase’s translation contains references to sound, tools, rest, giving, with a rather consistent theme throughout.

The next 8-bar phrase’s translation shows a distinct change of character, with the mention of fruit, eating, water, sun, etc. It also has a clear division between its first and second 4-bar phrases. This is not surprising because the first 4-bar phrase has a Roman numeral analysis of:

**V65 I V65 i**

And the next 4-bar phrase has a Roman numeral analysis of:

**V65/V V7 V7 i**

These two subphrases translate to:

**Fruit, eat**

**Water, sun**

And

**Come, fun**

**Listen, thing**

This is a clear distinction of topics that is reflective of the harmonic changes. The translation to “Come, fun Listen, thing” is particularly intriguing, as the music contains a secondary tonicization and firm closure of the phrase. The specifics of these translations are all but irrelevant, as the more important concept is that the structure itself allows room for independent ideas. A generalized view of this is that because the harmonic content is

clearly sectionalized, the translations can be any two broad topics. (It is likely safe to assume that listeners do not hear the main theme and immediately think of fruit.)

The next 8-bar phrase's translation presents perhaps the most sound result thus far. The translation is quite simple, only using the words “parent”, “person”, and “important” in various combinations. However, the translation may be viewed in a variety of ways that suggest deep connections with underlying structure. First, the obvious use of the word “important” is intriguing, as the section contains the first modulation. (One may consider the opening 8-bar phrase as being in Aeolian Dominant, and in that case this modulation is important because it is firmly to a major key.) Perhaps ChatGPT flagged this section as important because the sequence uses all new identifiers after the previous reused earlier ones.

The closing 8-bar phrase of the first 32 measures shows a return to the translation produced for mm. 9–16, with one extremely curious difference – the phrase “Come, fun” is replaced by “Come, strong”. This is fascinating because in m. 29–30, the consequent theme is restated with stronger rhythmic emphasis, accompanied by accents, show below:

**Example 9.** F. Chopin, Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2, mm. 29–30



The cause of the single word difference between translations can be seen in the sequence for this section, shown below:

**a16a17a18 a19a20a21 a16217a22 a23224a25**  
**a48a49a50 a51a30a52 a32a33a30 a34a35a53**

M. 29 corresponds to the subsequence **a48a49a50**, which along with the following subsequence show an introduction of new identifiers. The surrounding subsequences all contain elements that have been previously introduced. So, a change in rhythm and qualitative emphasis shows up as an event of structural importance in the sequence. This is then reflected in the translation through the word “strong”.

## Measure-level Effectiveness

The measure-level translations featured broad concepts, but did not excel in tracking meaningful changes in the music. Overall, the theme of each stanza is somewhat related to all the others, with a general aura of positivity. In mm. 1–2, the translation “Toki pona” (“Talk good”) may be a convenience or an implicit bias in ChatGPT to produce positive results. The subsequent measure-level translations, such as “Moku sulī” (“Food big”) in mm. 3–4, continue with the theme of plenty and positivity. The sequence for these measures shows a steady increase of identifiers:

**a1 a2 a3 a4 a5 a6 a7 a8**

It is difficult to suggest what led to the consistent translation, though one may interpret the consistent introduction of new material as a metaphor for growth.

The next 8-bar phrase shows similar behavior for identifiers, with a steady increase in presenting new material:

**a9 a10 a11 a12 a13 a14 a15 a16**

The translations again show a consistent theme of sustenance, through mentioning “water”, “market”, “food”, and “fruit”. Thus, it seems that either the consistent increase of new material suggests abundance, or ChatGPT was unable to find meaningful differences and decided to choose one theme throughout. From the basic harmonic analysis mentioned in the beat-level results, the second 8-bar phrase does indeed show a clear division between the first and second 4-bar phrases. However, the translation provided for the measure-level segmentation appears to treat even the entire first 16 measures as one consistent idea.

The next 8-bar phrase contains a modulation to the dominant, which was reflected in the beat-level translations as a complete change of topic. However, again, the measure-level translation seems to continue in the same vein, with mentions of “good water” and “plant sun”. Although this granularity seems to fail to capture enough information to hint at a narrative, the sequence does provide one interesting feature. This is the first section of the measure-level segmentation that contains self-references:

**a17 a18 a19 a20 a17 a18 a19 a21**

This is reflected in the translations as almost the same language is used in the first and second 4-bar phrases.

The translations for the final 8-bar phrase of the first 32 measures behaves ever so slightly similarly to the beat-level results. The change in rhythm in mm. 29–30 is easily seen in the measure-level sequence for mm. 25–32 below:

**a9 a10 a11 a12 a22 a23 a15 a16**

Just like in the beat-level sequence, there is a sudden introduction of new material. This appears in the translation as a change from “Talk food | Big fruit” “Food big | Talk fruit”. While it is difficult to provide a clear explanation, one might consider the rhythmic change, and corresponding sequence change, to be abrupt enough to merit the simple re-ordering of the limited vocabulary to highlight the structural change in the sequence.

## Harmonic-event Effectiveness

Somewhat surprisingly, while the harmonic-event segmentation offered a fine-grained view of the events throughout the piece, the translations are mostly the same as the beat-level results. However, there is one key difference between the translations that raises some important questions. The transition back to the opening section, mm. 45–48, shows a clear difference between translations of beat-level and harmonic-event segmentations. For the beat-level, the translation is:

**Big, big**

**Big, big**

While for the harmonic-event, the translation is:

**Fun, good**

**Good, strong**

Both translations show an important event happens, though the beat-level translation is far more certain of it. As no harmonic, motivic, or otherwise musical information was presented for translation, this is a fascinating result. Our only option is to inspect the sequences, which will almost certainly reveal the cause of both the identification of a huge structural moment, and the inability of the harmonic-event segmentation to fully account for it. The beat-level sequence for mm. 45–48 is shown below:

**a73a74a74 a75a74a74 a73a74a74 a73a74a76**

Immediately following this is the return of **a1a2a3** and so on. The stagnation of elements, with **a74** being the majority of phonemes present in the entire phrase, as well as the return of opening elements constitutes a clear structural event. This means that, at least for this mazurka, formal analysis in its most basic sense is possible by considering only vertical slices of notes.

The harmonic-event level sequence is shown below:

**a78a79a80 a81a82a80 a81a83a80 a81a83a80a84a85**

This is then of course followed by a return to **a1a2a1a3** (note the repeat of **a1** as it occurs on either side of **a2**). The sequence above is less obviously a stagnation of elements, as there are regular changes between each of the subsequences. For example, the second subsequence preserves **a80**, and the third subsequence preserves **a80** and **a81**, but over the course of the 4-bar phrase, there are 8 new phonemes. In contrast, the subsequences for the beat-level segmentation show consistent preservation of phonemes and only an introduction of 4 new ones. This seems a likely explanation for why the harmonic-event segmentation was unable to fully display the major structural event in its translation.

## Other Findings

Two related results emerged from this analysis: 1) calculations from information theory suggest that this mazurka transmits information at a rate roughly equivalent to Toki Pona, and 2) that Chopin's presentation of new material follows a pattern that is strikingly similar to Lucas numbers (closely related to Fibonacci numbers), and the ratio of points at which he repeats material is approximately equal to the Golden Ratio. While the second result is likely present in almost any analysis of a master composition, this case is particularly interesting because it arises from a beat-level segmentation of the piece.

