Carolien Van Nerom | Ann Peeters | Bart Bouckaert (Eds.)

MUSIC AND ITS NARRATIVE POTENTIAL

BRILL | FINK

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Table of Contents

Introduction VII

SECTION 1
Food for Thought: Theory and/in Practice

1 The Only Truly Musical Narrative Is an Autobiographical Quest 3
Peter Dayan

2 From Absolute Music to Sound Experience: On Post-Classical Music and Horizontal Listening 21
Marlies De Munck

3 The Question of Narrativity in Instrumental Music, and the Role of Repetition 41
Werner Wolf

4 Musical Minimalism and the Powers of the False: Gilles Deleuze's Falsifying Narration in *Two Pages* (*for Steve Reich?*) (1968) by Philip Glass 81
Jimmie LeBlanc

SECTION 2
Music and the Stage: Narratives in Opera and Musical

5 When Music Becomes the Plot: Narrative Strategies in Tom Johnson's Minimalist Metaoperas 105
Silvia Álvarez Baamonde

6 Narrativity in Minimalist Operas by Philip Glass: Impact of the Source Text and of Postminimalist Composition Strategies 123
Carolien Van Nerom

7 Stories of Nobody: Narrativity in Luciano Berio's Late Theater and the Case of *Outis* 143
Ruben Marzà

8 Queering the Musical Theater Tradition: Narrative Metareferentiality in Michael R. Jackson's *A Strange Loop* 161
Jade Thomas

SECTION 3

Narrativizing Music Through Different Media

9 Musical Stimulacra Are Narrative(s): Music beyond Sound in Concert Program Notes 183
Ivan Delazari

10 Music and Narrative in Art Exhibition Audio Guides: "Beckmann & Amerika" 201
Jarmila Mildorf

11 Non-Narrativity and Parody in Samuel Beckett's Radio Play *Words and Music* 219
Pim Verhulst

SECTION 4

The Limits of Narrativity: Storytelling Through Minimalist Music

12 Layers, Textures, and Structures: Towards a Theory of Narrative Space in Post-Minimal Music 239
Pwyll ap Siôn

13 "Your Music Tells Stories Now": Sorting Out Narrativity in Steve Reich's *Plastic Haircut* 271
John Pymm

14 Indexing a Narrative: Gestural Patterns, Plentitude, and Cultural Metonymy in Steve Reich's *Music for Pieces of Wood* 291
Martin Ross

List of Contributors 311

Introduction

The connection between music and narrative is a much-debated subject in writings from various disciplines. From a narratological viewpoint, there are many models that are applicable to music and point out music's capacity to express a story. For example, Eero Tarasti considers Proppian functions in symphonic poems by Franz Liszt, Peter Rabinowitz discusses narratorship in Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, or Byron Almén uses Northrop Frye's literary archetypes in his analysis of mostly Romantic compositions. Generally speaking, the most popular narrative models are structuralist and these are often applied to eighteenth- or nineteenth-century music. Compositions of this time period seem to be the most compatible with such narratological models. One of the reasons is the listener's familiarity with the musical materials. Research has shown that recognizability of a certain music style drives narrative engagement with the music (see e.g., Hellmuth Margulis; McAuley et al.). Because of their long history of having been listened to, analyzed, or talked about, the Classical and Romantic music styles have gradually become part and parcel of Western culture and thus sound familiar. In addition, extramusical meanings have tied themselves to such compositions, which also opens them up further to narrative interpretation. This is particularly true for Romantic music, which was often accompanied by reviews or analyses in floral and metaphorical language.

The premise of this book is that all music has a potential to be narrative. Admittedly, there are gradations to the aptness of narrative as a framework for understanding music. Scholars in intermedial studies quite agree that a verbal medium is the medium of preference when it comes to expressing a narrative (see e.g., Bernaerts 69–70; Nattiez 241; Ryan 13). For example, Werner Wolf specifically considers literary output as preferential for expressing a story ("Lyric Poetry and Narrativity" 145). However, it would be a false assumption to conclude that music per definition is incapable of evoking stories. In fact, there are several common threads running through discussions of music's potential for narrativity. For the sake of brevity, two of those focal points are covered in what follows, namely (1) that music moves in time, and (2) that music exhibits points of reference that follow a certain logical path.

First, music has a basic quality of moving in time (see e.g., Almén 38; Boykan esp. 30; Wolf, "Transmedial Narratology" 272). Jean-Jacques Nattiez, for example, considers the "unfolding of music in time" as a fundamental principle that makes for music's capacity to express a story (241). Other researchers speak of a sense of *sequentiality* to musical pieces (see e.g., Boykan 98). Sequentiality is grounded in music's moving in time but goes beyond that. It implicitly points out that music does not merely move in time. Rather, there is a certain logic or evolution to the sequence of musical elements. Often, that logic is attributed to a narrating instance. The explicit presence of a narrator has in the past often been seen as the prerogative of literary narratives and as impossible in music. The lack of a clearly identifiable narrating agent has also been a reason for some studies to conclude that music cannot be narrative (see e.g., Abbate). More recent studies with an intermedial outlook on narrative have displaced the presence of a narrator as paramount to narratives. The same trend is discernible in music analysis with a focus on narrative. Fred Everett Maus, for example, considers sequentiality rather than a narratorial presence as a narrative quality of music. He says: "there is always the possibility of understanding the music […] as the sequential presentation of a world in which the events of the story are perceived directly: in which case, there may be no sense of a narrator at all" (34).

Second, music is not only sequential. It has the possibility to introduce a certain *logic* to the sequence of musical units that can be evocative of *storyness*. Nattiez calls this the "syntactical […] dimension of music". It is possible to create through a specifically composed succession of musical materials amongst other things "repetitions, returns, preparations, expectations, resolutions, and […] continuity" (Nattiez 244). Even experimental composers, like Arnold Schoenberg, mention the importance of logic for the meaningfulness of music. He says: "The chief requirements for the creation of a comprehensible form are *logic* and *coherence*. The presentation, development and interconnexion of ideas must be based on relationship" (1, emphasis in original).[1]

Certain studies, like Nattiez's, consider a logic – plain and simple – to music, while others are more specific. For example, a *hierarchy* to distinct musical units and the sequence of those units is a type of logic that is frequently mentioned, such as in Robert Hatten's treatment of Ludwig van Beethoven's oeuvre; or as in Almén's *A Theory of Musical Narrative* in which he complements Hatten's hierarchical model of markedness with Frye's literary archetypes (see also above). Another specific sequence of musical units that is foregrounded in several analyses of musical narrative is the harmonic development in a succession of chords or a structural form (e.g., the *sonata* form) that constitute

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[1] Schoenberg's attention to a certain *logic* to a sequence of musical blocks is of particular importance to this volume. His dodecaphonic compositions after all eschewed the existing (narrative) structures of the Romantic period as well as the Classical period. This goes to show that even music that is composed with the intent of being non-narrative or non-extra-referential, has at least the potential to evoke meaning – even narrative meaning.

"stability – instability – stability" (as in e.g., Maus 19; Schoenberg 3; Wolf, "Transmedial Narratology" 272). This recurring sequence of distinct units can and is often subsequently interpretated narratively as the following sequence: "stable starting situation – crisis situation – new situation of stability".

While we have shown that there is certainly narrative potential to musical compositions, there are two main issues with existing research that this volume wishes to address. This is in line with current trends in recent research in musical narrative as well. First, there is a clear tendency to focus on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century compositions in particular. This is unsurprising given that music from the Classical and Romantic periods sounds familiar to the Western ear. Because the forms, structures, melodies, or other musical techniques sound comparatively more recognizable than contemporary music, it is easier to identify a narrative evoked in such music (see also above). There are several ways of creating recognizability, however. There is indeed the use of known strategies, as composers did in a highly formalized way in the Classical period, and as composers did by attaching strict extramusical meanings to their music by means of programs in the Romantic period for example. But there is also the repetition of musical units within the same piece that could create recognizability – apart from implementing traditional structures.[2] In other words, there are ways of familiarizing the audience with the music in such a way that there is also the potential to evoke a narrative in contemporary pieces.

Second, a considerable number of studies of musical narratives subscribe to a structuralist way of narrative analysis. Models such as those developed by Algirdas Greimas, Vladimir Propp, or Gérard Genette are used most often in musical analysis. While structuralist models for narrative analysis prove quite useful for certain output of music, it reduces or negates other compositions' potential for expressing stories. This is in part due to the fact that structuralist analysis has a long history of taking into account literary narratives exclusively. This creates a false idea that novels, short stories, and other literary forms are the only media in which narrativity is possible. This is exactly why this book subscribes to the usefulness of such structuralist and/or literary models but shows also the potential of more recent studies that highlight the possibilities of evoking narratives in intermedial ways.

This volume is structured along two major lines of thought as a counterclaim to the issues presented above. First, we offer an insight into the narrative potential of late twentieth-century and twenty-first-century music – a category of music that still constitutes a blind spot in the field of musical narrativity.

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[2] This is an issue that Werner Wolf, amongst others, particularly attends to in his chapter (3).

This book features important contributions that concern music subscribing to traditional Western composition strategies and techniques, such as music written by Beethoven, Alexander Scriabin, Pjotr Iljitsj Tsjaikovski, Richard Wagner, or Ralph Vaughan Williams. However, to complement these works, the larger part of this book concerns contemporary music. Case studies presented here include compositions by John S. Beckett, Luciano Berio, John Cage, Philip Glass, Tom Johnson, Steve Reich, or Max Richter. This book also goes beyond classical music with a chapter on the genre of the musical, with music by Michael R. Jackson, as well as a chapter on an eclectic group of musical genres, including also jazz with composers such as Bix Beiderbecke, or Cole Porter.

Second, the approaches towards musical narratives or narrativity move firmly away from the well-known structuralist models. Viewpoints on music's capacity to evoke stories stem from current trends in the field of narratology, such as intermedial studies, audionarratology, or cognitive narratology. In addition, this book goes even further to also include applications of narrative theories in disciplines other than literary studies or narratology. For example, concepts from cultural studies, philosophy, gender studies, or musicology are given prominence in several chapters.

The first section of this book provides a diverse set of answers to the question of whether music indeed has the capacity to express a narrative. A poignant example is chosen in each of these first four chapters, which are mostly geared towards theory. In chapter 1, Peter Dayan places the possibility to create a narrative with music in extramusical expressions of meaning, namely in autobiography. Better would be to speak of autobiograph*ies* since Dayan's argument is multifaceted. Different narratives surrounding music are considered, including those of the composer and his peers, of performers of music, or of music pieces themselves. Taking *The Lark Ascending* by Vaughan Williams as his example, Dayan considers versions of autobiographies that express the narrative of how music is encountered. He deals with writings or other expressions about music by both Ralph and by his wife Urusula Vaughan Williams; by George Meredith, whose poem provides the inspiration to the musical piece; as well as by different performers of Vaughan Williams' music, such as violinists Frederick Grinke, Hilary Hahn, and Marie Hall. One can also distinguish Dayan's own encounters with *The Lark Ascending* in this chapter. As R. Vaughan Williams did before him, Dayan concludes that the narrative of music cannot be captured through words. Instead, the quest to understand what music means, remains autobiographical, as meaningful as it may be.

In chapter 2, Marlies De Munck also considers the narratives that take shape when listening to music. She takes a philosophical stance in bringing to light a paradigm shift in listening to music. Post-classical music's extensive popularity is symptomatic of that paradigm shift, namely what De Munck, after Alessandro Baricco, calls horizontalization. De Munck discusses pivotal examples of that change, composed in the last few decades: Cage's *4"33'* and Richter's *Sleep*. In the reception of both pieces, De Munck points out that it is not music's potential to express a narrative that is in question, it is the relationship between the music and the listener that has changed directions. A "vertical" listening mode, where the audience is encouraged to interpret actively, is being replaced by a "horizontal" approach, where the creation of an aural landscape invites listeners to reside in, or experience the music, rather than actively listen to it. De Munck links this phenomenon to, amongst other things, the advancement of digital technologies and the resulting hyper-individualization of society.

Werner Wolf appraises the importance of repetition for music to exhibit some degree of narrativity in chapter 3. He holds that music has a very limited capacity to express a story, and this only in very specific cases when certain conditions are met. While he shows that music is not typically narrative, it is clear that there are still certain degrees of narrativity possible in music. This chapter zooms in on one of music's more common strategies – large-scale, form-motivated repetition – as an inhibitor to the expression of narrative. Wolf analyzes Wagner's overture to *Tannhäuser* as an example of music with formal repetition strategies with a very weak degree of narrativity. As such, Wolf underscores his hypothesis that music is not typically narrative, but instead it can be weakly narrativity-inducing. In these specific cases as with the overture to *Tannhäuser*, Wolf shows that it would be deficient to speak about the music in strictly formal or analytical terms. Rather, Wolf's analysis of Wagner's music is supportive of a general tendency in human meaning-making to revert to narrative structures. Indeed, to speak of music in terms of narrativity in such cases of weakly narrativity-inducing music ameliorates understanding the pieces.

A final chapter in the first section turns to Gilles Deleuze's cinema studies for its theoretical basis. In chapter 4, Jimmie LeBlanc relates avant-garde music of the 1960s to modern French cinema in the sense that both exhibit qualities that cause listeners to receive them as "non-narrative". By forwarding Deleuze's concepts of the *sensori-motor schema*, *time-image* and *falsifying narration*, LeBlanc posits that minimalist music is not non-narrative; rather it has an alternative narrative potential. In first instance, LeBlanc lays the foundations of an archetypal narrative model and shows how this model relies on musical functionality. Next, he shows how the rupture of the *sensori-motor schema* in cinema is comparable to the rupture of musical functionality in minimalist music, which leads to the "false" sense that it is non-narrative. By choosing Glass' *Two Pages* as an example, chapter 4 truly builds a bridge between the first section of mainly theoretical considerations and the second section of this book, which advances contemporary music as examples of various degrees of narrativity in music.

Indeed, in the second section, this book turns to music in practice, namely to music written for stage works. As mentioned, it is a collection of chapters that focus on contemporary pieces only – as is also the case for section 4 of this book. The peculiar appeal of a large amount of contemporary (classical) music pieces as experiences or as non-narrative works that require little mental effort to be understood, has already been signaled by De Munck and LeBlanc in section 1. This second section, then, is a continuation of an ongoing discussion of musical pieces that are not, as Wolf would say, "typically narrative". Opera compositions by Johnson, Glass, and Berio, as well as a musical by Jackson are offered as examples of musical art works that, in spite of often being labelled as "non-narrative", offer alternative types of narrative content or narrativity. Chapters 5 and 8 center on metareference with musical pieces that self-refer to their own narrative strategies or traditions. Chapter 6 focuses on the impact of the source text on music's degree of narrativity in postminimalist opera, while chapter 7 foregrounds the relationships between different media in theatre in creating a disruptive narrative.

Silvia Álvarez Baamonde, in chapter 5, uncovers the metareferential narrative layer in Johnson's minimalist operas. She first shows how the opera's libretto and characters as well as the music's minimalist repetition and self-reflexivity make it hard for the listener to conceive of a narrative plot. Next, she offers three alternative ways in which Johnson succeeds to tell a story by highlighting musical strategies that, at first hearing them, might seem like impediments to the music's narrativity. Instead, they are strategies that ultimately circumvent the sense of non-narrativity in Johnson's operas. First, Álvarez Baamonde considers Johnson's establishment of sound as an independent narrative vector that trumps the language of the libretto. Second, she forwards Johnson's paradigms that draw attention to the self-referential character of music as potentially narrative. Third, Johnson's mathematical methods are shown to counterbalance the "hindrance" that minimalist composition techniques pose on the potential expression of narratives.

Moving to another composer of minimalist operas, chapter 6 deals with operas composed by Glass. In this chapter, Carolien Van Nerom foregrounds degrees of narrativity in Glass' *The Juniper Tree* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Similarly to the previous chapter, minimalist music is exposed as carrying some degree of narrativity. There is, however, clearly a strain on narrativity because of the specific strategies implemented throughout minimalist music, such as heavily enforced repetition, use of minimal materials, and partial renunciation of classical music traditions. Van Nerom considers two factors that have an impact on the degree of narrativity of the music. First, the complexity of the literary source text plays a part in the perceived narrativity of these operas. *The Juniper Tree* is based on a more straightforward text – a fairy tale – that complies more with existing mental schema of narrative. Thus it is more narrative when related to *Waiting for the Barbarians* – a postcolonial allegory. Second, postminimalist techniques, including a return to more traditional and thus also more recognizable composition techniques, as well as quoting from existing classical music styles, lead to a higher degree of narrativity than purely minimalist composition strategies. Concerning Van Nerom's case study, this means that *The Juniper Tree* is more explicitly postminimalist than *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which also leads to its higher degree of narrativity.

In chapter 7, Ruben Marzà uncovers narrativity in Berio's music for theatre. Berio's pieces of the late twentieth century are shown to be disruptive in terms of traditional narrativity, but nonetheless narrative to some degree. Specifically, Marzà looks at *Outis* in this chapter, which is considered as an example of "musical action" – a combination of musical, literary, and theatrical experimentalism that balances disruptive techniques with recognizability. Marzà looks at how *Outis* came to be, with inclusion of the most influential sources of its "musical action". Most notably, he focuses on the essays by Propp (on the folk tale), and Umberto Eco (on the "open work"). The previous chapter took into consideration the musical structures of Glass' *operas* themselves and *listeners*' implicit views on these pieces' narrativity. Instead, Marzà takes a different approach here and predominantly looks at the *composer's own writings* related to narrativity. He also considers *essays* on Berio's music that feature aspects of narrative or narrativity.

Moving away from classical music for the stage, chapter 8 shows an interesting case of narrativity in more popular music, namely the musical theatre play *A Strange Loop* by Jackson. As with Johnson's operas (see chapter 5), this musical highlights and comments on its own narrative structures through metareferentiality. Jade Thomas clarifies, however, that *A Strange Loop*'s focus on narrative itself is of a different kind than in Johnson's operas. Rather, Jackson's musical is a contribution to queering the musical theater traditions and combines this particular angle with a comment on musical's politics, particularly with regard to Black queerness. Thomas thus foregoes traditional views on lyric time as performative breaches of plot development, as is often the case in antinarrative or antiformalist approaches to experimental art works. Instead, Thomas relies on Tyler Bradway's queer narrative theory to expose *A Strange Loop*'s lyric time in terms of its gradation in explicitness of metareference – specifically *mise en abymes*. These dramaturgical effects of narrative forms are seen by Thomas as communicating ideological messages.

In particular, *A Strange Loop* comments on racial doubling and exposes the open-endedness of discussions about heteronormativity by means of narrative metareferentiality.

This book offers another perspective on music and its potential for narrative expression in section 3, namely of the listener/reader in reception. Often, the word "narrativize" is used in different ways in these chapters to reflect on how narrative structures are formed and/or projected by and/or on a text. Specifically, this section takes into consideration texted multimedia. Respectively, the chapters deal with classical music program leaflets and booklets, art exhibition audio guides, and radio plays. In one way or another, music always plays a big part in these art works' emanation of narrativity or potential to trigger narrative readings.

Ivan Delazari, in chapter 9, sheds light on verbal texts and their contribution to the narrative potential of untexted music. Furthering his own theory of *stimulacra*, Delazari considers program notes as stimulating listeners' interest in the music and simulating the compositions mentally. Specifically, he analyzes samples of program notes from the St. Petersburg Philharmonia library collection. The chapter shows how these act as prompts of narrativity in the sense that they direct the way in which listeners make sense of the music towards narrative structures of meaning-making. As such, program notes often help listeners to be heard and remembered in more detail. Delazari's insightful analysis offers a look into the narrative strategies implemented by annotators. He concludes that the most common means of creating program notes that are *stimulacra*, are the usage of the narratives about both the composer's life and the work itself, as well as presenting tonal musical techniques as narrative entities.

From textual program notes in chapter 9, section 3 turns to the intermedial genre of art exhibition audio guides in chapter 10. Jarmila Mildorf here displays what narrative functions the music itself has in these texts. She looks at the audio guide texts underscored by music for the exhibition "Beckmann & Amerika" (published in catalogue format with audio by Hatje Cantz). Mildorf shows that, even though music does not play a predominant role, it is purposefully deployed in intriguing narrative functions. In particular, the music frames, or thematically introduces the narrative expressed through the audio guide text. In addition, the music often serves as amplifier of the textual narrative or as a segue between different narrative parts. Mildorf thus concludes that, even though art exhibition audio guides are often considered to be pragmatic, the intricate layers of narrative functions taken up by artistic music ultimately reveal the narrative genre of audio guide texts to be aesthetically rooted as well.

In the final chapter of the third section, Pim Verhulst looks at radio plays, specifically *Words and Music* by Samuel Beckett. His analysis offers an entirely different stance as what has come before in the other chapters. Namely, chapter 11 illustrates how music can disrupt the narrativity expressed in the text of intermedial art works such as the radio play. *Words and Music* has been scored by several composers. One score in particular is the focus of Verhulst's analysis, namely the one by S. Beckett's cousin John Beckett. This score is of particular interest because S. Beckett himself was involved in the composition process of the music. Verhulst shows that the music is a parody on program music and its expression of narrative themes. In addition, the music is shown to "denarrativize" the text. This contribution to the book might seem like the odd one out because it focuses on the "non-narrativity" of music. However, this aspect of music ties in with the gradable character of narrativity – a characteristic foregrounded in every chapter in some way. Indeed, some musical pieces have a very low degree of narrativity to the point that they are "non-narrative" or even "denarrativizing", whilst other have a very high degree of narrativity. In addition, the idea that music has the capacity to render the narrativity of a text moot in intermedial art works creates or even underlines the hypothesis that music can heighten the narrativity of a text as well.

Finally, section 4 explores the limits of music's narrative potential by considering narrativity in compositions by minimalist composer Reich. The sense that minimalist music is "non-narrative" has been touched upon already in chapters 4, 5, and 6.[3] In these cases, however, it has also become clear that minimalist music is not necessarily "non-narrative". Rather, narrative elements are obscured, stretched, structural, or highly implicit. In short, Reich's music, as well as many other minimalist compositions or experimental compositions of the late twentieth century, expresses narrative in unconventional or inconvenient ways. As such, the potential of Reich's music to express a narrative is present, but it is situated at the outer limit of the scale of narrativity, verging on the absence of narrativity.

Minimalist music is known for its idiosyncratic interpretation of time. In chapter 12, Pwyll ap Siôn foregrounds a heretofore underdeveloped field of inquiry, namely narrative space in minimalist and postminimalist music. He specifically analyzes and compares tropes of narrative space in postminimal works by Michael Torke, Reich, and Glass. Music-analytical parameters, such as layers, textures, and structures are forwarded as useful tools to discuss narrative space in music. Specifically, three different case studies are presented to illustrate these concepts. In *Adjustable Wrench*, Torke is revealed to use a layering technique that creates gradual transitions between sections. In Reich's *Proverb*, textural space controls composition techniques such as repetition and augmentation, which leads to an intensification of the music's expression of a sense of perspective. Lastly, "Etude no. 20" by Glass carries out narrative space through music-structural aspects, namely through a network of interrelated paradigmatic sections.

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[3] Note that Berio's music is also considered to have a strained relationship with narrative in chapter 7. His music, however, is not minimalist, but does fall under the overarching category of experimental, late-twentieth-century music.

In chapter 13, John Pymm answers Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's question to Reich as to how his "music tells stories". Reich composed music for the experimental film *Plastic Haircut*. The composition is one of his earliest compositions and, of Reich's well-known oeuvre, one of the lesser-known pieces that has been scarcely written about. In this chapter, Pymm explores the origins of Reich's sound collage. It is also deconstructed – Pymm provides a transcript of the audio snippets Reich uses in the collage – and analyzed in terms of its narrativity. This chapter is thus a strong contribution to what the limits of musical narrativity might be as it shows the way Reich "inconveniently" tells stories through his music, even though Reich himself proclaims that his music "does not tell stories". By focusing on a little-known, early piece, Pymm here reveals the foundations of Reich's seminal composition technique, namely the use of speech snippets, which is increasingly used in later works.

The final chapter (14) truly explores the limits of narrativity in a purely rhythmic piece by Reich, *Music for Pieces of Wood*. Martin Ross employs indexical processes in his narrative interpretation of Reich's piece with a strong focus on pattern development. He uncovers the musical gestures created by structuring the musical patterns in such a way that the former directs the listener to the latter. As such, a narrative trajectory can be discerned where each section reaches its ultimate built-up pattern, which Ross calls *plentitude*. Considering narrative as functioning on a fulfillment-based teleology, Ross argues that these musical gestures can be seen as dialogic interactions. As such, formal markers of plentitude can be distinguished when the claves in *Music for Pieces of Wood* exhaust their pattern functions. Ross adds a metonymical narrative layer by drawing attention to Reich's use of African compositional techniques. Reich's music is thus shown to incite different cultural perspectives in the listener, which also affects the musical gestures in Reich's music and how they are interpreted.

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SECTION 1

Food for Thought: Theory and/in Practice

The Only Truly Musical Narrative Is an Autobiographical Quest

Peter Dayan

Abstract

Ralph Vaughan Williams, like so many composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, maintained that the meaning of music cannot be expressed in words. If we accept that narratives are expressed in words, then we must suppose that, for him and his ilk, narrative cannot express the meaning of music. Yet the music of Vaughan Williams is surrounded by narratives; those he tells of his encounters with music, and those of the words he sets or associates with his instrumental compositions. What is the nature of the connection between his music and these narratives? Exploring the stories around *The Lark Ascending*, and conscripting his wife Ursula Vaughan Williams, whose poetry and narrative prose illustrate wonderfully the same aesthetic, I discover that for Ralph as for Ursula, the only way for a story to be faithful to a piece of music is for it to tell the tale of how we, as individuals, encounter the music. Such faithful tales never claim to express the meaning of the music. On the contrary: they know their task is not to capture the music, but to perform its escape from all our words. As academics, our duty, then, would be to learn to let music go.

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> [I]t may be asked what does music mean? A lot of nonsense is talked nowadays about the "meaning" of music. Music indeed has a meaning, though it is not one that can be expressed in words. Mendelssohn used to say that the meaning of music was too precise for words. The hearer may of course, if he chooses, narrow the meaning of music to fit words or visual impressions, as for example in opera. (R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music and Other Essays* 206)

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) is here telling us something that he maintained all his working life, and that many other composers have also believed. It seems, at first reading, familiar and innocent enough. But if one follows through its logic carefully, it leads to some very interesting knotty problems.

According to Vaughan Williams, people who attend an opera may well think that the music they hear has a meaning that fits words.[1] He himself, a composer

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[1] To be more precise: a meaning that fits "words or visual impressions". In this essay, I do not follow through that link to the visual; it would be very interesting, but I do not have the space.

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(like Mendelssohn), can see that this is an illusion. He knows that the meaning of music is of a kind that cannot be expressed in words. And yet he does not try to impose this knowledge on his hearers. He accepts they will often (indeed, one suspects, usually) choose to narrow the meaning of music to fit the words available. Why this acceptance? Does he not feel it his duty to persuade them of the error of their ways?

Before thinking this through, however, I ought to sort out to what extent it is relevant to the theme of this volume. We are here concerned, not with music and words in general, but with music and narrative potential. Can music narrate? What kind of narrative potential does it have? These are our core questions. Vaughan Williams writes often about the relationship between music and verbal language, but only indirectly about the relationship specifically between music and narrative. Can we take what he says about the former as relevant to the latter? That depends in turn on another question, an equally thorny one: does narrative, in the sense in which we should take it here, depend on words?

If a narrative does depend on words, then to receive a piece of music as narrative would logically be to narrow it, according to Vaughan Williams' reasoning.

Or could we, on the other hand, conceive of a kind of narrative that is properly musical, that works in a musical way, independent of words, in which case we might be able to receive music as narrative without narrowing it?

My answer to that will, I am well aware, not be universally welcomed, but I believe it to be true in our academic context. It is this: we have no useful concept of narrative that does not depend on words.

I reached that conclusion a decade ago, after attending a truly remarkable conference on narratology and the arts organised by Márta Grabócz, in Paris in 2012. It was entitled: "Première rencontre internationale sur la narratologie et les arts: 'L'art comme texte. Approches narratologiques, sémiotiques et transmédiatiques'". It was a conference fascinatingly full of genuine arguments between the participants, real fundamental differences of opinion that were never resolved. I thought I could see the reason for this. It was that once you set the concept of narrative loose from words, it immediately begins to expand uncontrollably, to include anything and everything that happens in time or in a sequence; and when that happens, the word *narrative* actually ceases to have any distinctive value, any discrete function, indeed any usefulness in academic discussion. Only definitions of narrative that acknowledged their dependence on a verbal model seemed to allow for a concept of narrative specific enough to give purchase to fruitful comparative debate. Participants who looked for entirely non-verbal narrative types in music or in the visual arts used the word *narrative* in such an unanchored way that it really did not tell us anything useful, beyond the fact that people experience all art in time and construct their experiences through sequencing.

Having absorbed that lesson, I have ever since used, and shall now use, the word *narrative* to refer exclusively to things that either happen in words, or else can be concretely analysed as analogous to narratives that happen in words. The narratives I am going to discuss begin with stories in words about music, and about how music reaches us. I am going to suggest that what we should learn from those narratives is this: the only narrative that is true to music, and does not narrow the meaning of music, is the story of how you personally find it. The true musical narrative is therefore always autobiographical. Music's narrative potential is nothing other than its boundless propensity to give rise to the stories we have to tell of how we come to appreciate it.

Once one allows oneself to entertain this apparently strange idea, one begins to find it diligently at work, though often below the surface, in the writings of many composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I have space here only to look at one of them. It will shortly become clear why I have chosen Ralph Vaughan Williams.

I shall begin with three little examples from a rather endearing text which Vaughan Williams called "A Musical Autobiography" (see *National Music and Other Essays* 177–94). Here is his account of the first time he heard an opera by Wagner:

> I experienced no surprise, but rather that strange certainty that I had heard it all before. There was a feeling of recognition as of meeting an old friend which comes to us all in the face of great artistic experiences. I had the same experience when I first heard an English folk-song, when I first saw Michael Angelo's *Day and Night*, when I suddenly came upon Stonehenge, or had my first sight of New York City – the intuition that I had been there already. (180)

This sense of recognition at first hearing had been a familiar one in European culture for several decades before Vaughan Williams' night at the Wagner opera. Charles Baudelaire had said very similar things.[2] But what is Vaughan Williams recognising? We are given no evidence that it is any kind of narrative within the music. Vaughan Williams gives no clue to the story of the opera. You could not even tell from what he writes which opera he had actually heard.

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[2] For example, in a letter he wrote to Wagner dated 17 February 1860, describing his first experience of hearing Wagner's music: "il m'a semblé que je connaissais cette musique, et plus tard en y réfléchissant, j'ai compris d'où venait ce mirage: il me semblait que cette musique était *la mienne*, et je la reconnaissais comme tout homme reconnaît les choses qu'il est destiné à aimer" (Baudelaire 690, emphasis added).

He is telling us the story of his own encounter with it, which has no necessary points of contact with the tale told in Wagner's words.

This technique is used throughout his writings wherever he is talking, not about musical technique, but about the meaning of music. He always, carefully, tells us what he experienced, and not what story the music tells. Here is Vaughan Williams as a music student:

> One day Walthew, who had a holy horror of anything high falutin in art, insisted on taking me to hear *Carmen*. By that time I had quite recovered from my Gounod fever and had become the complete prig. Bach, Beethoven (ex-officio), Brahms and Wagner were the only composers worth considering, so I went to *Carmen* prepared to scoff, but Walthew won the day and I remained to pray. (183)

Once again, he says nothing about the story that *Carmen* might tell, only the story of his experience of it.

> It must have been about the same time that I had another salutary disturbance of my musical prejudices: I heard Verdi's *Requiem* for the first time. At first I was properly shocked by the frank sentimentalism and sensationalism of the music. I remember being particularly horrified at the drop of a semitone on the word "Dona". Was not this the purest "village organist"? But in a very few minutes the music possessed me. I realized that here was a composer who could do all the things that I with my youthful pedantry thought wrong, indeed, would be unbearable in a lesser man; music which was sentimental, theatrical, occasionally even cheap, and yet was an overpowering masterpiece. That day I learnt that there is nothing in itself that is "common or unclean", indeed that there are no canons of art except that contained in the well-worn tag, "To thine own self be true". (183)

If you know what a Requiem is, then naturally you know in a sense what Verdi's music is about, and what story is being told at the point of that drop of a semitone. But nothing in Vaughan Williams' account itself tells you anything about that story. The story he gives us is not one contained within the music; it is of his own personal encounter. He is certainly being true to his own self. And doubtless according to his own principles, he is simultaneously being true to the spirit of what music itself is. But the question remains: in what sense, if any, is he being true specifically to any narrative contained in the music of Verdi's *Requiem*, or of *Carmen*, or of the particular Wagner opera he heard?

I shall leave that question suspended. It is now my turn to tell a story, being true to mine own self; the story of my encounter with a work by Vaughan Williams which is not a setting of words like an opera or a requiem, but that is clearly tangled up with words.

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The words in question begin with those of "The Lark Ascending", a poem by the now largely forgotten Victorian poet George Meredith (1828–1909).

In 1914, Vaughan Williams wrote a piece for violin and piano called *The Lark Ascending*, taking his title from Meredith's poem. At the time, the piece was neither performed nor published, because when the war broke out, Vaughan Williams joined the army immediately, abandoning his career as a composer. Like all his other manuscripts, *The Lark Ascending* was filed away and left behind. Vaughan Williams served in the army throughout the war. After his discharge, he got the *Lark* out of its drawer, worked on it again with the help of the violinist Marie Hall, to whom he dedicated it, and turned it into a *Romance for Violin and Orchestra*, which was first performed in 1921. It rapidly became a firm favourite, and is now by any measure one of the best loved pieces of what is generally called classical music in Britain.

Almost exactly a century after that first performance, the story of *The Lark Ascending* was brought to my attention by some of my undergraduate students at Edinburgh University. They were taking a new course I had put on entitled *Intermediality*. Each week, we had a two-hour seminar. This was generally led by a small group of students who were asked to select artworks in two different media (music, poetry, or painting) with overlapping themes, and present them, using them as examples to think through the following three questions:

> Do music, painting, and poetry all have something in common?
>
> Is there an essence of art which they all, somehow, contain or express?
>
> Or is each of those three arts fundamentally different, incompatible with the others, only able to work on its own terms?

One group chose "The Lark Ascending"; the poem by Meredith, and Vaughan Williams' *Romance for Violin and Orchestra*. They gave the history of Vaughan Williams' *Romance*, and talked, as one might have expected, about how the poem and the piece of music related or did not relate to each other. We discussed one obvious difference, which is in the form.

The poem has a straightforward linear narrative. It starts with a description of the lark taking off from the ground and beginning to sing. It follows the lark's ascent, during which the bird becomes, from the point of view of the earthbound human observer, steadily smaller and more distant. Finally, at the end of the poem, both the lark and its song vanish into the heavens – "and then the fancy sings". As the students said, Vaughan Williams draws attention to this through the lines he quotes from the poem on the front page of the score. He begins with the first lines of the poem, gives a few from the middle, and ends with the poem's final lines. Here is what figures on the page before the music in the printed score:

> He rises and begins to round,
> He drops the silver chain of sound,
> Of many rings without a break,
> In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.
>
> ∴
>
> For singing till his heaven fills,
> 'Tis love of earth that he instils,
> And ever winging up and up,
> Our valley is his golden cup,
> And he the wine which overflows
> To lift us with him as he goes.
>
> ∴
>
> Till lost on his aërial rings
> In light, and then the fancy sings.
> (qtd. in R. Vaughan Williams, *The Lark Ascending* 2)

This points us directly to the fundamental structural difference between Meredith's poem, and Vaughan Williams' *Romance*. The poem begins with a distinctly audible and visible lark. It ends with an inaudible one disappearing into the heavens. From the former to the latter, there is a steady progression, which is also a steady diminuendo. Vaughan Williams' music, on the other hand, ends much as it begins: almost inaudibly. At the start, there is a two-bar introduction scored for clarinets and bassoons marked *ppp*, and muted horns and strings marked *pp*. Then the solo violin enters, for a long *cadenza* marked *pp sur la touche*. After this opening *cadenza*, the music swells. The loudest, most present sections of the piece, those also with the most characterised melodies, are in the middle, not at the beginning. The overall form is actually quite complex, but to the listener it comes across as ABA, or perhaps, if one listens more carefully, ABCADCA. Thus it is more circular (or perhaps figure-of-eight) than linear.

This, as we agreed in the class, is actually quite typical of a general difference between literature and music. Literature tends to tell a story in which the end is a very different place from the beginning, whereas music is quite capable of returning to something like its point of departure. Music tends to structure itself more by repetition, literature more by progression. Which means we might say that music is typically less narrative than literature, because the literature we tend to call narrative (as opposed, perhaps, to poetic, or lyrical) is precisely that which is structured most by progression and least by repetition.

The students wanted us to think about how the music might be taken as imitative of the poem. Since it clearly did not imitate the poem's form or narrative structure, might it be taken to reflect the poem's subject matter, at the heart of which is the singing skylark? Does the violin, perhaps, sound like a lark? To help us to think about this, they played a video available on YouTube. It showed the violinist Hilary Hahn playing the piece. It can be easily found by googling. It is certainly a beautiful performance. Indeed, there are an astonishing number of beautiful performances of the piece by great violinists available on the internet.

