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BETWEEN SEMIOTICS, MUSIC AND SIGNIFICATION

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MAŁGORZATA GAMRAT *

BETWEEN SEMIOTICS, MUSIC AND SIGNIFICATION

I would like to present to the reader a unique volume, one born from a passion for knowledge, an attempt at understanding music in its deepest essence, and the question of whether this art can transmit meaning. This passion has led researchers to semiotics, structuralism, and trends in the global humanities that have uncovered those elements that constitute a work, that allow for communication in a nonverbal language—what can be encoded and what can be decoded, what has changed over the centuries, and what has remained constant. This has given rise to three closely related trends that have been developing for over 50 years: musical semiotics, musical signification (meaning), and musical narratology—all inspired by linguistics and literary studies, all adapting tools from these disciplines, all proposing a new perspective on music that was impossible for the tools typical of musicology or music theory, and which have thus allowed for a completely different understanding of music.[1]

Moreover, these trends complement each other perfectly, intertwine with each other, and are very often complementary, for example, that the "[t]opical and narrative analysis of compositions" are "related to music signification" (Grabócz,

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[1] These phenomena were perfectly captured by Márta Grabócz, who wrote:

> Beginning in the mid-1970s, numerous currents of the humanities, such as structuralism, post-structuralism, cognitive sciences, literary semiotics, narratology, and gender studies, have powerfully influenced musicology. The integration of new disciplines into the framework of traditional musicology reinforced the weight and value of these approaches as they engage in an "aesthetics of content", by which I mean the analysis of expression in music: thus, music signification—that is, musical semiotics—was established. (2020, p. 197)

2020, p. 202). Together, they allow for a multidimensional analysis of a work; separately, they permit the understanding of music from the perspective of its semantic and communicative potential, as well as its component parts, which form a musical narrativity and serve to communicate the significations (meanings) contained within sounds, ideas which date back to Antiquity: from Plato through the sophisticated compositions of medieval composers, *dramma per musica*, the connection between music and passion (and affect), to musical rhetoric and programme music, as well as references to melodies or genres that are culturally entangled, sometimes symbolically (e.g., salon dances, national anthems, church sequences such as *Dies Irae*, 19th-century leitmotifs, or melodies associated with, for example, a specific country, such as *Ranz des Vaches* with Switzerland). Each of these areas is deserving of a separate book, and most of them have been analysed in numerous volumes, both individual (e.g., Abbate, 1991; Agawu, 1991; 2008; Grabócz, 2009; Grimalt, 2020; Hatten, 2004; 2018; Kramer, 2002; Monelle, 1992; 2006; Stefani, 1976; Tarasti, 1978; 1994; 2000; 2002; 2012), and collective (e.g., Andreica, 2022; Grabócz, 2007; 2021; Hellaby, 2023; Sheinberg, 2012; Tarasti, 1995; 1996; 2006).

This volume, whose history is largely connected with the *16th World Congress of Semiotics*/*16th World Congress of the IASS-AIS (Warsaw 2024)*, contains 9 texts. In the Introduction to Volume *38*(1) of *Studia Semiotyczne*, I mentioned the panels held during this Congress and that the three of them were organised "under the patronage of the Polish Semiotic Society (PTS)" (Gamrat, 2025, p. 6). The *Semiotic and Artistic Realities* panel was the direct inspiration for the Call for Papers for Volume *38* of *Studia Semiotyczne*. However, another "artistic" panel was held under the auspices of the PTS, which I helped organise together with Prof. Eero Tarasti (University of Helsinki); this panel was titled *40 Years of Musical Semiotics* (Wąsik, 2024, pp. 36–37, 273–290). The participants of this panel also submitted their texts. Therefore, the Editor-in-Chief of *Studia Semiotyczne*, Prof. Tadeusz Ciecierski, and I decided to publish a second volume on semiotics and the arts, this time a "musical" one. This volume can be considered a musical extension of the previous volume, *38*(1), which concludes with a text on music in the context of reality and semiotics (Chagas, Petković Lozo, 2025). This time, however, the reflection on the connections between music and semiotics is much broader.

The panel *40 Years of Musical Semiotics* was preceded by a special issue of *Roczniki Humanistyczne* edited by Prof. Tarasti, titled *40 Years of Musical Signification* (2024), which was related to the 40th anniversary of the Musical Signification project (MS or MSP).[2] Musical Signification, as Márta Grabócz explains:

[2] The project *Musical Signification* was launched in Paris in 1984 by Eero Tarasti and other European scholars, including Marcello Castellana, Daniel Charles, François Delalande, Costin Miereanu, Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo, Gino Stefani, and Ivanka Stoianova. Eero Tarasti has been, and still is, the director of this Project. Every two to four years (since 1986) there has been organised an *International Congress of Musical Signification (ICMS)* which is one of the most important world fora for scholars of musical

> can be defined as the verbal reconstruction of a lost musical competence, a kind of musical knowledge quasi-forgotten through the ages, yet perpetuated in musical practice by interpreters and transmitted from generation to generation by various instrumental and vocal schools. The notion of signification covers the various *expressive types* within each musical style, types of expression linked to a given *musical formula* from a technical perspective, and referring to the same "cultural units" recognized by members of the given culture or society. (Grabócz, 2016, p. 325)

This concept is larger than even musical semiotics or musical narratology—it connects them both and covers each and every concept concerning signification (meaning) in/and music.

In this volume, we present the results of a researcher trained in musicology who is entering the field of semiotics in order to advance a deeper understanding of a musical work. We can thus explore what happens when semiotics starts as a secondary field of research, but becomes the primary tool of research and scholarly communication. As Jerzy Pelc postulated in 1970, semiotics can unite researchers from various fields (p. 9), this time from various fields of music studies: historical, analytical, or philosophically-oriented musicology, music theory, and performativity studies. Hence the diversity of this volume in terms of the topics focused on, as well as the historical periods, continents, and research perspectives.

The volume opens with Eero Tarasti, who in his extensive essay, *The Fruitful Interactions of Existential Semiotics and Musical Analysis: New Ways and New Challenges*, offers a panorama of the consequences of the emergence of existential semiotics (of which he is the creator), which, a quarter of a century ago, marked the crucial importance of considering musical signification. The new uses for this theory, which the Professor is constantly developing, are evident in the final sections of his essay, in which he applies his theory and Zemic analysis to avant-garde music of the 20th and 21st centuries. Ulrika Varankaitė, in her text, *Meaningful Music Listening: Inspiration and Self-Transcendence*, comments on theories about musical listening, music as a means of connecting people via meaning, feelings, and the perception of music, as well as extramusical associations that each listener can find (and give to the music) in a very individual way, depending on their own experiences and capacities. This is a very modern and new approach to musical signification and the field of musical semiotics. The semiotic nature of listening, examined from a perspective combining phenomenology and existential semiotics, is proposed by Sebastián Nabón Hernández in his essay titled *Silence and Sound as Interrelated Phenomena: The Existential Semiotic Nature of Listening and a Methodological Consequence*. He refers to Oscar Bazán's work titled *Del Silencio* that is the basis for the analyses presented in his article. This essay acts as a transition to the second part of this

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signification/meaning and musical semiotics. The next one—the *16th International Congress on Musical Signification*—will be held in Helsinki, at the Sibelius Academy between 2nd and 6th June 2026.

volume in which the authors present some case studies analysed from various semiotics perspectives.

Ricardo Nogueira de Castro Monteiro (*The Hidden Meaning of the Feast: Representations of Gender, Class and Ethnic Oppression in a Performance of the Brazilian* Guerreiro) chooses for his analysis "a traditional Brazilian folkloric manifestation associated with the Christmas cycle, [which] encompasses an Epiphany" (p. 81 of the current issue) called *Guerreiro*. It is presented from the methodological perspective of existential semiotics (Zemic analysis) and concepts by Stuart Hall and Kimberlé Crenshaw that permit the showing of the *Guerreiro* in a larger cultural, social, and political context. Füsün Deniz Özden, for her part, presents Ali Ufkî Bey's (Wojciech Bobowski, Albertus Bobovius, Ali Beg) concept of music notation in the context of Turkish culture and history, as well as by referring to phenomenology and the semiotics of culture. The three following articles concern musical narrativity connected to musical semiotics, musical analysis, and existential semiotics, using these combined methods to examine music from various epochs—from Mozart's 18th-century piano concerto (Panu Heimonen's *Steps Toward a Normative Music Analysis: Making Moral Choices Through Sympathetic Narrativity in Mozart's Piano Concertos K. 453, 466 and 467*), to virtuosity in piano toccatas (Julian Hellaby's *Toccatas:* Spielfiguren, *Virtuosity and Narrativity*) and contemporary piano concertos by 20th- and 21st-century Polish composers such as Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki, and Zygmunt Krauze (Anna Nowak's *The Potential of Narrative Strategies as Factors of the Composer's Idiom*). The volume closes with an article by Elodie Verlinden, *Dancing Cyborgs, Robots, Avatars, and Holograms: Reconfiguring Audience Reception in Performing Arts*, in which the author analysis the dance of non-human beings from a semiotics perspective, showing in which way the meaning in the dance of such agents can bring significance to dance and to the arts in general.

I wish the reader a pleasant and fruitful read, and hope that the multifaceted reflection in this volume will enliven the discussion on the relationship between music, meaning/signification, and semiotics.

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Article

EERO TARASTI *

THE FRUITFUL INTERACTIONS OF EXISTENTIAL SEMIOTICS AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS: NEW WAYS AND NEW CHALLENGES

SUMMARY: The article presents a synthetic panorama of the fruitful intersection of existential semiotics and musical analysis, as well as the Zemic model created by Eero Tarasti and its application to music. This article offers not only a panorama of existential semiotics applied to music analysis but also a critical review of the field of musical semiotics. Existential semiotics applied to musical analysis is commented and followed by some examples of its application to—among others—works by: Frederic Chopin and Claude Debussy, as well as referring to music by Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Robert Schumann, Jean Sibelius, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ernest Chausson. The new applications and challenges for existential semiotics can be seen on the example of 21st-century music, especially to the music of Krzysztof Penderecki and Arvo Pärt.

KEYWORDS: existential semiotics, musical semiotics, musical signification, musical meaning, Zemic model in music.

In the memory of Gino Stefani (1924–2019)

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1. Introduction

This essay was published in 2020 in the Brazilian journal *MusiMid 1* (Tarasti, 2020a). This version was reworked and extended to show new possibilities offered by the application of existential semiotics in the field of 21st-century musical analysis. My main concern is to present recent novel developments in my approach to existential semiotics and its application to music analysis. It goes without saying that this concerns not only European classical music—though it is naturally my own closest empirical area—but all musical cultures. Semiotic theory has always aspired towards universality and validity as a metalanguage portraying any social or cultural praxis. However, the examples for my analysis were taken from Western music (18th–21st centuries).

When starting existential semiotics, I was always aware of the risk in trying to develop a new program. It is much better to repeat the commonplaces and move along generally accepted lines. The one who attempts to invent and discover is soon the only one in that line, as we read in the famous Goethe poem: *Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt, Ach! der ist bald allein* [Who gives himself to loneliness/ah! he is soon alone].[1] But in some cases, this is unavoidable.

My theories have grown organically since their beginnings in Lévi-Strauss's ideas and continuing in the Paris school, and in its "return" to German philosophy, then back to semiotics, and from there back to my very first empirical field, music.

Why should there be a particular epistemological basis for one's work in musicology? Theodor Adorno, in spite of everything and his colossal errors, was an ideal. His theory and discourse were completely Hegelian. That distinguishes him. Yet most music semioticians are empirically minded scholars starting from music theory (and musical practice).

Then there are pseudo-semioticians of music who speak about semiotics and musical meaning but accuse other semioticians of narrow-minded linguistic imperialism. They use the term "semiotic" but never define what is meant by it. This attitude stems from British cultural theory. They determine themselves by saying that they represent the voice of the subaltern, of the marginal, i.e., popular culture—without understanding that what is marginal in the present world is definitely classical music.

2. What Is Music Analysis After All

But I want to go directly to the core issue of this paper, namely, what I call "Zemic analysis" in my present theory of existential semiotics. Yet, before I start to elaborate this new model, we have to ask some fundamental questions: what is analysis after all, what are we aiming for there? Every musicologist faces the task of producing an analysis of music. The purpose of an analysis is to provide

[1] One of the *Harpfensänger* [Harp singer] songs from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (Goethe, 2015, p. 425)—translation after (Oxford International Song Festival, n.d.).

a verbal portrayal of the musical object under discussion and to write it in such a way that the reader can imagine the music. And moreover, the word "what" refers to the entire experience we have of that piece of music. Such is quite practically the life of a music scholar.

Then, depending on what audience the analysis is intended for, the scholar chooses a textual strategy. If it is for a program note of a concert, or cover text for a record or speech for a general audience, or a paper at a professional musicology symposium, or at a conference with non-musical participants, the text is always different. Yet, the analysis itself is unavoidable. The challenge is, for instance, to clarify on the basis of a written document or score what an unknown composer's hitherto unheard work is like. The analysis is therefore *descriptive*, but it must not be reductionist so that the music itself disappears under the analysis, its schemes, diagrams, and techniques. On the other hand, it does not need to be *prescriptive*, i.e., that with it we should be able to produce the musical utterance again, i.e., write the score or play it. But it is still prescriptive in the sense that we have to be able to imagine or conceive the work, to "perform" it in our minds. What does this mean?

Furthermore, when we speak about a semiotic analysis, we can well encounter the question: what are you striving for with your analysis? What is its purpose and use? Since the analysis in the scientific sense takes place on an international level and is written in some generally understood language, we can say that it reveals hidden meanings and structures of the music under observation. Thus, a person, a semiotician or music scholar, who has competence in the culture which produced the work can make such concealed significations explicit; they can be discussed in a methodological language that all understand. We do believe, perhaps naively, that semiotics still is such a language of international scholarship. Taking into account how Western art music heritage has expanded all over the world, to cultural spheres far beyond the European one, such a task is a serious one and helps people everywhere to study and understand that music.

Now, there is much analysis of music that is not semiotic but represents other traditions and types of metalanguage. Let us think of German traditional music analysis since the nineteenth century. One aspect is that on the level of writing, when reading essays by Hugo Riemann, Ernst Kurth, Adolf Bernhard Marx, Heinrich Schenker, August Halm, etc., there is a certain impressiveness as early as there, in their *écriture*, as the Frenchmen would say. Not being a deconstructionist à la Derrida, much of the meaning of the analysis stems from the metalanguage it tries to form about the music. Through it, we try to make reading models of extremely complex musical texts. Definitely, other types of such analyses are those which try to clarify the basic function of music cognition and create generative, paradigmatic and other "systems" which often start from quite rudimentary musical examples persuading the reader to believe: this is only the beginning, wait for a while, we shall in the future—when the method and metalanguage develops—give you more complete analyses. Unfortunately, the experience is that such a moment often never comes.

Anyway, while reading those old classics, we have the feeling that we are reading something essential. Also, the language and discourse produce their own meanings. Meanings are of our own making, but at the same time of the making of other people, *les Autres* (Sartre) constitute some kind of reality and resistance which corrects the mistakes and returns the text to write paths. Without it, the analysis does not keep its feet on earth. It is like Greimas once said to me: we need intuition (we were speaking about Henri Bergson), but it has to be made into a model communicable to others. Then the other factor mitigating our theoretical fervor is the sense of history. I have never been able to think of musical semiotics without being in touch with musical history and "historical musicology", as they say in Germany. Therefore, it has been a joy to notice that after several world congresses of musicology, our discipline, i.e., musical semiotics, seems to be finally accepted as its own scientific paradigm even by most conservative-minded scholars.

3. Musical Meanings Appear

Yet, it is true that nowadays musical meanings are not only studied by semioticians or music scholars devoted to semiotic thought. Quite generally, it is admitted that music is meaningful. Even in such a pure music theory as the Schenker method, among others, one of its leading representatives, Edward Laufer, once said to me that it needs to be completed with a kind of semiotic aspect to be really efficient. Charles Rosen, who wrote so many seminal texts about classic romantic style, admitted in his last book *Music and Sentiment* (2010) that he is more interested in how composers use and apply different affective meanings than just labeling them as musical "signifieds", as I would say. He states:

> Other approaches to affective meaning in music that do not rely upon a code centered on single and simple parameters are far more fruitful… these serve as musical analysis. However, my own purpose here is more narrowly historical, to display the radical changes in the methods of representation of sentiment imposed on composers by changes of style over two centuries. (Rosen, 2010, pp. 27–28)

What is typical here is that Rosen does not use terms like "semiotics" and "meaning", or "signification", albeit what is involved are just these aspects (and although he here mentions Márta Grabócz, Robert Hatten, and myself).

However, as said earlier, many other approaches are dealing explicitly with meaning in music, and they seem or pretend to be experts in this field without any knowledge of what has happened in our paradigm of musical semiotics since it was founded in Europe in a congress in Belgrade organized by Gino Stefani in 1973. In cognitive studies meaning is mentioned but reduced to neural studies, which at best lead to statements such as that music has something to do with emotions (i.e., Allwood, Gärdenfors, 2008). Linguists have, since the beginning, been tempted by music and its analogies to language, by the simple fact that they are both linear, temporal, put signs one after another, following certain rules

which define which phrases are well-formed and grammatical and which are not. Quite remarkable studies have been done in this sense, such as Nicolas Ruwet or Fred Lerdahl (collaborating with Ray Jackendoff), and other Chomskyans, sometimes linguistically oriented scholars like quite recently Wolfgang Wildgen in his *Musiksemiotik. Musikalische Zeichen, Kognition und Sprache* (2018); he sees music in the evolutionary aspect of language acquisition, but seems to pass by the enormous quantity of music semiotical literature as such.

4. Does Anyone Want to Be a Semiotician?

The so-called cultural studies approach, which has become almost dominant in sociology, anthropology, and ethnology recently, stemming from British cultural theory, talks much about meaning and music, but the main thesis is that music is definitely cultural (just as in Germany they said that music is essentially historical). Michael Ryan, with Brett Ingram and Hannah Musiol, write in a book titled *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction* that:

> We may still question if music "makes sense" but our use of the term draws our attention more directly to what it makes us feel and what it makes our bodies do, rather than what it makes us think… Music occupies vaguely defined territory which blurs the distinction between mind and body, conscious and unconscious experience, the self and others… The personal is political… music is one of the primary ways by which we create and maintain our identities. (2010, pp. 105–107)

Chris Barker's *Cultural Studies Theory and Practice* (2008), written as a course book for universities, launches new terms like "culturalism" instead of structuralism, agency, ethnicity, race, television, consumption, youth, digital media culture. When music is inserted into this framework, its meanings are seen to stem directly from these contexts. The music they speak about is definitely popular music. It is considered marginal or subordinated. The only treatise on modern culture that I have noted to defend classical music heritage is the one by Roger Scruton. Otherwise, music appears as technology of the self (Nora, 2000) or as spectacle (Debord, 1995). So the question is also about which musical practice, i.e., genre and style, we are talking about. All the sophisticated theories on musical meaning developed in the last decades by music semioticians do not interest but passingly these adherents of "music as culture". Thus, we are never brought to know how, in fact, all this "recontextualization" touches the musical message itself and its structure.

Likewise, new ideas about multimodality in music emerge in studies, i.a., by Lyndon C. S. Way and Simon McKerrell in what they call *Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies*; they admit that there is such a thing as semiotics and often use the term "semiotic" in diverse connections: "Much has been made of the semiotic connections between music and language… however, our position is that music is not a language…" (2017, p. 11). And later, they claim:

> Music cannot be considered a language because of its semiotic ambiguity… More processual understanding of musical meaning in multimodal discourse, whereby music's meanings are emergent… depending largely upon the social and cultural bodies that hear them. Our bodies are cultured (Way, McKerrell, 2017, p. 11)

By this argument, music is not language; they seem to be justified in ignoring all the literature written about music as a non-verbal semiotic tool of signification and communication (cf. works by such scholars as: Gino Stefani, Vladimír Karbusický, Jaroslav Jiránek, Márta Grabócz, Raymond Monelle, David Lidov, Robert S. Hatten, Byron Almén, Leo Spitzer, Susanna Välimäki, Eero Tarasti, etc.).

In the same way, Roger Scruton, in his *The Aesthetics of Music* (1997), by arguing that music is not language, also excludes the avenue of musical semiotics. Therefore, they all ignore any such study that treats music as a form of linguistic communication. What is then this new idea of multimodality? One would be tempted to think it is a kind of state before musical utterance involving all sense organs, i.e., something before the real intertextuality emerges in music, i.e., references to other arts as an endless chain of interpretants, as Peirce would say. Nevertheless, "We define a mode to not to be corollarous with a channel of human perception (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell) but as a socially agreed channel of communication" (Way, McKerrell, 2017, p. 7). The key issue here becomes the "discourse". Certainly, music is discourse in a broader sense following French theoreticians since Foucault and Marcuse covering all forms of symbolic power (I shall soon return to this argument). Yet, the multimodal issue as a new approach to musical meaning remains vague itself. Maybe it is a kind of *khora*, as understood by Kristeva (or earlier by Plato) meaning the pre-language field, kinetic energy of our body before the "patriarchal order".

Altogether, in many fields people talk about semiotics, but they do not want to be identified or recognized as semioticians. If they were to do so, they feel they would be joining a historic paradigm of science that has long since been forgotten and abandoned.

To make things still more complicated, even among music semioticians, there are gaps between different schools and orientations. Sometimes the gaps are due to simple language barriers; those moving in English circles do not read French or German sources, and vice versa. Jean-Jacques Nattiez's school separated itself a long time ago from those who gathered under the flags of the international Musical Signification project since 1984. The Music dictionary published by Einaudi does not even mention such a community, which has arranged 15 large congresses, maintained a doctoral and postdoctoral seminar on musical semiotics, produced dozens of doctoral theses, having thus major international educational relevance (this well-known omission has been analyzed by Jean-Marie Jacono in 2008) This is a pity since without believing that there might loom a new chance for "unified science" as the logical empiricists did in the 1920s, the view that music functions as signification and communication would fertilize the whole musical culture around us beyond genre distinctions, i.e., between classical and popular music styles.

After these preliminary and contextualizing reflections, I dare to go back to the present state of the art of my own new approach, both to the semiotic theory in general and to its musical applications. I do not want to repeat here what is easily readable in my books, of which I want to mention the two published by Mouton de Gruyter in Berlin: *Semiotics of Classical Music* (2012) and *Sein und Schein* (2015). In fact, they should have appeared in reverse order since the latter contained the essentials of a theory used in the first one. However, one may notice that in the first one, side by side, with analyses which I could already call "existential semiotics", like the ones on Mozart's D minor and Schumann's C major *Fantasies*, there are still studies which belong to my earlier phase as a semiotician at Greimas and Paris School, such as the Wagner essay on *Die Walküre* (2nd act, 4th scene). I want to mention this since I have heard lately at the world congress of semiotics in Kaunas, June 2017, people say that I have altogether left the "old" Greimassian approach now. That is not true. In science, so-called progress or at least movement forward takes place such that the older theory remains valid but within the limits given by the new theory which surrounds it, i.e., it is *englobant*, as Greimas used to say. Thus, one may well stay a Greimassian music semiotician or something else and be at the same time an existential one.

5. New Epistemology

In what follows, I briefly repeat the core ideas of the latest phases of existential semiotics, particularly regarding the so-called "Zemic" model. Thus, what is involved in musical context has to be called *Zemic analysis of music*. However, here an empirically minded music scholar can still stop and ask: why should we have such a complicated philosophical theory behind us in order to analyze music, if the beginning is always musical experience? As Charles Rosen argues:

> Dealing with the representation of sentiment in music, I shall not often attempt to put a name to the sentiment, so readers who expect to find out what they are supposed to feel, when they listen to a given piece of music, will be inevitably disappointed. Happily, however, it is mostly quite obvious. That is; some music is sad and some is jolly… The power of music to illustrate sentiment and to awaken emotion in the auditors has been recognized and asserted for centuries, indeed for millennia. (Rosen, 2010, pp. 5–6)

Why shall we take pains to build up huge philosophic-epistemological systems in order to analyze such a simple, immediate, and evident phenomenon as musical experience? My counterargument is that there are a lot of musical facts around us, some say musical signs, or let us be satisfied to call them only facts… or rather data. Yet, data as such are nothing without a theory, a conception of what is pertinent. Even Nattiez, in his paradigmatic study on Debussy's *Syrinx*, once admitted that we could not study one piece alone without accounting for all the other pieces by Debussy (1973). So, there must be a network of data—but

even that is not sufficient. There has to be an interpretational network to which the musical sentiment, experience belongs. Only then does it become meaningful.

Discourse about music has many levels: description, analysis, theory, and ultimately, at the top, epistemology. Living examples of great musicologists show clearly the necessity of a theoretical ground. Theodor Adorno could be called a kind of pre-semiotician, albeit he never used such a term. His estimates are sometimes comical, like his claim that Beethoven's side theme in the 2nd movement of the Fifth Symphony is a failure because it is so bombastic. As a philosopher, he thought himself to be at a higher stand than mere musicians. However, his writings are completely based and dependent on his Hegelian background. Therefore, they are also difficult for a modern reader who is not familiar with that conceptual jungle.

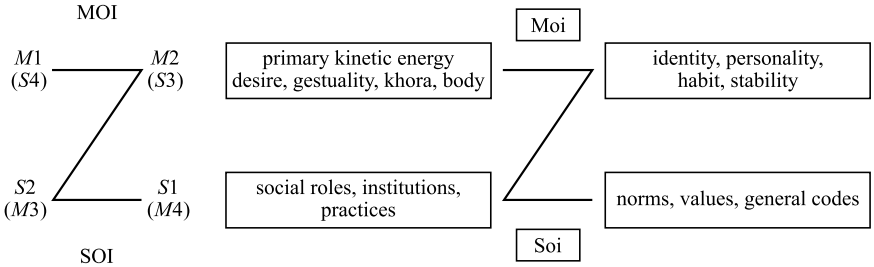
However, an epistemology is necessary for a more profound discourse about music. And once we take that step, we have to admit that even those philosophies change; they are in flux. Why should we be satisfied with what the giants of semiotics once said, from Greimas to Lotman and Eco? Greimas argued that his ideal of science is that the method is so rigorous, that he would sign any study made by his students: the results were guaranteed by the generative course. I always thought that luckily that was not true, otherwise there would never be any advancement in science.

6. Zemic Model

Now it is time to go back to the theory of existential semiotics and see what its relevance could be for musical semiotics. After many phases of elaboration, this new theory has reached a point that is crystallized into what I call a "Zemic" model. Epistemologically, it has many ingredients which have been smelted together to form a structure representing nothing less than the human mind. The Zemic model simply consists of inner movement and tension among four modes of being; this dynamism is portrayed by the letter "Z". The varieties of the mode "being" are articulated following Hegelian logic on the one hand, i.e., being-in-myself, being-for-myself, being-for-oneself, and being-in-oneself. These four cases follow to some extent the Paris school of semiotics and the famous Greimassian "semiotic square": *S*1, *S*2, non-*S*1, and non-*S*2 (1979). Yet, categories of Moi/Soi are also embedded there, quoted from Paul Ricœur (1983) and Jacques Fontanille (1998). Altogether, the model is an ontological hypothesis about human reality (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Eero Tarasti's Zemic Model



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

The model is the answer to the crucial question of multimodal studies, critical discourse analysis, cultural musicology, research on music as social semiotics—namely, how are we social, after all? Because society is *within* us. If the social were not dwelling inside us, it would not exercise any power on our behavior. The human mind—which is just modeled by the Zemic—is not only a more or less solipsistic Moi, it also contains Soi as one moment. Therefore, I was surprised to read Tia de Nora:

> Music is not merely "meaningful" or "communicative medium". It does much more than convey signification through non-verbal means. At the level of daily life, music has power. Music may influence how people compose their bodies, how they conduct themselves, how they experience the passage of time, about others and about situations. (Nora, 2000, p. 16–17)

In our terminology: bodies—Moi1, experience—Moi2, conduct—Soi2, and time—Soi1. We are talking about the same thing. But there is *no power without signification*. Nothing can move us unless we feel it has some meaning. Signs are social powers, as Umberto Eco said as early as in 1968 (cf. 2014). Musical signs are not an exception. The Zemic model is an effort to articulate this basic situation.

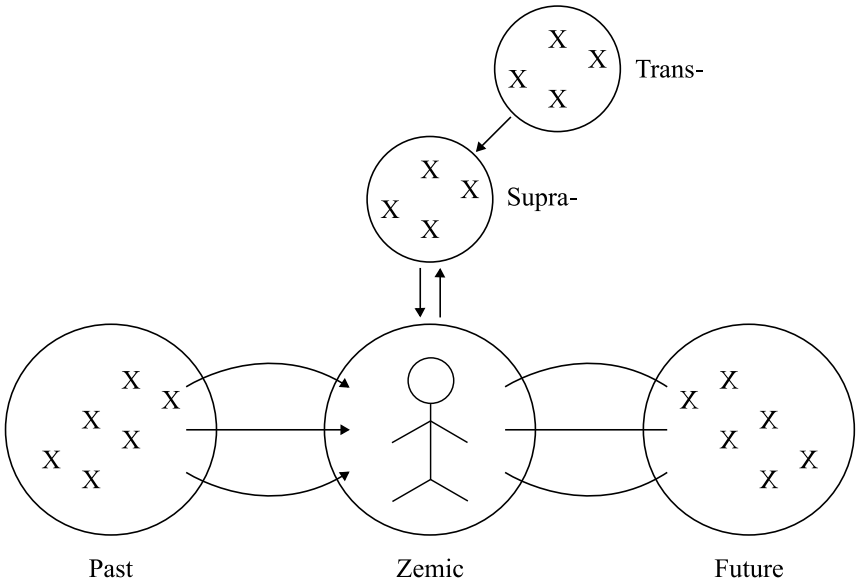
There are several more or less other hidden references in the model, like to Theodor Adorno's distinction *Ich und Gesellschaft* (Moi/Soi) or Lévi-Strauss's *sensible* (Moi) and *intelligible* (Soi), or to Jaspers's *gegenständlich/ungegenständlich*. This model I have already dealt with in several published essays and books of mine (Tarasti, 2000; 2012; 2015).

From this starting point, we can take one step further and ponder how the Zemic world unfolds or diminishes by projecting it in the timeline to the past or to the future, whether it gets there through strengthening its own structure, substance, and elements, or whether it contrarily tries to expand to all dimensions. Accordingly, also towards *transcendence*. An expeditor would always discover the same "Zemic" world; the American Indian or the Polynesian aboriginals

would be only negations of our Zemic, not any really unique and independent substances. Therefore, our subject is in the fulcrum of being. To him/her, signs inundate from four directions; from the now moment, past, future, "suprazemic" level, and transcendence (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

The Zemic Levels



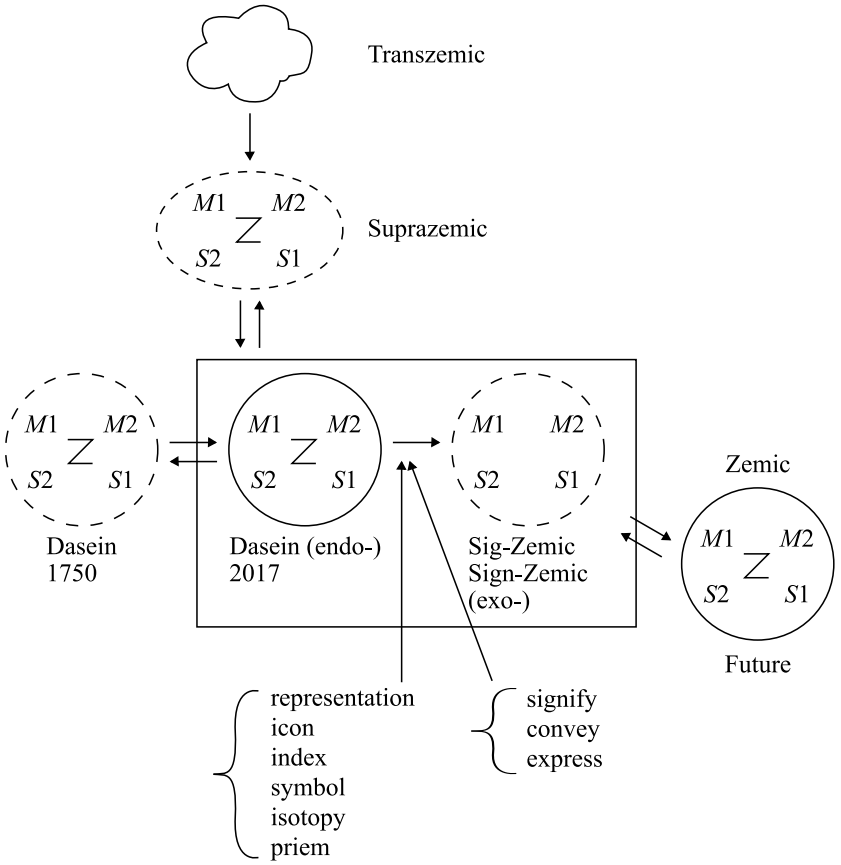
Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

They are first mere data for him. Yet, he has a kind of *Vorverständnis* of what they are. He recognizes in them at least those four species: Moi1, Moi2, Soi2, and Soi1. He articulates Dasein or the immediate *Umwelt* by them. Consequently, the Dasein consists of act-signs, where the signs of the future are its pre-signs and the past ones, from history, its post-signs. Our model does not deal only with a pure phenomenological now-moment but reaches history as well as the future. This is important considering its musical applications later.

In order to see what is involved in this complicated network, let us again see the diagram, which allocates the different spheres and interpretations of the Zemic to their proper places (Figures 3 and 4):

Figure 3

The Detailed Zemic Elements



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

Figure 4

Logical Interaction Within the Zemic Model

1) Similarity vs difference (contrariety).

2) Zemic movement in two directions (enacting semantic categories of material/immaterial (*gegenständlich*/*ungegenständlich*) and one/many.

3) Movement towards and from transcendence.

4) Dialogicity, i.e., Zemic in the world of other Zemics.

Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

In the center, there are two "Zemics": the Dasein or Zemic of the act-signs—and its representation in signs: "sig-zemic" or "sign-zemic". The empirical focus of our study is something which we obviously cannot doubt, but which we can verify anytime and to anyone, i.e., immaterial, from *gegenständlich* to *ungegenaständlich*, from one to many; taking into account *transcendence*, from trans-ascendence to trans-descendance; and last: *dialogical principle*, i.e., formation of Zemic in the world of other Zemics (cf. Tarasti, 2020b; 2021).

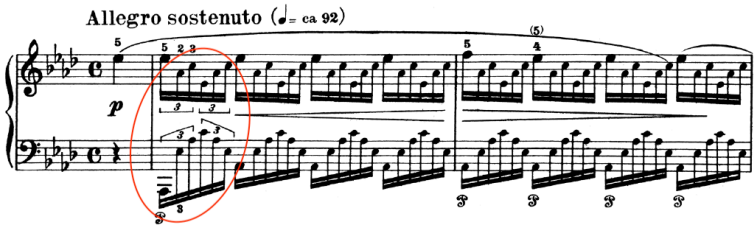
Now it is high time to go back to music. To what extent is the Zemic model pertinent when we elucidate musical significations? For the first, as early as in my *Semiotics of Classical Music*, I defined the Zemic modes of being regarding music: Moi1 = "body" in music, kinetic energy, the physical aspect of music. "Der erste Element in Musik ist Klang" [The first element in music is sound—own translation] said conductor Christian Thielemann (2012, p. 138); so it is sound, it is the Peircean Firstness, something immediate without yet any reflection or conscious articulation; Moi2 = is the same as the Greimassian *actoriality* in music, i.e., themes, motifs which are more or less anthropomorphic representations of our human subjectivity, person, something which among others Leonard B. Meyer in his theory of melody (Meyer, 1973) labelled as the archetypes of melodies: scale, broken triad, gad and fill, axis. Soi2: genre, form, topics, rhetoric, or the rules and formal constraints which make music social communication and praxis, and Soi1: values, musical aesthetics, more or less abstract concepts ruling over the whole musical process of generation.

This may still sound schematic and rudimentary but we may say that there is no musical utterance or text that would NOT contain in various degrees these four modes. I have often used the following example with piano: Chopin *Etude* op. 25 No. 1, A flat major: Moi1 = it is the vibrating sound produced by constant arpeggiation (see Figure 5a), Moi2: there is a melody in the upper line (Figure 5b), Soi2 = the genre of the piece is piano *étude* and so it follows its rules; Soi1: it has the aesthetics of romanticism, *Schönheit und Poesie*, beauty and poetry as said to me by my Polish piano teacher Jan Hoffmann once. Therefore, the appearance of the Zemic is something quite concrete and familiar to everyone.

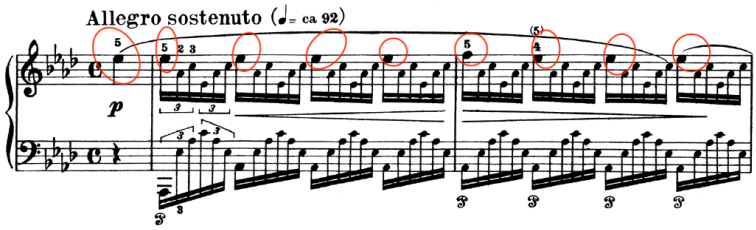
Figure 5

F. Chopin Etude *Op. 25 No. 1, A Flat Major, Beginning Bars a) Constant Arpeggiation Marked; b) With Marked Upper Line Melody*

a)



b)



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

How the Zemic analysis really goes in practice, I have no space here to elucidate in detail, but the reader may have a look at my recent essay in the 2020 anthology *The Routledge Handbook of Music Signification* edited by William P. Dougherty and Esti Sheinberg.

7. Music and Globalization

Now I want to go even further back to the musical field and, at the same time, develop the model of analysis further. I got an important impulse at the symposium on *Musique et Globalisation*, chaired by Zélia Chueke and her team *Groupe de recherche musicale brésilienne* (GRMB) in January 2020 at Sorbonne University. Namely, I had to ponder one central phenomenon on the contemporary worldwide musical culture, explicitly the so-called globalization. This became to also a test of how my rather theoretical philosophical model, with its origins in continental—particularly German—philosophy and classical semiotics—notably the Paris School of Greimas—would serve when we search for answers to problems in our present musical life.

First, what is globalization in music? It is a phenomenon of communication which has enabled the simultaneous presence and existence of all the world's musical heritages and cultures and a quick shift from one continent to another. It has made possible the expansion of Western art or classical music to countries whose

cultural background is completely different from the one in which this music has its origins. When, via the internet, all musical messages reach our minds immediately, what is involved is the McLuhanian "hot society or community" of fast communication, what Jean Baudrillard once called the ecstasy of communication.

Yet, if musical *signifiers* are transferred fluently at the speed of light from one place to another, does this concern also the *signifieds* or contents? Hence, the problem is a semiotic one. Does the correct signified go automatically with the signifier or with the physical aspect of the sign vehicle, or does it remain somewhere on the journey? I have once written about this in my *Minnesota Diary* (2004). One would be tempted to think that with globalization, there would have emerged a particular genre of universal music, in the sense in which Friedrich Schlegel once spoke about universal poetry when comparing Indian and European literature. Would thus the cheerful connection of the West and East, acclaimed once by Goethe in his *West-östlicher Divan* (1819) be possible also in music?

One might be tempted to think so at first, when one recalls, in the context of musical performance, how Korean, Chinese, and Japanese musicians distinguish themselves brilliantly in our international competitions in all genres of classical music and win them. Have they reached this level only by *mimesis*, i.e., by imitating, resorting to recordings of various historic Western interpretations and adopting their styles and ideas into their own playing? This is in no case the whole truth. They have, namely, most often correctly acquired the contents and aesthetics of European music, albeit they have grown and been educated in completely different cultural conditions. How then have signifieds been able to travel such huge distances over continents and then been transmitted to listeners completely convincingly? The fact that we even pose such a question is based to some extent on the misbelief and colonialist prejudice that some culture has a privilege to the art created on its soil. Only a German can understand Wagner, only a Frenchman Debussy, only a Russian Tchaikovsky, or only a Finn Sibelius, or only a Brazilian Villa-Lobos. One should remember the prophetic words of Bela Bartók from as early as the 1940s in *Über die Rassenreinheit der Musik* (1957): No nation has its own music—all of it is a loan! Did he already anticipate the situation in the global era? Accordingly, the only right identity would be the one of a nomad composer, testified by the case of some Stravinsky and theorized by Daniel Charles (2001).

8. "Hear Music Like *This*"

However, a total and global understanding is based upon the particular semiotic structure of music. Every musical message is generated by a complicated process. What is experienced in music as heard is only a phenomenon, an appearance, the surface. Yet, from this surface, the music listener reasons and makes inferences to depth direction and reaches the processes which produced it. If he/she happens to find them, he/she is enchanted and satisfied, just as if he/she had rediscovered his or her lost fatherland, as Marcel Proust once said about

musical performers. Then the musical interpretation is correct whether it is given in New York, Paris, Helsinki, Beijing, Tokyo, Sao Paulo, or Bogota. What is involved is what Greimas and the Paris school called *structural semantics*, *sémantique structurale* (Greimas, 1966; cf. Greimas, 1979). It has been built into every musical message. It is intuitively present, but can it be rendered from immanent to manifest, from implicit to explicit? This is the challenge of semiotics, and particularly existential semiotics.

If the issue is approached from the perspective of communication, then not. The music listener hears only the surface of music—but from it, gates are opened to the meaningful universe of the work, and these gaps can be called "attraction points", as the art historian Altti Kuusamo has proposed for the visual arts (2013). From them, one can proceed to the analysis of semantics; it can be ultimately put in a special notation at the side of the notes, somewhat like in Schenker analysis; this has been a problem throughout my semiotic studies of music, namely to find a proper notation for the results, such as that developed for modal grammar—see my study on Chopin g minor ballade op. 23 in 1992—and it is even more acute in my existential analyses (the only one having gone the same path has been the young English scholar Tom Pankhurst with his Schenker oriented methods and applications to existential semiotics; cf. 2008).

After all, what is involved is also what Ludwig Wittgenstein noticed in his *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (I was once, as quite a young student, recommended by the Finnish philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright, a follower of Wittgenstein in his chair at Cambridge University, to read what he said about music, but at the time I did not care; it is only now I am able to study Wittgenstein, although I cannot say I would have quite understood it yet). Wittgenstein spoke about hearing as something. In order to understand music, we have to hear music as some meaning which is in the message itself, but at the same time, behind it. If this connection is not found in the interpretation, i.e., in the performer, singer, pianist, or conductor, the performance is wrong, and one may notice it. Is listening as something a particular phenomenological reduction in which the musical signifier reaches its *noema*, intention, as Husserl said?

Let Wittgenstein say: "Only of course, if I say to someone: 'Hear it like *this*', he must now be able to say: 'Yes, now I understand it; now it really makes sense!' (Something must click)" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 546). Moreover:

> Would it be imaginable, given two identical bits of a piece of music, to have direction placed above them, bidding us hear it like *this* the first time, and like *this* the second, without this exerting any influence on the performance? The piece would perhaps be written for a chiming clock and the two bits would be meant to be played equally loud and in the same tempo—only taken differently each time. And, even if a composer has never yet written such a direction, might not a critic write it? Would not such a direction be comparable to a title to Programme music (*Dance of the Peasants*)? (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 545)

And later, he asks the question: "Would it make sense to ask a composer whether one should hear a figure like *this* or like *this*; if that does not also mean: whether one should *play* it in this way or that?" (1980, p. 1130). Finally, he points out: "Remember that one may say: 'You have to hear the tune like *this* and then also *play* it correspondingly'" (1980, p. 995).

However, one can notice how the starting point in Wittgenstein's works is almost always language. "That the world is my world, shows itself in the fact that the limits of the language (the language which only I understand) mean the limits of my world", he says in *Tractatus* (2001, p. 74). That might be contested by the musical and any non-verbal experience. In his *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology,* one could read:

> Understanding a piece of music—understanding a sentence.
>
> I am said not to understand a form of speech like a native if, while I do know its sense, I yet do not know, e.g., what class of people would employ it. In such a case one says that I am not acquainted with the precise shade of meaning. But if one were now to think that one has a different sensation in pronouncing the word if one knows this shade of meaning, this would again be incorrect. But there are, e.g., innumerable transitions which I can make and the other can not. (1980, p. 1078)

Next, I can give some examples of "listening as something" in Wittgenstein's sense.

* *Allegretto* from Beethoven's 7th Symphony. There is a hermeneutic program of this piece by Arnold Schering (1936), such that it portrays the funerals of Mignon from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. If the conductor knows this reference, he certainly chooses an appropriate tempo, i.e., not too fast, which unfortunately happens all too often even among great conductors.

* Mozart's d minor *Fantasy*, the main theme: it is supposed to be a "danceless dance" which provides its proper gestuality; later chromaticism stems directly from Belmondo's aria in the *Abduction from Seraglio*. It is the rhetorical figure of *suspiratio* or weeping.

* Chopin's F minor *Fantasy*; the march at the beginning, it is said in Paris that it represents the Polish prisoners in Siberia under the Russian tsar, certainly the tempo here is clear in any case but its modality and atmosphere is like that.

* Debussy's piano piece *l'isle joyeuse* evokes Watteau's painting *Embarquement à l'isle de Cythère*. The musician must get the same airy expression in his/her playing.

* Sibelius: beginning of the Violin concerto, the side section is a Finnougrian topos; this would need more explanation. Yet, the opening of his 1st symphony is a lamentation of a runic singer. That should be known to performers.

* Schumann's C major *Fantasy* op. 17, the end of the 1st movement: quotation from the Beethoven song *An die ferne Geliebte* or the third movement floating figuration in the side section: the end choir in mountains in Goethe's *Faust II*.

* Chausson: opening of the Piano quartet A major: the theme is nothing but the clock motif from *Parsifal*! The main theme of the slow movement *très calme* is just a transformation of the *Abendmal* motif from the same opera.

Thus, the list could be continued as long as one wishes. Accordingly, and in fact this shows indeed that music is cultural, since musicians educated outside the European tradition cannot know them by any means—and even our own young musicians often do not know these things. There must be a fully competent person, some art educator, supervisor, to tell them that. If one hears those passages "as" those topics or in connection to that other, secondary sign or interpretant as Peirce would have said, then the performance becomes different, closer to what can be taken as "authentic".

9. Ways of Generation

But now this is not yet a solution to our problem, i.e., why people living outside this culture and without that information still are able to interpret this music correctly and convincingly, even those who do not know these "cultural units", to use the term due to Umberto Eco.

The core methodological issue here is that music can be generated in two manners: either we can apply the idea of Greimas's *parcours génératif*, and then this process leads from deep structure to the musical surface, or to the so-called "discoursivisation". We can there distinguish two parallel lines: syntax and semantics. They mean in music the following: syntax = the rules whereby we put signs correctly one after the other, so that they end up with a grammatical or "well-formed" phrase; semantics: the meanings which are articulated at the same time.

I have made a variant of it for musical purposes already in my monograph *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (1994), in which I chose only those levels that I found relevant to reading complex musical texts.

Nevertheless, now in the time of existential semiotics, we can think about whether such a "generation" could take place with our Zemic model. It has not yet been tested. This would be something truly new. What does it mean?

If in the Greimassian model there are two simultaneous levels of generation and that process leads organically and quasi-automatically to the surface, then in the Zemic model there are four such simultaneous levels or "boxes"; they do not lead directly into anything in the surface because in-between take place numerous rearticulations in the sense of the linguist André Martinet and the philosopher Sören Kierkegaard, i.e., "leaps". Albeit, if we knew which Zemic forces were behind it, we could not automatically reason the end result. I can here only mention some possible errors in this respect:

Moi1—body: it is argued that music is only *Klang*, sound or rhythm, or kinetic substance, or gender, and that the masculine/feminine is always heard in music.

Moi2—person, actor: it is claimed that the actor, "composer" is unequivocally manifest in a composition: if the composer has a bad ideology or he is mad like Schumann, it is definitely heard in music.

Soi2—practice: music follows genre, form, social norms only and exclusively.

Soi1—values: everything derives from musical aesthetic.

Yet the situation in music generated by Zemic is more complicated since the levels influence each other and fight with each other for the foremost place in the music, i.e., they are in a struggle about the position of the attraction point in the reception of the listener. Can we also apply here Greimassian generation to Zemic and say that semantics and syntax also rule over the four modes of Zemic:

* the syntax of the body: combinations of certain gestures;

* the semantics of the body: the dominance of the energy, like in the ideas of power by John Ruskin, for example, Appassionata, Rheingold overture, Atmosphères by Ligeti, etc.;

* the syntax of the person: thematicity, like in Rudolph Reti;

* the semantics of the person: melody and identifying with it;

* the nominations of these according to the actantial model of Greimas: helper, opponent, sender, receiver, subject, object, or by their characters, like in the study by Panu Heimonen on Mozart's piano *concerti*: benevolent, aggressive, humble, subordinate themes, etc.;

* the syntax of the practice: for instance, sonata form, *Satzform*, periodic structure, row, Schenkerian *Ursatz*, the position of a note in *Urlinie* or *Grundbrechung*, *fokusieren*/*ausfalten*;

* semantics of practice: determined by the genre, like opera, recitativo, operetta, waltz, lied, march, military, church, chorals, rhetorical figures like katabasis/anabasis and their theological semantics, ellipse, anaphora, oxymenon, trope, etc.;

* syntax of aesthetics—they are of course the manifestations of the aesthetic: tragical, comic, grotesque, gracious, everyday, etc., and their combination, consequentially or superimposed, like in Mozart's aesthetic syntax: tragic and Turkish, i.e., comic at the same time: Piano sonata A minor opening;

* semantics of aesthetics: the crystallization of the aesthetic moments into meanings, meanings are not arbitrary but dictated by the structure.