Using Shannon's information theory formula, we can calculate the amount of information transmitted per second of a given medium. The formula is shown below:

$$I = \log_2(N)$$

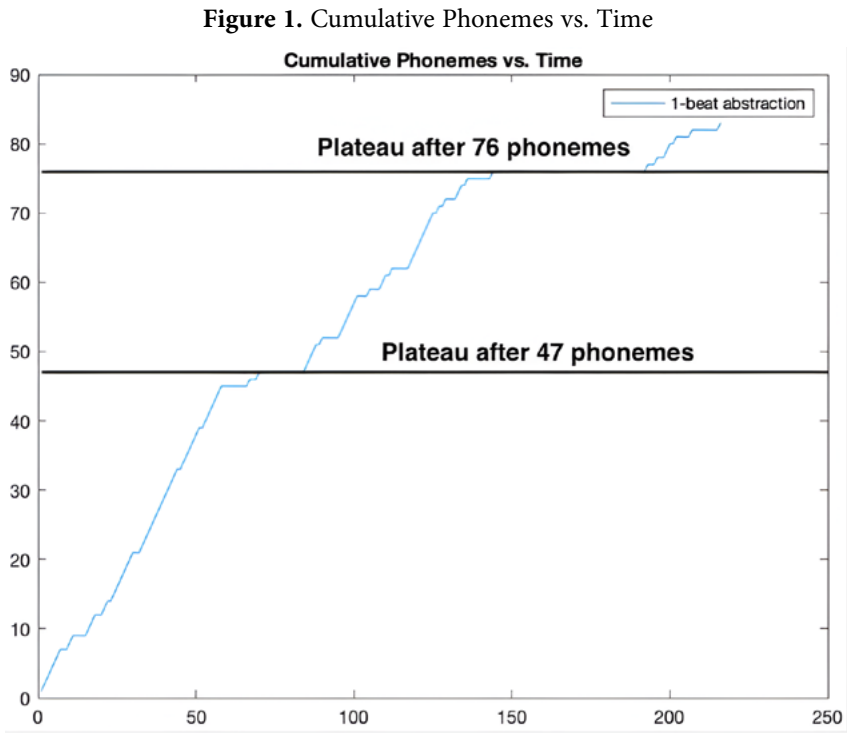


where  $N$  represents the number of possible symbols in a given system. Toki Pona consists of approximately 120–130 words, which yields an  $I$  of approximately 6.91 – 7.03 bits of information. Given a reasonable speaking rate of 2 to 3 words per second, the information transfer rate is thus estimated as approximately 14–21 bits/sec. Normal human language transmits information at a significantly higher rate due to its large vocabulary and precise semantics. Studies on human speech indicate that natural languages convey information at an average rate of 40 bits/second. For music, the information per note choice depends on the number of possible distinct musical events. Using the 88 keys of the piano as a reference:

$$I = \log_2(88) = 6.46 \text{ bits for 2 notes}$$
$$I = \log_2(3828) = 11.9 \text{ bits for 3 notes}$$

As chords increase in complexity, the possible variations grow exponentially. To estimate the information transfer rate of the mazurka, I took the beat-level segmentations and using the number of notes in each, computed  $I$  values for each. Since I intend to provide an average, I calculated the total number of beats as  $3 \times 72 = 216$ . Finally, to provide a rate of information transfer, a tempo of 75 bpm was used to arrive at the following formula:

$$Rate = \frac{\sum I(beat)}{Nbeats \times Secondsperbeat}$$



Using the above values, I calculated an information transfer rate of approximately 22 bits/second. This aligns remarkably well with the rate found for Toki Pona. While a more thorough and rigorous investigation of this is necessary, an initial agreement between two disparate systems is difficult to ignore and holds promise for future study.

The other result M. 24 marks the point after which the main theme is first repeated. M. 24 is also comprised solely of phoneme **a47**. There is a steady increase in the presentation of new phonemes throughout mm. 1–24, but this rate slows down dramatically with the repeat of the main theme.

The piece introduces 47 phonemes through the end of mm. 1–24, then stagnates on **a47**. After this, the main theme is repeated, causing a plateau in the introduction of new phonemes. Later, at the return of the A section in m. 49, there is another plateau. This plateau occurs after the introduction of 76 phonemes, also after a repeat of **a74** as mentioned in the earlier section on beat-level effectiveness. Rather than considering the measure placement of these events (which is both intriguing and familiar to them occurring at m. 24 and m. 48), when considering the amount of information presented up until these two points, a familiar ratio is observed. The ratio of 47 to 76 is:

$$47/76 = 0.61842$$

This ratio is widely known as the Golden Ratio, and while it does not appear as a time-dependent feature of the piece, it emerges in an undeniable fashion from the rate at which new harmonic information is presented. One may of course challenge this by noting the repeat signs present in the score. However, the appearance of such an important number at such high precision, and the exact correspondence of these two numbers with Lucas numbers, makes this finding quite difficult to ignore altogether.

## Conclusion and Future Work

This study examined the communicative properties of Chopin's Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2 through the lens of segmentation, abstraction, and linguistic comparison, particularly with the minimalist constructed language Toki Pona. By segmenting the piece at different levels – beat-level, measure-level, and harmonic-event – we translated its harmonic structure into a symbolic representation, which was then processed by a Large Language Model. The results revealed several intriguing patterns that highlight both the limitations and potential of treating music as a narrative shell with communicative properties.

We identified structural and thematic parallels between music segmentation and linguistic abstraction. The beat-level segmentation proved most effective in capturing shifts in musical content, with translations reflecting conceptual and structural changes in the composition. The effectiveness of what may seem a crude reduction in capturing structural changes in both 8-bar phrases and the piece as a whole, suggest that this method may prove useful in evaluating other works. In addition, because the method creates vertical slices of harmonic content, it is a prime candidate for use in computer algorithms for automated analysis. The measure-level segmentation did not produce a convincing translation that corresponded to musical events and instead output more generalized transla-

tions that kept a continued theme throughout. The harmonic-event segmentation, while offering the finest resolution, struggled to reveal the largest-scale structural moment of the piece – the end of the B section – potentially suggesting that music perception relies on broader temporal structures rather than isolated harmonic snapshots.

One of the most striking findings is the alignment between the information transmission rate of the mazurka and that of Toki Pona. Using Shannon's information theory and a reasonable performance tempo of 75 bpm, we estimated that the mazurka transmits information at approximately 22 bits per second, a value remarkably close to Toki Pona's range of 14–21 bits per second. This suggests that while music does not function as a referential language in the traditional sense, it operates at a level of complexity comparable to highly simplified linguistic systems, reinforcing its role as a structured yet open-ended form of communication.

A particularly compelling discovery was the emergence of the Golden Ratio (0.618) within the rate of new phoneme introduction. This suggests that the pacing of new harmonic material in this mazurka follows a naturally emergent structural pattern. If valid, it seems extremely unlikely that Chopin meticulously counted each unique beat of harmonic content and assembled the composition under those constraints. Rather, it is likely an emergent property of an unconscious awareness of musical proportions. While such proportions are often noted in classical compositions, their manifestation within a data-driven abstraction of harmony offers fresh insight into the underlying organizational principles of musical form.

## Future Work

As quantitative and AI-related studies will undoubtedly become more common in the future, this study raises several questions for further exploration:

(1) Expanding Beyond Harmonic Analysis – while this chapter focused on harmony, future research could integrate melody, rhythm, and expressive elements to create a more holistic linguistic abstraction of music.

(2) Comparing Other Musical Styles – applying this methodology to different genres, traditions, and improvisational forms could reveal how various musical systems structure information differently.