One thing struck me about the video. The *cadenza*, as we have seen, is marked *sur la touche*. The violinist is being instructed to play with the bow over the fingerboard. Hahn does not do this at all. One plainly sees that her bow never gets anywhere near the fingerboard. On the contrary: a minute into the piece, it is practically on the bridge. Nor, indeed, is she making any obvious attempt to play *pp*. She gives more the impression, if I may put it thus, of singing her heart out. I pointed this out to the students. They were not sure what to make of it. We will return to this.

Among the interesting documents that the students presented to the class was the front matter to Vaughan Williams' manuscript. They pointed out the lines quoted from the poem. These are the same as those which figure on the printed score (I have given them above) – except that there are also a few other lines, which Vaughan Williams copied out on his manuscript, and then crossed out. These crossed-out lines are not in the printed score. We wondered why he changed his mind, and decided to omit them.

The crossed-out lines are from the central section of the poem, which is actually the most remarkable from the literary point of view. Meredith here writes not as an ordinary observer might, describing the bird and his song as seen and heard from the ground, but as a mystical poet for whom the bird is transubstantiated into the English countryside and its inhabitants, in the same way, quite explicitly, as the wine and wafer in Holy Communion actually become the blood and the body of Christ. The bird is not *like*, or emblematic of, the place and its people; he actually *is* the place and its people. He is not a sign, he is the thing itself. At this point the very regular, not to say monotonous, rather breathless rhythm of Meredith's iambic tetrameter comes to have a peculiarly powerful effect.

> The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine
> He is, the hills, the human line,
> The meadows green, the fallows brown […]
> (Meredith 4)[3]

The unvarying rhythm places a powerful stress on the verb *is*. This effect is reproduced in the lines Vaughan Williams had thought of quoting:

> He is, the dance of children, thanks
> Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
> And eyes of violets while they breathe;
> All these the circling song will wreathe. (Meredith 4)

The song, which *wreathes*, we find here distinguished from the bird, who *is*: is not merely himself, but the whole rural world which the poet, thanks to the lark, can conceive of as a single organic entity. This, we saw in the class, gives a valuable insight into how a poem's subject gains its identity. But we had difficulty thinking through, at the time, the question of why Vaughan Williams initially copied out these lines, then deleted them. I only found my answer much later, as a result of a personal engagement with the question raised earlier: why does Hahn not play *sur la touche*, as directed?

In the class, I had wondered out loud to the students whether Vaughan Williams actually thought anyone would really play the opening *cadenza pp sur la touche*. To which their response was: if he did not think they would play it, why did he write it? Is a composer's score not supposed to be a set of practical instructions for the musician?

I replied: not necessarily. Composers quite often think of their scores not merely as prompts for performance, but as written things existing in their own right, as if the physical score partook of a distinctive kind of artistic genre reaching beyond the audible. Just as poets will write poems suggesting that there is something beyond words, so composers will write pieces of music suggesting there is something beyond sound, and perhaps that is what Vaughan Williams is doing here.

I offered no hard evidence, and we got no further on that topic in the class. But the question lodged in my head, and I could not let it lie.

I had recently acquired a light, slender, elegant eighteenth-century French violin which, like a lot of violins from the middle of that century, has an ability to produce a beautiful whisper that most nineteenth- and twentieth-century violins lack, I suspect because since the days of Paganini every aspiring violinist has wanted a powerful and projecting violin with a noble tone. I said to myself: if any violin can play that *cadenza* genuinely *pp sur la touche*, mine can. I decided to see whether I could do it.

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[3] There are many editions of Meredith's poem, which was popular in its day. I quote from a popular collection of Meredith's verse which may well have been in Vaughan Williams' hands. "The Lark Ascending" is the second poem in the volume.

I tried. More than a year later, I am still trying. It is certainly not easy. Apart from anything else, one's bow practically bumps into one's left-hand fingers when one gets to the high notes. But even putting aside the technical difficulties, it would take extraordinary courage to try to do it in a concert hall with an orchestra behind you. You would hear your violin teacher in your head telling you to *project*. I happen to think that a violin like mine playing *pp sur la touche* can perfectly well be heard at the back of a concert hall, but that is not what teachers tell you. What is certainly true is that if you do take the risk and sincerely try to play *pp sur la touche*, the slightest wobble or twitch caused by nerves, or a sudden breeze, or an incipient cough, or anything else, makes the sound crack up. It is terrifyingly, intensely, absorbingly fragile.

At the same time, being interested in the history of women violinists in this period, I found out what I could about Hall (1884–1956). Hers is a fascinating story. She owned, by 1920, a magnificent Stradivarius, of the kind that will dominate any concert hall. (She had started her playing career on an Amati which would have been much more like my eighteenth-century fiddle, but she moved up to the more powerful model as soon as she could.) There is no available recording of her playing the *Lark*, but there are other recordings, and she definitely sounds like someone who loves and nurtures her constantly magnificent sustained noble tone, not like someone who would willingly take the risk of playing *pp sur la touche*.

I also discovered that, while the piece is dedicated to her and it was she who first played it, she was not the violinist with whom Vaughan Williams himself, as conductor, most often performed it. That honour goes to another friend of his, the Canadian violinist Frederick Grinke (1911–1987). We do have a recording of Grinke playing it, in 1940, with Vaughan Williams conducting. There is no video, of course, but it is perfectly obvious from the sound (available on YouTube) that he is making no more effort than Hahn to play it *pp sur la touche*. This is particularly clear at the point in the score where, towards the end of the *cadenza*, Vaughan Williams writes *nat.*, meaning *naturale*, no longer *sur la touche*. Grinke makes no audible change whatsoever to his tone at that point, nor indeed at the two other points where Vaughan Williams writes *sur la touche*.

Vaughan Williams had nothing but praise for Grinke's playing. There is no evidence, to put it crudely, that he ever said: "Fred, could you please try to play it genuinely over the fingerboard?" He was certainly happy enough to continue working with Grinke on the piece repeatedly over many years. Surely this can only mean that Vaughan Williams knew perfectly well, when he wrote *pp sur la touche*, he would not get what he was asking for, and he did not complain when he did not get it.

This was definitely not due to any kind of ignorance on his part. He knew all about violin playing. The violin was his first instrument. He was so good at playing the viola when he was a young man that he wanted to be a professional viola player, and indeed he would have been if his family had not forbidden it. He knew perfectly well what *sur la touche* meant. When he wrote the piece, he had recently been studying with Ravel in Paris, and no one was more firm or radical on questions of tone colour than Ravel. By the way, it seems to me probable that he wrote *sur la touche* rather than *sul tasto* because of Ravel's influence.

I began to suspect that to appreciate the mystery at work here, one had to delve more deeply into a sense, never explicit in his writings but often emerging indirectly from them, that there is something uniquely precious about inaudible or almost inaudible music, something that escapes the traditional notion of a performance as the realisation of a score.

One of the most moving passages of Ursula Vaughan Williams' biography of her husband describes the memorial performance of the *Matthew Passion* (BWV 244) which Ralph conducted after the death of his sister:

> the choir was enormous [...] nearly eight hundred singers [...] The memory that remained most vivid was the singing of the unaccompanied chorale 'Be near me Lord when dying' which he had rehearsed over and over again till he made the choir achieve a real pianissimo, a wonderful sound when so many voices were able to achieve the tiny crescendo like a sigh, a stillness of the world holding its breath before the Evangelist's awe-stricken – 'and the veil of the temple was rent ...' (U. Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.* 186)

Of course, Bach's score does not ask for a *real pianissimo* or for a *tiny crescendo* from nearly eight hundred voices. But then, Vaughan Williams always scorned the idea of authentic period performance. He believed his duty was to take Bach's scores and bring them to life for his audience, as suited his time and means. As with the *Lark*, the connection between the score and the threshold of audibility is not a simple one.

The Lark Ascending ends with a *cadenza* quite similar to the one with which it opens. There are, however, some notable differences. The final *cadenza* is marked, not *pp sur la touche*, but *ppp sur la touche*. And it ends with a long *diminuendo*, from that *ppp*, on two high notes both marked with a pause labelled *lunga*.

Grinke, as far as we can tell from the recording, pays no attention to these markings. His *ppp* is no quieter than his *pp*, and he really does no pause at all on those two high notes at the end. (Do the technical limitations of the old recording flatten his dynamics? Doubtless they do, to some extent. And yet one can clearly hear him getting louder and quieter on several occasions, especially within expressive phrases, and the orchestra's changes of dynamic are quite perceptible, above all in its tone. The orchestral strings' *pianissimo* sounds like a genuine whisper; Grinke's solo sound never does. In any case, the limitations of the recording certainly cannot be responsible for the lack of long pauses.) Was Vaughan Williams happy with this? Once again, if he was not, no trace of any unhappiness remains; he appears never to have had a bad word to say about Grinke's playing.

Naturally enough, I found myself thinking: here am I, desperately struggling to play this piece as Vaughan Williams wrote it, when all the evidence suggests that he never expected it to be so played. Why am I bothering? And yet as I struggled, I could not help feeling that the story told by the interweaving of that struggle and my research was telling me something about the music. It is not something I can demonstrate in any kind of academic reasoning. It takes us back to my starting point, and it might be roughly formulated thus.

In my mind, Vaughan Williams, like so many other composers, led a double life. On the surface, in his public words as in his performing life, he was an intensely practical man who aimed to make music that would genuinely move people, and give audiences and performers a profound sense of the value of music. Which the *Lark* certainly does, as it has always been played, by so many great violinists from Hall to Hahn, not *ppp* or *sur la touche*. But in his other life, in his real inner life, he was an unutterably impractical person for whom true music was something totally out of this world and totally independent of words, something he loved so much that he was genuinely unafraid of death, and equally genuinely unable to love anyone who could not share his sense of the remoteness of beauty. (Both his wives certainly did share it.) This second Vaughan Williams is the one who wrote the following sentence, whose implications should be received as frankly devastating for any attempt to understand music through words:

> The human, visible, audible and intelligible media which artists (of all kinds) use, are symbols not of other visible and audible things but of what lies beyond sense and knowledge. (R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music and Other Essays* 122)

Heard music, as an audible medium, is a symbol of what lies beyond the audible and visible. Written music, as a visible medium, is so, too. In the hands of the composer who understands these things, written music can nudge us to hear beyond the audible, just as audible music can tell us to look beyond the visible. The Vaughan Williams who understood and implemented this intermedial dynamic is the one who wrote *ppp sur la touche dimimuendo*, knowing perfectly well that nobody would ever play it thus. I cannot tell you this as an academic fact because I do not have the evidence in his own words, and I do not have the evidence in his own words because he did not believe words should be relied on to say such things. The composer's task is to ensure that our contemporary words, with their reckless claim (whether biblical, philosophical, or academic) to be the natural language of truth, are never allowed to clog our access to what lies beyond sense and knowledge.

That is why the narratives that he offers us, in his own words, never present themselves as in any way equivalent to stories that might actually inhere in the music. On the contrary. They are always narratives of how music comes to inflect and disrupt our pre-existent verbal narratives.

Vaughan Williams tells us about hearing *Carmen* because when he heard it, he had to change his mind about the limits of what music could be. He similarly tells us about hearing Verdi's requiem because when he heard it, he had to change his mind about the limits of what music could be. The same motivation lurks behind his many lengthy explanations of why he does not believe in attempting to perform Bach's music as Bach himself performed it: he wants us to know that not even the greatest of composers can be legitimately asked to tell us in words what music, any music, including his own, may become.[4] To thine own self be true … but in being true to yourself, you must be constantly willing to change your mind about what can limit music. Music urges us not to narrow it by fitting it to words, but rather to broaden it, to push back its limits, ever further away from what words do. And, as his writing shows us in exemplary fashion, the way to do that when you are writing about music is autobiographical. Bearing in mind that autobiography can be a kind of fiction, and vice versa.

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[4] See, for example, "Bach, the Great Bourgeois" (*National Music and Other Essays* 170–6), where Vaughan Williams asks: "Did Bach always mean his orchestral directions to be carried out to the letter?" To which he gives his own reply: "'The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life'. If we adhere meticulously and mechanically to the letter of Bach we shall inevitably kill the spirit" (174–5). The key question here is: where can we look to find the spirit, if not in the letter, whether it be in the Bible or in the music of Bach? The only available answers are: inwards ("to thine own self be true"), and then outwards and upwards, to where we are "lost […] [i]n light".

Vaughan Williams' second wife Ursula Vaughan Williams (1911–2007) was a poet; a remarkable one, though little known as a poet today. She also wrote a small amount of narrative prose. Among her published pieces is a wonderful novella called *Fall of Leaf*. One of the main characters in the story, a woman named Stella, is a composer. Another of the main characters, a man named Francis, is a poet. Might one sense autobiographical echoes here? Obviously, between Ralph the composer and Ursula the poet, and Stella the composer and Francis the poet, the genders are reversed. But striking similarities remain.

Stella the composer is several decades older than Francis the poet, as Ralph was several decades older than Ursula. Towards the end of the story, Stella dies, and a memorial concert of her works is put on. Francis goes to the concert, and he hears a recently composed piece of chamber music. We are told nothing about the structure of that piece of music or what story it might intrinsically have tried to tell; only what it did for and to the poet.

> It was written in a musical language unfamiliar to Francis. But as he listened, he remembered his talk with her about death, and thought that he understood whence the essence of the music came. He felt that he was listening to meaning beyond unfamiliar means of expression. It gave him the final poem for his sequence, and it came not only from her music but from the dream he had told her during the summer […]. (U. Vaughan Williams, *Fall of Leaf* 444)

Francis' listening gives him the final poem for the sequence he had been working on. But how is that giving connected to the music itself? A curious syntactic ambiguity should make us hesitate. The word *it* occurs twice in the final sentence of my quotation. The first *it* must refer to his experience of listening to the music or to its meaning as he finds it. The second *it* we doubtless instinctively take as having the same antecedent as the first. But if it does, then we have to accept that we are being told that the meaning he finds as he listens to the music actually comes, not only from Stella's music, but also from Francis' dream, which he had recounted to Stella shortly before she died. The meaning of the music comes both from the experience of listening to it, and from Francis' own first-person verbal narrative; and there is no way to disentangle the two. The listener's autobiography cannot be separated from the music's meaning.

There follows Francis' poem, which concludes the novella. Here are its last lines:

> I was alone, clothed in exaltation,
> as if all wishes and all hopes were found,
> as if, in that wide darkness, I was light.
> (U. Vaughan Williams, *Fall of Leaf* 444)

Whatever else it is, this is the story of a transfiguration into pure light, like that of the lark in the last lines of Meredith's poem:

> Till lost on his aërial rings
> In light […].
> (qtd. in R. Vaughan Williams, *The Lark Ascending* 2)

Francis' poem is, like Meredith's, given as a first-person narrative. It presents itself as autobiographical. He tells us that it was given to him by a piece of music; as Meredith's was given to him, perhaps, by the song of the lark. But the poem tells us, like everything that Ralph and Ursula Vaughan Williams wrote, nothing about any particular narrative that might inhere in any specific work of music as such, prior as of right to the story that individual listeners might find in it. Should we, as academics, see this as a problem?

It certainly is a problem if we think that our academic duty is to pin down in words the distinctive identity of a particular work of music. Which would be understandable. Our instinct, in the human-scientific academy, is always to look for a kind of objective truth that can be expressed in words. Looking for a truth that can be expressed in words is, of course, as Vaughan Williams knew, similarly what most people choose to do when they reflect on music they have heard; emblematically, by presuming the narrative of an opera's music corresponds to that of its words. But this process, natural though it is in that it satisfies the dynamics of our everyday method of looking for truth, is also, as Ralph Vaughan Williams said in the quotation from which I began, a narrowing of the meaning of the music. Both he and Ursula, in their writing about music and its meaning, push in the opposite direction. They aim to broaden the music by blurring the perceived relationship of identity between music, words in general, and narrative in particular.

It is to me emblematic that on the score of *The Lark Ascending*, Vaughan Williams crossed out precisely those lines of Meredith's poem that assert the absolute identity of the bird with the particular landscape. Certainly, a sense of connection between music and the land is frequently present in Vaughan Williams' writing; he often insists on the Englishness of his music, and on the uniqueness of English folk music. But he never allows that connection to develop into a sufficient expression of the music's identity. We can find the true meaning, the essence, of any particular piece of music, only if we are prepared to follow the music as it moves, like the lark at the end of the poem, away from the land and upwards, into the silent light where the fancy alone still sings. The progression, the progress, may pass through verbalisable identity, certainly; but its flight takes it further, from identity to something that dissolves it.

The *ppp sur la touche* followed by the long *diminuendo* at the end of the *Lark* takes us on the same journey. The music is there, and of course it must be played, as Meredith's poem is there and must be read. But there is a level, none other than the level of writing, of inscription on paper, at which both the poem and the music put us on a trajectory towards silence.

We are reluctant to accept this, because as we move with the music and the poem towards silence, we lose our sense of what they actually can be, really, concretely, distinctively; we find that if we try to say what they are in words, it is the inadequacy of our words, rather than their appropriateness to the work in its individuality, which becomes the distinguishing marker of their true value. What is the identity of *The Lark Ascending*? Where should we look for its narrative? Is it in the sound of the music when played by Grinke, or Hall, or Hahn, or anyone else, even me? Is it rather in the score, with its provocatively unplayable dynamics? Was it in Vaughan Williams' head, and therefore now, since he died in the year I was born, nowhere? Is it to be sought by thinking about the poem or by allowing ourselves to know what Vaughan Williams crossed out from the poem on his manuscript? If I try to think about being faithful to the thought patterns of Ralph or indeed of Ursula Vaughan Williams, what I see is how the music escapes from all of these things. As it escapes, it leaves behind no narrative from within it. But it generates endless narratives, including mine.

We have seen how Ralph Vaughan Williams' narratives of musical experience are actually narratives of how he repeatedly had to de-limit his own sense of what music was. Ursula Vaughan Williams' narrative in *Fall of Leaf* might seem different because it is a fictional account about a fictional piece of music; but does that matter? What does matter is that her story, like Ralph's, does not attempt to use words to identify any narrative meaning within the specific piece of music. It does not try to persuade us that the music tells us any kind of story. Instead, it tells the story of how an individual human being experiences the music, and the opening up which results. Instead of music as narrative, we have narrative on music; and with that we must be satisfied.

We might wish, as academics interested in narratology, that we could do something with our words more faithful to the certifiable identity of a particular piece of music – certifiable in academic words. But we cannot. If we love it, we must be prepared to love it and lose it – and then to tell the story of how we lost it. That is the only way to be faithful to it.

This conclusion satisfies me because over many decades of research into how poets and composers since the 1830s write about their arts, I have become increasingly impressed and obsessed by what they refuse to talk about. They have a strict limit beyond which they will not go, and a shared conviction that critical discourse can only legitimately reach so far. I have learned a great deal from trying to understand why, and from mapping the border between what, for them, can and cannot be said.

At this point, as a last confession, I will admit to a peculiar feeling that when I fail to play the *Lark* as I would like to on my light and elegant mid-eighteenth century violin, I am being as faithful to it as Hall or Grinke were when they played it on their magnificent Strads (Grinke also had a Strad), successfully, to an audience of hundreds or thousands including the composer. Even though you would have enjoyed Grinke's performance, or Hall's, or Hahn's (she plays an equally magnificent nineteenth-century copy of a Strad), and you certainly would not enjoy mine. And even though I am quite certain that Ralph Vaughan Williams himself would have been far more at home with a magnificent Strad than with my delicate French violin.

To sum up. If we follow my interpretation of Ralph and Ursula Vaughan Williams, we find it is a mistake to try to use our academic words to seek for a narrative within a piece of music. Narratives require words; and to identify a piece of music with anything that could happen in words is to narrow it, as well as to narrow our sense of what music is. But in telling the narratives of our encounters with a piece of music, we can also tell how we open ourselves to an ever-broader understanding. Do such stories tell us anything about the particular piece of music? Well … Perhaps the next time you hear *The Lark Ascending*, you will think of Grinke, and Hall, and Hahn on their powerful Strads or pseudo-Strads, and then of me struggling with my *ppp sur la touche*; and you will hear the music differently. Perhaps when I go to see *Carmen* for the first time, I will think of Vaughan Williams between Bach and Verdi, and hear it differently. Does any of this engage the identity of the music in any certifiable way? Perhaps it does, because it situates the work within the history of music reception and of conceptions of music. It does, for example, allow us to see how the composer of *The Lark Ascending* was drawn to the romantic myth of silent music. (One of the poems by Ursula that Ralph set to music is entitled "Silence and Music".) But it tells us nothing about music as narrative. The only narrative that is faithful to the music is the one that engages the way in which we, as individuals, receive it.

If we try to plot the narrative content of a piece of music using the kinds of mapping tools that work for words, we narrow it. We may choose to do so, as we may choose to experience the music of an opera as an expression of its libretto. The motives that push us to make this choice have such deep roots in our post-Enlightenment notion of the nature of truth, that the composer, being realistic, knows it would be vain to combat them directly. But the composer also knows that if we wish to be true both to ourselves and to the music, we should release the music from our net of words, as a bird, netted and observed, might be released to fly again, and let it rise to where the fancy sings. The story we should be telling is the story of how as we released it, it let us go too, with our sense of music broadened, not narrowed.

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From Absolute Music to Sound Experience

On Post-Classical Music and Horizontal Listening

Marlies De Munck

Abstract

This chapter examines the perception and understanding of post-classical (or "post-minimalist") music and its compatibility with narrative approaches to music. The main hypothesis is that the immense popularity of this music genre is symptomatic of a music-aesthetic paradigm shift that is currently taking place, which also affects listening modes and musical interpretation strategies. Because of its deep intertwining with digital technologies – both the music itself and the listening practice – post-classical music is in line with broader cultural processes of horizontalization, driven by digitalization and resulting in the hyper-individualization of society. The main argument for this alignment is that post-classical music creates immersive sound experiences rather than any musical "content" based on musical syntax or harmonic development. By comparing two archetypal cases – John Cage's 4'33" and Max Richter's *Sleep* – this chapter investigates how the relationship between music and listener has fundamentally changed over the last decades. While the "vertical" listening attitude required the audience to actively reach out and interpret the musical material, the "horizontal" listening mode creates a static aural landscape to reside in. Consequently, concepts of musical meaning built on "vertical" models of meaning, especially narrative approaches, no longer seem applicable within the new music-aesthetic paradigm.

1 Music-Aesthetic Paradigms

Like every art form, music is always in transformation. The main engines of innovation are, undoubtedly, musicians. Yet musical change is also a marker of its own sociocultural age. Critical thinkers, most notably Theodor Adorno, have written about the seemingly paradoxical character of music as both autonomous and a social fact (Adorno 6). Famous is Adorno's acknowledgement of Arnold Schoenberg's turn to atonality as the only possible way of composing at the time, not because he regarded atonality as aesthetically better but because tonality, as a historical material, had "collapsed" by the early 20th century (Paddison 83). Even those who do not favor Adorno's aesthetic theory may agree that transformations in and of music often reflect sociological, political,

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technological, and other forms of change in society. An obvious example is the direct link between technical improvements of musical instruments and innovative compositional techniques, such as shown in the research of pianist Tom Beghin (2022). By using a replica of Beethoven's Erard piano, he discovered how certain passages in Beethoven's *Waldstein* sonata took shape as a result of the heavy touch of his new French keyboard. But not just the material conditions matter, music also relates to more abstract societal conditions, such as the socio-political situation. For example, Andrew Bowie describes how, in reaction to Germany's failure to realize many individual freedoms, composers like Beethoven channeled their desire for freedom into their music (*Philosophical Variations* 25).

Many scholars have pointed out how listening practices and musical interpretation strategies transform as well. Together with the music, the expectations, imagination and musical literacy of listeners evolve under the influence of changing cultural, socio-economic, and technological circumstances. For example, James H. Johnson described how the economic rise of the bourgeoisie initiated a public concert culture with newly built concert halls and new rules of behavior for the listener, including the requirement of *silenzio*. The audience was increasingly expected to listen attentively to the musical performance. As a result, composers could count on more actively involved listeners with a longer attention span, which created room for more elaborate, autonomous musical forms. This evolution required new ways of understanding music's meaning. As Lydia Goehr argued, the emergence and success of the autonomous musical work around 1800 came hand in hand with the new, Kantian ideal of aesthetic contemplation as a mode of "disinterested attention" (*Imaginary Museum* 158). This ideal implied a belief in the autonomy of the musical work as purposeful in and of itself, as exemplified in the nineteenth century idea of "absolute music", or, in the terms of Peter Kivy, as "music alone".

Carl Dahlhaus described the rise of absolute music in the same terms that Thomas Kuhn applied to the history of science: a "paradigm shift", as it relied on a total "reversal of esthetic premises" (7). He also described how this new music-aesthetic paradigm required a new hermeneutic model to accommodate for the meaningfulness of purely instrumental music. This led to ongoing discussions between proponents of formalist, narrative and expressivist approaches to music, most clearly exemplified in the 19th century *Musikstreit* between defenders of absolute and program music. But however great the differences between the respective positions were, they still belonged to one and the same music-aesthetic paradigm. "Most scholars", Mark Evan Bonds writes, "including Dahlhaus, recognized that the conceptual dichotomy of absolute and program music was unsustainable; over time, the two extremes came to be seen more and more as opposite ends of a conceptual spectrum" (298). That conceptual spectrum is the Romantic music-aesthetic paradigm, which, until today, dominates the main part of western classical music culture, including most theories of musical meaning.

It is within the conceptual spectrum of this Romantic paradigm that narrative interpretations of music make sense. However, I will argue that we are, in the twenty-first century, experiencing a new paradigm shift that is taking music and the listening culture into a whole new direction. I will describe this as the shift from absolute music to sound experience. Like the previous shift, this new turn is part of a larger cultural transformation, initiated by changing social, cultural, and technological conditions. More specifically, I will argue that the rapid digitalization and hyper-individualization of Western culture, which both serve as instruments and catalysts in the democratizing of art and culture, have a decisive impact on music making and on the way we listen to and understand music. One reason for considering this shift as fundamental for classical music, I will argue, is that it changes the core of its artistic significance. More specifically, purely instrumental music is less and less listened to as an autonomous source of meaning. As a consequence, the narrative approach to music loses its appeal as a hermeneutic strategy and as a conceptual basis for musical understanding.[1]

There is no vantage point (yet) from which to observe the situation we find ourselves in. I am aware that this inevitably makes my thesis speculative. Yet I base it on concrete and verifiable phenomena, such as the ubiquity of digital audio technology, the increasing cultural value attached to the so-called "immersive experience" and the ever-growing presence of post-classical music on major classical concert stages and festival programs. In what follows, I first look at these notable cultural trends to illustrate and clarify the conceptual distinction between what I will call, after Italian philosopher Alessandro Baricco, "vertical" and "horizontal" meaning paradigms. In the next section I argue that classical music is going through a process of horizontalization. To get a handle on this evolution, I compare two well-known musical works that epitomize how both music and listening modes have "horizontalized" over the last decades. The chapter closes with a critical section in which I ask whether our current theories of musical meaning, including narrative concepts, are still adequate to describe the horizontalized musical experience.

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[1] To be sure, I do not want to claim that there is a master plan behind this shift. Indeed, one should avoid projecting an imagined purposefulness onto music history when establishing links with society and culture at large, if only because the causal direction of these links is at no point completely clear. Neither do I want to maintain that there is only one correct listening mode for each musical style or genre, or that a listener would automatically adopt the "correct" listening attitude. Still, I believe there is a degree of appropriateness between the style and genre of a musical work and the way one can fruitfully listen to it, and that this appropriateness is calibrated, amongst other factors, by the use of technology.

2 Vertical and Horizontal Meaning Paradigms

ASMR, listening bars, virtual reality, the *Van Gogh Experience*, the *Hearing Wellness Festival*, the metaverse, … Besides being immensely popular, these diverse cultural phenomena have another thing in common: they all promise the spectator or listener a so-called "immersive experience". In doing so, they implicitly assume and communicate that the experience of being immersed is desirable. Digital museums and virtually enhanced art exhibitions promote immersion in artworks as a direct gateway to their essence or meaning.[2] The silent assumption seems to be that artworks need technological enhancement to bring them closer to the amateur spectator, who can only then fully understand them. The recent exhibition *Lights on Van Eyck* in Ghent, for example, presented a digital and musical interpretation of *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, with projections on every wall available, including the ceiling, and four large dancing robot-arms, "to discover Van Eyck's impressive oeuvre in an accessible way" (*Lights on Van Eyck*). As the website states, digital technology was used to accentuate the bright lights and pure colors of Van Eyck's paintings, so that "the audience will be just as amazed by Van Eyck's work as the medieval people first were centuries ago" (ibid.). The suggestion here is that spectators today cannot by themselves bridge the historical (or other) gap between themselves and the artwork, at least not in a quick and easy way. Instead of actively engaging with the artwork by patiently analyzing it or educating oneself about the historical context of the work, the religious or other symbolic meanings that would help to understand it, digital animation bridges the gap.

A similar logic seems to underly the success of auditory immersive experiences. For example, the increasingly popular listening bars, with their high-end audio equipment and perfectly arranged surround sound systems, promote immersion as a better way of listening (Beech; Iqbal). The idea is that improving the audio quality and perfecting the listening environment helps to get to the pure core of the music, without the distraction of disturbing noises.

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[2] E.g., the Belgian museum *Mudia* (Musée Didactique d'Art) and the website *Closer to Van Eyck: Rediscovering the Ghent Altar Piece*. Likewise, exhibitions like *Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* and *Klimt: The Immersive Experience* allow visitors to step into the (virtual) paintings of Van Gogh, Klimt, and other famous painters, to experience them "from within".

This should result in the satisfying aesthetic experience of being completely immersed in the sounds, which explains why the immersive listening experience is also presented as a moment of "hearing wellness", in which the listener's comfort and aesthetic pleasure are the ultimate goal, rather than "understanding" the music. Nowadays, the technologically mediated, immersive musical experience is also ubiquitous in everyday life. The widespread use of earphones and earbuds gives listeners the impression of being constantly surrounded by music, wherever they are. Thanks to the clever use of algorithms and artificial intelligence, streaming services like *Spotify, Apple Music*, and *Soundcloud* can guarantee their listeners an endless stream of music to linger in, customized to their individual taste in order to avoid unwanted musical surprises. The result is a long stream of music, without beginning or end, in which the different pieces become part of a continuous soundtrack. In these immersive experiences, music becomes the auditory background of the listener's everyday life and no longer qualifies as a "purely musical experience" (Kivy esp. 27). Rather than drawing attention to its own meaning, it loses its status as "music alone". Adapted to the listener's personal taste, mood and desires, and mediated by personal audio devices, it is rather the music that now transforms the listener into a "listener alone".

As Tia DeNora pointed out, intimate musical practices are part of the modern reflexive project of the self, as music is deeply "implicated in the construction of the self as an aesthetic agent" (46). Certainly, the intimate connection between music and the construction of the self is not new. The emergence of subjectivity in modern philosophy was closely intertwined with the rise, by the end of the eighteenth century, of aesthetics, and in particular with music. These aesthetic theories, according to Bowie, "regard the experience of natural and artistic beauty and the fact of aesthetic production as vital to the understanding of self-consciousness" (*Aesthetics and Subjectivity* 2). The Romantics emphasized that the non-representational, non-conceptual language of music enables us "better to *understand* aspects of ourselves which are not reducible to what can be objectively known" (Ibid. 10, emphasis in original). The close ties between music and the subject were conceptualized within the Romantic paradigm of absolute music, which was, as Bowie writes, a reaction and answer to the crisis of meaning in modernity that followed the decline of theologically legitimated social orders (Ibid. 3–4). The aesthetic experience provided existential depth for the individual subject by creating new, meaningful relations with nature and the surrounding natural and social order. According to the Romantic scheme, the listener immersed in absolute music feels connected to an order that transcends his or her sense of individual self, and this is what makes the musical experience meaningful. In today's immersive musical experience, however, this scheme seems reversed. The individually customized and technologically mediated music is draped around the listener, to become part of his or her personal, immanent decorum. As such, the music's meaningfulness does not lie in the fact that it relates the listener to a transcendent order, but rather in the fact that it offers a constant confirmation of one's self-image. To elaborate on Naomi Cumming's famous formulation, the result is not so much a "*sonic* self", as a "sonic *self*". This shift in emphasis makes the transformation of the listening experience part of the larger cultural shift towards hyper-individualization, which is described by scholars as a matter of "prioritizing the self", rather than just "subjective self-actualization" (Degen et al. 2).[3]

These observations correspond to the claim of Baricco, who states that today's globalizing, digitalizing Western culture is going through a process of horizontalization. In his essay *The Barbarians* (2006), he distinguishes between horizontal and vertical dynamics as the two basic orientations in creating and understanding meaning. While vertical orientation builds on the belief in foundational depth or transcendence as the source or pinnacle of meaning, horizontal orientation seeks meaning in creating networks and experiencing lateral connectedness through such networks. Therefore, the new, "horizontal" generations are constantly looking for new experiences. By moving around the earth's surface, either digitally or by real travel, they create their own personal networks of meaning that reflect their unique, individual identities. As they are constantly on the move, their view of life is literally "superficial" in the sense that it depends primarily on the impression of the surface of things: how they look, feel, smell, sound, etc.[4] In doing so, Baricco maintains, they storm all aspects of the old vertical culture to see if and how they can transform it into a transit zone or easy passage, to quickly experience it and then move on to the next experience. The contemporary immersive experience fits this picture perfectly, since it seeks to provide a quick and easy aesthetic experience as part of the construction of the individual's sense of self.

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[3] Hyper-individualization is a hot topic in many businesses and disciplines, ranging from digital e-commerce and traveling to health care and education. For example, by creating so-called "micro-credentials", hyper-individualized learning systems aim to document personal accomplishments and achievements, to highlight the individual's unique personality on the job market (see Frey). In his blogpost "The Shift from Personalization to Hyper-Individualization", Sarath Kumar Ganesan describes how the use of artificial intelligence "allows organizations to curate and deliver content, product/service offering specific to each individual user".

[4] Baricco uses the term "barbarians" in a playful and humorous way. He expressly does not condemn the younger generations, but rather wants to point out how fundamentally different their view of the world is. According to Baricco, the new, "horizontal" generations are like a new species, which makes the old "vertical" people afraid of being overruled by these apparent "barbarians".

According to Baricco, classical music is part of the vertical meaning paradigm (122–130). This means that both the music itself and its dominant listening strategies rest on the implicit belief that music's meaning does not coincide with its sounds, but is rather something that emerges from it, like a soul or a spiritual content. This corresponds to the tenor of the discussions in the Romantic music-aesthetic paradigm, between proponents and opponents of programmatic and emotional interpretations of music. As Bonds writes, the entire *Musikstreit* can be understood as the defense of music as a medium capable of being purely instrumental, yet meaningful (211–3). This was certainly the case for the aesthetics of program music, which "rested on the same premise of transcendence that had figured so large in the earlier aesthetics of idealism" (213). But it was just as much the case for the defenders of absolute music. Eminent musicians such as Franz Liszt "believed in the ability of all music, absolute or program, to elevate listeners to a higher realm of consciousness" (213). In this way music could "cease to be a simple combination of tones and become a poetic language" (qtd. in Bonds 214: Liszt). Even those who wanted to emancipate music from the burden of extra-musical meaning did not deny the ideal dimension of music. Tellingly, arch-formalist Eduard Hanslick wrote in his influential essay *On the Musically Beautiful* (1854/1986) that "we have not excluded ideal content but, on the contrary, have insisted on it. For we acknowledge no beauty without its full share of ideality" (30). The ideality referred to here makes the Romantic or absolute music paradigm vertical, as it asks the listener to relate to the music as something transcending mere sensory experience, to understand its meaning as an ideal content emerging from the sounds.

3 Two Cases of Horizontalization in Music

What does it mean to state that music, today, is going through a new paradigm shift? How can purely instrumental, classical music, be "horizontalized?" Based on Baricco's thesis, I suggest that the paradigm shift at least implies that the concept of musical meaning is fundamentally changing. Music's ideal content – whether that would be a narrative, an emotion, or a purely formalistic type of aesthetic import – evaporates and gives way to the digitally mediated, hyper-individualized immersive experience. Perhaps it is more accurate, then, to say that "musical meaning" is no longer regarded as a content or as the result of musical understanding, but that it is replaced by the intensity of the musical experience. To call something meaningful in the horizontal sense, is to say above all that you have enjoyed it or that it touched you in some way. In keeping with Susan Sontag's famous statement, the horizontal approach to music is 'against interpretation' and focuses instead on the immediate impact of the music. In what follows, I focus on two well-known cases in which these horizontal dynamics between music and listener stand out. The first is John Cage's *4'33"* (1952), which can be seen as a significant starting point of the horizontalization movement in Western classical music. The second is the eight-and-a-half-hour composition *Sleep* (2015) by contemporary British composer and musician Max Richter. The evolution between these two examples suggests that the process of horizontalization has radicalized over the years.