Let it be as it is, but these mechanisms of generation are taken to be universally valid and cause classical music to be performed and understood everywhere "correctly". Whoever can decode them from the musical text and also encode them into a performance. They are the algebra of the brain, as Lévi-Strauss said, cognition as we often hear nowadays. One may consequently state that this mechanism of generation is also in the background of the aforementioned globalization and makes it possible in its positive meaning.

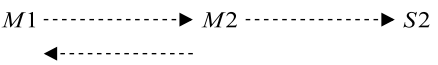
10. Communication Among the Zemics or the Selves

However, if we think of what happens on the surface of the musical text, i.e., "music as heard", it is the fight of the attraction point or which Zemic mode catches the primary attention. In fact, this problem leads us to think that the Zemic modes, i.e., Moi1, Moi2, etc., together constitute kinds of "selves", kinds of independent singular entities; we may ponder how they are in contact with each other, i.e., how they communicate. If we think of any concrete sig-zemic unit, it consists of Moi1 or gesture, Moi2 or actor, Soi2 or form, and Soi1 or aesthetics, to simplify these categories a little. Which Zemic modes are compatible and which incompatible? So, the sig-zemic is a melting point of all those modes; they can be called, like in the philosophy of McTaggart (*The Nature of Existence*, 1988), "selves". We can say that one self becomes dominant and attractive as an immediate perception because 1) its Zemic is somehow overwhelming in relation to others, which are weaker, 2) it is a knot point of several Zemic modes. Selves are groups of Zemic modes. The selves are in communication with each other, say, in the sonata form primary theme with the secondary theme, or they have inner communication within themselves. So, a theme or Zemic unit becomes an attraction point 1) by its energy, i.e., Moi1, 2) by its actorial power, i.e., motivic force or melodic character, as a "leitmotif", 3) by its actantial role, due to form, genre, etc., 4) due to aesthetic idea, say, nationalism: Finlandia, Emperor hymn in Germany, religious quality in the quotation of a hymn like in Mendelssohn's Reformation symphony or of a revolution song in Shostakovich symphony, etc. But what does it mean to say that these Zemic modes communicate with each other and within our minds?

It is not always easy to translate McTaggart's concepts into semiotics or into a metalanguage comprehensible in this context. Let us, for instance, quote a fragment from the Chapter XXX *Further Considerations on Selves*, in which he concludes that:

> all that exists is spiritual, that the primary parts in the system of determining correspondence are selves, and that the secondary parts of all grades are perceptions. The selves, then, occupy a unique position in the universe. They, and they alone, are primary parts. And they, and they alone, are percipients. This distinguishes them from their own parts, which are all secondary parts in the system of determining correspondence, and which are perceptions and not percipients. (McTaggart, McTaggart, 1988, Vol. II, p. 120)

First, what McTaggart understands by "determining correspondence" equals what we understand by communication. Self = Zemic, primary part = mode of being, i.e., Moi1, Moi2, etc. Then we have to explain what he means by "percipient" and "perception". Percipient = primary part, i.e., Zemic mode, which has the capacity to receive messages from other primary parts. Perception = the state of the mode after it has received a message, information, or perception, for instance, in the model:



The percipient *M*2 can both receive and send signs to others, like in this case to *S*2. This needs semantic investment: if the person has a dominant *M*2, i.e., personal authority and *S*2 professional position like a school teacher, and the other partner is living only in the mode of *M*1, like a teenager, not yet having a well-determined personality or clear social role sense, then the communication may not be successful at all. Well, that happens in the Zemic world itself. What about sig-zemic, i.e., level or representation? We can imagine a musical piece in which one theme lives only in its Moi1, i.e., by its undefined, inarticulate kinetic energy and another theme which is a clear actor, having a certain actantial role, say, like primary theme in a sonata or recurring rondo theme in a rondo form or a fugue theme, then these sig-zemic units may not interact, i.e., meet other musical "selves" at all in a piece.

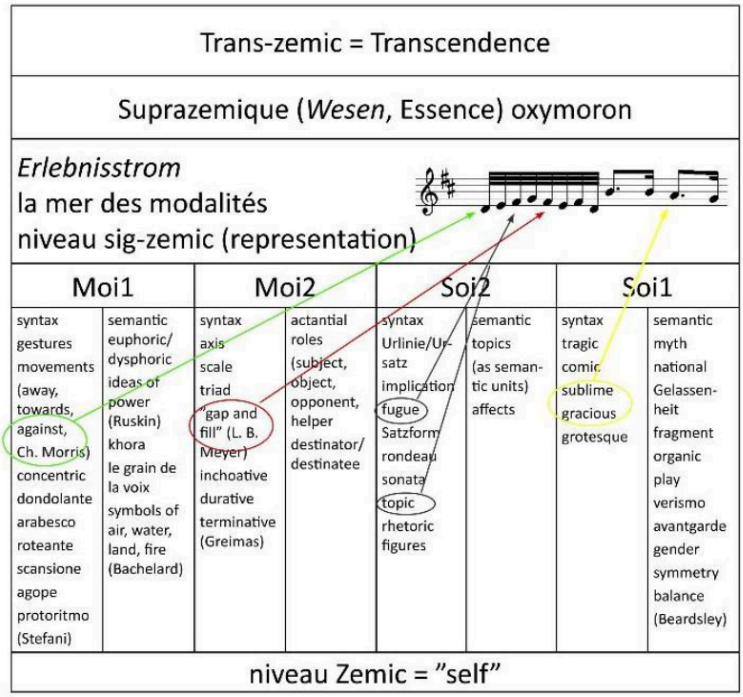
One aspect that makes the situation still more complicated is that after the Zemic world or Dasein*,* so to say, comes the supra-zemic level, as it was said earlier. Or the level Hegel called the realm of Essence (*Wesen*; 1969; cf. Inwood, 1995). On this level we have to take into account four different aspects: 1) Is the sig-zemic similar to Zemic or different? Is it iconic, indexical, symbolic in its mode of representation? Such issues we can ponder only by shifting us to the supra-zemic level of reflection. 2) Is it in a dialogue, i.e., forming or transforming the primary part Dasein into artistic expression like James Joyce writing about his *Dubliners* or Marcel Proust about his Paris? 3) Is it embodying or sublimating, i.e., is Soi1 gradually stepwise filled by Moi1 or is Moi1 stepwise sublimated into Soi1? This is just what the letter "Z" in the original model was supposed to indicate. 4) Is it transcending, i.e., treated by negation or affirmation?

11. Music and the Stream of Consciousness

Now we are ready to constitute a new type of "generative" model for our existential process of something being understood in a deeper sense; we have been able to form a metalanguage and define concepts, whereby we can explain and make explicit cases of communication with very complex processes of signification. We can take as a concrete illustration the short fugue theme of D major from J. S. Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier I*. We can, with the attached chart, note how many different Zemic modes and parts contribute to its meaning. Beginning from its immediate structure split into two halves contrasting with each other and those forming what is called in rhetoric oxymoron, or trope by Robert Hatten (2004), different colors in the diagram illustrate the procedure of how this simple and short sig-zemic unit utilizes its arsenal of signification, i.e., how it picks up from that treasure its proper characters and "primary part" in order to serve its function as a fugue theme in that type of musical text (Figure 6):

Figure 6

The New "Generation" of Musical Signs



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

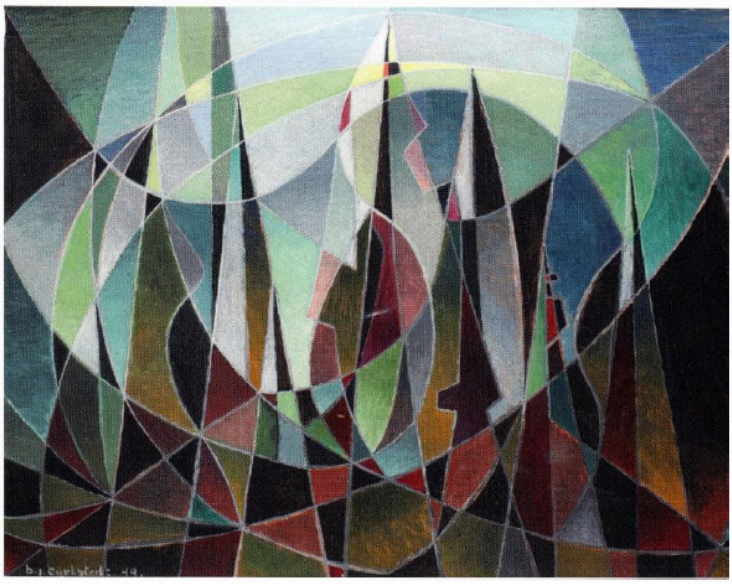
Moreover, one may notice that the level of real music, i.e., as empirical reality lives in a kind of stream of consciousness, i.e., Husserlian *Erlebnisstrom* in which the temporality takes all signs under its formation, under its particular kinetic energy and *Bewegungsphase* (Kurth, 1917). McTaggart speaks of *A*, *B*, and *C* times, which means that if *A* and *B* are units in causality, i.e., in temporal consecution, then *C* time is beyond it; it is a kind of "transcendental time" or rather timeless state in which there is no longer anything like past, present, future, but only something before or after. So, it comes close to what Ernst Cassirer understood by the mythical time, *avant*/*après*. However, music lives in the stream of our musical mind and perception, which could as well be called the sea of modalities [*La mer des modalités*]. Taking into account the primal continuous flux, the nature of this stream, what is then our sig-zemic unit or utterance there, in which the primary Zemic world is reflected and which it represents? How is it segmented, or how can it be segmented if at all? How does it distinguish from the murmuring and foaming sea of modalities in its background, which is in fact our substance? How does it generate itself from the Zemic? Furthermore, if a sig-zemic rises up, rises from other sig-zemics, how does it get chained with other sig-zemics and ultimately lead by relation of implication (Meyer, 1973) into other sig-zemics? How can any syntactico-semantic unit of Zemic, some particular sign, be in relation to another completely different kind of unit? Or which kind of communication or perception relationship dwells among them? This will be the continuation of our theory, here I cannot yet go further.

To conclude, we might make an intertextual experiment with music and painting. Birger Carlstedt was a Finnish-Swedish avant-garde painter (1907–1975) who passed through different styles, ending with quite abstract non-figurative visual language. His wife was a Danish pianist, who settled in Finland after the war, France Ellegaard (1912–1999), who was called the "Piano Queen of Scandinavia". When she played at their atelier house close to Helsinki, the husband painted, and once the result was an oil painting named *Uponnut Katedraali* [The Sunken Cathedral] due to the fact that his wife had played this Debussy prelude. Now we might ponder if our Zemic model is able to portray this interartistic communication or *ekphrasis* as follows.

Carlstedt painting: Moi1 = the water, Moi2 = the towers of the cathedral, Soi2 = cubistic techniques, Soi1 = avant-garde aesthetic, constructivism, non-figurative aspiration, impressionism. But how does Carlstedt's painting serve as the *ekphrasis* of Debussy's musical work? What are the sig-zemic signs in Debussy? Moi1 = the sound, the chords blurred by pedal effects, blending the harmonies, Moi2 = parallel chord passages, non-functional harmonies, yet the music motif or actor of the cathedral raises up from the sonorities, Soi2 = genre of a character piece for piano, Soi1 = impressionistic aesthetics, as one can see in the following figures (Figures 7a and 7b).

Figure 7a

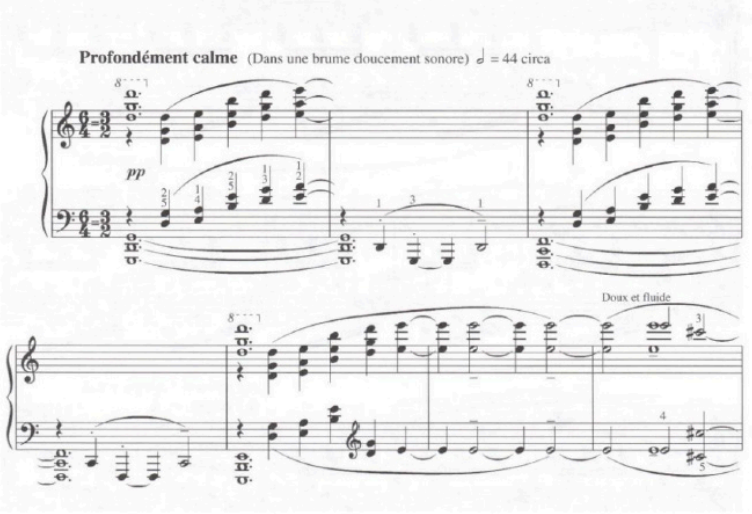
Birger Carlstedt, Uponnut Katedraali [The Sunken Cathedral] *(1949)*



Note. Source: Carlstedt's exhibition catalogue (Malmström, Endén, 2019).

Figure 7b

Claude Debussy, La Cathédrale Engloutie *(1910); Beginning Bars*



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

12. Zemic Analysis: New Ways and New Challenges

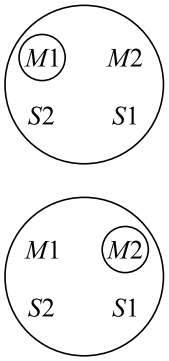
21st-century music, especially avant-garde music that is born out of Western Classical way of thinking and composing could be seen as a true challenge for existential semiotics as well as semiotics in general. As I said at the beginning of this essay, my conception of existential semiotics and its application to musical analysis could be applicable to non-Western music and music not in the traditional Western notation and composition system.

Recently, I applied my method to the music of Krzysztof Penderecki—an icon of Polish 20th- and 21st-century music, one of the greatest contemporary composers, who passed away in 2020. My analysis of his sonoristic works (such as *Threnody*, *Fluorescences*, *Anaklasis*), and *Cello Concerto No. 2* shows in which way Zemic analysis can be applied in this kind of avant-garde music. At the beginning of my analysis, event the notation—an innovative graphic notation—was a challenge, but all the cluster chords, etc., could be understood, as the elements imply a movement that is a sign connected to a musical situation and—then—to an aesthetic reflection. The musical elements (cluster chord, quasi-melodic, or rhythmic motif) connected to the fundamental elements of the Zemic model, and in this way, I analyzed Penderecki's music. However, this kind of analysis cannot be shortened to a few paragraphs, I propose examining the diagram (see Figure 8 on the next page) of the Zemic analysis of *Anaklasis* that I presented in the open-access academic journal *Roczniki Humanistyczne* (2024). I also analyzed his music using existential semiotics, connecting to the idea of the musical metaphors and epistemes that open a new way of analysis and interpretation of avant-garde music (Tarasti, 2026). Moreover, Zemic analysis could be applied to the music of Arvo Pärt, which I presented in October 2025 at the Launasmaa Pärt Center in Estonia.

And soon, in June 2026, the next *International Congress of Musical Signification (ICMS)* will be held in Helsinki—the 16th of this series of scientific events, titled *Music as a Meaningful Art*. Many scholars from around the world will come to Helsinki for this event and will speak about various faces of musical signification, musical semiotics, and my existential semiotics, once again applied by others and used in ways that I use and in new ways. We will see…

Figure 8

Zemic Analysis of Penderecki's Anaklasis



1) *M*1 field opens but it has dramatic expression of *Befindlichkeit* like Wagner's *Walküre* and its opening string *ostinato! Tutti archi* pronounces a cluster chord which sounds tragical
18 + 20 + 25
$\Longrightarrow$ this indeed leads to a more sublimated passage.

2) in which short fragments of full themes, i.e., motifs, pieces of a row are heard in all registers dissipated, but this is also like a negation of Darmstadt school of serialism, so it is a non-*S*2, but this is almost transcendental reaching high, light and immaterial registers, so 25 + 18 + 18 + 18 $\Uparrow$

3) now percussion group is foregrounded vaguely referring to actoriality, but rather with a fugal lexeme emancipates mute from direct actoriality bars 25–105 this is like a long *Durchführung* in a sonata, but also virtuoso, i.e., evoking *S*2, certain genre of performance at the same line.

4) that leads $\Longrightarrow$ to a glissando of strings, i.e., *M*1 also elevating, striving for transcendence $\Uparrow$ but leading to enigmatic piano tones prepared note (with jazz brushes), returning our actor on the earth.

Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

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Article

ULRIKA VARANKAITĖ *

MEANINGFUL MUSIC LISTENING: INSPIRATION AND SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

SUMMARY: Scientific studies suggest that media experiences may bring not only pleasure but also meaningful insights and inspiration. Such experiences can reflect self-transcendence, resulting in focusing not only on oneself but feeling more connected to others or to even be inspired to take action in the real world. One of the most powerful media forms in this context is music which also involves creative extramusical processes. These include emotions and visual imagery that vary depending on the types of musical pieces, on listeners' musical perception and on their sociocultural environment. Therefore, listening to music can also evoke meaningful insights, inspirational states, and self-transcendent experiences. In fact, studies show that music is the most popular media source for seeking inspiration.

This paper focuses on meaningfulness, self-transcendence, and inspiration evoked by music from the listeners' perspective. It also explores the thin line between the listeners' personal (inner) and social (outer) experiences since individual extramusical associations are greatly influenced by the listener's sociocultural environment including other media.

KEYWORDS: music listening, music perception, inspiration, self-transcendence, extramusical associations, sociocultural and media influence, meaningful media.

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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on music listening as a complex yet creative experience for the listener. The research was inspired by recent studies in the field of positive media psychology which suggest that various media forms, from a simple Instagram post to an epic film, can bring not only pleasure and entertainment but also meaningful insights, inspiration (de Leeuw, Janicke-Bowles, Ji, 2022) as well as self-transcendental experiences (Oliver et al., 2018). While many factors contribute to the process of music listening, the aim here is to mainly explore the afore mentioned aspects: meaningfulness, inspiration and self-transcendence in the extramusical context.

Although people may find meaningfulness and inspiration in various aspects of their life, in the context of media it is generally music that seems to be the most popular source for seeking inspiration (Raney et al., 2018). It is no surprise that there are so many genres and musical pieces to choose from, and listeners have a wide range of options to find what they like and feel moved by. Due to the Internet and digital technologies, music has never been so easily accessible meaning that today people can be listeners almost anywhere and anytime. Today, 79% of people think that there are more ways of music listening than ever before. Also, the older the generation, the higher the number, since they could experience the evolution and growth of music's different listening ways and habits (IFPI, 2023).

In many cases music listening can be more associated with purposes such as consumption, leisure, entertainment, background company while doing some (cognitive) tasks (Kiss, Linnell, 2023), exercising or relaxing (IFPI, 2023), or other activities. Nevertheless, music listening can be enjoyed by many people with no musical training required. As a result, it is a common everyday activity today with different (personal) purposes for which people usually spend over 20 hours per week (IFPI, 2023).

Music listening, especially active (when a person is consciously listening to music as opposed to passive background music listening), is seen as a complex process which in fact involves creativity. Listeners are considered active music-makers in a sense that they create their own way or perspective of musical experiences (Kratus, 2017). Active music listening can usually evoke emotional responses and visual imagery (extramusical associations) which vary depending not only on musical pieces (Varankaitė, 2021). That is, listeners' extramusical interpretations, especially visual imagery, are formed not only by the main audial source and stimulus (music), but also by social and cultural influences that are connected to that particular musical piece and to the listener (Varankaitė, 2021). In many cases, having these influences involved in the process, the margin between personal (inner) and sociocultural (outer) extramusical experience gets very blurry. The personal and social experiences also overlap when we talk about self-transcendent experiences where people's sense of connectedness and being a part of something bigger is boosted by meaningful music.

2. Everyday Music Listening: Main Choices and Reasons

We are probably aware of being exposed to music everyday whether we mean to or not. But are we aware of how much time during the day we actually spend hearing music even if it is only somewhere in the background? And can background music have an effect on accidental listeners? For instance, Christmas music in supermarkets every December (or even earlier) may elevate a Christmas mood for some people, but others may find it annoying. The influence of music on customers or the effects of different genres may be separate topics, and there are many factors that contribute to the complexity of everyday music listening. However, in this part of the paper the main objective is to provide an overview of general everyday music listening with more focus on the mindful choices of musical pieces (for both—*active* and *passive* [background]—music listening) and the reasons for those choices.

John Sloboda and his collaborators claim that "A substantial amount of music listening in contemporary Western society is deliberately chosen" (Sloboda, Lamont, Greasley, 2009, p. 431). The time that is spent on music listening grows each year. An average listener today spends over 20 hours per week on this activity and will usually listen to eight different music genres (IFPI, 2023). Table 1 presents the most relevant generalised data of a worldwide study on music listening habits in 2023 that involved over 43,000 respondents from 26 countries that accounted for 91.2% of global recorded music market revenues in 2022 (IFPI, 2023). According to the survey results related to mindful musical choices, many listeners consider music important for their mental wellbeing, relaxation and for physical activities. In addition to the information presented in the table, the study also showed that the top four ways for 16–24 year olds to engage with music are: short-form videos (82%), audio streaming (72%), video streaming platforms (66%), and radio (48%). At this point it can be noted that in general radio is still quite popular, being the third favoured way of music listening (see Table 1).

Sweden shows the highest rate (61%) of engagement with paid subscription. A possible explanation for this could be that Spotify, the most popular music listening subscription platform in the world (Leu, 2025), is a Swedish company, and "Sweden, the birthplace of Spotify, has long proven itself to be an accelerated market in terms of the maturity of music streaming" (Ingham, 2024).

Table 1

Overview of Worldwide Music Listening Aspects

Avg. weekly time spent on music listening	20.7 hours
Top 10 favourite genres globally	1. Pop 2. Rock 3. Hip-hop/Rap 4. Dance/ Electronic 5. Latin 6. R&B 7. Classical/Opera 8. Country 9. Soundtracks 10. Reggae
Avg. number of music genres to which one person listens	8 (+)
Top 5 ways of listening to music	1. Audio streaming—32% 2. Video streaming—31% 3. Radio—17% 4. Purchased music records—9% 5. Other forms (e.g., TV)—7% 6. Live music—4%
Listening to music using licensed audio streaming platforms	73%
Top 5 countries most engaged with paid subscription	1. Sweden—61% 2. Mexico—57% 3. Germany—55% 4. USA—53% 5. New Zealand—52%
Music listening is important to listeners' mental health	71%
Music helps to relax and cope with stress	78%
Using music for specific individual activities	In the car—50% Commuting to work or school—45% Relaxing or unwinding—41% Housework—39% Browsing the Internet—37%

Note. Source: International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI, 2023).

Research studies suggest that there are three principal reasons for music listening: 1) regulating arousal and mood, 2) achieving self-awareness, and 3) expression of social relatedness (*The Big Three* of music listening as suggested by Schäfer, Sedlmeier, Städtler, Huron, 2013). In Powell, Olsen, and Thompson's study (2023) on hedonic and eudaimonic motivation for music, they conclude that people have intentions to listen to music for purposes of pleasure (hedonic experiences) and for more meaningful and challenging (eudaimonic) experiences.

According to a study by Kiss and Linnell (2023), most listeners listen to music in the background while driving or doing monotonous tasks. The most popular choice for those occasions would be vocal pieces, and they would listen with the aim to feel energised. Furthermore, participants, who listen to music while reading or studying, mostly would choose instrumental music and would listen to help calm down. As the authors conclude, there are different patterns and reasons in choices for background music listening that are not only dependent on the type and complexity of the task. This conclusion is also related to there being many factors involved in the process of music listening for enhancing the performance of one's task since each of the main three aspects—music, task and listener—have their own differences (Gonzalez, Aiello, 2019).

In another study, Kiss and Linnell (2021) found that listening to music chosen (preferred) by the listener, increases focus on the task and decreases mind-wandering. Of course it is important to keep in mind that not all people (or not always) use music for background when they work or study since some individuals may find it too distracting (Gonzalez, Aiello, 2019). Nevertheless, each listener has their own reasons and choices for creating an enjoyable personal experience of active or passive music listening and these may differ from day to day.

3. Creative Music Listening and Extramusical Associations

There are quite a few different notions offered by researchers for creativity in the music listening context—from "creative cognition" (Deliège, 2006) to "creative music listening" (Brattico, Tervaniemi, 2006). Leman (1999, p. 285) explains that musical creativity "is not a property of musical products but of persons that are involved with musical information processing". Generally the creative musical activities that first come to mind would be music composition, performance, and improvisation (perhaps, due to the natural association with creativity as a very complex and more advanced process), and even if we think of music listening in the creativity category, it may be at the end of the list. Research, on the other hand, suggests that music listening is indeed a creative activity. Regardless of whether listeners produce any musical sounds or not, they can also be considered as "music makers" since their musical perception is an important contribution to the overall experience of the musical piece, this form can be described as some sort of "music making" (Peterson, 2006).

Imagination, as suggested by Hargreaves (2012), is also an essential part of creative musical perception, not only in music listening but also in music production. On the other hand, music listening has a great potential to be used as a stimulus for enhancing creativity (including convergent and divergent thinking) in people in general or in different specific settings, according to Ritter and Ferguson (2017). The authors also conclude their study by stating that listening to "happy music" (that conveys a positive mood and high arousal) stimulates divergent thinking (but not convergent) as compared to silence condition (control).

When we address the creative factors in music listening, it is important to include listeners' conscious choices and active engagement in the process. Researchers tend to emphasise the connectivity of "active" and "creative" components in music listening and explain that every listener creates their own "unique musical experience" (Kratus, 2017). There are different levels in engaging with music, such as listeners having different music listening styles and consciously using music in various situations to achieve certain emotional states (Hargreaves, Hargreaves, North, 2011). Creative processes can happen even if the listener is not the one to choose the musical material; based on the level of engagement with the musical piece, the listener can still experience extramusical associations. Neuroscientists Brattico and Tervaniemi (2006, p. 293) suggest that listening to music can be considered as "an act of creation when it involves, apart from auditory abilities, imaginative, representational, attentional and emotional behaviours in order for the listener to reach the composer's meaning or to create their own".

In general, *extramusical meaning* "relates music to non-musical concepts such as emotions, ideas, etc." (Wright, 1975, p. 419). There is still not much research carried out that focuses on the notion, especially in the context of music listening, however, such interpretations, including emotion, visual imagery and general associations, seem to be quite common to experience: they are multifaceted processes that have different links amongst each other as well as with elements of the sociocultural environment (Varankaitė, 2021). In this paper the terms "extramusical associations" and "extramusical interpretations" are used interchangeably to define listeners' subjective music-induced perceptions.

Emotion is one of the most common elements of music-induced experiences. Many individuals can perceive emotion as a natural outcome of listening to music (~96% of listeners; Varankaitė, 2021) and those perceived emotions can be either very clear, strong, ambiguous, or mixed at the same time (Varankaitė, 2021). Therefore, it is quite a subjective experience since emotions usually "cannot be explained only in terms of objectively defined stimuli: stimuli gain their *significance* from how they are processed by a particular individual in a particular context" (Juslin, Sloboda, 2013, p. 587). Furthermore, there are many terms that are related to emotions but there are distinctions (e.g., mood, feeling, arousal, etc.) that even in the literature can be used interchangeably and in doing so, create some confusion. Also, there is an important difference between *perception* and *arousal* of emotions. In the first case music conveys emotion that is recog-

nised by the listener, and in the second, music evokes emotion that is experienced by the listener (Juslin, 2009; Juslin, Sloboda, 2013).

Another and one of the most interesting extramusical aspects is music-evoked visual imagery which "refers to a process whereby a listener conjures up—either intentionally or unintentionally—visual images while listening to music" (Vuoskoski, Eerola, 2013, p. 263). In other words, in most music listening cases listeners can effortlessly process the audial stimulus and turn it into visual information inside their minds. According to a study by Küssner and Eerola (2019), 77% of their 500 survey respondents had experienced visual imagery at least once during music listening. The perceived visual imagery can take various forms, from very abstract, blurry and static images to colourful, complex, and dynamic stories, and they can be based on personal memories or imagination or be a mixture of both (Varankaitė, 2021). It is important to note that other media is an influential factor in creating mental images when listening to music since we are surrounded by various audiovisual works like short reels and longer videos on social media platforms, films, advertisements, video games, stage performances and other, to which we are used to some sort of image-to-music or music-to-image linking (Varankaitė, 2021).

After all, even if we perceive music listening as a personal experience, we can still usually find reflections of the sociocultural environment because, as seen from the semiotic perspective by Tagg (2012, p. 46), music is "extrageneric"—"related to society". This may explain why listeners can in some cases have similar extramusical associations although they may be hearing the piece for the first time, and why they can easily create visual stories in their minds when listening to music even if it is instrumental with no direct (or abstract) verbal cues (Varankaitė, 2021).

Extramusical associations serve as empirical confirmation that music is full of signs. We may consider music as one of the most subjective art forms, one that is not easily decoded since it contains abstract musical elements (especially if it is an instrumental piece with no hints of the actual story in lyrics), but also "we seem to agree that music signifies" (Tarasti, 2002, p. 65). As mentioned earlier, no listener needs to be musically trained to perceive or create their own meanings in music, and they can base their meanings not only on the general sound of the musical piece but also on the separate multimodal elements, such as melody, harmony, rhythm, instruments (timbre), tempo, etc. These aspects induce extramusical associations that may result in a multimodal form as well, and here we can look for specific links between musical and extramusical elements, that is, in Saussurean terms, analyse the *signifier* and the *signified*. In the context of extramusical experiences we usually look for the *connotative* signified—what is *associated* with the musical piece.

4. Inspiration and Self-Transcendence in Music Listening

One of the extramusical elements linked to emotion is inspiration which, in turn, can evoke a self-transcendent experience. Inspiration, as a psychological construct, according to Thrash and Elliot (2003) involves three main factors: it is evoked (not an act of will), it implies motivation (stimulation and direction of behaviour), and it involves transcendence ("inspiration orients one toward something that is more important than one's usual concerns"; Thrash, Elliot, 2004, p. 957). Self-transcendence is defined as "experiences pertaining to universality and connectedness, moral virtue, and spirituality" (Oliver et al., 2018, p. 384). Furthermore, "self-transcendence arises as viewers, readers, and players recognise in themselves elements of shared humanity (beyond service or sacrifice for a particular cause or community) and the potential for moral beauty, humility, courage, and hope" (Oliver et al., 2018, p. 384). These notions imply that meaningful media (or, specifically, musical) experiences may involve focusing not (only) on oneself (encourage self-advancement; Chang, 2022) but feeling more connected to others or even inspired to make good-will actions in the real world. In this case for instance, people may experience an increased inspiration for active willingness to help others (Pizarro et al., 2021).

A study conducted in the United States showed that 90.5% of respondents felt moved, touched or inspired while listening to music, making this sonic form of art the number one media source for seeking inspiration (Raney et al., 2018). According to another study (Schäfer, Smukalla, Oelker, 2013), intense musical experiences (IMEs), described as altered states of consciousness and very strong feelings induced by music, help listeners achieve deeper realisations about their inner self, life goals and dreams, and can even encourage listeners to follow these in their daily life. Therefore, the authors suggested that, since the IMEs may have the potential to help people see the difference between their dreams and real life, perhaps it could be used as a prevention tool (in music therapy); in other words listeners may be inspired by IMEs to be more courageous, to follow their real desires, and to change their life for the better.

In their empirical study, Ji and colleagues (2019) tried to find and show empirical evidence for a clearer connection between inspirational effect and self-transcendent sources (especially music) and they investigated the influence of awe-eliciting music on inspiration as well as a set of positive well-being aspects. The authors concluded that there is a direct link between awe-eliciting music and aspects that define self-transcendent experiences. Furthermore, listening to such music boosts an inspirational state, motivates listeners to seek the meaning of life and to take pro-social actions.

It should be noted that although the terms of inspiration, meaningfulness and self-transcendence are different, some researchers seem to use them as synonyms (Chang, 2022). In addition, inspiration and eudaimonia tend to be used interchangeably (Ji, Janicke-Bowles, De Leeuw, Oliver, 2019), most likely because these notions seem highly intertwined.

Although self-transcendent experiences can indicate bigger and wider outer social aspects, media psychology seems to be more concentrated on the inner, individual aspects (Whaley, Sloboda, Gabrielsson, 2009). Regarding sociocultural influences that contribute to shaping listeners' musical perception and extramusical outcome, music-induced self-transcendent experiences are examples of the blurred margins between individual/personal/inner and social/cultural/outer experiences.

It is also important to bear in mind that the notion *meaningful media* does not apply to any specific media product or even a genre. According to a study by Oliver and colleagues (2018), people (viewers, listeners, readers or players) may have different preferences, tastes and/or levels of perception regarding one particular media product. Therefore, the authors propose a better term—*meaningful media experiences*—that involves the very important subjective interpretations of media consumers. In the musical context, the focus is not on the musical object as being meaningful but on the experience of music listening including listeners' perceptions. The aspect of finding meaningfulness in a chosen media work now seems like a personal preference, perhaps even without questioning what the author of the work meant by it. We can therefore consider that the perception of the listener (or viewer, depending on the chosen media format) can be more important in the whole "meaningfulness" experience. As the listener is a participant in a musical process, "he must, in a sense, create his own experience, yet he need not take the attitude of the composer in order to do so" (Meyer, 1956, p. 41).

5. Empirical Study in Lithuania: Media Usage, Music Listening and Inspiration

To look at Lithuanian tendencies in music-induced inspiration, a study was conducted with 70 listeners in 2024. It was designed to explore the following main research questions within the Lithuanian context: (a) Which media forms are seen as most inspiring? (b) Is music amongst them? (c) Which music genres do listeners find most inspiring? (d) What are the main music-induced inspirational outcomes? and (e) What musical pieces and/or their elements induce specific inspirational aspects (signifier-signified links)?

The study was based on an anonymous online survey in the Lithuanian language consisting of mostly multiple-choice, some single-choice and open-ended questions. All closed questions had an additional option *other* which could be specified by respondents if needed. In most cases the participants were asked to choose between one and three options, although in one question (on preferred musical genres) they were given between two to five options, and in another one (about music-induced inspirational outcome)—all possible options (including "other"). The first section of the survey was modelled to look at Lithuanians' general media usage and preferences (four questions), the second section focused on their music listening habits and preferences (four questions), and the third

section was about music-induced inspiration (five questions). The final section consisted of seven demographic questions.

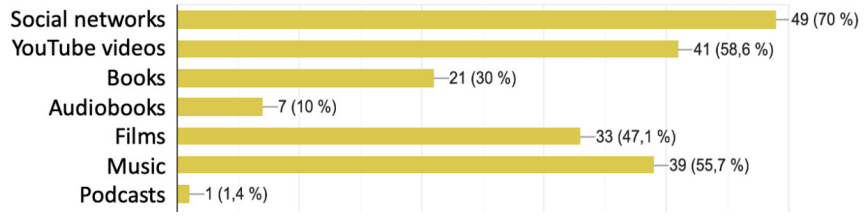
The respondents were specifically Lithuanians who reside in Lithuania (mostly from the two biggest cities, Kaunas, 68,6%, and Vilnius, 20%), their age was 18 and above (21–35 year olds was the biggest age group taking 41,4%; almost a quarter of all participants (24,3%) were 36–45 year olds; and the 66+ group was one of the smallest, 7,1%); women represented 77.1% of the respondents, and men represented 22,9%. Regarding participants' education levels, the largest group of 42,9% represented those with a master's degree, while 27.1% had a bachelor's degree, and 11,4% were PhDs. Overall, the respondents were highly educated although this is not very surprising as Lithuanians in general are amongst the most academically educated Europeans (State Data Agency, 2023).

Participants with no musical training totalled 44,3%, a quarter were amateur musicians, and a small percentage of the respondents could be considered music professionals. Of all respondents, 54,3% play one or more musical instruments (or sing—55,3%), amongst which the most popular were: piano/keyboard (71,1%), guitar (39,5%), violin (21,1%) and accordion (13,2%).

The first questions of the survey were not focused on music specifically, the interest was to first look at the bigger picture: what kind of tendencies can be found in media usage in Lithuania, and whether music is really the most inspiring media as it was in the previous studies from other countries. To answer the first question participants could choose one to three options to specify media formats for which they dedicate most of their time. As seen in Figure 1, most time is spent on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), YouTube videos, music and films. The same tendency is found across all participant groups no matter their age, gender, general or musical education, or even location of residence.

Figure 1

Media Forms on Which Participants Spend Most of Their Time



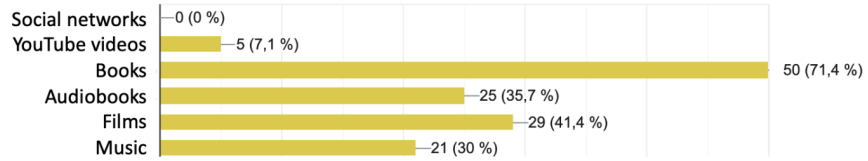
Note. Source: author's own elaboration?

It is probably no surprise that nowadays social networks take up most of people's time. However, the respondents did not express any interest in dedicating more time to it (see Figure 2), instead they wished to spend more time on books (71,4%), films (41,4%), audiobooks (35,7%) and music (30%). Interestingly, professional musicians mainly chose books and audiobooks, and did not tick

music at all, perhaps due to being surrounded by music not only in the context of leisure but also work. Generally, we can see that respondents' answers for this question represent some sort of counterbalance to the previous question on what they already spend their time on.

Figure 2

Media Forms on Which Participants Would Like to Spend More Time

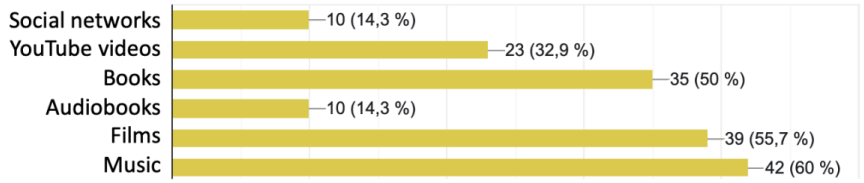


Note. Source: author's own elaboration?

As mentioned previously, research shows that music was found to be the most inspiring media form (Raney et al., 2018), and this is confirmed in this study (see Figure 3). After music, films and books seem to be amongst the most inspiring media forms for the Lithuanian participants.

Figure 3

Media Forms That Participants Find Most Inspiring



Note. Source: author's own elaboration?

Before moving straight to the results on music-induced inspiration, it is important to provide a brief overview of what the general music listening habits of the Lithuanian participants are based on. As can be seen in Table 2, the respondents tend to choose YouTube and Spotify as the main platforms for music listening as well as radio and, interestingly, in third place and even above radio we see attendance at live concerts (based on multiple-choice, one to three options, answers).

Table 2

Music Listening Patterns in Lithuania and IFPI Data

	Lithuanian Respondents' Answers	IFPI Data
Most popular ways of listening to music	YouTube (62,9%) Spotify (50%) Live concerts (48,6%) Radio (41,4%)	Audio streaming (32%) Video streaming (31%) Radio (17%)
Most popular genres	Pop (71,4%) Classical (57,1%) Rock (37,1%) Jazz (37,1%) Film music (35,7%)	Pop Rock Hip-hop/Rap EDM Latin
Time spent on music listening	6 h and more/day (5,7%)	Avg. of 20,7 h/week (~ 2 hours and 57 minutes per day)
	3–5 h/day (4 h/day on avg.; 21,4%)	
	1–2 h/day (90 min/day on avg.; 22,9%)	
	4–6 h/week (~ 43 min/day on avg.; 21,4%)	
	1–3 h/week (~ 17 min/day on avg.; 24,3%)	

Note. Generalized data of the respondents' answers regarding everyday music listening and comparison with global data according to the report by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI, 2023).

The most popular genre is pop (based on multiple-choice, two to five options, answers), which coincides with the global data of IFPI (2023), and then the genres or their popularity ratings tend to differ: in second place is classical music (versus rock, according to the IFPI data), third is rock (IFPI—hip-hop/rap), jazz is fourth (IFPI—electronic dance music, EDM), and fifth place reveals that some Lithuanian listeners enjoy film music soundtracks (IFPI—Latin).

The average time spent for music listening globally is 20,7 hours per week (IFPI, 2023), which is approximately 20 hours and 42 minutes, or ~two hours and 57 minutes per day. Almost a quarter (24,3%) of the Lithuanian respondents spend only one to three hours per week (~17 minutes per day on average) for

music listening, 22,9% dedicate an average of ~ one and a half hours per day, 21,4% spend around four hours per day and another 21,4%—43 minutes per day on average, and only 5,7% seem to be real music lovers dedicating six or more hours per day for this activity (based on single-choice answers).

6. Respondents' Perception of Music-Induced Inspiration and Self-Transcendence

After providing a brief overview of the general music listening habits of Lithuanian listeners, the focus can now shift to more specific sources of music-induced inspiration and its effects on the listener as a tangible real-world outcome. Although most of the respondents were able to specify those aspects, one listener (non-musician) claimed that she is not inspired by music and there is no emotional influence.

According to the survey, classical music seems to be the most inspiring genre, equally for both musicians and non-musicians. However, it is not for the youngest group of participants (18–25)—none of them mentioned the genre as inspiring, and in fact, it appeared that the older the listeners, the bigger the inspiration and appreciation of the genre. One of the reasons why classical music seems inspiring is explained by a participant (amateur musician): "the sensuality of classical music arising from the multilayered movement of [different] pitches".

Another inspiring genre specified by the participants is film music (soundtracks), equally across all participant groups (age, gender, musicians and non-musicians). Usually, this genre is considered to be inspiring in general, especially soundtracks with the big, wide, "epic" sound (according to personal discussions with students and even descriptions of musical playlists published on YouTube). One listener (amateur musician) describes their perception on music-induced inspiration: "I think that in all cases, the musical dramaturgical material is extremely important (especially in the case of film soundtracks), texture, ranges of selected instruments, timbres, if the work has words (text)—this is undoubtedly an extremely important component, which greatly affects the possibilities of musical interpretation and the associations that arise, related to or inspired by a specific work". The last three most inspiring music genres are pop, rock and jazz (based on multiple-choice, one to three options, answers). Interestingly, the rankings of the top five most-listened-to music genres (see Table 2) do not coincide with the top five of the most-inspiring music, although the same five genres are found in both lists.

Table 3

Generalized Data of the Respondents' Answers Regarding Music-Induced Inspiration

Most inspiring music genres	Classical (52,9%) Film music (41,4%) Pop (38,6%) Rock (27,1%) Jazz (25,7%)
Most inspiring music	J. S. Bach, W. A. Mozart, H. Zimmer, J. Hisaishi
	"The piece does not matter, the most important is the sound of piano"
	"No specific piece, depends on the mood"
Music-induced inspirational out-come	Helps to feel good/better (91,4%) Encourages dreaming (74,3%) Brings creative ideas (54,3%) Helps to concentrate (34,3%) Gives courage when making an important decision (32,9%) Encourages to help others (25,7%)

Based on the answers to the open-ended question, the respondents specified many and different musical pieces which they personally find inspiring, meaning no specific tendencies can be seen here (although, a few specific music authors were mentioned by a few participants: classical music composers Bach and Mozart, and contemporary film music composers Hans Zimmer and Joe Hisaishi). For some listeners inspiration is not found in a particular piece, it is more about the sound or some specific musical elements, and for others it just depends on their mood at that moment. It seems that in general it is not about genres—listeners tend to base their inspirational experiences mainly on particular sound qualities.

Some music-induced inspirational outcomes resulted in very high percentages of the respondents (the question was multiple-choice with all the possible options). Music helping to feel good was indicated by 91,4% of the participants, and this aspect once again confirms music being used for emotional reasons, specifically emotional regulation. Almost three quarters (74,3%) agree that music fosters (day)dreaming (which usually involves visual imagery), more than half (54,3%) of the participants claim that music can help bring about creative ideas, and over a third (34,3%) say that music helps them to concentrate. Two perhaps

more tangible and interesting music-evoked inspirational outcomes may be the following: music giving courage when making an important life decision (32,9%) and music encouraging to help others (25,7%). According to the results of this survey, music really seems to be a powerful tool for inspiration that may bring positive results or real-life changes to listeners.

Looking at some more comprehensive extramusical descriptions on musical inspiration provided by the respondents, some signifier-signified links could be found. Specifically, links between the musical aspect (signifier) and the inspirational reason (or general feeling of inspiration; signified). Excerpts of the respondents' descriptions are demonstrated below with signifiers being underlined and signifieds presented in bold:

- "Listening to loud rock makes you **want to drive more aggressively**";
- "Words are the most **inspiring** because I pay a lot of attention to words and how they are used. Also the artist's voice, because it best conveys the emotion and context of the words";
- "Rhythm and tempo may coincide with the rhythm of the activity I am doing, so music helps me to **return to myself, to calm down**. Words are also important to me, they are so sincere, they remind me of this value (**sincerity**)";
- "The sounds of individual musical instruments, piano, electric guitar, drums are **inspiring**. For me, these are the most beautiful sounds, when needed they **help to relax**, sometimes they **excite**";
- "Energetic elements of music **inspire me not to be lazy to work** and to **take the extra step** in work";
- "*Kamanių šilelis*, the fact that they sing in Lithuanian **resonates** a lot, the song of these artists and in general the whole creation helps to **sink somewhere deep into the heart** and **bring the feelings that are so deeply locked to the outside through sincerity**, gentle but strong vocals and the sounds of music that accompany the whole thing like **a meditation, a journey to yourself**".

These extramusical descriptions show that listeners have quite different preferences for musical elements to be meaningful and to induce some kind of inspiration which also seems to be specific in many cases. From specific elements to whole musical pieces as signifiers and from instantaneous mood regulations to possible actions or deep philosophical insights as signifieds. Again, it seems to be more about particular sound qualities rather than music genres, although the first example identifies a genre—rock (with its specific set of sound qualities).

When the survey was conducted, there was no focus on self-transcendence, therefore there were no specific questions presented to the listeners, although some examples of self-transcendent experiences naturally emerged from their detailed answers. This again suggests the link between inspiration and self-

transcendence. Here are the descriptions of individual extramusical and self-transcendent experiences shared by the respondents:

- "Music is the basis of everything, **connection with the universe is through music**";
- "You are just walking down the street, listening to music, the sun is shining, people are smiling and boom!—there is such a great feeling. I am **surrounded by some global warm tenderness, but at the same time I surround others with this feeling**";
- "There have been some very interesting synchronisations when an answer was needed and it seemed to come from music, merging with the events of the moment through sounds and lyrics. When drawing, the **music takes you into [outer] space** and that space is absorbed into the canvas";
- "When musical sounds **evoke associations with my own internal state and the environment**".

These extramusical examples—even if only a few—reveal rather deep insights: a sense of globality, as well as looking internally into oneself but at the same time connecting with surroundings, and again we can see the ambiguous verge of personal and sociocultural realms. The example of music that "takes you into [outer] space" hints at an evoked visual imagery which, in this case, manifests itself as a painting on the listener's canvas.

7. Conclusions

Due to modern digital-technological possibilities, music has never been more accessible and with the average number of music listening hours growing each year, it shows that this activity is becoming more and more important in people's lives. The main purpose is not (only) leisure: there are many different personal choices and reasons for music listening including using music as a background for cognitive or physical activities, relaxation, seeking motivation or inspiration, and even experiencing self-transcendence. Compared to other media, music is the most used source for seeking such elevated states, especially inspiration.

Active music listening is a creative activity, and choices made by the listener in the process of music listening are also considered creative since each listener creates a unique music listening experience for themselves. Furthermore, active music listening usually evokes extramusical associations that almost always include emotion and visual imagery, as well as resulting in inspirational states and self-transcendence. Meaningfulness is mainly established by the listener individually, therefore this empirical study also showed that there were many different musical pieces (or authors, or sound, or elements in music) specified as inspiring by the respondents. In fact, the most inspiring musical aspects seem to be not genres or musical pieces but various particular sound qualities. A music-

evoked inspirational state regulates emotion (elevates), helps to concentrate, brings creative ideas to the fore, and may lead to real-life actions (pro-social). It may also result in self-transcendence which reflects or even boosts feelings of connectedness to other people, nature, humanity, etc.

The listeners' sociocultural environment is often reflected in their musical experience and perception. It is without doubt that people naturally consider music as a social and collective experience in cases like concerts where all listeners together are immersed in the same musical adventure. However, at the same time they may also have very personal experiences while they all are physically in the same social setting. Therefore, the creative process of music listening is somewhere in between the individual/personal/inner and social/cultural/outer perspectives which may intertwine in many different points. It seems that the clear distinction cannot be identified especially when we take into account extramusical responses, inspirational and self-transcendent experiences.

A more in-depth qualitative study would be beneficial to look at more specific aspects that listeners provide (and possibly explain) as meaningful and important details of their extramusical interpretations, helping to better understand their perception of music-induced inspiration and self-transcendence.

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Article

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SILENCE AND SOUND AS INTERRELATED PHENOMENA: THE EXISTENTIAL SEMIOTIC NATURE OF LISTENING AND A METHODOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCE

SUMMARY: This study applies existential semiotics to examine the semiotic nature of listening, providing a novel framework to understand silence and sound as interrelated phenomena. Building a theoretical and methodological framework by interpreting the existential semiotic concept of *situation* and *Z*-model in a new way; silence is examined through the lens of Latin American minimist music. By presenting a case study analyzing Oscar Bazán's *Del Silencio*, this work positions listening as a transformative act, bridging the existential, artistic, and semiotic dimensions of human experience. With the help of this methodological exploration, it is argued that, when listening is taken from an existential perspective, silence and sound must be understood as an interrelated phenomenon rather than two distinct elements. In turn, it can bring methodological developments through modalities whereby silence can be analyzed as a dynamic situation of a space of possibilities.