(3) Perception Studies – conducting listener-based experiments could help determine whether Toki Pona-like translations align with human interpretations of musical meaning, providing deeper insight into music cognition.

By framing Mazurka Op. 6 No. 2 as a structured yet flexible narrative shell, this study demonstrates that music has the capacity for abstract yet meaningful communication. While the findings are intriguing, they are best read as illustrative hypotheses rather than definitive confirmations. The study shows the promise of segmentation-based computational approaches, but further work is needed across a broader repertoire and with listener-based experiments to assess whether these patterns generalize. This research opens new possibilities for exploring music as a formalized system of conceptual expression, bridging music theory, linguistics, and artificial intelligence.

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## Chapter 17

# The Narratives of Witold Lutosławski's Musical Time Through the Lens of Music Theory as a Psychology<sup>1,2</sup>

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## Abstract

This chapter discusses the musical time in Witold Lutosławski's music – that is, the composition of musical time, its invisible skeleton, and the methods how to study its peculiarities. Time in the 20th- and 21st-century music can be “framed” into the regular bars, which mostly do not correspond to the irregular, chaotic, or static auditory experience of listening to the music. That is why the research presented here explores Lutosławski's non-metric musical time and the hidden laws of its structuring through the different approaches, developed in experimental way: musical analysis, source method, survey and interview methods, and the narrative analysis. The results of this research connect the theoretical investigation of musical time with the domain of the psychology of music.

**Keywords:** narrative of musical time, Witold Lutosławski's music, non-metric composition, perception, chronoframe

## Introduction

The domain of musical time in Witold Lutosławski's music fascinates the musicians and listeners by its innovative solutions – artistic, aesthetic, philosophical, and compositional. However, an exploration of this multi-layered phenomenon through the methods of modern music theory and musicology poses a challenge to the researcher. What plays the role of organizing the musical flow without classical bars in Lutosławski's compositions? How to analyse the most invisible part of the temporal organization – its musical “skeleton”?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Original Scientific Article.

<sup>2</sup> The author would like to express her heartfelt gratitude to her PhD supervisor, Prof. Iryna Chizhyk, and to her mentor at the subsequent stage, Prof. Michael Ellison, for their profound contributions to the development of this research and their unwavering support; to Dr. Simon Obert for his invaluable advice in processing the composer's manuscripts, as well as his guidance regarding the research and its conceptual framework; to the entire staff of the Paul Sacher Stiftung for granting access to the Lutosławski collection and for supporting this work through a generous research grant; to all participants who took part in the interviews conducted; to Mr. Tom Hornshaw for creating the artistic and narrative works inspired by listening to Lutosławski's music and supporting the surveying idea of the research; to Mrs. Rosemary Mann for her assistance in proofreading this text; and to the colleagues, friends, and family whose support was instrumental throughout the course of this research.

<sup>3</sup> Many composers and researchers speak about the existence of a logic of temporal organization that is invisible to the eye, but clearly revealed to the ear in 20th-century non-metric compositions.

What makes it possible to perceive the unfolding of musical time as something organized, which consistently, frame by frame, passes through the listener's perception, motivates the listening process, gives it a certain predictability, and also structures it?

In this study, the temporal organization in Lutosławski's music, its internal laws, technique and aesthetics are examined from the perspective of "music theory as psychology".<sup>4</sup> The idea of conducting this research is inspired by Lutosławski's phrase: "I [...] compose not form, but a perception. Therefore, each of my works is like a recorded perception. Hence a number of features" (Nikolska 1995, 109). These words embody the composer's approach to the creating music, to listening to music, and its aesthetics. For this reason, the study seeks to approach musical composition as both a recorded perception and a recorded experience of time. To explore this idea, the research applies analytical methods to the score and its sound recordings, alongside source analysis, interviews, surveys, and narrative interpretation. This research aims to explore both the composer's and the listener's perception of temporal organization in Lutosławski's music, and to further develop analytical approaches for studying the peculiarities of non-metric musical time.

All elements of musical time that contribute to the creation of artistic phenomena – such as time units, accents, rhythmic durations, bar lines, downbeats, upbeats, regularity, and periodicity – undergo significant modification and acquire new qualities in the conditions of non-metric musical time. The exquisite forms of polyphonic layering of regularity and irregularity, the artistic effects of time-statics, time-dynamics, and polychronicity in Lutosławski's music – all these phenomena require attention not only to understand the techniques behind their creation, but also to develop analytical tools that can explain their properties. For this reason, a fundamental first step in the research is to develop methods for studying musical time and to formulate a vocabulary that could be used to explain the technique of artistic phenomena in the field of musical time in 20th-century music, and in particular – in Lutosławski's music from the 1960s to the 1990s.<sup>5</sup>

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Gérard Grisey (1987) refers to this underlying structure as the "skeleton of time", describing it as the temporal divisions used by composers to organize sound. He writes: "By skeleton of time we mean the temporal divisions that the composer uses to organize sounds. Without being immediately discernible, at best merely sensed beneath the 'flesh of time', this infrastructure nonetheless retains an attraction for twentieth century composers, no doubt because in its relative simplicity it gives us the illusion of operational efficiency" (Grisey 1987, 239).

<sup>4</sup> "Music Theory as Psychology" is the title of a chapter in Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff's book *Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> The multifaceted nature of time in Lutosławski's music is insufficiently explored in the scholarly studies. D. Krawczyk's (2009) research offers valuable insights into the artistic conception of time in Lutosławski's works, delving into the interaction of the dramaturgy of musical time and end-accented form. In his seminal two-volume study on rhythm in twentieth-century music, Rudziński (1987) develops the concept of free rhythm, interpreting it through the dynamic interaction of arsis and thesis within the musical flow. He classifies Lutosławski's rhythm as free rhythm and dedicates a specific section to the composer's notions of modular and non-modular rhythmic structures. M. Homma (1996a), whose primary research focuses on the pitch parameter in Lutosławski's compositions based on his sketches, also addresses time and rhythm within these materials. Her commentary on rhythmic aspects provides essential guidance through the drafts, serving as a crucial resource for source studies on rhythm in Lutosławski's music. Z. Skowron's (2011) investigation of the

At its current stage, the theory of musical time does not operate with terms that could clearly define and explain the peculiarities of time structuring in post-tonal music and to demonstrate some flexible approaches to studying non-metric musical time. Justin London (2012), one of the leading theorists in this field, pays considerable attention to the aspect of the structure of musical time, its laws, the metric system of musical time, as well as the perception of musical metre. The methods of his concept, based on the development of Schenkerian approach, as well as on the positions of Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, encompass a broad corpus of post-tonal music, but they do not provide tools for the analysis of all forms of free rhythm (Witold Rudziński's term), based on the temporal flexibility of time units under non-metric conditions. In his book *Hearing in time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter*, London examines in detail the psychological issues of musical metre, identifying the psychological boundaries of the perception of a metric unit. However, by involving non-Western musical repertoire in his research, London considers it from the perspective of metrical organization, based on the possibility of a hierarchical subdivision of beats. This approach, unfortunately, limits the analysis of the rich, multifaceted, and complex temporal parameter of Lutosławski's non-metrical music. Rudziński's (1987) fundamental studies represent an innovative approach to the rhythm of different historical periods. Engaging in a scholarly dialogue with the French researcher André Mocquereau, Rudziński reconsiders the concepts of downbeat and upbeat by introducing and substantiating the concepts of *arsis* and *thesis*, and explains the laws of rhythm through the prism of interrelated motion between *arsis* and *thesis*. The flow between *arsis* and *thesis* creates a free rhythm, not limited by the hierarchical subdivisions of metrical units. This approach reveals the tension of the musical flow, its freedom and flexibility, not only in terms of developing ways of exploring rhythmic, but also establishing connections between 20th-century music and earlier traditions, particularly Gregorian chant.