3.1 *Cage's Empowerment of the Listener*

In *4'33"*, Cage cleverly exploited the classical concert setting and the accompanying expectations and listening attitude of the audience. The performer of *4'33"* complies with the traditional concert rituals by taking place on the stage and closing and opening the piano's lid before and after each of the three movements of the piece. The performer follows a score – indicating "Tacet" for each movement – and a strict timing. He turns the pages and bows to the audience (Herwitz 792). However, no "music" is played. Hence, these formal elements contribute to the effect of the piece's silence: the audience obeys the classical convention of *silenzio* and cocks their ears. As such, Cage provided a stage for the sounds that are normally filtered out during a concert. Suppressed coughing, shuffling, creaking chairs, distant noises, … These sounds become acutely audible as the listener's attention searches for something to focus on. By highlighting random sounds in a traditional concert setting, Cage broke down the fundamental distinction between music and sound. It was his expressed desire to let sounds be themselves and no longer use them as vehicles for human emotions or ideas (Cage, "Silence" 10). Indeed, what Cage wanted was to break with the classical concept of the musical work. According to Goehr, "Cage believed that we could not overestimate the deadening impact the traditional work concept had on the listening experience" ("Explosive Experiments" 119). Instead, he wanted to open up the work concept to release the mind and musical production from the inherited dogmas of the absolute music paradigm.

To bring about this fundamental shift, a psychological transformation of the listener was needed, so that he or she would pay attention to the sounds in and of themselves and no longer regard them as a medium for a meaning or message. To this end, Cage embarked on a spiritual path, influenced by Zen Buddhism. With regard to this Eastern influence, Arthur Danto referred to a well-known saying by Zen master Ch'ing-yuan Wei-hsin about the path of spiritual enlightenment:

> Before I had studied Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains and waters as waters. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to the point where I saw that mountains are not mountains, and waters are not waters. But now that I have got the very substance I am at rest. For it is just that I see mountains once again as mountains, and waters once again as waters. (qtd. in Danto 58)

The aphorism shows that it is not the world that transfigures. The change happens in the observer. In the last step of the three-stage transformation the enlightened mind finds that "seeing mountains as mountains" does not involve a tautology. Throughout the process, meaning has been gained (De Munck 311). Similarly, in *4'33"*, the listener learns to listen to random sounds in an enlightened way, opening up to what is heard without searching for further meaning. What Cage envisioned was a horizontal model of music, away from the Western, learned music tradition. In his Juilliard Lecture of 1952, he elaborated on the Zen master's aphorism and stated that "[a]fter studying music men are men and sounds are sounds" (96–7). According to Daniel A. Herwitz, the ambition to perceive sound independently of our projective ears is a direct result of Cage's skepticism about projective modes of knowing music (789). Indeed, Cage saw it as a problem that, after studying music, sounds are no longer just sounds, because "a composer uses the sounds to express an idea or a feeling or an integration of these" ("Juilliard Lecture" 97). Contrary to the romantic music aesthetic, his music is designed to break through the hierarchical relationship between sounds and meaning, in which the former are instrumentalized to function as signs. Cage wanted his music *not* to refer to anything. The sound experience he wanted to create is purely immanent, just like Zen spirituality. He wanted his listeners to hear the sounds "before one's thinking has a chance to turn it into something logical, abstract, or symbolical" (Cage, "Juilliard Lecture" 98).

Turning away from the learned aspects of musical understanding was as much a political act as an aesthetic choice for Cage, for his music of organized sounds demanded a new, liberated way of listening: "New music: new listening. Not an attempt to understand something that is being said, for, if something were being said, the sounds would be given the shapes of words. Just an attention to the activity of sounds" (*Silence* 10).

The hierarchical relation between composer and listener was another vertical barrier to be broken down. The empowerment of the listener consisted in no longer dictating what to hear or what to listen to. As Branden W. Joseph writes, Cage's "disarticulation of transcendent structure was understood as a subversion of power" (62). By emancipating the listener, Cage wanted to democratize the musical experience itself.

3.2 *Sleep*

Cage's "aesthetic of immanence" (Joseph 60) gave an important impulse to minimalism in music. As Kyle Gann writes, "indirectly *4'33"* led to the developments from which grew the simpler and more accessible new style of minimalism" (*No Such Thing As Silence* 21).[5] Even some of Cage's earlier works, such as *In a Landscape* (1948), already anticipated the avant-garde minimalism of the 1960s.[6] This piece, written for solo piano or harp, shows the strong influence of Eric Satie, in particular his *musique d'ameublement*.[7] The music embodies a state of stasis in which there is no musical development nor any clear directional intention in the musical syntax. Its delicate fabric of small melodious cells still allows for a thin layer of idealized content, as the listener is spurred on by the title to imagine a landscape. (One could easily imagine a frozen landscape by the painter Hokusai, including mountains and waters.) However, the music invites the listener to enter the landscape – indeed, to immerse oneself in it – rather than to imagine something happening in it. In this sense, *In a Landscape* is even more radically "horizontal" than *4'33"* and more in line with Satie's *musique d'ameublement* (1917), which, according to Gann, might be seen as "the flip side of *4'33"* – instead of playing nothing and asking people to listen to environmental sounds, Satie played music *as* environmental sound, and begged people – in vain – not to listen to it" (*No Such Thing As Silence* 76). This radically changes the perspective of the listener, who is now hearing and experiencing the music "from within", reminiscent of the third stage of the Zen enlightenment process, where the individual no longer observes from a distance.

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[5] However, Alex Ross remarks about Cage's pioneering role with regard to minimalism that "he showed little sympathy for that movement when it came along" ("Searching for Silence").

[6] According to musicologist Alex Burns, "[i]t's been said that *In A Landscape* is one of the purest forms of minimalist music due to its single divine theme and stillness". Kyle Gann even refers to *In A Landscape* as a "protopostminimalist" work. For Gann, the term "postminimalism" refers to the repertoire of music in the 1980s and 1990s that was "on the most obvious level, a collective response to the somewhat earlier style known as minimalism" and which was "conventionally classical in format but with harmonies, processes and textures inspired by the more unconventional minimalist works that had emerged from the Manhattan and San Francisco avant-gardes" ("A Technically Definable Stream of Postminimalism" 39; 40).

[7] In 1948, the year in which he composed *In a Landscape*, Cage organized a Satie Festival at Black Mountain College, where he also presented his lecture "Defense of Satie" (Nyman 1227).

With its focus on immersion in the sounds rather than on musical syntax or harmonic development, today's composers of post-classical music – also known as post-minimalism – continue this evolution of horizontalization. This relatively new genre includes the tranquil music of composers such as Max Richter, Ólafur Arnalds, Eydís Evensen, Poppy Ackroyd, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Nils Frahm, Ludovico Einaudi, Hauschka, and many others. They work with the repetitive principles of minimalism and manufacture sober, drawn-out sound chains, often performed on acoustic piano and other classical instruments, but mostly digitally enhanced or supplemented by electronics.[8] In the program notes of a classical music festival dedicated to post-classical music, the music was referred to as a "sonic experience" (Steins). The latter term puts the emphasis on the experience of the listener, rather than on the music itself. Indeed, in most discourses on post-classical music, the emphasis shifts from the object-pole (the musical work) to the subject-pole (the experience). Compared to "classical music", post-classical music creates different expectations. Rather than presenting a musical development as embodying or pointing to expressive or narrative content, it promises the satisfying experience of being comfortably surrounded by the ambient sounds. This music is not an autonomous "Other" to which the listener has to relate, but precisely ensures that the listener does *not* experience otherness.

This shift is consistent with Baricco's thesis that the accessibility of cultural products is a central concern for today's fast-moving generations.[9] From this same concern, many pieces of classical music are "recomposed" and turned into post-classical music. Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, for example, were recomposed by Max Richter (2012), and Chopin's piano works were 'reinvented' by Ólafur Arnalds and Alice Sara Ott in *The Chopin Project* (2015). The procedure of recomposing consists mostly in the cutting up of the musical syntax, after which the isolated musical cells or themes are re-edited in loops and supplemented with electronic ambient sounds. The result is repetitive music with recognizable melodic elements, with special attention to sound and atmosphere, but usually without further elaboration of the musical material. This alters the attention span of the listener, who does not need to follow the music attentively but rather savor the musical sounds. The repetitive nature of the music allows for a distracted mode of attention, not unlike what Walter Benjamin called *Zerstreuung*, as he described the mode of scattered attention triggered by the new visual media of his time (Duttlinger). Just like the digital enhancement of Van Eyck's paintings, the purpose of recomposing classical works is to make them more accessible for contemporary audiences by turning them from a musical work into a sound experience. The implicit assumption is that narrative or other "learned" interpretation strategies are only needed because classical music is too complex to be enjoyed in and off itself. Conversely, the immanent listening mode requires neither listening training nor specialized expertise or prior knowledge.

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[8] The term "post-classical" here refers to a later development than the "postminimalist" repertoire referred to by Gann (see also footnote 6 above). Community website and online database *last.fm* defines the contemporary movement of post-classical music as "(m)odern classical music with heavy post-rock, ambient or drone music influences. As these genres are heavily influenced by minimalism in classical music, this could be said to have come full circle" ("Post-Classical Music").

[9] About his 2007 debut album *Eulogy for Evolution*, Ólafur Arnalds said: "I wanted to make music that was more or less classical music, but that would also reach a young audience. Many peers had no ears or interest in classical music. But there is so much great classical music that I wanted to let its influences be heard in my own compositions, but in a more contemporary and accessible way. I don't want to compose music that nobody understands" (qtd. in Steins).

As such, post-classical music seems to offer a solution to the alleged crisis of classical music, which, on the composer's side, seems to have reached a creative impasse of ever obscurer experiments, and on the listener's side, attracts an ever smaller, privileged audience.[10] Also from a commercial viewpoint, post-classical music has been hailed as the savior of the classical music tradition, as it boosted the sales figures of record labels such as *Deutsche Grammophon* and attracts young audiences to the major concert halls. Max Richter confirms that the crisis of classical music was a trigger for the major artistic turnaround in his work and career:

> I come from a high-modernist classical music training, where maximum complexity, extreme dissonance, asymmetry and impenetrability were badges of honour. If you wrote a single tonal chord – even by accident – people would mock you, and concerts were more like the issuing of manifestos. I wrote a lot in that tradition, but came to feel that, for all its technical sophistication, this language was basically inert. It reached almost nobody beyond the new music cliques. I didn't want to talk to just those people. I deliberately set out to be as plainspoken as possible. (qtd. in Wallace)

An interesting example is Richter's wordless composition *Sleep*. According to *Deutsche Grammophon*, this album is the "most streamed classical record of all time" (Ross, "Doleful Minimalism"). The work lasts eight hours and is composed with the explicit intention of the listeners sleeping during its performance.

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[10] With regard to the classical orchestra repertoire, the feeling of crisis has been eloquently expressed by Leon Botstein, who stated that "[t]here is a nagging sensibility that we are living well beyond that authentic age of the orchestra and its repertoire" (189).

To that end, Richter teamed up with a neuroscientist, who helped him mimic the brain waves of sleep to maximize the relaxing effect during the different stages of sleep. Even though the music contains melodies and chord progressions, its slow development is not meant to be followed closely by the listener. As critic Anwen Crawford stated in *The New Yorker*, "the composition is repetitious enough to allow you to drift in and out without worrying that you've missed crucial developments". Indeed, this music is meant to be heard but not listened to. Interestingly, Crawford contrasts the live experience of *Sleep* with the effect of Latin plainsong, which she also finds useful to fall asleep to. However, she immediately adds her doubt about this comparison, wondering whether it is right to use sacred music as a sleep aid, "when it is designed to bring listeners (and performers) to a state of spiritual clarity, not oblivious slumber" (Crawford). The hesitation is telling. Using sacred music as a sleep aid would indeed amount to denying its *raison d'être*, which is directing the listener to a transcendent, holy dimension. Richter's music, however, is even better understood – or rather, better experienced – in horizontal mode, i.e., while sleeping. For Richter, "*Sleep* is an attempt to see how that space when your conscious mind is on holiday can be a place for music to live" (qtd. in Strauss). Just like with Satie's *Musique d'ameublement*, the purpose of this music is *not* to pay attention to it. Ultimately, the music must become inaudible for the conscious mind.

At the same time, Richter also thinks of *Sleep* as a political piece. "It's protest music against this sort of very super industrialized, intense, mechanized way of living right now. It's a political work in that sense. It's a call to arms to stop what we're doing" (qtd. in Laban). Here is another interesting parallel with Cage, but also an important shift – perhaps even a contradiction. With *4'33"* and *Sleep*, both Cage and Richter respectively wanted to provide a space of stillness to empower the listener. Both promote a horizontal listening model, favoring a meditative mood over an interpretive, hermeneutical approach. However, while *4'33"* adhered to a model of spiritual enlightenment that heightens the listener's concentration, Richter rather aims to diminish that concentration and to withdraw from the world. In doing so, he radicalizes the horizontalization process up to a point of total leveling, implying a passive listening mode. There is no need for transfiguration of the listener. Instead, the music is expected (and indeed designed) to conform to his or her personal needs. The fact that Richter relied on the input of neuroscience to adapt the music to the different stages of sleep is a perfect illustration of that reversal. The focal point of the post-classical musical experience is no longer the musical work, but the listener.

4 What to Do With Narrative Meaning Concepts?

Can narrative concepts of musical meaning still play a role in classical music today? On the one hand, it seems that the mode of distracted attention, which Benjamin attributed to the increase in industrial stimuli, has found its final completion in a perfectly adapted music genre. Post-classical music not only accommodates the need for easy and fast impulses, it even aims to compensate for the overdose of technological and other stimuli that listeners are exposed to today. On the other hand, in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936/2008), Benjamin also pointed out that the scattered form of attention is not limited to mechanically reproduced works only, since the viewer's gaze was fundamentally changed by the new technologies. Indeed, as he saw it, the aura loss that he linked to the new mass media of photography and film led to a more general change in the perception of all artworks, including the older, "auratic" works that were not mechanically reproduced. Given the rapid digitalization and individualization of the musical experience today, it seems reasonable to suspect a similar effect on the classical listening attitude and the Romantic concepts on which it is based. Moreover, Benjamin considered the stance of distraction as a tool of political emancipation, opposed to religiously inspired forms of contemplation which he found historically obsolete and politically regressive (Duttlinger 41). As we have seen, both Cage and Richter expressed similar views on the need to emancipate the listener and to free him or her from the dominant, "vertical" forms of attention where listeners are expected to actively reach out to the musical or other ideal content of the sounds. In this sense, post-classical music is not just a new movement *within* the classical music tradition, it also aspires to alter that tradition by making it more accessible and removing the barriers for the listener. In doing so, it creates the expectation of accessibility and no longer prompts the listener to develop active listening strategies to interpret the music. The effect of that might translate to the entire classical canon.

All this puts the conceptual edifice of the absolute music paradigm under pressure, including the concepts of meaning on which it rests, since they all presume the active involvement and imagination of the listener. As heirs to the Kantian aesthetics, they presume an "*as if*-mode" on the part of the listener, and a form of "disinterested" contemplation in which the aesthetic pleasure is derived solely from the perceived purposiveness of the object of contemplation. The persona theory, for example, which has been defended by a large number of scholars, claims that "when we hear an emotion in music, we necessarily imagine or have a sense of a person to whom that emotion belongs" (Cochrane 264). Likewise, the many theories that rely on narrative analysis, ranging from plot archetypes to narrative archetypes, all imply that "the listener perceives and tracks a culturally significant transvaluation of hierarchical relationships within a temporal span" (Almén 12). Recognizing culturally significant plots and archetypes is part of the listener's job and requires active involvement of the imagination. In fact, all these theories of musical meaning rely on the mechanism that has been described as "hearing-as" (Arbo) or as "hearing-in" (Levinson esp. 109–12). Even Roger Scruton and those theorists who tend towards musical formalism, such as Kivy or Stephen Davies, lean on this mechanism, by assuming that the relationship between musical sounds and their expressivity has a metaphorical character. Central to these views is the conviction that, when listening to music, we do not hear mere sounds. We hear the music *in* the sounds (Boghossian 50). As Scruton writes, "understanding music involves the active creation of an intentional world, in which inert sounds are transfigured into movements, harmonies, rhythms – metaphorical gestures in a metaphorical space. And into these metaphorical gestures a metaphorical soul is breathed by the sympathetic listener" (100). Even with regard to sound art, most theorists assume a "twofoldness" of the experience, which implies that it is "both literal and metaphorical, non-acousmatic and acousmatic" (Hamilton 58).

However varied the explanations for the significance or expressiveness of absolute music may be, they all assume a certain ideal dimension – Hanslick's *geistiges Gehalt* – as a crucial part of the musical experience. If not, one has to confront the question with which Hanslick had already struggled: how can the music rise above the level of a merely pleasing play with tones, lacking deeper significance (Bonds 292)? The answer suggested by most theories is that music is "animated" by the composer, the performer and the listener, and this is exactly the anthropocentric approach that Cage wanted to oppose. By creating an experience of the sounds "from within", he removed the required aesthetic distance for projection by the listener. The result is a purely acoustic experience of sounds, rather than the presumed twofold experience. Post-classical music, with its promise of satisfying immersivity, further undermines the aesthetic distance. Even more than Cage's experimental music, it takes away the music's transcendent dimension, as it functions within a technologically mediated musical practice that is customized to the listener's individual taste and needs. The autonomy of the musical work, as a purposeful entity in itself, no longer plays a role here, as the focus of the musical experience shifts completely to the well-being of the listener. We should ask ourselves, then, whether or to what extent all those theories of musical meaning that rely on Kantian aesthetics are still relevant within the new, horizontal music paradigm. It seems that we are in need of new concepts that can account for the meaningfulness of the post-classical sound experience. For, even if post-classical music can remedy the crisis of classical music, it is very likely that the younger generations will listen to it with different, horizontal ears.

One last question remains: is this progress or a loss? Or, to state it differently, is the loss of the vertical dimension in music, like the loss of aura, a good or a bad thing? And by extension: should our concepts only reflect actual practice or should they also resist evolutions within that practice? If the conceptual framework of a musical paradigm weighs so heavily on the way we hear and understand music, then perhaps we should also reflect on how to nurture that paradigm and keep it alive. The question is of course whether such a thing is, if possible at all, desirable. Intertwined with the contemporary pursuit of greater inclusiveness, the horizontal paradigm is more in line with the *zeitgeist*. The challenge will be to propagate the classical music canon and its vertical listening strategies, including narrative approaches to music, in a non-elitist way, so that it can attract a more diverse audience. There is undoubtedly an aesthetic empowerment of the listener in that as well.

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The Question of Narrativity in Instrumental Music, and the Role of Repetition

Werner Wolf

Abstract

The idea that narrativity is not restricted to verbal media but covers a wide range of arts and media has steadily gained ground over the past few decades in postclassical "transmedial narratology". This expansionist move has also reached music, including instrumental music. However, one should be cautious when generally aligning music with narrativity, for music, the most self-referential of the arts, notoriously has difficulties with extra-medial reference and thus with one of the essential features of narratives. Indeed, several conditions apply, before one can meaningfully consider a musical composition in the context of narrativity. Focussing on classical Western instrumental music, the present contribution addresses the question of narrativity in music particularly with respect to one of these narrativity-permitting conditions, namely the absence of large-scale, merely form-motivated repetition. It is argued that the typical structure of stories creates a tension between narrativity and this kind of repetition. This tension also contributes to the fact that the literary genre most prone to such repetitions, namely lyric poetry, is – like music – not typically narrative. However, the gradable quality of narrativity allows for various degrees, which should make one equally cautious about rashly excluding entire arts and media from the field of narrativity. Consequently, this paper argues that instrumental music can in some cases be attributed a low degree of narrativity: rather than being narrative *tout court*, it can be weakly narrativity-inducing. While this quasi-narrativity posits instrumental music at the margins of the field of potentially narrative media, it still means that, under certain conditions, it does make sense to consider – and listen to – some compositions such as the example discussed in this contribution, Richard Wagner's overture to *Tannhäuser*, in the frame of narrativity.

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1 Provocative Introduction and Essay Outline

"Narrative and music" – this topic of the present volume and the conference on which it is based (held in Brussels in November 2021) and where (most of) the following contribution was delivered as the opening key-note speech warrants some cautionary remarks, for the reader may not find exactly what he or she may expect. As in all conferences and scholarly publications, new results are expected, although the debate on the question of the narrative potential of music has been going on for several decades.[1] The instructions in the original call for papers make it clear that these results should go beyond "structuralist models" of narratology "originating from literary studies", and moreover that the focus should be on "late twentieth century and contemporary music", as one of the subsections dedicated to the "narrativity of [notoriously repetitive] minimalist music" specifies ("Call for Papers"). In view of these premises, I must warn the readers that they may be disappointed: I do not believe that music is typically narrative, and having said so repeatedly elsewhere (most recently in Wolf, "Narrativity in Instrumental Music?" and "Narrativité et musique instrumentale"), there is not much new matter to expect here; moreover, I am a narratologist coming from literary studies and am convinced that we can learn a lot about narrativity from verbal if not literary texts; in addition, I have always considered structuralism – for all its shortcomings – a noteworthy theoretical approach, and, perhaps worst of all, I must also signal that my modest and very selective expertise as a music lover and amateur organist is limited to music until the end of the nineteenth century.

This said, the reader will nevertheless be offered some hopefully constructive reflections on the topic of the present volume. Although I will have to quote or paraphrase excerpts from previous publications of mine, there will be some new matter in the discussion of the relationship between music, narrativity and repetition as well as in my main musical example. As for the general issue of the narrativity of music, my assertion that music is not typically narrative must be relativized: first, as someone having worked in the field of transmedial narratology, I do, of course, not believe that narrative is the exclusive domain of verbal media; moreover, my wording of music as "not typically" being narrative opens at least the possibility that in *un*typical cases this may be different, but conditions apply.[2]

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[1] For an overview see Márta Grabócz, "Introduction".

[2] My scepticism, which allows for musical narrativity in exceptional cases, has been misinterpreted as a general rejection of such narrativity (cf. Meelberg 253).

Indeed, the relationship between music and narrative is not a negatively closed affair, but, as the title of the present contribution indicates, an open question. Drawing on my previous research,[3] I will explain why music and narrative are in many cases strange bedfellows, but there will also be a discussion of conditions under which the question of whether music is narrative can, at least tentatively, be answered in the affirmative. My *first hypothesis is thus: instrumental music is never per se simply "narrative" but can – under certain circumstances and given some intra-musical conditions – be considered narrativity-inducing.*

Yet, initially, a frequent problem in the humanities requires attention, namely the fact that whatever can meaningfully be said in this field largely depends on the notions used. In the present case this refers to the question: what do we mean here by the terms "music" and "narrative"? Among the conditions a potentially narrative kind of music must fulfil in my opinion, there is one I would like to focus on which seems to be particularly appropriate for the present volume's sub-topic of minimalist music with its "notorious repetitiv[ity]",[4] namely the *exclusion of a certain kind of repetition*. In this context, my *second hypothesis is that there is a tension between narrativity and large-scale, form-centered and form-motivated repetition and that consequently music which sports such repetition to a major degree tends* not *to be narrativity-inducing.*

After the discussion of the conditions, music must fulfil to be meaningfully considered approaching narrativity and of the role repetition may play here, the theoretical findings will be illustrated by one example. The conclusion will also include a tentative answer to a question which all too often is neglected in research, namely: what benefits can one expect from trying to align music with narrativity? Or: why bother at all about music and narrative?

2 Music and Narrativity: What Kind of Music, What (Approach to) Narrativity?

In preparation for a discussion of music and narrativity, the kind of music in focus must first be specified. Owing to my aforementioned limited expertise, I will restrict my comments to Western music, mostly from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Within Western music – as indeed in most music – one can differentiate between music in plurimedial combinations (such as in songs, operas, oratorios, films, and computer games) and monomedial music. For the purpose of discussing the narrative potential of music *tout court*, the former, plurimedial variant presents problems, for it may be difficult to ascertain to what extent *music* is responsible for potential narrativity rather than the other components of the work in question. This problem is particularly virulent when verbal text is part of the non-musical components as in all vocal music including opera and in film music (after the silent film age). Of course, operatic music may substantially contribute to the story, for instance by helping to identify settings or characters and their moods, and this is not only true of Wagnerian opera but also, as Carolien Van Nerom has convincingly shown, of operas by contemporary minimalist composer Phil Glass. Yet, this contribution to narrativity notwithstanding, in cases such as opera and film music, the burden of narrativity may be carried predominantly, if not exclusively, by the verbal component. Therefore, in the following, the focus will be on monomedial music and instrumental music in particular,[5] for in this case, the problem of musical narrativity presents itself, as it were, in pure form. In addition, equally outside the focus will be compositions that are an "intermedial transposition" from verbal stories, as discussed by Malgorzata Pawlowska (concerning *Romeo and Juliet*) or Anna Maria Olivari (concerning *Doktor Faustus*), since in these cases the interference from the knowledge of the verbal pretext could make one jump to narrative conclusions too easily. And lastly, as for the question of the performativity of instrumental music, music is conceived of here as performed organized sound, but the following comments will be limited to, as it were, *ideal* or *abstract* performance and will exclude the contribution of actual performances to (producing) narrative (effects).[6]

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[3] Cf. Wolf, "Das Problem der Narrativität"; "Erzählende Musik"; "Erzählen in der Musik"; "Transmedial Narratology"; "Narrativity in Instrumental Music?"; "Narrativité et musique instrumentale"; and "The Concept 'Transmediality'".

[4] Call for papers to the conference on which the present volume is based (see "Call for Papers").

As for the concept of narrative on which the ensuing remarks will be based, a specification, more precisely, a limitation is mandatory here as well. Even if one dismisses a regrettable inflation of the term "narrative" in contemporary English as well as German usage (where the term is increasingly used for "concept"), an inflationist tendency in the usage of the term can also be observed in scholarship. Indeed, after the fall of old, *classical* narratology's wall around narratives as the allegedly exclusive domain of verbal, narrator-transmitted

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[5] Human voice, when *not* used for articulate speech (as in humming) would in principle also be an option, but – for obvious reasons (the scarcity of compositions) – certainly not a good one.

[6] It should, however, be noted that this performative aspect of music and its relationship and contribution to narrativity (for instance, in the pathognomic or otherwise bodily expressivity of conductors and musicians, which may add to the *drama* of music) would merit an enquiry of its own, which, to my knowledge, has not yet been undertaken.

(fictional) stories and the subsequent emergence of a transmedial and transgeneric *postclassical* narratology, ever more arts and media have been declared narrative. As a narratologist, one may welcome this expansionist development, in which I myself have participated,[7] since it seems to enhance the relevance of this scholarly field and its representatives. Yet, one should also become wary: for such "colonization" of ever more fields comes with a cost. One price to pay in such developments is often the dilution of the concept in question. In fact, if almost everything is considered narrative, the term loses much of its meaning and heuristic value, which can best be maintained, as long as one still recognizes an "Other", an outside of narrativity (for instance description, argument, formal pattern-building and structuring as well as other macro-modes of arranging sign configurations). The necessary systematic assumption of what Porter H. Abbott termed "unnarratable knowledge" ("Unnarratable Knowledge") is why I, for instance, am critical about claims which have been made that lyrical poetry is usually narrative (cf. "Lyric Poetry and Narrativity"), and this is also why I propose to be cautious about the narrative potential of instrumental music.

So, if the use of a *defined*, that is, a limited, concept of narrative is a better idea, what is this concept, and what approaches are advisable? As discussed elsewhere (e.g., Wolf, "Das Problem der Narrativität"; "Transmedial Narratology"), I conceive of narrative as a general human faculty. It is located in our minds as a complex cognitive frame and, in Byron Almén's words, is "conceptually prior to its manifestation in a particular medium" ("Music Narrative" 171). This is why this cognitive frame enables us to create narratives in many media and also to recognize them as such when we are confronted with individual tokens of the type. The cognitive frame "narrative" (like many others, and even simple concepts) is mentally stored through prototypes, and for this reason I, alongside many other narratologists, consider prototype theory best for the description of narrativity. When it comes to classifying given sign configurations, prototype theory allows us, in many cases, to eschew the simple dichotomy of yes or no in favour of more or less.[8] Narrativity as the defining quality of narrative is indeed gradable. Its strongest form is encountered in prototypical narratives. What these prototypes are, is, however, open to debate: Monika Fludernik, for instance, chose "natural narratives", i.e., everyday storytelling, while I have favoured fairy tales (cf. "Das Problem der Narrativität"). In doing so we both privilege verbal narratives, which is a move open to criticism (cf. Meelberg 253), though justifiable, I believe, since it is arguably verbal narratives through which most, if not all, humans have narratively been encultured (at least so far), and it is verbal narratives that permit the realization of certain typical features of narratives, so-called "narremes",[9] best. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the fact that narrative presupposes representational, propositional concepts (as will appear below) and that all propositional concepts are verbal, all narratives, in whatever medium, must be translatable (or capable of intermedial transposition), as far as essentials of their contents[10] are concerned, into words.

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[7] I have discussed the question of a narrative potential in painting (cf. "Das Problem der Narrativität"; "Narrative and Narrativity"), sculpture (cf. "Narratology and Media(lity)" 147–55), music, and – critically – lyric poetry (cf. "Lyric Poetry and Narrativity").

[8] There are, of course, areas outside the realm of narrative, as just stated, notably descriptive representations without events (see below).

As for the specifics of the aforementioned narremes, since others, including notably Marie-Laure Ryan, and I myself have repeatedly published in the field, there is no need to discuss them in detail here. The following remarks – mostly stemming from a recent paper on the poor narrativity of lyric poetry – may therefore suffice (Wolf, "Lyric Poetry and Narrativity" 145–6):

Narrative is a form of world building: it creates miniature worlds, which, in the arts and media in particular, have a world(view)-modelling function. In this, narrative principally uses what Roman Jakobson termed the "referential function" of language; I call it, from a transmedial point of view, "hetero-referentiality" (i.e., as opposed to self-referentiality, reference which points to phenomena outside the respective signifying system or the arts and media[11]). This hetero-referentiality is intimately connected with the specific representational quality of narratives – not only in the verbal medium. This leads to the central features of prototypical narratives (*core-narremes*): representationality, experientiality, and meaningfulness (both representationality and meaningfulness being inextricably linked to propositional concepts[12]): we can – and like to – experience narrative worlds because they appear to us as meaningful representations of fictional or factual worlds or parts thereof that address, through their modelling function, interesting aspects of reality. These core-narremes are realized through several content and syntactic narremes.

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[9] Gerald Prince employs the term "narrateme" ("Revisiting Narrativity" 46).

[10] This means that it is primarily the level of story with its constituents, setting, characters and action (not the phenomena that are attributed to the level of discourse) that is capable of intermedial or intergeneric transposition into a verbal story; it goes without saying that such transposition does not mean exact reproduction of the level of discourse, although the way in which a story is represented (including the medium at hand) and how meaning is created in it is an important constituent of narratives as well.

[11] For details see Wolf, "Metareference across Media".

[12] This is less so with experientiality, if one accepts (as I do) the existence of extra-verbal or non-verbal experience.

As for the *content narremes*, the *building blocks of narratives*, they comprise thinking, feeling and decision-making characters who exist (or rather *existed*, for pastness is typical of most narratives) in a chronotopos, a temporal and spatial setting, and are implicated in actions and events that must lead to significant changes in the represented world. Narrative eventfulness typically implies the overcoming of obstacles with concomitant motivations and reactions by the character(s) involved. The pastness mentioned also applies to most performative variants of narrative as in theatrical plays and can be related to the scriptedness of the story.

These building blocks must be selected in a certain way (which yields the narreme selectivity according to criteria of relevance and structuring according to the Aristotelian template of a mythos with a beginning, a middle, and an end) and must be interlinked by a certain *syntax*. In Ryan's words: "The text must allow the reconstruction of an interpretive network of goals, plans, causal relations, and psychological motivations […] This implicit network gives coherence and intelligibility to the […] events […]" (8). All of this leads to *syntactic narremes*, which include chronology, causality, and teleology (the latter being, to a large extent, the consequence of the fact that narratives are typically representations of some events which have [supposedly] already happened). It should be noted that causality and teleology do not imply deterministic constructions: conflicts and the dealing with obstacles typically allow for more than one outcome, but, as a rule, only one of them is realized[13]; the non-realized lurks, so to speak, as a potential in the wings of the narrative and becomes a "disnarrated element" (Prince, "Remarks on Narrativity" 98). As well as the syntactic narremes already mentioned, there are others, for instance suspensefulness and "tellability" (cf. Pratt 132). Both are especially efficient for the realization of the general narreme experientiality (suspensefulness appeals to the emotions in particular and motivates the recipient to strongly engage in the narrative flow, while tellability, which is based on the partial non-conformity of the narrated phenomena, elicits attention for, and interest in, the story in relation to cultural norms). In the present context, it merits being mentioned that part of the syntactic narremes that create meaningful coherence are also limited content-motivated repetitions or variations of story elements, e.g., in the recurrence of identical characters in several story episodes or variations of recurrent meetings among characters in similar settings (cf. Wolf, "Erzählende

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[13] Exceptions exist, notably in postmodernist works such as John Fowles' novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) with its several possible endings.

Musik?" 24; "Narrativity in Instrumental Music?" 486). For a selective overview of the system of narremes adumbrated here see Figure 3.1.

It should be noted, though, that these narremes are, as it were, *intra-compositional* phenomena which require the cooperation of the recipients for them to work as narrative markers. Generally, potentially narrative sign configurations, to be realized as such, require the recipients' *narrativization*. The relevance of narrative as arguably our most frequently used and most important template to make sense of life and existence in their temporal dimension and to communicate this sense-making (cf. Meelberg 246) leads to a powerful propensity to see narratives almost everywhere. And this may also be one of the reasons for the tendency to narrativize where the object in view (which, in all cases, is the principal and most important factor and *trigger* of narrativity) hardly justifies such a reading – as in some music reception. Generally, as in all cognitive matters, there is always a necessary recipient's share in the applicability of a given cognitive frame, but, as we will see, the degree to which this share is required can vary for several reasons, some of them also residing in the nature of the medium in question.[14]

To sum up the concept of narrative used in the ensuing discussion: it is a cognitive frame which consists of making sense and enabling the frequently suspenseful (re-)experience of factual or fictional (slices of) medially represented worlds and significant temporal changes therein; narrative worlds contain anthropomorphic characters, events, and a chronological, causal, and teleological structure, all of which communicates some point or purpose. The nature of narrative as a cognitive frame modelled on a prototype (such as oral storytelling or fairy tales) enables gradable realizations in various genres and media and renders it a transmedial and transgeneric phenomenon (which is not restricted to verbal stories transmitted by a represented narrator as in fiction).

Among the potentially narrative genres and media many distinctions are possible, one of them related to the question as to whether a "double temporality"[15] applies or not: this notion refers to the compulsory chronology informing all stories as the first component of this double temporality and to

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[14] While the recipient (and his or her narrativization) is an important factor in all narrative *readings*, to overstress this factor could lead to an arbitrary and in my view untenable "anything goes" (where anything can become a narrative), which is why I place the emphasis on the triggers of narrativity in the work under discussion; this is also why I have used the stronger term "narrativity-inducing" for certain types of narratives rather than, for instance, the weaker "narrativity-inviting".

[15] Gérard Genette, in *Figures III* 77, already uses this "dualité temporelle" for a distinction between several narrative media.