KEYWORDS: existential semiotics, sound, silence, auditory perception, Latin American Minimism, modalities.

1. Introduction

Listening is a significant semiotic connection with the world that involves more than just receiving auditory stimuli. It is a dynamic and immersive act that involves the listener in a relational process wherein they construct meaning with

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their surroundings, going beyond basic auditory awareness. Auditory sense is an active process in which subject and object, sound and silence, and presence and absence interact to generate meaning.

This article examines how listening can be seen as a semiotic method for understanding sound and silence as interrelated phenomena, drawing on existential semiotics. This piece places listening in a larger existential framework and highlights its function in bringing human attention to the fundamental structures of the world that has a deeper connection with cultural, social, and existential dimensions, emphasizing its ability to bridge "internal" and "exterior" realities. This article's examination of listening is a relational construct highlights the importance of silence as a fundamental constituent of semiosis, as a modality of the listening experience. Here, silence—often understood as the lack of sound—is reframed as a dynamic space of possibilities where resistance and interpretation meet.

The semiotic approach seeks to deconstruct the phenomenon and identify a common situation between the subject and object where the specific attribution of meaning as silence can arise. Its main goal is to interpret this complex phenomenon without establishing a definition because silence escapes it. Recommendations for a single way of listening or a definitive viewpoint are distant from this study.

The existence of sound is not contingent on its interpretation. The sound we hear is an active, dynamic process created by a continuous dialogue between a subject and its surroundings. This inherent relational characteristic provides various interpretation options for the intricate relationships between the situation as a soundscape and what we perceive as silence in a particular circumstance.

According to Salomé Voegelin (2010, p. 3), the auditory universe is filtered and shaped by our daily life soundscapes' active interaction and co-creation. Silence in this context does not prevent hearing or listening; it actively contributes to creating our auditory sensation, in which aesthetic and ideological bonds extend beyond it and play a role in the multi-layered process of semiosis.

Since the mid-twentieth century, the phenomenon of silence has gained more attention in the arts and in the humanities. The increased attention comes from sound art and music artworks frequently using silence as a resource and as a particular sound material, consequently improving the notion's interpretations, allowing silence to be gradually accepted as a listening modality rather than only as a verbal act.

This change in perception is linked to the widespread one-sided view that silence is the absence of sound, a void, or complete stillness. There is never a total lack of sound material, as John Cage (1961, pp. 12–13) pointed out in 1951 when he entered the anechoic room at Harvard University. Instead, we are constantly talking about a certain meaning attribution, a connection to the phenomena related to the sound itself.

According to Voegelin, we tend to create communication links between the many symbolic constructions that each person creates with the occurrence of

silence. Additionally, this produces a potential language and future sociability that reflects the will and the endeavor to communicate more accurately than a pre-established code (2010, p. 87).

2. Listening and the Semiotics of Silence

Cage's writings offer a powerful illustration of this. Famously, his *4'33"* turns the lack of a composed sound into an invitation for listeners to interact with the soundscape of their surroundings. Cage's experience in Harvard's anechoic room, where he learned that body sounds are unavoidable, emphasizes how impossible complete silence as stillness or void is. As Cage noted: "There is always something to see, something to hear" (Cage, 1961, p. 12); auditory experience is relational and contingent. Silence in *4'33"* is transformed into a place of heightened awareness where listeners are encouraged to actively contribute to meaning-making. Thus, sound and silence are interrelated phenomena existing within a dynamic continuum whose interconnection challenges their common binary opposition.

Similarly, the semiotic potential of silence as a form of cultural resistance is explored in the works of minimist[1] composers. Silence challenges conventional Western musical paradigms by symbolizing suppression and resilience in pieces such as *todavía no* (1979) by Graciela Paraskevaídis (for an extended exploration on this topic, see Aharonián, 2012; Nabón Hernández, 2024). Through static soundscapes and extreme austerity, Paraskevaídis establishes generative listening spaces where silence serves as a medium for political critique and collective memory. These pieces highlight the relational aspect of silence and show how it can express meaning in particular historical and cultural situations:

[1] Minimism and minimalism are understood here as specific compositional techniques for austere music in the context of two different groups of composers. The former represents a group of composers all around Latin America, with Coriún Aharonián and Graciela Paraskevaídis as the precursors of the term, and the latter constitutes a group of composers such as La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Philip Glass, and Steve Reich, from the United States, and Louis Andriessen, Michael Nyman, and Gavin Bryars as the representatives from European Minimalism. Minimism has more connections aesthetically with the *musique pauvre*. Although Minimist composers explicitly reject both conceptions of American and European Minimalism schools, its roots in the idea of dialogue between scanty elements that imply absent ones make a strong connection with musique pauvre. It seems apt to consider here *musique pauvre* or *austere music* as the umbrella term for describing a more general aesthetic of sparse music and leave *Minimalism* and *Minimism* as terms referring to the specific schools and composers already mentioned. In this regard, both Minimalism and Minimism, referring to specific schools and works, partake in the more general aesthetic trend of *austere music*. More on minimize in Latin-American music comments Luciana Natalia Orellana Lanús in her article *Aproximación al 'minimismo' latinoamericano* (2020).

> […] when the musician works on a particular aspect of sound or suspends his emission on one or all instruments to propose listening to moments of silence, as does Anton Webern or, in another way, John Cage. […] When the writer leaves a page blank where the reader expects an answer; if he abandons his characters in the secrecy of his inner deliberations, forgetting for a moment the complex dominion he has over them; or if he frequently uses suspensive points or ellipsis, as in Japanese literature; or also, if he uses veiled writing as Camus does in *The Foreigner*. The aesthetic figures of silence are numerous. The painting also contributes its own with the symbolic equivalents of monochrome (Klein), of the void in which the form floats, or of the creation of an evocative atmosphere of silence specific to the situation described or as an addition to give it a metaphysical resonance (De Chirico, Hopper, etc.). (Le Breton, 2009, p. 56)

The relationality of silence is further emphasized by Le Breton (2009), who characterizes it as a phenomenon that appears in interpersonal encounters. According to this perspective, silence is a communication act influenced and shaped by social and cultural forces rather than just being a void. We discover silence's function as a structural component in the semiotics of listening by analyzing it via this relational lens. Listeners use the interaction of presence and absence to create meaning as silence becomes a place for negotiation, mostly called "empty space".

Coriún Aharonián (2012) also noted that many musical compositions in the Latin American minimist movement used aesthetic figures that alluded to silence, pointing out that this was a common theme among them. Aharonián claims that composers today are no longer afraid of nothingness:

> [The composers have] managed to understand the expressive musical process not as a sonorous mass that from time to time breathes, but as a wide space where silence ceases to be negation to become affirmation, in a sonorous space charged with expressiveness. This conquest has an essential significance as a cultural symbol. (Aharonián, 2012, p. 100)

As interest in silence as an artistic/musical phenomenon has grown over the past 60 years, numerous authors have developed various approaches to discern its fundamental features. Some significant studies include those by Kurzon (2007), who developed a typology of silence in social interactions; Bruneau (1973) also identifies a taxonomy; Jensen (1973) illustrates the various purposes of silence in communication; and Johannsen (1974), who also identifies the purposes of silence in counseling and psychotherapy by providing a list of twenty possible meanings of silence. Without delving into the ontological side of things, all of these works enhance one another and provide a more comprehensive map of typologies and functions of the phenomena. In his book *Silence, The Phenomenon and its Ontological Significance* (1980), Bernard Dauenhauer delves deeply into the ontological aspects of silence from a philosophical perspective, highlighting it as an active performance that involves "abstaining from some previously engaged in stream of experience" (1980, p. 101).

It appears plausible that three contingent and dynamic features will continue to exist in the signification framework and entwine the various perspectives. One has to do with how the environment and its dynamic degree of sound intensity interact with how the body's sounds are perceived; in other words, the body enhances the hearing experience. A second is associated with the subject intention, when the internal desire to create connections between sounds is retracted to listening in a scenario where the relational possibilities are nearly equal in likelihood, akin to an entropic scenario. Lastly, a third one concerns a possible desire and endeavor to share the fleeting experience. The three coexist and enhance one another in a dynamic and contingent specific setting; this list does not imply any sequence of occurrence.

This interpretative process evolved into generative listening in the context of communication, as demonstrated by the musical examples examined in this essay. It transformed a silent situation into a source of sound for musical expression and acquired distinct aesthetic and ideological ties with the considered context.

The compositions of minimist composers show how silence may challenge normative expectations and make listeners re-evaluate their assumptions about silence and sound. They question prevailing cultural narratives by remaining silent and providing a different framework for comprehending memory, identity, and resistance. This viewpoint emphasizes how crucial listening is as a structural tool for comprehending soundscape dynamics and symbolic constructions.

Eero Tarasti's existential semiotics introduces a structural method for analysis via the *Z*-model. The subjectivities of Moi (the internal self) and Soi (the exterior, socialized self) are at the heart of this approach. They interact dialectically to generate semiotic events (Tarasti, 2000). I argue, within the framework of this theory, that listening functions as a mediator between the Moi and Soi, bridging the gap between one's "internal" view and the "outside" world. The interplay between these subjectivities emphasizes how listening is a relational semiotic act in which meaning is negotiated within a dynamic space of presences and absences in a specific *situation* (for a more detailed exploration, see Nabon, 2024, pp. 39–46). We can discover later how hearing can negotiate the complex relationship between cultural background and subjective interpretation by looking at it through the prism of modalities.

3. The Notion of Situation as an Analytical Tool

Given that a sign can be understood in part as an act performed by a subject and that the body is the first entity involved regarding any theorizing (music, text, and phenomenon), the existential semiotic concept of situation serves as a category that suggests that music, rather than existing as a fixed object, appears as a specific dynamic-sound environment. In this sense, it *is understood as* "a continuous intermingling of happenings that represent various modes of being in the real contexts in which they occur. […] Situation is that part of the world with which one enters into a relationship" (Tarasti, 2002, p. 72).

In addition to providing a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions of musical semiosis, communication, and signification, the concept of situation serves as a bridge between the semiotics of music, cognitive musicology, and, as Juha Ojala (2023) noted, the 4E interdisciplinary paradigm, which encompasses "cognitive views of subject and mind as a brain/body-in-the-world system" and embodied, enactive, embedded, and extended cognition (Tarasti, 2023, p. 260).

The events, acts, and actions that create and sustain musical situations must be closely examined when discussing musical discourse. According to Tarasti (2002), a situation can be considered space. This relationship appears applicable because minimist composers typically tried to develop sound structures rather than traditional harmonic structures and linear-syntagmatic chains of sounds.

> Situation might be easily identified with a space: the space at a given moment as perceived by a given actor. In music, situation always implies an actor; no situation can exist without an actor somehow pertaining to it. Therefore, what is crucial for a musical work is the way it draws listeners into the situation and forces them to participate in it. (Tarasti, 2002, p. 76)

Understanding the idea of an actor in musical terms as an actor-theme—typically associated with the idea of a developing motif or a cell that serves as a minimum unit before becoming a structural carrier of future formal development—is crucial for my research here in terms of methodology.

It suggests a deeper understanding of kinetic energy and cannot be reduced to a melodic cell or a single harmonic relationship. Ernst Kurth (1886–1946), a Swiss music theorist, is the foundation for translating the actor topic in Tarasti's theory (2002) into musical discourse. In its seminal notion of music as motion, Kurth wrote about kinetic energy (1991), with examples referring to melodic content. As Tarasti stated, the idea "revolutionizes the traditional criteria of segmentation" of the musical discourse, but it may also be applied more broadly.

> Kurth's theory accordingly revolutionizes traditional criteria of segmentation; and using it one can also treat music that analysts have generally had trouble segmenting, such as electronic music, freely pulsatile music, "sound mass" compositions for example, some works by Ligeti and Penderecki), minimalism, spectral music, and computer works. (Tarasti, 1994, p. 100)

Tarasti noted that "the energy which flows through melodic lines influences all single tones in a melody, which we experience as a closed whole, a linear unit" (1994, p. 100). In this sense, music may be analytically divided into movement phases constrained by their kinetic energy. The author also noted that kinetic energy is distinct from the rhythmic and metric impulses of music. I, from my view, understand kinetic energy regarding music as the interplay between the inner and outer tensions of sound material, i.e., the inner tensions as horizontal (melodic) and vertical (harmonic), and the outer tensions as the relationship between background and foreground and center/s and periphery/ies, even though

metric and rhythmic impulses are crucial in identifying the kinetic energy units that Tarasti refers to as kinemes and can also form an independent kineme.

This notion is close to Roland Barthes's somatheme (1985), which is conceptualized with regard to music. Somatheme is a concept influenced by Kristeva's (1984) pheno-text and geno-text distinction, where the latter:

> […] Reveals transfers of drive energy that can be detected in phonematic devices (such as the accumulation and repetition of phonemes or rhyme) and melodic devices (such as intonation and rhythm). […] The genotext organises a space in which the subject will be generated as such by a process of facilitations and marks […] it is a process, which tends to articulate structures that are ephemeral and non-signifying (devices that do not have a double articulation). (Kristeva, 1984, p. 86)

The social, cultural, and linguistic restrictions make up the pheno-text, which facilitates communication. In his article *The Grain of the Voice*, Barthes (1985), motivated by these concepts, applied them to music and introduced the idea of a *somatheme*, which refers to musical figures of the body that relate both the physical and metaphorical musical gestures.

In this sense, Moi1 (being-in-myself) is closely tied to Kristeva's idea of semiotic *Chora* (Kristeva, 1977, p. 57). Tarasti refers to the same type of being Moi1 (2018, pp. 40–41) as kinetic energy and *Chora* in his book *Musical Semiotics—A Discipline, its History and Theories, Past and Present* (2018).

The inner tensions of sound material regarding the relationship between consonance and dissonance are treated within a hierarchical system of roles and functions in a set of pitches regarding one central tone (center/periphery relationship), which is thought to be the point of release of these tensions within the tonic pitches. This is the case in actoralized music, where the actor-themes or motifs are defined and constitute structural parts in developing more complex melodies and harmony. Accordingly, various tension and release processes evolve over time, and the internal relationship between the horizontal (successivity) and vertical (simultaneity) tensions in terms of consonance and dissonance, their temporal distribution, and their tensional relationships with other kinemes is what gives the kineme its unity. Because of this, for instance, we can discern various transpositions or variations of a motif or melody, where the timbre (as perceived by another instrument) may change, the pitches may change, and the melody may be transposed to different registers, but there is an iconicity in its internal kinetic tensions that enables its recognition as a whole, as a unity.

The underlying tensions around the consonance and dissonance of the sound material are the stressed medium to push or draw the listener into a musical scenario, even though depth relationships (background and foreground) and center/periphery play a significant role in actoralized music. The foundation of narrativity in music is the fundamental notion that dissonance seeks a release in consonance or additional elaboration; as a result, the musical situation is viewed as an act or an event.

However, situations like acts and events cannot be reduced to music that can be examined from a narrative perspective or to actoralized music. It is not necessary to understand the link between consonance and dissonance as the pursuit of greater elaboration or the release of the latter in the former, even though, as I have stated previously, a situation always implies an actor, this actor being defined as a specific embodiment of a kineme. As with most avant-garde music, the implied listener is expected to create the situation in de-actoralized music.

As a result, without defining an actor in musical terms, an act in the musical discourse of de-actoralized music can exist as an act of the implied composer. As it refers to the actor-subject relationship, subject-less music, especially in minimism, suggests that motifs, melodies, and harmonies are not regarded as hierarchical entities. As a result, the implied composers are not articulating actor-themes that behave differently; rather, they are articulating and acting within the material's kinetic energy, bringing the implied listener closer to the aural perception where the implied listeners are expected to project their significations, thereby creating musical situations, rather than placing them in a specific situation within a coded system of tension's relationships.

An event must be differentiated from an act based on activity or passivity. An act is to interfere with the normal sequence of events. An event is a passive circumstance, while an act is an active one. An act can generate and be generated by an event, but is not reduced to it because the intervention might maintain the status quo. An event always implies change; it occurs in the condition of affairs. As a result, Tarasti (2002) distinguished between three categories of musical facts: events, where something occurred; processes, where something is occurring; and states of affairs, where something occurs. These realities are interconnected and coexist. As previously said, an event invariably entails change, whether within the facts or from the current situation to a process or vice versa.

> Unlike an event, an act cannot be identified as a change in the world. Rather, to act is in a sense always to intervene in the course of affairs. For example, to write a composition or to perform it is undoubtedly an act. There are both individual and general acts. For instance, a general act could be the performance of *Les adieux*, and the corresponding general change (event) would be that the sonata was performed at all. An individual act would be that "Claudio Arrau played *Les adieux* in Rome in 1970", the individual event being that it was performed in that year in Rome. The logical difference between acts and events lies in their activity or passivity: an act always requires an acting agent. Acts have to be distinguished from actions. It is, for instance, an act to perform *Les adieux*, but it is an action to be able to perform it. Events occur and processes continue; acts cause the occurrence of events, and actions make processes continue. (Tarasti, 2002, p. 77)

Acts are distinct from actions since they are the real activities a single subject performs in a particular situation. These specific actions can serve as a collection of institutionalized practices or techniques that, for example, the implied composer possesses in a particular composition context. In the case of the implied

listener, they may be related to the hermeneutical devices or competence required for the de-codification of the musical situation.

For example, a predetermined traditional musical form, as a general scheme, "serves as situations for the occurrence of certain things" (Tarasti, 2002, p. 78). This is because a situation is seen as the potential possibilities of relationships and space, which can be related to intertextuality. In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish between the actual scenario or the music as heard and the situation as a transcendental concept, such as a scheme, structure, idea, or grammar. While we are dealing with the music phenomenon as heard in the circumstance as act-signs (in Tarasti's language), the prior situation as trans-signs may or may not be realized. According to Tarasti (2002), the situation encompasses both tangible and intangible indications, as well as "not only the remembrance of the choices, acts, and events that happened but also those that might have happened" (p. 79).

Another distinction that must be made while working with music settings is the difference between act-signs and event-signs, according to Tarasti (2002). Both categories belong to the transcendental realm, where the implied composers' individual significations emerge from a break in the musical text in the case of the former (act-signs) and conform to the predetermined language constraints by following the "rules of communication" (Tarasti, 2002, p. 80) in the case of the latter (event-signs).

For clarity's sake, I will illustrate these relationships as I see them in the context of this study. Acts that intervene in the current situation may be confused with act-signs that interpret earlier acts in the actual situation (listen to music, for example; note that the prefix act in act-signs does not refer to acts but to actual); these act-signs may be in accordance with or contrary to the pre-established code system; and lastly, the act-sings in the situation as a transcendental concept suggests the breaking of the system of pre-established codes to allow the flourishing of individual significance.

The Three Musical Facts:

State of affairs (something happens),
Processes (s. is happening),
Events (s. happened).

The Four Types of Elementary Acts (as intervening; von Wright's logic of change symbols used by Tarasti, 1994, p. 85):

*p*T*p*—preserving of *p*
-*p*T-*p*—forbearance of *p*
-*p*T*p*—doing of *p*
*p*T-*p*—destruction of *p*

In the level of the musical text itself, a situation as actual; these acts are interpreted as

[act-signs]

In the level of a situation as transcendent, these act-signs bring two types of

[trans-signs]

[act-signs]
[event-signs]

Here is where I think the confusion arises; in this regard, I propose in this thesis to change the terms to:

[trans-signs]

[counter-current-signs]
[current-signs]

According to Tarasti (2002, p. 80), the intervening acts are interpreted as act-signs that make up the actual situation or music as heard. The actual situation as transcendence, which includes actions, schemes, norms, or grammar, brings two types of trans-signs: counter-current-signs (also known as act-signs) and current-signs (also known as event-signs).

Within musical facts, the elementary acts might induce either stasis moments, something that only "is", or dynamic moments, which make things happen. Stasis moments are not directly associated with consonance and dynamic moments with dissonance. It is possible to create stasis moments by dissonance and vice versa, even if consonance implies stillness and dissonance motion in the internal interactions between sounds. The idea of a musical situation as kinetic space will be used to introduce these elements for analysis in the following section, along with an example of application as an analytical tool.

4. Semiotic Methodological Application: Musical Analysis

As a symbolic art form, music necessitates a collaborative approach in which listeners decode and co-create meaning. As proposed by Edward Pearsall (2006), the notion of *performative silence* emphasizes how silence is represented more by sound than by the lack of it. It is impossible to achieve absolute silence from an acoustic point of view, but it is possible to suspend meaning or significance at a semantic level.

In music, silence can be expressed not only by pauses, articulations, and endings but also by musical textures that forgo certain linear elements or contingencies between sounds, that is, the feeling or auditory guide that creates expectations about how certain sounds will affect other sounds in relationships that suggest a sequential order. Here, I explain a concept closely related to Leonard Meyer's more general notion of *tendencies* (1967, p. 24). These tendencies become conscious and play a significant role in the meaning-making process of musical discourse when the normal course of the pattern is disrupted, or their final completion is inhibited.

The properties that control the hierarchical organization of music are related to these aspects of oriented processes, which include, among other things, melodic continuity and thematic functions, in which events proceed in a linear fashion; that is, one event appears to lead to another gradually. These features of the musical phenomena are determined by each person's level of acquaintance with particular stylistic conventions.

How these components interact within a given environment determines the content of any given occurrence of silent articulation in music. As we can see in many minimist compositions, there is a choice to create a static spatial quality where texture and timbre become the main focus of attention for pieces that firmly do not pursue process-oriented, thematic purposes and/or occurrences that seem to address others progressively. In these circumstances, Barthes' concept of *degré zéro*, in which the author is released from "all bondage to a preordained state of language" (1967, p. 76) can be used to interpret music. When music is transformed into its structural arrangement and the first level of articulation, its semantic aspect remains silent: "[S]ilence is more than a void. Silence constitutes a dramatic presence in music similar to that of music at its most overtly discursive and plays an important, if not indispensable, role in the production of meaning" (Pearsall, 2006, p. 58). This *dramatic presence* creates a "musical situation" (Tarasti's term) where listeners can discern meanings and tensions woven into the interactions between sound and silence through the interpretation of the kinetic energy of the sound material.

This framework is enhanced by Meyer's (1961) anti-teleological art, which suggests that the lack of goal-oriented progression highlights the listener's experience of sound as distinct events. This is consistent with Tarasti's idea that musical settings are dynamic environments (situations) where tensions and releases occur. We can reveal the semiotic interaction between meaning, sound, and si-

lence by examining these places using the dimensions of simultaneity, successivity, and spatial depth.

Furthermore, the idea of mobile statics—a sound world that alters subtly without progressing teleologically—is introduced in the compositions of Paraskevaídis (1979) and Bazán (1975–1977). In order to use this technique, the listener must completely immerse themselves in the aural environment, interacting with its complex relationships and textures. In these pieces, silence is more than just an absence; it is a force that guides and molds the listener's attention.

5. The Kinetic Space of Musical Situations

The words employed are purely spatial, which alludes to a musical situation metaphorically when I describe the kineme as the interaction of inner and exterior tensions through its distribution time. The external tensions are: foreground/background and center/periphery, and the internal are: simultaneity (vertical) and successivity (horizontal). In this analysis of kinemes, time can be viewed as the duration or real rhythmic figures as its inner tension, and the metrics or broader rhythmic structure as its outside tension since space and time cannot be discussed independently.

Musical space can be articulated according to the following dimensions:

Table 1

Inner and Outer Tensions

Inner	*Outer*
Successivity	Center/Periphery
Simultaneity	Depth (Foreground/Background)
	Registers
Rhythmic Duration/Figures (Time)	Metrics/Temporal Structure (Time)

Note. Source: author's own elaboration (Nabón Hernández, 2024, p. 56).

Since the tonal hierarchical system around a single tone and the fundamental relationship of the release of dissonance in consonance in this work and applied to minimist music are not interpreted as "must be" relationships, I view center/periphery as belonging to outer space. Using dynamics, timbre, or another interaction of characteristics unrelated to the centripetal and centrifugal tendencies of tension and release can create a center/periphery relationship.

Accordingly, kineme is defined as a specific arrangement of tensions and releases in the musical context that is acknowledged as a single entity that can either repeat itself or function as a structural point for additional growth. This idea is related to the notion of gesture proposed by Robert Hatten (2004). Furthermore, Hatten's (2018) theory of virtual agency in music intimately relates to

the basic notion of a musical situation as a kinetic space involving motion. As he pointed out:

> […] Gesture may best be understood as part of a more cohesive and comprehensive theory of virtual agency in music. Stimulated by Seth Monahan's (2013) proposal of four levels of agency in the analytical discourse of music theorists, I propose four rather different levels to speculatively account for listeners' inferences of virtual agency in music. In order of most basic to most complex, these levels proceed from (1) unspecified virtual actants to (2) virtual human agents to (3) their ongoing actorial roles in lyric, dramatic, and/or narrative trajectories and, finally, to (4) their transformation as parts of a larger, singular consciousness or subjectivity that is negotiated by each individual listener. These four levels guide the coherent interaction of musical forces, gestures, topics and tropes, embodiment, identity, and the continuity of musical discourse. Furthermore, they lead to the expression (not merely representation) and ongoing development (not merely succession) of virtual emotions and thoughts, both as motivated by virtual situations in virtual worlds and as enriched by self-reflection. (Hatten, 2018, p. 17)

The spatial dimensions mentioned above are used to analytically express kinemes as specific configurations of tension and release. Additionally, because these tensions and releases suggest motion, we discuss the musical situation as a kinetic space. However, not all kinetic spaces involve the formation of kinemes; occasionally, we are dealing with articulating the material's kinetic energy as Moi1 in the *Z*-model without the configuration of Moi2 or its negation.

The musical situation as a kinetic space can be structurally separated into at least three types of spaces: a "point-like" space (Tarasti, 1994, p. 84) where we have positions of distinct sounds or pitches, which can be related to various hierarchical relationships based on the collection of pitches; a musical space that consists of transitions between these various "points", which Tarasti (1994) refers to as "musical vectors" or "lines"; and the third space as a whole field, including the distinction of the points and transitions, which are known as "articulated sonorous masses or timbres" (Tarasti, 1994, p. 85).

In summary, a musical situation as a kinetic space can be divided into at least three spaces, such as point-like, transitions, and articulated masses or timbres, ranging from the most general to the most specific. It can also be expressed in seven dimensions based on the inner and outer "micro-spaces" where the kinetic energy is realized: the inner "micro-spaces" are successivity, simultaneity, rhythmic duration, and figures; the outer "micro-spaces" are center/periphery, depth (the relationship between foreground and background), registers, metrics, and rhythmic structures.

The kinetic energy alone, without the formation of kinemes, constitutes the Moi1/Soi4 in our model; the formation of kinemes implies *M*2/*S*3; the realization of kinetic energy or kinemes intrinsically related to their form over time is related to *M*3/*S*2; and, lastly, the memory of what was heard in relation to a more general musical spatial kinetic structure constitutes the realm of *M*4/*S*1. These

analytical articulations of the kinetic space enable me to comprehend the actions of the implied composers who follow the *Z*-model.

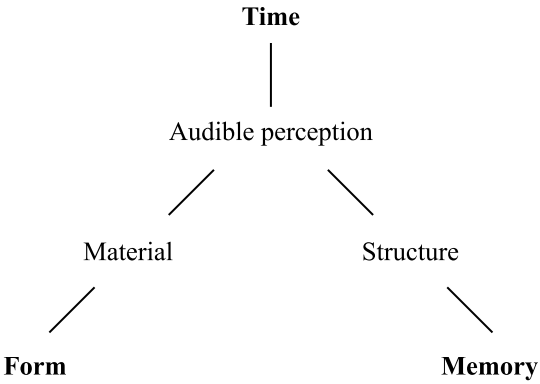
There is an inherent connection between the manifestation of the acoustic material that establishes a specific form or spatial materiality (through time) and the memory of what was heard, directly related to the existence or absence of a potential structure. Space and time cannot be thought of independently.

Music situations can be examined using an adapted model that sheds light on the inherent intersection between identity, artistic expression, and social-political implications, in addition to my model of triadic associations in the audible perception between material, form, structure, and memory.

In my previous master's studies in musical composition, I developed a diagram trying to show these relationships:

Figure 1

Diagram of Relationships in Musical Audible Perception

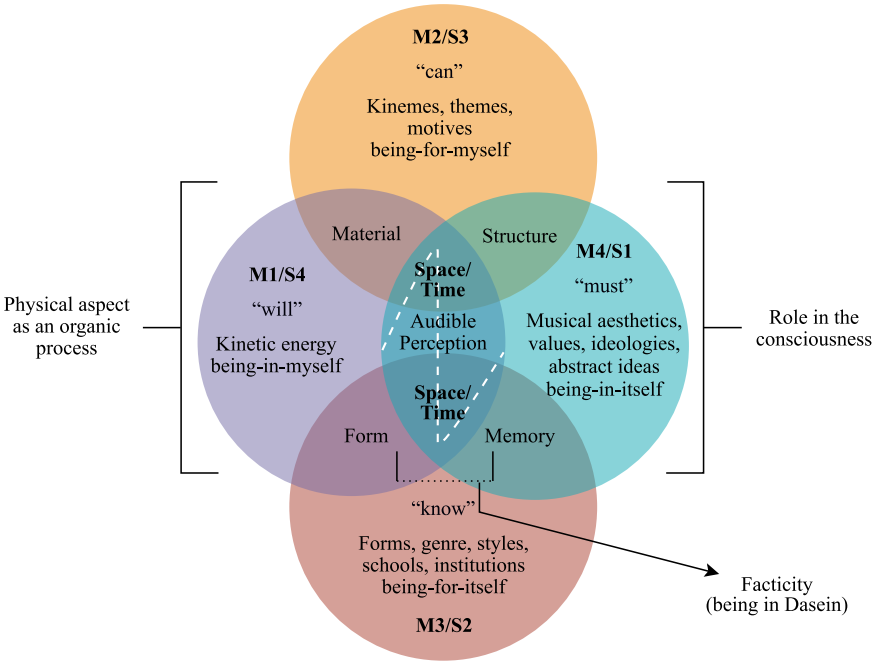


Note. Source: author's own elaboration (Nabón Hernández, 2024, p. 58).

Methodologically, I integrated this diagram with the *Z*-model of Tarasti, which I think can bring a clearer application to the music situation seen as a kinetic space (see Figure 2 on the next page).

Figure 2

Combined Model



Note. Source: author's own elaboration (Nabón Hernández, 2024, p. 59).

6. One Example: Oscar Bazán's *Del Silencio*

Music is considered a situation of kinetic space where the modalities are involved and can be replaced to interpret the implied composers' current or counter-current signs of acts regarding the nalysis results. As an example, *Del Silencio*[2] is part of *Austeras* (1975–1977) by Oscar Bazán (1936–2005),[3] a fifteen-piece cycle of free instrumentation that can be presented in any order, in its entirety, or performed in any partial selection.

The piece's outer spaces are fixed. The periphery in the tone "D" is an embroidery of a second interval, while the center in the tone "E" establishes the center/periphery relationship. The registers and depth relationship are fixed; the interpreter's choice must remain constant during the performance, even when the dynamics are not. Here, the chronometric density of the two notes "E" and "D"

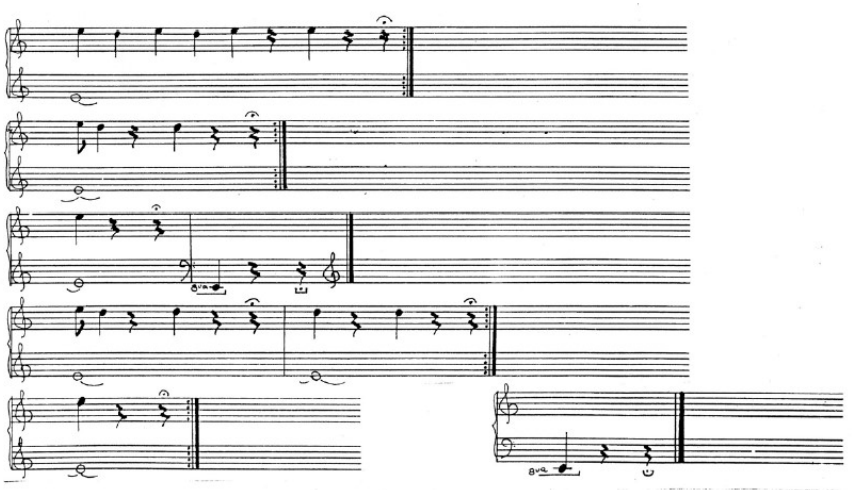
[2] One can listen to this work at (Ivan Gabriel Perez Faccaro, 2020).

[3] Argentinian composer, one of the most representative of Latin American Minimism. More biographical information at Paraskevaídis' analysis of *Austeras* at (Graciela Paraskevaidis—Magma, n.d.).

as a foreground against a static “E” as the background—rather than the dynamics—marks the relationship between the foreground and background (Figure 3). The uncertain and limited inner temporal space of durations obscures the outward temporal space of metrics.

Figure 3

Del Silencio Score



Note. Source: (Paraskevaídis Aharonián Foundation Archive, n.d.).

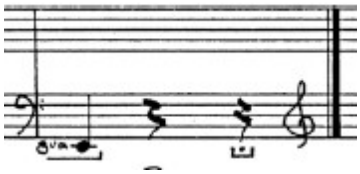
The inner space of successivity shifts, creating a kineme that can be recognized as a melodic unit. This little motive begins to be broken up by increasingly frequent silences.

Silences that break up the kineme are replaced with the steady tone “E” in the background, which helps us recognize it. The silences that articulate and break the kineme with the background tone “E”, which replaces it in Moi2, have an intriguing relationship. The constant tone “E” is identified as silence, while the chronometric density of the motive gradually decreases due to the articulation of silences. This suggests, in my opinion, that silence is a fixed sound that surrounds.

The arrival of a low “E”, which ends the continuous sound and produces a distinct silence, refutes this notion. Although its presence is phenomenologically distinct, it is represented in the score using the same symbols for its temporal articulation. Besides, the implied composer established a long wait in this silence after the low note (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

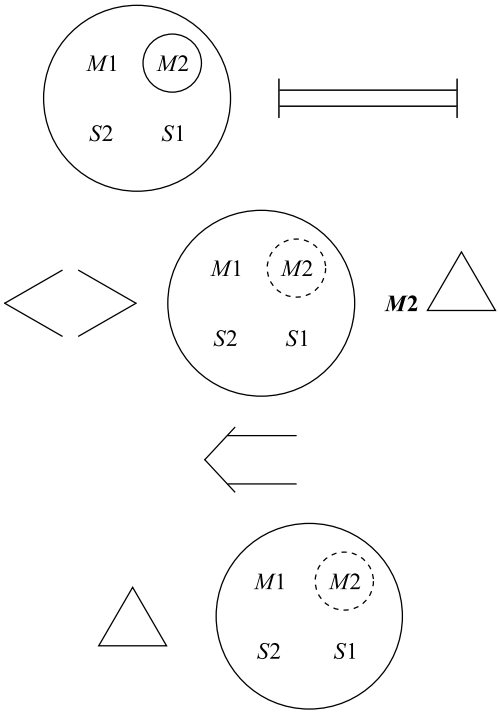
Fragment of the Score (Ending of the 3rd Line)



Note. (Paraskevaídis Aharonián Foundation Archive, n.d.).

The abrupt cessation of the continuous sound associated with the earlier silences is viewed as a significant shift in auditory perception; it may be interpreted as the discovery of a new silence.

The Zemic analysis[4] can be as follows:



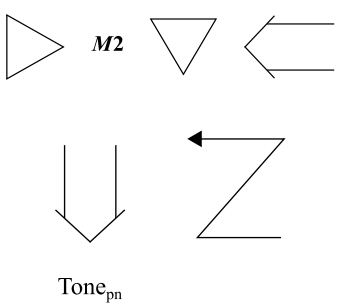
*M*2 as kineme is presented in a mobile stasis (Line 1).

*M*2 is fragmented gradually by rests but still affirmed by its recognition (Line 2 and first part of 3).

The low "E" as a sudden event against the fragmented *M*2 (end of Line 3).

*M*2 fragmented is affirmed (Line 4).

[4] For the extension and scope of this paper, further exploration on the graphics for the analysis is not explained here; for this, see (Nabon, 2024, pp. 59–67).



*M*2 is destroyed with the presence of rests and the last event of the low "E" (Lines 5 and 6).

The gradually listening guidance in the experience can be interpreted as an act of trans-descendence and embodiment; from the abstract situation of the kineme as a motive to its disintegration in an actual silence.

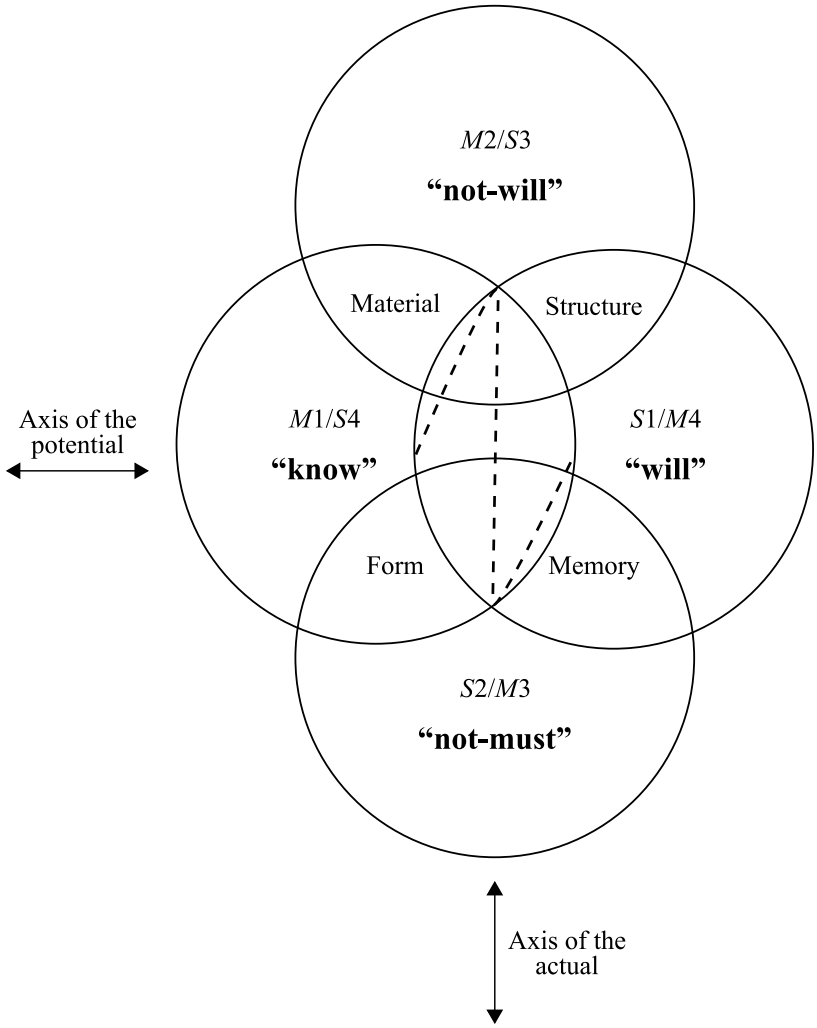
The Latin American minimist style is best exemplified by Bazán's *Del Silencio*, which uses silence as a structural and symbolic element. The interaction of internal and external forces gives the piece its frenetic energy. The piece's fragmented interior temporal spaces, whose successivity shifts to generate kinemes interrupted by silences, contrast with its static outer spaces anchored in the tone "E" as a permanent background. The silences, expressed through pauses and rest motifs, are dynamic relational spaces reorganizing the listener's engagement rather than being absent.

These silences serve as spaces of trans-descendence that represent resistance and rebirth when viewed through the existential semiotic lens. The composition leads the listener to a new level of auditory awareness as the broken kineme dissipates into extended silences. According to phenomenology, the "low E" event represents a rupture—an existential turning point where silence transforms into presence, and its semiotic power is revealed.

In light of the analysis, it is possible to further understand the inner musical occurrences in relation to their connections with more fundamental semantic elements by substituting the modalities (see Figure 5) when attempting to fit them into the material.

Figure 5

Replacement of Modalities



Note. Source: author’s own elaboration (Nabón Hernández, 2024, p. 97).

The implied composer establishes the musical situation with an austere use of elements that require a strong knowledge of techniques and their historical features to position themselves as a particular modality of listening. This allows a personal generative path for the composition modeling the kinetic energy, which is why *M*1/*S*4 (being-in-myself) appears as “know” instead of “will”.

*S*1/*M*4 (being-in-itself) appears as a "will" rather than a "must" along the same axis of potentiality but in the domain of abstract ideas, ideologies, and aesthetics. This is because the individual is recognized as a member of the same community and adheres to a corpus of aesthetic ideas, such as austerity, dispossession, and silence.

In both instances, the modalities gain a different placement and denial as the embodiment process, and the sublimation process faces the facticity. We have a withdrawal, a "not-will", which is portrayed in the context of music as movements against the construction of a subject or the fragmentation of the subject, specifically the various techniques against discursiveness in the music and the anti-teleological motions, in the category where the Moi is more represented as an individual, as a differentiation from the common identity.

This "not-will", or "no-intention", clashes with the "not-must", which substitutes for "know" in *S*2/*M*3 (being-for-itself). The kinetic energy is articulated in a familiar musical scenario by the inherent interplay of the withdrawal. The issue is in the desire to liberate hearing from historical norms, which must not be followed in a specific manner; adhering to the guidelines of what has been deemed the process of creating a new idiolect is not required. Presenting a personal answer while maintaining a semiotic tension with regard to what and how it is acknowledged as music is possible through the decision to withdraw or negate the will.

By considering silence as an expressive semiotic act that is primarily represented by a strong process of an embodiment of two main metaphors of silence as a cultural symbol, namely austerity and dispossession, minimist composers have integrated silence into their aesthetic identities through an existential choice of the negation and transformed this negation into affirmation.

Although this transcendental path can be seen in a more general historical context, the uniqueness of the Latin American minimism context lies in the development of a new idiolect that is incomprehensible to the dominant discourse and in the transformation of silencing—the main tool of the power dynamic between the dominant and the dominated—into its primary characteristic of resistance.

The semiotic act of merely providing a context in which the implied listener is given control over the musical situation is interpreted as a retreat of the implied composer's voice, leaving room for new possibilities to arise and forcing the listener into a new musical experience. In this way, silence is a performative act that invites new kinds of signification and serves as a metaphor for emptiness.

7. Final Remarks

When presented as a existential semiotic method, listening goes beyond its traditional limits and can be used for existential and phenomenological investigation. This essay illustrates how listening involves relational interactions that result in layered meanings through a semiotic musical analysis methodology, as well as that listening is an active process of meaning formation rather than

a passive reception. The dynamics of soundscapes and their existential implications require a grasp of silence's relational and semiotic nature.

As a crucial part of this process, silence subverts the conventional divisions of sound and a void, presence, and absence. The works of minimist composers exemplify how silence may be a tool for creativity rather than a meaningless space. What is more, in minimist compositions, silence functions as a generative and relational entity, highlighting the transformational power of listening.

This concept of listening confirms its significance as an essential act of being and interpretation. By integrating it into the larger semiotic framework, we go beyond traditional ideas of absence to acknowledge silence's function as a relational and productive force. This method pushes us to re-evaluate the limits of sound, silence, and meaning and improve our understanding of auditory events. Through the profound interaction of sound and silence, listening thus becomes a transforming discipline that allows us to reconsider our relationship with the environment and each other.

At last, rethinking listening broadens its conceptual scope and provides fresh methods for interaction. This study pushes us to re-evaluate how sound and silence influence human comprehension and interaction by fusing semiotic frameworks. As a result, listening becomes a transforming activity that encourages us to explore the profound, frequently unsaid aspects of auditory experience while strengthening our bonds with one another and our surroundings.

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Article

RICARDO NOGUEIRA DE CASTRO MONTEIRO *

THE HIDDEN MEANING OF THE FEAST: REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER, CLASS AND ETHNIC OPPRESSION IN A PERFORMANCE OF THE BRAZILIAN *GUERREIRO*[1]

SUMMARY: The objective of this paper is to discuss the representations of class, gender and ethnic oppression crystalized in an excerpt of a 2019 presentation of Master Cosmo's *Guerreiro* in Juazeiro do Norte, Brazil. The *Guerreiro*, a traditional Brazilian folkloric manifestation associated with the Christmas cycle, encompasses an Epiphany celebration characterized by a series of tunes performed by dancing, singing and/or playing—and sometimes also by acting—yielding a complex, rhapsodic syncretic text. The methodological framework for this analysis is grounded in Eero Tarasti's Existential Semiotics, utilizing its Zemic model to facilitate a nuanced approach to understanding the construction of meaning in the syncretic performative text—from its corporeality to identity, then to social interactions, and ultimately revealing its values and *Weltanschauung*. By applying the semiotic perspective developed by Stuart Hall, this analysis reveals the dynamics of oppression within the discourse. This critical viewpoint is further enriched by the concept of Intersectionality as discussed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which underscores the presence in the discourse of the imprints of the social, cultural, and political context from which enunciation takes place, highlighting its position within unequal power structures. Among the most remarkable results discussed in this paper appear the intersectionality of gender, class, and ethnic oppression in the depiction of black women in the *Guerreiro*, alongside the identification of the primary semi-symbolic rhetorical strategies deployed to construct this representation in the syncretic text.

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KEYWORDS: ethnomusicology, semiotics, musical analysis, cultural heritage, syncretism.

1. Introduction: The *Guerreiro*

The *Guerreiro* corresponds to a traditional Brazilian folkloric manifestation of the Christmas cycle aimed to celebrate the Epiphany feast. Despite being in principle a religious feast celebrating the Catholic Faith, the *Guerreiro* incorporates many elements of African and Native Brazilian origins, acquiring an encyclopedic character for the synthesis it offers of different traditions, reflecting the complexity of the construction of Brazilian identity. Compounded by a chain of songs that are performed by dancing, singing and/or playing—and sometimes also by acting—the *Guerreiro* results in a complex, rhapsodic syncretic text that until some decades ago would easily extend throughout many hours, but that nowadays hardly exceeds 60 minutes. In this context the more than 2 hours long presentation of Master Cosmo's *Guerreiro* recorded on December 30th 2019 in the outskirts of Juazeiro do Norte, a city in the hinterland of Northeastern Brazil, can be considered as an authentic remnant of the original splendor of this cultural manifestation.

Théo Brandão dates the formation of what is currently understood as *Reisado*—a predecessor of the *Guerreiro*—to at least 60 or 70 years before the publication of his classic *O Reisado Alagoano* in 1949, tracing its emergence to what he describes as an "amalgam of various folk performances" (Brandão, 1953, p. 13). This allows for an approximate dating of the folk play in the state of Alagoas, in its present form, to at least as early as the 1880s. From this period onward, the presence of Padre Cícero Romão Batista (1844–1934) in Juazeiro do Norte—a late charismatic religious leader currently undergoing the process of canonization—turned that city, which regards him as its principal founder, into the epicenter of one of the most significant pilgrimage routes in the Southern Hemisphere. Oswald Barroso also believes that the *Reisado* arrived in Ceará by the late 19th century (Barroso, 1996, p. 69). Through the direct intervention of Padre Cícero himself, some performers of popular folk plays such as the *Reisado* were invited to settle permanently in the Cariri region, in order to strengthen local religiosity through that cultural expression (Barroso, 1996, p. 179).

A close examination of studies on the *Guerreiro*—a regional variant of the *Reisado* typical from the Brazilian state of Alagoas—reveals a dynamic popular folk play in perpetual metamorphosis. One of the earliest mentions of it appears in 1935, when Arthur Ramos published *O Folclore Negro do Brasil* (1935). In that work, the author presents a complex view, in which the *Guerreiro* would be described as "a struggle between two factions, the warriors and the *caboclos* [a Brazilian term for people of Indigenous descent], interspersed with a number of scenes in which various characters take turns singing their respective pieces"

(p. 105).[2] Ramos further highlights that the climax of the confrontation between warriors and *caboclos* culminates in the death of the character *Lira*, with the play concluding with the *Bumba-meu-boi*[3] (1935, p. 105). The *Guerreiro* described by Câmara Cascudo in his *Dicionário do Folclore Brasileiro*, originally published in 1954, appears as a folk performance of more modest proportions, opposing two groups of warriors—rather than warriors and *caboclos*—yet still marked by the presence of a particular character that appears also in other folk plays, called *Lira*. She is a young woman whose death is ordered by the jealous Queen and assigned to one of the *caboclos*. Struck by *Lira*'s beauty, he proposes that she marry him as a way to spare her life. Incorruptible, she refuses—and is executed. In many versions of the play, she is later brought back to life through the magic and cleverness of the clown *Mateo* (Brandão, 2003, p. 87). Once a quintessential character in the original *Guerreiro* of Alagoas, the *Lira* has virtually disappeared from performances in Juazeiro do Norte over the past decade (2015–2025).