In the post-Soviet space, one of the leading researchers of musical time, Valentina Kholopova (2002) developed a theory of rhythm in 20th-century music, revealing the features and elements of regularity and irregularity that can be dominant in the rhythmic structures of music of different historical periods and styles. The scholar notes that both the most important properties of rhythm have different gradations and degrees of expression. Kholopova believes that the regular type of rhythm includes modal rhythm (a system of rhythmic modes of the 12th and 13th centuries), and metric music. The irregular type of rhythm, according to Kholopova, is characteristic of ancient Greek monody, Eastern Turkish music, 13th-century Indian music, and the 20th-century music of various styles. Kholopova's works provide specific features that can be used to identify the degree of regularity and irregularity in different stylistic rhythm systems. At the same time, the researcher outlines the signs of regularity and irregularity (phenomena of variable, mixed metres, variable metrical beats, non-square division of bars, polymetry) in relation to the

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composer's autographs, along with his editorial work and publication of Lutosławski's public presentations and lectures, provides access to the composer's own perspective on time – both in terms of technique and aesthetics. Collectively, these studies illuminate the diverse dimensions of time in Lutosławski's music and suggest promising avenues for further research. Nevertheless, the technical, aesthetic, and stylistic aspects of Lutosławski's musical time warrant deeper scholarly attention.

metric system. The focus on the metric system, in relation to which signs of regularity and irregularity are outlined, complicates the analysis of music free from a bar grid. Therefore, the theory of rhythm developed by the researcher is very valuable, but at the same time, it requires further clarification based on the analysis of time in non-metric music of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Rosemary Mountain (2013) explores periodicity in the music of Lutosławski and Ligeti of the 1950s from the perspective of the possibilities of human auditory and psychological perception. She offers calculations of the time volumes within which the feeling of the duration of periodical units fluctuates, defining a unit with a duration of ten seconds as the longest. However, because Mountain identifies the phenomenon of periodicity with regularity, the temporal unevenness in the ratios of elements of a musical composition, which is inherent in periodic phenomena, is not taken into account.

The focus on the metric system in the most fundamental theoretical works on rhythm mentioned in this article “blurs” the boundary between concepts of temporal organization and complicates the analysis of non-metric music and the explanation of its laws. In this regard, one of the main theoretical propositions of the research is that the metric unit is understood as one of the types of time units that belong specifically to the metric system. The application of this concept in revealing the properties of the temporal organization of Lutosławski’s works is limited, since the flow of time in his music is structured through time units, only some of which have a metrical function – those based on the regular alternation of strong and weak beats.

My doctoral research (Myronenko-Mikheishyna 2023), conducted at an earlier stage of this investigation, examined Lutosławski’s innovations in musical time by situating his techniques within broader artistic developments in rhythm and temporality. It also developed methodological approaches for analyzing non-metric musical time, contributing new tools for the study of temporality in 20th-century music. Some positions of my PhD thesis are presented in the following section of this chapter. Further development of its methods, based on the application of source, interview and survey methods, is discussed in the second and third sections of this article.

### **Theoretical concept of time unit: narrative of the researcher**

In my PhD research, it was found that the leading, innovative property of the temporal organization in the works of the 1960s-1990s is the very refined and individually organized alternation and free layering of chronoframes – units of time operating under non-metric conditions – across both micro- and macroscales, as well as the polyphonic interaction of the chronoframes and metric bars. In the study, for the first time, the concept of chronoframe is applied to a unit of time that functions in sections with an irregular rhythm type. This is a unit of time that, in origin and form, is a syntactic structure – a motif or phrase, or a complete segment, comparable in scope to a period. Within the magmatic, micro-polyphonic texture, the nearly static musical time is “framed” into units whose contours and boundaries may be subtle or even imperceptibly blurred. So, the multidimensional flow of time in Lutosławski’s music is “formed” and “sculpted” into various forms of time units – chronoframes – which can possess either clear or indistinct boundaries and vary



in length. This complexity of the time structuring makes the analysis of the time units one of the most challenging aspects of the research.

It was found that the basic musical prerequisites for the formation of the chronoframes, at the levels of micro- and macroscales, are the compositional principles of similarity and contrast, manifested in the interaction of various elements of musical composition (thematics, melodics, dynamics, instrumentation, texture etc.), as well as principles of periodic repetition or updating of the musical material. In contrary to the regular metric interaction of the downbeats and upbeats in the bar, the moments of the repetition and updates of the presentation of musical material become the starting points for the formation of a new time unit.

One of the methods, applied in the doctoral research, involved comparing different performances using a chronometer to determine whether the characteristics of temporal organization elements change when the interpretation deviates from the score. The results were compiled and systematized into tables containing comparative data on the durations of sections as required in the score and achieved by the performer.<sup>6</sup> Notably, the comparative study found that when the performer's chosen tempo is slower than that indicated in the score, the chronoframe exhibits a distinctive property.

Namely, under non-metric conditions, the scope of musical material within a unit of time can vary depending on speed. If the tempo of performance is slowed down, the internal content of the time structure becomes more detailed, the listener's attention switches to another layer, and the recipient perceives the musical material of a smaller scale level as a significant one. For example, in *Three Poems by Henri Michaux* (mm. 98–136) each entry of individual choral groups, because of register, timbre contrast and thematic repetition, becomes the initial moment of the time unit. However, in the slowed down performance by R. Abdullaev and F. Chyzhevsky (2016), the musical material of a smaller scale level comes to the forefront, and the content of time unit has been changed. This fundamentally distinguishes the properties of a chronoframe from the properties of a classic bar: due to the regular alternation of down-beats and upbeats, the bar can maintain its integrity equally in its notation and in its "sounded" form. So, the properties of a chronoframe largely depend on the performer, whose interpretation may contain unpredictable nuances. If the performer does not follow the tempo markings, set in the score, then the time units have different contents within their boundaries. This is not only a compositional feature of the time structuring in Lutosławski's music, but also a factor that can significantly influence the artistic peculiarities of musical time in the composition.

If time units in the metric system are proportional to the smallest metric unit, then in Lutosławski's rhythm in non-metric sections there is no such ratios between time units. The temporal relationships between chronoframes are not chaotic; they are "governed" by periodicity – that is, by the exact or variant repetition of the presentation of musical material throughout the unfolding of a composition over time. This occurs across multi-

<sup>6</sup> For detailed examples, refer to my article in the Polish edition, which includes tables based on the analysis of four performance versions of *Three Poems by Henri Michaux* (Myronenko-Mikheishyna 2021).

ple levels of compositional organization – melodic, rhythmic, textural, timbral, registral, and harmonic – within different yet similar time volumes (for example, in the first part of *Three Poems by Henri Michaux*, mm. 98–131), in accordance with the definition of periodicity proposed in the doctoral study.

So, in Lutosławski's musical compositions from 1960s to 1990s, the bar conventionally exists in musical notation, but predominantly not in the "sounded" time flow. Instead, the chronoframe – a unit of non-metric time – reveals itself not so much on chapter as in listener's "musical ear". This is largely the result of the perception of the time flow in Lutosławski's music. Therefore, non-musical factors – perception, memory, attention, and auditory experience of the composer, performer, and listener – are of significant importance in revealing the features of a time structuring.