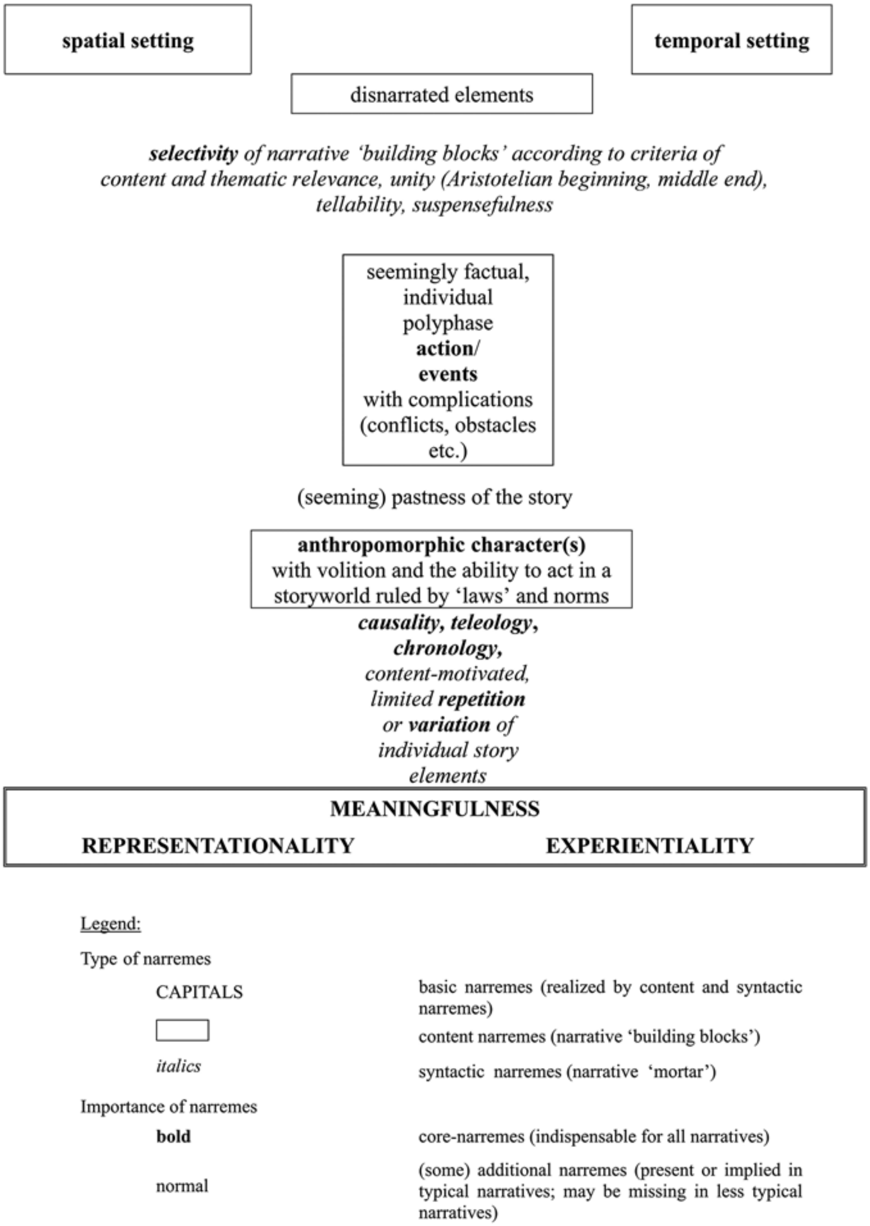
spatial setting
temporal setting
disnarrated elements
selectivity of narrative 'building blocks' according to criteria of content and thematic relevance, unity (Aristotelian beginning, middle end), tellability, suspensefulness
seemingly factual, individual polyphase action/ events with complications (conflicts, obstacles etc.)
(seeming) pastness of the story
anthropomorphic character(s) with volition and the ability to act in a storyworld ruled by 'laws' and norms
causality, teleology, chronology, content-motivated, limited repetition or variation of individual story elements
MEANINGFULNESS
REPRESENTATIONALITY
EXPERIENTIALITY
Legend:
Type of narremes
CAPITALS
basic narremes (realized by content and syntactic narremes)
content narremes (narrative 'building blocks')
italics
syntactic narremes (narrative 'mortar')
Importance of narremes
bold
core-narremes (indispensable for all narratives)
normal
(some) additional narremes (present or implied in typical narratives; may be missing in less typical narratives)

Figure 3.1 Media neutral model of (important) narremes of prototypical narratives (cf. Wolf, "Transmedial Narratology" 261).

the quality of a given medium as predominantly existing in time or space as the second one. Where this double temporality applies (as in fiction, drama, film, or comics), the medium in question has the potential to be *strongly narrative*; where it does not (despite the presence of otherwise typical narrative features), we are, as a rule, in the realm of more or less powerfully *narrativity-inducing media* (see Wolf, "Transmedial Narratology" 278). However, while the absence of temporality in a given medium or genre excludes it from strong narrativity, its presence alone (as we will see with respect to music) is no guarantee for this (highest) degree of narrativity. The other degrees of narrativity which one may distinguish (cf. Wolf, "Transmedial Narratology" 275–6) are – within the area of narrativity-inducing media – *strongly narrativity-inducing* media (e.g., picture series), and *weakly narrativity-inducing media*, a category which, as will be seen, will be relevant to some instrumental music; lastly, *non-narrative media* (such as abstract paintings and, as will also be shown, most instrumental music).[16]

3 Why Instrumental Music Is Rarely Narrative, and Conditions for the Potential of Instrumental Music to Approach Narrativity[17]

As already said: some scepticism is advisable concerning an undifferentiated attribution of a narrative potential to instrumental music. But why is that so? It is mainly because of a very fundamental problem: the vexed question of musical signification. Only if such signification can, at least to a certain extent, be attributed to music and instrumental music in particular, can we speak of narrativity, for narrativity implies the qualitative narremes of representationality and meaningfulness (including an identity-related meaningfulness). This in turn presupposes that the sign system employed can point to things beyond itself, constitute a possible world and transmit explanations about what happens there. As is well known, such "hetero-reference" presents major problems in music, owing to the predominant self-referentiality of this medium (cf. Micznik 212)[18] and its focus on the level of signifiers rather than signifieds, which must be logically different from the signifiers.[19] This, in fact, renders the fulfilment of all content narremes a highly questionable affair with regard to music and, for instance, prevents it from containing "disnarrated elements" and well-defined details concerning setting, characters and events in the way film, for instance, can do.[20]

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[16] The preceding five paragraphs contain a revised version of Wolf, "Lyric Poetry and Narrativity" 145–7.

[17] The ensuing chapter is, to a large extent, a revised version of Wolf, "Narrativity in Instrumental Music?" 487–92 (cf. also Wolf, "Music and Narrative").

[18] This self-referentiality manifests itself in the use of recurrent motifs and themes, and generally in counterpoint.

And yet there is a plethora of historical as well as contemporary documents[21] that testify to a reception at least of certain compositions in terms of narratives and thus also as open to hetero-referential signification (cf. Wolf, "Das Problem der Narrativität" 408–9). Arne Stollberg has traced the emergence of a narrative reading of instrumental music back to the 1770s[22] and shows to what extent it looms large in the nineteenth century.

One should take this tendency to narrativize music, including instrumental music, seriously. This is why I propose the following *hypothesis* (in expansion of what was mentioned in the introduction): *it is true that instrumental music cannot, by itself, tell specific stories in the way novels or films are able to do; nor does it have at its disposal all of the elaborate repertoire of narrative transmission which is open to other media. Nevertheless, instrumental music does possess a potential to offer, in a general way, the* mould *of narratives, a* hollow form *into which, under certain circumstances, recipients are able – or are invited – to pour different narrative contents, thus* narrativizing *music. These contents are vague, but can outline rudimentary types of narratives*. They can, for instance, adumbrate stories with a happy or a tragic ending. Eduard Hanslick's famous formula, which defines music as "tönend bewegte Formen" ("dynamic aural forms" [59, my translation]) may thus be applied to the ability of certain compositions to trigger the impression that we are confronted with a narrative because of the structure of these compositions as a dynamic aural mould of storytelling.

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[19] Vincent Meelberg blurs this fundamental semiotic principle when he claims, for instance, that "a dominant seventh chord [...] is a musical representation of tension" (253) and that "causality, linearity, and goal-directedness are not in the music itself, but are represented by the music" (254), by using the term "representation" in a vague way; it would be better to speak of *eliciting* tension and other effects which then can – under certain conditions – be seen to facilitate musical narrativization. However, through a dominant seventh chord music does not typically point to some extra-musical phenomenon which could justify the usage of "representation" but simply follows some intra-musical conventions.

[20] One could also point to the thorny question of the indication of *pastness* in music, which I have not space enough to elaborate on here; suffice it to mention that, generally, the scriptedness of most performed music implies pastness to a certain degree and that, in addition, the use of "archaic" musical language can in certain cases add to the idea of pastness.

[21] Anthony Newcomb's "Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies" must be mentioned here as a seminal essay triggering a discussion about musical narrativity that has been going on over the past few decades.

[22] Stollberg (50) refers to Carl Ludwig Junker's *Betrachtungen über Malerey, Ton und Bildhauerkunst*, 1778.

If one is prepared to follow this line of argument, it should be added that instrumental music can at best be attributed the *quasi-narrativity* of a weakly narrativity-inducing kind. Moreover, as Stollberg, in the wake of Fred Everett Maus (cf. "Music as Narrative" and "Classical Instrumental Music and Narrative") and others, has eloquently argued, this quasi-narrativity can best be likened not to novels and the like but to drama, and forms what Hector Berlioz, in his *Avertissement* to his *Symphonie fantastique* termed "drame instrumental" (qtd. in Drees 264). It is indeed one of the gravest errors of some musicologists and scholars who discuss musical narrativity without being aware of transmedial, postclassical narratology (cf. Abbate; Levinson; Seaton) to restrict narratives to narrator-transmitted stories, thereby excluding drama, one of the principal literary forms of transmitting stories without (represented) narrators.[23] It is in fact the dramatic, performative model that must be used in arguments about musical narrativity,[24] since music shares the performative quality and, like drama, may be said to *enact* narratives rather than to channel them through some represented narratorial agency.[25] The reason why one may indeed view instrumental music in this narrative light has, however, yet to be explained:

To begin with, one must relativize the claim that instrumental music cannot point to anything beyond itself. For, as music semiotics teaches us,[26] it does have some, albeit marginal possibilities of doing so. To musicologists these possibilities are well-known,[27] and thus one can limit the following to the adumbration of some of the options discussed in musical semiotics:

There are, firstly, isolated instances of a *symbolic* use of musical signs, as in the highly codified rhetoric of baroque music, or – using a verbal notational system – by referring to composers' names such as B – A – C – H for Bach or D – Es – C – H for (the German version of the name) *D*mitri *Sch*ostakowitsch.

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[23] Cf. Jahn.

[24] Cf. Maus, "Music as Drama"; "Classical Instrumental Music and Narrative" 467; and Rösch.

[25] In contrast to this, Vera Micznik (247) still uses a narrow conception of narrative when, in view of the lack of a manifest narrator in Beethoven and Mahler (the composers she discusses), she speaks of the audibility of the composers' voices in their compositions as a feature of narrativity (thereby confusing narrator with author/composer); at the basis of this is a confusion between a potentially narrating author/composer outside the work in question and the representation of a narrative agency inside it (as in novels with an overt narrator).

[26] Cf. Micznik (with respect to the general problem of musical meaning and narrativity) or (with reference to Shostakovich) Karen Kopp 105–15. I myself have discussed the problem of musical hetero-reference more in detail elsewhere (see "Das Problem der Narrativität" 413–5).

[27] See, as another discussion of this issue, Sheinberg and Dougherty.

Even more important is musical iconicity, above all *perceptual iconicity* or, in Carolyn Abbate's words, the "aural mimicry" (33) of extra-musical phenomena as a means of referring to or connoting birds, thunderstorms, water etc. Moreover, iconicity in music can also occur in the form of *diagrammatic* or *conceptual* iconicity (cf. Nänny and Fischer): this presents the possibility of using musical structures and compositional devices in the fields of melody, harmony, dynamics and rhythm in order to evoke phenomena that are characterized in a similar way (for instance, fast scales as an evocation of running or *pianissimo* harmonies as a correlative of rest, quietness and so forth).

Finally, one must also mention a musical analogy to intertextuality: by *quoting* other music (whole genres or individual compositions through "intermusicality") or by making use of musical *topoi* and their conventional meanings instrumental music can import the connotations attached to these elements[28] and thus add additional shades of meaning (e.g., suggesting the military by means of a march or a religious context through a hymn or chorale). Of course, intermedial references to actual narratives as in programme music form an even more obvious reservoir of musical hetero-reference.

Generally, one must be aware of the fact that meaningful creation in all arts is, at least to some extent, based on concepts. In musical composition, these concepts need not be limited to strictly intra-musical ones but may include, and in fact have done so (not only in nineteenth-century programme music), extra-musical concepts, which in turn opens a road to extra-musical reception at least in some cases.

All of these musical options and potentials of hetero-reference are, however, restricted to isolated cases. In addition, they may point more to a general musical *descriptivity* (cf. Walter; and Wolf, "Description" esp. sec. 3.3) rather than to narrativity as the representation of temporal experience. Therefore, it is crucial that a narratological approach to music highlights a fundamental quality which music shares with language and through which at the same time it differs from the pictorial arts as essentially spatial (and descriptive) media: namely the *temporal nature* of music (cf. Nattiez 244). This permits the medium music to fulfil the double temporality mentioned in the preceding section: the doubling of time in the nature of the medium and the possibility of representing temporal phenomena. Moreover, the fact that, as a rule, musical compositions are pre-arranged gives the recipient the typical narrative feeling of a precedence of the represented with respect to its representation (cf. Abbott, “The Future of All Narrative Futures” 535), which fulfils the narreme of pastness. The temporality of musical events often also suggests causality, even if this implies the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. It should, however, be noted that such causality can only be inferred by the narrativizing listener, to whom music cannot provide causality markers as language can in the use of causal conjunctions or other lexical items.[29] Be that as it may, owing to its temporal nature, music can not only evoke outlines of a chronologically and causally unfolding action, it can also cause expectations to rise and in turn frustration to occur (if expectations aren’t met), it can create tension[30] and suspense, and it may increase these states and decrease them in various degrees.

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[28] For such "associate meaning" see J. Peter Burkholder; for musical "topoi" see Grabócz, *Narratologie musicale*, part I.

Suspense as an emotion-related phenomenon is just one element that points to the frequently mentioned special emotionality of music. In many cases, the use of emotions can appear as an indexical sign of certain moods and states of mind that may be attributed to characters represented by the music. At any rate, the appeal to various emotions in various sequences and degrees of intensity substantially contributes to the meaning of music, which – as with other arts – cannot be restricted to a merely propositional content.[31]

Music is thus able to suggest the realization of a number of narremes. Above all, the temporal dimension inherent in music empowers it to create teleological structures. It is true, teleology can be limited to purely intra-musical, formal issues (e.g., it may be restricted to the return to the tonic after excursions into alien keys), but it can also suggest a narrative trajectory and thus lead listeners to infer narrativity, as even narrative sceptics such as Jean-Jacques Nattiez (cf. 245) must admit.[32]

In addition, music can suggest development by presenting conflicts and obstacles (dissonances) and then overcoming them through harmony and “reconciliation”, thus fulfilling further narremes (cf. McClary 22). By means of this process, music can create surprises, transgress borders, and return to home domains and thus can adumbrate "sequences of events" (Abbate 45),[33] another central narreme, although the precise nature of these events and their trajectory will remain vague.

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[29] In traditional tonality, there are, of course, clear formal features that may be likened to causality (as when a tonic chord is triggered by a preceding dominant chord), but when a listener hears here more than the formal development of the composition in question and “regards” them as a causal relationship among story elements, a great deal of inference is nevertheless requisite.

[30] For a discussion of tension in music and narrativity see Raphael Baroni.

[31] For a broad conception of musical signification see Sheinberg and Dougherty and the contributions to the volume introduced by them.

[32] Cf. also Abbate, who concedes the possibility that “music is a marking of experienced time” (261).

Through polyphony, music can also create the impression of human voices engaged in a discussion and thus, in John Neubauer's terms, "enact metaphoric dialogues" (119). Homophonic music may do something similar by a skilful use of contrasts between themes and/or instruments, notably in solo concertos or in *quasi recitativo* passages. Thus, music seems to be able to fulfil yet another narreme, namely the representation of anthropomorphic characters.

To sum up: music as a temporal art can thus unfold a variety of narrative potentials: music can suggest characters through different instruments, voices, or themes,[34] the suspense-eliciting structure of tension and release (be it in terms of emotions or intellectual, formal expectations), the occurrence of events (outstanding, notably surprising features in the musical process). Events and the general development of musical composition can be felt to unfold not only in a simply chronological way but also with respect to causality (for instance when a specific chord occurs *because* it has been prepared by a preceding one), and the compositional structure may be perceived to be ordered in a teleological way within a compositional macro-structure. All of this amounts to a basic "isomorphism" (cf. Abbate 32 and *passim*; cf. also Baroni 8) between what can happen when listening to music and what Paul Ricœur termed the "prenarrative structure of experience" (59) and Michel Imberty a "proto-narrative" structure (esp. 13).[35]

This basic experiential structure, according to Imberty's psychological approach, is a prelinguistic schema acquired in early childhood, and it corresponds to the cognitive frame "narrative" as a "hollow form" in which both real-life experience and medial representations can find meaningful shape. Instrumental music, which has difficulties with specific representation in particular, can at least become an "audible ideogram of experience", as Henry Orlov (137) aptly put it, and thus provide a basic narrative mould. This mould is not filled with any concrete story – therefore instrumental music cannot really be said to tell a story in any way that could rival, for instance, a narrative film – but the very hollowness (or referential vagueness) of the musical "mould" permits individual listeners to fill it with their personal experiences according to their own imagination or memory. Certain instrumental compositions, while not being able to tell particular stories, may thus stage the frame of narrative itself in an abstract way. They may thus invite individual narrativizations and even concretizations, but they can guide such narrative projections and dramatizations much less and thus require more of the recipient's narrativizing share than other media.[36] The crucial difference between drama *tout court* and music as drama, according to Stollberg, lies in the fact that the drama of music works through its structure rather than through extra-musical reference.[37] This is true, but may be misleading, since a structure that is evocative of narrative is tantamount to evoking elements of a story-world, which is a weak, indirect form of extra-musical reference. However, in performed drama, each recipient sees the same concrete characters and specific actions; in instrumental music, this is impossible, and the narrative concretizations of the individual listeners will be much more vague and different from each other.

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[33] Abbate, like Lawrence Kramer and others, is nevertheless highly sceptical about musical narrativity.

[34] The connection between themes and narrative (dramatic) protagonists was already made by Junker in the 1770s (see Stollberg 51 and note 23 above). Maus, using the example of Beethoven's string quartet no. 11 op. 94, however, also discusses the problematic aspect of identifying analogies to characters in music ("Music as Drama").

[35] In contrast to Richard Walsh, I would, however, not consider rhythm an important "common basis of narrative and music" (49).

However, in some cases, let us say a Bach fugue from the *Wohltemperiertes Klavier*, such concretization will be purely subjective and limited to very few listeners, while other cases may invite a narrativization that seems less arbitrary and appeals to more listeners. Why is that so, or, in other words, what are the conditions that render a composition narrativity-inducing? One concerns the *listener* who must be able and/or willing to narrativize and also *anthropomorphize*[38] a given composition (cf. Stollberg 42). More interesting however, are what I will focus on in the following, namely factors, or rather "framings" and "stimuli"[39] in the respective *compositions* themselves and also in their respective *contexts*, that is, stimuli in intra- or extra-compositional position.

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[36] However, one should not exaggerate and attribute narrative effects exclusively to the listener's imagination, for something must be *there* in the music itself to warrant such effect (cf. also Hatten 94), hence my ensuing remarks.

[37] "Das Drama der Musik liegt in ihrer Struktur, nicht im Verweis auf Dinge außerhalb der klanglichen Realität" (Stollberg 42).

[38] I here disagree with Almén, who claims that there is no "no need for the anthropomorphization of the musical material for the narrative to occur" (*A Theory of Musical Narrative* 23 and "Music Narrative" 171–2).

[39] "Framing" is used here in the sense of a specific marker that is able to trigger a cognitive frame such as narrative, while "stimulus" refers to an individual feature of a composition that is not by itself a sufficient indicator, e.g., of narrativity, but may point to this frame if occurring in combination with other relevant stimuli and/or appropriate framing.

As for *extra-compositional* stimuli one must certainly consider the *cultural and historical contexts*[40] in which a work is composed. Thus, it has been said that in the nineteenth century, narratives, notably in the form of novels and historiography, form an especially salient feature of the culture of the dominant middle-class and thus also influence the members of this class when listening to classical music. This amounts to a particularly favourable contextual stimulus for the narrativization of certain compositions, particularly in the form of symphonies (cf. McClary). In addition, well-known *intentions* or *tendencies of certain composers* may also be relevant for the narrativization of certain compositions by certain composers (e.g., Beethoven's motto "per aspera ad astra").

These intentions may become manifest outside the respective composition, in *extra-compositional* form (such as composers' self-interpretations) but also as part of the composition in question. Among these *intra-compositional* incitements to narrativize, verbal *paratexts* are especially important. These include all terms (titles of compositions or parts thereof) with narrative denotations or connotations and intermedial references to verbal stories as in programme music. Such paratexts can form powerful narrative framings and are often decisive for triggering narrative readings in the recipients in the first place. This, of course, proves even more true when they become fully fledged written narrative programmes as was sometimes the case in nineteenth-century programme music. (However, in all these cases the intermedial loan made from verbal language also shows the difficulties that arise if one tries to ascribe the narrative stimulus to music alone).

In addition to the afore-mentioned intra-compositional elements, the following more genuinely *musical stimuli*, whether or not intentionally offered by composers, are noteworthy as helpful for a narrativization on the part of the recipient and at the same time as an explanation why some compositions seem to be more narrative than others[41] (note that the following list is not meant as a collection of absolute intra-compositional requirements, of which all must be realized in a given composition, but rather one which specifies conditions conducive to a narrative reading):

a) a certain extension and complexity (a two-bar trumpet flourish would hardly invite narrativity);

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[40] It should be noted that these contexts which can contribute to facilitating a narrative reception of instrumental music include all the verbal discourses that "surround" the reception and appreciation of music, which again points to the special importance of language for narratives and/or narrativization.

[41] The following is a revised excerpt from Wolf, "Transmedial Narratology" 275–6.

b) the suggestion of some causal and teleological links between musical "events" and the stages of a preferably suspenseful development that contains sequences of tension and release and aims at a final release of the tension built up throughout the composition;
c) a high degree of deviation from generic and other formal conventions and expectations;[42] this is what would discourage a merely musical, formal reading and encourage the recipient to read the deviations as some kind of event;
d) the suggestion of at least one but ideally several musical units (instruments, "voices") that could be likened to anthropomorphic characters;[43]
e) the use of a musical system which permits deviations and the pattern of tension-release in the first place, such as major-minor harmonics and traditional *Formenlehre*, including the reference to some established generic frame (all of which is opposed to contemporary avant-garde music, in which more often than not, anything can happen at any time);[44]
f) possibly also, but to a lesser extent, musical intertextuality ("intermusicality") that is, references to other musical forms, genres, or compositional practices with powerful connotations (e.g., *recitativo* form).

4 Repetition: General Remarks, Forms, Role in Instrumental Music and Its Potential of Narrativity[45]

In the aforementioned list of conditions favoring a narrative "reading" of music, one was left out which merits particular attention and deserves a separate treatment, namely *a low prominence of essentially musical formal self-reference in the guise of verbatim repetitions* (e.g., of an entire section *da capo al fine*), for narrative developments rarely, if ever, happen twice over in exactly the same way.

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[42] Cf. Almén, "Music Narrative" 168, who speaks of "idiosyncratic manipulation of formal schemes".

[43] Almén, however, argues (in my opinion unconvincingly) that "actorial elements are not essential to music narrative" (*A Theory of Musical Narrative* 23).

[44] The condition of a harmonic system (which Susan McClary [22] also seems to support – or at least considers helpful for musical narrativity to occur) has implicitly been contested by Michael L. Klein and Nicholas Reyland, editors, a collection of essays discussing narrativity in music after 1900 in which the traditional Western harmonic system was not only dropped but also not replaced by an alternative, cf. also Knut Holtsträter; however, I cannot imagine how deviations (harmonic, generic and otherwise) can become discernible without a background system (unless it is established *ad hoc* a by a given composition, which would, arguably, overtax the listener).

[45] This section is a revised version of part of Wolf, "The Concept 'Transmediality'" section 3.

This leads to the pre-announced reflections on the relationship between repetition and narrativity. Generally, repetition comes in a variety of forms, which one can classify in the following ways (note that all of the following oppositions mark extremes in a continuum):

- according to semiotic level of occurrence: on the level of signifiers (*form-centered* repetition) or signifieds (*content-centered* repetition);
- according to place of occurrence: *intra-compositional* vs. *extra-compositional* (the repetition of the same eight bars within a musical composition vs. the quotation of the theme of composer A in a composition by composer B);
- according to degrees on intensity: from *exact repetition* (indicated in musical notation by ://) to mere *similarities or variation* (as in theme with variations);
- according to degrees in extension: *small-* to *large-scale*; for example: the repetition of a musical theme vs. the repetition of a whole sonata exposition;
- according to motivation: *form-motivated* vs. *content-motivated*; form-motivated would be the aforementioned repetition of the exposition in sonata form; content-motivated the, for instance, leitmotivic recurrence of a theme in film music or opera which indicates or announces the presence of a certain film character;
- according to expectability and hence functional relevance and meaningfulness: *automatized* vs. *de-automatized* (cf. Wolf, “Wiederholung/Ähnlichkeit”); automatized repetition occurs in music where formal conventions make it expectable, again as in the aforementioned sonata form example, the de-automatized variant could be illustrated by the repetition of identical musical phrases with an increase in volume (*crescendo*) in orchestral music of the Mannheim school of the second half of the eighteenth century.

In the context of the problem of musical narrativity the following forms of repetition are of particular importance: *intra-compositional, large-scale, form-centered, form-motivated, and often expectable* (*tendentially automatized*) *repetition*. It is my contention that such repetition is frequent in Western instrumental music, and much more so than in other typical media such as films or novels, and that this indicates the wide-spread incompatibility of such repetition with narrativity.

As for the first part of my contention, I must draw attention to the fact that it does not refer to small-scale repetition, which is relatively neutral as to narrativity both concerning form and content, for it occurs in all media, including verbal narrative media (consider the recurrence of definite articles and other lexemes or the repeated appearance of the hero in a story). It is only in minimalist music in which persistent small-scale repetition is a major compositional principle and which, to quote Van Nerom (2), "is mostly known for its anti-narrative compositions", that a tension with narrativity is generally acknowledged (cf. Van Nerom 1) – yet even there exceptions apply, as Van Nerom also explains when this kind of music is used in operas.

My focus is therefore on large-scale, form-centered, and form-motivated repetition stretching over several bars. The fact that instrumental music, more precisely Western classical instrumental music, is full of such repetitions needs hardly to be belabored. One may only think of Baroque *da capo* arias, of the ternary *Lied* form A-B-A often used in the second movement of classical symphonies and elsewhere, and last, but not least, of the sonata form with its components that can also be aligned to an underlying A-B-A form: an optional introduction; a compulsory exposition, which in the classical form is repeated and then followed by a development, which in turn, before an again optional coda, leads to the recapitulation, which in itself is partly a verbatim repetition of the exposition and partly a variation.[46] Now, most of these forms or genres strike me as not particularly narrative, and in all cases, repetition is form-motivated and does not derive from some narrative content (indeed in much of instrumental music a large part of content *is* form).

Sonata form, in which the development could be likened to some degree of narrative conflict among themes regarded as (analogous to) characters, may be viewed as a problem case, in particular with respect to what Stollberg, in his drama-oriented musical narratology, aptly called the "recapitulation problem" ("Reprisenproblem" 69; 83): according to Stollberg, nineteenth-century authorities such as Anton Reicha and Carl Czerny did not have a problem with the repetitive nature of the recapitulation when it comes to a narrative reading, for they focused on the dissolution of the tonal tension in a typical recapitulation as a continuation of the development and hence as a phenomenon compatible with narrativity. In contrast to this, Richard Wagner, in his essay "Über Franz Liszt's symphonische Dichtung" (1857), considered the repetition inherent in an ABA form of Beethoven's *Leonore* overture ("die Wiederholung des ersten Theiles nach dem Mittelsatze") a weakness in the context of the "dramatic development that alone one recognizes to determine the master in all other parts" ("in allen übrigen Theilen [...] die dramatische Entwicklung als einzig den Meister bestimmend zu erkennen ist" (Wagner, "Über Franz Liszt" 19). I agree with Wagner, even if Stollberg appears to regard this modern perspective on the recapitulation problem as anachronistic (cf. 72) if applied to earlier nineteenth-century symphonies. I do so because the resolution element in sonata form recapitulations, apart from the general return to the home key, concerns only a mostly minor part of the entire recapitulation, namely the return to the home key of the second theme. In comparison to regular expositions, this amounts to a minor variation while the major part of the section is often a verbatim repetition, which in my view is detrimental to narrativity. I may thus repeat the *second hypothesis* mentioned in the introduction: *there is a tension between narrativity and large-scale, form-centered, and form-motivated repetition and consequently, music which sports such repetition to a major degree tends* not to be *narrativity-inducing*.

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[46] Notably in the convention that in compositions in major tonalities, the second theme, which occurred in the dominant in the exposition, in the recapitulation loses this tonal tension by being "reduced" to the tonic (in a similar way, in minor tonalities, the second theme changes from the parallel major tonality to the main minor one).

But why does such large-scale repetition exclude strong narrativity? Is it not true that stories, in whatever medium they occur (be it film, comics, novels, or opera), are typically based on the narreme "content-motivated repetition" (see above, and cf. Wolf, "Narrativity in Instrumental Music?" 486) for their intelligibility? Indeed, all stories do contain repeated appearances of the same characters, they can show similar to identical settings[47] and may contain similar episodes (or, in opera and film music recurring leitmotifs). Yet, they do *not* typically repeat the same episode (including settings and characters) down to minute details (experimental films[48] and *da capo*-arias in pre-Wagnerian opera being an exception[49]). This is why I added the adjective "limited" to the designation of the narreme "content-motivated repetition" in the aforementioned Figure 3.1. Of course, a story may, for example, tell a hero's peregrinations, in which he not only makes repeated appearances but also revisits old haunts or makes the same journey again; fairy tales often repeat similar actions or constellations a magical three times; and a multi-perspectival narrative may offer different perspectives on the same phenomenon. Yet, even in these cases, in which the repetition or variation is motivated by the happenings in the story line and is thus content-motivated, differences will inevitably occur on the story-level (i.e., the content level), also it would not be probable that the recurring event was represented on the discourse-level (the level of form and transmission) in exactly the same terms (unless there is a story-centered motivation in line with verisimilitude, as would be imaginable in the recurrence of a traumatic dream). This absence of large-scale, content-motivated and -centered repetition in typical, mimetic narratives (that is, in non-experimental ones) is also true, when one considers Tzvetan Todorov's (60) theory of basic ternary structure underlying typical narrative plots, namely the movement from original balance to its disruption and re-establishment (or the establishment of a new balance), which would align story structures with an ABA or ABA* structure and hence with repetition. Yet, Todorov's formula is so general and refers to a deep structure, which could come with a plethora of different realizations on the surface, so that it does not point to what is at stake here, namely large-scale more or less verbatim repetitions which appear on an immediately perceptible level. All in all, content-motivated large-scale and quasi verbatim repetition is almost unimaginable in non-experimental stories, since it lacks minimal probability to which typical storytelling usually tends. As a result, neither Todorov's narrative analysis nor the rare cases in which stories may show some degree of repetition invalidate the claim that narrativity is incompatible with large-scale form-centered and form-motivated repetition.

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[47] In TV serial films, this has become a staple functioning as a reminder of certain spatial settings, for instance, in the German TV series *Der Bergdoktor*, (The Mountain Doc, my translation), where the device refers to the identical descriptive shots of an Austrian mountain scenery taken from above; cf. also, in the U.S Series *Castle*, the shot identifying the eponymous hero's New York house (see also Cristian Eduard Dragan 26).

[48] Cf. Dragan's illuminating discussion of "single-shot repetition as cinematic metareference" (title).

[49] *Da capo* arias were, however, already criticized in the eighteenth century on the basis of the improbability that emotions regularly return to the same initial state; one may also see in this form-centered and form-motivated repetition a non-narrative element, which, however, is embedded in the overall, largely narrative structure of opera.

Therefore, both in fiction (in novels and short stories) and in drama such forms of repetition are extremely rare. And when they occur nevertheless, they confirm, so to speak, the rule by their general *deviant* quality and *experimental* nature: this is, e.g., the case of Raymond Queneau's notorious *Exercices de Style*. Its *tour de force* of ninety-nine versions of one and the same scene is based on the variation principle and hence on a variant of repetition. In Queneau's text this principle is so pervading that the overall narrativity of the volume is near zero, for the focus has here clearly shifted from a story-based narrative to the metareferential foregrounding of the discourse-level displaying the author's virtuosity in inventing ever new variations. By way of contrast with this rare experiment in fiction, large-scale, from-centered and form-motivated repetitions are not rare in poetry at all, notably in refrains. In fact, within literature, poetry is the least narrative genre – while novels and drama belong to the clearly narrative ones. All of this points to the inverse relationship between narrativity and the kind of repetition at hand, a tension which can also be observed in music.

5 Narrativity-Inducing Music Without Large-Scale Form-Centered and Form-Motivated Repetition: The Overture to Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, as an Example

It has hopefully become clear that narrativity and instrumental music are tendentially at odds with each other, not least owing to the particularly frequent occurrence of form-centered and form-motivated, large-scale repetition in music – but also that exceptions apply. All of this was discussed theoretically. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. This is why, in the following section, an example shall be given of what one may consider narrativity-inducing music that conforms to the aforementioned conditions for the exceptions. Interestingly, the example does contain startling repetitions – yet, as we will see, of a kind that may be considered a reinforcement of a possible narrative reading, owing to their being motivated by content rather than form. The example is the overture to Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in the Dresden version of 1845. Before going into details, some introductory remarks are in order.

For a start, some objections to using Wagner's overture as an example of a potentially narrative composition of instrumental music may arise. The first one is the fact that this is an overture to an opera, thus to musical drama and hence to a narrative. Moreover, one could say that an overture is not actually a stand-alone composition but dependent on the ensuing opera it introduces. A further objection, which anyone may put forth who is familiar with Wagner's *Tannhäuser* overture, is that it is replete with form-centered repetitions, both small-scale and large-scale. If, for the sake of easy identification, one provisionally accepts that denominations of melodies and happenings in the overture refer to the opera, large-scale repetition makes a notable appearance in the verbatim reoccurrence of the E major "pilgrims' chorus melody" in measures 1–10, in measures 70–80, and, in augmented form, in measures 320 ff., and that, all in all, the entire composition conforms to the well-known template of an A-B-A form with the "Venusberg episode" forming the central B-part and the pilgrims' chorus music the form-motivated A-parts.

To these objections counter-arguments may be raised. The first objection referring to the narrative context of the ensuing opera is valid only to the extent that this may facilitate a narrative reading but that the mere fact of it being an overture need not necessarily indicate that it is in itself narrative or narrativity-inducing, for overtures can just offer foreshadowing extracts of the ensuing operatic music without being organized in themselves in a narrative way. And even if the motifs occurring in an overture may frequently be linked with characters or events of the following opera, this does not hold true for the listener of the first performance. Nor is the objection valid that the *Tannhäuser* overture cannot be heard as a stand-alone composition. Not only its dimensions (442 measures requiring about 15 minutes performance time) point to the contrary but also the authority of Franz Liszt, who said that "this great overture forms in itself a symphonic whole, which can be considered independent from the opera it precedes"[50]. The fact that the overture is frequently performed and recorded as an individual composition corroborates this. As for the last objection, the small-scale repetitions occurring throughout the *Tannhäuser* overture do not really count as an obstacle to a narrative potential, for they can be encountered in all narratives, including verbal ones, as said above. Concerning large-scale repetitions, my claim is that in Wagner's case, they can be regarded as content- rather than form-motivated. Although the overall form of the overture does show an ABA (or rather ABA*) structure, this is a general template which, in view of what I said about Todorov, does not really reduce narrativity; moreover, as we will see, the second A part here comes with a notable deviation from the first.

Yet, to what extent can the large-scale repetitions convincingly be "read" as content-motivated and to what extent does the entire overture invite a narrative reading in the first place? In answering these questions, I propose following Liszt's idea and considering the overture as an independent instrumental composition; in addition, I propose imagining listening to this composition for the first time, provisionally without being aware of its title and thus narrative context, except for short-cut terminological identifications of some elements. So, what do we hear?

The overture starts with a slow four-voice diatonic E major section (Fig. 3.2) played *piano* by two clarinets, two horns, and two bassoons. Even if we try and tear ourselves away from our knowledge that in the ensuing opera this is the music given to the pilgrims' chorus, anyone familiar with nineteenth-century musical *topoi* cannot but associate this section with sacred music, more precisely with a sacred hymn or a chorale: the slow pace, the organ-like instrumentation (wind instruments!), the diatonic melody and simple harmonies used all point in this direction. So, the composition begins with a music that is replete with cultural meaning and is thus a powerful invitation to look for further meaning in the following – which the overture offers to a surprisingly large extent. The first impression we get after having identified the opening motif as sacred music is that is swells from *piano* to *mezzo forte* (m. 58) before

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[50] My translation. The original reads: "Diese große Ouvertüre bildet für sich ein symphonisches Ganze [sic], das als ein von der Oper, der sie vorangeht, unabhängiges Tonstück betrachtet werden kann" (Liszt 15).

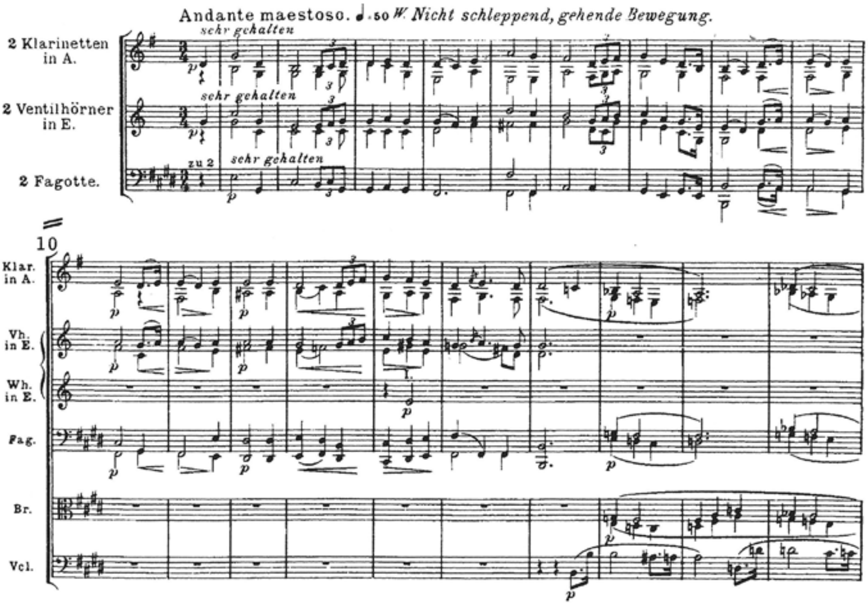

Figure 3.2 Richard Wagner, overture to *Tannhäuser*, Dresden version (1845), mm. 1–19 (*Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg: Ouvertüre* 5).

dwindling again to *piano* (mm. 70 ff.), an effect which may be linked to creating space by music, more precisely that a melody, a song, and its singers start in the distance, then move nearer and then recede again into the background.