Essentially, the *Guerreiro* is composed of fragments of older *Reisados*, differing from them mainly in the performers' costumes—especially the distinctive cathedral-shaped hat typical of the *Guerreiro*. Câmara Cascudo believed it to be a relatively recent invention, emerging around 1930 and essentially preserving the same repertoire as the *Reisado* (Cascudo, 1988, p. 371). Théo Brandão, in his *O Reisado Alagoano* (1953), considers it essentially a synthesis of the *Reisado* and another folk play, the *Caboclinhos* (Brandão, 1953, p. 19)—a virtuosic reminiscence of Native Brazilian dances (Cascudo, 1988, p. 166). However, in his later work *Folguedos Natalinos*, Brandão (1966) not only restores the opposition between warriors and *caboclos*, but also describes the folk play as containing episodes not found in the *Reisado*, known as "parts". In these, diverse characters such as the *North Star*, the *Golden Star*, the *Butterfly*, or the *Mermaid* go to the center of the scene, between the groups, and dance and sing their part, implying the presence of short recitatives and declaimed dialogues (Brandão, 2003, p. 83). This fundamental structure remains essentially unchanged in the description found in *Folguedos e Danças de Alagoas*, published by Tenório Rocha in 1984.

Théo Brandão noted in 1982 that the groups of *Reisados*, which had been extraordinarily frequent 40 to 60 years before (1922–1942), especially along the coast and its vicinities, and which used to journey to the banks of the São Fran-

[2] The original in Portuguese corresponding to the translation that appears between quotation marks reads: "na luta entre dois partidos, dos guerreiros e dos caboclos, entremeada de uma quantidade de cenas, onde várias personagens se sucedem cantando as suas respectivas peças" (author's translation).

[3] The *Bumba-meu-boi* is a very popular and traditional Brazilian folk play—a comedic performance whose presence is well documented since the early 19th century, though it likely originated in the late 18th century. The plot varies widely, but it typically involves a character—often a pregnant woman—who wishes for the bull's death in order to eat it, followed by the bull's death, a humorous dispute over the possibility of dividing its meat, and finally, its comic resurrection—usually brought about through the intervention of either a doctor or a sorcerer (Cascudo, 1988, p. 152).

cisco River or to the hinterlands towards Juazeiro do Norte, had by then nearly disappeared—thus highlighting and confirming the existence of the pilgrimage route between Alagoas and Juazeiro do Norte (Brandão, 1982, p. 78). Brandão's account reveals that the decline of the *Reisado* in Alagoas occurred just as, through the intervention of Padre Cícero, the folk play gained strength and expanded in southern Ceará.[4] As a counterpoint to the growing scarcity of the *Reisado*, Brandão noted that the *Guerreiro*, which emerged through the syncretism of the former with the *Caboclinhos*, fully replaced both and took their place as the only folk play to carry out cross-border excursions and to be staged with a truly dazzling richness of costumes (Brandão, 1982).

The migration of the *Guerreiro* to Ceará is documented by researcher Oswald Barroso, who states also that the group led by Mestra Margarida was the only active *Guerreiro* in Juazeiro do Norte in the 1990s (Barroso, 1996, p. 12). Influenced by, but distinct from, the original folk play from Alagoas, Mestra Margarida's *Guerreiro* is notable for being performed almost exclusively by women, and for incorporating from a variety of different folk plays characters like the Star, the Mermaid and the *Baiana*, among others (Barroso, 1996). Mestra Margarida, however, did not see herself as the founder of the *Guerreiros* in the region: in numerous testimonies, she recounted that, after migrating from Alagoas on foot with her mother when she was about five years old—on a journey of more than 600 kilometers—she joined the *Guerreiro* of Mestre Amaro, eventually founding her own group at the age of fifteen, around 1950 (Conceição, 2004; 2024). It is also worth noting that the existence of a female *Reisado*—the *Reisado Decolores*, led by Mestra Mazé de Luna—contradicts a popular definition in the Cariri region according to which the *Reisado* would be performed mainly by men and the *Guerreiro*, mainly by women. Although such a gender-based division proves at best imprecise, it undeniably appears in the local imagination, and even the performers themselves repeat this narrative without hesitation.

It is observed today in the Cariri region that *Reisados* and *Guerreiros* differ little in terms of plot or the characters presented—known as the *Figuras* [Figures]—unlike what was originally described in the context outlined by Théo Brandão. The main differences are thus relegated to costume—the *Guerreiro* still preserves the characteristic church-shaped hats, as can be seen in Figure 1—and to music, where there is a subtle tendency towards faster tempos, and a predominance (though not exclusivity) of the syncopated binary rhythm known as *baianada* or *baião*—a variation of the classic *habanera*. Another distinction that has emerged over time is a shared origin: although Mestra Margarida may not have been the founder of the first *Guerreiro* in the region, all the currently active *Guerreiro* groups in Cariri are inspired by her legacy. The *Guerreiro de Nossa Senhora Aparecida* is no exception. Founded in 2012 by Mestre Valdir and Mestre Tarcísio, it is currently directed by Cosmo de Souza Lima—known as Mestre

[4] Brazilian state where the city of Juazeiro do Norte is located.

Cosmo. One of the pieces performed by the group on December 30, 2019 will serve as the main *corpus* for the present study.

Figure 1

The Characteristic Church-Shaped Hat of the Guerreiro *Tradition*

Note. The photograph depicts Mestra Margarida, one of its most prominent exponents, wearing the hat—commonly referred to by performers as the *coroa* [crown]. Source of the photography: (Uchôa, 2025).

2. Theoretical Framework

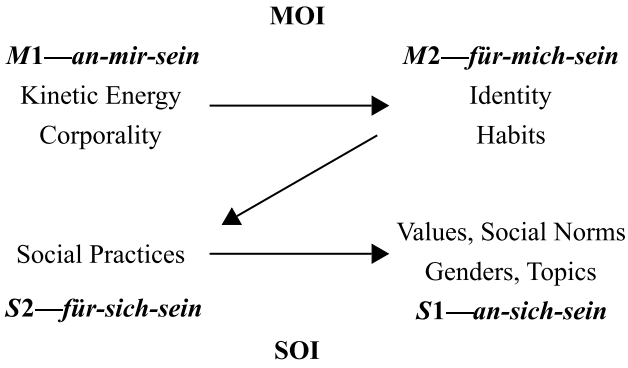
The objective of the present paper is to discuss the representations of class, gender and ethnic oppression crystalized in an excerpt of a 2019 presentation of Master Cosmo's *Guerreiro* in Juazeiro do Norte, Brazil.

The methodological approach adopted in this study is based upon Eero Tarasti's Existential Semiotics (2000; 2021), that offer conceptual and methodological tools that can successfully examine complex syncretic textures like that of the *Guerreiro*, that besides musical and verbal involves also visual elements in its textual web—not to mention the moments in which the performers touch members of the audience, introducing a tactile dimension, or even bring food and beverages to the performance, thus adding to it olfactive and/or tasteable parameters. Existential Semiotics proposes a path from immanence and existence (being) to action and narrativity (doing), and from these to manifestation (appear-

ing). In order to achieve this goal, one of its main methodological and conceptual tools is the so-called Zemic model (Figure 2)—by means of which it is possible to develop an approach from corporality (*M*1) to identity (*M*2), from identity to social interactions (*S*2), and from these to the *Weltanschuung* that permeates the syncretic text (*S*1). The analysis of this *Weltanschauung*, combined with the semiotic approach developed by Stuart Hall (2016), allows us to detect relations of ethnic, gender and class oppression in the discourse. The Zemic model can be represented in the following scheme:

Figure 2

Eero Tarasti's Zemic Model



Note. The diagram outlines the dynamic trajectory between the MOI—the embodied, lived self (*M*)—and the SOI—the normative, social self (*S*)—by mapping distinct existential modalities. It also contrasts ontology (quadrants 1) with praxis (quadrants 2), forming a "Z" (thus "Zemic") path that begins with ontological corporality (*M*1), progresses through the formation of identity and habitual subjectivity (*M*2), then moves into social practices and interpersonal actions (*S*2), and culminates in the domain of the values and social norms (*S*1) that structure the discourse. Source: author's own elaboration after Tarasti, 2015, p. 27.

Traditional syncretic texts such as the *Guerreiro* serve as syntheses and reflections of societal norms, and at the same time prove to be able to influence perceptions and to shape social dynamics. More importantly, they also provide a rich lens for examining intricate interplays of gender, class, and ethnic representations in the cultural imagery.

While the present study adopts Tarasti's Existential Semiotics as its primary methodological framework, it is important to acknowledge other approaches that have contributed significantly to the study of multisensoriality and performance.

3. Analytical Corpus: The Piece *Maria Pretinha*

Among the 34 tunes performed during the *Guerreiro's* 2019 presentation, one stands out as particularly representative of the community's gender, class, and racial tensions: the song *Maria Pretinha*,[5] sung by the group's *contramestre* [second-in-command], Mestre Valdir. The very name of the character is already highly significant. *Pretinha*, the diminutive of *preta* [Black woman], conveys not only the character's ethnic identity but also a connotation that—paradoxically—can be perceived as both affectionate and demeaning. The lyrics of the piece are presented below:

Maria Pretinha	Maria Pretinha
faz três anos que namora	has been dating for three years;
O noivo dela foi embora	Her fiancé went away
sentar praça militar	to join the military;
Ela foi olhar	She went to watch
A partida do trem	the departure of the train;
Eu lhe dei os parabéns	I congratulated her,
ela começou a chorar	and she started to cry;
Ela me disse	She said to me
que agora vai é tudo	that now, everything goes:
Aleijado, moribundo,	crippled, moribund,
Trata com quem encontrar	She will deal with whoever she finds;
Maria Pretinha foi presa	Maria Pretinha was arrested
pra Siriema	and taken to Siriema;
Coitadinha de pendenga	Poor thing, she was framed,
Está padecendo por lá	and she is suffering over there;
(E) Eu Passei por lá	I passed by there,
Dei um voto a favor dela	and I cast a vote in her favor;
Morena cor de canela	Cinnamon-colored brunette,
Eu peço um beijo ela me dá	I ask for a kiss—and she gave it to me.

[5] The video with the original recording, lyrics and English translation of *Maria Pretinha* is available at https://youtu.be/xjn9Ffuhypk. The complete performance can be watched at https://youtu.be/m5lvqYDE6Zs. For those interested in other complete Guerreiro presentations, presentations of Mestra Margarida's Guerreiro de Santa Joana D'arc are available at https://youtu.be/kQbyvZe0XvE and https://youtu.be/bg95VCZJlzk.

4. Plane of Content

The trajectory of the character Maria Pretinha begins with her disjunction from what can be inferred to be her value-object: romantic union within a socially recognized relationship—a state she initially seems to experience with her fiancé, who nevertheless ultimately abandons her to join the armed forces. It is worth noting that the character loses not only her bond with her beloved one, but also a socially legitimizing status. This loss is symbolized by the departure of her fiancé, which she watches helplessly from the station—and which she clearly sanctions negatively, responding to the enunciator's words with tears.

A second key moment in her narrative is marked by a new dysphoric cognitive sanction, in which she declares that her next romantic union will no longer be conditioned by the presence of qualities of excellence in her love object. On the contrary, socially stigmatized attributes—such as physical disability or frailty—are now deemed acceptable.

The third turning point is characterized by another dysphoric state—not modal in nature, as the previous one, but rather a negative descriptive value—represented by the character's conjunction with the condition of imprisonment. Here, the negative aspects take on concrete form through the linguistic choice of terms such as *coitadinha* [poor thing] and *padecendo* [languishing].

It is within this context that the final performance occurs, in which the enunciator favors her in an undefined way, yet very clearly requests something in return—discursively framed as "a kiss". The trajectory of Maria Pretinha, therefore, can be interpreted as a progressive process of social and existential degradation, in which the character gradually loses her dignity: from the loss of her fiancé to the abandonment of any criteria of selection; from this stage to the loss of physical freedom, marked by her spatial confinement; and finally, to the commodification of her affection—even by supposed allies and friends, such as the enunciator, who, by asking her for a kiss, confronts a woman in a position of vulnerability, whose refusal could jeopardize one of the few remaining sources of support available to her.

This narrative process of successive deprivations finds its counterpart, at the discursive level, in a series of figures that engage in dialogism with cultural imaginaries, particularly with regard to representations of social power relations. Maria Pretinha carries in her name the markers of her condition as both a woman and a Black individual, and the use of the diminutive in this context acquires weight as a possible signifier of devaluation for these categories. Her imprisonment, which combines the deprivation of freedom with spatial restriction, is also associated with the loss—whether temporary or permanent—of the subject's conjunctive relationship with all of her goods, that is, with the descriptive values from which she is now dispossessed. At this stage of her trajectory, Maria Pretinha reaches a condition of indigence marked by the intersectionality—understood in the sense developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989)—of her subaltern oppression as a woman, as a Black person, and as someone who is poor. How-

ever, our object of analysis is not the verbal dimension of the piece, but rather the performance as a whole—one whose visual and musical components must now also be considered.

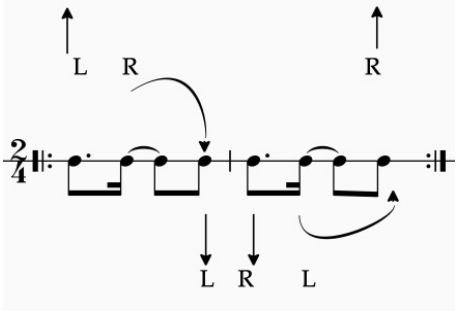
5. Plane of Expression

5.1. Visual Elements

From the perspective of performance, the piece is accompanied by a single type of movement—or *passo* [step]—as the choreographic element is referred to by the group. This step, known as the *baião*, is so called because it typically accompanies songs in the popular binary rhythm of the same name, characterized by the rhythmic cell that appears in Figure 3:

Figure 3

Scheme of the baião *dance steps*

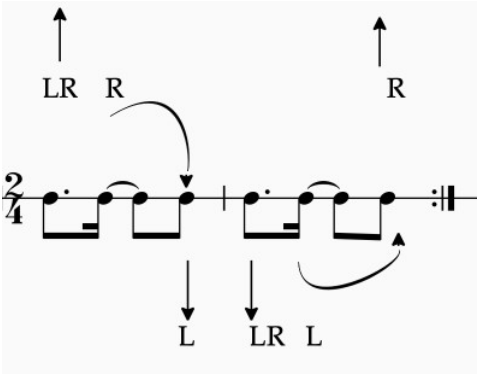


Note. The figure represents the *baião* step sequence in 2/4 meter, notated as a combination of rhythmic values and directional footwork. The symbols above the staff indicate forward movements with the left (L) and right (R) feet, while the symbols below indicate backward steps. Curved arrows represent turns. Source: author's own elaboration.

This step has a circular character, consisting of a 180-degree clockwise turn of the right foot in the middle of the measure, followed in the next bar by a symmetrical movement of the left foot in a counterclockwise direction, completing the choreographic phrase. This choreography is repeated throughout the sung sections of the piece, but presents the variation described in Figure 4 during the instrumental sections that follow each full execution of the lyrics:

Figure 4

Scheme of the variation of the baião *steps in the instrumental passages*



Note. Symbols above the staff indicate forward movements with the left (L), right (R), or both feet (LR), while symbols below the staff indicate backward steps. Curved arrows represent turns. This variation is marked by a pronounced double forward step (LR) preceding the circular turn, which distinguishes the dance in the instrumental sections from that of the sung strophes. Source: author's own elaboration.

Despite its strong intensifying effect on the movement, the variation ultimately consists simply of marking the downbeat of each measure by striking both feet simultaneously, while otherwise maintaining the same structure as the basic step.

There is, therefore, a certain homology between the form of the content and the choreographic and sonic form of expression—marking the alternation between the presence and absence of oral verbal elements as much as the musical form itself. It is nonetheless noteworthy that the dance remains neutral during the narrative of Maria Pretinha's saga as recounted by the enunciating actor, only intensifying in the instrumental section, in which the voice falls silent and the instruments take over to ornament and vary the theme—this section being referred to by the performers as the *marcha* [march], despite there being no actual correspondence with the musical genre of the same name. Among the many possible interpretations of this contrast, one particularly worth noting is the reading that identifies an ethos of restraint in a narrator who only reveals emotional intensity and affective engagement once the voice is silent. This property represents a construction at the semi-symbolic level[6]—valid for this specific piece in

[6] While symbolic relations establish associations between signs—understood as unities of the plane of expression—and unities of meaning in the plane of content, tending toward generalization within the linguistic system, semi-symbolic relations instead connect categories—such as *verticality* vs *horizontality*—rather than unities, of the plane of expression with categories of the plane of content—such as *affirmation* vs *negation* (Greimas, Courtés, 1986, pp. 203–204). Unlike symbolic relations, their validity may be

this particular performance—and not a symbolic relation that could be replicated every time the same figures of expression are present.

However, when observing the two-hour performance as a whole—approximately one hour after the presentation of Maria Pretinha, yet mobilizing a similar imaginary—there emerges, in the piece *Oh Doida* [Oh Madwoman] (Núcleo de Pesquisa, 2024), a figurativization of a female character in the *mise-en-scène* that warrants closer examination.

Figure 5

Performance of the Character Doida [Madwoman]

Note. The image highlights key semiotic traits of the *Doida*: disheveled curly hair, smeared lipstick, and provocative gestures, which index rupture with social order and hypersexualized femininity. Her central position in the scene underscores both her agency and her objectification, as she becomes the focal point of the spectators' gaze, embodying various cultural asymmetries. Source: (Núcleo de Pesquisa, 2024).

Among the various elements that characterize the figure of the *Doida*, the following are worth highlighting: (1) the disheveled curly hair, which, in addition to emphasizing the performer's Blackness, also functions as a sign that simultane-

restricted to particular texts. For instance, in his 1995 comparative analysis of the IBM and Apple logos, Jean-Marie Floch identifies a homology between the categorical oppositions *cold monochromatism* vs *hot polychromatism* and *rectilinear* vs *curvilinear* forms in the plane of expression, and the oppositions *servitude* vs *liberty* in the plane of content (Floch, 1995, pp. 59–60). These semi-symbolic relations are clearly operative only within the specific corpus of his analysis.

ously iconizes, indexes, and symbolizes the semantic trait of rupture with social order that defines the character *Doida*; (2) the smeared lipstick, a sign that conveys femininity, disorder, and an index of anarchic and hypertrophied sexuality; (3) the hand that lifts the skirt, as if fanning the character's genitals—presenting the hypertrophy of female libido as a semantic trait of *Doida*'s madness. It is worth noting that male hypersexualization is rarely associated with madness, whereas, when linked to femininity, it acquires such a connotation in cultural representations, revealing the asymmetry in gender relations. To this sexist framework is added the stereotype of the hypersexualized Black woman—who, although here appears as a subject of her own desire, has historically also occupied the role of a recurrent victim of abuse and sexual violence; (4) in the image, *Doida* appears as the focal point of the gaze of those around her, becoming a valued object—that is, the target of a cognitive sanction—from a collective Addresser, for whom she becomes an object of ridicule and scorn. Despite the temporal gap between the two pieces—Maria Pretinha being the 4th and *Doida* the 23rd of the 34 segments performed—numerous points of convergence may be noted between the two characters: both are women, Black, hypersexualized, and subject to the opprobrium[7] of a collective Addresser.

External to the musical execution of the piece *Maria Pretinha* specifically, the *mise-en-scène* corresponding to *Oh Doida* may be conceived as internal to the broader syncretic performance, functioning as a figurativization—if not of the character Maria Pretinha herself, then at least of the imaginary from which she emerges. This approximation, however, has its limits within its cultural framework, which must also be clearly delineated. Originating as a primarily religious manifestation associated with the celebration of the Epiphany, the *Guerreiro*, like many other Brazilian folk plays, absorbed into its representations of the divine and of transcendence the imaginaries of Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities—groups that, ultimately, constituted a substantial part of both the local community and the broader targeted audience of these performances. In this respect, it is possible to establish correspondences between certain characters from the folk plays and entities from the pantheon of *Catimbó*—a practice rooted in Indigenous traditions but later incorporating various elements of African origin—or from *Umbanda*—of African origin, but which, in many of its forms, also integrates elements drawn from the imaginaries of Indigenous heritage as well as from those of the colonizer, including not only Catholicism but also Spiritism. In this context, *Doida* closely resembles religious representations of the figure known as *Pomba Gira*, associated with "the stereotype of the prostitute, the 'street woman', who dresses in scandalous clothing, displays

[7] The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines opprobrium as contempt; reproach; public disgrace or ill fame that follows from conduct considered grossly wrong or vicious (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

obscene behavior, vulgar language, and exaggerated gestures"[8] (Silva, 2005, p. 123). What we observe, therefore, is the mobilization of a cultural archetype within the Brazilian imaginary that, without subsuming the meaning of the piece *Maria Pretinha*, establishes an interdiscursive relationship that enriches the significance of its syncretic enunciation.

An important distinction that must be emphasized, however, is that while *Pomba Gira* is associated with a powerful and exuberant spiritual entity, Maria Pretinha, by contrast, is portrayed as a woman weakened by her social condition—as a woman, as a Black individual, and as someone in economic vulnerability. This contrast, though it may be seen simply as a discrepancy between *Pomba Gira* and Maria Pretinha, and as a sign of the inconsistency of comparing the two figures, also allows for a reading in which the incongruity—like a deceptive cadence in music—functions as a rupture of expectation that further intensifies Maria Pretinha's sense of disappointment and helplessness in the face of a society that, far from fearing the supernatural empowerment of the *Pomba Gira*, ruthlessly steamrolls that woman and her hypersexualized representation. What occurs, then, is a process of *Transzendenz*[9] in the Heideggerian sense—but one that unfolds in reverse of its usual orientation: rather than ascending toward the sublime, the character descends into the grotesque.

5.2. Musical Elements

Let us now consider the musical structure and its relationship to the lyrics of the song. The melodic structure (Figure 6) is built around two main motifs: the ascending major sixth leap, and the ascending C major arpeggio—the latter appearing in three variations: its retrograde form; its transposition to A minor; and its transposition to A diminished. Rhythmically, two metric structures are set in contrast: one homogeneous, consisting of even eighth notes; and the other heterogeneous, marked by the presence of syncopation. Let us now examine the semi-symbolic relations that arise from the aforementioned oppositions.

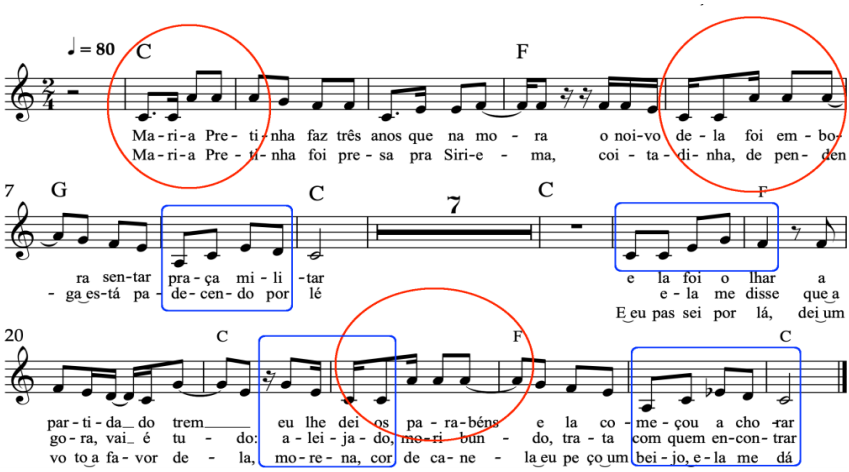
[8] In the original text in Portuguese: "ao estereótipo da prostituta, da 'mulher de rua', que se veste com roupas escandalosas, exibe atitudes obscenas, linguagem vulgar e gestos escrachados" (Silva, 2005, p. 123).

[9] In the present article, the question of Transcendence is addressed through Tarasti's Existential Semiotics, which examines it in light of Heidegger's propositions, for whom it occurs not necessarily through a mystical experience, but simply from the moment in which the human being breaks with their isolation and establishes a relationship with the surrounding world (Heidegger, 1967, pp. 62, 366).

5.3. Melodic Motive 1

Figure 6

Excerpt From the Transcription of the Song Maria Pretinha



Note. The red circles highlight the ascending major sixth leap (motive 1), interpreted as a marker of *passionalization* in the syncretic text, while the arpeggiated fifths in the blue boxes (motive 2) are often associated with intersubjective oppositions. Source: author's own elaboration.

An initial reading of the ascending major sixth interval leap could be interpreted through what Tatit identifies as the "passionalization" of musical expression—a model characterized by "a tensional investment in the very contour [of the melody] in terms of expanding the tessitura range, vowel durations, and the pauses between phrases", in which "large intervallic leaps" and "the exploration of the upper vocal register" prevail (Tatit, 1998, p. 119),[10] with the aim of intensifying the pathemic[11] dimension. This tensional emphasis would mark the song sign, rendering it passionalized.

[10] The original in Portuguese says:

> O segundo modelo caracteriza-se pelo investimento tensivo do próprio contorno em termos de ampliação do campo de tessitura melódica, das durações vocálicas e das próprias pausas entre as frases. Surge, consequentemente, uma tendência para os grandes saltos intervalares e para a exploração da região aguda, onde as cordas vocais manifestam fisicamente a tensividade. (Tatit, 1998, p. 119)

[11] According to Greimas and Courtés, the pathemic role concerns the subject's being and *état d'âme* [state of mind], defined in semiotic terms by a hierarchical modal organization (Greimas; Courtés, 1986, p. 165). Barros illustrates this with the pathemic configuration of *hope*, which may be characterized by a subject who *wants to be*, does not *believe*

Thus, the vocative "Maria Pretinha" acquires a pathemic dimension within the song—a dimension that, as shown in the lyrical analysis, is fully justified by the imaginary it mobilizes. It is worth noting that the next instance of the ascending major sixth—"her fiancé went away"—corresponds precisely to what dramaturgy refers to as the *inciting incident* of the narrative, that is, the turning point that sets the dramatic action in motion (Vogler, 2007, p. 99).

The third instance, "I congratulated her", marks two important aspects of the song's structure: the beginning of direct interaction between the enunciating actor and the character Maria Pretinha, and the establishment of the narrator's *ethos*—the latter defined by an ambivalence in which his empathy toward the woman's suffering seems to blend with a certain opportunism toward her vulnerability, as though he were seizing the moment to take advantage of her, casting a cynical shadow over the compassion he appears to express regarding her ordeal.

The fourth instance of the ascending sixth leap occurs with the words "crippled, moribund", pathemizing Maria Pretinha's loss of any ability to impose limits or criteria on whoever might seek to engage in a romantic relationship with her—suggesting a social and emotional degradation that would force her to accept whoever desired her from that point on. In the following instance, the character plunges into the abyss, imprisoned *de pendenga* [because of a dispute], her dysphoric state being introduced by the adjective *coitadinha* [poor thing] and followed by the verb *padecendo* [languishing], confirming the presence of a dysphoric accent in the syncretic text. Finally, in its last appearance, the interval, now associated with the "cinnamon-colored" skin of Maria Pretinha, establishes a connection between her ultimate degradation—the kiss given in return for the favor granted by the narrator—and the mark of her ethnicity, reinforcing the tensional accent of racial discrimination, here in clear intersectionality with social and gender-based oppression.

5.4. Melodic Motive 2

The structure of greatest interest to us corresponds to the symmetrical pair of opening and closing of the perfect fifth arpeggio. In this piece, a semantic invariance can be observed associated with this expressive figure: the opposition between subjects. Thus, in its first occurrence, the opening/closing pair is homologous to the contrast "she went to see" (the train's departure)/"I gave her (my congratulations)". This symmetrical element marks the beginning of the interaction between the enunciating actor and the character Maria Pretinha. It is worth noting that the enunciator's "congratulations", which trigger the character's cry-

that he cannot be, or *knows that he can be* (Barros, 1988, p. 64). In this sense, a pathemic configuration corresponds to the syntagmatic arrangement of modalities that semiotically defines the state of mind—or passion—experienced by a given subject.

ing episode as a result of her *anagnorisis*[12] of abandonment, may be read either as an act of naïveté or of cynicism.

In the following occurrence, the opposition—still centered on the *narrator*/*Maria Pretinha* dyad—also involves third parties: "*she* told *me*" (that now, everything goes)/"*crippled*". Again, there is a dialogical exchange between the narrator and the character, but this time with the peculiarity that the latter illustrates her progressive degradation by making herself available to anyone, no matter if "crippled" or "moribund", and to whoever else might come her way.

In the third and final occurrence, there is a contrast between the "I" of the enunciating actor—who presents himself as the benefactor intervening on behalf of the imprisoned woman—and a Maria Pretinha who, either out of gratitude or fear of the consequences of refusing, grants the narrator the kiss he had requested. Furthermore, a subtle variation produces a figure of expression that deserves the attention of the reader: both in "and she started to cry" and in "I ask for a kiss—and she gave it to me", the perfect 5th is altered to a tritone—the infamous *diabolus in musica*, a widely recognized musical topos of dysphoria, which underscores the dysphoric quality of these excerpts.

Hence, it is important to emphasize the ambivalence of the narrator's ethos, whose congratulations in the first stanza and supposed help in the final one can be read either as acts of empathy toward Maria Pretinha's suffering or as sheer opportunism: the actions of someone who, by virtue of his relative privilege, takes advantage of a structurally racist, sexist, and classist situation—a situation that enables him to exploit its distortions for personal gain while preserving the appearance of moral integrity, thus reaping the benefits of systemic oppression without having to assume a morally condemnable discourse.

6. Application of Eero Tarasti's Zemic Model

6.1. *M*1

Starting from the *an-mir-sein* dimension, which Tarasti associates with attributes related to corporality and kinetic energy, the following elements can be inventoried: 1) femininity: the female condition of Maria Pretinha; 2) Blackness: the character's racial condition; 3) precarious clothing: the character's socioeconomic condition; 4) use of the diminutive: complexity involving semantic features denoting minimized magnitude and/or connoting affection and/or depreciation; 5) the character's crying (after receiving the narrator's congratulations);

[12] Aristotle defines *Ἀναγνώρισις* [Anagnorisis] in his *Poetics* as the transition from ignorance to awareness, which brings about a reversal in the states of love and hate, or of happiness and sorrow. Its most powerful effect occurs when it follows a *peripeteia*—a sudden reversal in the character's situation (Yebra, 2022, pp. 164–165). The piece *Maria Pretinha* offers a clear instance of Aristotelian *anagnorisis*: after the *peripeteia* marked by her fiancé's departure, the narrative traces, step by step, her progressive recognition of the tragic shift from good fortune to misfortune.

6) her suffering ("languishing over there"); 7) cinnamon-colored brown skin: racial condition of the character (shade of her Blackness); 8) imprisonment and kiss: physical elements of intersubjective interaction, but also articulations of the character's affect and self-perception.

6.2. *M*2

The *für-mich-sein* dimension, in which one moves from mere corporeality to the construction of a sense of identity, renders the elements from *M*1 more complex by shifting them from denotation to connotation, such that the identity of the character Maria Pretinha will be defined by the following characteristics: 1) she dated for three years, until her fiancé left her to enlist in the military; 2) regarding their separation, her only reaction was to go watch the departure of the train that took her former fiancé—there is no description of revolt or confrontation, thus inferring a dysphoric pathemic configuration of *resignation*; 3) degradation into prostitution: by declaring that from then on, she would accept anyone, Maria Pretinha assumes a modal configuration of *not-being-able-not-to-do*, thereby declaring herself as an Addressee of any Addresser who might mobilize her for a performance of physical conjunction, and thus embracing an identity condition of prostitution.

6.3. *S*2

In the condition of *für-sich-sein*, intersubjective relationships are situated, establishing the effect of meaning of alterity. This alterity is founded through interactions such as: 1) Maria Pretinha's abandonment by her fiancé, which establishes her vulnerability and sense of helplessness; 2) her fiancé's enlistment in the army, configuring a framework in which he seeks social inclusion, in contrast to Maria Pretinha's exclusion from such a process; 3) the congratulations given to Maria Pretinha by the enunciating actor, a compliment which establishes an ambiguous *ethos* in their relationship—somewhere between the naivety of someone who wounds unintentionally and the cynicism of one who mocks another's suffering; 4) Maria Pretinha's degradation into prostitution, marked by the modal configuration of *not-being-able-not-to-act*, placing her in the condition of a receiver of any sender who might wish to engage in physical conjunction with her—a sender disqualified within an imaginary that naturalizes ableism, stigmatizing the condition of a possible "cripple" or "moribund"; 5) the depreciation—albeit empathetic—of Maria Pretinha by a sender who qualifies her as "poor thing"; 6) a particularly complex intersubjective relation concerns the narrative trajectory of the pendenga—the interpersonal conflict—that would have led to Maria Pretinha's imprisonment and subsequent ordeal. It is not clear who the Addresser was that manipulated this trajectory, nor the nature of the conflict itself—what is clearly defined is the deprivation of her freedom through imprisonment,

her condition of hardship expressed by the term *padecendo* [languishing], and her consequent vulnerability and powerlessness in relation to other subjects.

Another complex trajectory concerns the element 7) of this enumeration: the "kiss" granted by Maria Pretinha to the enunciating actor. This trajectory would consist of an initial complex program in which the narrator manipulates another subject in favor of Maria Pretinha—thus causing a second subject to positively sanction the girl. In the following program, the narrator uses the very act that had previously benefited the young woman to manipulate her through temptation, so that she, too, might positively sanction his request—one that constitutes a *to-make-to-do* act ultimately leading her to kiss him. As previously noted, this performance is imbued with ambiguity: it is unclear whether the request was marked by the innocence of a genuine desire or by the opportunism of someone who sees before him a vulnerable young woman, unable to afford the luxury of denying a favor to a benefactor. Nor is it clear whether the narrator truly came to help the girl or merely assisted her in order to make her more likely to enter into physical conjunction with him. In any case, the trajectory of intersubjective interactions undergone by the character may be interpreted as a process of progressive degradation in which, at first, Maria Pretinha loses her desired object within a consensual relationship—only to, instigated by the enunciator, come to see herself reduced to the condition of an abulic object of someone else's desire, until finally finding herself forced to yield to the harassment of her supposed helper.

In this regard, it is worth highlighting that the character's depreciation unfolds in three stages—a primordial stage in which she feels valued by her fiancé; a second stage in which, deprived of both her fiancé's esteem and her own, she feels at the mercy of whoever might want her; and a final stage, in which even those who once seemed to be helpers come to assume the role of her antagonist or oppressor.

6.4. *S*1

At level *S*1, Tarasti situates the sphere in which values, social norms, genres, and the worldview imprinted on the text are represented. In this regard, the *Weltanschauung* of this piece may perhaps be subsumed under a few key ideas: 1) The moment when Maria Pretinha announces that, from then on, she would no longer be in a position to refuse anyone who might solicit her. In this way, the valences of attraction and repulsion are neutralized for a subject marked simultaneously by abulia and by a *not-being-able-not-to-do* configuration adjacent to the deontic modality; 2) Another prevailing aspect of the narrative is Maria Pretinha's abandonment: abandoned by her fiancé, by a justice system that incarcerated her over an undefined "dispute" [*pendenga*], and by her supposed friend represented by the enunciating actor, who demanded physical intimacy in return for the favors he had done for her. Such abandonment is also inseparable, as previously discussed, from a sense of deception and from a rupture in the expectation of continuity in the instance of *seeming*, which always ends up revealing

itself melancholically as discontinuity in the instance of *being*; 3) Another prevailing effect of meaning in the narrative is Maria Pretinha's vulnerability—emotional (loss of her fiancé and self-esteem) and socio-economic (loss of freedom). Such vulnerability can be seen as an aspect of insufficiency—an aspect that also permeates the isotopy[13] of abandonment, insofar as impermanence may be semiotically perceived as a form of insufficient permanence.

Other key elements deserve to be highlighted: 4) The isotopy of prostitution is constructed through various images and thus permeates the entire text. The theme of the young woman who "falls into a life of sin" after being abandoned resonates with an imaginary that implicitly assumes the fiancée had lost her virginity in the recently ended relationship—something that would practically preclude any new formal romantic engagement in an archaic social context in which a woman depended entirely on a male guardian—father or husband—for economic support. It is from this context that Maria Pretinha would no longer discern any options other than resorting to prostitution as a means of survival. In this way, from this perspective as well, one can identify a semantic trait of insufficiency that defines the character's existential condition.

An asymmetry of power relations becomes evident—regarding gender, the woman cannot afford the luxury of choosing (*cannot-want*; *cannot-do*), while the male characters can (*can-want*; *can-do* and, more importantly, *can-make-do*). In terms of ethnic perspective, Maria Pretinha is marked both as Black and as a "cinnamon-colored brunette", whereas there is no ethnic characterization for the other characters. The use of *morena*, in the Brazilian context, suggests that the character has a skin tone typically associated with racial mixing. In this respect, it is worth considering that, according to a recent study of Brazilian genetic composition published in *Science*, while most patrilineal Y-chromosome lineages in the country are of European origin, most matrilineal lineages—associated with mitochondrial DNA—are of African origin, a phenomenon the authors attribute to the colonial history of sexual violence by the colonizer toward other ethnic groups (Nunes et al., 2025, p. 2). Within this context, the overlap of the mixed condition of *morena* onto *pretinha* suggests that, though her skin tone may be read as brunette, Maria Pretinha is socially construed as Black, bearing the cultural stigma of oppression historically imposed on enslaved Africans brought to the country.

The phenomenon in which, within a mixed-race population, individuals from higher social strata are identified as "white" regardless of skin tone, while those from the base of the social pyramid are identified as "Black", is portrayed in the renowned song *Haiti* by Gilberto Gil, with lyrics by Caetano Veloso, in which the poet describes men "almost white, almost Black from being so poor" (Sovik, 2002, p. 2). From this perspective, Maria Pretinha, regardless of her ethnic back-

[13] Barros, in a slightly different way than Greimas, defines isotopy as the reiteration of semantic traces by means of their repetition in discursive figures and themes throughout the text, indicating it as one of the main resources to confer it semantic coherence (Barros, 1990, p. 87).

ground, is "Black from being so poor", thus highlighting the intersectionality of gender, racial, and class-based oppression. Finally, with regard to her socioeconomic condition itself—which, as previously discussed, is marked by vulnerability—Maria Pretinha's social oppression is revealed not only in her availability to whoever might want her, but above all in her imprisonment: the ultimate form of social immobilization, which equates to a modal state of *cannot-do*/*be* and absolute subjection to an indeterminate Addresser represented by the law or the authorities.

7. Dasein and Transcendence

The piece under study clearly substantiates the Dasein status of Maria Pretinha. Recalling Heidegger's definition of the term, one may say that, for the German philosopher, Dasein refers to the condition of a being capable of questioning, among other things, its own existential situation (Heidegger, 1967, p. 7). The moment of anagnorisis, therefore—when the character confides to the narrator that, from that point onward, she would no longer place any restrictions on accepting whoever might approach her—represents a reflection on her existential condition that signals not only her immersion into Dasein, but also the threshold at which Maria Pretinha's Transcendence takes place. This Transcendence, in this case, is limited to what Tarasti refers to as the first act of Transcendence: negation, in which the subject plunges into a deep nihilism that completely empties of meaning her previous existential condition (Tarasti, 2015, p. 6). The absence of the subsequent stage—the *pleroma*, in which the initial negation is followed by a re-signification of the world—is entirely justifiable, insofar as the stage of negation may extend indefinitely over time (Tarasti, 2015, p. 8).

In the case of the syncretic text under analysis, it is worth noting that Transcendence—with its plunge into the reality of Dasein and the consequent anagnorisis regarding it—does not occur through the sublime, but rather through the grotesque. This possibility is not excluded from Tarasti's proposal, who envisions it among the many forms of Transcendence by negation (Tarasti, 2015, p. 7). Maria Pretinha's immersion in Dasein takes place through an anagnorisis that reveals the sordid mundanity of *Weltlichkeit*.[14] Thus, the Transcendence experienced by her takes place through the overcoming—or more precisely, the violation—of her own limits, in a process that leads not to the sublime, but to the grotesque. When she declares that henceforth she would no longer be able to choose her partners, the character exemplifies her new existential condition by imagining herself alongside people with special needs—a cripple and a mori-

[14] The question of worldliness will be developed in light of Stuart Hall's cultural studies, identifying the thematic and figurative elements that reveal the marks of class, gender, and race oppression in syncretic discourse (Hall, 2016). In this way, as Heidegger himself suggests, attention is drawn to an approach to *Weltlichkeit* based on an ontological interpretation of the entities of a given environment, whose character would only be revealed through its structuring (Heidegger, 1967, p. 66).

bund—drawing on a cliché from an ableist imaginary that was naturalized in the early twentieth century (often materialized in those days by hiring individuals with uncommon features for circus roles), but which is now repudiated by contemporary sensibility.

It is worth noting that, although there is no information about the exact date of the piece's composition, the mention of the "departure of the train" allows us to situate its creation between the beginning of passenger train operations in northeastern Brazil, in 1858, and their discontinuation, around 1990. Regarding the mention of a place named Siriema, no municipalities with that name were found, but rather small villages, two of which are located near old railway lines: one in the region of Paulo Afonso, in Bahia, and another near Caxias, in Maranhão. Given that the origins of the *Guerreiro* tradition lie in Alagoas, and the railway line that passed through Paulo Afonso, in Bahia, also traversed the state of Alagoas, it is consistent to hypothesize that the Siriema mentioned in the song's imaginary might refer to the district by that name in Paulo Afonso—even though the possibility that it is a fictional locality cannot be ruled out. It is worth highlighting that, in addition to its proximity to the railway and its associated imaginary, as well as to various other cities of the region mentioned in the canonical *Guerreiro* repertoire, Siriema is also relatively close to the birthplace of another historical figure frequently referenced in the folk tradition: the *cangaceira* [female outlaw of the Brazilian backlands] Maria Bonita, wife of Lampião, the "king of the *cangaço*",[15] who was born and raised in an area approximately 40 km from the urban center of Paulo Afonso. Thus, the locality is also associated with references tied to mythical figures of criminality and their cultural imaginary in Brazil. This element is noteworthy because Maria Bonita and her husband Lampião are celebrated in numerous pieces of the *Guerreiro* repertory and occupy a central place in Brazilian cultural imagery, through their representation in oral and written literature, popular music, cinema, and audiovisual productions (Lima Irmão, 2015, pp. 17–28).

Another element contributing to the grotesque dimension of Maria Pretinha's Transcendence lies, it bears repeating, in her imprisonment. The prison, by reinforcing the modality of *cannot-do*/*be* through the restriction of spatial mobility, reverberates in the instance of *doing* a limitation intrinsic to the character's very existential condition—that is, to the instance of *being*. Upon realising she could no longer afford to select her romantic partners, Maria Pretinha became a priori confined in existential terms, bound to respond to any proposal made to her with the same, unchanging "yes". In this light, the kiss that concludes the narrative may be interpreted as a continuation of this same impossibility of refusal, and

[15] Among the many definitions of the *cangaço*—a concept not so far from the North American Wild West banditry—Lima Irmão considers that, besides a social phenomenon marked by the actions of armed outlaws who plundered farms, villages, and towns in the Brazilian Northeast, the *cangaço* represents also a manifestation of class struggle from the illiterate and poor peasants against the domination of an equally illiterate but wealthy and despotic ruling class of landowners (Lima Irmão, 2015, p. 21).

such a kiss sets up an opposition between thematic categories such as *love*, *loyalty*, and *friendship* in the instance of *Schein* [*to-appear*], and *lovelessness*, *disloyalty*, and *betrayal* in the instance of *Sein* [*to-be*]. The narrator's kiss, then, may be read as a demonstration of affection on his part and of gratitude on the part of the protagonist at the level of *appearance*—but of opportunism by the enunciating actor and of Maria Pretinha's submission and oppression at the level of *being*. This final stage enriches the semantic fabric of the text, allowing it to be read either literally and optimistically, or through the lens of the grotesque, marked by cynicism and the recognition of deeper, more complex and contradictory layers of meaning construction.

Finally, a last but necessary element to consider in the construction of the grotesque is precisely its contrast with the sublime. Victor Hugo asserted that the counterpoint between the grotesque and the sublime, just as between comedy and tragedy, lay at the heart of modern drama (Hugo, 1876, p. XXIV). In this respect, its presence in the *Guerreiro* performance, and its alternation with moments that emphasize the sublime, can be understood—within Hugo's framework—as a strategy for structuring the performance in a way that aligns with the genre constraints of modern drama. This contrast is not foreign to Tarasti's conception of Transcendence; on the contrary, the interplay of the grotesque in the negation of Dasein and the sublime in its affirmation aligns coherently with the contrast between the nihilism of the first stage and the *pleroma* of the second. Indeed, it is Tarasti himself who foresees the possibility, in the stage of Negation, of incursions into the realms of parody and mockery—explicitly including the grotesque in the latter (Tarasti, 2015, p. 7); likewise, the Finnish semiotician considers, as possibilities for Affirmation, processes he names illumination, initiation, and transfiguration—all of which are related to sublimation or the sublime itself (Tarasti, 2015, p. 8). Tarasti nonetheless emphasizes that his model was conceived more for the study, in Kantian terms, of the *transcendental*—that is, what pertains to our forms of apprehending objects (Kant, 1913, p. 49)—than of the *transcendent*, which refers to what lies beyond the bounds of possible experience (Kant, 1913, p. 526). In the case of Maria Pretinha, her transcendence follows Heidegger's understanding of transcendence as grounded in an original gaze upon the world—one capable of encompassing it, apprehending it, and shaping it (Heidegger, 1955, p. 39). Thus, although Heidegger does not explicitly address the categories of the sublime and the grotesque, Maria Pretinha's *anagnorisis* fits his concept of Transcendence insofar as it entails a substantial change in the quality of her outlook on the world—one that proves capable of transforming the universe around her.

8. Final Considerations

One of the many difficulties faced by the present research concerns the complexity of defining the boundaries of the syncretic text, particularly with regard

to interdiscursivity.[16] Greimas used to remark informally within his close circle of collaborators that *hors du texte, pas de salut* [outside the text, no salvation]. In making such a comment, the Lithuanian linguist was primarily referring to verbal texts, in which the boundaries of the text—even from a material standpoint—are far more clearly defined than in the case of a syncretic performative text within the context of a traditional culture. In addressing the differences between verbal texts and syncretic texts within the context of orality in traditional cultures, Yuri Lotman observes that, while the former constitute complete texts or fragments of a purely semiotic nature, the latter—as syncretic and/or ritual texts—are mnemonically bound to oral references that are specifically anchored in a given temporality and spatiality (Lotman, 1990, p. 250). In the present analysis, the issue raised by Lotman gains remarkable concreteness and clarity. This is because each sign—whether visual or auditory—present in the *Guerreiro* performance has the potential to exhibit both a performative dimension, whose structural role in the syncretic text can be associated with a relatively clear function and semiotic value for an external observer, and a ritual dimension, whose mnemonic and symbolic associations often elude an observer unfamiliar with the cultural codes being mobilized—and, at times, pertain to a symbolic framework specific to the tight-knit community encompassing the performers, their collaborators, and their respective existential references.

In the analyzed piece, *Maria Pretinha*, certain convergences and divergences were noted in relation to another piece from the same performance—*Oh Doida*—in which the interface with the ritual and mythical aspects of the folk play they belong to begins to take shape. Actually, there are other pieces in the same performance in which the connection with religious imaginaries becomes even more tangible, such as *Eu que não tenho medo do Dragão Devorador* [I, Who Am Not Afraid of the Devouring Dragon], in which the well-documented syncretism between the Catholic saint Saint George and the orisha Oshosi, an entity venerated in both *candomblé* and *umbanda*, reveals the complexity arising from the superposition of millennia-old imaginaries from originally distant cultures that intersected in the New World.

As aggravating factors of complexity in pieces where the ritual dimension supersedes the performative one, we must highlight not only the totemic elements and their broad symbolic range, but also two particularly delicate issues. Firstly, when foundational aspects of meaning are silenced for being taboo, around which a declared or tacit customary law conceals from the outsider's gaze precious interrelations and causalities necessary to understand the nature of the

[16] Fiorin defines interdiscursivity as the process through which themes and/or figures from one discourse are incorporated into another (Fiorin, 1994, p. 32). In the case of the *Guerreiro*, for instance, visual, musical, and verbal elements of this Epiphanic celebration relate not only to Christian traditions but also to Native Brazilian and Afro-Brazilian religious imaginaries. The result is a complex, encyclopedic, and kaleidoscopic texture whose comprehension often eludes those unfamiliar with the references—frequently mobilized simultaneously—by the multiple modes that shape this syncretic text.

symbolic apparatus in question. Secondly, when it comes to particularities of religious imaginaries that, unlike those of major world religions, have not undergone a process of unified doctrinal systematization. Thus, for instance, when a certain *umbanda* practitioner says that Saint George corresponds to Oxóssi—thereby mobilizing the full symbolic framework of colors, chants, myths, offerings, etc., associated with that entity—and another claims the correspondence is with Ogum, the absence of doctrinal standardization allows both to be equally correct, within the particular scope of their own religious spaces. In such cases, it falls to the researcher who wishes to engage with greater depth and consistency to become acquainted with the specific worldview of the community being studied, particularly in terms of the imaginaries it mobilizes.

Another point to emphasize is that Tarasti's model does not oppose Greimas's canonical generative trajectory; rather, it complements and enriches it—on the level of expression, by being more permeable to the structural role of figures of expression (particularly with regard to corporeality and its representations), and, on the level of content, by encompassing existential issues of great depth and complexity, such as worldview and Transcendence. Thus, while a Greimasian narratological perspective would focus on the junctional configurations of Maria Pretinha, attentive to the successive forms of spoliation she suffers, Tarasti's model—without invalidating any of Greimas's propositions—moves more swiftly toward examining the immense existential void experienced by the character, shaped by the pragmatism she is forced to adopt in the face of a progressively oppressive alterity. It plunges the narrative into an ambiguity on the edge of cynicism, in which even gestures of apparent generosity culminate in the character's systematic humiliation.