To study the non-musical factors of time organization, that are at the intersection of music psychology and music theory, case studies of Lutosławski's compositional drafts from the 1960s and 1970s were conducted, as well as surveys among the listeners.

### **Time structuring. The narrative of the composer**

"Making sense of music is a delicate task, requiring nuanced thinking, careful study, attention to detail, and the steady acknowledgment that texts can resist our interpretations" – says Michael L. Klein in the book *Music and Narrative since 1900* (2013, 23). Lutosławski's music really resists the narrative interpretation. However, it undeniably contains a narrative, elusive and disappearing. And, at the same time, it forms a narrative around itself. The next step of this research was to deepen its analytical findings through the study of Lutosławski's drafts preserved in the archive of the Paul Sacher Stiftung, as well as through the composer's texts, notes, and sketches, in order to reveal how, at the pre-compositional stage, the chronoframe was formed in Lutosławski's imagination as an element of the temporal continuum and how musical time was articulated in the composer's narratives.

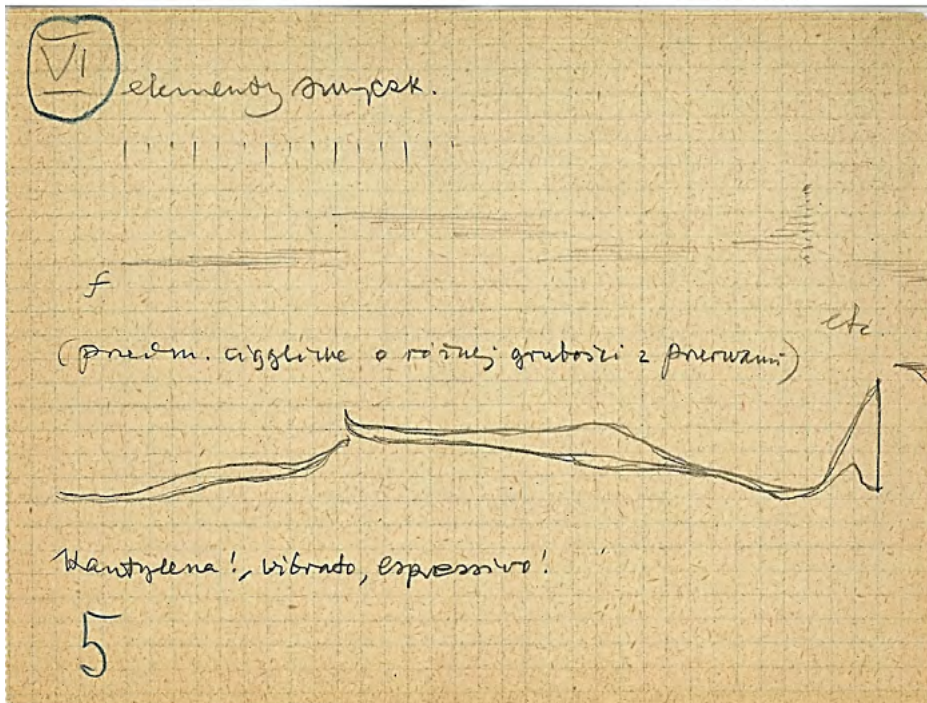
The composer himself calls certain structures that appear in his auditory and also visual imagination the "strata" (these remarks are contained in a folder with drafts tentatively named "Studies on Composition" by researchers, and "Red Thread. Raw material. Monody" by Lutosławski). He also calls the structures "sections", "segments" (for example, one of the pages contains a comment – "the length of segment at least 25'"). The word "object" appears in the manuscripts most frequently. For example, the Figure 1 has an inscription "ductile objects of various thicknesses with gaps." The comment amazingly shows us how the feeling of a spatial parameter of a sound object appears first, and how the elements of the sound material are spread in time afterwards.

It is a sound object the composer mostly thinks about, imagining and, first of all, noting down its spatial, textural parameter. In his 1962 talk "On Aleatorism. Remarks on the Marginals of the *Jeux vénitiens*", the composer notes that he borrowed the term "sound objects" (in French, *objets sonores*) from Pierre Schaeffer and defines it as follows:

What are *objets sonores* in vocal and instrumental music? This is a set of sounds that have their own boundaries in time and scale, individual sounds of this set are more closely related to each other than to the sounds of other *objets sonores* that occur earlier,

later, or even simultaneously. What leads to the fact that the connection of sounds with each other is closer within the same object? These can be various factors: close proximity of sounds in time, similarity of rhythm, timbre, attack, dynamics, expression, etc. (Witold Lutosławski & Skowron 2011, 93).

**Figure 1.** Unidentified sketch. Published with permission from the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel: Witold Lutosławski Collection.



The composer then gives an example of a macrorhythm (ratio of segment lengths at the level of musical form) from one of the fragments of the *Jeux vénitiens* (movement IV, from a1 to G), where sound objects are correlated in seconds, which alternate sequentially: “5 5 4 4 4 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 etc.” (Witold Lutosławski & Skowron 2011, 93). Lutosławski pays special attention to the internal structure of sound objects. Sound objects can have different densities of rhythmic accents, depending on their place in the form – at the beginning or at the end. The composer notes that the greatest density of impulses (that is, accents) within the objects is at the beginning of the work, the least is near the end: “The greatest density [of impulses] is at the beginning, after which a gradual delution occurs” (Witold Lutosławski & Skowron 2011, 94; translation – O.M., the text has been published by Zbigniew Skowron).

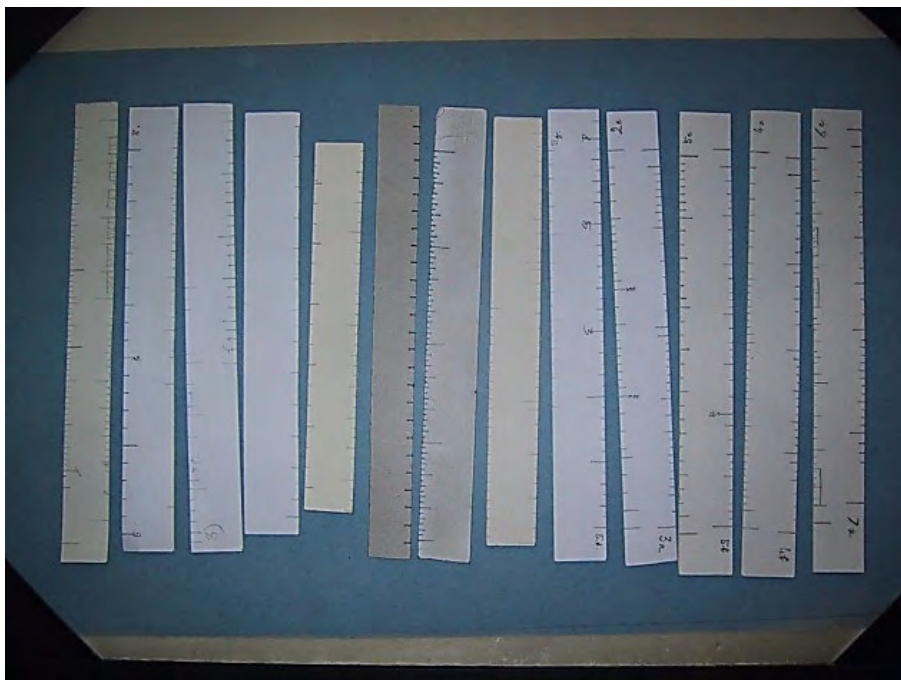
So, a sound object is a textural and thematic segment, and, according to Nicholas Reyland's concept (2007), it is an event. Its meaning and role clearly differ from those of a time unit: a sound object cannot always be defined as a chronoframe. Therefore, it was

important to understand how just a chronoframe, due to the composer's individual feeling of the length of the time volumes, was forming in the composer's imagination.