Note: already by describing it in this way, the verb "to recede" originally implies a human or at least animate agent, someone who goes back, and if we hear this in this way, we are about to anthropomorphize the music as a first stage in the process of narrativizing it. To continue: after some time (mm. 37 ff.) the chorale tune (before in 3/4 time now in 6/8 time) is accompanied by strange descending semiquaver triplets with small rests in between, a procedure that may irritate: I for one would never accompany a chorale at the organ in this way. So, at present we do not know what to make of it (in hindsight, we will recognize the semiquaver sequence as foreshadowing one of the so-called "Venusberg motifs" as well as the accompaniment of the concluding chorale section). For someone with a very sharp ear it is noteworthy that these semiquavers begin in a diatonic way and thus remain within the E major mode but adopt an increasing chromaticism towards the end of the A section as if wanting to escape the tonal constraints, before being momentarily silenced in the repetition of the chorale melody in mm. 70–80 (again in 3/4 time). As for this large-scale repetition, if we follow the narrative markers of the music so

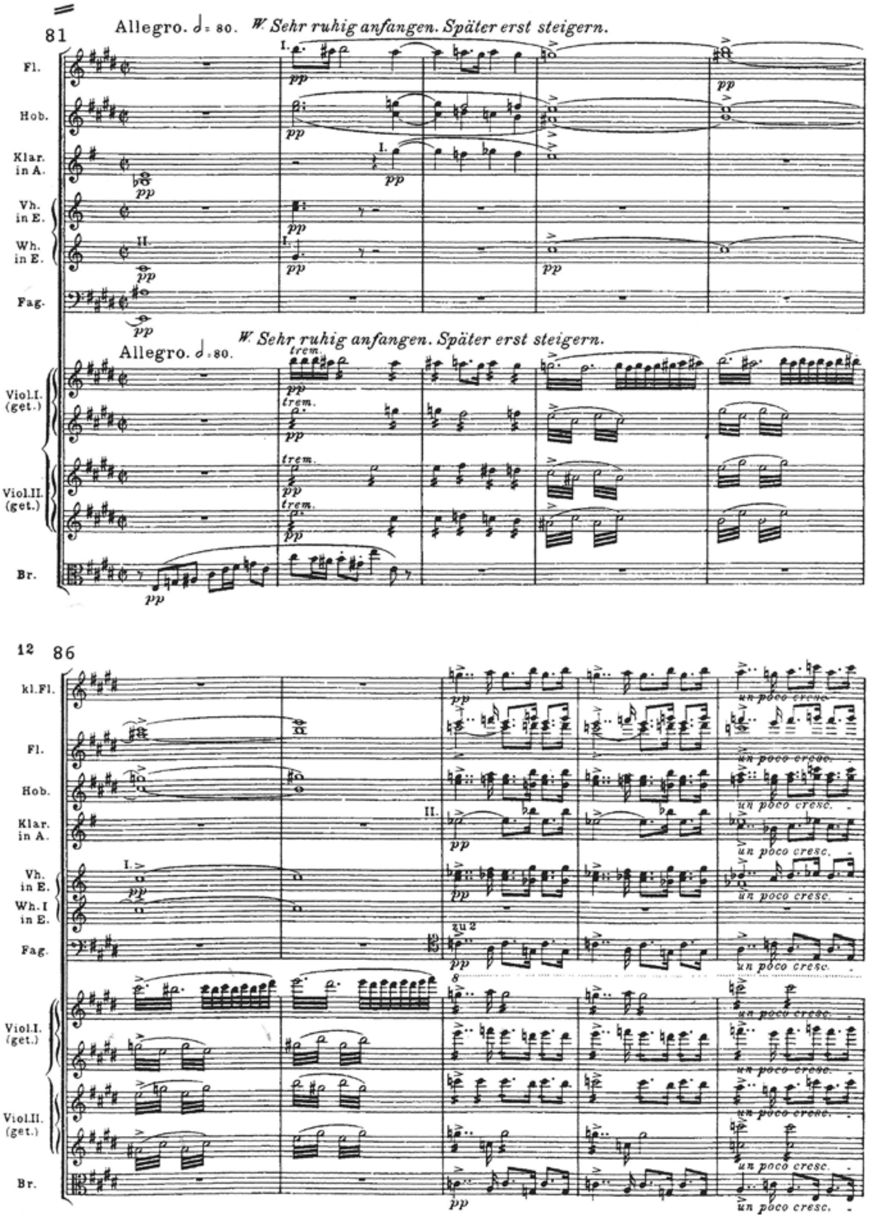
81
Allegro. 𝅗𝅥 = 80. W. Sehr ruhig anfangen. Später erst steigern.
Fl.
Hob.
Klar. in A.
Vh. in E.
Wh. in E.
Fag.
Viol.I. (get.)
Viol.II. (get.)
Br.
pp
trem.
12 86
kl.Fl.
Wh. I in E.
zu 2
un poco cresc.

Figure 3.3 Richard Wagner, overture to *Tannhäuser*, Dresden version (1845), mm. 81–90 (*Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg: Ouvertüre* 11–12).

far, it may be attributed to the receding singers of the chorale, which would render the repetition content – rather than form-motivated, for it is probable that people on the move, as in a pilgrimage (procession), could sing the same tune over again. It would thus constitute a case where large-scale repetition is compatible with narrativity. As for the disconcerting accompaniment, it could be narratively explained by the fact that one may hear more details or become aware of out-of-tune elements, when one is closer to a music event and/or singers or an individual singer.

After the religious A part we enter, in the B part, as it were, a new and contrasting secular world, introduced by rapid dotted *allegro* rhythms (mm. 81 ff., *allabreve*, Fig. 3.3): a world of soft to exciting melodies and rhythms, a world of sweet, alluring sensuousness, characterized by much chromaticism and many suspensions (syncopes). According to nineteenth-century gender connotations, this is also a world of enticing femininity, in which a powerful at first yearning (*molto espressivo*) and later in part march-like quasi song is inserted (mm. 143 ff., Fig. 3.4), arguably with masculine connotations.

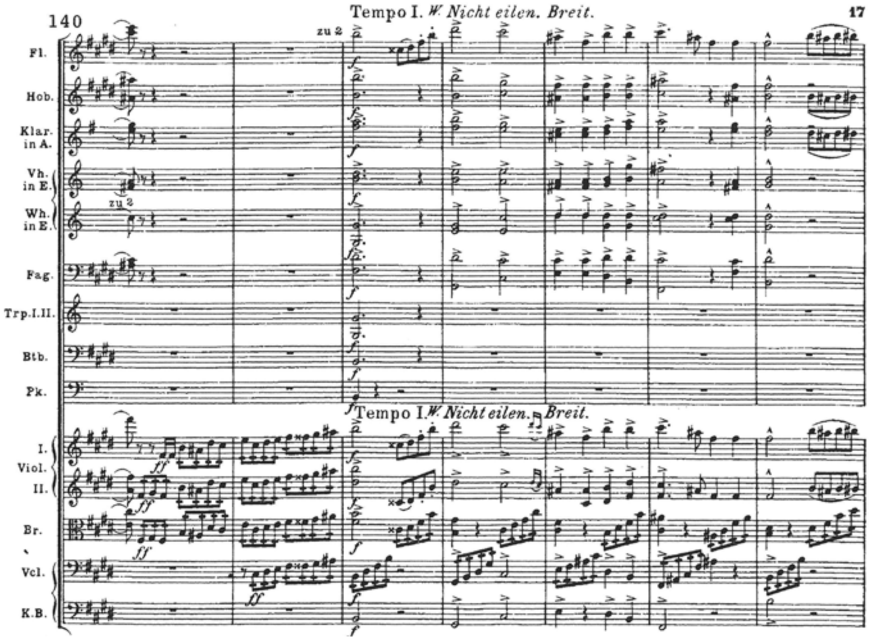

Figure 3.4 Richard Wagner, overture to *Tannhäuser*, Dresden version (1845), mm. 140–146 (*Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg: Ouvertüre* 17).

All of this also comes with chromaticism and suspensions, thus continuing the disorder-contrast with the orderly chorale part (its first and last occurrence in the A section in particular). The nature of the alluring sensuousness can only be guessed, but together with the opposition to the religious connotations of the opening chorale and the fact that in the nineteenth century, sin was often associated with sexuality, a sexual interpretation is not improbable.

Later in the same B section, a beautiful clarinet melody adds to the overall sensuous nature of the whole (mm. 194 ff.). An impressive *crescendo* on descending chromatic notes of the violins follows, leading to a *forte* version of the earlier song-like part (mm. 342 ff.), where the former expressive nature changes into excitement and leads on to a *crescendo* with ecstatic pulsating rhythms and long trills (*molto vivace* m. 273, later *feroce* m. 294), all of which may appear reminiscent of a sexual intercourse leading to a climax and its aftermath (*diminuendo*, mm. 314 ff.).

From the climax on an uninterrupted descending chromatic chain of semiquavers re-occurs (Fig. 3.5) which takes up the accompaniment of the chorale melody from the first A part (mm. 38 ff.). This establishes a remarkable link between the B and the A section – were the pilgrims or one of them already “contaminated” by “unhallowed” sensuous thoughts? Be that as it may, we finally return to the recapitulation of the A chorale part *piano*, with the chorale melody in augmented notation accompanied by the said chain of semiquavers. This section now presents a powerful *crescendo* of the chorale, in which the semiquavers gradually shed their chromaticism and re-enter into the orderly diatonic world of the E major tonality (cf. mm. 310 ff. and mm. 364 ff.) and thus adumbrate a “purified” synthesis between the religious and the sensual. The development towards the end of the first A section (from diatonic to chromatic accompaniment (cf. mm. 38 ff. and mm. 55 ff.), readable as a movement from order to disorder, from faith to sensuality) is thus reversed. In the grandiose final bars the chorale appears in a *crescendo* to fortissimo *assai stretto* (from m. 379), performed in sound in which the religious, sacred music *topoi* are reinforced by the predominance of organ-like wind instruments, the use of a *cambiata* (*Wechselnote*) and trill before the return to tonic (mm. 424–427), and a final plagal cadence conclusion (mm. 433 ff.) in which even the semiquavers disappear in favour of massive chords. The only deviation from the pervading suggestion of sacred music is the very end, in which repeated chords appear that are untypical of sacred choral music and arguably are reminders of the operatic context (m. 414).

The entire second A (A*) section (like the B section) is overwhelmingly emotional, although eliciting a different, sublime emotion and cannot but be read as the victory of the sacred over the sensuous, which eventually appears

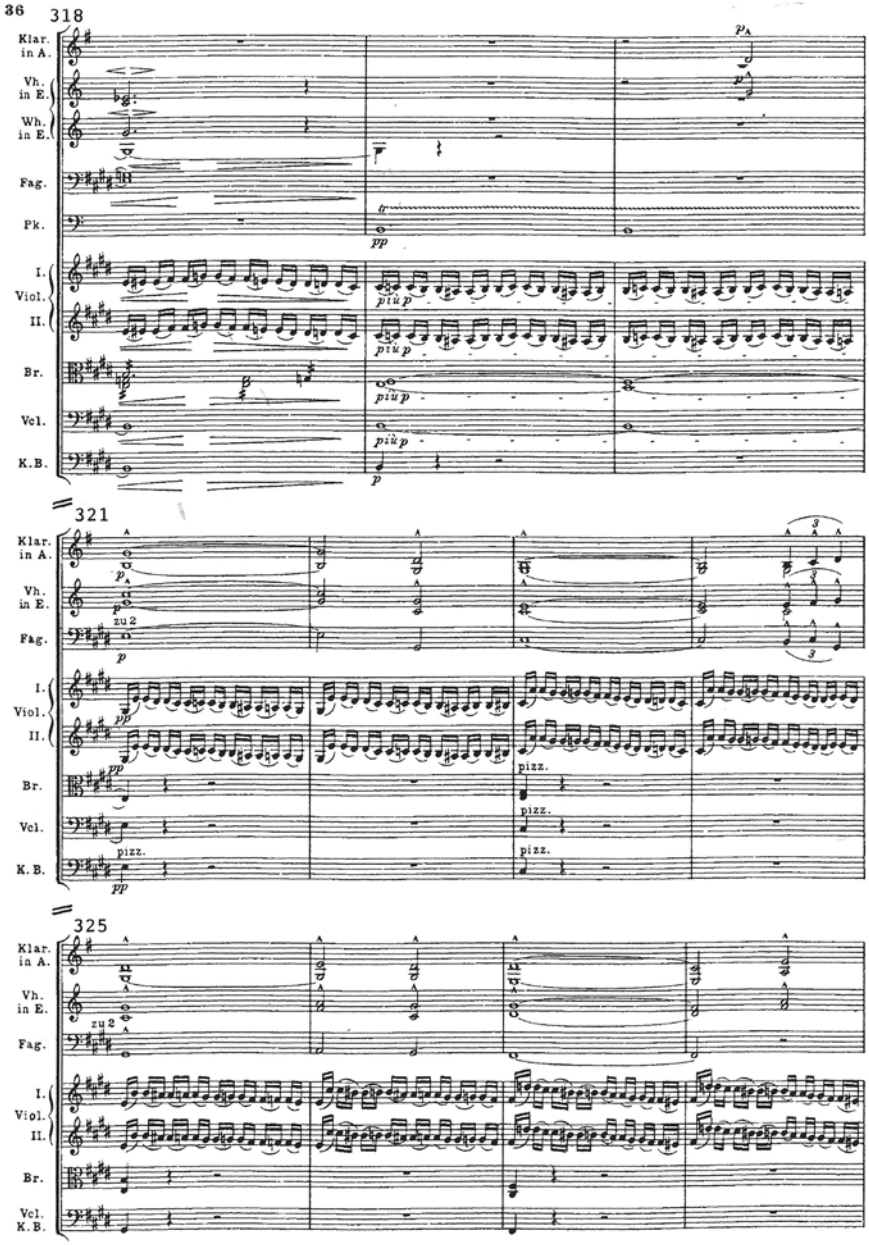
36
318
Klar. in A.
Vh. in E.
Wh. in E.
Fag.
Pk.
I.
Viol.
II.
Br.
Vcl.
K.B.
pp
più p
p
321
zu 2
pizz.
325

Figure 3.5 Richard Wagner, overture to *Tannhäuser*, Dresden version (1845), mm. 318–328 (*Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg: Ouvertüre* 36).

to be appeased and reintegrated into the order and triumphant harmony of the leading tonality.

My preceding description, in which I have mixed musicological with narrative comments is certainly not the only possible way of approaching the composition at hand. When it comes to narrativization, it was a relatively "tame" attempt, especially if compared to the narrative interpretation the composer himself gave in 1853 on demand of the orchestra "on the occasion of the performance of [this] work at Zurich" (Ellis 220). In this comment, also published in his *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, Wagner tells a genuine little story, in which the setting (Venusberg, "Einbruch der Nacht", "Morgen") and the main characters are specified (Tannhäuser and Venus) as well as the narrative trajectory.[51] According to Wagner, it leads from the song of pilgrims, who recede into the distance, to "sensuous love enjoyment" ("sinnlicher Liebeslust"), to which Tannhäuser, approaching the Venusberg at night, abandons himself, allured and seduced by the goddess of love. Finally, at daybreak, we are confronted with the exultation of the "Venusberg redeemed from the curse of impiousness" ("der Jubel des aus dem Fluche der Unheiligkeit erlösten Venusberges selbst") and generally with a "song of redemption" ("Gesange der Erlösung") (Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften* 231, my translations); now "both dissevered elements, both soul and senses, God and Nature, unite in the atoning kiss of hallowed Love" (Wagner, *Prose Works* 231).

One will have noticed that Wagner's own narrativization is much more explicit and detailed than my own, and one may well be sceptical about it. One may even suspect that my imaginative reception scenario of a first, quasi-innocent listening is difficult to maintain in view of my knowledge of Wagner's self-interpretation and that I was, so to speak, "contaminated" by the composer's words as well as by my knowledge of the fact that we are dealing with an operatic overture. Indeed, strictly speaking, any narrative reading of the *Tannhäuser* overture may be relativized, even if one must concede that the composer's authority does not count for nothing, that the work contains connotations of religion and sensuousness which can hardly be overlooked, and that it invites narrativization owing to a development from pious A over sensuous B back to pious and victorious A*, in which a synthesis with B elements is achieved.

Yet, what are the details of this story – if it is one? Who sings the chorale? Who are the characters (no identification of a hero named Tannhäuser is possible through the music alone, and the same applies to Venus and her entourage)? Why does the pilgrims' chorus, if we accept this interpretation in the first place, approach and recede in the opening section? Who is responsible for the sensual part, and where and when does all of this take place (except for chronology, the music does not give hints at a night or daybreak setting or at any mountain as a spatial setting). Moreover, what is the connection between the chorale part and the sensual part apart from a mere opposition, and why is there the sequence from religion to sensuality and back again? Why does the chorale part reoccur triumphantly in the final section? Who, if anyone, is "redeemed" and why? We may concede that there is a possible narrative template: faith, tribulation/temptation, and re-entry in the realm of faith, but details are unclear.

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[51] Interestingly, this trajectory deviates from the ensuing opera, which starts with Tannhäuser living in the Venusberg in thrall of the erotic goddess, a scene that *precedes* the arrival of the pilgrims.

These questions together with what we said beforehand point to the following: on the one hand there *is* music which does invite narrativization – as does the overture just discussed. Besides its strong emotional impact based on a sequence of different moods, which in itself is already an invitation to narrativize, it obeys most of the conditions of narrativization stipulated above:

- it is of sufficient extension and complexity,
- is composed in a tonal system that allows for the recognition of eventful deviations (notable chromaticism vs. diatonic melodies);
- it moreover contains, in the use of musical *topoi*, meaning-eliciting "intermusicality" (above all the system reference to chorales);
- it also suggests a temporal sequence of events (even though the causality is unclear);
- in addition, it contains a sequence of tension and release and is clearly goal-oriented;
- it furthermore deviates from formal templates (which do not exist for overtures in the same way as sonata form as *de rigueur* for the first movement of nineteenth-century symphonies) – the ABA* form can be accounted for from the narrative content in particular, if we consider it a version of Todorov's restitution pattern;
- and if one takes the verbal paratext "overture to *Tannhäuser*" into account, there is also a powerful intermedial reference to a verbal, more precisely dramatic story;
- and last but not least, the *Tannhäuser* overture does *not* contain large-scale, merely form-motivated repetition, for the recurrences of the chorale can be read as content-motivated.

On the other hand, as with all alleged narratives transmitted in the medium of instrumental music, the details of the story allegedly represented by the composition are vague to totally unclear. The most problematic snag is the absence of identifiable anthropomorphic characters: the *Tannhäuser* overture here presents a real problem, since, apart from the semiquaver chains linking the A and B sections, there are no continuous motives throughout the overture which would permit one to really recognize a central character by linking him or her to a motive or theme. Thus, one can at best imagine one subject as the focus of the various scenarios evoked by the music, but this would be an addition on behalf of the recipient – unless we are now (finally) giving up the artificial scenario of *not* being aware of the paratext and its conventional connotations: after all, an operatic overture is the opening of a musical drama, and drama is a form of narrative; moreover, overtures conventionally refer to or take up elements of the ensuing opera. All of this invites the listener to surmise that the mini-drama of the overture in question is the drama, hence story, of the eponymous, paratextually named character "Tannhäuser". Yet, in this case it would be words, not music, that would fill the decisive lacuna concerning the existence of characters, without which a story would hardly be possible.

All this confirms my hypothesis that instrumental music can be aligned with narrativity only under certain conditions and to a limited extent; above all that not all music is narrative, and that therefore the claim that "narrative is a structure inherent to music" discussed by Eero Tarasti (293, too leniently, in my view) is misleading. Even in cases such as the *Tannhäuser* overture, instrumental music alone can at best be quasi-narrative or weakly narrativity-inducing rather than being genuinely narrative, since it cannot "*tell* particular stories" but only "enable us to *associate* it with stories", as Tarasti (ibid.) convincingly points out. Moreover, the burden of the narrativization in this medium is partly carried by verbal paratextual elements and is, in general, much heavier for the recipient than, for example in novels, where the story, the identity of the characters, the logical connection of its parts etc. are presented more or less ready-made, often by a narrator. Any equivalent to a represented narrator is, with very few exceptions (cf. Bernhart), absent in instrumental music, so that, as stated in my theoretical part, the closest analogy to a strongly narrative medium would be drama.[52]

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[52] At best (and in view of the lack of precision in narrativity-inducing music) one could liken the quasi-narrativity of some compositions to listening to a well-acted recital of a story in a language we do not understand.

6 Conclusion: Benefits Derived from Musical Narratology, or Why Bother at All About Music and Narrative?

I hope to have been able to confirm my two hypotheses concerning a) the merely narrativity-inducing capacity of *some* instrumental music and b) the tension between narrativity and large-scale, form-centered and form-motivated repetition, which so frequently characterizes musical compositions and thus substantially reduces their narrative potential. We should also note that conversely, the absence of large-scale, form-centered and form-motivated repetition is part of the catalogue of conditions that facilitate, in exceptional cases, a narrativization of instrumental music.

As we have seen, the narrativity of instrumental music is thus a thorny matter. But why should one bother about the question if and under what circumstances such narrativity can be assumed in the first place? Why not abandon the entire matter as a futile enterprise?

Well, some compositions such as the *Tannhäuser* overture and a number of others discussed in research (and by myself[53]) lend themselves more than others to a narrative reading. In these exceptional cases, I think that, in spite of the caution with which one must proceed in this thorny affair, a narrative reading does make sense, and be it that any other reading, and a formal one in particular, would be also, if not even more problematic and deficient.

In cases such as these, narrativity may specifically contribute to understanding elements of the structure and development of certain works (see Meelberg 245; 251). The occasion of Wagner's narrative comments on his overture is a case in point: it is tell-tale that the Zurich musicians requested his explanations "as it would enable them to 'play better'" (qtd. in Ellis 220). This "better understanding" and "playing" also applies to musical pedagogy. While simplistic projections of story elements on compositions that do not at all conform to narrativity is something which I personally already resisted as a child in my music classes, there are cases where narrative explanations do shed light on musical episodes, contrasts, or developments, as I know from my own recent experience as the student of a concert organist who loves to give narrative paraphrases to some pieces or passages.

Another, historical rather than systematic justification of the musical narratology derives from the observation that most compositions which open themselves to a narrative reading stem from the nineteenth century. This is arguably not a coincidence, as music appreciation changed in this period from an aristocratic framework with a few *connoisseurs* as listeners to a wider bourgeois public. For this audience, formal matters were perhaps less interesting and accessible than the emotional and narrative impact of a composition – so acknowledging narrativity in some contemporary works seems to do justice to a historical way of music reception and composition.

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[53] For a narrative reading of the second movement of Beethoven's concerto for piano and orchestra in G major see Wolf, "Das Problem der Narrativität" and "Transmedial Narratology".

Even in cases beyond the nineteenth century there is arguably an additional – anthropological – justification for the topic of the present volume: for narrative is a pervading cognitive frame for humans to make sense of the world and communicate this sense. With regard to this, it would be strange if music were totally exempt from this general human tendency.

Probing music for narrativity is thus not a futile matter, and this includes the informed rejection of the many cases where the narrative template does *not* apply. The medium of instrumental music is arguably less fit in transmitting stories than other media – owing to the difficulties it has with precise extra-musical hetero-reference and its pervading tendency towards self-reference – hence the overall importance of form-centered and form-motivated repetition discussed in this contribution. And yet it makes sense to look for revealing exceptions.

All in all, one of the main results of the postclassical project of transmedial narratology is to shed light on the narrative potentials and limitations of individual media, which then allows classification of media and individual works in this respect. Classification is not a sterile activity but a crucial basis of understanding and making sense of something. Both negative and positive results of such a classification contribute to said understanding. And thus the question of musical narrativity on which the present volume focuses is a central question not only for the understanding of music but for human meaning-making at large.

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Musical Minimalism and the Powers of the False

Gilles Deleuze's Falsifying Narration in Two Pages (for Steve Reich?) (*1968*) *by Philip Glass*

Jimmie LeBlanc

Abstract

In the context of the twentieth-century *anti-narrative turn* in the arts, composer Philip Glass claims that what distinguishes his music is that it is non-narrative, that it uses "process instead of 'story'", and thus offers the listener a musical experience that is completely different from more conventional approaches to form and discourse. Incidentally, the musical avant-garde of the 1960s is in many ways related to modern French cinema, which, as Gilles Deleuze has shown in his two books on cinema, is strongly characterized by similar non-narrative qualities. In fact, rather than blindly opposing narration, the new cinematic *time-image* and its various signs foster *powers of the false* and allow Deleuze to contrast *veracious narration* with *falsifying narration*, thereby forwarding alternative narrative potentials. Through an analysis of Glass' *Two Pages*, this chapter explores how this conceptual framework can inform musical narrativity. Firstly, by defining an archetypal narrative model and showing how such logic rests on musical functionality, just as classical cinema, after Deleuze, rests on the sensori-motor schema, and secondly, by investigating how the rupture of the sensori-motor schema in cinema releases genuine images and signs that can shed new light on the (non-)narrative potentials of minimalist music.

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From early in the twentieth century, modernist tendencies in the arts notoriously incline towards a rejection of narrativity. From visual art's "hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse" (Krauss 9) and purposeful lack of hierarchy, centre and inflection (158),[1] together with Brian Richardson's "Unnatural Narrative Theory", which reconsiders the notion of plot with "its explicit assumption of narrative unity, cohesion, and teleology" ("Beyond the Poetics of Plot" 167), even through post–World War II avant-garde cinema, music too has participated in what is termed the "anti–narrative turn" (Reyland 31). Philip Glass provides an epitomic example when he asserts that what makes

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[1] Krauss is also cited in Reyland 30.

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his music distinct "is […] that it's not narrative; and because it is non–narrative, we don't hear it within the usual time frame of most musical experiences" (qtd. in Gagne and Caras 214), arguing that pieces like *Two Pages* use "process instead of 'story'" (Glass, *Words* 201).

Investigating what it means for a piece of music to be non–narrative, this chapter will first delineate an archetypal model of musical narrativity by critically drawing on Vincent Meelberg's definition of musical narrative in *New Sound, New Stories*. Secondly, I will parallel this model with Gilles Deleuze's notion of *sensori-motor schema* that lies at the basis of classical cinema's organic and action–based form of expression, to show how the loosening – and eventual collapse – of the sensori–motor paradigm liberates a new sort of image typically found in modern cinema (e.g., Godard; Resnais), well-known for its non-narrative qualities. In fact, instead of blindly opposing narrative, the *time-image* and its various signs foster *powers of the false* and allow Deleuze to contrast *veracious narration* and *falsifying narration*, thus furthering alternative narrative potentials. Lastly, through analysis of Glass' 1968 keyboard piece equivocally titled either *Two Pages for Steve Reich*, or simply *Two Pages*,[2] I will explore how this conceptual framework can inform musical narrativity.

1 An Archetypal Model of Musical Narrativity

Based on Mieke Bal's narratology, Meelberg proposes that "a narrative is the representation of a temporal development", where a temporal development "is a succession of events that succeed each other in time" (39). In addition, causality plays a crucial role in narrative, as the author explains: "Because one can identify particular events as (metaphorically) causing other events, the perceiving subject is able to regard this succession of events as constituting a development, a transformation from one state to another" (40).

While I appreciate the rightness and inclusiveness of this definition, the notion of representation remains contentious when applied to music. To be sure, Meelberg asserts that, as opposed to music, drama is not narrative because "it is a presentation, or a demonstration" of a temporal development (39), instead of a representation such as in a conventional novel – but is this not what music is, the direct and performative presentation of its immediate form and content? Can music have more representational value than actions and situations in drama where, in contrast, metaphors and symbols proliferate at various narrative levels? It goes beyond the scope of this paper to thoroughly discuss representation in music, but for this demonstration, I will assume that representation should not be opposed to presentation in order to assert the narrative quality of a given musical work. Rather, I contend that any temporal development in music has both a face towards the presentation of its actual sounding unfolding, a chain of sound events building into a more or less complex temporal development, and a face towards representation, a chain of signifying units shaping a more or less complex musical or extra-musical meaning. In this regard, a direct and immediate musical process, such as claimed by Steve Reich in his "Music as Gradual Process",[3] could be considered a temporal development with the narrowest representational value, and still qualify for being narrative.[4] This is how I reposition *musical narrative as the representation of a temporal development*, that is, by extending representation to unactualized (but no less real) representational potentials. Consequently, I shift my focus from narrative to narrativity, where narrativity is defined as the reciprocal articulation of a temporal development and its representational powers, and my analysis concerns the logical structure and functioning of narrative production, as opposed to musical narrative per se, which I consider extrinsic to the musical material itself, and being of a more hermeneutic nature.

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[2] According to Reich, Glass finally dropped "for Steve Reich" (in *Two Pages for Steve Reich*) after a disagreement between the two composers, but to Glass, it was a simple dedication on a score gifted to his friend (Potter 286). To my discussion, this incidental fact is indicative of how the composers shared common views on music in 1968, when Glass wrote *Two Pages* and Reich published *Music as a Gradual Process*. For instance, when Glass relates how their music was non-narrative: "In Steve Reich's early pieces, he did this with "phasing", and I did it with additive structure. In this case, when process replaced narrative, the technique of repetition became the basis of the language" (*Words* 201).

Notwithstanding this recast perspective, I follow Meelberg's borrowing of Bal's three-fold narratological model of *text, story*, and *fabula*, where text becomes "musical text" or "perceptible sounds", *story* equals musical structure, and *fabula* is "a series of logically and chronologically related musical events caused or experienced by musical actors" (43). Musical text and perceptible sounds are a finite and structured whole composed of musical signs (44), *story* is the way a *fabula* is presented (59), while *fabula*, besides being a series of logically and chronologically related events, is also the "memorial trace that remains with the listener after the listening is done" (74). An event designates the transition from one state to another, while an actor is an agent that performs actions, which in music is a musical parameter (such as pitch or register) (83), and a character is a specified musical actor, that is, a parameter bearing distinctive characteristics, such as pitch with a given value, in such a way that a changing of pitch is an event, or a transition from one state to another (86). Finally, the narrator is not necessarily a given voice, which in music could be the composer or the performer; it is above all a function that operates without being assigned to a locatable instance. In Bal's words, the narrator is the "semiotic subject that relates a story through signs that are comprehensible for others" (qtd. in Meelberg 123). This would entail that in music, the semiotic subject appears in the narrative function of the musical signs themselves.

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[3] "I do not mean the process of composition but rather pieces of music that are, literally, processes" (Reich 34).

[4] In Meelberg's narrative analysis of Reich's *Piano Phase*, narrative as the representation of a temporal development takes the form of "only one conflict, i.e., the acceleration of one voice against an unchanging second voice, […] represented in different contexts" (91). This representation notably relies on the assumption that "musical events themselves do not actually physically exist in music", and that "musical tension and resolution are representations […] rather than physical entities" (76). However, to concur with Reich's ideal, I rather propose that *Piano Phase* literally – and not metaphorically – *presents* such conflict, essentially through phasing effects acoustically producing more audible tension at higher points of rhythmical complexity. Further representational value can surely be explored on this ground, even when not intended by the composer, but it should not be mistaken with a simple description of the actual sounding phenomenon.

It should now be clear that, for this narrative model to operate at the level of sound structures and parameters, it is necessary – if the notion of narrative is at all to be applied to music – to reposition the role of direct presentation in relation to representation, and to ground the archetypal model on narrativity instead of narrative. To be sure, if a musical actor is a pitch, and a character a given pitch, any pitch or change in pitch can hardly be the mediated representation of itself. It just is or it occurs, and the temporal development these sound structures and parameters *present* provide support to *representation* under the form of potential musical meaning and further metaphorical readings or cross–domain mappings (Zbikowski ch. 2), but are not, by themselves, representational.

As Figure 4.1 illustrates, Bal's notion of *story* is fully compatible with Barney Childs' archetypal *narrative curve*. The ordering of sections goes through the introduction of material along with elements of question or tension (statement), followed by actions, relationships, and responses irregularly increasing in complexity and intensity (development), until a high point (revelation, climax, catastrophe or denouement) is reached, then calling for resolution or relaxation, and ending with a concluding gesture or comment (195). Jann Pasler identifies the sonata form as an eminent example of such model, and many musicians have defined musical narrative in similar ways. For example, Edward T. Cone breaks it down into "introduction, statement, development, climax, restatement, peroration" (qtd. in Pasler 32), which is strongly reminiscent of music as "Klang-Rede", or oration in sounds, where the rhetorical concept of *dispositio* designates the appropriate ordering of sections in the musical discourse (see Mattheson).

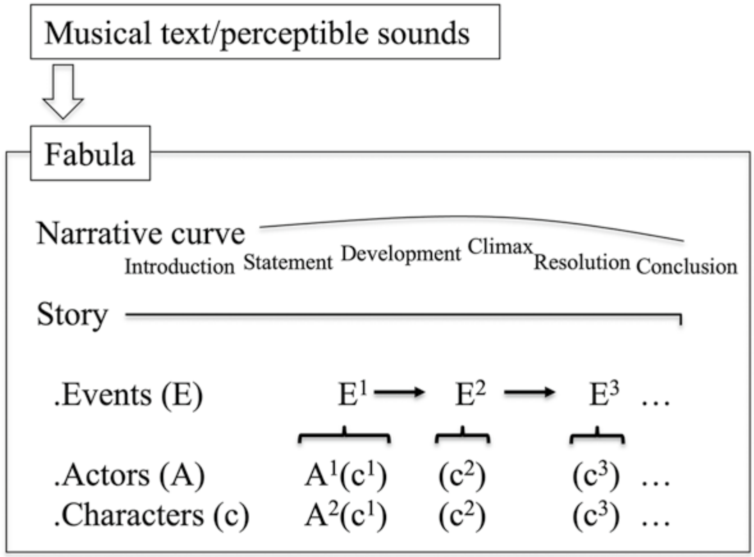

Figure 4.1 Compatibility of archetypal narrative model (see Meelberg/Bal) and narrative curve (based on Childs).

However, what ensures the proper functioning of such narrative curve, or *story*, is a more fundamental dynamic: one event logically connects to the next, whereupon given actions, consequent reactions occur, and hierarchies can be established, challenged, overturned or restored, which in turn implies a paradigm of identity and recognition where each musical element is distinct. Causal relationships are graspable, rational and consistent. In music, this relates well to Jonathan D. Kramer's *linear time*, which entails *teleological hearing*, where expectations arise from implications in the music and can be satisfyingly fulfilled (20). As Pasler puts it, narrativity "is that which allows a perceiver to develop expectations, grasp together events, and comprehend their implications" (36). *Fabula* provides and results from such an overarching logic that determines and ensures the functional articulation of smaller-scale units. *Fabula*, when applied to music, is akin to Gilles Deleuze's concept of the *open whole* of a cinematographic work, which both motivates the order and purpose of events, by means of montage (Deleuze, *Movement-Image* 29), and constitutes what is expressed through and beyond them in terms of constantly changing *relations*. Furthering this line, Ronald Bogue adds:

> It would be easy enough to translate Deleuze's definitions into more conventional terms, to see the whole as the unifying concept of the film (plot, theme, thesis, and so on), montage as the splicing of shots in accordance with that concept, and individual shots as the actual manifestations of the unifying

> concept, which itself can only be presented in an indirect fashion, not in any one shot but between the shots and in the organizing scheme of all the shots as a totality. (48)

It follows that we should be careful not to confuse the overall logic that determines and organizes the audio-visual material with the narrative utterances it allows. Indeed, the audio-visual image is made of a

> *signaletic material* which includes all kinds of modulation features, sensory (visual and sound), kinetic, intensive, affective, rhythmic, tonal, and even verbal (oral and written) [...]. But, even with its verbal elements, this is neither a language system nor a language. It is a plastic mass, an a-signifying and a-syntaxic material, a material not formed linguistically even though it is not amorphous and is formed semiotically, aesthetically and pragmatically. (Deleuze, *Time-Image* 29)

In this context, narration is deduced from the image, it is not literally part of the image itself. Images are not utterances, yet they are "utterable", that is, ready to be taken up by language – which is a sign system different from the one we started with in the film and its own signaletic material. From this perspective, the *whole* of the film is first and foremost the *whole of relations* that exist between all the plastic, sonic and verbal components of the image, and cannot be reduced to a narrative plot. It is the sense that *fabula* is used here as applied to music, and maybe what makes it even transferrable to music:

> If one had to define the whole, it would be defined by Relation [...]. Relations do not belong to objects, but to the whole [...]. By movement in space, the objects of a set change their respective positions. But, through relations, the whole is transformed or changes qualitatively. We can say of duration itself or of time, that it is the whole of relations. (Deleuze, *Movement-Image* 10)

This resonates well with *fabula* (after Meelberg) as a "series of logically and chronologically *related* musical events" (43, emphasis added), yet with further stress on the fact that, at the level of the musical form's temporal unfolding, these relations are constantly forming and re-forming (which is why this *whole* is said to be *open*) until listening is completed, and when *fabula* as a memorial trace results. In classical cinema, the *sensori-motor schema* is what ensures the logical and rational nature of relations between objects and events within the *open whole* of the work, whereas in music, I locate this fundamental dynamic in the logic of functionality.