At the level of *S*1, then, we encounter an exclusionary value system that segregates the protagonist based on her skin color, her gender, and her socioeconomic collapse—producing a toxic intersectionality that contaminates both her intersubjective relationships (in which she is permanently cast as the Addressee) and her junctional ones (in which she undergoes successive programs of spoliation). While the use of a major mode and relatively brisk tempo may be idiomatic traits of songs in the *Guerreiro* repertoire, the festive character of the piece nevertheless suggests a banalization of the character's suffering—an interpretation reinforced by the monotony of its choreography, confined to the basic *baião* step throughout the sung sections. As previously noted, only during instrumental interludes does the dance intensify, with a more agile and leaping variant of the basic step—suggesting that the character's silence, homologous to her physical immobility, holds within it most significative moments of the syncretic text in terms of pathemic states, implying rapid mobility at the level of modulations and modalizations of being.

These modulations and modalizations, in turn, suggest an affinity with the effect of meaning of uneasiness—*l'inquiétude*—a configuration discussed by Greimas and Fontanille in their *Semiotics of Passions* (1993, pp. 193–195). Thus, the moments in which the verbal instance falls silent are precisely those in which

the choreography emerges, marked by an intense articulation of modulations but preceding the discretization of modalities, and thereby operating within the realm of the sensible rather than the intelligible. Again, idiomatic though the procedure may be, its combination with the other factors mentioned before cannot but contribute to constructing what may resemble a muted scream from Maria Pretinha—a character so suffocated by the intersectionality of the oppressions she endures that no trace of revolt, protest, or even lamentation appears in the verbal discourse.

Thus, while the protagonist's silence in the verbal instance may suggest resignation in the face of such oppression, the choreography can be seen as an aspectualization that—without fully actualizing its content—nonetheless allows a glimpse of the uneasiness of a silent scream which, lacking the minimal freedom required to be expressed, remains latent, buried in silence after a kiss she would not have had the option to refuse.

Finally, one last point worth discussing concerns an issue as delicate as it is timely. Given that traditional cultural manifestations like the *Guerreiro* live under constant pressure to disappear—drowned by the hegemony of the culture industry, by economic infeasibility, by ruptures in the transmission of these traditions, and by the oblivion imposed by the frenzy of contemporary media culture toward traditional expressions—what is the sense in defending such traditions, especially when it becomes clear that some of their manifestations bear the marks of what is now considered abject in terms of racism, sexism, and classism, once naturalized but now deemed intolerable?

Some argue that the persistence of elements now recognized as racist, sexist, or classist may explain and even legitimize the gradual decline of such traditions (e.g., Albernaz, 2021, pp. 334–341; Albernaz, Lima, 2021, pp. 505–507; Carrico, 2012, pp. 31–32). Others advocate for unconditional preservation of the repertoire, emphasizing its intangible heritage value (Mira, Cerqueira, 2019, pp. 94–97). Still others defend selective preservation, either omitting or adapting the most problematic pieces (Carrico, 2012, pp. 35–36).

A growing body of scholarship, however, supports critical preservation, which seeks to safeguard the traditions while at the same time exposing and problematizing the mechanisms through which they reproduce structural inequalities (Cruz, Motta, Silva, Vellinho, Beltrame, 2021). It is within this last perspective that the present study positions itself, understanding that a critical engagement with the *Guerreiro* is essential for preserving its cultural significance while confronting the asymmetries it reproduces. Such a perspective allows that the mechanisms that naturalize such forms of violence are laid bare in detail, so that their normalization can be dismantled, and the situations of oppression can be presented as testimonies of a past that, while it must not be revived or perpetuated, also cannot and should not be forgotten—especially because only by knowing this past it is possible to understand and confront the enormous asymmetries inherited by contemporary society.

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Article

FÜSÜN DENIZ ÖZDEN *

THE STORY OF ALI UFKİ-BOBOVSKI. NOTATION OF TURKISH MUSIC

SUMMARY: The first Ottoman musician to use Western notation to write down melodies was Ali Ufkî (ca. 1610–1675), born as Wojciech Bobowski (named also Albertus Bobovius or Ali Beg), later convert and lived at the Ottoman palace as a slave at the beginning of his stay in the Ottoman Empire. He gained fame thanks to his versatile personality and became a great dragoman in 1673. He wrote down the Turkish melodies by using European Music Notation and was compiling an anthology of vocal and instrumental melodies called Ali Ufkî's *Mecmua*, which is a unique document of Turkish musical culture of the seventeenth century. He eliminated the cumbersome transliteration, wrote all the music from right to left, and added the words of the songs written in Turkish with Arabic script, partly under the notes, and partly below the music. The evolution of his method is a case in point of acculturation between the Western system and the Islamic concept of graphism. We learn many things from Ali Ufkî, not only about music culture but also Ottoman culture and life as well. His manner to working with music recalls Umberto Eco's conception of *The Open Work*. While he was at the Ottoman Court, he thought to arrange and create symbols for Turkish Music. He kept his former identity in this way and was assigned to carry the Ottoman Sound as an absolute.

KEYWORDS: music notation, phenomenology, open work, Turkish music, Ali Ufkî Bey (Wojciech Bobowski, Albertus Bobovius/Ali Beg).

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1. Introduction

Albert Bobowski (ca. 1610–1675), who left some of the most precious works of 17th-century Ottoman culture, is of great importance in depicting Ottoman culture and life in this century. He was born and grew up in Eastern Poland, in Lviv. He was born as Wojciech Bobowski and also known Albertus Bobovius or Ali Bey. The information about his family and early childhood is limited, but it is clear that he received a good education due to the language and culture he had. Claes Ralamb, who was Sweden's ambassador to Istanbul between 1657–1658, records from direct communication with Ali Ufkî that he was captured in the war with the Venetians in 1645, grew up in the palace, was a polyglot and man of letters, court music, and dulcimer in the community, and released by the sultan after working as a singer for ten years (Kut, 2008, p. 456); due to his skills, he was appointed as a private to the *Enderun Meşkhanesi* (Pawlina, 2025, p. 493). According to another source, he was among the prisoners aged 23–24 captured during the Ottoman-Polish war in the Kamieniec Podolski castle region near Lviv, in September 1633[1] (Behar, 2008, pp. 20–22; Uslu, 2019, pp. 299–304).

Thus, the interest in Turkish, Islamic religion and art arose, and "Orientalism" was reflected in the attitudes of many Polish nobles, such as King Sobieski. So, in the 17th century, large dictionaries were prepared, such as Meninski's example.

We know relatively little about his eventful and adventurous life. For example, birth and death dates are approximately known. Actually, it is not known when and how he was captured and came to Istanbul, when he wrote the works he brought, whether he was married or not, and whether he had children (Ergişi, 2008, pp. 40–41). Even though he was a Sipahi *ulufe*—salaried—he lived in the house of the British ambassador in the beginning. Yet rent accounts from 1660 show that Ali Ufkî was now a tenant of a woman outside the palace and earned around 1800 *akçe*, Ottoman currency, per month (Uslu, 2019, pp. 299–304, as cited in Behar, 2008, pp. 28–29). In another source, Ali Ufkî was married, and one of his brothers was a trade traveler to Egypt in 1671 (Behar, 2008, p. 29; Uslu, 2019, pp. 299–304). Some sources state that Ali Ufkî "was a Muslim" (Bayle, 1720, as cited in Behar, 2008, p. 31; Meninski, 2000; Rålamb, 1745; Uslu, 2019, pp. 299–304). There is currently no definitive information about where and when Ali Ufkî died (1675?). The fact that there is no trace of his participation in the great circumcision-wedding celebration of Mehmed IV in Edirne

[1] There were Turkish-speaking people, such as Krzysztof Dzierżek, a landlord in Eastern Poland, who travelled to the Ottoman lands for diplomatic or commercial reasons. Dzierżek was diplomatic representative of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Ottoman Empire in 1587 and 1591, standard-bearer of Trotsky in 1588. He stayed in Istanbul between 1570–1576 and learned Turkish. He additionally served as ambassador to Ottoman several times between 1577 and 1591, and maintained relations with the Turkish and Tatar ambassadors who remained in Poland (Polski Słownik Biograficzny, 1948, p. 160).

in May–June 1675, and the fact that *Mecmua-yı Saz u Söz* was in the possession of John Covel and the Psalms and his other works were in the possession of Antoine Galland in September 1675, suggest that Ali Ufkî died in this year instead of 1677 (Uslu, 2019, pp. 299–304, as cited in Behar, 2008, pp. 30, 50).

Ali Ufkî was registered at the Ottoman palace between 1632 and 1643. It is not known when he later entered the palace as the translator of the Imperial Council. He is called *Santuri Ali Bey* because he plays the *santur* [an Eastern type of hammered dulcimer]. Due to his skills, he was appointed as a private to the *Enderun Meşkhanesi* (Pawlina, 2025, pp. 493–494). He was a palace slave, but was later freed and rose to the rank of Grand Dragoman in 1673. Along with his last anthology of notes and lyrics, Ufkî also left a draft work collecting the stages of his serious effort. The notebook in question is a type of diary, consisting of pages of notes written in Italian, Turkish, as well as details about medical prescriptions, budget lists, mathematical literary pieces from Tasso, poems, anecdotes, genealogy, etc. Ali Ufkî's *Mecmua* remains a unique document of 17th-century Turkish musical culture accessible to the West. Besides being a musician and dragoman, he wrote many important books: *De Turcarum Liturgia* [A Treatise Concerning the Turkish Liturgy] was published by Thomas Hyde in 1691—the publication of the English translation (1712) was a reference source in Europe for a long time. Then, upon a request from the Dutchman Levinus Warner, he translated the Bible into Turkish (Uslu, 2019, pp. 299–304).

Even in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was his best-known work in Europe. Ali Ufkî Bey has been able to prevent the aesthetic elements of a cultural area from disappearing (Kut, 2008, pp. 456–457). Behar draws attention to the possibility that he may have died between 1673 and 1677. This date dates back to a very short period of time before the Ottomans appeared for the second time in Vienna. The Polish-Austrian cooperation would nullify this initiative, but with the help of Ali Ufkî Bey and other cultural transporters, the traces of Ottoman culture will begin to be felt more closely in Europe. As a representative of cultural interaction, one of the common values of the Ottoman and Polish societies, Ali Ufkî Bey has been tried to be understood in terms of his place and importance in Ottoman culture—and as Agata Pawlina states, he was "one of the most remarkable figures in the history of cultural contacts between Europe and the Ottoman Empire" (Pawlina, 2024, p. 27). s

2. Musical Education and Entertainment in Ottoman Culture

The palace *Enderun* school is of great importance in terms of music education, founded by Sultan Murad I (years of reign 1362–1389) and developed during the reigns of Sultan Murad II (years of reign 1421–1451), Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (years of reign 1451–1481) and Sultan Bayezid II (years of reign 1481–1512) of the Ottoman Empire. The *Enderun* school was directly under the oversight of the sultan himself and was an educational institution established to train qualified people to maintain the power of the Ottoman Empire. Music stud-

ies were conducted and continued in the palace. During the reign of Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the palace *Enderun* school was the most important school in terms of science and the arts. Fatih Sultan Mehmet was succeeded by his son, Sultan Bayezid II (years of reign 1481–1512), who similarly supported music culture among the Arab and Persian poets and minstrels who came to Istanbul in the second half of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. There were also musical masters. Some of them were educated by Bayezid II in the service of his sons or at the Ottoman court, and some of them were brought to Istanbul and educated in the *Enderun* by Yavuz Sultan Selim (years of reign 1512–1520). According to the ability of each student, either scholarly education was provided by scholars and art masters, or military training was given under the direction of officers at the *Enderun*. Musical education in *Enderun* was carried out meticulously, and young people who were musically gifted were sent to the *meşkhane*[2] to become instrumental and vocal musicians after being identified (Somakçı, 2017, p. 174).

As is known, Yavuz Sultan Selim's reign lasted eight and a half years, during which he restlessly took part in Persian and Egyptian campaigns. We have no information about his *fasıls*—the name given to sections in music where several pieces are played or sung; but as for his private life, we have information from Hakim Kazvini about his conversations with edibs and poets, his jokes, his friendliness. There are many valuable musical masters from Iran, among them Nayi Sheikh Murad, Neyzen Imam Kulu, Kanuni Sheikh Murad, and *daireci* (tambourine player and *fasıl* conductor) Maksud. Since he brought musicians and many other musicians to Istanbul and enrolled them in the *Enderun*, it is clear that he was interested in music. As a matter of fact, when his son Sultan Süleyman I—Suleiman the Magnificent (years of reign 1520–1566) became the ruler, in *Enderun*, the music committee called *Cemaat-i mutriban* was shown with their instruments and fees (Uzunçarşılı, 1977, p. 84). Musicians coming from Iran continued making music and became masters and participated in concert programs known as *fasl-ı hümayun*—court music at the palace. During the Ottoman period, it is known that famous musicians were trained at the *Enderun* School. Master composers and performers of the period were invited to the palace. Some of them, who had gained a little more confidence, worked as teachers in *Enderun*, e.g., Dede Efendi, Şakir Ağa, Tanburi Zeki Ağa, Kemani Ali Ağa. As a venue for the musical education of the children admitted to the palace, it was mostly used in Topkapı until the 17th century. The great and small rooms in *Enderun* in the palace were allocated during the reign of Murad IV (1623–1640; Somakçı, 2017, p. 174).

[2] *Meşkhane* refers to a place where education transmitted from master to pupil, known as *meşk*, is conducted. There were no class hours in the Meşkhane. It was open from morning to evening and music was played here continuously. In this training room, which was also used by masters, including *mehter* [military] musicians, students would receive education for at least fourteen years (Somakçı, 2017, p. 174).

The 17th-century highlights the growth of musical art within the broad scope of creative activities: the development of court music under the patronage of sultans, the all-pervading process of *mehter* music in communal life, the religious and secular music of dervish confreres with the great impact of the Mevlevi congregation, and urban music blending higher and lower traditions with an influx of folk elements and styles. Evliya Çelebi (n.d.) gives a detailed and colourful account of the professions of the 17th-century artisan guilds. According to his account, there were many professional musicians who made their living from music in the city, organized in workshops under the patronage of the sultan. *Ehl-i Hiref*—craftsmen's fee—notebooks recorded the money given to musicians in a serious manner.

Although art music was aimed at smaller audiences in the court, elements and genres of urban and folk music were gradually assimilated into the classical repertoire. Conversely, compositions created by elitist musicians have found their way into the popular stream of urban music. The opportunities to listen to music or to practice music were so numerous that music permeated all social activities, from court life to the lower strata of social structures.

Music was an important form of entertainment used to overcome obstacles, appealed to all segments of Ottoman society, as well as many events in the city; music was part of festivities, feast days, and social entertainments to celebrate holidays, victories, and spontaneous events in street demonstrations. Many forms of event, including music, were considered permissible and tolerated by the *madrasa*—containing *ulema class* and *kadis*—Muslim judge—who formed the organization of education, judiciary, *fatwa* [an answer explaining religious-legal ruling], and religion in the Ottoman Empire. The coffeehouses, called *Meclis-majlis*, were located in the Tahtakale-Eminönü area and provided a place for storytelling and musical entertainment (Lewis, 1972, pp. 136–137). Beside this, the most popular leisure time entertainment was picnic parties organized around the city. The groves and gardens at Bosphorus were the most attractive areas where an elite and cosmopolitan society from Istanbul enjoyed listening to music and performances by jugglers, tightrope walkers, acrobats, and *köçeks*—dancers. The owners of luxurious mansions on the Bosphorus entertained their guests with shows and music. The role of music further increased in the 17th century; the palace music school expanded, and social acceptance of musical entertainment became even more widespread.

3. Notation in Turkish Music

The Latin word *note* means "writing, written sign" in the dictionary, and in musical art, the sign is used to indicate musical sound, "graphical representation" of sound, musical writing (Agayeva, 2007, p. 205, as cited in Öncel, 2015, p. 209). In the dictionary, it is mentioned as musical letters and signs that indicate sounds. In another source, we see that the special signs used to detect sounds and music on paper are called musical writing, that is, notes (Özkan,

1986, p. 37, as cited in Öncel, 2015, p. 209). In fact, although notation and music writing are used in the same sense in many musical works, we see that they are not used in the same sense in some important musical sources. When note writings used in the world from past to present are considered in general, it is seen that four different note writing approaches—letter writings, "neumatic" letter-shape writings, stringed note writings, and tabulatures—have emerged (Say, 1985, p. 891, as cited in Öncel, 2015, p. 209). Letter writings are note writing systems developed depending on the alphabet of the culture to which they correspond. Neumatic notation is a writing system based on shapes such as dots, curves, lines, and circles. String notation is a form of notation that began with placing neuma marks on string-like lines. The tabulatura system is a marking language developed for ease of instrument playing rather than being a direct note writing system, and this system, which is widely used in many cultures, is mostly used outside of vocal music (Feyzi, 2018, pp. 1891–1892).

As for Turks, how notation was throughout history? We see that music developed a lot, especially during the Uyghur period, although there is no detailed information about notation writing among pre-Islamic Turks. It is said that the first Turkish state to perform music based on script was the Uyghurs. Turks used different notation systems in the post-Islamic historical practice. It is possible to say that there is no unified system regarding notation here, what failure to ensure system integrity also delayed institutionalization. When looked at in terms of historical changes in the development of musical notation styles, it can be seen that the four basic approaches are widely used in notating musical works in Turkish Music. The first of these is the letter writing system, that is, a note writing system created by using letters and letter groups in the Arabic alphabet. It is possible to see the effects of the ancient Greek letter writing style in the formation of this system. In this system, while letters generally represent pitch, duration values are given with numbers corresponding to these letters. Although examples of this type of notation system can be found in different cultures, generally, "Arabs, Iranians, and Turks have traditionally written music with letter and number notes" (Popescu-Judetz, 2007, p. 20, as cited in Feyzi, 2018, p. 1892). This notation system, generally known as the *Ebced* system, greatly influenced the period after its emergence and enabled the recording of musical works of both Central Asian-Arabic and Turkish cultures with its different genres created over the centuries (Feyzi, 2018, pp. 1892–1893).

The 17th century can be considered an important stage in the history of musical writing. In Ali Ufkî's work *Mecmua-ı Saz-ı Söz*, written in 1650, he published around 550 works with a special Western music notation system, arranged in the opposite direction of the standard Western orientation. In the Ottoman musical tradition, music was initially recorded with a number of special signs before ultimately being written in Western notation. In this regard, Ali Ufkî was first musician who wrote down the repertoire for the purpose of determining it (Öncel, 2015, p. 215).

4. Ali Ufkî's Contribution to Turkish Music

Most Ottoman theorists of the 15th and 16th century were not interested in notation except for tablature notes and definitions of modal scales. Towards the end of the 17th century, many composers, singers, and instrumentalists emerged who helped develop Turkish classical music with their creativity. One of them was the well-known Polish convert Ali Ufkî, a complex and erudite musician (cf. Haug, 2019). Ali Ufkî gives information about the training of musicians in the palace school. *Sazendebaşı*—head of musicians—was a Genoese in his time. In the *meskhane*, where even the Mehter team worked, the enslaved boys/eunuchs were taught music and met with music masters and students. They played all the music by heart and improvised songs perfectly. Clowns, dancers, and comedians trained in the same place or outdoors. The practice continued until the evening prayer. Later, the *meskhane* was occupied by *mehter*—military music—masters who taught their students to play wind instruments.

Some European travelers of the same period have left distorted notations in their accounts which became known in Europe as Turkish melodies. Bülent Aksoy introduced the concept of "lost music" to music literature—that this author defines as music that fails to keep its living melodies. He uses this term for cultures that could not preserve it in written form. According to Aksoy, without four notebooks of Ali Ufkî, *Kantemiroğlu*, *Nayi Osman Dede* and *Kevseri*, written in the 17th and 18th centuries, the musical culture of these centuries would not have survived (Aksoy, 2008, p. 232, as cited in Öncel, 2015, p. 219).

Notation was used only for the description of modal scale or for theoretical purposes before Ali Ufkî. Turkish theorists of music proceeded to develop two models of modal classification in parallel, a taxonomic approach and a transformative one in the early 1400s. The principle of taxonomic classification was inherited from Islamic theorists. Essentially, taxonomy involves the procedures of systematic organization of observed data. The transformative model is evolutive and concerns an aspect of development proceeding from certain tonal points through transposition, modulations, and evasions at a deep and surface level. However, Ali Ufkî used Western staff notation in Ottoman music. The thought of writing down music came forth as an important issue in the 17th century. He wrote down about 1650 with European staff notation, over 550 vocal and instrumental melodies about 200, *türkü*—about 120—and included about 20 *fasıls*. Having a Western background in musical training, Ali Ufkî directed his endeavors toward the application of Western staff notation to write Turkish music (Behar, 2008, p. 47; cf. Haug, 2019, pp. 137–190). Ufkî is the first consummate musician to accomplish the sensational task of writing a large body of Turkish music with notes. The melodies are notated in bass clef on a five-line staff. Obviously, only Western-type accidentals, flats, and sharps are used. An accidental is a symbol that indicates an alteration of a given pitch. The most common accidentals are the flat (♭) and the sharp (♯). Repetition signs of the typical Western prima volta and secondary volta are abundantly marked in the

final passages at the ends of the sentences. Ufkî's approach to rhythm is based on the traditional European double-triple dichotomy with its simple implications. Specially created symbols are placed as time signatures in the form of a circle or triangle, where two or three numbers are added together. In the case of a compound, two or three symbols come together. There are no obstacles or special signs for rest. Scores give clear outlines of melodies and have both descriptive and prescriptive purposes, intended for memorization and performance.

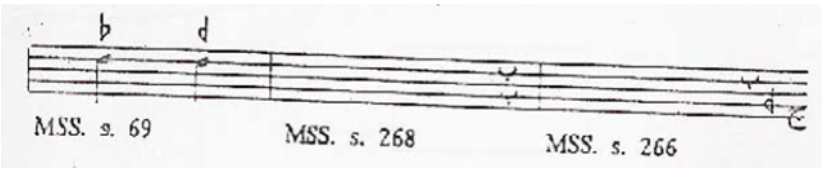
It is clear that the musical message of Ali Ufkî's score was aimed at the readers and interpreters of bicultural education who constituted the elite group of court musicians at that time. Ali Ufkî's notations of over 20 *fasıls* in his anthology of songs inform us about the program of the vocal instrumental suite of the 17th century, which integrated higher music genres like *beste*—named also *murabba*—*peşrev* and *semavi*, with dance pieces—*raksiye*—popular songs, *şarkı*, and folk melodies, commonly known as *türkü*. Later Sultan Ahmed III (years of reign 1703–1730) was a pro-westernization sultan, and so Ottoman musicians of the period expanded the horizon of musical creativity and activity with their compositions in the mid-18th century. Sultan Ahmet the III's grand vizier Damad İbrahim Pasha of Nevşehir, who was at the forefront of the harmonious movement between music and word, the tulip period and halva conversations, was an excellent composer in music, although his poetry was of moderate level, so his conversation assemblies were attractive in Bosphorus (Uzunçarşılı, 1977, p. 94). Ali Ufkî used Western staff notation and he had no interest in explaining the theory of Ottoman music. Very important information has been obtained on various subjects related to Ali Ufkî's work. Among these, those directly related to our subject and the technical features of Ali Ufkî writing, especially the works of Arel, Oransay, and Uludemir. According to Sanal (Sanal, 1964), a part of the instrumental value of this manuscript, which includes special and instrumental compositions from both traditional Turkish art music and Turkish folk music, is also found in *Kantemiroğlu Edvar*—the book of music theory (Tura, 2001). The first article introducing Ali Ufkî's *Mecmua-ı Saz-ü Söz* is by Uluçay (Uluçay, 1948). Ufkî's notation shows us that he studied Western music before coming to Istanbul. Ufkî was also a person who knew the theory of medieval music. As a matter of fact, it can be seen that this is also reflected in the writing in which he uses traces (Ergişi, 2008, p. 44).

The alternation signs used by Ali Ufkî in his musical notes have been tried to be explained in the light of the sources we have. According to Uludemir, *sharp* sounds are translated into their natural state with flat. It is used as a guide symbol at the end of each line, indicating the height of the first note at the beginning of the next line. The line that looks like the tie line is the closest line. Sometimes it seems that this line is not drawn long enough to include the second cabinet. There is no dimension line, only the repeat line is used. However, the points on this line are placed in the opposite direction, not towards the direction of the section to be repeated. The sustain point used in this article is located to the left of the note, unlike normal usage (Uludemir, 1991, pp. 21–22, as cited in Ergişi,

2008, p. 48). Ali Ufkî's flat varieties and Ali Ufkî's diyez varieties are shown below (Figures 1, 2):

Figure 1

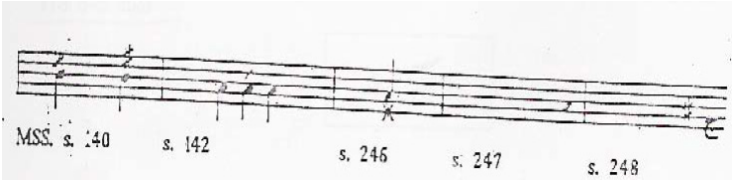
Flat Varieties



Note. Source: Ergişi, 2008, p. 49.

Figure 2

Diyez Varieties

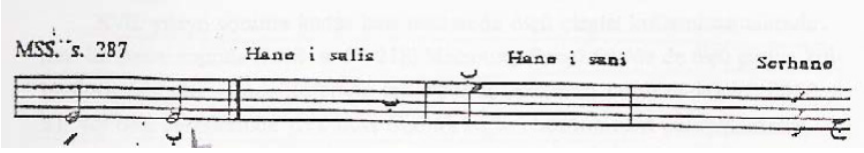


Note. Source: Ergişi, 2008, p. 49.

Special signs in Ali Ufkî's note writing (Figure 3) and sign in Ali Ufkî's musical notes indicating that the piece will pause *fermata-durak* are shown below (Figure 4).

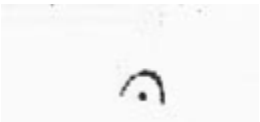
Figure 3

Note Writing



Note. Source: Ergişi, 2008, p. 49.

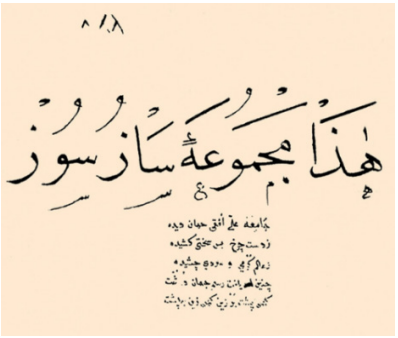
Figure 4
Fermata-Durak



Note. Source: Ergişi, 2008, p. 49.

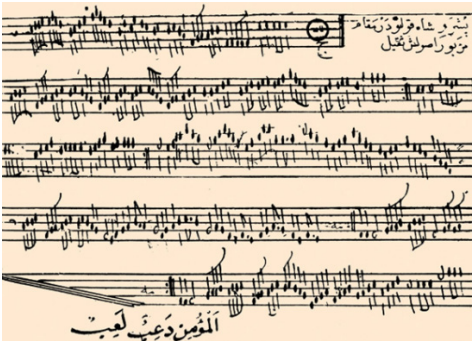
We had mentioned that *Mecmua-ı Saz ü Söz* (see Figures 5 and 6) was introduced for the first time in Turkey in an article written by Çağatay Uluçay (1948, p. 14). This was followed by many analyses (e.g., Ergin, 1968; Sanal, 1964; Şener, 1980) of the book.

Figure 5
Title Page From Mecmua-ı Saz-ü Söz



Note. Source: Özcan, 2008, p. 273.

Figure 6
Mecmua-ı Saz-ü Söz



Note. Source: Özcan, 2008, p. 273.

Haydar Sanal identificatied of some of the *mehter* airs in his work *Mehter Musikisi* (1964) and Cafer Ergin translated some of the Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman texts in the book into Latin letters (Ergin, 1968). *Musiki Mecmuası* (this publication, which was left aside, was later completed by H. İbrahim Şener in the same journal) draws attention as an important work on this subject. It should be especially noted that Muammer Uludemir carried out the most important studies on *Mecmua-i Saz ü Söz*, which was published and facsimilized by Şükrü Elçin. In these studies, Uludemir analyzes technical information such as *usul* [rhytm and metre] change signs, keys, etc., in *Mecmua-i Saz ü Söz*. He gave a list of all the notes with their information. He also published the transcribed texts of instrumental *semais* [poems written with an octave syllable meter and sung with a special melody], *murabba* [a poem consisting of four-line sections and folk songs in the work], and introduced many new works to the Turkish music repertoire. However, the edition of the work prepared by M. Hakan Cevher (Cevher, 2003) with some auxiliary technical information and research, the original text translated into Latin letters, and a translation of the notes written in the old Western notation into today's Western notation, is the most comprehensive publication on this subject to date (Özcan, 2008, p. 273). The works of Cem Behar, Yalçın Tura, Erhan Uslu, and other research on *Mecmua-i Saz ü Söz* are very valuable.

5. Semiotics in Culture and Music

The most general definition of culture is that culture is everything created by man outside of nature. Therefore, it also includes art and music. The origin of the term culture goes back to Cicero. By saying *Cultura animi philosophia est* [philosophy provides the care of the soul], Cicero emphasizes that *cultura* [care] should be considered as a process. Johann Gottfried Herder—in his work Johann Gottfried Herder—in his work *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* (1784)—treated this term, which at that time was associated with the care and cultivation of the soil, as a process and linked it with the main goal of his time, "enlightenment":

> We can call this lifelong second creation of man culture, after the cultivation of the field; we can call it enlightenment, after the symbol of light; whatever name is chosen, the rings of culture and enlightenment will reach to the ends of the earth. (Posner, 2001, p. 26)

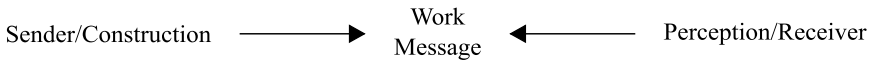
Following Peirce's semiotic theory, E. Cassirer (1874–1945) adopted the idea of unlimited meaning in semiosis. According to the common view, a sender wants to transmit a message to a receiver, establishes a relationship with the receiver through a channel, chooses a suitable code, chooses a suitable signifier from this code, and this unit must correspond to the message to be sent. This signifier in the selected code is related to a specific signifier in the whole code. The sender uses this signifier, i.e., a concrete instance of this signifier, i.e., a sig-

nifier. He proposed that culture should be the object of study for semiotics, which deals with culture as a whole. According to him, the symbolic forms existing in culture should be analyzed with the science of symbols. Semiotics exhibits symbolic forms as required by a really rigorous, precise and sharp way of thinking. Moreover, when analyzing a culture, it has to show that the symbolic forms in this culture are not a randomly assembled mass, but on the contrary, they come together as an embodiment of the functioning of the human mind (Posner, 2001, p. 28).

A prominent semiotician, Thomas Sebeok (2001), emphasized the combination of elements in every creation for modelling musical language. He suggested using Lévi-Strauss's method of semiotics for music, which Strauss used to study cultural processes and make sense of objects. Everything that people create can be considered as culture; therefore, culture is a dynamic precesses that should be taken into account during the analyses. It also concerns music with contemporary analytical methods, such as musical semiotics. Molino and Nattiez adapted—from R. Jakobson's diagram of linguistic communication—to musical diagram fundamental for music semiotics (Figure 7 below). However, Jakobson' *message* (sender and receiver) was called neutral in Nattiez's theory (Nattiez, 1990, pp. 16–18).

Figure 7

Neutral Level in Nattiez's Theory



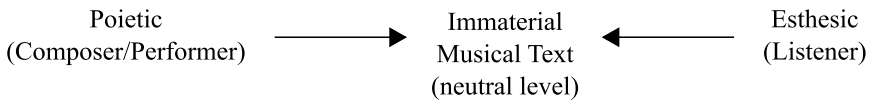
Note. Source: author's own elaboration based on (Nattiez, 1990, 16–18).

According to Nattiez, musical notation is regarded as the trace of a work at a neutral level, emerging through the composer's poietic process on the one hand and the listener/interpreter's aesthetic process on the other (Nattiez, 1990, pp. 11–13, 16–17). Nattiez states that Western music involves the interpretation of a score in performance and places the performance of the score at the end of the poietic process and the beginning of the aesthetic process.

In contrast, Nattiez views the poetic process in music based on oral traditions as the combination of composition and performance, thereby simplifying the model of musical transmission (Figure 8; Nattiez, 1990, p. 73).

Figure 8

Musical Transmission in Oral Traditions



Note. Source: Nattiez, 1990, p. 72.

Although the influence of oral tradition in Turkish makam music does indeed blur the boundary between notation and interpretation, Nattiez's models do not adequately describe the current position of traditional Turkish makam music. As societies globalize and become more visually oriented, the use of notation has become a tradition in both folk music and art music genres. However, the influence of the oral tradition is generally stronger in folk music compositions, which are usually shorter than in art music. As Salvucci (2024a, pp. 216) emphasized in his doctoral thesis, relying on notation for the transmission and preservation of compositions is more meaningful for Ottoman/Turkish art music compositions, which are longer and composed from beginning to end (Salvucci, 2024a, p. 157). Here, the final form of the music sign process consists of message or work, production, and aesthetic dimensions. The creation dimension is related to the construction, composition creation process, and the conditions of the creation of the work. The aesthetic dimension is related to perception and the recipient and the interpretation of the work. In this scheme, the boundaries of the work are drawn by the beginning pieces and parts of the music notes. It is the same as in Lévi-Strauss's serial and syntagmatic analyses. Thus, the making and the recipient stop, and the work itself begins (Littlefield, 1993, p. 332).

Eco published *Opera Aperta* [Open Work] prior to 1975, at a time when he had not yet focused much on semiotics. According to him, works of art allow for many different interpretations due to their "openness". However, at a time when deconstructive voices are increasingly heard against structuralism, Eco expresses his skepticism towards the idea that a work of art or a text can have an unlimited number of interpretations. Eco aimed to establish a dialectic between openness and the factors that limit interpretation in some way. Eco develops Pierce's concept of "unlimited meaning" and follows the path of Peirce's semiotics in order to draw limits to unlimited meaning and to search for criteria of interpretation (Göksel, 2006, pp. 85–86).

As Salvucci (2024b, p. 216) notes in his article, after Hockney, the forced narrative of a static viewpoint in European paintings through the use of perspective, Metin And characterizes the closed-form aesthetic in Western art and narrative theatre as goal-oriented, based on a chain of events. The closed-form narrative aesthetic coincides with the shaping of goal-oriented harmony and tonal music in 17th-century Europe and the development of perspective in European art around the same period. Closed-form theatre therefore aims to emotionally identify with its audience and establish a relationship with its characters, contrasting with the open-form aesthetic of traditional Ottoman theatre. Similar to the subjective, multi-faceted aesthetics of miniature art, the focus in open form Ottoman theatre is not on the leading actors, but on the audience, who perform the act of interpretation (And, 1970, p. 27, as cited in Salvucci, 2024b, p. 216). In music, too, *poiesis* is based on creation, whereas *mimesis* is more based on imitation. The open form of Ottoman music is more focused on *poiesis*.

Music that charms people of all cultures throughout the ages presents new ideas to human understanding. According to Thomas Sebeok (Casotti, 2003,

p. 275), musical language was created for modelling by human beings through combining elements in new ways. This perspective helps us see the musical world as a result of a modelling process that organizes the process in which sounds constantly disrupt and reconstruct the form (Casotti, 2003, p. 275). This is similar to what Lévi-Strauss regards as modelling. For him modelling can be human beings' construction of or making a minimized sample of a new form by deconstructing the form to understand the environmental perception which encircles them. The visual dimension of our environmental perception is objective-concrete, whereas its sound dimension is abstract.

In her essay *On Meaning in Music*, Susanne Langer (Arat, 1977) explains why she uses music as an example because sound is the easiest medium to use purely artistically. According to her, the history of music and aesthetics is full of events parallel to the history of thought. In this regard, many theories need to be taken into consideration in music studies. Therefore, the problem of the essence and function of music has changed its focus many times in accordance with these theories. While Kant placed music at the bottom of the art forms, W. James evaluated music as a form that has no purpose. Thinkers such as Helmholtz and Wundt emphasized that music is a form of pleasurable sensation and therefore the reason for the emergence of an aesthetics based on liking and disliking (Arat, 1977, pp. 157–158). The belief that music enlivens emotions went back to antiquity. In his seminal work *Republic*, Plato suggested that the public should not be influenced by immoral sources or be a weak or sybaritic people, who are defeated by their feelings. If music is really a language of emotions, first, the composer reflects his/her knowledge related to human emotions, but he/she never says how or when this knowledge was acquired.

6. Phenomenology and Ali Ufkî

Phenomenology is the discovery of existential "essence" in regard to subjective experience. All problems can eventually be brought back to a description of essential experience: "self" of consciousness or consciousness itself. Dan Zahavi asks: "What is the phenomenal meaning of this lived experience? How the phenomenal meaning of this lived experience gives itself to our consciousness, (self)awareness?" (Zahavi, 2005, pp. 15–16). It is not necessary to go through an experience, it means "what it is like" to have that experience and as long as there is something that says "this is", there must be an awareness of these experiences themselves (Zahavi, 2005, as cited in van-Manen, 2017, p. 811). The most important type of communication is the one we have with ourselves, and it presents a difficult picture. What makes it even more challenging when it comes to others is this very communication. It can be seen that the notion of tolerance is embodied in the essence of communication processes, where the communicating agents could be in a position to extend the attitude of acceptance of other people's comportment, which might also exert a positive impact on their lives. The concept of relationality seemed to be very important among van Manen's existential themes (Manen, 1997), since the experience of tolerance or intolerance cannot be dis-

cussed without taking into consideration the communicative relations between people and between cultures. In fact, communication as relationality is a phenomenon that can take place, *inter alia*, between individuals, groups, and cultural systems as well (Zaprucki, 2017, pp. 63–64).

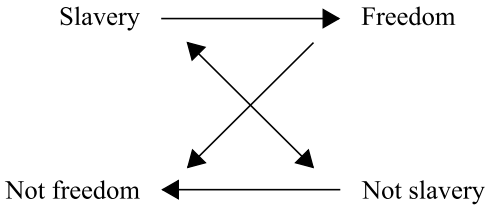
John Locke's treatment of consciousness and his use of the word semiotic are not accidental. In his work *An Essay on Human Understanding*, he emphasized the importance of understanding and awareness. The philosophical word is structurally a dialogical word, a reborn word commitment to the other. The constitutive character of understanding is dialogism. Dialogue is an external or internal discourse in which the word of the other prevails (not necessarily coming from another person), interferes with one's own word. Given this, the relationship with the other is the basis for the formation of the "I", individual thought; otherness takes place within the subject, within identity. The "I", which is itself a dialogue, is a relation between the same and the other. The "I" in the constitutional, structural, and dialogical sense tests the relationship with otherness, that otherness others, or the otherness of the self. Otherness is found both inside and outside, beside the subject. Philosophers such as Charles S. Peirce and Mikhail Bakhtin see dialogue as the modality of thought itself (Petrilli, Ponzio, 2010, pp. 39–40).

Ali Ufkî was conscious of his situation and, as an "other", not only adapted European musical notation to the Arabic alphabet, but also adapted himself to Ottoman culture. The notation of instrumental and vocal songs, musical texts, and lyrics are interspersed throughout Ali Ufkî's draft notebook (Behar, 2016). Since the lyrics of the songs are written in Turkish with Arabic letters, instrumental pieces are in his notational manuscript *Mecmua-i Saz ü Söz* (Elçin, 2000). Interestingly, Ali Ufkî additionally rendered the Turkish lyrics in Latin characters. Ufkî solved this dilemma in his manuscript by determining his own spelling rules, eliminating some transliteration difficulties, and writing all the music from right to left. The development of this script, partly under the notes, partly under the music, is an example of the acculturation between the Western system and Islamic graphic understanding. In this manner, European notation was not only used to record musical material, but also to establish a channel of communication between Western musical understanding and Turkish thought (Lasfolk, 2004, p. 1).

Adapting rationality as an existential choice as an expression of freedom when enslaved describes Ali Ufkî's situation well. Ali Ufkî adapted his lost life to court life. He was a hardworking man, and it must have been his way of life. Slavery and freedom are among the most basic systems regarding the essence of humanity and mankind, and their representations in Greimas's Semiotic Square are as follows (Figure 9):

Figure 9

Representation of Freedom-Slavery in Greimas's Semiotic Square



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

Ali Ufkî encountered a different culture and music in Istanbul. When it comes to Istanbul music, encountering a hybrid culture and music is inevitable because Istanbul is a cosmopolitan city. Edgar Morin (Morin, 2001, p. 139) adopted a semiotic approach to the music that emerged when different cultures' music met in Andalusia: artistic creativity, fueled by stimulus and response, flamenco, considered the most original music of our time, the intermingling of Arabs, Jews and Spaniards transformed by the Andalusian people, and the bitter-tragic intelligence of the gypsies. Like Edgar Morin, Ali Ufkî similarly demonstrated that elements and genres from urban and folk music in Turkish music were increasingly assimilated and simulated into the classical repertoire during his period. Ali Ufkî both heard and saw the productivity and danger of opening up the voice of Istanbul (to the outside world) while preserving the essence of dual forces. In addition, we can say that Ali Ufkî preserved his status by writing his music in the closed form of Western musical notation.

7. Final Remarks

Although the first examples of the writing and publishing of Turkish musical works with the string notation system began to be seen with Ali Ufkî Bey, the first published studies in the context of the string notation system used today coincide with the last quarter of the 19th century. However, the adaptation of Western notation as an official system in the Ottoman Empire and its use by Ottoman musicians dates from 1828–1830 (Ayangil, 2008, p. 401; Behar, 1987, p. 41). This situation can be considered a result of increasing musical relations with Europe during that period. In this context, it can be said that the phenomenon of "duality and multiculturalism", which is frequently mentioned in written sources about the *Tanzimat period*—the Westernization movement—and largely manifests itself in underlying dynamics such as melodic structure, instrument diversity, rhythm, and lyrics, is also felt to some extent in musical notation systems, and the work titled *Miftâh-ı Nota* is an important example of this. This notation system was created by combining two different musical notation ap-

proaches (letter notation and staff notation), but it did not gain sufficient widespread use during its time (Feyzi, 2018, p. 1907).

As a result of classical Western music education given at the *Musıka-i Hümayun*, the Western notation, which had not been seen since Ali Ufkî in parallel with the Hamparsum notation that was widely used in this century, gradually infiltrated the Ottoman environment and became increasingly widespread and popular in the second half of the 19th century (Popsecu-Judetz, 2007, p. 53, as cited in Feyzi, 2018, p. 1897). By the 20th century, Hüseyin Sadettin Arel's Turkish Music Sound System, the Arel-Ezgi-Uzdilek system, was greatly contributed to by Rauf Yekta Bey. It was used as a textbook in Turkish musical education at the Istanbul Conservatory with a pedagogical arrangement. In terms of music policy, following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the Music Education School was opened in Ankara in 1924 at Atatürk's suggestion. The opening of this school became the first symbol of the Republic's emphasis on Western music culture; many state conservatories were established. On November 20, 1934, the National Music Congress convened in Ankara, and the Music Culture Policy of the time was determined. Following the confusion caused by the banning of Alaturka music within this structure, which was shaped by an understanding based on Western music, the ban on Alaturka music was lifted shortly afterwards (Topuz, 1998, p. 60). Today, Turkish Music Theory studies, which began with Yalçın Tura at the Musicology Department of the State Turkish Music Conservatory, founded in 1975, are continued by Şehvar Beşiroğlu, Ozan Baysal, and many other scientists and young researchers, such as Peter Noah Salvucci or Agata Pawlina from Jagiellonian University (Poland).

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Article

PANU HEIMONEN *

STEPS TOWARD A NORMATIVE MUSIC ANALYSIS: MAKING MORAL CHOICES THROUGH SYMPATHETIC NARRATIVITY IN MOZART'S PIANO CONCERTOS K. 453, 466 AND 467

SUMMARY: This article develops the conjecture that inference from facts to normativity is a precondition for building a narrative account of a concerto movement as a dialogue between self-fashioning musical actors. This article searches for the exact mechanism for becoming normative. Normativity serves as an "ought" relationship between two thematic entries, thus initiating internal communication and dialogue and the allegory of a moral choice between the themes. This relationship is regulated by the 18th-century concept of self- and other-directed sympathy, and is formalised as eight transformation functions that serve as epistemic filters and appear in either a consecutive or simultaneous manner depending on the mechanism of representation. Throughout the article, the influence of fact-value-divide on analytical methodology is discussed. The conceptual tools that are used in constructing the framework are reflective equilibrium, sympathy, narrative high point and narrative coherence/unity. The existential semiotic Moi vs Soi distinction is proposed as a possible solution for inference from facts to values.

KEYWORDS: Mozart piano concerto, allegory, self-fashioning, reflective equilibrium, transformation function, existential semiotics, fact-value-distinction, Zemic-model.

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1. Introduction

At the base of this research there is the question if music theory and analysis is by nature a normative or non- normative activity. What is of interest here is what the theoretical nature of music analysis is. Is it possible to provide a normative basis for music analysis? Such a basis would not only describe how a musical work "is", but also give normative prescriptions about how it should behave in certain situations. This paper enquires as to whether it is possible to ground music analysis in a normative basis through an analysis of 18th-century moral sentiments.

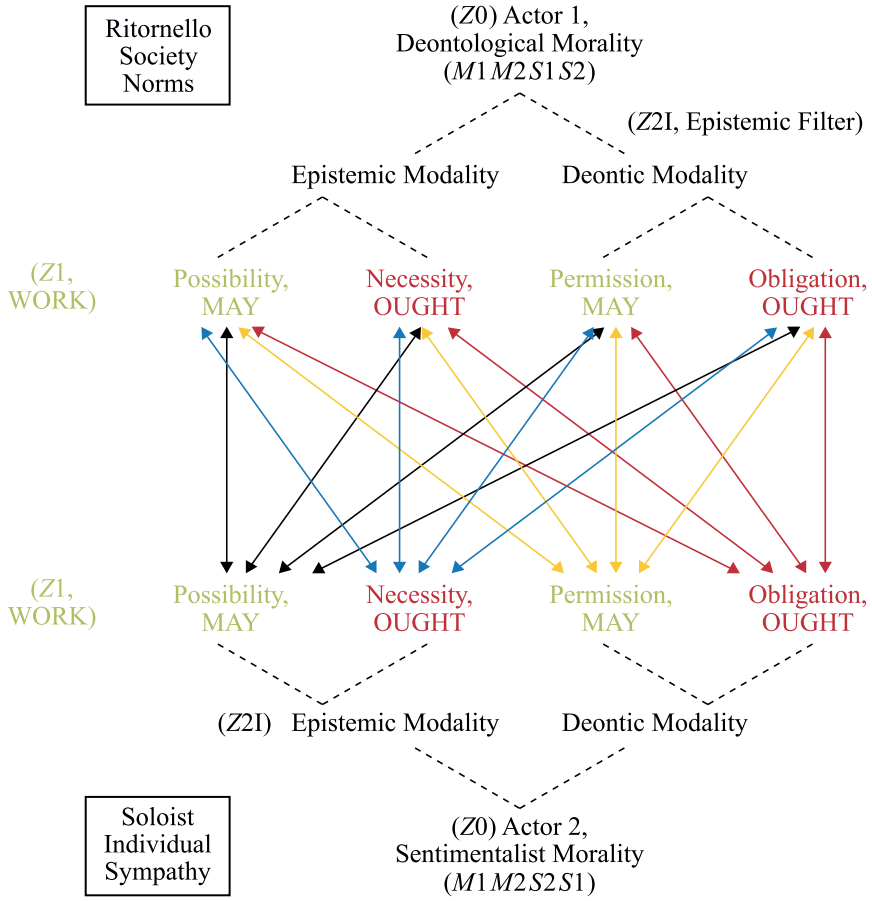
In this paper I argue that that the final goal of music analysis is not to describe how a work is, but rather to provide guidance for how to react to it in various interactive situations. Thus, the main objective is not the structure of the work, but rather what a work's dispositions to act are. Therefore, the structure is only a starting point on which to build a theory of musical action. This brings one to the question of what the role of normativity in music analytical practice is. The emergence of normativity in the form of a narrative trajectory and its unfolding can be illustrated through an analysis of the first movements of Mozart's piano concertos K. 453, 466 and 467. Since we have been able to build a narratological syntagmatic analytical system that corresponds to tonal analysis in all major respects, it has become possible to define the concerto in terms of the present narrative conception of a sonata instead of a sonata as seen through tonal analysis and as a musical form. Naturally, the present system needs to be seen in relation to tonal and form analysis. This will be done in the next phase of this research.

2. Transformations Between the Solo and Ritornello Sections in a Piano Concerto: Long Distance Anaphora

The starting point for an analysis of normativity and moral choice are the tensions between the solo and ritornello sections. Norms in society are, by nature, normative. However, there is normativity involved in sentimentalist morality (Gill, 2006) as well (see Figure 1 on the next page).

Figure 1

Dialogue as an Outcome of the Intersection Between Moral Duty and Moral Sentimentalism



Note. Figure 1 presents a basic interaction situation between soloist and orchestra in a concerto. At the top there is orchestra (ritornello) and at the bottom the soloist. It is conjectured that orchestra carries deontological moral values while soloist is expressive of sentimentalist morality. Figure 1 illustrates the multitude of possible dialogical relations between the two recurring actors in a concerto. Source: author's own elaboration.