The sketches show us how Lutosławski accurately calculated the length of time units and their internal content, using special made-up rulers of different scales and sizes. On the website [onpolishmusic.com](http://onpolishmusic.com) (2011–), created by Adrian Thomas, there are photos from Lutosławski's house in Warsaw of the rulers of different measurements (Figure 2, <https://onpolishmusic.com/2014/12/25/%e2%80%a2-wl10074-Lutoslawski-rules/>). One of the unidentified folders (folder “Unused Materials. Waste”), stored in the Paul Sacher Stiftung, also contains the rulers. So, the drafts, designed on the checkered paper, show the compositional work that has been done in accordance with a certain ruler's size.

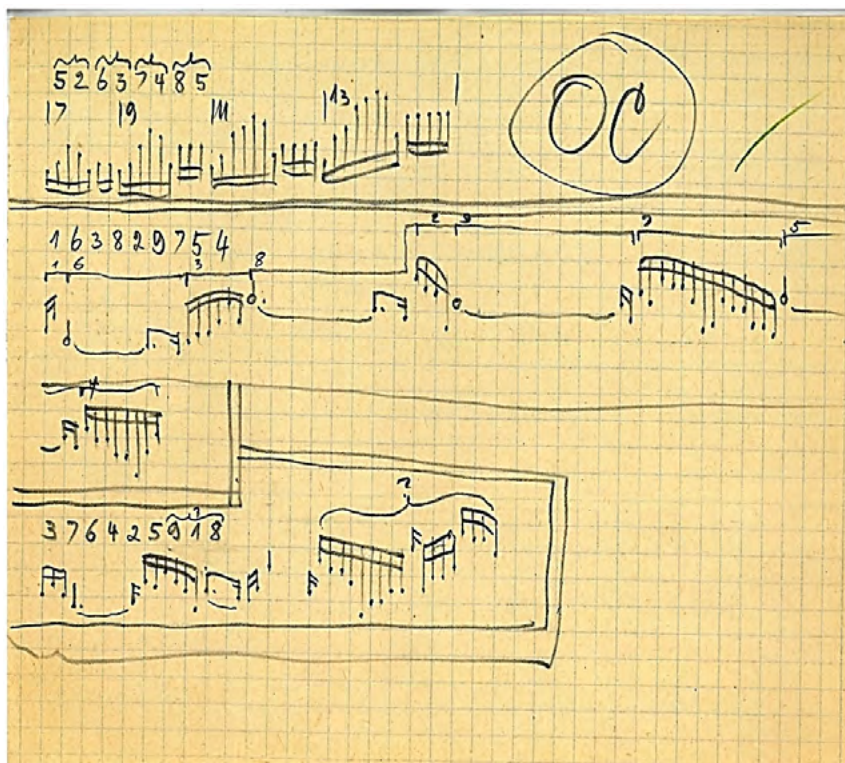
The sketch 208-0779 of the *Cello Concerto* (Figure 3), drafted on checkered paper, contains a numerical series indicating the length of the corresponding musical material. The first row 52 63 74 85 determines the combination of rhythmic groups, and the second row below I7 I9 I11 I13 defines the time units of the motifs, phrases, into which the rhythmic groupings are combined. These syntactic elements form a “micro-rhythm” of composition (Lutosławski's terminology<sup>7</sup>) – that is, various nuanced rhythmic groupings. This whole example shows us the formation of Lutosławski's “pre-hearing” of musical time, and reveals the details of the composer's work on structuring the time.

**Figure 2.** Lutosławski's rulers. Photo by Adrian Thomas. Published with permission from the author.



<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the concepts of modular and non-modular rhythmicity, see the composer's text *Kilka problemów z dziedziny rytmiki* in *O muzyce: Pisma i wypowiedzi* (Lutosławski & Skowron 2011).

**Figure 3.** Sketch of the *Cello Concerto*. Published with permission from the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel: Witold Lutosławski Collection.



The sketch 210-0814 from the *Second Symphony* (most likely corresponding to musical material from rehearsal numbers 123–123c) also illustrates how the musical idea unfolded in the composer's imagination. The sheet contains an individual ruler created by Lutosławski (1.6 mm of paper per second), calculations of the exact lengths of the temporal structures – 20", 25", 12", 8", 10x" – and formulas for these lengths along the edges of the sheet. These calculations reveal the plan of the composition's macro-rhythm and the "pre-audibility" of its volumes. Specifically for the music corresponding to this fragment of the *Second Symphony* – a micropolyphonic, vibratory, magmatic flow, unmeasured in time and free from any traditional metric structure – a survey on the perception of time structuring was developed as part of the research (the results of this survey are discussed in the following section). It was extremely important to compare Lutosławski's feeling of volumes of time units with the listeners' feeling. The responses from recipients regarding the structuring of the four-minute fragment that anticipates rehearsal number 123 differ slightly. These findings are examined in greater detail in the following section.

Another way to "travel" through the composer's imagination is an exploration of his conducting scores. Conducting remarks represent the stage when the time and its "pre-hearing" reveal themselves during the rehearsal – that is, during a process of testing an idea, that has been already fully formed at the pre-compositional stage. The Paul Sacher



Stiftung holds 7 conducting scores of Lutosławski's works (in particular, First Symphony, *Chain III*, *Les espaces du sommeil*, *Jeux vénitiens*).

Figure 4 is a fragment from a fair copy of the First Symphony (1947), created more than 10 years earlier, before the period of Lutosławski's innovations in musical time. This fragment demonstrates, through the conductor's remarks, how metric, regular bars in the notation were integrated into a single non-metric time unit – a chronoframe. Blue numbers on the sheet (1 2 3 4 5) reveal, that Lutosławski as a conductor perceived this whole fragment as a single temporal entity. As it was commented earlier, the feeling of unity is formed not because of the changes of down-beats and up-beats, but due to the syntactic, textural, dynamic, timbral etc. closeness in the segment.

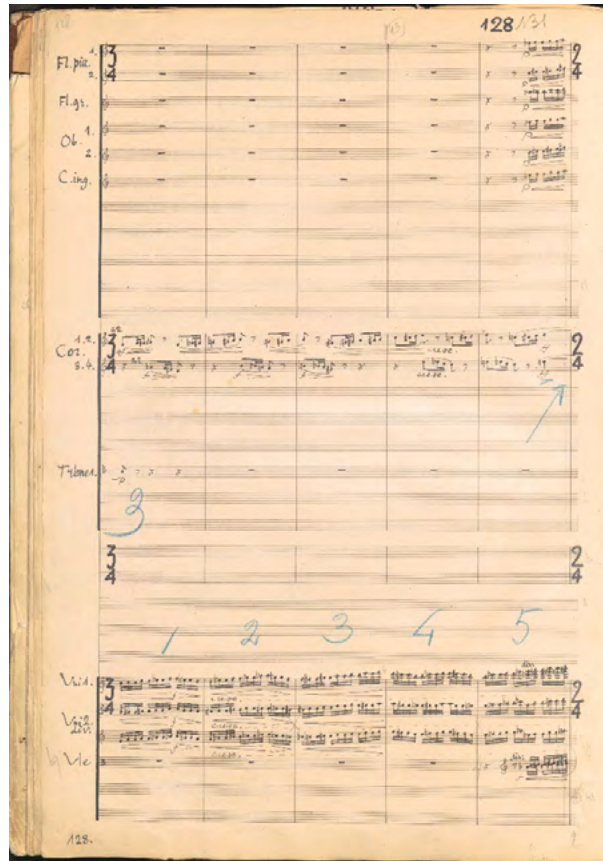
A comparison of two different conducting scores of *Jeux vénitiens*, one that has been stored in the Paul Sacher Stiftung, and another one from the Adrian Thomas's website, has become an interesting twist in this case study. For example, the graphemes of squares and triangles on p. 38 (IV movement, Adrian Thomas's score), and also little arrows near these graphemes show the conductor's gestures that "depict" the irregular order of the orchestra groups' entrances. Visually there are three segments of the musical time, of different lengths (Figure 5, <https://onpolishmusic.com/2014/12/30/%e2%80%a2-wl10079-jeux-venitiens-conducting-score/>).