2 The Sensori-Motor Schema and Musical Functionality

In his semiotics of cinema Deleuze contends that the sensory-motor schema and its eventual collapse are key to assess the fundamental differences between classical cinema, primarily based on the *movement-image*, and post-1945 modern cinema, where the *time-image* predominate and puts conventional narrative forms irrevocably in crisis:

> Organic narration consists of the development of sensori-motor schemas as a result of which the characters react to situations or act in such a way as to disclose the situation […]. [T]he sensori–motor schema is concretely located in a 'hodological space' (Kurt Lewin), which is defined by a field of forces, oppositions and tensions between these forces, resolutions of these tensions according to the distribution of goals, obstacles, means, detours … Movements and actions may present many obvious anomalies, breaks, insertions, superimpositions and decompositions; they none the less obey laws which are based on the distribution of *centres of forces* in space […]. Hence, no matter how disordered it is, it remains in principle a chronological time. (*Time-Image* 127)

In short, organic narration is "a regime of localizable relations, actual linkages, legal, causal and logical connections" (Deleuze, *Time-Image* 126), and I could hardly find a more suitable description of the inherent dynamic of the most pervasive musical forms in Western music. Now, if sensori–motor schemas seem rather intuitive in film, especially in action-based cinema where the fictional world replicates the real world and "the regularities and continuities of a commonsense space-time organized to increase the effectiveness of human action" (Bogue 66), one may ask what supports such logic in music. Is it learned practice and rhetorical conventions, or innate psychological and kinetic responses to musical stimuli? In the absence of an available answer, I will narrow down the focus on the working hypothesis that such relations find most of their expression in the realm of musical functionality, and that, similarly to the sensori-motor paradigm in cinema, conventional musical narrativity relies on the regularity, stability, and rational cohesiveness of its functional regime of relations at all levels.

From harmonic to thematic or formal functions, Stéphane Roy explains that

> [i]n order for a unit to carry out a function, it must play one or more roles within a musical organization where the units form an integral whole […]. In order for a musical unit to play its role in the larger context, it should […] take its expression from the network of relations created by the local and global contexts in which they are working. (343)

For instance, “[t]he presence of progressions concentrates motor roles on certain units, [...] favoring teleological movement, while stratified textures generate a hierarchical organization that assigns specific roles to certain units/stratas” (344).[5]

In this context, teleological time, goal-orientedness, and the interplay of expectation and resolution appear as the intensive impetus at the basis of functional expression: a given musical function necessarily involves either the rise, fulfilment, or deviation of an expectation, which can be easily illustrated by the classical tonal cadence, where tonic and dominant functions could not be expressed as such without building up the expectation of resolution. At a larger scale, Gregory Karl’s ten “functional sequences” (qtd. in Meelberg 62) show how various relations between musical units require a strong sense of consequent connections to structure the musical discourse. These functional sequences – enclosure, disruption, subversion, contraction, realization, withdrawal, interruption, integration, divergence and transfiguration – surely rely on anticipated behaviors in given contexts, while hinting at Meelberg’s idea of temporal development as *transformation*. Similar to Roy’s “integral whole” (or the encompassing organization within which such network of relations can be created), Pasler states “that a narrative must have a fundamental point of reference, and its events must progress, not just succeed one another” (33), and that the “ultimate reason narrative events are directed and connected is that they undergo or cause transformation” (34). Pasler first identifies “thematic transformation – ‘the process of modifying a theme so that in a new context it is different yet manifestly made of the same elements’ – [...] [which] allowed a composer to suggest different programmatic intentions” (Macdonald qtd. in Pasler 35). In functional analysis, the transformed utterance of a theme expresses a particular function such as intensification, fragmentation, recontextualization, and so on. Moreover, a “second kind of musical transformation that is characteristic of narrative does not necessarily depend on any recurrent material, but rather on a certain kind of relationship between events that are in themselves complex states of being. One example is tension into resolution”, notably carried through harmonic functions, and which constitutes, after Leonard Meyer and Eugene Narmour, an “implication-realization model of communication” (Pasler 35).

In sum, in the sensori-motor paradigm for music, functionality expresses Deleuze’s localizable relations, actual linkages, legal, causal, and logical connections between events organized in a given order (or *story*), which altogether in their gradual unfolding constitute the “integral whole” – or *fabula* of the work that, in turn, ensures their proper functioning and consistency. It follows that when one can no longer grasp the logic of the whole through its functional articulations, when musical functions are weak, equivocal, or defective, a crisis of narrativity occurs.

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[5] My translation.

3 The Rupture of the Sensori-Motor Schema in Cinema

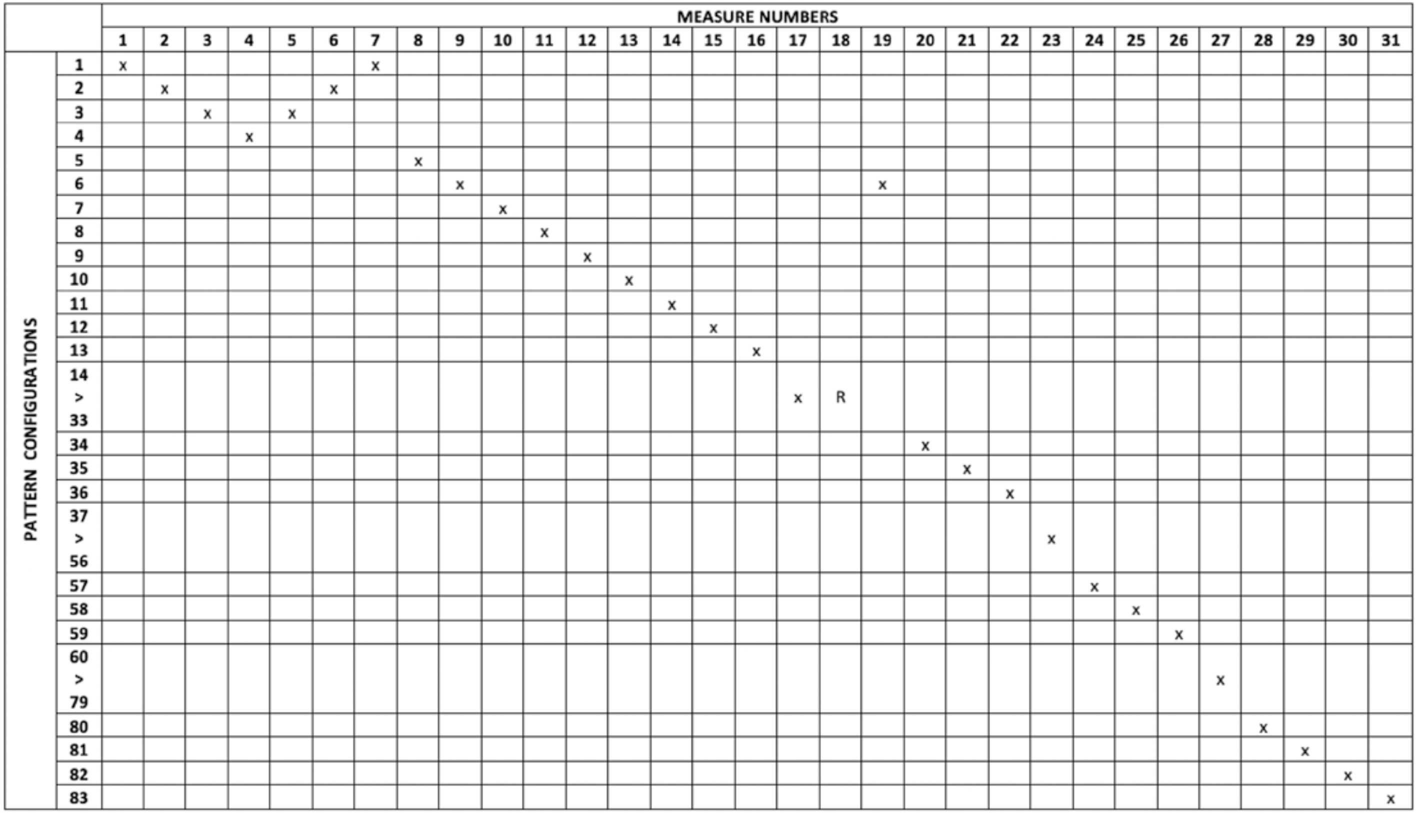
For Deleuze, with regard to the modern cinema of Welles, Godard, Resnais or Robbe-Grillet: "The first things to be compromised everywhere are the linkages of situation-action, action-reaction, excitation–response, in short, the sensori–motor links which produced the action-image" (*Movement-Image* 206). Three out of five symptoms of the loosening and rupture of the sensori-motor schema identified by Deleuze are relevant to us. Firstly, situations become dispersive and loose their cohesiveness and consistency, "the image no longer refers to a situation which is globalizing or synthetic, but rather to one which is dispersive. The characters are multiple, with weak interferences and become principal or revert to being secondary" (207). Instead of building up into a closed and organized totality, the unfolding events constantly reconfigures their own cartography and (loose) system of relations. Secondly, the sense of causality, of purposeful relation between elements and events, is threatened or lost, "the line or the fibre of the universe which prolonged events into one another [...] has broken [...]. Linkages, connections, or liaisons are deliberately weak. Chance becomes the sole guiding thread" (207), or an irrational logic supersedes our sense of rationality. Thirdly,

> the sensori-motor action or situation has been replaced by the stroll, the voyage [*balade*] and the continual return journey [...]. It has become detached from the active and effective structure which supported it, directed it, gave it even vague directions, [...] it is a question of undoing space, as well as the story, the plot or the action. (Deleuze, *Movement-Image* 208)

Music also participates in this aesthetic shift by fostering similar dispersive, non-rational, and wandering features, as exemplified by Glass' *Two Pages*.

3.1 *Dispersive Situation*

When Glass states that "*Two Pages* [is] an eighteen–minute work in which a line of music [is] pulled in and out of shape through adding and subtracting notes from an original theme, thereby determining the overall shape of the music" (*Words* 216), a dispersive situation comes into play. For I understand that multiple versions of the same material coexist (Fig. 4.2); no stable hierarchy organizes the figures thus aggregated, and what appears to be primary at a given time seems to lose its salience at another.



	MEASURE NUMBERS																														
PATTERN CONFIGURATIONS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	x						x																								
2		x				x																									
3			x		x																										
4				x																											
5								x																							
6									x										x												
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60 > 79																											x				
80																												x			
81																													x		
82																														x	
83																															x

Figure 4.2 Synoptic table of successive pattern configurations in *Two Pages*[6] (“R” stands for retrograde, as m. 18 mirrors the additive process in m. 17).

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[6] Considering the minimal approach to motivic differentiation in this piece, pattern identification is based on the exact configuration in each measure. This means, for instance, that the first five-note pattern actually returns in mm. 29–31, but now combined with other patterns in each bar, thus creating different situations in this analysis. Hence, Figure 4.2 only expresses literal bar repetitions.

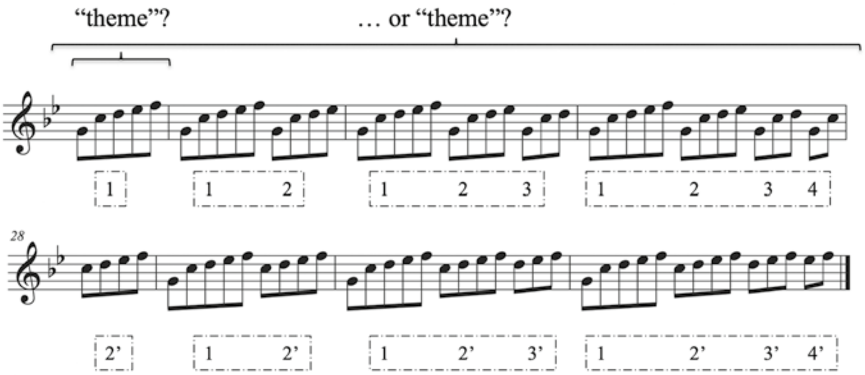
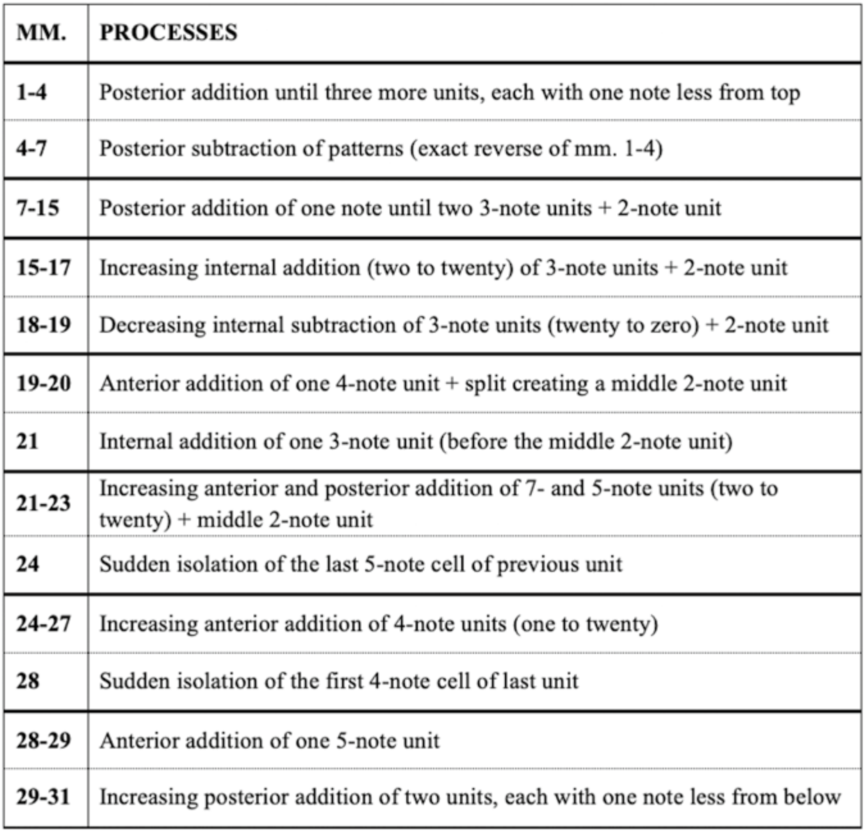


Figure 4.3 *Two Pages*, (a) mm. 1–4 and (b) 28–31, and each measure is repeated an undetermined but large number of times. Note that this and all subsequent musical excerpts are from the Dunvagen Music Publ. Inc. score of *Two Pages* (Glass, *Two Pages*).

For example, some doubt remains as to the seminal nature of the opening five–note motive (m. 1, Fig. 4.3), for no motivic or formal salience can confirm its paradigmatic status. This is illustrated by the irregular symmetry between the first and last four–measure patterns, which could instead suggest that Glass' original theme is not one–measure, but four–measure long.

3.2 *Deliberately Weak Links*

Weak links appear when we realize that only three basic functions operate in *Two Pages*, namely addition, subtraction, and repetition, which largely contrasts with the functional complexity of even the simplest classical piece of music. Moreover, the lack of a larger and synthetic logic that would explain why these processes are formally distributed the way they are renders these links even weaker (Fig. 4.4). As Wesley York has it, "[it is] clear that the concept of ambiguity is […] central to the entire composition" (91). Yet, the piece still shows a certain directionality, as the texture progresses towards a gradual emphasis on higher notes (Fig. 4.5), but no striking pattern emerges in the evolution of the additive strategies, and the rough-cut ending to a virtually eternal musical flow fails to afford any solid sense of completion. As Eero Tarasti notes: "in [minimal] music, one can no longer distinguish among beginning, end, introduction, or other temporal functions of music" (284).



MM.	PROCESSES
1-4	Posterior addition until three more units, each with one note less from top
4-7	Posterior subtraction of patterns (exact reverse of mm. 1-4)
7-15	Posterior addition of one note until two 3-note units + 2-note unit
15-17	Increasing internal addition (two to twenty) of 3-note units + 2-note unit
18-19	Decreasing internal subtraction of 3-note units (twenty to zero) + 2-note unit
19-20	Anterior addition of one 4-note unit + split creating a middle 2-note unit
21	Internal addition of one 3-note unit (before the middle 2-note unit)
21-23	Increasing anterior and posterior addition of 7- and 5-note units (two to twenty) + middle 2-note unit
24	Sudden isolation of the last 5-note cell of previous unit
24-27	Increasing anterior addition of 4-note units (one to twenty)
28	Sudden isolation of the first 4-note cell of last unit
28-29	Anterior addition of one 5-note unit
29-31	Increasing posterior addition of two units, each with one note less from below

Figure 4.4 Additive and subtractive processes in *Two Pages*.

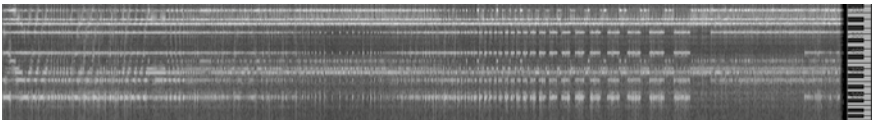


Figure 4.5 General tendency towards higher pitches in *Two Pages*, sonogram of the Shandar recording (1975), darker zones indicate lower intensity or silence.

3.3 Balade *or Wandering Form*

Weak functional links also considerably reduce goal-orientedness, as Pasler states: "[i]n minimal music, repetition […] does not require a backward glancing […]. Instead of mediating past, present, and future, it forces us to concentrate fully on an extended present" (41). In *Two Pages*, the absence of teleological tension relates to Deleuze's wandering form, *balade*. Cunningly, Glass stated about his early pieces that "what is interesting about them is how

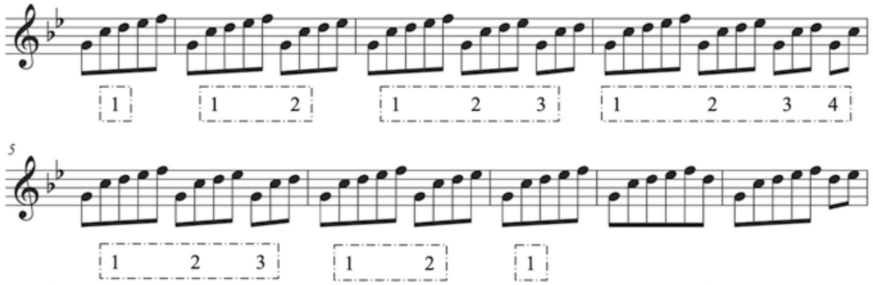


Figure 4.6 *Two Pages*, mm. 1–9. (Glass, *Two Pages*).

they don't repeat", claiming that "[i]n order to make it listenable, you had to change the face of the music […] so that the ear could never be sure of what it was going to hear" (*Words* 202). It follows that the material is unable to foster implication-realization models. Yet, we may locate directional processes at various levels, for instance between mm. 1–7 (Fig. 4.6), where a palindromic additive and subtractive sequence occurs, but they fail to provide any strong sense of goal-reaching, notably because the eight–note flow remains ostensibly regular (rhythmically and dynamically), and that the extensive repetition of each pattern tends to cancel directionality. Such "*balade*-form" recalls Kramer's nondirected linearity, where "we do not really know where we are going […] until we get there" (40).

3.4 *Organic Whole vs. Dissipative Plane*

As Tarasti claims, "in music there is a spatial–temporal–actorial isotopy[7] which causes us to 'read' the text as a coherent whole rather than as discrete fragments" (29). According to Pasler, this "'grasping together' of events that are not simultaneous into one thought […] is a critical characteristic of narrative thinking" (47), but when the composer has "sought to give form to other processes that are not necessarily goal-oriented, dramatic, or organic, […] [o]ne cannot develop expectations about these processes or resolve their inexplicable but inherent contradictions; one cannot grasp them into one thought" (48). This relates to the rupture of the sensori-motor schema: the *fabula* as *organic whole* has turned into a *dissipative plane*, or *non-totalizable whole* (to

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[7] After Greimas, Tarasti explains that "[i]sotopy designates a set of semantic categories whose redundancy guarantees the coherence and analysability of any text or sign complex […]. In music, isotopies mean the principles that articulate musical discourse into coherent sections" (6). Musical isotopies can be "a more or less achronic and abstract deep structure, such as the *Ursatz* in Schenker, "thematicity", "musical genre", "type of texture", "text strategy", where "the same theme or idea can be presented in a different light" (7–10).

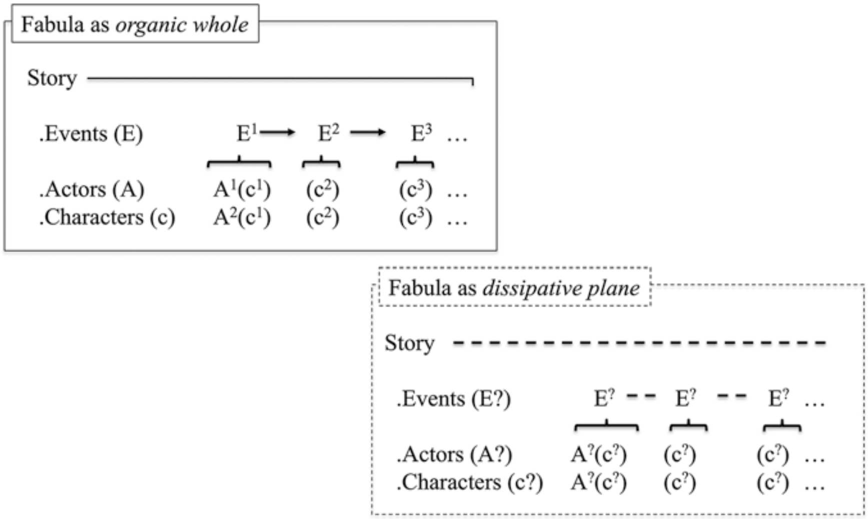
Fabula as *organic whole*
Story
.Events (E)
E¹ → E² → E³ …
.Actors (A)
A¹(c¹) (c²) (c³) …
.Characters (c)
A²(c¹) (c²) (c³) …
Fabula as *dissipative plane*
Story
.Events (E?)
E? -- E? -- E? …
.Actors (A?)
A?(c?) (c?) (c?) …
.Characters (c?)
A?(c?) (c?) (c?) …

Figure 4.7 (a) Organic whole vs. (b) dissipative plane (where dotted lines and question marks are suggestive of equivocality and open-endedness).

paraphrase Deleuze[8]), where no rational boundaries can harness the more or less erratic semiotic activity of the material, where an irrational logic (and not mere irrationality) substitutes for rational logic, and confronts us with "that which defies logical thought and yet demands to be thought" (Bogue 171).[9]

4 The Time-Image and Its Signs

In classical cinema, Deleuze shows how movement-images provide the sensori-motor schema with its basic articulation where a perception leads to an action, according to a given reaction or affection. Time thus deduced from movement offers an indirect image of time, but beyond the movement-image, time-images provide rather a direct manifestation of time, and their emergence occurs in the form of "pure optical and sonic images that break with the sensori–motor schema" (Bogue 107). Glass claims similar thinking in his liner notes to *Music in Twelve Parts* (1974):

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[8] "What constitutes the audio-visual image is a disjunction, […] but at the same time an incommensurable or 'irrational' relation which connects them to each other, without forming a whole, without offering the least whole. It is a resistance stemming from the collapse of the sensory-motor schema, and which separates the visual image and the sound image, but puts them all the more into a non-totalizable relation" (*Time-Image* 256).

[9] See also Syderberg: "This goes beyond the psychological individual just as it makes a whole impossible: a non-totalizable complexity, 'non–representable by a single individual'" (qtd. in Deleuze, *Time-Image* 269).

> It may happen that some listeners, missing the usual musical structures (or landmarks) by which they are used to orient themselves, may experience some initial difficulties in actually perceiving the music. However, when it becomes apparent that nothing 'happens' in the usual sense, [...] [they] can perhaps discover another mode of listening – one in which neither memory nor anticipation has a part in sustaining the texture, quality, or reality of the musical experience.[10]

In Deleuze's semiotics of cinema, such pure optical and sonic images foster various signs, among which hyalosigns and chronosigns.

4.1 *Hyalosign or the Crystal-Image: Indiscernibility*

In the crystalline regime of the hyalosign, "the actual is cut off from its motor linkages, and the virtual, [...] detaches itself from its actualizations, starts to be valid for itself. The two modes of existence are now combined in a circuit where the real and the imaginary, the actual and the virtual, [...] exchange their roles and become indiscernible" (Deleuze, *Time-Image* 127). The oscillation between actual and virtual is best understood when we think of how, following Bergson, the actual present is immediately doubled by its virtual *simultaneous past* or *memory of the present*, which can occur when the break of the sensori-motor schema frees our perception from its immediate action–oriented duties. In the sensori-motor schema, perception and memory merge in a present carried away by the action to be performed – it is like when an actor is fully immersed in their acting. However, when the schema breaks down, and memory and perception are distinguished, an extended time of reflection allows an awareness of this split of the present into an actual present and a virtual memory of the present. In addition, there is indistinguishability between the two, coalescence of one and the other – just as when an actor is simultaneously acting and watching themself acting. Similarly, in a repetitive piece of music, the motive is no longer subsumed under its functional impetus which, when added to the extended time afforded by repetition, forwards this split of perception into actual present and immediate virtual memory, thus grounding the heightened perception and contemplative experience of minimalist music.

This intensified perception develops further virtualities under the form of psycho-acoustic phenomena. For instance, to Reich, the very slow unfolding of musical processes facilitates detailed listening (34), which in turn produces "impersonal, unintended, psycho-acoustics by-products of the intended

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[10] Liner notes to the original 1974 LP vinyl recording, as printed on the back cover.

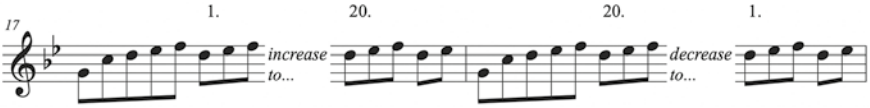

Figure 4.8 *Two Pages*, mm. 17–18[11]. (Glass, *Two Pages*).

process. These might include sub-melodies heard within repeated melodic patterns, stereophonic effects due to listener location, slight irregularities in performance, harmonics, difference tones, [and so on]" (35). In *Two Pages*, such psycho–acoustic effects happen, for instance, when the lowest or highest pitch of a pattern seems to detach itself from the eight-note runs, as if adding a non–written layer to the texture. This is notably the case with the low G at the bottom of the basic set of pitches for the piece, or with the extended three-note-cell repetitions at measures 17–18, where the listener may erroneously hear the highest pitch as first, rather than third, in each cell (Fig. 4.8).

4.2 *Chronosigns I: Order of Time and Undecidability*

With chronosigns, "[w]e are no longer in an indiscernible distinction between the real and the imaginary, [...] but in undecidable alternatives between sheets of past, or 'inexplicable' differences between points of present" (Deleuze, *Time-Image* 274). These "peaks of present" signal the coexistence of incompossible presents, just as in a film when the same scene is narrated a few times but in different yet equally valuable ways. Comparably, "sheets of past" designate the coexistence of multiple pasts (131), just as when various versions of the same past event equally coexist in the narration. Each peak of the present and each sheet of the past offer perfectly distinct possible versions, and in this sense, they are fully discernible possibilities:

> Each peak of the present is a distinct possibility, and each by itself may be regarded as true. But the peaks cannot all be true at the same time – and yet they are so enfolded with one another that they cannot be separated. Likewise, any one sheet of the past may be treated as true, in which case other sheets are necessarily false, but we cannot decide which is the true sheet and which the false. In this regard, then, the true and the false, though discernible, are rendered inexplicable or undecidable in peaks of the present and sheets of the past. (Bogue 148)

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[11] The repetitive pattern consists of always resuming at the measure beginning, each time adding one more 3-note unit in the middle, until twenty 3-note units is reached (and *ditto* decreasingly in measure 18).

As opposed to sonata form where there is a clear articulation between primary and developmental materials, a piece like *Two Pages* presents a flat-level structure unfolding according to repetitive, additive, and subtractive processes. There are possible groupings into extended sequences, but no solid ground from which one could hierarchically arrange them. This virtually introduces undecidability between different versions of the same material – and indeed, the varied repetition of a scene in film is akin to pattern repetition and variation in music, – it creates an a–centered multiplicity where each unit could be the original from which the others derive. As Glass has it, "[i]f you listened to the structure, you could hear the phrases changing constantly, even though the stream of music was so constant that it might feel like it wasn't changing. The trick of that music was that it allowed the attention to form around a series of successive events that became almost unnoticeable" (*Words* 218). Taken paradigmatically, comparing all motives with each other with no respect to their temporal ordering, this co–presence of equivocal figures is akin to cinema's incompossible presents, in that one cannot decide between original and derivatives (assuming here that "original" stands for "true"). But, taken in generative terms, if the actual written–out ordering of the material is suggestive of a generative process, the virtuality of other equally valuable progressions is real, thus emulating, by extension, the virtual coexistence of incompossible pasts, in that different reordering would not reproduce the same generative relation between past and present stages of the material, but still without threatening the nature of the work.[12]

4.3 *Chronosigns II: Time as Series and Non-Commensurable Relations*

Time as series occurs when successive images or events relate to each other by irrational cuts and re-linkages, realizing potentials that go beyond the functional requirements of the sensori-motor schema. As Deleuze has it:

> [A]n irrational cut [...] determines the non–commensurable relations between images [...]. [T]he images are certainly not abandoned to chance, but there are only relinkages subject to the cut, instead of cuts subject to the linkage [...]. [T]here is no longer linkage of associated images, but only relinkages of independent images. Instead of one image after the other, there is one image *plus*

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[12] The virtual validity of other progressions seems convincing when York reports that "Mr. Glass has mentioned that his score, as originally conceived, included two measures which were removed from the Shandar recording", and that "there may be further differences between the original score and the piece as [recorded]" (106). This observation suggests that changes to the score did not seem to threaten the internal logic of the work, also considering Glass' role as co-producer on the original release of the album in 1975.

> another […]. It is a whole new system of rhythm, and a serial or atonal cinema, a new conception of montage. (*Time-Image* 213)

In *Two Pages*, each isolated figure or sequence has its own value and, besides their pervasive common pitch set, only connects with its neighbor according to rudimentary functional relationships, which signals time as series. Consequently, the piece is shaped by the serial presentation of various alterations to the same basic material without any systematic or synthetic overarching process. On a localized scale, the sometimes-linear quality of the music suggests a sense, though weak, of implication. On a larger scale however, this remains anecdotal, reinforced by the undetermined number of repetitions resulting into rigorously unpredictable changes. Such apparent arbitrariness, for Deleuze, amounts to irrational cuts and re-linkages at the basis of time as series: the irrational character of the relation between two successive images virtually disconnects them into independent units, while re-linkage occurs when these virtually disconnected images are treated serially, thus weakening functionality in favor of more equivocal exchanges and resonance between them. In such a construction, time becomes non–chronological, and as chronological connections do not seem necessary, time becomes virtually multi–directional, fostering resonances and exchanges between immediate or remote objects. To be sure, it is not that there is no reason to the progressions, or that one cannot understand additive processes, but rather that many reasons to move from one pattern to another, from one additive strategy to the next, are equally valuable. Alternatively, non-commensurable, making for how time as series fosters the material's virtualities, where multiple potentials enter resonance rather than imposing the univocal realization of one particular implication.

5 Veracious vs. Falsifying Narration and the Powers of the False

In Deleuze's semiotics, the organic regime of the movement-image implies "truthful narration in the sense that it claims to be true, even in fiction" (*Time-Image* 127), and this truth likeness relies on its adherence to the causal and logical connections of the sensori–motor schema. On the other hand, the crystalline regime of the time-image, with its collapse of the sensori-motor logic, entails falsifying narration where "the power of the false cannot be separated from an irreducible multiplicity" (133), where fixed identities are overturned – not by a value of falsity, which would still belong to the dialectical regime of veracious narration, but by powers of the false, such as indiscernibility, undecidability, equivocality and non-commensurability.

Meelberg's archetypal model of musical narrative relates naturally to veracious narration, for as I have argued, its inherent mechanisms rely on the discernible, decidable, non-equivocal and commensurable expression of musical functions. However deconstructed or deviated the *story* may be, the open whole of the work, or *fabula*, can now be grasped in one thought, thanks to the consistency of logical and causal relations that structure the *musical text* and its sounding materials and events. Meelberg's definition of musical narrative can thus be seen as the representation of a truthful or veracious (in Deleuze's sense) temporal development, that is, a temporal development whose logic is consistent and graspable into a coherent and self-contained whole.[13]

By contrast, Deleuze's falsifying narration throws an interesting light on non-narrative strategies that, by standing against narrativity, cannot fully escape some narrative dimension, however weak or defective (indeed, it seems difficult to define what non- or anti-narrative identifies without hinting at narrative). By developing image types and signs with values of indiscernibility, undecidability, equivocality, Deleuze's semiotics of cinema thus allow for an approach to musical narrative or narrativity as the representation of a falsifying temporal development. When the *story*, or formal organization of the temporal unfolding of the work, purposefully relies on irrational connections or paradoxical and undecidable relations between materials and events, the open whole of the work turns into a *dissipative plane*, or *non-totalizable whole*. Here, events resonate with each other in all their contradictions and weak functional relationships, and no complete and closed thought can result into a conventional comprehension of the musical syntagmatic and paradigmatic logic.

In this paper, I have shown how symptoms akin to the cinema's rupture of the sensori–motor schema can be equated with temporal, formal and functional features in music, and how these are forwarded by musical signs whose effects reproduce those of cinema's hyalosigns and chronosigns. These notions highlight the limits and potentials of this study. If I here have drawn parallels between *Two Pages* and cinematographic models, further investigation will hopefully lead to the creation of genuine musical signs and concepts, reaching beyond cinema and delving deeper in the musical paradigm. On the basis that

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[13] From my recast perspective on narrativity, as exposed earlier in this chapter, I rather see musical narrativity as the reciprocal articulation of a truthful (or veracious) temporal development and its representational powers, where potential musical narratives consequently inherit similar veracious quality.

Deleuze's semiotic approach or method, which he constructed with literature, painting, and cinema, remains operational beyond the specific concepts it develops in relation to each art form, I foresee its potential for a renewed semiotic framework for music, notably for its capacity to tackle the non-discursive or non-linguistic sign, not to say the non-narrative quality of many musical works.

6 Epilogos

Two Pages offers a telling exploration of Deleuze's falsifying narration and the larger implications of the crystalline regime in music. Reality even meets fiction around the contentious title of the piece: like two sheets of the past enfolding onto one another, Glass' and Reich's incompossible stories endure, until now, as *undecidable* narratives.

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SECTION 2

Music and the Stage: Narratives in Opera and Musical

When Music Becomes the Plot

Narrative Strategies in Tom Johnson's Minimalist Metaoperas

Silvia Álvarez Baamonde

Abstract

Since the international success of his *Four Note Opera* in 1972, Tom Johnson's unique vision revitalizes theatrical conventions by introducing minimalist repetition and Pirandellian self-reflexivity into the mix. His metareferential libretti are reduced to the description of musical structures while a rich array of metacharacters blurs the frontier between the singers and the roles they personify. As reality and fiction collide, bereaving the plot of its narrative power, can music take over?

Drawing on a wide range of unpublished sources, this chapter addresses the three main impediments to musical narrativity that Johnson's metaoperas encounter and the strategies developed by the composer to circumvent them. The first part of this contribution, *When metaopera trumps language*, focuses on music's self-reflexivity as a way of obliterating language and establishing sound as the sole narrative vector. The second part of the chapter, *When music finds itself in the mirror*, analyzes self-referentiality's potential for musical characterization as a means of bypassing the heteroreferential predicament, that is, music's shortcomings regarding its capacity to designate a reality outside itself. The last part of this contribution, *When Music Becomes the Plot*, examines Johnson's mathematical methods as a way of counterbalancing minimalism's narrative impediments in relation to its non-dialectic, inexpressive and acausal nature. Johnson's approach to minimalist opera ultimately reveals a hidden drama where the voice itself claims the spotlight and becomes the true protagonist.

1 Introduction: The Three Impediments to Musical Narrativity in Tom Johnson's Minimalist Metaoperas

With the unexpected success of *L'Opéra de quatre notes*[1] in 1972, American composer Tom Johnson tiptoed his way onto the international stage. Audiences at the Cubiculo Theatre of New York instantly welcomed the premiere of one of the first lyrical statements of minimalism. Their enthusiasm immediately

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[1] Since all the examples from *The Four Note Opera* are taken from the publication in French, I have chosen here to use its French title.