Although it is a question of long-distance anaphora[1] (Aoun, 1985; Brandom, 1994), the interlocutors do indeed intersect somewhere, and their respective properties thus meet one another. This dialogical process takes place entirely among normative properties. The only function for formal properties is the segmentation of temporal relationships into the appropriate sections.

2.1. Verisimilitude Between Theme Actors

When looking at the matter in more detail, one must ask what the criteria for the sameness of a theme are. This depends on several factors. A theme may have similar motivic qualities. This, however, may, but not necessarily, guarantee any similarity. The same goes for timbre and rhythmic patterns. Themes belonging to the same topic might be totally different in all other ways. Thematic resemblance is perhaps the nearest measure of similarity. Yet, what is thematic resemblance? To systematise the above procedure, one might want to construct an existential semiotic measure for thematic sameness as verisimilitude. Here, the matter is treated intuitively, leaving detailed measures to a later stage. This sketched development of the thematic measure of verisimilitude will assist us in assessing on what grounds a theme can be transformed into such a theme as belongs to another musical episteme so that it nevertheless preserves its own identity.

2.2. The Structure of the Epistemic Filter

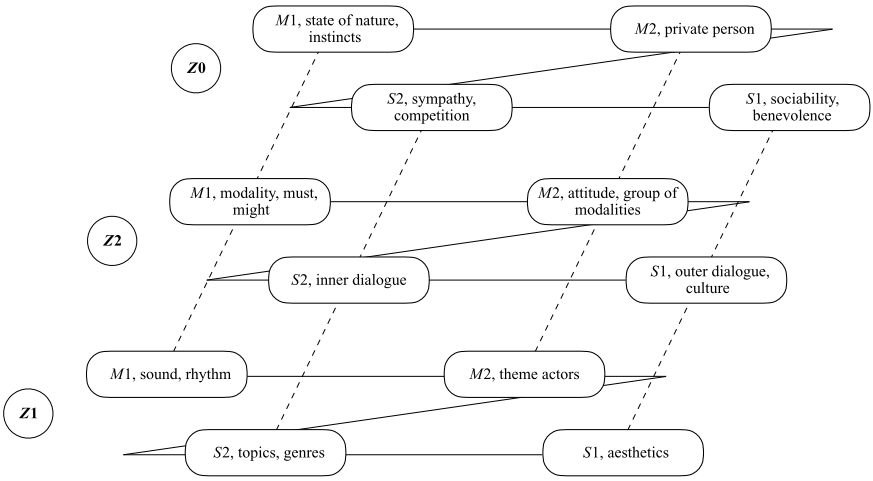
The starting point for our inquiry is allegory, together with the formal structure. The epistemic filters then filter everything that relates to certain central allegories belonging to the behaviour of a self-fashioning Enlightenment gentleman/woman. The epistemic filters reflect what one has access to, and, thus, what one's moral character is like. This level of values consists of metaphors and figurative expressions. Morality as exo-signs is transformed into endo-signs and gains a central position in the performance. In this examination, the formal properties do not hold a primary ontological position in a musical work. According to Hume's moral sentimentalism, values are based on sentiments and feelings, not rationality. Epistemic beliefs are able to arise on both rational and emotional bases. Emotional reactions depend on sentiments that cause both virtues and vices to arise. Rational reactions depend on formal relationships. These two are operationalised using epistemic filters. Thus, one moves from sentiments and rational criteria to the higher level of values from where allegory can be reached. An allegory is composed of both rational and emotional factors. This enlargement of the explanatory framework increases the factual nature of the allegorical input, while, at the same time, it questions the validity of the fact-value distinc-

[1] Anaphora is a backward-looking linguistic device that gets part of its meaning from a preceding antecedent. This is the case in pronominal reference, but the antecedent may also be a considerably larger part of discourse. This is the case in discourse anaphora.

tion (cf. Hume, 2001; Railton, 2003; Putnam, 2002). Firstly, the ritornello in Concerto K. 467 launches the modality "may" without specifying what the possible states of affairs will be. During our research, the inference proceeds from "ought" to "is". The processes of becoming normative and finding the general principle through reflective equilibrium are simultaneous. The model can then convey knowledge about alternatives to the theory of virtues based either on religious doctrine or on 18th-century empiricist philosophy. What were formerly moral exo-signs in the work's formal structure have now become endogenised and turned into endo-signs through existential semiotics (Tarasti, 2001). To support the analysis of the individual identity of concertos K. 453 and 467 as an Enlightenment allegory, both the sonata form and ritornello principle will contribute to the formation of this equilibrium. To illustrate the flow of knowledge and emotions both through the work and through history and the present moment, the so-called Zemic-model (Tarasti, 2015) is used (Figure 2). Epistemic filters determine to which extent this happens.

Figure 2

Primary Zemic-Model and Subsidiary Zemic-Models Z0 (Transcendence), Z1 (Work) and Z2 (Dasein)

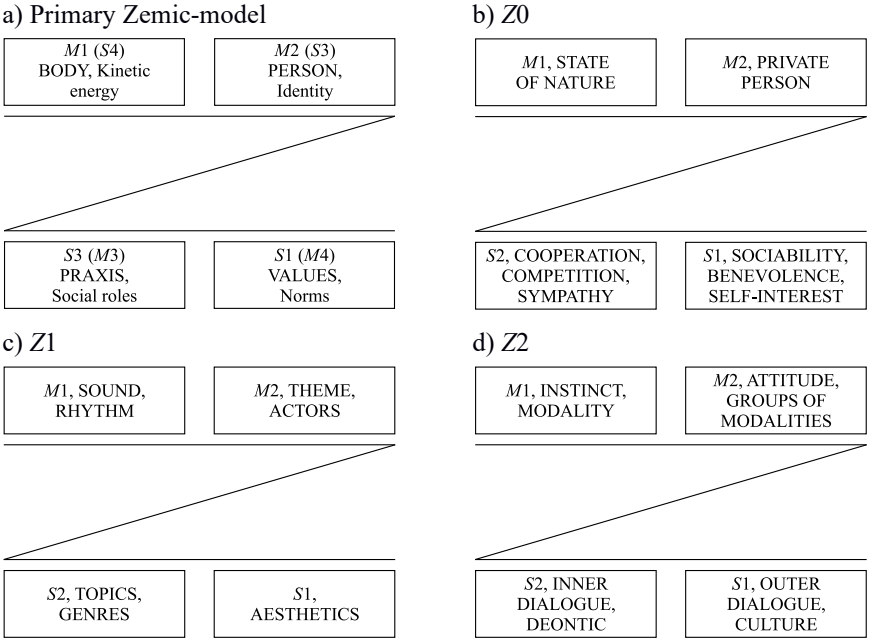


Note. Figure 2 presents so-called subsidiary Zemic-models *Z*0*Z*1*Z*2 as they are defined in the Enlightenment era. Thus, their scope is wider than that of classical style per se. In Figure 2 they are embedded in the *X*-model representing the relations between the work, transcendence and everyday life. This enables one to examine Mozart's oeuvre in relation to the culture of Enlightenment and to state conjectures and draw conclusions concerning research questions at various levels. Figure 3 presents the models *Z*0*Z*1*Z*2 separately and highlights their relation to the primary Zemic-model *Z*. Source: author's own elaboration (Heimonen, 2025, p. 289)

An epistemic filter works to determine which part of society's knowledge content and emotional input (*Z*0) is transferred through the work (*Z*1) to Dasein (*Z*2). Sympathy (Hume, 2001; Smith, 2002) is the theoretical construction that defines this process, while the epistemic filter (Lasonen-Aarnio, 2019) determines to which extent the subject has access to the emotional and knowledge base provided by *Z*0 and *Z*1 (Figure 2). A case in point is the g-minor theme in concerto K. 467. The theme clearly comes from the outside, awakening in the protagonist the realisation that their worldview has started to deviate from that of the old-world features of the first ritornello, *R*1. This is channelled through anaphoric reference, and it changes the balance between facts and values; the nature of normativity is changed. When new elements are added to the respective reflective equilibrium, the balance between general principles and individual inferences is also subject to change.

Figure 3

Sympathetic Self-Fashioning Presented via the Z0Z1Z2-Model. The Change of Aspect Between Dasein and the Work. Inner and Outer Communication



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

Figure 3 illustrates how sympathy functions in the work's internal communication and de facto leads to sympathetic self-fashioning when given allegorical interpretations. It thus fuses outer world influences (*Z*0) to our everyday experience (*Z*2). This process is mediated through the work (*Z*1) in a central manner. The filtering process rearranges the rational and emotional components so as to bring them together in the empirical and transcendental parts of consciousness in the Dasein. This whole process is called sympathetic narrativity.

3. The Role of Transformation Functions in Characterising Concerto Analyses

3.1. The Normative Nature of Transformation Functions

The above changes can be expressed as transformation functions. Theoretically, they can all change at the same time. In practice, this rarely happens. When all of the separate functions are taken together, they are descriptive of the total transformation between the musical passages, for example, in the transformation from the opening theme to the entry theme in concerto K. 466, or from the opening theme to the beginning of the development in piano concerto K. 467. Transformation functions are classified as belonging either to formalist or normative groups, thus reflecting the divide between facts and values. In this way, one sees in concerto K. 466 how the normative nature of the discourse enters the dialogue through the interaction between the formal and narrative elements. This change is especially clear in existential digressions where deontic modalities enter the increasing directedness of the musical material and its morally active components.

From these small steps of formal and normative nature grows the major transformation between the two sections of form in a concerto. In the present case, simultaneous and consecutive mechanisms of representation are in operation. Moreover, the notation should consider the emergence of antinomies in moral theories and their manifestations as anomalies in the work, i.e., *Z*1. Here, the principle of reflective equilibrium[2] will work in an exemplary manner. The changes within the functions are those presented in Figure 4, for example.

[2] A methodological remark is required here. While reflective equilibrium is a respected analytical tool in moral philosophy, it originates in John Rawls's neo-Kantian thought. Therefore, it cannot be taken as self-evidently applicable in a neo-sentimentalist context. Nevertheless, one does not want to complicate the argument unnecessarily here.

Figure 4

Transformation Functions Between Themes p *and* q *and Their Division Between Facts and Values*

$$F(p\mathrm{T}q) = \Sigma[F0(p\mathrm{T}q) + \ldots + F7(p\mathrm{T}q)]$$

*F*0 (pre-sign) a sign is changed into a pre-sign of a moral sentiment, *S*2, *Normative*

*F*1 (rhetoric) the nature of interrogation is changed, but the quality stays *S*2, *Normative*

*F*2 (morality) moral sentiments; e.g., pride, changed to benevolence, *S*1, *Normative*

*F*3 (norms) permissions/obligations; forbearances changed to permissions *S*2, *Normative*

*F*4 (motivic) shape stays the same, motives are widened, 3rds are moved to left hand *M*2, *Formal*

*F*5 (thematic) transformation takes place in an anaphoric manner *S*2, *Normative*

*F*6 (epistemes) earlier episteme is transformed into a later one *S*1, *Normative*

*F*7 (affirmation, negation) *S*2, *Normative*

Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

3.2. An Apostrophe Defines the Existential Mode and Dialogical Character of a Musical Passage

The recognition scene triggers a transformation whereby a hugely indefinite "might" is turned, through an interrogative (*F*1) apostrophic transition (*F*1, bs. 122–128), into a benevolent morality (*F*2) with a definite sense of "must" with shades of vanity infiltrating the secondary theme. As the weightiest interrogative gesture, this is also an affirmation of all the interrogations in the orchestral introduction.

When an apostrophe is combined with an epistemic modal "might" or "must", it produces a sense of turning toward something or someone. The mode in which one turns to something or someone is called an apostrophic transition. This forms part of the description of the musical actor's dialogical character.

3.3. The Recognition Scene and Reflective Equilibrium

A collection of transformation functions inhabits the central features of a musical actor's character. As they are composed of utterances at various levels of generality, they are capable of acting within the reflective equilibrium. The soloist carries out individual inferences, for the most part. Ritornellos, as emblems of society, are prone to follow general principles. Between the two there

is a reflective equilibrium. An apostrophe is built out of a group of transformation functions that produce the sense of turning to another type of passion or moral sentiment.

Changes in morality, for example, become changes in character. Through horizontal appearance, i.e., the degree of verisimilitude between characters, the characters relate to each other. The way in which an actor faces another actor depends on the epistemic and deontic modality *F*3 that an utterance or thematic complex is expressive of. Thus, while turning toward *F*1(rhetoric, apostrophe), that is, a sentimentalist actor, an utterance can be expressive of both determination and simultaneous hesitation and form a mild aporia. Such an actor could be turning away from a dark and gloomy setting that expresses anger, pity, despair and simultaneously courage, the latter quality being changed into determination. This pushes the reflective equilibrium of the section into a serious disequilibrium, pushing the individual actors into apostrophic gestures that bring about a new state of equilibrium, one that is directed towards the benevolent secondary theme. While there has been a change in the general rule, individual inferences are adapting the system that is moving toward a new equilibrium. This is the essential content of the recognition scene in the first movement of piano concerto K. 467. The phenomenon is connected to the dynamic coherence that was introduced earlier. These new spheres of equilibria expand in a piano concerto due to nested ellipses in the so-called SOD-scheme (spheres of dialogue scheme).[3] Here, the general explanatory model reaches the level of Mozart's piano concerto.

In music theoretical terms, the g-minor theme is a negation *F*7 of the preceding G-major and the whole C-major movement so far. It is also an example of the total unrelatedness between the thematic and motivic content *F*4 and *F*5, and also, therefore, a surprise.

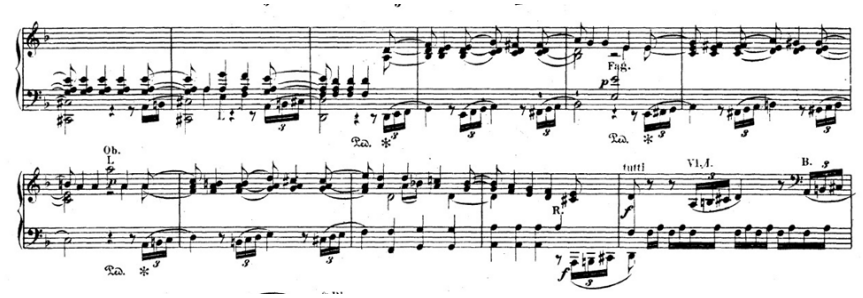
The quality that creates the dramatic difference between the orchestral exposition and the soloist's exposition is the apostrophic transitions between the theme areas. This is the source of the remarkable incongruence of the expositions, a central characteristic in a Mozart piano concerto. In Heinrich Koch's terms (1983), this creates an extraordinary *Anlage* in terms of the coming development of the rest of the movement. One obvious question that arises is whether it is possible to isolate a deontological apostrophe and a sentimentalist apostrophe, respectively. The former would be operative in orchestral exposition and the latter in the soloist's exposition.

[3] An SOD-scheme (spheres of dialogue scheme) is a concentric dialogue model of a Mozart concerto movement. In the SOD-scheme come together the Zemic-principles concerning the inner aspects of a concerto movement with the basic formal-analytical elements of a concerto. SOD-scheme plays a central role in the more general research which this article is a part of.

4. Analytical Case Studies: The Buildup and Comparison of Narrative High Points in Piano Concertos K. 466 and K. 467

Example 1

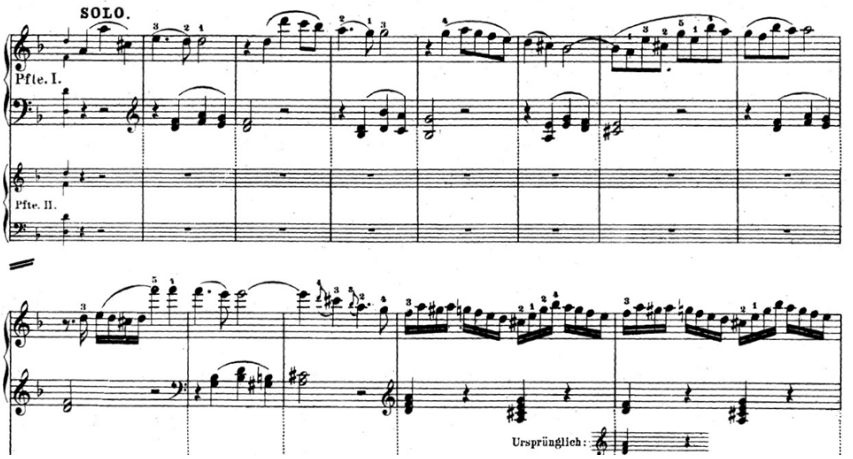
Piano Concerto K. 466, Bars 7–16



Note. Source: arrangement for two pianos by Franz Kullak, published in Leipzig by Steingräber Verlag in 1896. In the public domain.

Example 2

Piano Concerto K. 466, Entry Theme, Bars 77–88



Note. Source: arrangement for two pianos by Franz Kullak, published in Leipzig by Steingräber Verlag in 1896. In the public domain.

4.1. General Characteristics

A central issue is what kind of configurations epistemic filters form in a concerto movement. There can be long-term transformations, such as in concerto

K. 453 where the bVI degree chord's appearances stretch over the whole movement. Here, the driving force of the change is remembrance. In K. 466, several functions are activated right at the beginning of the first movement, causing dialogical tensions to spread over the following sections based mostly on anticipations (Examples 1 and 2). The concerto K. 467 sets the centre of gravity for epistemic change at the recognition scene, where new information is allowed to enter the work's structure.

K. 466 starts by loading anticipations concerning motives, tonality, style, rhetoric, norm structure, sentiments, pre-signs vs post-signs and existential content (cf. Examples 1, 2). These classes include several contradictions such as the opening statement's romantic *Sturm und Drang* that carries a stepwise ascending sequence pointing to benevolence and a classical style, while at the same time it is a reminder not to quit the old regime.

In summary, the opening section anticipates dialogical changes in epistemes, sentiments (morality), normative content of utterances (norms either prohibiting or permitting), the rhetorical outlook of theme entries and social modality (Soi) being changed into an individual modality (Moi). This is already a kind of dialogical *Anlage* for the movement where the variables of change are brought in simultaneously instead of in a sequential manner, as is the case in the concertos K. 453 and K. 467. While the functions have strong syntagmatic tendencies, it is the paradigmatic dimension that embraces the simultanisation inherent in the passage.

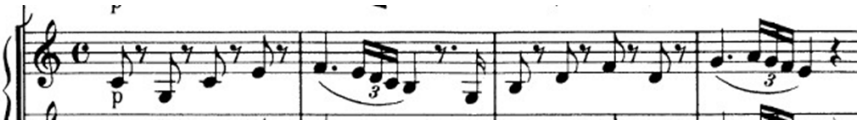
What, then, makes the two themes appear the same in any sense? The answer is that it is not a question of similarity at all, but a matter of a skilled transformation from a state of morality to another state of morality that is being carried out by the same actor. In other words, it is the musical context and narrative that leave a residue that turns out to be the same musical actor or else conceived as we defined it previously as an indefinite description. The actor is subject to a change from state 1 to state 2. It is a carrying out of different actions (cf. von Wright's second level). All of these differentiate, they are not sources of similarity. It will be shown that the thematic variety in Mozart belongs to the *Schein* (appearance). This is a disguise as far as the thematic essences are concerned. It is very much like the Harlequin in *Commedia dell'arte*; he changes face and becomes another character, but only on the surface. At a deeper level, the person remains the same; people, as such, can take on a whole variety of differing roles without losing their inner identity. Yet, one needs to ask what is it that remains the same? What, after all, is real and what remains of the *Schein*?

4.2. Concerto K. 467: The Sequential Manner of Representation

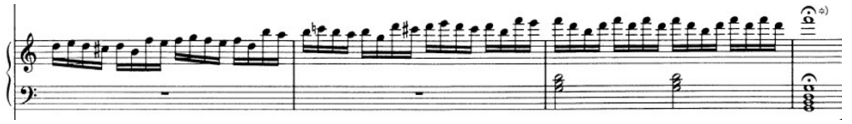
Figure 5

Continuum of Moral Sentiments, Nature of Change Between Dialogical Units

a) *Opening Theme, Buffo, Galant*

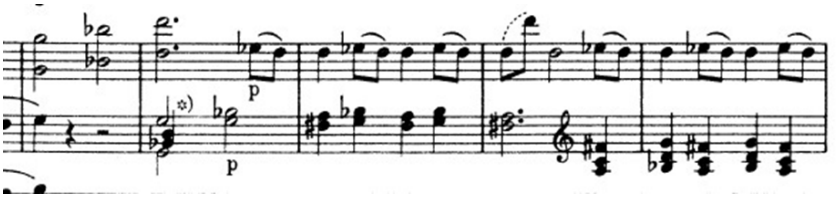


b) *Entry Theme, State of Nature*



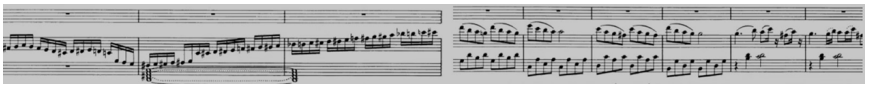
Note. From 1 to 2: "Ought" to "may", *F*3.

c) *Recognition Scene, Pity*



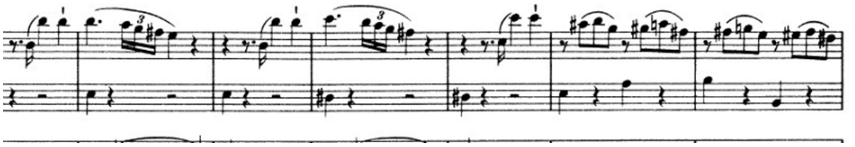
Note. From 2 to 3: "May" to negation/interdiction.

d) *Secondary Theme, Benevolence*



Note. From 3 to 4: Negation to permission/affirmation, transcendental act.

e) *Opening of S2, Humility*



Note. From 4 to 5: Motivic shape stays, "may" to "must", affirmation of existential experience. Source: author's own elaboration (Heimonen, 2024, pp. 181–183).

Anaphoric references may become effective between large scale formal sections so that at the syntagmatic level there is also a change from social (ritornello) to individual (solo) meaning. And this takes place together with the change from

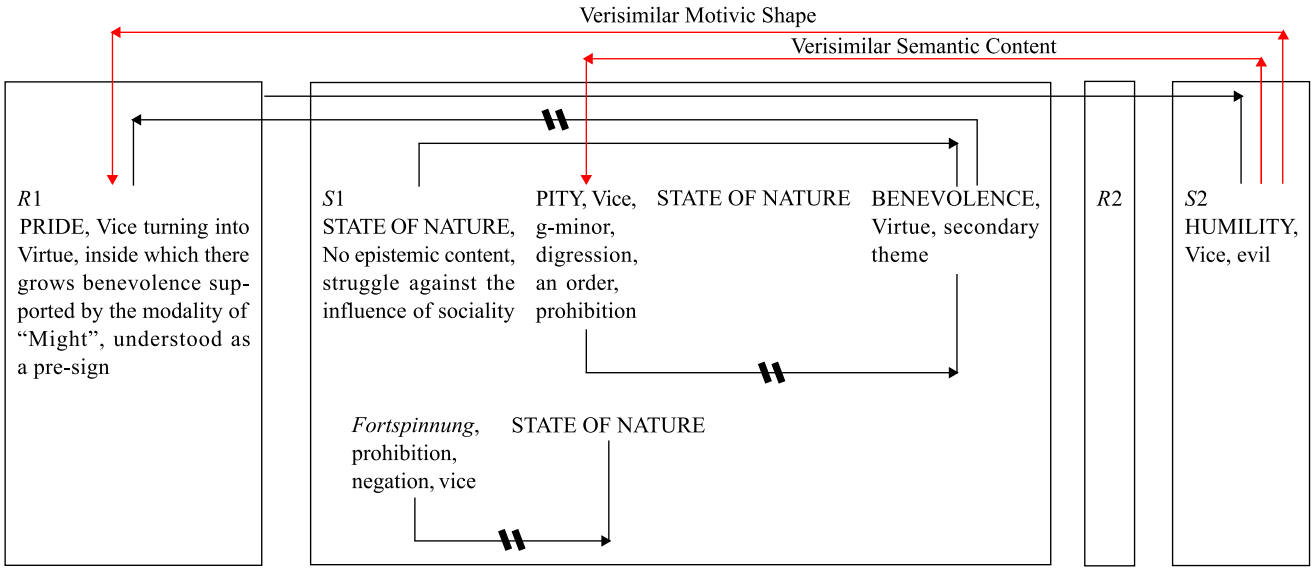
an icon to a symbol. The symbolic meaning here is normative. This may involve it becoming a new stylistic marker, such as a change in the musical episteme. When these levels are considered, an allegorical interpretation of a concerto movement as representing the transformation or change from old-world morality to that of the modern world is taking place. Certain relationships in this large-scale dialogue are more important for the sake of allegorical interpretation. Therefore, these elements need to be located and their nature and meaning as symbols need to be prescribed and allotted to them. Using the language of the primary Zemic-model and $p\mathrm{T}q$ relationship, one has now operationalised both of the changes $p\mathrm{T}q$ and $p\mathrm{Trepr}q$, including their possible sub-divisions, where[4]

$$\Sigma F1\mathrm{Recognition}(x) =$$
$$\{(\mathrm{pride}\,\mathrm{T}\,\mathrm{pity}), (\mathrm{Soi}\,\mathrm{T}\,\mathrm{repr}\,\mathrm{Moi}), [(\mathrm{Soi}\,\mathrm{T}\,\mathrm{Moi}), (\mathrm{Ought}\,\mathrm{Soi}\,\mathrm{T}\,\mathrm{Ought\text{-}not}\,\mathrm{Soi})],$$
$$(\mathrm{index}\,\mathrm{T}\,\mathrm{reprsymbol}), (\mathrm{permitted}\,\mathrm{T}\,\mathrm{interjected}), (\mathrm{episteme1}\,\mathrm{T}\,\mathrm{episteme2})\}$$

[4] The expression $p\mathrm{T}q$ is a way to present formally an elementary change between two states of affairs in von Wright's (1963) logic of change. In the present context p and q may stand for any signifying unit, be it a proposition, theme, a small or large section of form, a part of discourse, a sentence in a libretto or silence. In this research it is often a case of an individual meaning p (in solo sections) being juxtaposed with social meaning q (in ritornello sections), but other interpretations are, indeed, possible.

Figure 6

K. 467. Sequential Manner of Arranging Moral Sentiments and Transformation Functions



Note. Figure 6 presents those semantic elements that that are responsible for the passage before the secondary theme being called "A Recognition Scene". The scene has two components, the inner Moi and the outer Soi. The negation involved in the analytical modal mixture leads one to perceive indexicality being transformed into symbolic meaning. Overall, the recognition scene signifies a change from an earlier musical episteme into a later musical episteme. Source: author's own elaboration.

One can easily see that humility is composed of two components: on the one hand, there is the hidden motivic verisimilitude to the opening march theme, *F*4. On the other, there is a semantic component that is derived from the tragic moral sentiment in the recognition scene's pity theme, *F*2 and *F*5 (see Figure 6). When the process is seen as a whole, the strong influence of benevolence in the movement then changes the interpretation of the sentiment of pride from one belonging to the old world into one that is in accord with the content of the secular morality of Hume and Smith. In this moral regeneration, the source of sympathy is redirected from the transcendental religious world to the inner world of the individual, i.e., the Enlightenment's secular morality. This is the basic narrative trajectory in the movement. This is also the question of simultaneously perceiving both rational and emotional qualities in the music and being able to transform their combined experience into one that considers the interpretative contexts of both the moment when the composition was created and the Dasein of the present-day performer. If either one of these interpretative contexts is missing, there may still be musical merits to it, but the result is bound to be culturally biased.

4.3. The Myriad of Faces Among Apostrophic Transitions Between Theme Actors in Piano Concerto K. 467

In the first ritornello of the piano concerto K. 467, the phrase endings, i.e., the apostrophic transitions, are predominantly melodically raising ones. This gives the section an overall rhetorically questioning character. The way to describe phrase endings in modal terms would be to label them "may", expressive of possibility, rhetorical interrogation and yearning after the opening of unforeseen options. All of this takes place in the politest manner possible, providing an antidote to the excessive pride at the beginnings of the concerto's first movements.

When the soloist enters at bar 74, there is a decisive change in the way phrase endings are constructed. Now their character is one of determination, not questioning any more but rather giving affirmative answers. In the g-minor theme, however, we can note that a so-far unrecognised voice has entered the consciousness of the soloist, the individual actor of the drama changing the reflective equilibrium of the passage. The soloist recognises that, in their consciousness, there is a voice that demands absolute faithfulness toward the authorities, the Sovereign and God. From this moment on, the two voices or tendencies, one that stresses duty and obedience and the other that craves inner motivation and respect for sentiments, start to compete with one another. Analytically, the music can be seen in the manner in which the apostrophic transitions start to embrace both rising and falling motifs and the respective modalities of "may" and "must" or "duty" and "motivation". This is the embodiment of the generic nature of the concerto as a competition as expressed in the concerto K. 467. One can also recognise that Mozart is composed of several simultaneous voices in the same sense as Dostoyevsky's novels are, according to Bakhtinian dialogism.

In the previous section, the central theoretical themes of this research were presented, namely, morality, culture and representation. The orchestral actor's deontological inevitability can be traced back to the moral life of the ancient regime, and the youthful, self-motivated nature in the soloist's themes has its origin in the sentimentalist moral philosophy of the Enlightenment period. If K. 482 is a case of the private vs public sector emerging from a feudal society, one needs to ask which moral and ethical attitudes correspond to these societal arrangements.

4.4. The Stages Leading to an Allegory

Encounters that are born as the result of sympathetic understanding. A metaphor born in interaction. Turned into an allegory.

An apostrophe $F(1)$ is seen through a deontological worldview $F1[F(2)]$, producing metaphorical meaning. If the deontological influence comes from the opera *Don Giovanni*, from an intertext $G(q)$ that serves as an indexical reference, one might write $G2_{\text{DON G}}\,[F1(\text{K. } 466)]_{\text{Index}}$. Here, an index indicates the beginning of a new passion or moral sentiment in intertextual relationships. The same sense of deontology surely already lives within the work itself, but this shows its origin. It is vital to have the possibly sentimentalist actor sense the deontological influence through sympathetic communication. A pre-sign $F(1)$ is negated by $F(7)$, in a recognition scene that changes the course of events ($F1$, K. 467) by negation ($F(7)$, *Zauberflöte*).

4.5. Concerto K. 466 as a Contrasting Way to Structure the Development of Moral Choice

In practical music analytical terms, this already gives one the tools to understand what Mozart is doing. There appears to be a simpler level beneath the surface thematic variety, but what is this mysterious level?

One major issue that holds things together is the idea of episteme or musical epistemes. If an episteme preserves its identity or if it is transformed into another episteme, it is the actor themselves who carries out these actions. Thus, we know who it is who is acting even if they are acting from behind a mask. It has been argued that the musical personae (Cone, 1974) in the opening theme and the entry theme in concerto K. 466 is the same person. We need to distil those factors in the episteme that are the cause for the transformation at the general level within the style, and see how this is carried out in the case at hand. We have already mentioned that uniformity, repression and sequentiality characterise actors within the old regime. The new age, on the contrary, relies on freedom, non-uniformity and transcendence. One can, with good reason, talk about opposite poles. How, then, is such a transformation as described above made? In the entry theme, the moral sentiment of benevolence is in a state of nature as a pre-sign. This needs to be understood as a term that is brought from $Z0$ to $Z1$, the sig-zemic, but that

stays as a transcendental quality. This is the type of benevolence one has in the entry theme. It is somewhat paradoxical by nature, since, being in a state of nature, it is not yet fully formed.

One may start with the motivic shape and its transformative process. The feature that makes the passage interrogative is the upward sixth leap that is transformed into an octave leap in the entry theme: the pure, immaterial nature of an octave is what suits the transcendence. This leap is followed by a stepwise descending motion in both passages. What is remarkable is that the interrogative seconds in bars 8–14 are transferred to the left hand in the entry theme where they still interrogate, but now as a background to the right hand that reaches for transcendence. Despite the huge differences, the basic shape is still somehow similar. Furthermore, there is no question about stylistic dissimilarity. The qualities of classical and romantic epistemes as an interpretative framework have transformed the thematic complex from a baroque form that holds the romantic spirit inside it into a transcendental quest for the direction and moral grounding that an individual is supposed to be taking in the New World. While the stepwise ascending motion is there in the Baroque version, the entry theme brings out the freedom that already resides in that upward motion towards an emotional climax of an extraordinarily veiled character. Does there, after all, exist an entity that lies below all stylistic manoeuvring, an essence that stays unaffected and that might accordingly be called human nature in the vein of the spirit of the Enlightenment? A description of this entity may perhaps only be given in terms of an indefinite description, as was suggested earlier.

A juxtaposition of the opening theme and the entry theme in concerto K. 466 will illustrate the kind of dialogue that constantly arises in Mozart's instrumental works, not to mention his operas.

Points A and B below construct the allegorical interpretation of the first movement of K. 466. They show the enduring nature of the relation between opposing moral qualities encountered in the opening and entry themes. This juxtaposition and its theoretical grounding show the inevitability and paradoxical nature of the juxtaposition of the two thematic areas. It is argued that interpreting the opening and entry themes as an allegory is the best way to illustrate the extraordinary relationship between them.

A) The opening passages (bars 1–17) illustrate a polite *Sturm und Drang* as an early romantic feature. In a topical sense, it is an expression of the tragic. Although in a rhetorical sense the rising sequential sixth figures are interrogative by nature, the firm, law-like, almost stubborn syncopation nevertheless situates the opening section in deontological morality as it appears in the ancient regime.

B) What kind of a reaction is then provided by the soloist in the entry theme? When the soloist enters with a calm, serene, benevolent entry, one cannot possibly think of a greater contrast between the two thematic groups. Moreover, the passage cannot be considered an answer since, with the as-

cending octaves, it still retains its interrogative character. This contrast to the opening theme captures the essence of the d-minor concerto with its association with the hell and purgatory of the religious world, purgatory being the place where the soul is purified of all sins on the way to heaven. The non-religious alternative that Enlightenment thought is able to offer is the just, idealistic and rational utopia of the Enlightenment that is ruled not by religion and the Sovereign, but instead by wisdom, goodwill and the universal benevolence of secular morality. As the latter worldview prevails in concerto K. 467, that option is not available for *Don Giovanni*; the concerto's first movement stays in d-minor.

4.6. The Piano Concerto in Relation to Opera

The next thing to ask would be how it is possible for sympathy to operate between two such disparate theme entries. To establish sympathy, one would need to be able to see the other person's mind from either one's own point of view or that of another.

Allusions to the operas *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte* are very close indeed. As one can see, whole new worlds are encountered here. Society has become conscious of its history. The spheres of life are being mixed; new continents are being discovered, as well as scientific progress and discovery accelerating in a corresponding manner.

The reason the rest of the movement is so captivating is exactly that the contrast between the layered nature of the opening theme and the extremely thin and purified outlook of the entry theme makes anticipatory processes arise, and there is a gap between the thematic areas that need to be filled. Yet, what is the role of sympathy in this constellation? Has all communication ceased because the two passages appear to live separate lives? It might be that old channels have been deserted, but new channels are opening to replace these obsolete old ones. A glance at the theme entries in Baroque concertos testifies to the fact that the ways of communication have experienced a dramatic shift. What is needed now is a music-analytical language to express the changed situation. Only those sympathetic impulses that have a positive, accepted influence on the other interlocutor are adopted. Within Enlightenment culture, the answer to this dilemma was benevolence (cf. Gill, 2006; Hume, 2001). In concertos, communication is channelled via benevolent themes with all their goodwill, acceptance and permitting attitudes; benevolence has the power to transform the world for the better. Only a few of the functions emitted by the opening passage find their counterpart in the entry theme, the rest of them are disseminated within the rest of the movement. In all of these cases, it is sympathy and communication that guide the process. The opening theme launches initiatives for change in all eight functions $F(0)$, …, $F(7)$, as the entry theme only reacts to two of those, namely moral sentiment and the similarity of the motivic shape, although it needs to be admitted that benevolence here comes more as a pre-sign rather than as a fully-developed

sentiment. The entry theme really does not form a stance towards any other issues that functions give rise to. In this sense, it raises more questions than it answers. The theme could be seen as a parallel to the ghost in Hamlet, where remembrance of it starts to emerge (Greenblatt, 2001). In the development section, the theme appears in an undistorted form. If the parallel were taken a bit further, it would suggest the soloist's entry point as purgatory which Don Giovanni struggles to get into in order to have his soul purified so as to be accepted to heaven, but instead it turns out that he is destined to enter hell. That would seem to be Don Giovanni's inevitable fate. Music, however, seems to suggest that Enlightenment philosophy might offer another option that is based on science, secular morality and eternal wisdom.

4.7. Von Wright's Levels of Change, Action and Norm: The Emergence of Epistemic Filtering

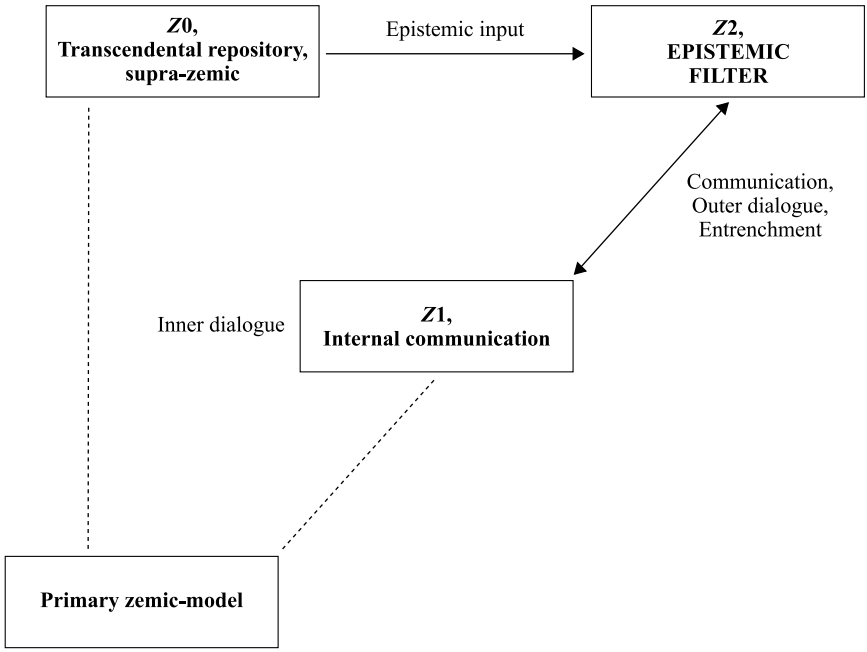
Transformation functions need to be constructed out of all of von Wright's three levels: change, action and norms. The overall change is one from Baroque pride to benevolence, *F*6 (epistemes). The action needed to accomplish this (von Wright's second level; von Wright, 1963, 53–69) is to release the content of p by removing, through the secondary theme, the negation that hinders p from flourishing *F*7 (affirmation, negation). To make the change a permanent matter, means to make it to achieve the status of a norm (von Wright's level three; von Wright, 1963, 70–92). What one does in terms of music analytical categories is first to describe the elementary units of the situation and possible inductive steps that may be caused by them. The third step, in addition to the second level of dealing with individual and collective actions as such, involves giving permission for an actor to change *F*3 (norms). This move necessitates the inclusion of the individual and collective acts in the possible ways in which to react to given deontic forces such as forbearances and permissions *F*. This part of the research is operationalised through the existential semiotic concepts of the Soi and the Moi. What one has gained so far is a description of change between states *p* and *q* that can be described as a transformation between the two states. This relationship is anaphoric by nature, in the sense that the latter term gains part of its meaning from the former. This long-distance anaphoric element can consist of any of the componential elements $F(0)$, …, $F(7)$. This gives a range of choices from which to choose the appropriate one for the anaphoric reference in question. The respective modes can be found in the primary Zemic-model as indicated in the chart (Figure 2).

These eight classes form the nucleus of a model that can be used in analysing changes between states in a movement. This research proceeds while keeping as conjecture the role of the eight transformation functions in the analysis of the three piano concertos and beyond. This comprises the paradigmatic transformation of thematic entries into epistemic configurations by the music's internal process that is fuelled by the level of musical epistemes. In the present frame-

work, this process is part of the music's internal communication. Coming full circle back to the existential semiotic framework, one notes that there is a connection here to the Zemic-model's modes. It is transferred through an epistemic filter to *Z*2, as presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Epistemic Filtering of Transcendental Properties to Internal Communication



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

These changes can be expressed as transformation functions in the following manner, in that they deliver anaphoric meaning between sections. This consists of a modality that changes, along with semantic changes in the moral sentiments. When all separate functions are taken together, they are descriptive of the total transformation between the musical passages in the transformation from an opening theme to an entry theme in the d-minor concerto. Due to the different nature and character of the d-minor concerto, the situation and actions related to the choice there need to be conceptualised differently in comparison to concerto K. 467. This decisive event is seen to reside in the entry theme. From this, and from the complexity of the situation, there arises the need to construct so-called transformation functions. The present research examines those semiotic processes that facilitate this transformation.

In transformation functions, log-zemics play a certain rhetorical role. They enter transformation functions causing the form of a sentiment at supra-zemic to resemble that in the sig-zemic. This is comparable to the Kantian *sensus communis* as opposed to *sensus privatis* (Arendt, 1992, pp. 70–72). A social experience is created as the result of the individual being in dialogue with the ritornello's Soi.

Belief is the concrete mental musical fact that emerges as a result of the musical analysis process. The knowledge conveyed by the score is the central, but by no means the only, source of knowledge. Beliefs about a piece can be seen as the result of a combination of several components. When the experience of the epistemic configuration that emerges because of the process appears to be "true", a kind of knowledge is generated that transforms the transformation between functions into the equilibrium required for dynamic unity.

The role of belief in constructing musical analytical knowledge. Facts have a different manner of being from values. When applied to music analysis, one can discern differences between musical beliefs and the way in which these are born in musical processes. Also noteworthy is the dependency of beliefs and knowledge on either empirical observation or rational thinking.

In this way, the degree and quality of the score dependence of beliefs is demonstrated:

1) The property is in the score, it is observable, and we have a belief about it; the property is transferred directly from the score as a suitable mental image,
2) The feature is in the score, it is not perceptible, and we have a belief about it; the syntactic feature of the score evokes a mental association,
3) The property is not in the score, it is perceptible, and we have a belief about it; the property is transferred from the transcendental store,
4) The property is not in the score, it is not perceptible, and we have a belief about it; the property can arise synthetically as an association of other properties, purely as an image within the mind.

Absolute music is thus united with associations within the mind, that is, to be conceived as transcendental conditions of the mind. These are the central music analytical categories, including non-perceptible percepts as counterparts to Schenkerian implied tones. A dynamic system of music analytical beliefs has then been constructed, where these beliefs are the central actors when moral choices among individual and social musical personae are made.

4.8. Methodological Outcomes From the Comparison of the Two Concertos

There is a dramatic difference between the two cases in how they handle the gap between "is" and "ought". Whereas K. 467 has turned the gap into a wide

stretch, in K. 466 it has been baked in several simultaneous layers. It is not really a question of whether one should adopt either a layered or a non-layered approach; instead, they should be juxtaposed and used inside a single approach. This is how the differences between the phenomena are made theoretically visible. In the present context, it is the degree of layeredness of transformation functions that is the essential separating factor. In K. 467, this difference is writ large over the temporal stretch of the movement. The functions are mostly consecutive. In K. 466, the situation is dramatically different: the functions, that are now understood as epistemic filters, are piled one on top of another causing reversals, contradictions and temporary annihilations to inter-thematic relations.

What in concerto K. 467 was admittedly surprising but nevertheless orderly has, in K. 466, been compressed into a highly tense transformation process between the opening theme and the entry theme. In this transformation, there appear several simultaneous transformation functions that stretch from strictly formal to highly normative. This is a variability that has been condensed into a temporally short stretch. And yet the two concertos are pretty much like brothers or sisters. The truth is that there is a close kinship between the two. Due to this layeredness, they look different on the surface and if one's interpretative framework is kept intact, one might justifiably argue that they are different. But in such cases, one disregards their inner similarity. This is the basic constitution of their building blocks that have just been arranged in a different manner. One could say that they are different representations of the same Ur-phenomenon. While in the former case the mechanism of representation is sequentiality, in the latter it is simultaneity. The similarity is in the stock of sentiments, which is very similar considering the fact that, in the minor concerto, the sentiments are a kind of mirror image. The upshot seems to be that a novel, hidden level of similarity has been found in the moral sentiments. It has turned out that the laws of representation apply to compositional choices, at least when the latter are seen as moral choices. As constituents of self-fashioning, they have the same effect on the identity of the actor.

4.9. A Brief Comparison of Two Recent Analytical Approaches

How does the novel approach presented in this paper relate in comparison to alternative analytical approaches of Mozart's piano concertos? Recognising these differences will highlight certain central features of the present approach. The most prominent approaches to dialogue in a Mozart piano concerto are Hepokoski and Darcy's (2006) sonata theory and Keefe's (2001) book on dialogue in Mozart's piano concertos. My use relates to the common way of talking about normative concepts in ethics and moral philosophy: normativity is the central property that expresses the wish concerning how a word should be, in comparison to how it is. Normative concepts are modal concepts, as broadly understood. Hepokoski and Darcy seem to use the word in a narrower sense to designate a norm or rule that can prescribe the behaviour of a musical object, for example.

There is, however, no change in the accompanying concepts where the norm is applied, whereas in the present system all principles, inferences and concepts are to be derived from normativity. In other words, music analysis has been (partly) embedded in moral philosophy, whereas in Hepokoski and Darcy's theory one stays within the *Formenlehre*.

A comparison with Keefe's (2001) book is equally revealing. Both approaches bring forth the concept of dialogue in a central manner. It seems to me that Keefe's dialogue is primarily the immediate interplay of piano and orchestra within a large-scale section of forms, such as the solo and ritornello sections. In the present approach, dialogue takes place first and foremost between and among the solo and ritornello sections caused by the central incongruences there. From this intersectional level, dialogical inclination spreads to the next, lower hierarchical levels and reaches the level of individual musical phrases. Dialogue is a through-going principle that can be derived from Koch's idea of *Anlage* when dialogically interpreted. At the ground level, dialogue is based on the concept of change $p\mathrm{T}q$ and can accordingly be applied to any structural or formal constituent of a concerto. In Mozart, it can also be applied to the examination of the influence that anomalies have on the dialogical principles of a concerto movement. Moreover, in the present approach the analysis of change allows one, through semantic interpretation, to arrive at an allegorical interpretation of the concerto dialogue. This short comparison has already shown certain fundamental differences in music analytical premises that the three approaches exhibit. These differences among premises are already significant at the form analytical level. They gain enhanced significance when one proceeds to the study of genre or musical style. When one analyses dialogue based mostly on tonality and form, the scope of the concept becomes inevitably somewhat restricted. If eight transformation functions are added to this vocabulary, several novel opportunities for conceptualising dialogue emerge. As to the question "What is a concerto?", it is hoped that the present approach will grow closer to the theories of the musical *Formenlehre*. It will then be shown that the approaches are not antithetical, but, in fact, complementary in a way that, together, they will redefine what the essential features of a Mozartian piano concerto are.

5. Conclusions

The solo and ritornello are in competition because they are based on different, partly conflicting, value systems. This is the basic situation in a double-exposition where both the soloist and orchestra set out their basic ideas. From here on, the movement starts to unravel these tensions. Despite the tensions, there is a tendency to reconcile the two opposing moral positions. This force comes in the form of 18th-century sympathy and is manifested in benevolent theme structures in the concertos. The process is based on the normative nature of the dispositions of the actors involved. Their actions are directed towards a certain outcome. In both concertos, at the moment of existential experience, there is the same, verisimilar;

motivic shape; a kind of Hamlet's father's ghost (Greenblatt, 2001), whose shape can be transformed, but of which we have a remembrance.

David Hume argues at length that one cannot derive how things should be from how things are (2001). This is the "is-ought"-dilemma, also known as the problem of whether it is possible to derive values from facts. It has been widely debated in the history of philosophy. Has the present research been able to cast light on the question through casting the issue onto the relationships between formal analysis and narrative inquiry? Is it possible to draw narrative consequences from formal-analytical premises, contrary to what Hume has argued? Presupposing that the premises and conclusions have been correctly formulated, it does seem that the question should be answered in the affirmative and that there is a connection between the two domains. Intuitively, this feels right. Does it look the same when examined at a detailed level? This research has illustrated two very different cases of narrative high points in concertos K. 466 and K. 467. These high points are very peculiar indeed. One could say that they both have verisimilar motivic shapes. For artwork, this does not suffice; there must be implications for how the world should be. In Mozart, there are plenty of those implications. Here, the shift to the realm of values has been made and it is here that the work becomes alive and gains the Enlightenment quality of vivacity.

Our realities are made up of both facts and values. One rarely has just either facts or values. Inferences go from a mixed group of facts and values to a differently constituted group of facts and values. This is where the Zemic-model changes its composition. The Moi1 is the corporeal, empirical realm or reality, basically the pure self, almost without a moral component. The Humean way of thinking would take this as the objective element. What matters is the type of individuality or generality encountered. This approach leads to the concerto being reframed in moral theoretical terms. Of crucial importance is the moment of choice. It is not a high point in a traditional sense. It can be manifested as a *pianissimo* passage in low register, as in the case of the e-minor theme in concerto K. 467, but it can be kind of a climax too. The essential characteristic is that of making a choice.