Another score (PSS) contains pencil drawings of the instruments. At the top of the page, ten instruments are depicted, placed at regular intervals of approximately 2 cm. Together, these elements visually form a single time structure, in which the conductor highlights the leading timbres in the musical development.

The first pages show us Lutosławski's opposing feelings about the desired duration of the opening ACEG sections of the I movement: 32 – 38 – 26 – 44 seconds in the PSS score and three, four, and half shorter (12 – 18 – 6 – 24 seconds) in the score presented by Adrian Thomas. What caused these differences – the practice of rehearsing and "sounding" the silent music of the manuscript, the repeated practice of performing the entire composition while conducting, or some other factor? This remains an intriguing question for future investigations of Lutosławski's manuscripts.

Very interesting graphics by Lutosławski can be found in Adrian Thomas's score on p. 30 (IV movement, mm. 38–46). The score shows three blue squares, visually grouping every four bars into three sections. Additionally, dense vertical lines appear increasingly from m. 39 onward, collectively organizing the entire fragment into a single time unit. Most likely, the conductor (Lutosławski) used these markings to indicate the intensity of motion throughout the fragment. Conductor and composer Michael Ellison, in conversation with me, suggested that "the little lines showing the 'indeterminate' entrances of the lower parts' pitches – it's as though he wants to keep track of the 'composite melody' or counterpoint between the parts." These conductor's marks thus reveal an invisible skeleton of time, reflecting both Lutosławski's perception of temporal flow and the intensity of its motion.

**Figure 4.** First Symphony. Conducting score. Published with permission from the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel: Witold Lutosławski Collection.



Let us make a small digression and comment on the different positions of Lutosławski and conductor Wojciech Michniewski regarding the practice of using additional bars in Lutosławski's scores in the *ad libitum* sections. The discussion arose during the period of these conductors' adaptation to the new form of musical notation in the technique of controlled aleatorics, developed by Lutosławski. The role of triangles and vertical lines in *ad libitum* sections was interpreted by performers in completely different ways in practice. This is reflected in the quotations:

- Lutosławski: "Notation in score form can be completely misunderstood by some conductors who add unexpected bar lines in my scores, metre, etc. <...> This leads to a complete distortion of the composer's intentions, to the transformation of the work into his caricature" (Michniewski 2017, 83).
- Michniewski: "The half-arrows that he uses impose a metric (in essence) impulse on the course of time. **There is nothing wrong** with transforming the **impulse of the arrows into a metric pulse**, if it is needed in practice" (Michniewski 2017, 83; *translation and emphasis – O. M.*).

**Figure 5.** *Jeux vénitiens*. Conducting score. Photo by Adrian Thomas. Published with permission from the author.

The image shows a page from a musical score, identified as a conducting score for *Jeux vénitiens*. The page is filled with musical staves for various instruments and voices. At the top, there are three large, stylized symbols: a square with a downward arrow, a triangle with a downward arrow, and a circle with a downward arrow. These symbols are connected by lines to specific parts of the score. The staves are labeled with instrument abbreviations: fl, ob, cl, f, cor, tuba, pf, vln, vla, vc, and cb. The score includes musical notation, lyrics, and conducting cues marked with letters and symbols like arrows and triangles. The page number '38' is visible in the top left corner.

Despite the fact that both artists had such different positions, one of the most outstanding recordings of the work *Three Poems by Henri Michaux* is the recording of its performance conducted jointly by Lutosławski and Michniewski. The performance of this piece must be conducted by two conductors together.

These quotations provoke discussion, as they indicate a different vision of the temporal organization of the *ad libitum* sections: Lutosławski does not aim to form a metric organization in these sections, he “hears” the change of chronoframes – the units of free time. On the contrary, Michniewski finds it there, he perceives the initial impulse, conventionally fixed by arrows and triangles, as metric.

An important property of Lutosławski’s temporal organization is its artistic connection with a word, and, in fact, the origin of its rhythmicity from the word. Speech as an artistic prototype of rhythm is key for Lutosławski in the creation of the rhythm of composition and its nuances. The composer said:

Rhythmics, to a certain extent, is a model of human speech with its characteristic nuances arising from the expressed content and from the expression provided by sentences, words and even syllables. You should not think because of this that the music should



actually convey a certain unequivocal meaning. Its internal habitus, its purely sound properties and the **way in which it flows in time are borrowed from speech** (Skowron 2011, 43–44; *emphasis* – O. M.).

Not only on an artistic level, but also on a compositional level, the concept of speech as a free interweaving of words and phrases is important for the formation of temporal organization. Namely, the speech model is artistically reflected in the musical syntactic structure, that is, it is artistically transformed into a sequence of time units.

Actually, the concept of speech appears in a large number of sketches, such as, for example, in the drafts of *Double Concerto*. In sketch 208-0391 Lutosławski notes:

Different situations, expressions, monologue! Use 'speech' (different languages) as a model of the phrase, its expressive content as a model of the form!"<sup>8</sup> A noteworthy phrase appears in Notes: "A striking similarity between verse and prose, as well as 'pulse' and 'ad lib.' This is our epoch – the second half of the twentieth century opens prose for the second time (Skowron 2008, 27).

Therefore, these individual quotations provide interesting material for the further investigation of musical time in Lutosławski's works. And they make it possible to outline, very carefully, the narrative in Lutosławski's music.

The methods used to analyze Lutosławski's drafts – revealing the contours of temporal units and the processes behind their formation – together with the study of conductor's scores, which provide insight into the structuring of musical time, extend beyond the traditional boundaries of music theory, highlighting the intersection of analytical, theoretical approaches to music analysis with the field of musical psychology.