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caught on with the television industry as well: a few months after the opening at the Cubiculo, CBS broadcasted the first attempt at drama of a thirty-three-year-old composer nobody had heard of. Other theatrical pieces followed, while *L'Opéra de quatre notes* remained a favorite among music-lovers all over the world. Within a twenty-five-year span, the work had already been translated into eight languages and inspired more than fifty productions in sixteen different countries.

And yet, if one should ask audience members about the plot of *L'Opéra de quatre notes*, they would be met with a surprising degree of hesitation. This reluctance to verbalize the story is somewhat understandable when we take a closer look at Johnson's other works. Indeed, for over four decades, the composer has been depriving his lyrical repertoire of a literary plot, relying exclusively on self-referentiality to create opera about opera. Through his musically descriptive librettos, the power of story-telling leaves the verbal medium to infiltrate the realm of sound. Such an approach inevitably challenges musical narrativity on three fronts.

The first impediment that hinders the narrative potential of music is the presence of a verbal dimension in the transmedial genre that is opera. The libretto traditionally carries the narrative weight, relegating sound to a subsidiary position. Language tells the story, while music merely fulfills an emphatic function, highlighting the emotions and ambiances implied by the text. Johnson's metaoperas inevitably arouse the same skepticism towards the libretto's dominance triggered by vocal genres in general and beg the question of how self-sufficiency of musical narrativity asserts itself within a transmedial artwork. Self-reflexivity arises as Johnson's weapon of choice to reverse the hierarchical dominance of text over sound. His self-written librettos are exclusively devoted to the description of musical structures and are therefore completely devoid of plot. Once self-reference has effectively shifted narrative focus from words to sound, language can emancipate itself from meaning to become part of the musical material. Music is all that remains, and its narrative autonomy can no longer be called into question.

Johnson's evolution in the field of drama can be interpreted as a long-lasting battle to reinforce the supremacy of music over the verbal medium, by subjecting the text to multiple fragmentation processes that ultimately lead to complete obliteration. But if his self-referential operas succeed in neutralizing language as a narrative force, then they become instances of instrumental music for all intents and purposes. As such, the second impediment to musical narrativity becomes clear: instrumental music's shortcomings with regard to *heteroreference*, that is, the capacity of a sign to "designate elements of what conventionally is (still) conceived of as 'reality outside' a semiotic system"

(Wolf, "Metareference Across Media" 18). The semantic vagueness of sounds has been highlighted by many scholars. In her contribution to the *Handbook of Narratology,* Marie-Laure Ryan embodies one of the more radical stances when she rescinds music's narrative pretensions, arguing that "as a semiotic substance, sound possesses neither the conventional meaning nor the iconic value that allow words and images to create a concrete world and bring to mind individuated characters" (13). Werner Wolf's approach allows for a broader spectrum of narrative degrees. Although he considers instrumental music as "notoriously under-privileged as far as its capability of "heteroreferentially" pointing beyond itself is concerned" (Wolf, "Preface" vii), he also acknowledges its unrivaled self-referential capacity to point to itself and create music about music. Johnson's lyrical repertoire puts into practice Wolf's observations. Instead of designating an extraneous reality, his metaoperas call attention to the music world itself. The stage set duplicates the decorations and furniture of the opera house while the characters become copycats of their own performers: the soprano impersonates the capricious *prima donna*, the tenor portrays the seductive *primo uomo* and so on. Following the same pattern, the realm of sound foregrounds its own devices through caricature, failure and doubling. By systematically mirroring its own structures, self-reference successfully implements intra-musical narratives where the voice becomes the protagonist and faces its own array of twists and turns.

Although Johnson's metaoperas successfully circumvent the *heteroreferential* predicament, they still seem at odds with traditional narrative theories inspired by literary models. Transmedial interpretations offer a more comprehensive analytical framework, such as Byron Almén's media-unspecific perspective in *A Theory of Musical Narrative*: "I will understand narrative as articulating the dynamics and possible outcomes of conflict or interaction between elements, rendering meaningful the temporal succession of events, and coordinating these events into an interpretive whole" (13). The partition of the concept "narrative" into three abstract components (conflict/interaction, temporal succession and interpretive coherence) guarantees its applicability to any given art or medium, including instrumental music. And yet, one aesthetic movement seems to fall outside the scope of his all-inclusive model, namely minimalism.

The specificity of repetitive music triggers the third impediment to narrative consideration of Johnson's operas. In their quest for objectivity, minimalist composers have often rejected the emotional and psychological dimension of music that has frequently attracted narratological theorists. However, since it is ultimately the listeners that make sense of their own musical experience, a supposedly neutral approach on the part of the composer cannot effectively prevent the emergence of a narrative experience on the recipient's (and the musicologist's) part. Still, the frequent reduction of musical means to a single motif contravenes the dialectic tension featured in nearly all the definitions of narrativity. Indeed, not many scholars acknowledge the possibility of a narrative development based on gradual transformation rather than opposition. In his *Introduction to Poetics*, Tzvetan Todorov is one of the few to consider this gradual process in narrative. He identifies two categories of narrative episodes: "those that describe a state (of equilibrium or disequilibrium) and those that describe the transition from one state to the other" (Todorov 51). While the first type of episode implies a succession of antithetical states (equilibrium/disequilibrium) that echoes Almén's conflict/interaction dichotomy, the second type of episode presupposes a non-dialectic conception of narrative as transition. Major branches of minimalism such as phase music, with its transmutation from simultaneity to asynchrony, and process music, as in compositions by Johnson, can be aligned with Todorov's second model. This transitional view of narrative implies a link of causality between the intermediate stages that connect the initial and the final states. Minimalism's extreme repetition tends to obliterate temporal sequentiality in addition to negating a dialectic narrative tension. The circularity of repetitive music prevents the emergence of teleology within musical discourse. However, to restore causality, Johnson's operas introduce underlying numeric patterns inspired by mathematics that redirect the sound progression and introduce sequentiality within the cyclic time of repetitive music. His musical processes then become predictable, circumscribing the potentially eternal dimension of circularity between a beginning and an ending point.

Drawing on a wide range of archival sources, this chapter shows how Johnson's minimalist metaoperas circumvent the three impediments for musical narravity by resorting to self-referentiality and numeric logic. In the first part of this contribution, "When metaopera trumps language", I analyze the mirroring power of music as a way of surpassing the verbal predicament and achieving narrative autonomy. In the second part of the chapter, "When music finds itself in the mirror", I once again address self-referentiality, this time considering its potential for bypassing the heteroreferential deterrent. The representational capacity of Johnson's metaoperas is here assessed through the study of musical characterization. The last part of this contribution, "When music becomes the plot", focuses on Johnson's mathematical strategies as a way of counterbalancing minimalism's narrative shortcomings regarding its non-dialectic, inexpressive and acausal nature. In "The hidden drama of voice" I then conclude my study by briefly discussing the new types of musical narratives that emerge in Johnson's metaoperas as a result of these processes.

In order to fully understand Johnson's perspective, I draw my examples from the vast diversity of his dramatic corpus, which comprises twelve catalogued works and two withdrawn pieces. The case studies considered in this chapter are the following works:

1) Three grand operas: *L'Opéra de quatre notes* (1972), *Riemannoper* (1988) and *Un'Opera Italiana* (1991, 2006[2]);
2) Three pocket operas from the *Shaggy-Dog* cycle (1978): "Drawer", "Dryer", and "Door";
3) Two chamber operas: *Sopranos Only* (1984), and *La Princesse et les fFeuilles* (2014).

Through this variety of configurations, Johnson's metaoperas are leading examples of a four-decade crusade for the reinstatement of narrativity within minimalist discourse. The first step in this restoration process is for music to take over and replace the libretto as the main narrative source.

2 When Metaopera Trumps Language

Johnson's operas offer three strategies that obliterate language as a narrative force:

1) Language's subordination to music through self-referentiality and the infiltration of musical procedures into the verbal medium
2) Language's loss of semantic power through fragmentation
3) Language's complete dissolution through *vocalise*

The first strategy in the obliteration of the verbal medium is already present in *L'Opéra de quatre notes*. In this unconventional piece, the theatrical action starts without warning with a quartet of soloists that give the starting signal in the manner of a choral Prologue: "*Il y a trois chœurs dans cet opéra. Voici le premier. Le deuxième sera semblable à ceci. Mais un peu plus court*"[3] (Johnson, *L'Opéra de quatre notes* 2). This self-reflexive discourse continues throughout the opera. The spectator gradually realizes that language has been deflected to deal exclusively with the description of musical structures and the performers' real-time actions.

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[2] The dates refer to the world premiere of each work, with the exception of the unreleased *Un'Opera Italiana*. In this particular case, the years indicate the publication of the first and second editions of the score.

[3] "There are three choruses in this opera. This is the first one. The second is quite similar. But a little shorter" (my translation).

The subjugation of words to sound in *L'Opéra de quatre notes* is reinforced by the application of musical procedures to the verbal medium. Repetitive strategies stemming from minimalism frequently permeate the libretto. This is the case in the "Theme and Variations Duet", where the melodic dialogue between the soprano and the tenor follows classical variational patterns (ornamentation, augmentation, diminution), while the text is a strict reiteration of the original sentence "*Ce duo est une suite de variations sur un tout petit thème*"[4] (Johnson, *L'Opéra de quatre notes* 26). A few minutes later, during the "Recitativo 8", minimalist repetition infiltrates language once again, but is here tainted by the theme-and-variations procedure. In this scene, the soprano brings the opera to a halt in order to rest her voice before her *aria di bravura*. The contralto and the baritone explain the situation, engaging in endless gibble-gabble to appease the impatient spectators. The original text/theme is then subject to a series of semantical variations while the *recto-tono recitativo* is repeated without alteration.

> Theme: "Le compositeur a placé cet air à la fin de l'opéra *pour que le soprano ait tout le temps pour s'y mettre".*[5]
>
> Variation 1: Elle doit reposer sa voix avant de commencer
> Variation 2: Pour qu'elle ait le temps de reposer sa voix
> Variation 3: Mais elle a besoin de reposer sa voix avant de s'y mettre
> Variation 4: Elle doit reposer sa voix un instant
> Variation 5: Pour lui donner le temps de se reposer
> Variation 6: Pour qu'elle trouve un moment de repos
> Variation 7: Elle a besoin d'un moment de repos
> Variation 8: Afin qu'elle trouve le temps de se reposer
>
> (based on Johnson, *L'Opéra de quatre notes* 115, emphasis added)

Music's sovereignty over the verbal is corroborated in Johnson's second grand opera: *Riemannoper*. Here the libretto consists exclusively of a succession of definitions taken from the *Riemann Musiklexicon*. The *Vorspiel* introduces the four vocal types played by the soloists: *prima donna, prima donna assoluta*, lyrical tenor, and baritone. Then, each subsequent number strictly demonstrates a traditional operatic form as described in Riemann's encyclopedia: *aria di bravura, leitmotiv, recitativo alla Gluck*, etc. Language describes music which in turn instantiates and subverts language by subjecting it to the same repetitive patterns used in *L'Opéra de quatre notes*. However, the predominance of a definitional discourse in *Riemannoper* further curtails language's diegetic power, placing the narrative responsibility entirely on the musical layer.

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[4] "This duet is a little theme and variations" (my translation).

[5] "The composer placed this aria at the end of the opera so that the soprano can get ready" (my translation).

The second strategy in the deplacement of the verbal medium is the segmentation of language into sound units. This procedure can be exemplified by the "Long Aria" from *L'Opéra de quatre notes*. In this baritone number, each syllable of the text is isolated and surrounded by quarter rests. Meaning is strained because of the fragmentation of language and its reconstruction befalls entirely on the listeners' willingness to make inferences about the next upcoming syllable that might complete each word.

Johnson takes these semantic attacks a step further in his *Shaggy Dog Operas*. "Drawers" offers another instance of linguistic fragmentation into phonetic units at the expense of meaning. In this monodrama, the soprano strictly doubles the piano's melodic pattern as she gradually assembles her sentences, word by word.

Table 5.1 Based on Johnson, "Drawers".

G	Lost
G-A	It's lost
G-A-B	Where is it?
G-A-B-C$^{\#}$	It must be here
G-A-B-C$^{\#}$-E	Where is my thimble?

Another example is "Dryer", from the *Shaggy Dog Opera* for tenor, baritone and piano. Once again, language mimics the piano's melodic evolution throughout the opera. The entire piece follows the principle of rotational melodies, where the starting point of the musical phrase shifts from one note to the next till it comes full circle. The text combines the circular logic of music with the nonsensical repetition of syllables (see Fig. 5.1).

The third and last strategy of linguistic obliteration that brings the verbal medium to complete dissolution does not feature in any of the abovementioned operas. The first extensive use of *vocalise* as an alternative for language occurs in "Door" from the *Shaggy Dog* cycle. In this opera for two sopranos and piano, the fragmented sentences sang by the soloists systematically culminate in a long yawn that serves as an excuse for displaying the *coloratura*'s competence. But the most compelling example is Johnson's chamber opera, *Sopranos Only*. The first half of this twenty-minute work is entirely devoted to *vocalise* and consequently free from any verbal incursion. Language unconvincingly reemerges during the middle section, but after failing to find

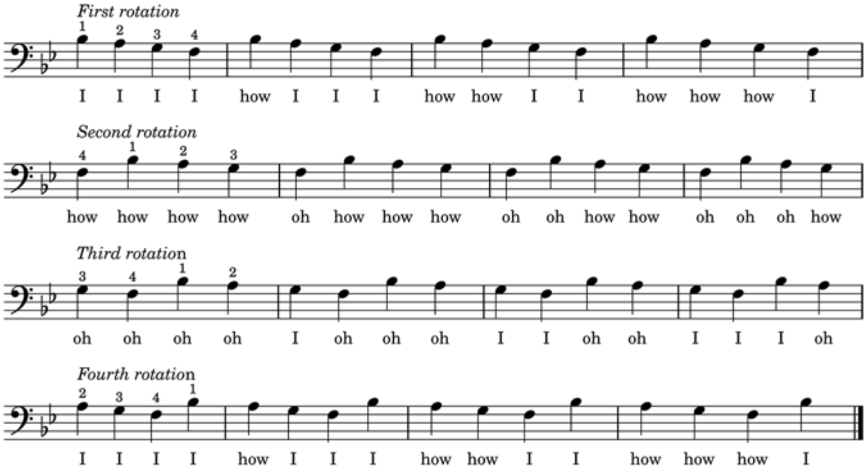
First rotation
1 2 3 4
I I I I how I I I how how I I how how how I
Second rotation
4 1 2 3
how how how how oh how how how oh oh how how oh oh oh how
Third rotation
3 4 1 2
oh oh oh oh I oh oh oh I I oh oh I I I oh
Fourth rotation
2 3 4 1
I I I I how I I I how how I I how how how I

Figure 5.1 Diagram of the rotational melody sung by the baritone in "Dryer". (based on Johnson, "Dryer").

the right arrangement between words and music, the composer goes back to *vocalise*. His last chamber opera, *La Princesse et les feuilles*, goes a step further by replacing the traditional overture with a series of vocal warm-ups.

With language out of the picture, the question remains: can music emerge as an autonomous narrative force? If so, how do Johnson's operas circumvent the heteroreferential predicament?

3 When Music Finds Itself in the Mirror

In Johnson's works, self-referentiality compensates for the music's lack of representationality. Music becomes the only possible subject, and the libretto (what is left of it) points towards the realm of sound. However, some fundamental narrative strategies, such as characterization, still rely heavily on semantic specificity to summon an extraneous reality. Focusing primarily on self-reference, this section looks at the potential of Johnson's metaoperas to achieve narrative characterization through musical means, such as tessitura and vocal technique.

Since *L'Opéra de quatre notes*, Johnson calls the concept of character into question from a musical point of view. His protagonists are conceived of as caricatures of the main vocal stereotypes that traditionally populate opera. Their vocal category constitutes the differentiating factor between characters. Blurring the frontier between reality and fiction, a mimetic link is invariably established between the performer's range and the role she or he plays. In order to call attention to *tessitura, L'Opéra de quatre notes* devotes a solo number to each of the four protagonists: the soprano, the contralto, the tenor and the baritone. A fifth vocal type makes a furtive intrusion in the middle of the second act before disappearing without warning after a single aria: the *basso profundo*. The libretto of *L'Opéra de quatre notes* provides only indirect commentaries on each vocal type. But, as mentioned before, the *Riemannoper* quotes the actual encyclopedic entries from Hugo Riemann's *Musiklexicon*. Here is the definition of "tenor" that serves as model for the other three vocal categories:

> "*Der lyrische Tenor erfordert Schönheit und Glanz der Stimme bis zum C zwei. Hugo Riemann Musiklexikon Sachteil Seite neunhundert siebenundvierzig.*"[6] (Johnson, *Riemannoper* 9–10)

While the text resorts to verbal description, music develops its own means of characterization. Johnson's operas highlight vocal types as their main defining factor. His music calls attention to *tessitura* by empirically testing its limits and instigating comparisons through imitation. Singers must accept the risk of exceeding their range at the expense of vocal beauty. In *L'Opéra de quatre notes*, only the baritone escapes this 'harsh' treatment. Throughout the entire work, the tenor complains about the unsuitability of his melodies that mischievously favor the low register, while the contralto confesses to being more of a mezzo-soprano herself. Her *tessitura* is ultimately put to the test in the famous "Imitation Duet", composed as a duel of vocal typologies between the soprano and the contralto. The rules are simple: every melodic pattern introduced by the contralto has to be rigorously repeated by the soprano. Johnson has given the contralto the upper hand but instead of engaging in a virtuosity contest, he concentrates on *tessitura* as the main subject of contention. The contralto immediately seizes the opportunity and drags the soprano into the low register, where she must go beyond her range to reach a B3 and an A3. As a result of these doublings, the listener can easily compare vocal ranges and experience vocal typology used as a tool for musical characterization.

This combative spirit is taken a step further in *Sopranos Only*. Here, the sense of duel is no longer confined to a single number, but the entirety of this chamber opera is conceived of as a vocal joust between six sopranos. As mentioned in the first part of this contribution, the libretto has been reduced here to a series of *vocalises*. Characterization no longer happens through the verbal medium which, on the contrary, favors indistinctness between roles. As the score's preface states: "The sopranos may be adults or children, male or female, beautiful or not, or preferably some combination of the many types of people we call sopranos" (Johnson, *Sopranos Only* i). As all the soloists share the same vocal range, *tessitura* can no longer function as a distinctive criterion among roles. The musical battle shifts from vocal typology to singing technique as a means of characterization. In *Sopranos Only*, Johnson gathers a wide array of vocal twists and turns to encourage comparisons. Among them, we find *coloratura* passages, extreme *pianissimo* dynamics, out-of-range low notes, fast enunciation challenges and lengthy sustained notes that confront the singers with their breathing limitations.

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[6] "The lyrical tenor requires vocal beauty and brilliance up to C^2. Hugo Riemann *Musiklexikon*, page nine-hundred-forty-seven" (my translation).

In addition to imitation, another musical strategy to highlight vocal technique as a characterizing tool is the inclusion of perceptible errors. Johnson's repertoire is intentionally sprinkled with fictional vocal failures that call attention to virtuosity itself. The first examples are taken from *L'Opéra de quatre notes*. The contralto and the baritone (pretend to) experience false starts and the soprano makes a faulty repetition during the "Imitation Duet". The tenor is spared this whole farce of technical difficulties because, as he repeatedly points out, his part is so insignificant that he "has almost nothing to say" (Johnson, *L'Opéra de quatre notes* 48). In the same vein, the first solo interventions of the *prima donna* and the tenor in the *Riemannoper* are marked by premature starts.

Some challenges fall out of the fictional realm and become real. *L'Opéra de quatre notes* contains two telling examples of vocal trials that can effectively lead to failure. In the "Concentration Aria", the baritone must sing twenty-four phrases of varying lengths without convenient melodic repetitions. Each sentence is preceded by a piano chord that is subjected to an arbitrary number of repetitions, fluctuating between two and fourteen. The instrumental and the vocal melodies must follow one another without interruption. The singer has no choice but to adjust to an unpredictable numeric set of twenty-four elements along with his own varied melodic patterns in order to place each entrance correctly. Memory and concentration are undeniably put to the test. But perhaps the most famous challenge in Johnson's repertoire is the "Unaccompanied aria" from this same opera. Despite its misleading title, this contralto number features a long unaccompanied *recitativo* that allows a certain degree of improvisation. Alongside this interpretative freedom runs a dreadful imposition: the singer must end her solo on an impeccably tuned A as the piano will enter simultaneously on the same note. Any approximation is mercilessly exposed by the return of the musical accompaniment. Maintaining perfect pitch while singing *a cappella* for such a long time constitutes a real challenge, as each performance can expose the singer to conspicuous defeat.

Over the years, Johnson has reinforced associations between vocal typologies and degrees of technical mastery that result in the emergence of recurring characters throughout his repertoire. *Riemannoper* serves as model for his later works: the baritone is bound to *buffo*-inspired *staccato*, the contralto and the tenor are frequently restricted to slow *legato* arias. Despite constant criticism on her behalf, the soprano holds the monopoly on ornamentation. 73% of *coloratura* passages are devoted to the *prima donna*, followed by the baritone (19%) and the tenor (8%).

By establishing role types through tessitura and vocal technique, Johnson's self-reflexive music effectively achieves rudimentary forms of differentiation between characters in the absence of language. Consequently, while the spectator might never be able to put into words semantically specific descriptions such as "the pure and courageous commander's daughter", he will resort instead to such musical depictions as "brilliant coloratura soprano with a warm medium register and a vivacious *staccato*". Through their self-explanatory dimension, Johnson's metaoperas ultimately also fulfill a pedagogical goal by engaging the audience in a spot-the-difference game of vocal range and mastery.

4 When Music Becomes the Plot

Now that the protagonists have taken shape through musical characterization, the desire to see them evolve within a storyline arises. This section addresses the last narrative aspect of Johnson's metaoperas, namely, the restoration of sequentiality and causality within minimalist music. The answer lies in the composer's interest in mathematically inspired logic. In the vein of John Cage and Morton Feldman, Johnson takes an objective view on music that puts an end to the decaying rule of the demiurge composer. Mathematics offers a vast array of universal truths in the form of theorems, laws and formulas that can be translated into sound in order to achieve artistic objectivity. Its inner teleology infiltrates Johnson's minimalist idiom and brings with it the possibility for narrativity. Although repetition tends to generate circular time and consequently bans sequentiality from the musical discourse, directionality can ultimately be reinstated through Johnson's maximalism. This concept, introduced by French musicologist Gilbert Delor, refers to the exhaustivity with which the composer explores every possible outcome of the numerical rules that underlie his works. Simple operations such as counting, permutating, adding and subtracting reinforce the linear causality of the musical discourse in a very perceptible way.

In Johnson's compositions, minimalism and maximalism do not constitute antonymic but rather complementary approaches. Both principles are persuasively combined in the gossip chorus from *Un'Opera Italiana*. This scene illustrates the non-diegetic nature of Johnson's libretto: the text consists solely of all the conjugations of the verbs *chiacchierare* and *ciacolare* (to chat) in the present tense. Music subsequently stands alone as the only vehicle for storytelling. In order to exert the narrative potential of maximalist logic, Johnson's gossip scene deploys the complete set of permutations obtained by combining a three-note melodic motive to build a six-voice canon.

Table 5.2 Based on Johnson, *Un'Opera Italiana*.

Permutation 1:	F A C (1 2 3)
Permutation 2:	F C A (1 3 2)
Permutation 3:	A C F (2 3 1)
Permutation 4:	A F C (2 1 3)
Permutation 5:	C F A (3 1 2)
Permutation 6:	C A F (3 2 1)

Even though the material is extremely reduced, the composer exhausts all the possibilities offered by the mathematical principle at hand. The circularity of the canon is modulated by the sequentiality of the combinatorial set, whose deliberate order preserves the melodic ascension of the original motif for as long as possible. Maximalism effectively circumscribes minimalist circularity within the linear progression of the permutation set. In this particular example, Johnson's music mimics the directionality of gossip by recreating the gradual distortion of information that frequently occurs along the communication chain. All through the transmission process, the initial data is altered as a consequence of permutation. In the end, the deformation has come full circle: the ascending melody (F A C) has been twisted upside down (C A F), much as facts tend to be perverted by gossip.

A more rudimentary version of maximalism is already present in *L'Opéra de quatre notes* with the "Forty-Bar Duet". In this number, the contralto and the baritone engage in the rigorous counting of bars, from one to forty. The inner directionality of counting rhymes also infiltrates the *Shaggy Dog* cycle. "Door" reverses the additive logic by enlisting in a subtractive process. The piece starts with eight knocks on the door, followed by an eight-note piano melody. The two sopranos hesitate to answer the call as they are comfortably sunbathing. A second attempt is made, but we only hear seven knocks followed by a seven-note piano melody. One by one, the number of knocks (and notes) decreases but the soloists remain in a resting position unwilling to answer the door. The static nature of the libretto is curtailed by the inexorable countdown of knocks and notes that asserts musical teleology. The listener can foresee and anticipate how the piece will end.

"Drawers" introduces another counting method. The progressive construction of the melody employs an accumulative type of addition that Johnson applies again to the antithetic melodies from *Un'Opera Italiana*'s love duet:

Table 5.3 Counting techniques in "Drawers" and the love duet from *Un'Opera Italiana*.

Counting technique	**"Drawers"**	***Un'Opera Italiana*: love duet**	
		(soprano)	(tenor)
1	G	A	E
12	G-A	A-G$^{\#}$	E-F$^{\#}$
123	G-A-B	A-G$^{\#}$-F$^{\#}$	E-F$^{\#}$-G$^{\#}$
1234	G-A-B- C$^{\#}$	A-G$^{\#}$-F$^{\#}$-E	E-F$^{\#}$-G$^{\#}$-A

While in "Drawers" additive counting accompanies the research of the soprano's lost thimble in a series of drawers, the narrative force of mathematics is much more salient in *Un'Opera Italiana*'s love scene. As the soprano's descending pattern and the tenor's ascending motive grow, their voices intertwine until they finally blend in a circular pattern without beginning or end. The two distinct musical phrases are a subtle metaphor for love, as the characters singing them also become one (see Fig. 5.2).

Un'Opera Italiana also renews with the technique of rotational melodies already introduced in the *Shaggy Dog* cycle. In his "Andantino Pastorale" from scene XI, Johnson takes circularity a step further by reviving the medieval isorhythmic techniques from the Ars Nova period. This choral piece combines a short *talea* of eight durations with a seven-note *color*. The process ends when the melody comes full circle after its fifty-sixth note (8 × 7). Because of the scarcity of means and the straightforwardness of Johnson's maximalism, the audience can foresee the evolution of musical material and its ending point.

In addition to permutations, counting techniques and rotational melodies, Johnson's last theatrical work introduces more sophisticated forms of mathematical teleology. *La Princesse et les feuilles*, a chamber opera for "two sopranos

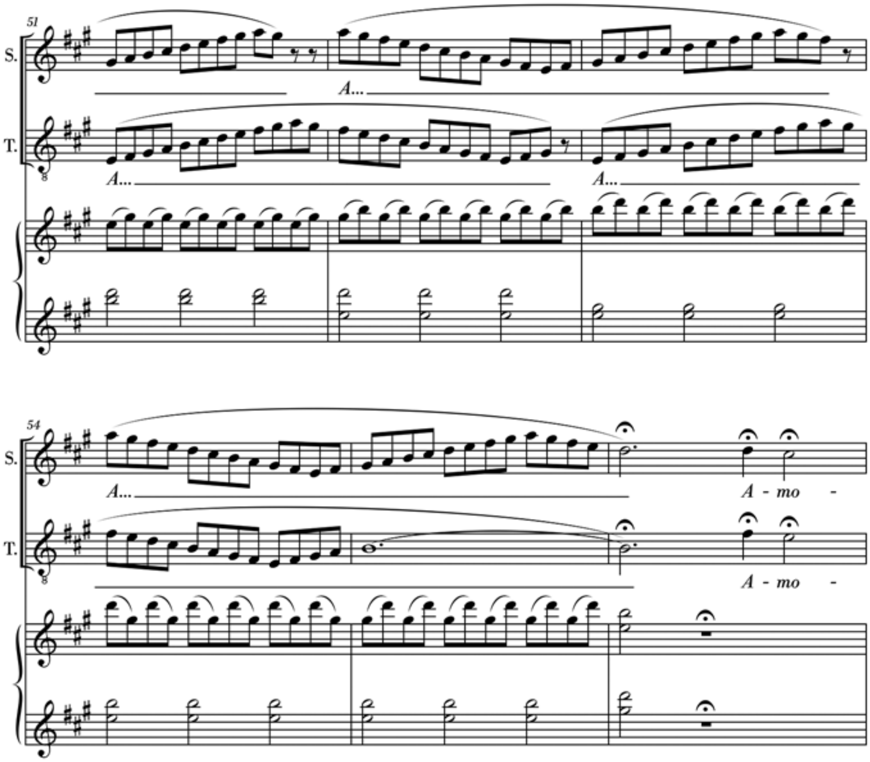

Figure 5.2 “Scena VIII” from *Un’Opera Italiana*. (Johnson, *Un’Opera Italiana* 111).

with almost identical voices, accompanied by two flutists with almost identical color”,[7] revives one of the first musico-mathematical models that Johnson encountered as a student at Yale: Allen Forte’s Set Theory. The composer pays homage to his teacher’s conceptualization of the z-relation, a criterion for grouping harmonic sets that share the same intervallic properties. *La Princesse et les* feuilles is based on the homometric sets 4-Z15 (0,1,4,6) and 4-Z29 (0,1,3,7), better known as the all-interval tetrachords because they contain all six interval classes: one minor second, one major second, one minor third, one major third, one perfect fourth and one tritone.

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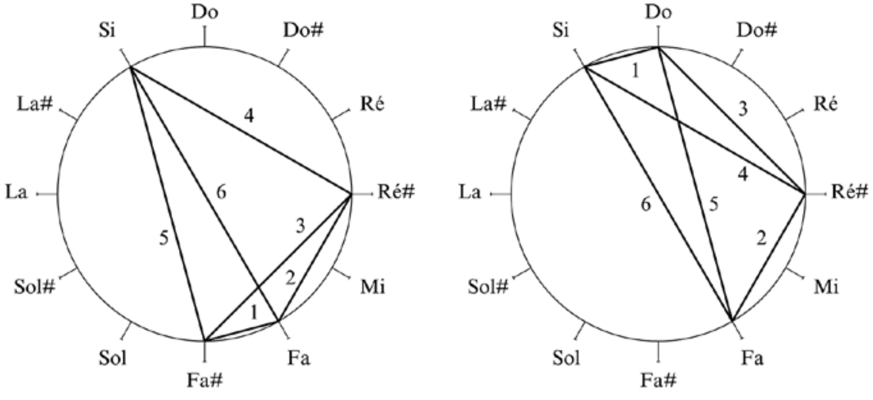
[7] From the preface of the French edition: “*deux sopranos aux voix presque jumelles, accompagnées par deux flutistes aux timbres presque jumeaux*” (my translation).



4-Z29 : Fa# - Si - Ré# - Mi#

4-Z15 : Si - Do - Mib - Fa

Figure 5.3 First two sets of *La princesse et les feuilles* with their intervallic components – They share three common pitches: D#, F and B. (based on Johnson, *La Princesse et les feuilles*).

This pair offers a wide collection of transpositions and inversion, but the composer chooses here not to exhaust all the potential solutions. He restricts instead his reservoir of pitches throughout the piece, using only eight notes out of twelve (A#, C#, E and G are excluded). His alternation of 4-Z15 and 4-Z29 transpositions favors minimal change: each set shares three common pitches with its surrounding groups, introducing one new note at a time. This is Johnson's way of putting into sound Leibniz's words that constitute the whole of the libretto:

> *Je ne crois pas que dans ce jardin se trouvent deux feuilles parfaitement semblables, il y a toujours des petites différences. Et quoi qu'il en chercha beaucoup, il fut convaincu par ses yeux qu'elles étaient différentes.*[8] (*La Princesse et les feuilles* 1)

The dialectical relationship between difference and similarity is embodied here by the two all-interval tetrachords that share the same properties but adopt a myriad of different presentations. The grouping of soloists in almost identical pairs reinforces the metaphor. Everything is the same, but not the same, like Leibniz's foliage. And yet, the melodic counterpoint derived from the alternating process highlights differences while masking similarities. The flutists execute melodic *chiasmi* rather than replications, while the two sopranos privilege imitative dialogue instead of unison. Here, musical doublings no longer point to difference in vocal range or technique, as both sopranos sing in a simple syllabic style, but to discrepancies in vocal color. Differences are highlighted as this is what motivates Leibniz's quest for two identical leaves. But since similarities intervene mainly on a structural level – one must acknowledge the z-relation between 4-Z15 and 4-Z29 to fully understand the musical metaphor – they will probably pass unnoticed under neophyte ears. Contrary to previous examples, *La Princesse et les feuilles*' mathematical maximalism, while restoring causality, lacks transparency. Its intricacy consequently compromises the perceptibility of the logical processes. Music's narrative potential ultimately becomes a matter of connoisseurs.

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[8] "I do not think there are two perfectly similar leaves in this garden, there are always small differences between them. And although he looked for a long time, his eyes convinced him that they were different" (my translation).

5 Conclusion: The Hidden Drama of Voice

After obliterating language's narrative potential, Johnson's self-referentiality successfully introduces new forms of musical characterization while his maximalist approach restores sequentiality and teleology within minimalism. His metaoperas clearly strive to fulfill narrative expectations, and one cannot help but wonder what kind of stories they actually tell. Self-referentiality circumscribes the intrigue to the musical sphere, and more specifically, the world of opera. Johnson's strategies for musical characterization point towards the voice as the indisputable protagonist: from his encyclopedically descriptive librettos, to the vocal challenges, doublings and mistakes that run through his operas.

A recurrent narrative pattern seems to emerge over the years. The humorous tone of Johnson's operas hides a drama: the death of virtuosity. This tragedy roughly follows the tripartite frame of traditional narratives: situation-disruption-resolution. In the first part of the narrative, the main characters are introduced. We witness the symbolic birth of the voice (or voices) through various musical procedures. In *L'Opéra de quatre notes*, the *Riemannoper* and *Sopranos Only*, singers unveil their voices one by one through solo numbers. In the *Shaggy Dog* cycle, the voice emerges little by little, one note at a time. In *La Princesse et les feuilles*, vocal warm-ups serve as presentation cards for the soloists. Then comes the disruption stage in the form of singing challenges that defy *tessitura*, virtuosity and ultimately question vocal beauty. Narrative resolution rarely brings a happy ending in Johnson's operas. Few victories are granted to the voice and the hyperbolic nature of such triumphs taints them with irony. Failure is frequently inevitable due to the inclusion of intentional errors and insurmountable obstacles. *L'Opéra de quatre notes* leaves a tragic aftertaste as the soloists' efforts to master vocal virtuosity are cut short in a *recto-tono* "Finale" where each voice has been reduced to a single note. In the *Riemannoper*, the battle between singers ends without victors as the initial melodies that served as presentation cards resurface but have lost all their distinctive features.

What remains of the voice, the tragic warrior, after facing these ordeals? Johnson's last opera functions as his artistic testament. Leibniz's maxim in *La Princesse et les feuilles* summarizes his aesthetic position. After the death of virtuosity, a new ideal emerges: a vocality without artifice whose inconspicuous nuances arise through comparison to reveal its unique color. Johnson's voice becomes an emissary of universal truths, an anti-hero in the service of musical narrative.

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Narrativity in Minimalist Operas by Philip Glass

Impact of the Source Text and of Postminimalist Composition Strategies

Carolien Van Nerom

Abstract

In its early days, minimalist music was met with reviews that were either positive or outright negative. A recurring observation in the initial reception of these kinds of musical pieces is that they appear to be "non-narrative". Since its emergence into the classical music scene, however, minimalist music has evolved and has been received in different ways. This chapter is a contribution to an ongoing debate that foregrounds minimalist music's degrees of narrativity. Specifically, the degree of narrativity is gauged in two operas by Philip Glass: one that is based on a straightforward literary source text (fairy tale *The Juniper Tree*), and one that is based on a more complex literary source text (postcolonial allegory *Waiting for the Barbarians*). While both operas exhibit markers of narrativity that induce listeners to look for further indications of narrativity, there is a remarkable difference in degree between the two. Two reasons come to the fore in this analysis. (1) The more complex the literary source text is, the lower the degree of narrativity of the Glass opera. Complexity of the source text depends, amongst other things, on adherence to mental schemas of narrative, or on the gravity of themes. (2) Glass' increased use of postminimalist strategies of composition leads to a higher degree of narrativity. Amongst others, this chapter highlights the following techniques: return to traditional and more recognizable classical style identifiers (e.g., tonality or melodic development), and quotations of existing classical styles.

1 Introduction

The narrative potential of music has been explored by several researchers in recent years. This is part of an increasing interest since the 1970s in the application of narrative models to media other than literary works. In the field of music studies, most narrative analyses still almost exclusively focus on

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classical compositions from the 18th and 19th century.[1] Perhaps these compositions are more readily perceived as a narrative because they have a highly recognizable style. They are composed within a framework of references that over time grew familiar to Western culture at large (see McAuley et al. 519; Hellmuth Margulis 245).[2] As John Richardson and Susanna Välimäki put it: Classical and Romantic compositions have become "musical vernacular" with a recognizability that allows for and facilitates extra-musical references (222). Contemporary music can still lack such a framework or familiarity that mitigates the narrative potential of a musical composition.