There is now a postulated level of morality in a Mozart piano concerto that can bring out the meaningful shapes in the dialogue inside a concerto, a so-called internal communication. In addition, morality opens a potential comparison between concertos, thus revealing similarities that would otherwise go unnoticed. The "is" of formal analysis and related facts has a peculiar relationship to the normative field of values, or "ought". It is one that is negotiated through reflective equilibrium. Here, the influence goes from metaphorical interpretation to formal analysis; in other words, the former has a primary position. This can be seen in the interpretation of the concerto itself: in addition to the skeleton of voice leading and form, one has a dynamically changing network of narrative tensions that seek their proper balance intuitively, according to the performer's imagination and conflicting social forces. This depends on how well the performer's Moi is in balance or in non-balance with the Soi, both their own and

that of society. When operationalised in this way, the relationship of facts to values can become compelling; it may take more effort or else be nearly impossible. In addition, the change to the normative dimension might be voluntary and easily permitted or totally involuntary and hard to obtain. The case studies illustrate the complexity of relationships between facts and values in individual compositions; This partly explains why the analytical results can seem strangely contradictory when only one analytical method is used. The analytical framework is born in dialogue between formal and semantic methodologies; there are emergent features that disappear in the absence of one of the methodological approaches. This very much concerns the concept of narrative highpoint(s) that, in the absence of normative components, tend to disappear. The two examples here present a concerto movement as an allegory of a moral choice that is based either on consecutive (K. 467) or simultaneous (K. 466) transformation functions. Transformation functions tend to weigh the normative nature of musical representation. The relationship between facts and values needs to be seen as depending on both syntagmatic and paradigmatic factors. Meaningful relationships between formal and narrative features are then established and an overall explanatory framework, where facts and values converse with one another, is established.

Is it possible to infer from "is" to "ought"? This is what happens in musical interpretation. The result is that one can, under certain conditions, infer from "is" to "ought", i.e., from Moi to Soi. This, however, presupposes auxiliary assumptions and a simultaneity of inferences. Moral and aesthetic qualities are projected from the formal layout to the moral and aesthetic dimensions. Thus, the question concerning inference from facts to values is that, as a creative process, it is indeed possible to infer from facts to values. This is an altogether different idea from inductive or deductive inference. Through these theoretical sign interactions, our realities can communicate with one another. The question of whether values or formal perceptions are more subjective is, at least, partly a misguided one, since, from experience, they are both present either as the primary content or as presuppositions. It is through the principles exhibited in the Zemic-model that the "is-ought" dichotomy is dissolved or, if not entirely, at least part of its mysteries has become less obscure.

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Article

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TOCCATAS: *SPIELFIGUREN*, VIRTUOSITY AND NARRATIVITY

SUMMARY: The term *Spielfiguren* was used by Heinrich Besseler (1956) and others to refer to figurations which are performatively idiomatic to a particular musical instrument. Piano toccatas from the 19th century onwards often feature specific pianistic figures to generate their motoric character (for example repeated notes), simultaneously shaping the musical substance. With reference to the toccata genre and Alfredo Casella's Toccata Op. 6 in particular, this article suggests ways in which signification may be thought to operate from contrasting viewpoints. From the perspective of the skilled pianist, the toccata's printed page may be regarded as symbolic of (and the sound in performance indexical to) a particular type of engagement with the keyboard, thus conveying corporeal (or haptic) signification. From the point of view of both work and performer, toccatas are usually virtuoso pieces which tax the pianist's playing mechanism, thereby augmenting the importance of the performer and reversing the usual "work > performance" paradigm. The perceived role of virtuosity in referencing death, the macabre and the sublime is also considered. From the point of view of the work itself, a toccata's tendency to depend on a single *Spielfigur* means that it will be topically limited and will not generally bespeak a complex narrative structure. However, toccatas are often cumulative with executive difficulties and dynamic intensity building as the end approaches, a feature that may be experienced as teleological, providing another, less self-referential, type of signification.

KEYWORDS: toccata, *Spielfiguren*, virtuosity and signification, narrative devices, Alfredo Casella, Franz Liszt.

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1. Introduction

This article was prompted primarily by a recent return to performing a work I had first learned several years ago, namely the Toccata in C-sharp minor Op. 6 (1904) by Alfredo Casella (1883–1947). In the relearning process, I was struck by the pattern-based pianism—here referred to as *Spielfiguren*—which, once understood, significantly aided the revision process.[1] Arguably much of the virtuoso effectiveness of the piece and its narrative trajectory towards the climactic final stages is rooted in the piano figurations at least as much if not more than in the musical content; indeed the two are inseparable, the generative piano writing being integral to any thematic, harmonic and textural material that is present. I will thus be using the Casella Toccata as a primary case-study but, with reference to other relevant examples as well, I will also explore the wider implications raised by this study and a consideration of these will take up a significant part of the central sections of this article. The focus will in particular be on the three perspectives indicated in the title: *Spielfiguren*, virtuosity and narrativity. The journey through these perspectives will be one of subsummation wherein the musical figures (the *Spielfiguren*) are, given the right circumstances, collectively seen to constitute the performance practice of virtuosity, and then together these are subsumed by the concept of musical narrativity.

2. *Spielfiguren*

In an article written for the 1957 issue of *Deutsches Jahrbuch der Musikwissenschaft*, Heinrich Besseler (1956) coined the term *Spielfiguren* to describe musical figures that were idiomatic to a particular instrument, thus chordal strumming is a *Spielfigur* for a guitar, glissandos for a trombone and string-crossing for a violin. The musical semiotician Eero Tarasti (1994) regards such figures as signs in themselves: "A certain musical figure may fit well say with the position of a hand on the keyboard; consequently the composer may choose that figure over another simply because it is more convenient for the player" (p. 55). Tarasti lists *Spielfiguren* under the Peircean sign category of icon, a category in which the sign resembles its referent, usually visually. In the present case the iconicity is based far more in the visual reality of the performer than is the case with most iconic signs in music (such as those representing fountains or clouds) where a process akin to Jakobson's "intersemiotic translation" (1966, p. 233)—or rather its musical equivalent—is needed to establish the referent. In the case of a *Spielfigur*, the resultant sound formation is so intimately linked with the players' movements that the iconicity is physically embedded. Thus, by ex-

[1] Pattern recognition is a well-known element of musical learning or relearning. As Lehmann and McArthur put it: "musical features are recognized as patterns and matched to pertinent information already stored in long-term memory" (2002, p. 144). They give the Alberti bass as an example; another is the split-octave rotatory figures used extensively in the Casella Toccata.

tending Peirce's second sign trichotomy of icon, index and symbol, it may be more appropriate, at least for the performer him or herself, to introduce the notion of a *Spielfigur* as a haptic sign, of which more below.

For the pianist, there are many such *Spielfiguren*: scales, arpeggios, repeated notes, octaves and the like, and the musical genres that in particular feature such figures are studies—one thinks of Czerny or Chopin—and toccatas, in their 19th rather than their 18th-century guise, the former often rhythmically driven by a single or a limited number of these figures. For example, one of the earliest of the 19th-century toccatas, the one by Schumann, is primarily driven by oscillating double notes, whereas the later one by Ravel (which concludes his *Tombeau de Couperin* suite) is often driven by repeated notes. Both of these, and other similar cases, bespeak a particular physical activity at the keyboard which emphasises the motoric aspect.

So how might these figures signify when worked into a composition? They do in at least three ways: 1. For general, non-specialist, non-musically-literate but attentive listeners who may not be aware of the technical or theoretical means behind what they are hearing, the kinetic force of the music, signifying the more vital feelings of energy, urgency or zeal, is likely to be felt; 2. To the musically literate and appropriately informed attentive listener, this first signification may be added to through knowledge of the means by which the effects are being achieved. Such an interlocuter will be able to "see" the hand (or other) actions required by reading the notational signs embedded in the score and can literally see them if watching a performance; 3. To the pianist-performer, added to the first two significations is the act of playing itself: knowledge and real-time experience of the motions needed to realise the score's notation, motions that will have been practised and prepared over a period of time. Arnie Cox has described this as "physical empathy that involves imagining making the sounds we are listening to" (2011). Cox uses the term "mimetic motor imagery", more specifically "intra-modal",[2] to describe the imagined actions currently under discussion but, in semiotic terms I would favour the notion of a haptic sign—one that signifies through bodily sensation. For the performer, it is of especial relevance because it can be experienced inwardly by looking at a score, physically empathised with when watching another's rendition and put into practice in actual performance.

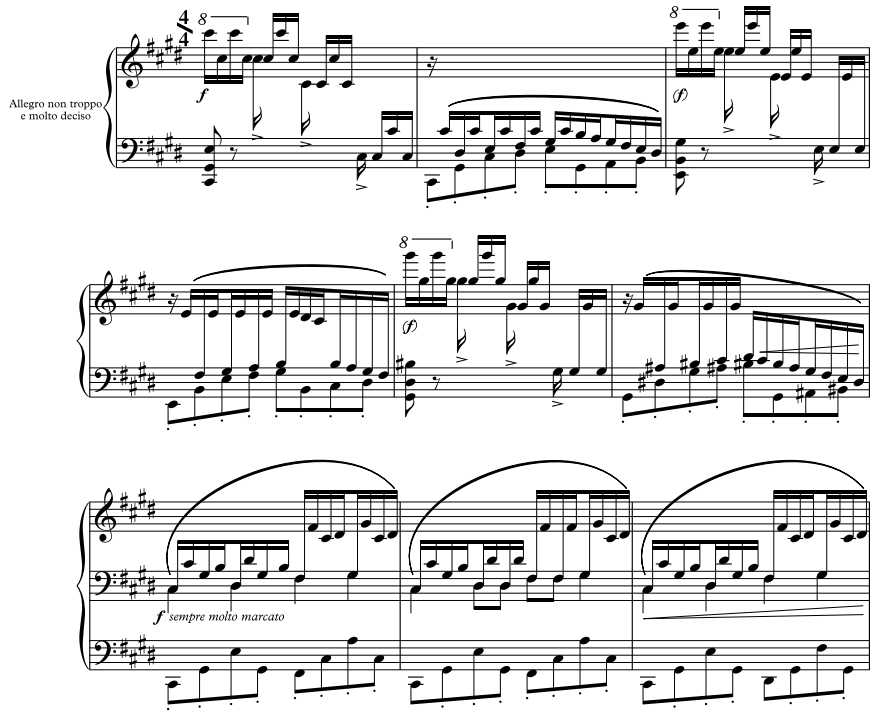
In the case of the Toccata by Alfredo Casella, one of the principal *Spielfiguren* is that of right-hand split octaves and broken chords via forearm rotation (Example 1), rather along the lines of the figures in the outer sections of Chopin's *Fantasy-Impromptu* op. 66.[3] Another one features hand alternations (see Examples 2a and b on the following pages).

[2] Cox uses the term "intra-modal" when the imagined reaction relates directly to the stimulus, his example being "finger imitation of finger movements" (2011).

[3] I am grateful to Simon Nicholls for pointing out the similarity. The two works also share the same key.

Example 1

Alfredo Casella, Toccata Op. 6*, Bars 1–9, Showing the Rotatory* Spielfigur

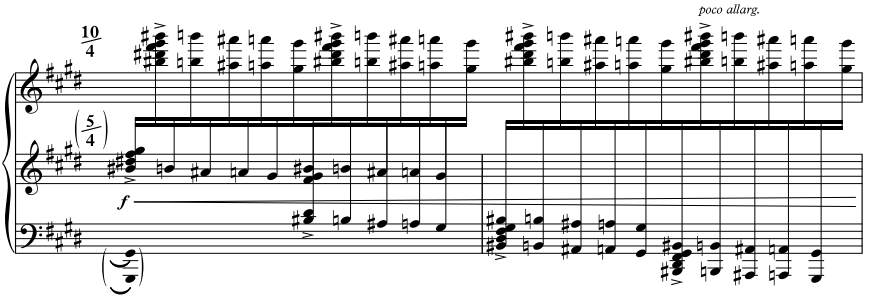


Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

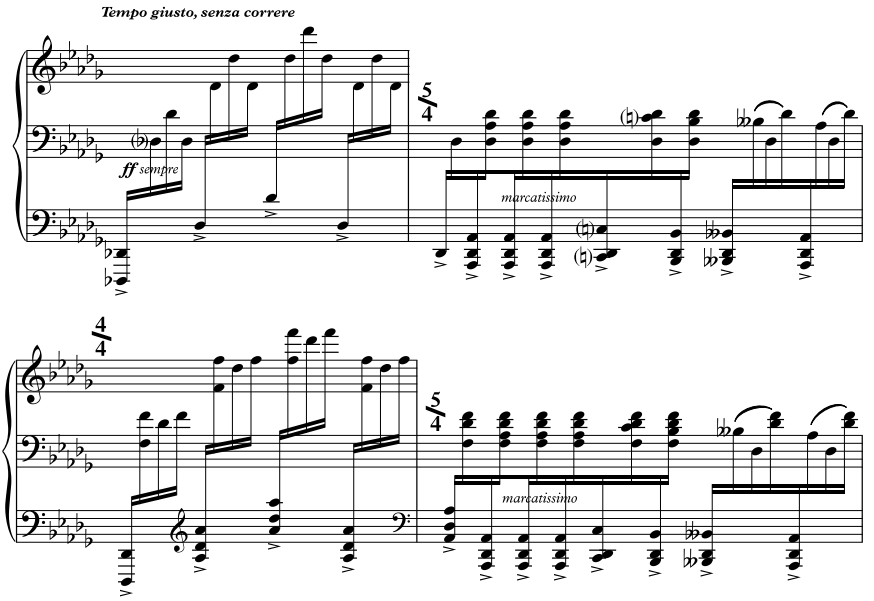
Example 2

Alfredo Casella, Toccata Op. 6*, Bars 102 and 145–148, Showing the Alternating Hands* Spielfigur

a)



b)



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

Both these pianistic figures, as with other similar ones in toccatas or motoric pieces generally, are used to generate momentum and energy. This may be conveyed to the first two types of listener identified above by means of what Stephen Davies (2011) has referred to as contagion, a process whereby musical representation of a particular emotional state is recognised but not necessarily shared (though it might be) by an attentive (or even non-attentive) listener. Da-

vies does not differentiate between live and recorded musical experiences and whilst it would be hard for even a novice listener not to latch on to the emotional excitement generated by such motoric means when listening to a recording, it would be even harder for an audience member to miss if attending a live performance where the pianist's physical engagement with the keyboard is visually as well as aurally apparent. Indeed, in the case of virtuoso repertoire, the visual element is integral to the conveyance of tension and excitement. David Lidov uses the metaphor of "flames leaping and dancing" (2012, p. 164) and less fancifully, Lina Navickaitė-Martinelli has noted that a "performer's expression is communicated to the audience through sound and body" (2023, p. 235). Turning to the third category identified above, naturally, for the performer him or herself, the physical aspect looms large, the need being not only to convey a sense of visceral excitement through sound but to have the necessary technical skill and dexterity, not to mention the temperamental aptitude, to convey the musical essence—of which more in the next section.

For the pianist, as noted above, the sign as seen on the page or witnessed in performance will immediately prompt a haptic response, an experiential and kinaesthetically sourced sense of how it will feel, muscularly, to play this music. Forearm rotation, required to play many of Casella's figurations, is a particular piano technique that involves a controlled rocking from one side of the hand to the other. Although not invented by him, the technique is often associated with the English pedagogue Tobias Matthay (1914; 2013) who analysed it closely and also emphasized the need for rotational freedom (that is, avoiding muscular tension as much as possible). The technique has since become absorbed into mainstream piano teaching and has been further elucidated by writers such as György Sándor (1981), Murray McLachlan (2014) and Penelope Roskell (2020). Likewise the hand-alternations can only be effectively performed if the playing mechanism is relaxed and the executant is able to "throw" each hand (and arm) into the keyboard in a seamless flow. Alexandra Pierce refers to this as "weight-throwing"—"tossed weight releases of the upper limbs […] the motions impelled are both deft and buoyant" (2007, p. 29). If a tense arm and, especially, forearm were maintained throughout a piece such as the Casella toccata fatigue possibly injury would almost certainly be the result.

So the *Spielfiguren* in this work, and others like it, act as signs in multiple ways, signifying, at one level of listening, momentum, energy or urgency; at the next level, additional visual and cognitive understanding of the physical actions involved; and, at the third level, a further haptic and muscle-embedded sensation. The *Spielfiguren* as they are used in the Casella and other toccatas, whilst signs in themselves, are also symptomatic of a more overarching performance practice: that of virtuosity. It may seem an extension too far to describe virtuosity as a performance practice—a term normally associated with HIP (historically informed performance)—but given that, in terms of piano performance, virtuosity has a particular resonance with 19th-century pianism, in particular that of Liszt,

the descriptor seems appropriate, as will become apparent. So it is now pertinent to consider this subject and its significations.

3. Virtuosity

3.1. Virtuosity as Work Property and Performance Practice

The early 19th century was a crucial period for the development of the piano as an instrument so it is no surprise that numerous methods by authors such as Cramer, Hummel, Czerny and Kalkbrenner appeared alongside studies (or exercises) by the aforementioned as well as by Chopin and Liszt. It is therefore unsurprising that the toccata as we now know it, as opposed to its baroque predecessor, evolved in tandem with these instrumental developments, the examples by Schumann and Czerny coming early on in the field. Indeed toccatas may be thought of as a sub-species of studies. Where studies can focus on any aspect of technique including, for example, chordal playing, legato playing, staccato or cantabile touches as well as on virtuoso techniques such as brilliant runs, chromatic scales and octaves, toccatas betoken the more technically extrovert side of piano playing. If a composer wishes to write a toccata the focus will almost certainly be on musical exuberance allied to technical brilliance, *Spielfiguren* often featuring prominently.

Clearly, toccatas raise the issue of virtuosity and its role as a musical signifier. It is often viewed as a phenomenon that, as a performance practice, draws attention to itself (more specifically the performer) rather than to the work in which it is featured. Jim Samson links virtuosity to the rise of individualism in the 19th century: "Virtuosity […] can be regarded as the natural outcome of the performer's quest for autonomy. It was the magnet […] drawing the listener away from the qualities of the work towards the qualities of the performer" (2003, p. 74), following on from which he writes: "[v]irtuosity presents rather than represents. It encourages us to wonder at the act rather than to commune with the work and its referents by way of the act" (p. 84). Such sentiments go back at least as far as the 19th century. Lucia Ruprecht argues that

> [n]ineteenth-century discourses on musical virtuosity can be characterised by their concern with the virtuoso as a *false artist*. Unfaithful to the composer's, or "true" artist's, will, virtuoso musicians drew much criticism for being more obsessed with their own personality than with the immaterial realm of musical imagination. (2013, p. 323)

It may be thinking such as this which has contributed to the bad name that virtuosity has, in more musically puritanical circles, tended to acquire. The phrase "empty virtuosity" [4] springs to mind, where seemingly all that matters is the

[4] The term "empty virtuosity" was used by Liszt's biographer Lina Ramann (1882) to describe piano playing in 1830s Paris.

executant's technique, the music itself being of little worth or, if it is of any worth, it is masked by the performer's ego.

The implication of such a state of affairs is that virtuosity and musical works are separable, the former, by drawing attention to the performer, somehow obscuring the latter. This may be true in the case of a performer whose exaggerated antics or facial expressions at the keyboard can be construed as self-seeking (although these are not observable if the performance is an audio recording), but if all the pianist is doing is performing what the work demands it is hard to sustain that s/he is drawing attention away from the work, since the virtuosity is embedded in the very fabric of such a work. Where this fabric is constructed, as it is in so many toccatas, by the motoric repetition of *Spielfiguren* it is more likely that by underplaying the virtuoso aspect of the work and failing to "wow" the receiver, the performer is falling short in his or her duty to that work. Lydia Goehr proposes the view that a *Werktreue* ideal is met if a performance achieves "transparency" which allows "the work to 'shine' through and be heard in and for itself" (2007, p. 232). Jane O'Dea states that "[t]here exists a large body of musical compositions whose central qualities do not include the display of virtuoso skillfulness. […] Technical skills are incidental in works like these" (2000, p. 49) and she identifies a Bach fugue or a simple Mozart sonata as examples. Virtuoso display of the exhibitionist sort is certainly not a particular feature in these cases but the expert handling of line, texture, mood and character in such music is also dependent on the technical skill of the performer, so even here, the performer's mechanical aptitude perforce advertises itself in the service of *Werktreue*. It is still not possible for the performer entirely to hide behind the work. However, in the case of avowedly virtuoso works such as Liszt's *Douze études d'exécution transcendante*, by emphasizing the virtuosity and drawing admiration from an audience, the performer is achieving work transparency more than would be the case in a performance of "tasteful" restraint. As a performance practice, virtuosity has, in the present context, some kinship with HIP, in that the attempt to reconstruct a sonic equivalence with past practices is put at the service of the work. After all, Liszt himself wrote in the 1850s that "virtuosity is not an outgrowth but an indispensable element of music" (as cited in Karosi, 2014, p. 7) and in an essay concerning Clara Schumann: "on its breath hangs the life and death of the artwork entrusted to it" (as cited in Larkin, 2015, p. 216). Likewise, Stephen Davies, in connection with the finale of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata Op. 106, believes that the technical demands made on the performing pianist are a feature of the work itself. In other words virtuosity signifies not just a performer's technical skill and a concomitant sense of difficulties overcome but an ability to realise and project the essence of a virtuoso work. In the process, this does indeed draw attention to the skill of the performer, but the one needs the other.

There is also a further signification for the live audience. Jim Samson has noted that virtuosity is a two-way process:

> Audiences shape it almost as much as performers; they mould it to their own needs […]. We can recognise already in the accounts of Paganini's concertising […] a type of listener familiar enough in today's world […] the aficionado of this or that celebrity performer, the disciple who fetishes the performer and the performance […] and in so doing feeds and catalyses a cult of virtuosity rather than a cult of the work. (Samson, 2003, p. 78)

In an article about the pianist-entertainer Liberace, critic Edward Rothstein shed further light on how this "cult" operates:

> Both then and now, in both Liszt and Liberace, the insistence on regal mythic powers in the midst of ordinariness, all this is not extraneous to the figure of the virtuoso, but part of his substance, the signs to an audience of the meaning in this nineteenth-century music, or its contemporary popular descendants […] what is dreamed of in the music is made real on the stage; what is heard is also seen. (Rothstein, 1984, pp. 25–29)

Rothstein suggests that the music's "meaning" is in part embodied by the figure of the virtuoso which parallels my arguments above concerning virtuosity's work-constitutive properties. There is a nexus of relations between all parties involved but one might nevertheless say that if, from the performer's perspective, virtuosity signifies a "look-at-me" attitude, for the live audience it signifies a "look at you" attitude, creating a mutual pact of admiration. So although as argued above, virtuosity can be integral to a work, with a sincere performance reflecting a virtuoso "cult" whilst simultaneously espousing a *Werktreue* ideal, its signification is nonetheless decidedly performer-centric.

3.2. Virtuosity and Death

There are however, other ways in which virtuosity has been thought to signify. Bálint Karosi (2014) has noted Liszt's use of virtuosity to signify a link with death, citing works such as *Totentanz* (1849) and *Funérailles* (1853, from *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*). In *Totentanz*, a set of variations on the *Dies Irae* theme—*Dies Irae* being part of the Latin *Missa pro defunctis*—Karosi hears a "drama without words between the soloist and the plainchant theme, where virtuosity is central to the dramatic opposition between the piano, the orchestra and the chant" (2014, p. 8). He concludes by asserting that for Liszt, virtuosity "was a poetic rather than technical tool, essentially serving his artistic ideas of communicating emotional and metaphysical messages" (2014, pp. 9–10) and that "The development of virtuosity enabled […] composers to vividly depict individual struggle and drama" (2014, p. 12). So here Karosi is including individuality in his exegesis but he is taking the performer-centric aspect to another level. In the case of *Totentanz*, the virtuosity may be interpreted as a sign of a dramatic battle with death, the latter being essentially a macabre and destructive force to be confronted. Another example of the macabre in music is the same composer's

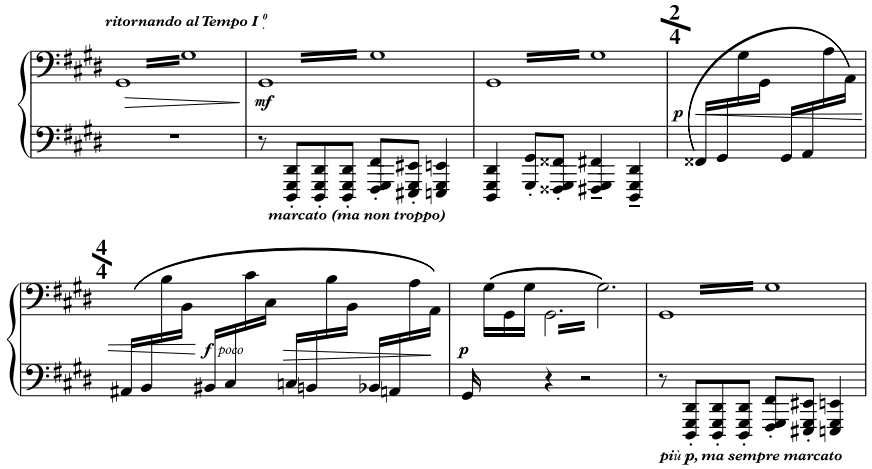
first *Mephisto* Waltz (1862) in which the death-figure is Mephistopheles or the devil, thereby extending the signifying field of virtuosity into the realm of diablerie—perhaps a legacy of Berlioz's *Songe d'une nuit du sabbat* which closes his *Symphonie fantastique*. Apart from the "love" episode in the middle of this "diabolical scherzo", as Vladimir Jankélévitch (1979, p. 52) characterises the *Mephisto* Waltz, it is a celebration of virtuosity or, to quote David Larkin, "an unabashed thematizing of the power of virtuosity" (2015, p. 216) and a popular candidate for inclusion in piano recitals, one with which performers can present their technical and narrative credentials, both being essential to the work.[5]

But to return to the subject of toccatas, these are natural homes for virtuosity and are rarely if ever overtly pictorial, the Casella Toccata being no exception. In the case of the Liszt pieces discussed above, there are some bespoke signifying features employed. For example: the use of a funeral march in *Funérailles*; the use of the *Dies Irae* chant in *Totentanz*; and the invocation of an episode from Nikolaus Lenau's 1836 version of the *Faust* legend as a programme for the *Mephisto* Waltz's narrative. However, programmes aside, there is always an element of "living dangerously" when a performer tackles a piece of virtuoso repertoire. This "danger" is amusingly expressed by Debussy's fictional Monsieur Croche: "There is always the hope that [when attending a virtuoso performance] something dangerous may happen: Mr. X may play the violin with Mr. Y on his shoulders" (1927, p. 22). Rather more in earnest, Friedrich Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science* extolled the taking of risks: "the secret of realising the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is: to *live dangerously*. Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships out into uncharted seas!" (Nietzsche, 1977, p. 208). His examples all carry the risk of failure and death, and whilst rather less dramatic, the performance of virtuoso repertoire carries with it a risk of failure—of a metaphorical on-stage death—prompting poor reviews, conceivably a down-turn in career prospects. Despite these possible parallels between the real-life courting of death and its on-stage equivalent, the signification of virtuosity in toccatas, devoid of programmatic markers, is unlikely to embrace a more graphic index to death. However, in the Casella Toccata, the growling repeated low chords at bar 77 et al. (Example 3) which are subsequently combined in bars 92 and 98 with alternating G-sharp and D pedal notes—the tritonal "devil's interval"—clearly point to a topic of the macabre.

[5] The programme for the *Mephisto* Waltz is drawn from an episode in Lenau's (as opposed to Goethe's) *Faust*.

Example 3

Alfredo Casella, Toccata Op. 6*, Bars 76–82, a Macabre Topic*



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

3.3. Virtuosity and the Sublime

Both Lucia Ruprecht (2013) and Alexander Stefaniak (2016) link virtuosity to the notion of the sublime. As the latter has it, the sublime in late 18th- and early 19th-century philosophy

> elaborated the central belief that one experienced the sublime by observing phenomena of astonishing, even fearsome, power and grandeur, which, under the right circumstances, could supposedly overwhelm beholders' sensory and cognitive faculties and inspire a mixture of attraction, admiration, trepidation, even discomfort. (Stefaniak, 2016, p. 436)

—a sort of awe-inspiring beauty. The concept was primarily associated with nature and natural phenomena—as typically depicted by John Martin in, for example, his painting *The Destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii*. Edmund Burke (1757) explained it thus: "The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully is Astonishment, and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended" (p. 41). By a process of transfer—or "translation" which, according to Małgorzata Grajter is a "dynamic negotiation and mediation between different subjects" (2024, p. 24)—Stefaniak notes that the imagery used by contemporary authors writing about Liszt was infused with sublime terminology: "reviewers compared [Liszt] to Greek god-heroes (Atlas, for example) and powerful natural phenomena (including Niagara Falls) and reported feelings of trembling and awe" (2016, p. 436).

In a recollection of a Liszt concert given in 1842 in St Petersburg, the Russian critic Vladimir Stasov wrote:

> We had never in our lives heard anything like this; we had never been in the presence of such a brilliant, passionate, demonic temperament, at one moment rushing like a whirlwind, at another pouring forth cascades of tender beauty and grace. Liszt's playing was absolutely overwhelming. (as cited in Walker, 1983, p. 376)

Dana Gooley (2004) believes that

> [t]he sheer quantity of information [Liszt] put forth was far beyond what audiences were accustomed to hearing and seeing at a virtuoso concert and exceeded what their minds could reasonably process. Listening to him was the aural equivalent of experiencing the sublime. (Gooley, 2004, p. 47)

The above accounts tell of contemporary reactions to the Liszt phenomenon and it must be remembered that such audiences had never witnessed anything like the technical prowess, power or personal magnetism that, by all accounts, the young Liszt was able to command. So, in addition to the foregoing ingredients, novelty value may also be added. However, where pianistic virtuosity is concerned, at least in the context of current mainstream piano performance, the ingredient of novelty value has long since disappeared. Thus when assessing a quality such as the sublime in relation to the Casella Toccata—or indeed any virtuoso work—and modern performance, one perhaps needs to exercise some caution.

When Liszt first wowed his audiences with his then seemingly overwhelming virtuosity or when an unsuspecting public heard the 15-year-old Clara Wieck deliver the first performance of Schumann's Toccata Op. 7 in 1834, they may well have been overwhelmed by feelings of admiration, trepidation or even discomfort at the spectacle that was causing them astonishment. But in the twenty-first century such feats have become commonplace, sometimes even achieved by children. As Hans-Georg Gadamer reminds us it would be foolish to aim for "a contemporaneousness with the author or original reader by means of a reconstruction of his historical horizon" (1977, p. 101). In any case, 19th-century sensibilities were very different from those of today and, with the passage of time and ongoing advances in technique, virtuosity has almost become a cliché.

Virtuosity may be unexceptional in modern performance and cynics may tire of hearing works such as the Liszt sonata, Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*, Balakirev's *Islamey* or the *Brahms-Paganini Variations* which feature in the programmes of many an aspiring pianist, eager to display his or her virtuoso credentials. Nevertheless, if reviews are anything to go by, technical display is still capable of dazzling an audience. For example from Susan Miron reviewing a recital by Evgeny Kissin we read: "The clarity of his playing and voicing was revelatory, but at the service of making this overlooked piece shine with commanding brilliance […] technique to die for […] beauty, poetry and, yes,

unbelievable chops" (2023);[6] and from *New York Times*'s Zachary Woolfe on Yuja Wang: "playing, with electric mastery, all four of Rachmaninoff's dizzyingly difficult piano concertos and his Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini […] the kind of feat for which the phrase 'once in a lifetime' was invented" (2023). One is reminded of David Huron's explanation of how the familiar still has the capacity to surprise.

> A slamming door will typically evoke a startle [sic] response […]. Now consider what happens when you catch a glimpse of the closing door just before it is about to slam. In this case you *know* that the door is about to make a loud sound […]. Oddly you still experience a startle response. To be sure the response is often not as marked as when the door slams without any advanced warning […]. It is as though some part of your brain fails to get the message that there is no danger. (Huron, 2007, p. 226)

The rather playful analogy drawn here between a slamming door and an audience expecting but still being impressed by virtuosity when witnessing an expert performance of, say, Balakirev's *Islamey* likewise suggests that performative "danger" and its capacity to thrill vicariously has not entirely gone away. Perhaps capitalising on this, composers have continued to add virtuoso showpieces to the piano repertoire, Ligeti's study *The Devil's Staircase* (1988–1994) and, very recently, Graham Fitkin's *Rapid Unscheduled Dissasembly* (2024)[7] furnishing good examples, especially with their references to the macabre and destruction. So we may still experience a certain awe at a taxing task carried out supremely well but are less likely to experience those quasi-religious feelings of transcendence conjured in the rapturous prose cited above which is, in any case, emblematic of a 19th-century world-view. Our astonishment is modified by foreknowledge but not banished, so an element of the sublime signification remains.

4. Narrativity

Spielfiguren have been shown to contribute to what I have designated the performance practice of virtuosity (albeit work-embedded) and all that this signifies. Earlier I wrote that these two areas may be further subsumed into a musical narration, so it is now time to address the latter idea. Much has been written in recent years about musical narrativity (e.g., Almén, 2008; 2020; Grabócz, 2014; 2020; Hatten, 2018; Klein; 2013), often in connection with complex musical structures and ways in which various agencies operate within these. Purely instrumental music's ability to have a narrative function has during the early years of the twenty-first century become, in the words of Byron Almén "an established discipline, with scholars comfortably employing narrative approaches as part of

[6] "Chops" is a colloquial term for exceptional technical strength.

[7] Written for pianist Kathryn Stott's farewell solo recital tour during which the work was premiered.

their theoretical/analytical palette" (2020, p. 170). Theories of musical narrativity have varied from the complex (Almén 2008; 2020) to the relatively straightforward as with the one from Eero Tarasti in which he posits narrativity as a "[human] competency that involves putting temporal events into a certain order, a syntagmatic continuum. This continuum has a beginning, development and end; and the order created in this way is called, under given circumstances, a narration" (1994, p. 24). Even more succinctly, Márta Grabócz defines it thus: "musical narrativity is the mode of organisation of signifying units within a musical form" (2021, p. 201).

Inevitably analyses employing a narrative method have tended to focus on large, composite works, a good example being Márta Grabócz's own masterly analysis of Liszt's Sonata in B minor (2009) in which topics such as "Macabre quest and struggle" or "Pastoral-amoroso" are identified as signifying units and which are seen to alternate and interact across seven sections; these in turn are subsumed into the narrative complex of sonata form with its usual five components (introduction, exposition, development, recapitulation and coda).

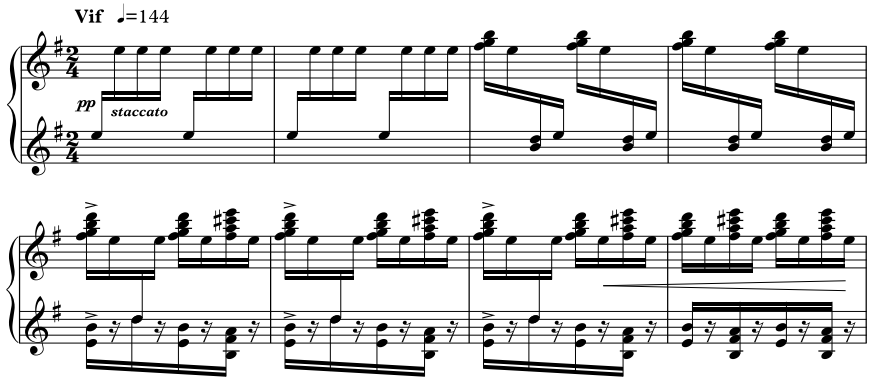
So can a toccata—not typically a musical genre characterized by multiple signifying units, complex syntax or grandiose design—be a vehicle for narrativity? According to Samson: "For the composer to prescribe virtuosity is to weaken or obfuscate any sense of an idea represented, a story told, a meaning rendered. […] The telling is destined to exceed the tale" (2003, p. 84). Toccatas are predominantly shortish pieces driven by a limited number of figures and tend to adopt the same affect throughout, so it is certainly difficult to see them as obvious channels for narrative-bearing music.

However, in terms of signifying units one can certainly identify virtuosity which, although a worldwide phenomenon in music of all sorts, in a piano composition signifies, as described above, a type of performer-centric pianism with the ghost of Liszt still present as well as, according to context, the macabre and the sublime. *Spielfiguren* are also, as argued above, signifying units, their alternation, interaction and morphing generating both the virtuosity and the musical substance. But what of a narrative structure and the drawing together of these elements into musical form? One can here turn to Kofi Agawu (1991) whose beginning-middle-end paradigm (pre-echoing Tarasti's) may be relevant to plot structure in many toccatas, because they tend to be cumulative, that is they start by presenting an idiomatic figure at a certain tempo (usually fast); in the middle, this is developed, possibly modified a little (but without losing the basic momentum) and then the end is reached, often a climax in which the technical difficulties are intensified—one thinks of the Ravel toccata from *Le tombeau de Couperin* (see Example 4a, b and c) or the finale of Prokofiev's 7th sonata (a toccata in all but name). This makes the genre seem essentially teleological.

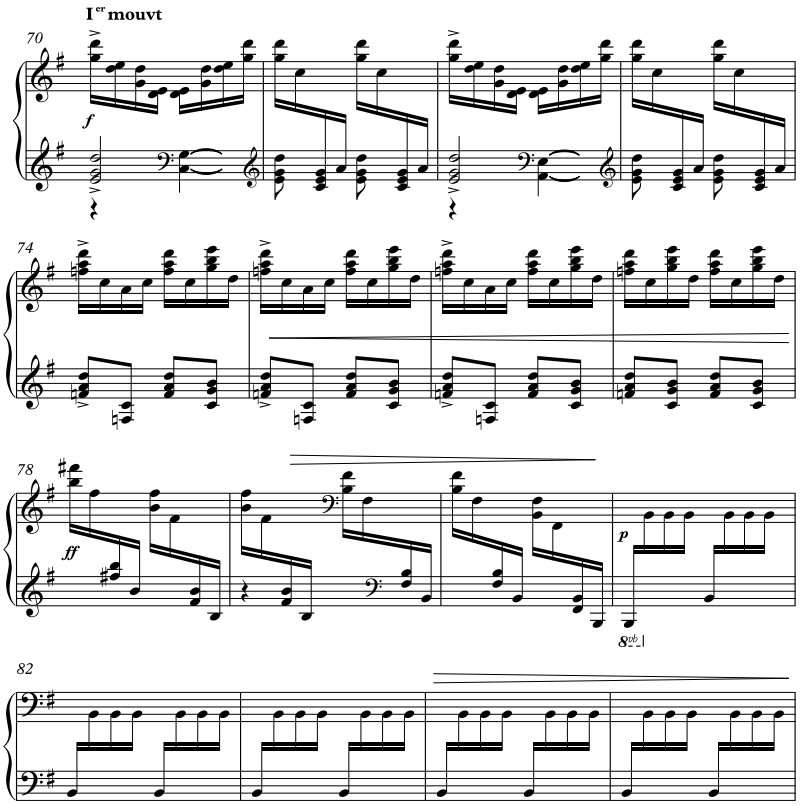
Examples 4a, 4b and 4c

Ravel, Toccata from Le tombeau de Couperin*, Bars 1–8, 70–85 and 234–251, Indicating a Beginning-Middle-End Cumulative Effect*

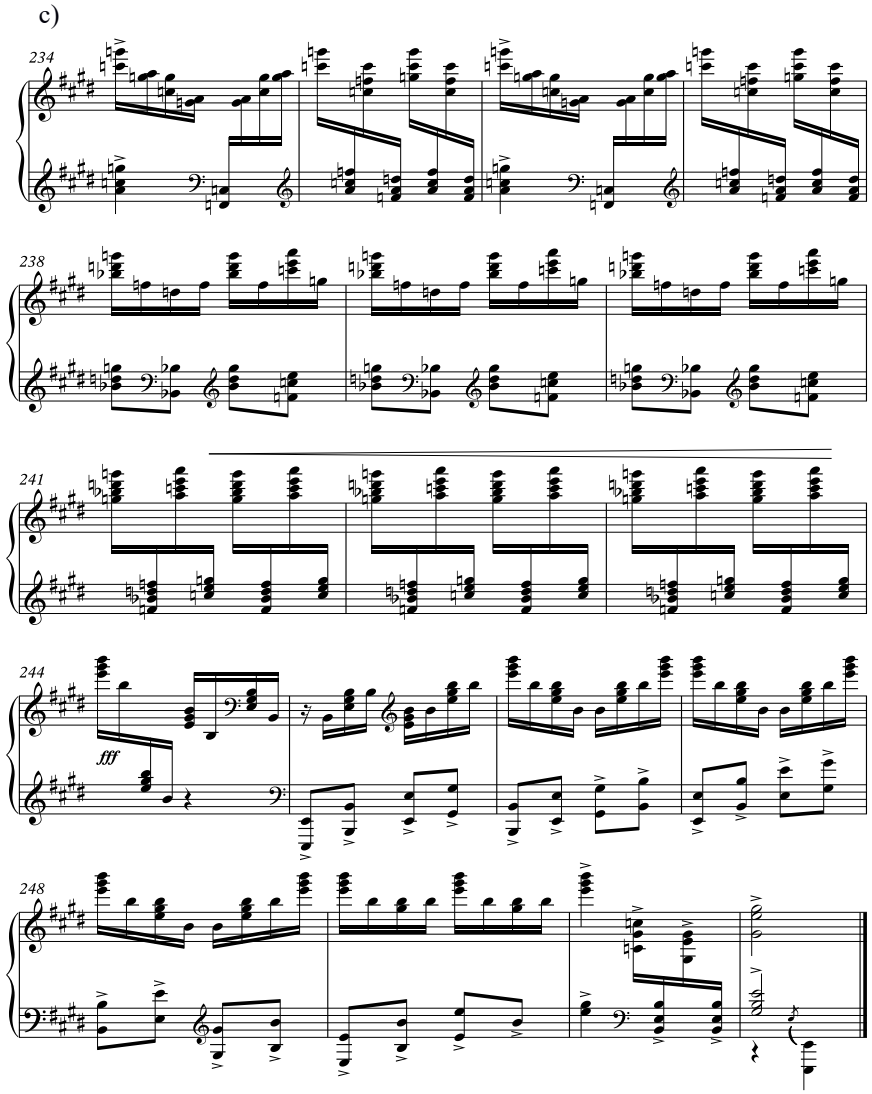
a)



b)



c)



Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

Nevertheless, this need not blind us to the fact that a more formal design may also be present. In the Schumann toccata sonata form, one of the principal narrative devices of the 19th century, may be detected as it can also in the toccatas by Prokofiev and Ravel, even if only remotely in the case of the latter. The figures in Casella's toccata are likewise arranged into a type of sonata form although this is by no means a text-book example. Put briefly, this works as follows:

Exposition (bars 1–30): The introductory material features the forearm-rotation figure and scales; C-sharp minor is established; a second idea appears, extending the rotatory figure but essentially remaining in C-sharp minor. The exposition is repeated.

Development (bars 31–103): This develops the rotatory and scale figures but introduces new broken-chord patterns building to the first big climax; a fresh idea—hinting at the macabre—enters based on chordal textures within a limited pitch range; this joins forces with the rotatory and scale figures; it is combined with a prolonged dominant preparation building to the second big climax.

Recapitulation and coda (104–end): The exposition material is repeated which leads to a coda passage in the tonic major wherein the rotatory figures, the scales, the broken chords and the chordal patterns are extended and blended to form the third and biggest climax.

Because the piece lacks the strong contrasts of key and mood offered by conventional 18th-century sonata form design, this aspect of narrativity is somewhat weakened so, as hinted above, we need to look elsewhere for the chief narrative driver. It will be observed that, in terms of dramatic effect, there are three main climax points, the third being the most powerful. In this regard one is reminded of the role of high points (Agawu, 2009) as narrative markers. Kofi Agawu points out that

> a single high point typically dominates a single composition, but given the fact that a larger whole is often constituted by smaller parts, each of which might have its own intensity curve, the global highpoint may be understood as a product of successive local high points. (2009, p. 61)

Casella's toccata illustrates this depiction very well in that there are two main preparatory high points which lead the music to a crowning high point which essentially starts at bar 134 and gains in intensity as the end approaches.

This end-orientation is, as discussed above, a feature of toccatas in general but it would be worth examining in more detail how it operates in the Casella. There is a lesser high point at the end of the exposition (from bar 27), giving this section its own micro-narrative. For the performer the composer indicates at bar 27 *più f* and, in terms of content, introduces a greater degree of chromaticism than heretofore with the music moving rapidly through G-sharp^7, A^7, B^7, and F^7, a harmonic scheme that is presented four times, an octave higher on the third iteration and another octave up on the fourth, thus creating a heightened sense of musical urgency. This technique is further exploited in the development section where rotatory broken chords, frequently (though not exclusively) related by tones and thirds, are regularly featured, often in an upward trajectory, passing incidentally through many keys but without establishing a "home". From bar 62, descending chromatic scales are added to the mix inexorably preparing for the

first real high point which is reached, as mentioned, at bar 74 on the dominant of the home key. This is a tonal area conventionally related to exposition second-subjects but here it is tellingly delayed until half way through the development section, and approximately half way through the work as a whole. This means that all the major climax points are reserved for the second half of the piece, a significant element in the work's narrative end-orientation (see the intensity level graph in Figure 1). Over a lengthy tension-inducing dominant preparation (G-sharp), periodically interrupted with a threatening tritonal D, chromatic scales continue as a feature in this "macabre" passage (see Example 3), culminating at bar 102 in a powerful harmonized chromatic scale descent performed with the alternating hands *Spielfigur*, (see Example 2a) thus taking the intensity level a notch higher than heretofore. The lesser high-point preparation mentioned earlier is, after its reappearance in the recapitulation, capped by the biggest and most prolonged of the three principal climaxes (see Example 2b) in which the rotatory and chromatic figures are combined with fast-moving harmonies leading to a blazing ending firmly rooted in the tonic major (notated as D-flat major). All of this indicates a long-term goal reached, a strong sense of difficulties conquered and a narrative culmination. Michael Klein has observed that, prior to 1900, music was concerned primarily with "narratives of success" (2013, p. 19) and one could apply his thought to this toccata which, coming as it does from 1906, is still heavily influenced by a 19th-century paradigm.

Reduced to its essentials, we can in diagrammatic form (see Figure 1), plot the narrative described above, showing the overall sonata form design but, more importantly for the musical effect, the use of *Spielfiguren* and the way these are combined. For the listener, the intensity graph reflecting the dynamics and textural density, indicative of the narrative trajectory, is probably the most important feature of the diagram. The main structural sections are shown at the top, under that are the *Spielfiguren*, with the principal ones in bold. Below this are the main keys and lastly the intensity level graph.

5. Conclusion

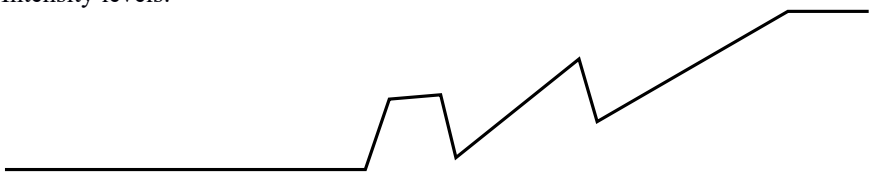
To summarise, this essay has traced a path from the identification of musical elements (*Spielfiguren*) drawn together into a performance practice (virtuosity) thence to a summation in musical form and narrative. The latter was shown to be teleological in nature and this is clearly illustrated in the graphic depiction at the bottom of Figure 1. In the hands of a skilful performer, the musical journey will bespeak a heady excitement, culminating in the coda with an orgy of sound and a definite sense of arrival and struggles overcome, a sense that is enhanced by the change from minor to major. The *Spielfiguren* and concomitant virtuosity are, along with their haptic signification for the performing pianist, crucial to this narrative journey, yielding the physical actions from which the musical energy is born and moulded.

Figure 1

Diagram showing the form, Spielfiguren *and narrative design in Alfredo Casella's* Toccata Op. 6

Exposition (repeated), bars 1–30	Development, bars 31–103	Recapitulation and coda, bars 104–end
***Figure*: Forearm rotation**	**Forearm rotation**	**Forearm rotation**
Scales	Scales	Hand-alternation scales
	Broken chords **Rhythmic chords**	Broken chords **Rhythmic chords**
Main keys: C-sharp minor	C-sharp minor C major + modulations (G-sharp pedal)	C-sharp minor D-flat major

Intensity levels:



Bar 1–63 64–75 76–103 104–133 134–end

Note. Source: author's own elaboration.

It was noted earlier that virtuosity has sometimes been understood to signify both death and the sublime. It may be unsafe to suggest that the combined effect of the elements used in this toccata signify either of these in any well-defined way although as previously noted the journey is tempered with macabre references perhaps signalling danger if not death. In performance, the advanced level of engagement with the keyboard and sense of athletic exhilaration tell of "living dangerously" (Nietzsche, 1977, p. 208) and, at the end, there is the sense of a battle won. More generally they also signify a virtuosity that draws attention equally to both the work and the performer with an ongoing tendency to "wow" audiences, despite the latter's expectations, so a hint of the sublime lingers on.