## Time structuring. Narrative of the listener

In studies on time and rhythm, the perception of music – both in listening and performance – is one of the most crucial aspects. John Sloboda (1983) explores how metre is perceived during sight-reading of musical compositions, employing experimental methods such as audience surveys. Mari Riess Jones (2015) conducts her research on the perception of musical metre, the laws of perception of the basic elements of metre. These studies primarily focus on music with a clear metric structure. Irène Deliège (1993) investigates the mechanisms of memorizing musical time and its constituent elements by analysing the listening experience of Pierre Boulez's post-tonal composition *Éclat*. Her research relies exclusively on psychological methods. To illustrate how her work approaches the boundary between music theory, the theory of musical time and psychology, it is worth citing the following excerpt:

In view of the points discussed above, we can add to this affirmation that training, as far as memory for musical structures is concerned, opens up not only a larger memory, but also a better safeguard of the labelling of stored elements. Experience appears, to a certain extent to act as a barrier to the imprint phenomenon. Evidence of this is found in

<sup>8</sup> Original text (*shortened* – O.M.): "Monodia <...> rytmika <...> czerpanie wzorów ze zjaw. pozamuz.: mowa, natura, maszyny etc." (folder "Studies on Compositional technique" – "PPS-SWL Studien zur Kompositionstechnik").

the primacy and recency effects observed in musicians and apparently absent in non-musicians. In this way, the timbre of the piano present at both the beginning and the end of *Eclat* and the similar organisation of the initial and final structures of the work produced this imprint phenomenon in the non-musicians, demonstrated by frequent confusions in their localisations; contrary to what is observed for the musicians (Deliège 1993, 204).

Remaining within the purely musical framework of this research, it was essential to conduct surveys aimed at capturing listeners' perceptions of musical time – its structure and its flow. Key questions included whether perceptual differences exist between amateur and professional musicians, and what factors influence a listener's experience of temporal organization. One of the central objectives of these surveys was to investigate what triggers a listener's awareness of chronoframe shifts – that is, the perceptible changes in time units within a musical composition.

The surveys that were conducted reveal the approximate lengths of the chronoframe, partially determine its boundaries, as well as the factors of its formation. The listeners were of different ages (between 30 and 40, as well as over 60), two of them didn't have musical performance experience, three of them had an advanced performance experience, and one of them was a professional musician – music theorist and pianist. One of the important conditions of this experiment was listening to the audio recordings with different dynamics (loud and medium listening process correspond to Lutosławski's idea about the listening to the live concert and its recording: "I believe that music on a record or cassette is different from music at a concert [...]. This is for something else. I see its advantages that concert music does not have. This allows you to get to know the work very deeply, to know every note of the work. But 'mechanical' music obviously has its weaknesses. Even acoustic ones. Concert acoustics cannot be reproduced in a recording".<sup>9</sup>)

So, to reveal the invisible outlines of a chronoframe, it was important to test how the factors of its formation (principles of similarity and contrast, repetition and updating of the presentation of musical material) influenced the listener's perception. An auditory experiment of listening to the first 4 minutes of the II movement from the Second Symphony, demonstrates that the listeners first of all pay attention to the changes in dynamics, timbres, speed, and the textural density. Their responses included: "First of all it was dynamic contrasts and introduction of new timbres. The feeling of being inside of the frame appeared when the sound had established itself and became clearly different in comparison to the previous frame", "Slight pause. New melody started", "Differing speeds and intensity plays with gathering set time frames."

One of the objectives of conducting surveys was to establish an approximate duration of a time unit. The volume of a time unit cannot be determined from a score, or from bar marks, which outline only the formal division of time into certain segments. The question of determining the duration of time units in musical time is very debatable. In his aforementioned book Justin London writes about the duration of metric elements. In his abstract the author mentions: "Drawing on research on the ability to make durational dis-

<sup>9</sup> This phrase was said in the film "Witold Lutosławski in conversation with Krzysztof Zanussi", 1989.

criminations and categorizations at various tempos, as well as evidence from neurobiology, the 'speed limits' for meter are given: the inter-onset interval for metric elements must be greater than 100ms (10 per second) and less than 1.5–2.00 seconds" (2004). In her 2013 studies on periodicity in Lutosławski's and Ligeti's music from the 1950s, Rosemary Mountain offers calculations of time volumes within which the perceived duration of periodic units fluctuates. The level of "textural" periodicity, when the volume of pulsation units is less than the limit of 0.5", contributes, according to the author, to the formation of the effect of a single, continuous sound line. The smallest unit of periodicity that is subject to perception, according to Mountain, is the duration from 0.5" to 1.5" of the "pulse" level. "Super-pulse" periodicity with a volume from 1.5" to 4.5" "corresponds to the traditional meter". The largest time span that is perceived by ear as an element of periodicity and retained in memory under the condition of rich auditory and analytical experience is a duration of 4.5" to 10" ("large-scale level").

Mountain emphasizes that the features of the listener's short-term memory and cumulative auditory experiences are crucial for perceiving the highest level of periodicity. This is one of the reasons why questions about professional experience were included in the surveys. In my view, a natural interdependence exists between prior exposure to a variety of music and the perception of the organization of musical time in Lutosławski's work, which can be revealed through different methodologies.

In the conducted surveys, the listeners identified three fragments within a four-minute episode, as well as six additional fragments, and estimated their approximate durations. One listener identified five episodes, noting that "each frame lasted about one minute". Therefore, the applied method allows us, through the collection and analysis of responses, to determine the objective duration of a time unit in non-metric musical time. The responses provided by the listeners are highly important for further studies of the musical time unit and its properties.

Realizing a particular musical idea, Lutosławski commented:

I have always held the opinion that the musical time experienced by the listener is relative. The material we hear a second time seems longer than the first time: it takes place in a different time, because it is already familiar. Therefore, starting with the First Symphony, I create my reprises in such a way that the motifs of the exposition are 'condensed' in them: they are presented in a different texture, dynamics; most often *stretto* and *tutti forte*. The reprise of the main part of the Third Symphony is constructed identically, where the first thematic group is repeated, and the second is presented as if in an increase, but not temporally, – dynamically (from conversations with I. Nikolska 1995, 100; *translation* – O.M.).

These ideas are the reason why each survey includes a question at the end about how many occasions of listening it took to complete the survey. The listeners completed all their surveys without prior listening experience from the 2nd, 3rd and 5th time – the question about the number of listenings to complete the surveys was one of the most important.

The survey questions were intentionally open-ended, allowing listeners to express their perceptions of musical time not only through verbal responses but also through visual representations. In this way, Lutosławski's music becomes a bridge between arts.

Surveys conducted among amateur listeners included intuitive sketches that captured impressions of musical time within the fragments they heard. These small drawings reflect mood, the image of the music and in a certain way comment on musical time. However, this contribution of surveys, which becomes art *about* art, deserves to be explored in a dedicated study.

The surveys make it possible to identify and delineate the “reliefs” of compositional musical time and its fundamental element – the time unit. The methods employed help reveal the subtle, often imperceptible contours of these time units. Moreover, through narrative responses, they uncover individual differences in how listeners perceive musical time. Altogether, this not only illuminates the narrative of Lutosławski’s musical time but also constructs a narrative around it.

## Conclusion

This research on Lutosławski’s individual musical time is simultaneously an experimental exploration of time in a broader sense, and its findings can be applied to and tested across a diverse range of post-tonal music from the 20th and 21st centuries. Although the results are not entirely consistent, they provide valuable insights for developing methodologies for analyzing musical time in modern non-metric music and for expanding the vocabulary used to describe free, non-metric musical time.

All the methods applied in this research contribute to uncovering the invisible skeleton of time in Lutosławski’s music and to explaining some of the processes behind its formation. Theoretical analysis examines the internal laws of temporal structuring and helps to account for certain auditory impressions. The surveys demonstrate the existence of the chronoframe phenomenon and, through listener responses, identify the key auditory factors that shape its perception. Source analysis reveals the composer’s intuitive sense of temporal “frames”, which exist independently of conventional bar lines. Together, these approaches pave the way for a psychological understanding of Lutosławski’s music. They bring us closer to realizing his idea: “I create a perception...” (Nikolska 1995, 109) and demonstrate how this concept can be revealed and explored in practice.

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