The work and the work in performance have demonstrated a crucial interface throughout this essay so I will end with a few thoughts about performing the Casella toccata, ones which may well apply to other toccatas as well. The performer needs to be a master of the *Spielfiguren*, with their demands in particular on forearm rotation and hand/arm alternation. S/he will need to be able to sustain the execution over an extended period—typically the toccata takes about 5,5 minutes to play—without muscular stiffening if the pianism is to remain fluent

and rhythmically even. My own preparation in this regard involved the equivalent of a sportsman going into training. If ever tiring or stiffness occurred, based on prior experience, the best plan was to stop playing and only go back to work once the muscles had rested and relaxed. Building up endurance this way, on a daily basis, was carried out until execution entered the stage of "unconscious competence".[8] This enabled the virtuosity inherent in the music to emerge in performance without undue effort. But virtuosity needs more than just ease of execution; it also needs projection, temperament and a willingness on the part of the performer to "show off" (or to live dangerously) if the musical exuberance inherent in the work is to be conveyed to full effect. Again personal preparation was paramount here. One way of achieving a sense of projection was to deliver practice "performances" imagining audience members in the room and their possible reaction. Using a camcorder to video a studio performance was another useful strategy giving me something to perform to and then to analyse. And finally, before taking the work on stage, performing to a critical listener and receiving feedback was of immense value. Technical mastery and virtuoso exhibitionism will however be less telling if these elements are not subsumed into the musical/performative narrative. Observing dynamic markings, yielding high as well as low points, undoubtedly aids the acoustic plot portrayal but attention especially to the three climax points identified above is vital for the teleology to be clearly communicated. So when the performer reaches bar 74 it would be as well for him or her to hold something in reserve for the next climax and then, at bar 102, to have still more in reserve for the ultra-climactic coda where all the metaphorical stops can be pulled out. To achieve this, one strategy I used in my own practice was consciously to underplay the two lesser climaxes and then play out in the third one. The next stage was to add a little more to the second one and finally to project the necessary gradations. A sense of ultimate arrival and conquest was thus more likely to be communicated to the listener. As already mentioned, Jim Samson averred that, with virtuosity, "the telling is destined to exceed the tale" (2003, p. 84). However I would contend, in the case of this toccata and probably others too, that whilst the telling is important, so is the tale told!

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[8] Noel Burch's Conscious Competence Learning Model (1970) identifies four learning stages from "unconscious incompetence" through "conscious incompetence" and "conscious competence", thence to "unconscious competence" whereby acquired skills can be taken for granted and no longer need be the focus of attention (Swart, 2022).

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Article

ANNA NOWAK *

THE POTENTIAL OF NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AS FACTORS OF THE COMPOSER'S IDIOM

SUMMARY: Among the factors that define a composer's individual style, narrative strategies may be significant as others organising principles. In contemporary works narrative strategies also allow revealing us the musical meaning of new sound orders, their ideological foundations and the evolution of the composer's style and aesthetics. Arguments confirming the above thesis are provided by analyzes of solo concertos by Polish contemporary composers: Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki, and Zygmunt Krauze.

KEYWORDS: narrative strategies, factors of musical style, composer's idiom, contemporary music.

1. Components of Narrative and Methods of Analysing Them

A composer's individual style—as Leonard B. Meyer showed in his book *Style and Music* (1989)—is the result of a choice of specific musical means made by a creator in the process of composing musical works. Meyer's second, significant theory states that the style is determined not only by technique and formal means but also by what was intended to be expressed via these means. For a scholar of musical oeuvres who, guided by Meyer's concept of style, wishes to describe the specifics of a composer's idiom, it will be crucial to identify those factors of the style that appear constitutive for a given oeuvre. Studying

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them allows one to judge the uniqueness of a given body of musical work, its ideological foundations and, consequently, the artistic identity of its creator. The organising principles of a musical work that focus the researcher's attention in such a case are usually tonal and harmonic means, individual composition techniques, metre and rhythm means, textures, sound and form. They are used by most authors of musicological works in order to recognise the unique style of a given composition or musical work. Among the factors that define a composer's individual style, narrative strategies may also be significant.

The methodological potential of musical analyses with a narrative profile became the subject of intensive research already in the last decades of the 20th century. Authors of works in the field of musical narratology, such as Eero Tarasti (1994; 2000), Raymond Monelle (2000), Vladimir Karbusicky (1986), Marta Grabócz (2009), who were inspired by the narrative theories of Tzvetan Todorov (1969), Algirdas Julien Greimas (1970; 1983), Louis Hjelmslev (1971) and others, proposed a number of narrative models used to describe the organization of signifieds in music. Marta Grabócz, who analyzed this trend, concluded: "'post-classical narratologies' (in other words, narratologies that emerged after the 'classisal' theory, i.e., since 1990) imply an almost unlimited openness to new interdisciplinary approaches and definitions" (2016, p. 329).

Marta Grabócz, whose concept of narrative strategies is the most well-known and widespread in the semiotic-oriented musicological community, refers to the term musical narrativity to "the mode of expressive organization of an instrumental piece", thus linking the notion of signification to the notion of musical narrativity. In her analyzes of musical works she have applied "the elements of structural semantics, notably the narrative grammar of Greimas, including the narrative program, the elementary structure of signification, narrative syntax, etc." (2016, p. 331). New methodological concepts of studying narrativity as a component of musical pieces were presented in the first decades of the 21st century by researchers such as Byron Almén, Nicolas Reyland, and Michael Klein.

Narrative analysis began to be used in Polish musicological literature relatively recently. The first monograph devoted to stage music based on a story of Romeo and Juliet is the book by Małgorzata Pawłowska, *Muzyczne narracje o kochankach z Werony, Wprowadzenie do narratologii muzycznej*, which was published in 2016 [Exploring Musical Narratology: the Romeo and Juliet Myth in Music, 2018]. In the area of purely instrumental music, the first work that characterises contemporary compositional work from a narratological perspective is Malwina Marciniak's doctoral thesis, *Pamięć gatunku, nowe idee, nowe narracje w polskich koncertach fortepianowych XXI wieku* [Memory of the Genre, New Ideas, New Narratives in Polish Piano Concertos of the 21st Century] (Marciniak, 2023). This article is an attempt to find arguments confirming the important style-forming function of narrative strategies using the narrative models of the authors cited above and the understanding of the term narrative by Katarzyna Rosner. The presented thesis is provided by analyzes of solo concertos

by Polish contemporary composers: Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki, and Zygmunt Krauze.

Narrative, as one of the key categories of modern humanities, is defined by Polish cultural philosopher Katarzyna Rosner as "the human ability to frame actions and events unfolding within a sequence […] into comprehensive structures of meaning" (1999, p. 11). Rosner, emphasising the style-forming nature of narrative as a structure of understanding, as well as its broad applications in science, indicates three constitutive components of narrative: (1) temporal development, (2) configurability of ingredients, (3) closure (1999, p. 11). Thus, narrative guides the attention of a scholar of musical works (1) to the way in which the temporal structure of the work of art has been organised, (2) to the relations between the elements of the musical form, (3) to the form itself as a result of the chronological ordering of musical events. Such profiling of musical analysis favours the discovery of the compositional idea of a piece, according to which the work's form was shaped.

As we know, in the twentieth century, after the rejection of the norms of the major-minor tonal system and the resulting logic of the tonal order of a piece of music, composers searched—and continue to do so—for individual ideas for creating musical narrative. The analyst's discovery of the relics of classical models of form in such works and the indication of the general principles of the work's formal construction, such as repetition, contrast and transformation, often prove insufficient to grasp what is idiomatic to a given musical oeuvre. One may risk claiming that the music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which has rejected major-minor tonality, expects an analysis oriented toward its narrative aspect. Michael Klein was among those who have identified the directions for this type of analysis, creating a map of narrative discourses (Klein, 2013, p. 5, Figure 1.1). Among the four types of discourses—narrative, non-narrative, neo-narrative and anti-narrative—three of them (non-narrative, neo-narrative and anti-narrative) allow one to delve into the meanings of works that make use of new means of musical expression and the non-traditional structuring of musical time and space.

Referring once more to Katarzyna Rosner's theories, we may assume that the specificity of individual discourses stems from the way in which the three narrative components she listed co-create the plot of the work. The first is *time*. As Jonathan D. Kramer wrote in *The Time of Music* (1988), time in music may be perceived as linear or non-linear. Only linear time, filled with a sequence of musical events that leads to a teleological listening, is inherent to narrative works.

The second component—*configurability of ingredients*—encompasses the relations that form between the factors of the musical form on the timeline. They constitute the temporal structure of the meaning of a given composition. Byron Almén arranged the resulting various musical strategies into four narrative archetypes: romance, tragedy, irony and comedy (Almén, 2008). He based these archetypes on two binary oppositions: order vs transgression and victory vs defeat.

As a prerequisite of a narratively shaped musical text, he assumed the occurrence of an act of transvaluation during its course. Another methodological proposal for delving into the significance of narrative strategies used in a work are Nicholas Reyland's narrative negations (2013, p. 35). Reyland's distinction of the four types of "narrative negations"—disnarration, denarration, subjunctive narration and bifurcated narration (2013, p. 35)—give analysts of contemporary works another perspective for interpreting a sequence of musical events as a temporal structure of a musical work.

The third of the constitutive components of narratively shaped texts is the *conclusion*. Narrative is a significant whole that has at least a beginning, middle and an end (Pawłowska, 2018). It is constituted as a "teleological sequence of events linked by some principle of causation" (Reyland, 2013, p. 35), when it is built from a minimum of two separate musical events (Krawczyk, 2007, p. 69).

One may also ask about the oft-disputed issue of a narrator in music. The understanding of a narrator I have adopted in my analyses refers to Marcin Trzęsiok's definition, who wrote "a narrator is a 'hidden' subjective force that organises the formal coherence of a musical work" (2023, p. 178).

The variety of methodological approaches to narrative in a musical work I have recalled here does not exhaust the analytical dilemmas a scholar of contemporary music encounters. There are many conceptions of shaping musical plots in music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Thus, Vera Micznik's theory of degrees of narrativity may be of help in describing the sometimes subtle differences between the various conceptions of shaping the flow of music. According to this theory, a given work may be "closer to, or farther from, the condition of narrative" (2001, p. 244).

Having at one's disposal such a variety of analytical tools for recognising the narrative strategies used in the structure of a musical work, one may take up the task of not only revealing the musical meanings of plots in works based on the non-tonal principles of organising sound material but also—as Leonard B. Meyer postulates—linking these musical elements with their ideological, extra-work meanings. What is more, by analysing the work of a given composer from this perspective, it is possible to attempt to study the evolution of this musical style factor and its relationship with the composer's aesthetic.

2. The Narrative Potential of Concertos

In order to confirm the presented arguments, I will present examples of narrative strategies used in instrumental concertos by three leading Polish musical composers of the second half of the twentieth century: Witold Lutosławski (1913–1994), Krzysztof Penderecki (1933–2020) and Zygmunt Krauze (b. 1938). Their artistic stance and compositional oeuvre became the embodiment of new ideas and means of expression in twentieth-century music. The highlighted works are also linked by a similar time of composition—the 1960s and 1970s. The last

concert discussed was created in the 1990s. In chronological order, the works were created in:

- 1967—Krzysztof Penderecki's *Capriccio per violino e orchestra*,
- 1970—Witold Lutosławski's *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra*,
- 1976—Zygmunt Krauze's *Piano Concerto No. 1*,
- 1976—Krzysztof Penderecki's *Concerto per violino ed orchestra*,
- 1995—Krzysztof Penderecki's *Metamorfosen. Concerto per violino ed orchestra No. 2*.

The work of each of the composers listed has seen many descriptions pointing out those factors of musical style that define the idiomatic nature of a given composer's music. Much space is taken up in these considerations by analyses of techniques of organising horizontal-vertical structures, means of sound, metre and rhythm and form seen from the point of view of the structural units that constitute it. From this analytical perspective, I presented extensive characteristics of the above-mentioned concertos in my monograph on the Polish instrumental concerto from the second half of the 20th century (*Współczesny koncert polski. Przemiany gatunku* [Contemporary Polish Concerto. Transformations of the Genre], 1997). These analyses became the basis for the short descriptions of the forms of the above musical works. An examination of the narrative strategies of each concerto thus opens up yet another perspective for characterising the musical style of a given composer.

Krzysztof Penderecki's *Capriccio per violino e orchestra* (1967) was not titled a "concerto", even though it represents the type of concertante music in which the plot is co-created by two opposing musical subjects—the soloist and the orchestra. The soloist's part, operating with twelve-tone material of post-serial provenance, is eminently virtuosic in character. The opposing orchestra has an extensive line-up, which allows it to achieve various constellations of instrumental sounds. Its massive, highly expressive blocks of sonoristic sounds counterbalance the soloist's vigorous phrases. Subsequent episodes of the musical rivalry that develops between the soloist and the orchestra reveal the sense of the course of the music, which is characterised by temporal development, configurability of components and closure. Let us add that we are dealing here with a neo-narrative, as the *Capriccio* was composed using a sonoristic technique. The expressive gestures of opening and closing mark the structural framework of its musical plot.

The *Capriccio* begins with a cluster of brass instruments, which will shortly be overlaid with a cluster of strings, forming, as T. A. Zieliński wrote, "an atmosphere of initial tension" (2003, p. 28). From the point of view of Almén's theory, the orchestra embodies the initial order of the work, its starting state, which is about to be disrupted by the entrance of the soloist—an oppositional, transgressive element. The *Capriccio*'s three-phase structure, a representation of

the three-part cycle of a classical instrumental concerto, ends with a cluster performed jointly by the soloist and the orchestra. The soloist's joining of the orchestra in the final cluster hints at Almén's comic archetype underlying the plot—the triumph of transgression (here the soloist) over order (the orchestra) (2008, p. 188).

In the final phase of the piece, the listeners' attention is caught by three episodes of music that parody the waltz (*Tempo di valse*) and the coda, in which the soloist plays five consonant chords that resolve into a final cluster performed jointly by the soloist and the orchestra. According to Nicolas Reyland's "narrative negations", the tonal episodes of the *Capriccio* may be interpreted as "disnarrations" (2013, p. 38). The grotesque parodies of a waltz and consonant triads appear here as an alternative world to sonoristic music, which quickly absorbs this other sonic reality.

In the 1970s, Penderecki made a profound transformation of his musical language. Mieczysław Tomaszewski described this new phase of his work as a "dialogue with a rediscovered past" (2023, p. 13). In the works created since then, including instrumental concertos, the narrative character of the musical form, which features episodes that are a kind of disnarration, has been preserved. The various archetypes of narrative strategies seen in these works confirm the constant presence of this factor of style in the composer's work.

Violin Concerto No. 1 of Krzysztof Penderecki was composed in 1976, i.e., almost a decade after *Capriccio*. It represents a different sound aesthetic, combining romantic expression with the sonic language of contemporary music. The musical themes and motifs are based on an 11-tone series made up of seconds and a tritone. In the melody, these very intervals are accompanied by minor thirds, which are also structurally important. The expanded, multiphase form of this single-movement concerto has been interpreted in various ways.

According to Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa the basic opposition between the main themes: those of the soloist and the orchestra, and the values they represent can be interpreted in terms of light and darkness, of "chiaroscuro" (1984, p. 83). Mieczysław Tomaszewski also interprets the interaction between these two musical "dramatis personae" as a struggle between the force of light—life (the soloist)—and the side of darkness—death, personified by the collective, i.e., the orchestra (2009, p. 16). The struggle of the second theme performed by the soloist, which is an element of transgression, ends in defeat. The Alménian tragic archetype confirms both interpretations of the concerto's musical plot. The two episodes marked as *Tempo di marcia, Scherzando*, which in the second and fourth phases of the *Violin Concerto* disturb the dramatic rivalry between the soloist and the orchestra, serve the same narrative function as the analogous scherzando episodes of the *Capriccio*. They briefly interrupt "the solitary struggle of the individual soloist with time and space".

Violin Concerto No. 2, Metamorphoses of Krzysztof Penderecki is a late piece, completed in 1995. Its grand, monumental form is made up of 7 movements linked by the principle of "dualism of energy and delicate lyricism"

(Zieliński, 2003, p. 124). The agogic and dynamic, as well as textural and motivic contrasts, not only form the basis for the metamorphoses of the motivic and thematic material, but also serve their expressive and melodic transformations. "The dramaturgy of *Violin Concerto No. 2* can be described as supporting the expression" (Janicka-Słysz, 2013, p. 24).

The solemn and emotional phases in the concerto are contrasted with both "moving epic actions" and scherzando episodes, which are part of the strategy of narrative negation (disnarration). In the final act of the musical drama, "[…] the string parts bring back the motif of the main theme […] and then meet the soloist, pianissimo, on the last *d* note, which constitutes the final point and resolution of the drama" (Zieliński, 2003, p. 124). At this point, Almén's archetype of romance is fulfilled—order wins over transgression. The final phase of the piece perpetuates the primordial value that is the expression of the lyrical type.

It seems that the changing character of the narrative discourses of the three violin concertos reflects no less than other elements of Krzysztof Penderecki's musical language, the changes in musical style that have occurred in the composer's work since the 1970s.

The stylistic distinctiveness of **Witold Lutosławski's** music is determined by several elements of his musical language. The composer created his own system of pitch organisation of sounds, the technique of controlled aleatoricism organising metre and rhythm structures, and the concept of the two-part form. The composer explained the purpose of his work as follows:

> When composing large-scale closed forms, I always remember that what I am principally engaged in doing is organising the process of perception of my work. […] [The] only problem is to find […] ways of activating the listener's memory and anticipation. (As cited in Rae, 1994, 118)

The quoted excerpt from the lecture *Notes on the Construction of Large-Scale Closed Forms* (Rae, 1994, p. 118) highlights the importance of narrative thinking in the composer's work. This is because, in large-scale closed forms, he based their discursive character on a unique musical idea, which in the resulting work gave a sense of plot to individual musical events. In *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* (1970), this idea is the principle of conflict between the opposing parts—the cello and the orchestra. The *Concerto* begins with a long introduction—a monologue by the soloist. As the composer explained, "the orchestra provides the element of intervention, interruption, even disruption. […] The relationship between these two forces undergoes a change in the course of the concerto" (Rae, 1994, p. 119).

The soloist's struggle with the orchestra intervening in their narrative flow results in expressive transformations of the solo voice. It evolves from *indifferente-grazioso-un poco buffo* in the introduction, through *cantabile* and *scherzoso* in the middle phase, then *precipitato-poco patetico-molto espressivo*, to *furioso* and *molto patetico* in the finale, ending with *dolente*. The result of the soloist's struggle with the orchestra, which they are ultimately able to overcome (this is

an example of the tragic archetype according to Almén's theory), is also the abandonment of the D note, which serves a centralising function in the initial phases of the piece, and the ending of the passage on an A note. There is no return to the starting point.

The composer's biographer, Charles Bodman Rae, referring to the extra-musical meanings of this piece, reflected as follows:

> If one seeks political metaphors, they can easily be found. [Referring to the struggle of the individual against the oppressive Soviet regime]. Yet the strength and potentially universal appeal of this music lies in its independence from such specific interpretations. The powerful drama can be perceived and understood in abstract, purely musical terms. (Rae, 1994, p. 123)

Zygmunt Krauze's musical style was shaped under the influence of artistic impulses stemming from Władysław Strzemiński's Unistic paintings. The artistic credo of Unism is explained by the following excerpt from the composer's statement:

> I want calm and organisation in my music. […] Any changes and movements necessary to maintain the continuity of the music are not contrasting and do not introduce new elements. […] Everything the listener discovers in the first seconds of a performance of the piece will last until the end. The beginning of the composition immediately reveals the full scale of sounds, so that nothing different, nothing new will appear again. There will be no surprises. (As cited in Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, 2001, p. 119)

Although the composer, in creating larger instrumental works, abandoned the non-contrast form, the influence of musical Unism can be seen in the way the temporal structure of a musical work is shaped. Examples of such a narrative flow include *Piano Concerto No. 1* (1976). The segmental structure of the *Concerto* uses three melodic ideas. At their core are small figurative-ornamental motifs "circling" around a selected note. These motifs are not rhythmically synchronised between individual instrumental voices, so their movement, devoid of striving, does not release musical tension. Instead, it contributes to the timbral vibration of the music that fills a given segment of the *Concerto*. The very beginning fragment of the composition is an example of developing a musical flow with a low degree of vitality.

The structural principle of Krauze's *Concerto* is a sequencing of segments, each distinguished by a different selection of orchestral instruments accompanying the soloist. The piano is present almost from the beginning to the end of the composition, constituting the continuity of the musical narrative. Its changing timbral "illumination" in successive segments is the most tangible change in the course of the concerto. This is because there are no connections between the segments of a structure designed in this way beyond the timbre and the melodic material. A meditative and contemplative disposition dominates.

Let us recall the assumptions of Byron Almén's theory of musical narrative who based the archetypes on two binary oppositions: order vs transgression and victory vs defeat. As a prerequisite of a narratively shaped musical text, he assumed the occurrence of an act of transvaluation during its course. In Krauze's *Piano Concerto No. 1*, there is no attempt to transgress the three melodic ideas. Only the orchestral instruments accompanying the soloist in the subsequent segments change. However, these are not sufficient to effect an act of transvaluation, therefore the narrative potential of a musical flow shaped in this way is small.

The bi-tonally juxtaposed chords of A major and B major close this little developed narrative with a distinct dynamic accent [*fortissimo*], thus fulfilling the third condition of the narrative flow—closure.

3. Functions of Narrative Strategies

Determining the narrative potential of the three concertos and the narrative strategies used in them makes it possible to synthetically examine the abovementioned compositions from the perspective of the functions that the three components of narrative identified by Katarzyna Rosner perform in the state of the compositional idiom.

The uniqueness of each of the presented concertos is largely determined by the narrative strategies used. Regardless of the methodology adopted by the analyst, these theories help explain the sense of the musical events laid out on a timeline and their unique composition. Thus, they confirm the goal of compositional activities, which is not to reactivate historical formal models but to develop musical plots based on new structural ideas. The configurability of components, the sense of which is explained by narrative strategies, allows in this case to infer both the individual style of a given musical work and the musical idiom of its creator.

The two remaining components of narrative—temporal development and closure—as factors of the composer's individual style, allow at the same time for the discernment of common elements where stylistic distinctions are generally perceived. The works by Lutosławski and Penderecki presented here may serve as an example. Despite their different sound techniques, both concertos are characterised by the same high narrative potential of the musical plot. In both compositions, there is a clear introduction to the musical action, followed by the formation of various relations between musical events and the closure of the narrative designed in this way. Krauze's *Piano Concerto*, on the other hand, is characterised by a different approach to time and musical form. Its low-development narrative encourages the listener to contemplate the sounds rather than follow the relationships between successive phases of the musical progression.

If we relate the narrative potential of a given work to the dichotomy of narrative form—non-narrative form, and we correlate this dichotomy with a second opposition—traditional forms, developed processually, with a teleological orientation versus forms that prefer musical stasis, characterised by a non-linear ap-

proach to musical time—another convergence of compositional attitudes is revealed. Sonically innovative works, formed from unconventional means of expression and techniques of organising musical matter, such as the Lutosławski and Penderecki concertos discussed here, are often developed processually, according to the principles of narrative forms. The temporal organisation of the musical structures of these concertos shows that they do not abandon such ways of forming the structural coherence of the work as are inherent to large narrative forms shaped by previous generations of composers. These large narrative forms are "ruled" by the principle of teleological organisation of chronologically ordered musical events.

As we remember from history of music, large narrative forms evolved alongside musical genres, such as symphony or instrumental concerto. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the dramatic coherence and musical sense of such forms was based on the tonal logos and the sonata form and cycle. In the twentieth century, when a new musical language was being sought, the classical model of the form began to be reinterpreted or transformed into various formal hybrids. Such concepts of adapting the classical archetype to contemporary means of expression can be observed primarily in works from the first half of the twentieth century, in the compositions of Bartók, Stravinsky, Berg, Shostakovich and others. In the second half of the twentieth century, when the ideas of the second musical avant-garde oriented musical artist vectors towards searching for a new structural coherence of musical works, the attitude of composers towards historical formal models changed. The new nature of a logical relation in works not inspired by historical conventions, such as the cited concertos of Polish composers, is revealed by analyses of their narrative strategies.

In conclusion, it can be stated: The usefulness of analyses studying narrative strategies in works of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is therefore not limited to explaining the essence of the compositional idiom of a given artist but may also serve to show changes in the ways in which large narrative forms are constructed in our modern times.

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Article

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DANCING CYBORGS, ROBOTS, AVATARS, AND HOLOGRAMS: RECONFIGURING AUDIENCE RECEPTION IN PERFORMING ARTS

SUMMARY: "To dance is human" (Hanna, 1979), but dancers on stage may be cyborgs, robots, avatars, or holograms. The boundaries between these creatures and their creators are sometimes blurred (voluntarily or not). The phenomenon is not new, but advances in technology (including AI, deep fake) broadens their use, strengthens this confusion and deepens the "uncanny valley" (Mori, 1970). If (modern, post-modern and contemporary) dance is challenging traditional spectatorship schemes in performing arts (often based on finding narrative interpretations), these "unidentified dancing beings" emphasize dance specificities, forcing the spectators to question their relationship with dancing movements and their authors and the semiotic processes through which these movements acquire meaning. This paper analyses the example of *ROBOT* (a piece choreographed by Blanca Li) and underlines how this shift is editing spectator's routine when attending performing arts in general and dance in particular, from both a semiotic and signification-oriented perspective.

KEYWORDS: dance, cyborgs, robots, avatars, holograms, uncanny valley, audience reception, digital performance.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the presence of non-human performers on the dance stage has evolved from a curious novelty into a sustained artistic strategy. Choreographers such as Blanca Li have gone beyond mere technological spectacle to interrogate fundamental questions of embodiment, agency, and spectatorship by placing cyborgs, robots, avatars and holograms alongside (and sometimes in place of) human dancers. While traditional dance frames movement as a uniquely human, intentional act, these "unidentified dancing beings" force us to reconsider the very definition of dance.

From a semiotic perspective, dance can be understood as a structured system of signs, where movements function as representamina interpreted by spectators according to culturally established codes (kinesic, proxemic, rhythmic). Introducing non-human performers into this system destabilises these codes and therefore modifies the very conditions under which meaning is produced.

This paper examines how the integration of robotic and virtual performers in live performance disrupts conventional audience expectations and reconfigures the act of perception. Drawing on the case study of Li's *ROBOT* (2013), in which eight human dancers share the stage with seven NAO robots and automaton instruments by Maywa Denki, we explore three interrelated dimensions: the semiotic boundary, how robotic movement challenges the human/non-human divide and problematizes the "uncanny valley" effect; spectatorship and agency, in what ways non-human performers provoke reflection on intentionality, authorship, and the live spectator's role in meaning-making process; and technological co-creation, how advances in artificial intelligence and customisable robotics shift machines from mere tools to potential co-creative partners.

By situating *ROBOT* within broader debates in performance studies, semiotics, and robotics research, this study demonstrates that dancing machines do more than entertain, they open a "fracture" in our habitual sign-systems, compelling us to ask not only "Can machines dance?" but also "What does it mean to dance?". In so doing, they renew the art form by transforming both the choreography on stage and the cognitive choreography of the audience.

2. Dance as a Semiotic System

This "cognitive choreography" corresponds to what Peirce would describe as the continuous generation of interpretants, and to Eco's view of meaning as an open, culturally coded process.

Drawing on Peirce and Eco, dance may be described as a multimodal semiotic field where gestures, spatial configurations, rhythm, energy and proxemics act as signs. A movement (representamen) refers to an object (an intention, an emotion, a fictional action, or even a choreographic code) and generates interpretants in the mind of the spectator. Eco's emphasis on cultural codes is particularly

relevant: spectators decode movements according to learned conventions shaped by a history of dance, bodily schemas, and shared imaginaries.

Inserting non-human bodies into this system introduces new sign-vehicles that neither obey nor fully break these codes, producing a state of semiotic tension essential to the spectator's interpretive activity. Robotic and virtual performers thus act as powerful operators of code perturbation, revealing dance as a fundamentally semiotic practice.

3. An Intriguing Choice

In July 2013, at the Montpellier Festival, choreographer Blanca Li created *ROBOT*, a show featuring eight dancers, seven NAO robots[1] and automaton instruments by Maywa Denki.[2]

While the title of the show and the appearance of the NAO robots leave no doubt as to their nature, their flexibility and attitudes disrupt the preconceptions the spectator may have of robotic movement. The NAO's gestures seem intentional, their energy like a living thing. They sow confusion. Confronted with human presence, they question and challenge it, forcing us to rethink the increasingly blurred boundaries between the human and the technological; between the living and the non-living. Blanca Li, an internationally acclaimed choreographer born in Granada in 1964, has deliberately chosen to make robots dance… An intriguing choice that we shall attempt to analyse.

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[1] In her presentation of the robots, Blanca Li emphasises their quasi-human characteristics, describing them as follows:

> At 58 cm tall, NAO has two arms, two legs (9 tactile sensors and 8 pressure sensors), two eyes (2 HD cameras) and a mouth (4 microphones), just like everyone else! He is gifted in vocal and visual recognition, the basis of his communication capabilities, which use the interface of a vocal synthesiser, LED lamps and 2 high-fidelity loudspeakers. (Li, n.d., author's translation)

[2] Blanca Li also highlights the role of the Maywa Denki automaton instruments, whose material and mechanical production of sound contrasts with digital music and contributes to the semiotic tension between organic, mechanical and technological regimes within the performance:

> The musical instruments in the Tsukuba series (classified like their traditional inspirations as guitar, saxophone, keyboard, voice, percussion, etc.) are complex automata that actually play music via electromechanical systems operated by humans. No electronics. The functional beauty of the machinery is revealed during musical performances designed as a challenge to our contemporary world, where music has become just another piece of information, a stream of data. Maywa Denki's musical instruments bring us back to music that is substantial and non-informational. Against the flow of bits from iPod headphones, the beat of live music created on stage. Against the digital sound produced synthetically or by sampling electronic recordings, the sound of physical objects. But not just any objects: "back to the future" objects, perfect automata whose form gives them spirit! (Li, n.d.)

Although there is a fair amount of research into "Dance + robot", most of it is in the field of robotics and has nothing whatsoever to do with live performance. Dance, like walking (one of the greatest early challenges for humanoid robots) a few decades ago, represents a technological challenge for specialists in artificial movement: to give the impression that the robot is dancing by making it more flexible and fluid; by extending its repertoire of movements with non-utilitarian, non-economic sequences; by making it follow a rhythm that is disconnected from any logic of efficiency. Of all contemporary humanoid robots, NAO is the most widely used in the world of research and education (computer science, artificial intelligence, psychology, etc.; Li, n.d.). But its technical characteristics also make it particularly attractive to the choreographer Blanca Li. This is something that SoftBank Robotics boasts on its NAO homepage: "[Blanca Li's *ROBOT*] the world' first show to feature robots as headliners, it has already won over audiences in Europe and North America" (Softbankrobotics, n.d.).

NAO is in fact the best example of the evolution of robotics: it is no longer just a question of creating machines to help humans with heavy, boring or thankless tasks, but of designing (also) customisable, individualisable "companions" capable of entertaining, interacting, learning, etc.:

> Autonomous, NAO is the artificial companion of tomorrow, able to help and entertain humans, interacting with its own people or with us! (Li, n.d.)

> NAO[3] is an engaging, interactive and customisable companion robot. Everyone can build their own experience with specific applications according to their imagination. (Softbankrobotics, n.d.)

> NAO is designed to be personalised: adding content, using this or that ability, enriching its personality and even developing new skills. NAO is your robot and the *Choreographer* software will help you personalise it. (Softbankrobotics, n.d.)

In short, NAO is endowed with many qualities that make it exceptional and are the source of its commercial success. But it still does not answer the question:

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[3] More specific description of NAO is given by Verdier and Nevaoux, one can read as follows:

> NAO is now one of the best-known humanoid robots and undoubtedly the most widely used. It appeals thanks to its small size, childlike appearance, and wide range of capabilities. In 2015, there were already around 5000 units in use in more than 50 countries and at least 400 research, teaching, and healthcare establishments. […] Nao is the first creation of the Aldebaran company. It weighs 4,3 kg and measures 58 cm. It has articulated legs, arms, and hands equipped with numerous sensors: two cameras, four microphones, sonar, pressure sensors, an inertial measurement unit, etc. Its cognitive abilities enable it to interact with a conversation partner, grasp objects, understand hundreds of commands, and even get up when it falls. (Verdier, Nevaoux, 2022, author's translation)

why integrate robots into the cast of a choreographic show when you can simply work with real dancers?

There are many hypotheses,[4] but Blanca Li herself provides part of the answer to this question:

> In ROBOT, I address the relationships between human bodies and artificial ones and questions such as: Where are the borders between "us" and "them"? […] The fragility and child-like imperfections of these small humanoids are magnified and conveyed to the audience while interacting with human dancers. (Li, n.d.)

Semiotically speaking, Li is not merely adding an exotic element to the stage; she is setting up a confrontation between different regimes of signification. NAO does not only function as a character or a prop but as a metasign that comments on and reframes the human dancers' movements. It is these two elements that we are going to try to understand better: the question of the boundary between them and us, and the relationships with spectators and flesh-and-blood dancers.

4. Is the "Dancing Robot" an Oxymoron?

The question is obviously provocative and purely rhetorical, because as we find in many the definitions of dance, it is specific to humans and can only be used metaphorically for animals, and a fortiori, things… The "human" character is in fact essential to dissociate dance, a choreographic and artistic work, from its metaphorical use for other phenomena in nature, such as the action of the wind on a field of poppies or the courtship of an animal. In the first case, it is a meteorological cause that provokes a physical reaction on part of the surrounding flora. Much less poetic, we admit (which is one of the advantages of the metaphor). In the second case, it is a characteristic instinctive reaction which, because of its effectiveness in reproducing the animal in question, has been retained by natural selection. A physical reaction in the first case, a biological characteristic in the second. It is not a question of dancing. Without this clarification of the human character, Paul Bouissac notes a "point-by-point correspondence" between a certain definition of live performance and the definition of lekking, a technical term used by ethologists to designate a collective phenomenon that is attested in numerous animal species (P. Bouissac, personal communication, April 23–24, 2010). Copeland and Cohen, in the introduction to *What is Dance?* also claim this distinction, and for the same reasons:

[4] For example, choreographers may wish to explore new kinesthetic vocabularies that human bodies cannot easily produce; they may use robots to materialize abstract or non-human agencies on stage; or they may seek to question spectators' perceptual and interpretive habits by staging entities situated at the edge of the human and the artificial. Robots may also be introduced to comment on contemporary technological imaginaries, or to expand the semiotic possibilities of dance through the interplay between mechanical gesture, rhythm, and human movement.

> A broad definition […] which refuses to distinguish between human and nonhuman motion enable us to describe as "dances" the movement of waves or the orbits of the heavenly bodies. In addition, this usage enables biologists like Karl von Frisch (in *The Dancing Bees*) to describe the movement patterns of non-human creatures, like bees, as dances. (Copeland, Cohen, 1983, p. 1)

This brings to mind Sue Jones's famous article:[5] *Do Rabbits Dance?* (1999).

The question is what distinguishes humans from animals and things. If we take as our hypothesis Descartes' dualism, with which our Western society is particularly imbued, the soul is *res cogitans* [the thinking thing] and the body, *res extensa* [extended thing/bodily substance]. As Jean-Pierre Sirois-Trahan points out, in Part 5 of the *Discours de la méthode*, Descartes discusses the difference between animals and humans by comparing animals without souls to automata or moving machines (cf. Sirois-Trahan, 2008). Put differently, robots function as mechanical automata, devoid of the soul-like intentionality that defines human action.

So, we could quickly conclude with this syllogism: dancing is the prerogative of humans, robots are not, so NAO cannot dance.

These two premises therefore seem, a priori, indisputable (we will come back to this later): on the one hand, dance (creation and/or interpretation) is the prerogative of humans; on the other, robots, even in their humanoid forms, cannot be considered human. However, they can imitate humans—sometimes convincingly—thus complicating the distinction between human and non-human performers and reinforcing the need to interrogate how such imitation operates and is perceived on stage.

In semiotic terms, robotic imitation produces an iconic sign (resemblance to human movement), but the cause of the gesture remains mechanical, thus shifting the interpretant toward ambiguity: is the spectator decoding a human-like action, a programmed effect, or a symbolic commentary on artificiality? This ambiguity is fundamental to the meaning-effects of *ROBOT*. It already indicates that what we call "dance" is less tied to a specific ontology of the body than to a specific regime of signification and interpretation.

We thus return to our initial question: if we can agree that dance (except in the metaphorical sense) is indissociable from a human body, why are we increasingly confronted with dance formats in which digital, virtual, artificial and mechanical bodies are so often present?

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[5] In her 1999 article, Sue Jones investigates the ontological status of "dance" by examining non-human cases (the "dancing rabbit") to question the agency and intentionality required for movement to qualify as dance. Her analysis underscores the need to rethink the very definition of dance beyond human performers, directly informing our inquiry into robotic and cyborg embodiments on stage.

5. Duplicates That Affect Our Perception

Robotic doubles introduce what Peirce would call "multiple sign-functions": a single gesture simultaneously acts as an icon (it resembles human movement), an index (it points to an underlying algorithm or program), and a symbol (it stands for "technology", "mechanisation", or "the future").

Eco's concept of the "open work" helps to understand why this proliferation of possible readings intensifies spectatorship: the meaning of the movement is no longer anchored in human intentionality but becomes a site of negotiation between human and non-human agencies.

The first elements of the response proposed by Blanca Li herself take us back to the notion of borders and difference(s). The idea is to show us just how different doubles and originals are by confronting them and bringing them together on stage to affect our perception of both the original and the double.

In 1999, Merce Cunningham created *Biped*, a choreography in which stylised silhouettes are (sometimes) projected simultaneously with the real dancers. Paul Kaiser, the designer of these animations, justified their use as follows: "The dance is successful if your perception of the dance has been affected by the projections, even when they are not present on the screen" (Kaiser, as cited in Broadhurst, 2007). But how can these doubles (avatars, holograms, robots, automatons, etc.) affect our perception of dance? Béatrice Picon Vallin suggests a way forward, based on digital avatars that we could extend to humanoid robots such as the NAO used by Blanca Li:

> These images, multitudes of ectoplasms derived from chemistry, light, numbers and electronics, made up of pixels, seem to speak of death, whereas the body would speak of life […]. And it is well known that it was by bringing the breath of death to the stage that Meyerhold, with his symbolist dramaturgy, and later Kantor, gave us a glimpse of the living of their time. (Picon-Vallin, 2001, p. 11; author's translation)[6]

Similarly, Pascal Roland, in his book *Danse et imaginaire*, emphasises the effect of amplifying differentiation through the confrontation of the similar:

[6] In the original French version, Picon-Vallin writes:

> Ces images, multitudes d'ectoplasmes issus de la chimie, de la lumière, du nombre, de l'électronique, composés de pixels, semblent parler de la mort, alors que le corps parlerait de la vie […]. Et l'on sait bien que c'est en faisant passer sur scène le souffle de la mort que Meyerhold, avec la dramaturgie symboliste, et plus tard Kantor ont donné à voir le vivant de leur époque.

> The motif of the double does not necessarily reproduce the identical and enhance the value of the one; on the contrary, unity only exists through its reproduction, the ideal twin being impossible because it necessarily involves a differentiation between two units. The same is no longer reduced to the identical but is enriched by the similar. (Roland, 200, p. 169; author's translation)[7]

The co-presence of the dancer and his non-human double is therefore essential to provoke this effect of differentiation. An effect aimed at the audience, enabling them to participate in and co-create the artistic experience as defined by Nicole Everaert Desmedt:

> Any artistic experience, whether of production or reception, implies the double necessity of mastering a symbolism, and of breaking it to allow the intrusion of the forces of primacy that we will call imaginary. […] The imaginary, through the movement of its infiltration into symbolism, provokes a displacement in the codes, a modification of the filters and thus allows another access to the as yet uninterpreted real, an as yet unformulated knowledge. (Everaert-Desmedt, 1990, p. 109; author's translation)[8]

The coexistence of the real body and its mechanical replica is precisely what allows this imaginary world to develop, as Béatrice Picon-Vallin also emphasises with regard to the different registers of presence: "The coexistence of different registers of presence implies a tension between the living body and the dematerialised body, which is conducive […] to the development of the imaginary world" (Picon-Vallin, 2001, p. 29). Abel Gance also gave this explanation, which we can also extend to the robot:

> The addition of image and reality gives image and reality a new dimension, a kind of fourth dimension that undeniably enriches a show. In my opinion, the arts are all about that. It is about creating a new dimension in the spectator's mind. (As cited in Picon-Vallin, 2001; author's translation)[9]

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[7] The original French version reads as follows:

Le motif du double ne reproduit donc pas nécessairement l'identique et la valorisation de l'un, mais, au contraire, l'unité n'existe que par sa reproduction, la gémellité idéale impossible puisque relevant nécessairement d'une différenciation entre deux unités. Le même n'est, des lors, plus réduit à l'identique mais enrichi par le semblable.

[8] In the original French text:

Toute expérience artistique, qu'il s'agisse de production ou de réception, implique la double nécessité de maîtriser un symbolisme, et de le rompre pour permettre l'intrusion des forces de la priméité que nous nommerons imaginaire […]. L'imaginaire, par le mouvement de son infiltration dans le symbolisme, provoque un déplacement dans les codes, une modification des filtres et permet donc un autre accès au réel non encore interprété, une connaissance encore informulée.

That is precisely what it is all about: creating a deviation, an astonishment, a disturbance, even a sense of unease, which will raise questions, make people think, force them to ask questions and modify their filters to allow the artistic experience to take place.

From a semiotic point of view, the double functions as a meta-sign: it does not simply add one more body but comments on, reframes, and sometimes undermines the sign-value of the original dancer's movements. The spectator is thus confronted with a layered signifying structure where human and robotic bodies constantly re-encode each other.

This unsettling effect produced by the hyper-realistic portrayal of the double clearly evokes Freud's notion of the *Unheimlich*. On one hand, the unsettling strangeness of the robotic dancer; on the other, the disquieting familiarity (as translated by Jean-Luc Steinmetz) of the double. This tension arises both from the dehumanization of the real dancers and the humanization of the robots. Blanca Li attempts to blur the boundaries between her dancers and the NAO as much as possible: images of metal and electronic skeletons and shells are projected onto the dancers' bodies, costumes of pipes and boxes under which you doubt you will find a human, strings marionettising the dancers, etc.; touching NAOs that fall, that are dressed in overalls, that look you in the eye, etc. The interplay between real and fake and the confusion it creates is, as Philippe Noisette points out, "a recurring element in choreographers approaching the virtual" (Noisette, 2010, p. 104).

It is therefore clear that the choreographers are deliberately playing with the double in order to create confusion and an artistic experience. From this observation, we can also assume that the greater the realism of the double, the greater the disturbance / sensation of *Unheimlich*. And we might also assume that the greater the disturbance, the more profound the artistic experience. But there is another phenomenon to take into account: the *Uncanny Valley*.

6. The Uncanny Valley

Masahiro Mori has plotted the supposed emotional reaction of humans to human-looking robots: the more the robot resembles a human, the greater our empathy for it. However, this rising curve (realism on the *x*-axis, empathy on the *y*-axis) falls sharply (Uncanny Valley) when the robot resembles a real human a little too closely. This disturbing familiarity provokes rejection and even fear rather than empathy.

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[9] Original French version:

L'adjonction de l'image et de la réalité confère à l'image et à la réalité une dimension nouvelle, une sorte de quatrième dimension qui enrichit incontestablement un spectacle. A mon avis, les arts ne visent qu'à cela. Il s'agit de créer une dimension nouvelle dans l'esprit des spectateurs.

From a semiotic angle, the uncanny valley is not only a psychological effect but a semiotic threshold: it marks the limit at which the iconicity of the robot (its resemblance to humans) enters into conflict with indexical and symbolic cues of artificiality, producing contradictory interpretants in the spectator. The sign becomes internally divided: what it shows (iconically) and what it indicates (indexically) are no longer easily compatible.

What Blanca Li succeeds in producing in her show *ROBOT* is to make different bodies resonate within the same performance, to offer a continuum of dancers who are more or less human, more or less machines, more or less disturbing, more or less disruptive, without ever falling into the Uncanny Valley and losing the spectator's support for her project. Between *mise-en-abîme*, echo and distorting mirror, it allows the paradoxical reception (cf. Sirois-Trahan, 2008) that is essential to the artistic experience. A paradoxical reception that is nonetheless very "Western".

According to Machiko Kusuhara, a professor at Waseda University, Japanese people, and Asians in general, suffer less from the *unheimlich* nature of robots (Sirois-Trahan, 2008). The explanation may lie in the fact that in Buddhism, there is no difference between the lives of human beings and other animals:

> Perhaps we should see the difference between, on the one hand, Asian animist religions (for whom things and animals have souls) and, on the other, the Judeo-Christian religion and its cartesian avatar (for whom machine animals have no souls), as the main reason for the difference in reactions to automata. (Sirois-Trahan, 2008, p. 204; author's translation)[10]

In an interview with Masahiro Mori (the author of Uncanny Valley) conducted by Zaven Paré, he asserts that this impossible division linked to Buddhism is much more general and also concerns the link between creator and creation: "When you create this thing, you become this creation […]" (Mori, as cited in Paré, 2012, p. 204).

This shortens the continuum and further softens the already blurred boundaries. When, later in the conversation, he explains to Zaven Paré that in Buddhism, Buddha statues are only transitory instruments, Paré asks him whether robots could also be transitory forms of man. Mori replied, "There is nothing to stop it…" (Mori, as cited in Paré, 2012, p. 204).

Could Sue Jones' rabbits dance in Asia? This calls into question our initial premise that robots are not human because they have no soul. Our "human" premise is certainly a sine qua non condition for the emergence of dance, but not

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[10] Original French version:

> Peut-être faut-il voir la différence entre, d'une part, les religions animistes asiatiques (pour lesquels les choses et les animaux ont une âme) et, d'autre part, la religion judéo-chrétienne et son avatar cartésien (pour lesquels les animaux-machines n'ont aucune âme), comme la principale raison de la différence dans les réactions que suscitent les automates.

so much in that it is a matter of the soul as Buddhists endow animals and things with, but in that it is *res cogitans*, a matter of intentionality and full consciousness. In her preface to the new edition of *To Dance is Human*, Hanna wishes to emphasise this human criterion. And particularly on one element of her definition in this regard:

> My phrase "from the dancer's perspective"[11] applies not to the conceptualization but to the purpose of dance. This proviso is meant to deal with ethnocentrism […] as well as the contrast between intentional selection of movement and other animals' programmed action sequences. (Hanna, 1979, p. XIV)

The human nature of dance is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Intentionality, mindfulness, body-mind centering and sub-partition are all elements linked to the human and are also sine qua non conditions for the emergence of dance. So, what about the intentionality of the robot? Advances in artificial intelligence will certainly force us to study this question in the medium or short term: self-programming, decision-making, consciousness, feelings are already subjects of study in robotics… From a semiotic perspective, the key issue is not whether robots "really" feel, but how their actions are read as signs by spectators embedded in particular cultural and technological contexts. In the end, we have asked more questions than we have answered…

7. Conclusion

This study has shown that the integration of cyborgs, robots, avatars and holograms in dance performance is not simply a technological innovation but a profound semiotic event. In *ROBOT*, movement becomes the site of a conflict between heterogeneous regimes of signification: human intentionality, mechanical causality, choreographic authorship, and spectators' cultural decoding practices.

From a Peircean perspective, NAO's gestures constitute *overdetermined signs*: they operate simultaneously as icons (through resemblance), indices (through mechanical execution), and symbols (through cultural associations of artificiality). This triadic saturation produces divergent interpretants, which destabilise the spectator's interpretive habits and generate what we may call a semiotic bifurcation: a moment where the sign cannot be anchored in a single enunciative source.

Eco's notion of the interpretant further illuminates this process. Because meaning is culturally coded and always open, the presence of a robotic performer

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[11] Judith Lynn Hanna's definition of dance, grounded in intentionality and human agency, highlights the centrality of purposeful and culturally coded movement:

> […] dance is defined as human behaviour composed, from the dancer's perspective, of purposeful, intentionally rhythmical, and culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movement which are not ordinary motor activities, the motion having inherent and aesthetic value. (Hanna, 1979, p. 48)

multiplies the possible readings of a movement and shifts the semiosic burden toward the spectator. In this sense, *ROBOT* reveals that dance meaning does not arise from bodies alone but from the relational semiosis circulating among human and non-human agents.

The key theoretical implication is that robotic performers introduce a new regime of enunciation into dance. Their gestures do not express intention in the human sense, yet they produce an *effect of enunciation* that spectators interpret as meaningful. This dissociation between intention and enunciation challenges one of the foundational axioms of dance studies—the idea that choreography emerges from human intentionality—and calls for a renewed semiotic framework capable of accounting for distributed or composite enunciators.

In this light, *ROBOT* is not merely a playful confrontation between dancers and machines; it performs a reconfiguration of the semiotic ontology of dance itself. By staging movements that oscillate between the organic and the artificial, the work exposes the instability of dance as a signifying practice and reveals that meaning arises not from the purity of embodiment but from the tension between heterogeneous bodies and codes.

Ultimately, dancing machines compel us to reconsider what a danced sign is, who or what may produce it, and how spectators construct meaning in conditions where intentionality is uncertain, ambiguous, or multi-layered. Far from threatening the essence of dance, robotic performers broaden its semiotic horizon and open new possibilities for rethinking embodiment, agency, and movement in the twenty-first century.

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