Minimalist music, for example, with its heydays in the 1960s, was often labeled "non-narrative" in the past (see e.g., Evans; Gann; Pasler; Waters). The case studies in this chapter, however, reveal the narrative potential of contemporary minimalist operas by American composer Philip Glass. Since the start of his composition career, his works have become increasingly popular and researched. In general, minimalist music has increasingly been interpreted as broadly referential and specifically narrative. Rebecca Leydon, for example, distinguishes different musical tropes in minimalist music that express an experienced affect. Jann Pasler considers elements of narrative in minimalist music that do not "function as they would in a [traditional] narrative" (40). In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music*, several chapters are dedicated fully or partly to the narrative potential of minimalist music. Most notably, John Pymm explores the narrativity of Steve Reich's music. He says that "there is a widely held view that minimalist music is non-narrative and has little or no interest in the telling of stories". However, this is an "*a priori* assumption of non-narrativity [that] tends to gloss over works that might inconveniently suggest an element of story" (Pymm 280). If such compositions are not conventional narratives, then at least they can convey stories to some degree. *Inconveniently* is an apt description as it best reflects minimalism's tendency to frustrate narrative readings of music. It also conveys the continuing need for frameworks to understand minimalist music in a narrative way – such frameworks that existing traditions such as the Romantic or Classical traditions have historically built up.

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[1] With notable exceptions from authors included in this book, e.g., Pwyll ap Siôn (see chapter 12), or Pymm (see chapter 13), as well as other authors discussed further in this chapter, e.g., Evans, or Pasler.

[2] Pasler implies something similar when she mentions that the tendency to listen to music in a narrative way is heightened when a listener has a "culturally engrained ability to apprehend how such [narrative] structures normally behave" (36). In other words, the musical strategies used to evoke narrativity are more easily perceived as narrative when they are culturally engrained or recognizable.

This chapter is a contribution to the ongoing reflection on minimalist music's capacity to convey a story. In general, it explores narrativity in Glass operas based on novels. Through Glass operas, I consider the limits of narrativity in music. Minimalist music particularly obscures narrative triggers chiefly because of three of its characteristics: intense repetition of musical materials such as rhythm, motifs, or harmonic successions; little variety; and a refusal to subscribe to existing Western traditions. Still, a degree of narrativity exudes from the music and I focus here on two factors that influence the degree of narrativity in Glass' operatic music in two case studies with different degrees of narrativity.

The first element that impacts the relative degree of the opera music is the complexity of the source text of the opera. In this chapter, I consider *The Juniper Tree* (first performed in 1985) based on a fairy tale by the brothers Grimm and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (first performed in 2005) based on a postcolonial allegory by J.M. Coetzee.[3] *The Juniper Tree* tells the story of a boy whose stepmother decides to kill him out of jealousy. From his bones, the boy is resurrected as a bird who seeks revenge on his stepmother. After the stepmother is eliminated, the bird turns back into his boy form and lives happily ever after with his family. This story that follows a straightforward narrative scheme leads to music with a higher degree of narrativity than the story of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which is more complex by comparison. Coetzee's allegory thematizes discrimination owing to a colonial context. The novel and the opera both convey the tale of the Magistrate who goes on a personal journey. He transforms from a supporter and partaker of the existing colonial hierarchy into a (self-)critical person who questions the validity of the colonial rulers' intentions and methods.

The second aspect that leads to differences in the degree of narrativity, is the extent to which Glass employs postminimalist features. In her chapter on operas by Glass and Louis Andriessen, Novak notes that it is mainly the incorporation of existing musical language (e.g. tonality) and the weakening of minimalism's rigid repetition process that makes postminimalist music more "open to narrative systems" (131). Tristian Evans also notes that minimalist and postminimalist works composed after 1976 can be understood as narratives more readily due to a higher frequency in recurrence of thematic materials (128). These observations also apply to the case studies in this chapter. *The Juniper Tree* subscribes to postminimalism more than *Waiting for the barbarians* does, which leads to the former having a higher degree of narrativity.[4] Additionally, I consider the role of auditive memory that plays a part in the difference in degree of narrativity in Glass' opera music. Before turning to the case studies, I first expand on narrativity as I understand it.

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[3] For my analysis, I based myself on audio recordings of live performances of the operas as well as on the scores. The recording I used for *The Juniper Tree* is by The Juniper Tree Opera Orchestra conducted by Richard Pittmann (2009) and the one I used for *Waiting for the Barbarians* is by the Philharmonisches Orchester Erfurt and the Opernchor des Theaters Erfurt conducted by Dennis Russell Davies (2008). While *The Juniper Tree* is an opera composed by two composers, Glass and Robert Moran, I only considered the scenes composed by Glass.

2 About Narrativity

Most theories of narrative are firmly rooted in literary traditions. This is not surprising since narratology has a long history of taking literary narratives as examples. While such models have proven useful in the discussion of a musical narrative, it is important to acknowledge that these are what Byron Almén calls "descendant".[5] A descendant model "presupposes a conceptual priority for literary narrative" (Almén 12). In my opinion, taking such models as a general definition of narrative creates two important problems. Either certain texts or even entire media are too quickly dismissed as having no ability to express a narrative, or the discussion of narrative in different media is reduced to one particular aspect of it. I provide two examples to illustrate the two problems before suggesting a more conducive way of speaking about music's capacity to evoke narrative through the concept of narrativity.

Carolyn Abbate dismisses music's capacity to evoke narrative entirely in her book *Unsung Voices*. In it, she clearly adheres to a model of narrative that is based on literary texts. According to her, a reference to past time is a prerequisite for the expression of a narrative because it creates a "temporal-moral distance" that the receiver needs in order to envelop him- or herself in the story (Abbate 52). The use of past time signals to the audience or reader that there is diegesis in the form of a narrator (Abbate 23). The use of grammatical past time is indeed restricted to verbal media, ruling out music as a potential medium for expressing narrative. However, there are two fallacies in Abbate's definition of narrative. Firstly, a narrator or the sense of diegesis might be accomplished through other techniques than the use of past time. Within the medium of the novel, past time might be frequently used in specific genres to create certain narrative levels, but it is not a feature that is typical of all genres. For example, fairy tales specifically use past time, as exemplified in the stock phrase "once upon a time, there was …". Contrastively, stream-of-consciousness novels use grammatical experiment rather than past time to present a window into the mind of a certain character. What is more, such novels more often use present tense or no conjugated verbs at all to enhance the feeling of tapping into a "real-time" flow of thoughts. Secondly, in more recent intermedial conceptions of narrative, the explicit presence of a narrator is no longer considered as a prerequisite for the evocation of a story. This has been demonstrated both specifically in music (see Maus) and in intermedial considerations of narrative (see Jahn; Ryan, *Narrative Across Media*; Ryan, "Narrativity"; Wolf).

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[4] Robert F. Waters, in his recent book *The Stage Works of Philip Glass* also notes the difference in how both operas are generally received. For example, he says about *Waiting for the Barbarians* that listeners found it to "lack […] teleological focus and emotional contrast" due to its high "degree of repetition" (Waters 186).

[5] See e.g. Tarasti, who applies Proppian functions and semiotic theory by Greimas to musical narrative in several of his analyses (e.g., "'Après un Rêve'"; "Beethoven's Waldstein"); and Halliwell or Maus, who both use a specific concept of the narrator that is based on literary analysis.

Even in more nuanced stances towards music's potential to evoke a story, the literary text and language are often considered as the ideal means of conveying a narrative. For example, Peter Rabinowitz allows that music is narrative in specific cases, but still adheres to the idea that a narrator or the sense of different narrative levels is essential to express a narrative. He offers the example of Bizet's *Carmen* to illustrate that a form of narratorship is possible in music, especially in opera (Rabinowitz, "Singing for Myself"). The character Carmen creates different narrative levels because she is a professional singer. She thus inhabits both the opera level, where singing is a specific trait of the medium; and the narrative level, where she sings as a character to her fellow characters. By singing to other characters, she highlights the opera's different narrative levels that are mediated by different agents. While she is singing on the narrative level, she is a character focalizing and representing herself. She points out other negotiating agents expressing the story – e.g., an unnamed extradiegetic narrator – when she sings to the audience. Rabinowitz thus implies that different narrative levels need to be made explicit by a device such as focalization or even a narrating instance. I agree that clear demarcations of narrative levels can be indicative of the *storyness* of a text to the reader, but focalization and the explicit presence of a narrator are not the only possible ways of doing so. By focusing on the *necessity* of an explicit focalization and the clear presence of a narrator, a narrative interpretation of many other musical compositions is inevitably disregarded.

Rabinowitz concludes elsewhere that music is "not technically 'narrative'" ("John Adams" 84). While I do not presume to make such conclusions about *all* music, I accept that music is not the most straightforward medium for expressing a narrative. Language (and the novel by extension) has a referentiality that music does not. Verbal media offer the most clear-cut way to tell a story (see Bernaerts 69; Ryan, *Narrative Across Media* 10; 13). Still, some musical compositions are narrative or evidence at least a certain degree of narrative elements that invite a listener to interpret the music in a narrative way. Definitions of narrative that hold on to the novel as its foremost example are clearly problematic. I am following Marie-Laure Ryan's lead here, who considers the question of whether a text is narrative or not, to be a purely theoretical one that only narratologists might ask themselves ("Narrativity" 316). It is not a question rooted in actual considerations of texts. Therefore, I favor the term narrativity over narrative. Narrativity is a continuum that cannot be captured as a dichotomy where a text is considered as either narrative or non-narrative.

Narrativity lies on the nexus between the *text* and its perceivable narrative triggers themselves and the human *mind* that constructs a narrative. It reflects the double loop that is activated when a narrative is expressed and received: First, a mental schema of narrative in the reader or listener is triggered by actual elements in the text. Once such a schema of narrative is activated, a reader or listener is inclined to look for further narrative features in the text to validate their mental schema of narrative or to interpret aspects of the text in a narrative way. The narrative triggers considered in this chapter are those widely considered as the most prevalent elements of narrative and narrative analysis across media by scholars such as Ryan (*Narrative Across Media*), Jan-Noël Thon, and David Herman. They can be grouped under the denominations plot, characters, and setting. The difference between narrative and narrativity is that the former includes or excludes texts based on full membership to a set of characteristics, while narrativity is scalar and is a "fuzzy set allowing different degrees of membership" (Ryan, "Semantics, Pragmatics, and Narrativity" 193).

Additionally, the sense of experientiality is an important trigger considered in this chapter. In her book *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, Monika Fludernik considers experientiality as the primary element for a text to be considered as a narrative. Because the triggering of a narrative schema is a profoundly human act, the sense of perceiving or experiencing subsumes other narrative elements such as plot, characters and setting. For example, if a text presents only a succession of events (plot) without expressing that these events are experienced, Fludernik would argue that it is non-narrative or "zero-degree narrativity" (328–9). The examples of narrative musical pieces in Glass below will also show that it is this experientiality – a sense of human perception, motivation, feeling, or consciousness – that informs all elements of plot, character, and setting and that profoundly triggers a narrative understanding of the music.

By discussing these narrative triggers in Glass' operas *The Juniper Tree* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*, I show which factors increase or decrease the level of narrativity. As mentioned before, I focus on two parameters that are specifically pertinent to Glass operas in the following order: (1) the make-up and complexity of the source text of the opera; and (2) the use of minimalist or postminimalist composition techniques, which in turn have a different effect on the recognizability of musical elements as narrative triggers.

3 Complexity of the Source Text and the Degree of Narrativity of Glass' Music

Opera has a distinct bond with narrative to the point where people come to expect a narrative from an opera performance (see Lindenberger 63) – even more so when an opera is based on a literary work. With Glass operas based on literary works, however, that narrative potential of the opera is frequently hindered. Reviews of *Waiting for the Barbarians* indicate that its music has a lower degree of narrativity than *The Juniper Tree*. For example, one reviewer mentions the lack of plot as *Waiting for the Barbarians*' greatest weakness (Sealey par. 6). Others mention the underdeveloped characters that lack motivations for their actions (Ashley par. 4; Smith par. 7). This is in stark contrast to *The Juniper Tree*, where reviewers clearly identify plot elements in the music (Downey par. 5). The latter also features "dramatic" and "beautifully lyrical" musical pieces that are tied to specific characters such as the Stepmother and the Son respectively (Kozinn par. 4).

In part, this difference in degree of narrativity has its basis in the complexity of the operas' respective literary source texts. The complexity of the novel is understood here as the degree to which a story adheres to the mental schema of a story. This schema can include expectations in terms of the three triggers discussed above: plot, characters and setting. There is a clear difference in the way that the narratives of *The Juniper Tree* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* adhere to or suggest a narrative schema. On the one hand, *The Juniper Tree* meets the expectations of a basic story entirely: there are key actions in the plot that push the story forward, the characters are clearly described and have designated roles (e.g. good-versus-evil), and the setting is familiar to the real world, but includes magic. Moreover, the fairy tale as a genre follows a distinctive path or schema that meets the readers' expectations every time. The plot of *The Juniper Tree* goes from a harmonious setting to then introduce a disturbance that sets the main character off in pursuit of a solution.

On the other hand, *Waiting for the Barbarians* does not create such defined genre expectations and is less specific in its expression of plot, characters, and setting. It has a plot that does not lift off as *The Juniper Tree* does because its actions do not necessarily create clear highlights in plot progression. For example, the Barbarians never show up at the borders of the colony. While that is exactly the point of the story – namely that the Barbarians are not real, just a materialized fear of "the other" – the effect on the plot is that it seems to not progress. Only two of the novel's characters are mentally developed. Rather, characters are purposely underdeveloped. For example, they do not have a name. Coetzee implements a nameless I-narrator, a magistrate, who continuously refers to the other main character as "the girl" rather than name her.[6] While the setting is defined as a colonial settlement, not much detail is afforded to its description. The abstract nature of the characters in Coetzee's novel is deliberate. The narrative is an allegory that focuses on the metaphorical content and moral rather than on the story itself. Plot progression, for example, is less urgent so that the focus falls on the personal ruminations and mental development of the main character the Magistrate. Thus, *Waiting for the Barbarians* is also more complex on a thematical level than *The Juniper Tree*. Via an abstract character's mental journey and complex metaphors, Coetzee thematizes postcolonial issues and fear of the other.

The complexity of these source novels has its effect on the degree of narrativity of the opera music: *The Juniper Tree* has a higher degree of narrativity than *Waiting for the Barbarians*. In terms of characters, *The Juniper Tree* features a very distinctive trigger in the form of the music sung by the Son who turns into the Juniper Bird. Much unlike the musical textures featured in other scenes of *The Juniper Tree*, Act 1 features a beautiful melody for the Juniper Bird. This melodic line stands out within the opera, but also in Glass' entire oeuvre. Glass' early minimalist music rarely features similar melodic lines, but instead the musical material features mostly short motifs and repetitions thereof. Because this melody contrasts with what came before within the opera as well as defies expectations created by Glass through his existing minimalist oeuvre, this melody becomes marked and stands out as a narrative trigger.

The melody itself is first played by the orchestra in Act 1 "Birdsong" before the Son also sings the same melody accompanied by the orchestra. The melody sounds simple because there are no large intervals and the harmonic development is tonal, suggesting a C major tonality. It is slurred and broad with broken

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[6] The only characters with names are figures of authority – Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel. However, they remain flat characters; representatives of an unjust colonial system because a reader learns nothing of their background or inner thoughts.

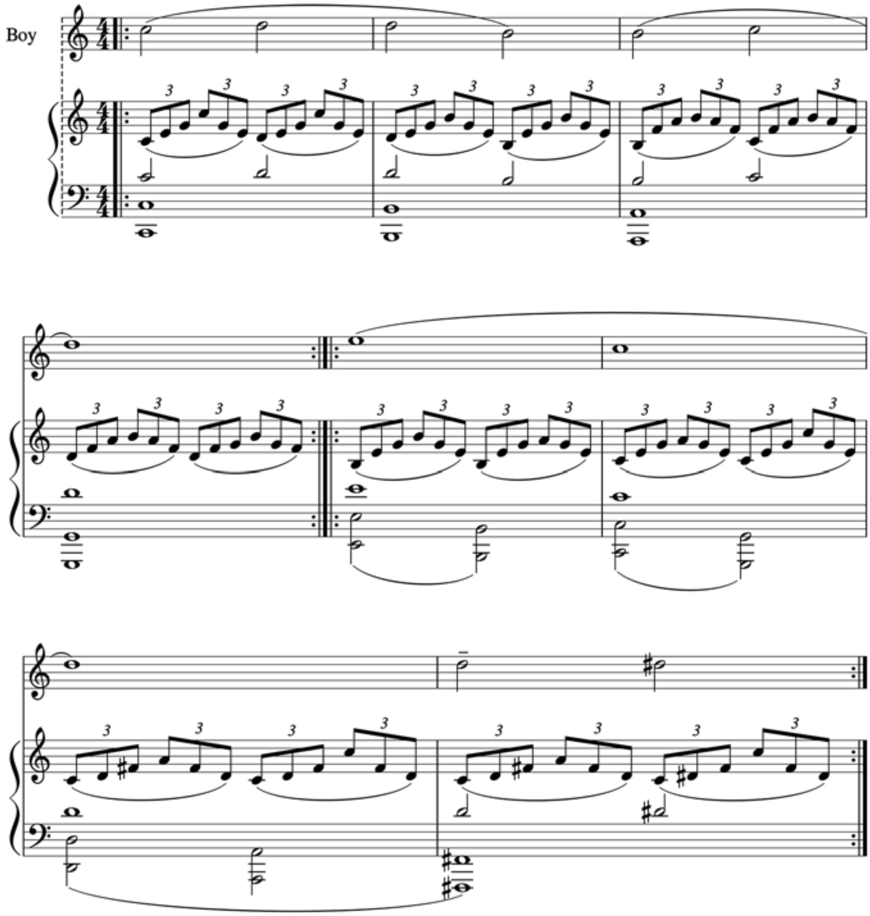

Figure 6.1 The Juniper Tree Act 1 "Birdsong" (Glass, *Juniper Tree* 97): The Son/the Juniper Bird's melody (referred to in the score as "Boy Voice") is harmoniously shaped, tonal, and broadly slurred. It is a marker of the Son's status as a protagonist and signifies a transformative moment in the opera's plot.

chords played in slurred triplets in the synthesizer. Because it is so broad, the musical texture does not sound like typical birdsong even though the title refers to the transformation of the boy into a bird (see Fig. 6.1). Rather, the melody points out the opposite, namely that the Son was never naturally a bird.

The melody is also a narrative trigger of plot because the timbres of the instruments used in this act lead up to a climax. The act starts off with thin orchestration of synthesizer and harp playing the slurred triplets. Subsequently, the Son's melody is pre-empted by the strings and bassoon, after which the boy voice chimes in with the instruments. The build-up in instrumentation invites the listener to notice the importance of the melody. When the full instrumentation in addition to the boy voice is reached, it is clear that the musical climax marks a transformative moment for the Son. Furthermore, when the Son-turned-Juniper-Bird sings, Glass adds the French horn to the timbre. The sound of the French horn is often related to nobility, or a noble-minded character. Here, it is clearly used to identify the Son as the protagonist of the story, rather than as its villain. The Son is thus firmly placed opposite the Stepmother, who mostly sings in and is accompanied by short, minimalist motifs rather than melodic lines. The instrumentation thus serves a double marker function: one of a turning point in the plot, and one of characterization.

Such triggers of narrativity are not absent from *Waiting for the Barbarians*, but they are less noticeable or marked. Not only does Glass stick more consistently to the minimalist style, the nature of Coetzee's novel also plays a part in this low degree of narrativity. The music is much like the text: an allegory. The specifics of the characters or setting remain vague in order for the moral of the story to be the focal point. Concretely, the musical elements in *Waiting for the Barbarians* that serve as narrative triggers are often more spread out over the opera than in *The Juniper Tree*, which means it takes more time to notice them and it asks more energy from the audience's memory.

For example, Glass sets apart the "real" setting of the colony and the setting of the Magistrate's dreams. These dreams have an allegorical function. They represent the Magistrate's moral growth and express metaphors for the moral of the story that revolves around postcolonial impact and "the other". In the opera, the choir is used in a specific manner to distinguish dreams from reality. In regular scenes of interaction, the choir chants in words such as "En-e-my" or "Bar-bar-i-ans" (e.g., in Act 2 Scene 3) and in these passages gives voice to a mob. Contrarily, the choir takes a central place as an integrated part of the orchestra in the dreams because no solo singers partake in the scene. Additionally, the choir has no lyrics here, which results in a unified texture rather than solos or solo groups on top of an accompanying, subservient group.

Only over the course of the entire opera does it become clear that the dreamscapes draw towards a culmination point in the fifth and final dream (which takes place in Act 2). Here too, it is Glass' orchestration, specifically the percussion section, that increases the feeling of agitation and works towards a climax. The first dream only features melodic percussion instruments – a very soft texture. Increasingly, more percussion sounds can be heard with the sharpest-sounding instruments in the final Dreamscape Five: snare drum played with wire brushes in combination with sticks and tambourine. The choir also plays its part in creating a musical peak. It becomes increasingly fuller as the all-female voices in the first four dreams are supplemented with male voices in the final dream.[7]

The dreams' build-up as a narrative trigger is not just one that evokes a certain setting or distinguishes between real and imagined spaces. It also creates a sense of experientiality. The dreams characterize the Magistrate and express his inner struggle with the colonial forces. It is important for this build-up as a narrative trigger that it is connected to the Magistrate as the perceiver.[8] The dreams are comparable to the *human experience* of an *aha*-moment and it is this *feltness*, this focalization by the Magistrate that makes the triggers profoundly narrative. Otherwise, it would simply evoke any setting. Instead, it is the felt humanness of these triggers, or what Fludernik calls experientiality, that would lead an audience to hear the music as a narrative.

4 Use of Postminimalist Features Versus Predominant Minimalism and the Degree of Narrativity of Glass' Music

So far, I have suggested that the complexity of the novel has an impact on the degree of narrativity of the music in the opera adaptation. Complex source texts have fewer clearly defined mental schemes or create fewer specific expectations. Narrative triggers in the music become less pronounced in operas with a more complex source text and consequently have a lower degree than operas with a more straightforward source text. Another feature that impacts the degree of narrativity of music is the use of postminimalist composition techniques and their higher recognizability. Using the metaphor of "language" for different composition styles, Richardson and Välimäki point out that some composition styles are "vernacular" while others are not (yet) (222). Vernaculars, such as the Romantic or Classical style, have a greater recognizability than for example contemporary styles in part because they have had the time to become symbols of a culture. Because of its "young age" and because minimalist composers went out of their way to avoid existing Western traditions in their music, minimalist music is not "vernacular" just yet. It is therefore also more difficult to understand the narrative potential of such compositions. Indeed, J. Devin McAuley et al. note that culturally embedded composition styles have a high recognizability that "drives narrative engagement with music" (519). It is this familiarity that minimalist music still lacks to a certain degree and that postminimalist compositions re-insert into minimalist music because they return to existing strategies such as tonality and particularly also "recycle other musical languages" (Novak 129).

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[7] The addition of the male voices elevates the dreams of the magistrate to a more general level. Glass' choice is possibly inspired by the novel as an allegory. It turns the Magistrate's dreams about a female barbarian girl into a moral applicable on a wider scale. The individual subject of the Magistrate's dreams becomes a metaphor for a whole people and their position in a colonial structure. Thus, the Magistrate's dreams ultimately express a general false fear of "the other" created by a colonial, corrupted system.

[8] The source novel to *Waiting for the Barbarians* is evidently complex on the level of genre as well. It shows clear kinship to the allegory, but the Magistrate's central role to the story also places the novel within the tradition of the *bildungsroman*. Being set in a colony and thematizing colonialism and fear of "the other", *Waiting for the Barbarians* should also be considered as a part of the large and very diverse field of the postcolonial novel.

Turning to the case studies, *Waiting for the Barbarians* is rather typically minimalist. It mostly features long repetitions of short motifs and offers little variety in harmonic development and melodic shapes. Mark Sealey puts it aptly in his review of the opera[9]: "There is little inclusion of fresh instrumental groups, of allusion to other works – inside and outside Glass' own corpus – and no truly arresting moments that do not almost immediately dissipate in the familiar and the deflated, almost" (par. 8). I come back to the narrativity in *Waiting for the Barbarians* below, but first I contrast this consistent minimalism to *The Juniper Tree*. There, streaks of minimalist drones or repetitions are interspersed with postminimalist elements such as quotations of existing traditions and a return to tonality instead of the rather unvaried use of modes or atonality.

The Juniper Tree, for example, refers to the Classical composing style in the prologue to Act 1. A straightforward 4/4 meter is accentuated because the choir sings chords in quarter notes with no syncopated or other breaking rhythms in other voices or instruments. The tonality is clearly diatonic here. As such, this texture sounds Classical in style. The quotation is rather conspicuous and stands out – not just among the other musical textures of this opera, but also in Glass' oeuvre in general.[10] As a narrative trigger, this segment in a clear

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[9] Sealey's review is of the same audio recording that I used in my analysis, namely of the premiere as performed by the *Philharmonisches Orchester Erfurt*, the *Opernchor des Theaters Erfurt*, and conducted by Dennis Russell Davies in 2005.

[10] Glass is considered as one of the founders of minimalist music along with composers such as Terry Riley and La Monte Young. His early works are certainly strictly minimalist in conception. A return to more tonal and/or other existing traditions of composition is usually situated in the late 1970s (Gann, et al. 1; Gann). For Glass specifically, a style change is often seen after the popularity of *Einstein on the Beach* (Novak 129). While a distinction is often made between minimalism of the 1950s and 60s and postminimalism from the 1970s onwards, it should be clear that postminimalist compositions are firmly rooted in minimalism. Novak calls postminimalist music in opera an "applied" form of minimalist music to an existing composition form (129). In Glass' oeuvre, minimalist techniques are

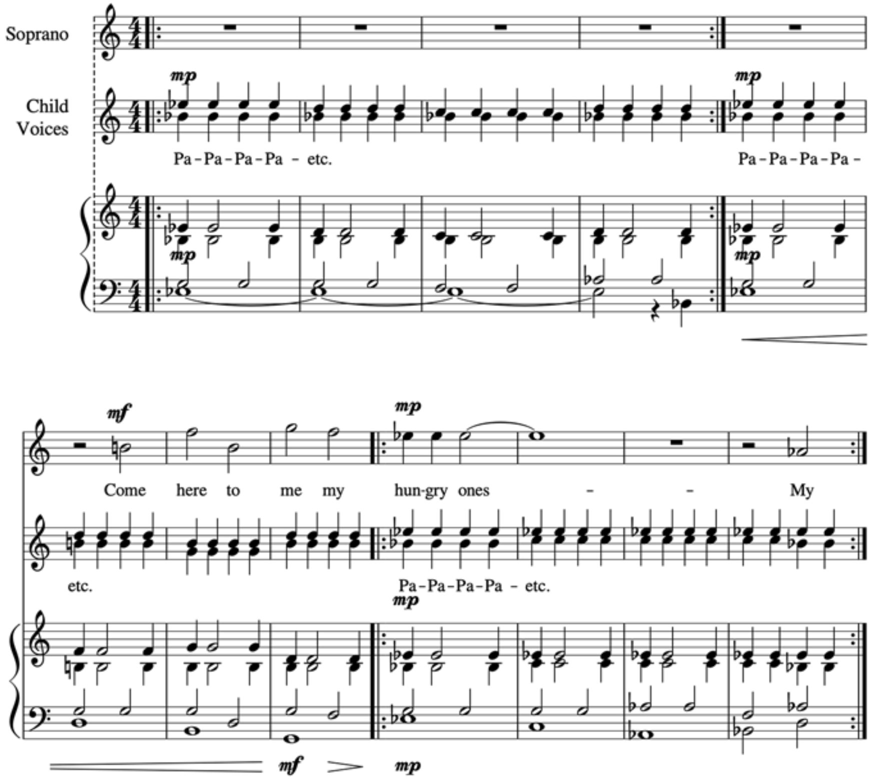

Figure 6.2 *The Juniper Tree* Act 1 Prologue (Glass, *Juniper Tree* 4): The Wife (referred to in the score as "Soprano") is singing together with the birds (referred to in the score as "Child Voices"). The excerpt is a reference to the Classical composition style and might be heard as a reference to Mozart's singing characters Papageno and Papagena.

major tonality points towards a typical fairy tale plot point of a positive or at least neutral starting point. The citation might even be received in a more detailed way. The repeated notes in the melody in addition to the repeated "pa-pa-pa" remind the listener perhaps of Mozart's famous duet for Papageno and Papagena in *The Magic Flute*. The reference is well chosen since *The Magic Flute* is also set as a magical fairy tale and Glass here aims at setting a narrative scene of the Wife interacting with the birds, which Papageno and Papagena also personify.

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still very present and define even his works that are considered postminimalist. When a traditional style is referred to, it thus stands out from the overall style in which Glass composes and is clearly a quotation.

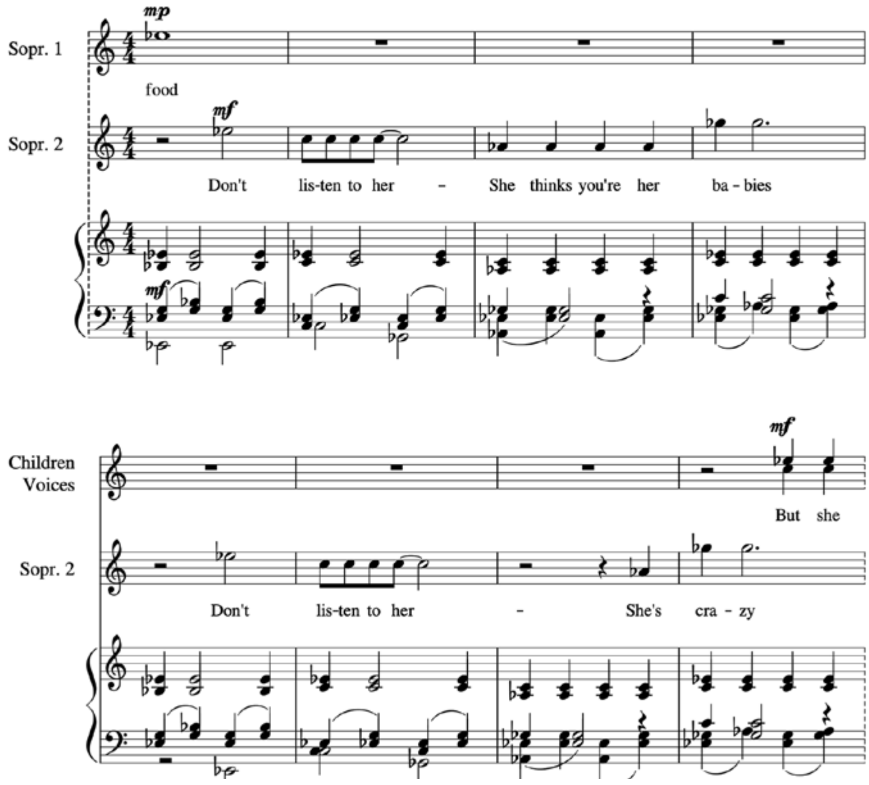
Sopr. 1
mp
food
Sopr. 2
mf
Don't lis-ten to her - She thinks you're her ba - bies
Children Voices
mf
But she
Sopr. 2
Don't lis-ten to her - She's cra - zy

Figure 6.3 *The Juniper Tree* Act 1 Prologue (Glass, *Juniper Tree* 6): The reference to the Classical style remains, but is complemented by a dissonant note in the bassoon part (measure two and six in the example). This dissonant is a testimony to the Wife's fragile mental state.

Glass departs from the fairy tale in the subsequent bars by breaking the magical realism and referring to the Wife's mental illness. True to minimalism's negation of traditional tonalities, Glass adds a dissonant note in the bassoon part. In a texture where the tonality of E♭ major is implied, the addition of G♭ in bassoon sounds peculiar.

By choosing a dissonant note, Glass implies that something disrupts the normality of the otherwise stable starting situation of the fairy tale. The instability that the G♭ causes, upheaves the suspension of disbelief that normalizes the conversation with birds that talk and sing. From that vantage point, it becomes clear that the Wife is experiencing/focalizing here and that her conversation with the bird is a delusion. The Mama Bird (Soprano 2) also mentions that the Wife is "crazy" (Glass, *Juniper Tree* 6). The Wife is suffering from a depression due to the grief she feels for her inability to conceive a child at this point in the scene. The dissonance she feels, is expressed through a dissonant in the otherwise tonal music.

When compared to *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the transparency of the reference to another music style in *The Juniper Tree* is rather striking. Conspicuous references to other music traditions are absent from *Waiting for the Barbarians*. As a result, the opera relies largely on its minimalist devices for its degree of narrativity. What stands out are not references that contrast strongly with minimalism, but those minimal shifts that break with what comes before, i.e. a relatively long repetition of short motifs that becomes a texture a listener could be enveloped in. However, because those repetitive textures are relatively long, listeners might easily lose attention.[11] Changes or shifts that remain in the minimalist style are then comparatively less perceptible. These shifts serve as narrative triggers but stand out in a way that relies more heavily on the memory and attention span of the audience.

An example of such a subtle and minimal contrast is the use of a particular musical mode in the prologue to Scene 4 of Act 2 of *Waiting for the Barbarbians*. From a general focus on rhythm, repetition and short motifs with little variety in terms of harmonic and melodic development, Glass shifts to the use of a distinct scale. Glass often makes use of modes throughout the opera and his oeuvre in general, but this mode stands out because of its pronounced "otherness" in comparison to Western tradition. A melody of sorts emerges, consisting of five notes that are part of a half-diminished minor scale played in oboe and clarinet. This texture, mode, and instrumentation in combination with the sound of suspended cymbal is a nod to an oriental setting. The sound of woodwinds with reeds (oboe and clarinet) particularly reminds the listener of the *duduk*, a double-reed instrument that originates from Armenia.

Again, it is the experientiality – a perception through human eyes – that emanates from this musical shift that makes it viable as a narrative trigger. The slurred nature of the melodic line and soft instrumentation do not simply denote a narrative spatial setting, but also point out who is perceiving the setting. A nostalgic feeling and sense of reverence for the Barbarians' past speaks

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[11] In its early days, minimalist music was also known under alternative names such as "trans-music", "hypnotic music", or "meditative music" (see Gann 186; Mertens 14). These early terms reflect the idea that minimalist music has no extra-referential meaning and offers a way to escape reality and "real" time. Minimalist music invited a type of listening that does not need our full mental attention: "a more ambient, globalized kind of listening" (Gann et al. 9). However, this misconception has been refuted by several analyses; and while it is true that in short minimalist pieces a more trance-like or "chill-out" mode of listening is plausible, this is hardly the case in longer compositions such as Glass' operas (Ibid.).

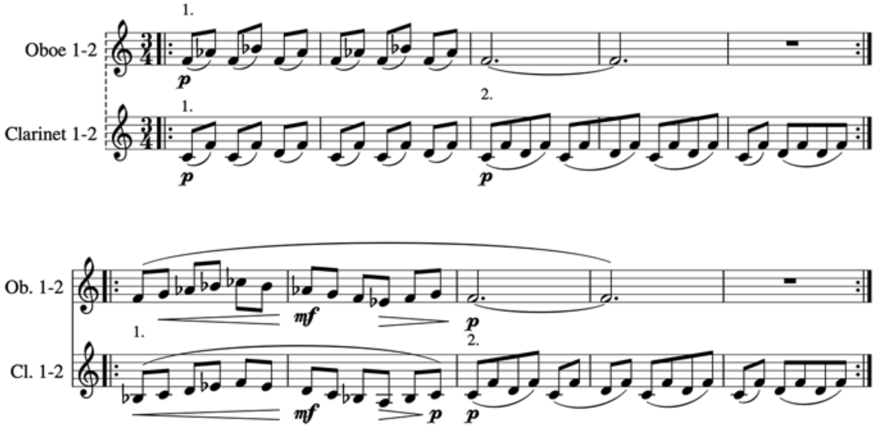

Figure 6.4 *Waiting for the Barbarians* Act 2 Scene 4 Prologue (Glass, *Barbarians* Act 2 48; percussion left out of quotation): the melodic effect here reveals the use of a specific mode that refers to oriental music. The instrumentation of oboe and clarinet is also a reference to double-reed instruments that are in popular use in oriental styles of music (e.g., Armenian music).

from the modal melody. It is the Magistrate who sees the colonial setting as an archaeological site to be treated with respect. In the following scene (Act 2 Scene 4), Colonel Joll indeed attacks the Magistrate's feelings and holds him in contempt for fraternizing with the Barbarians.

While the reference to an oriental mode and instrumentation in soft reed instruments might be a narrative trigger that sets the scene of *Waiting for the Barbarians* in the orient, it is a weaker trigger than the reference to Classical music in *The Juniper Tree*. The recognizability of the Classical style in the post-minimalist *The Juniper Tree* creates a familiarity with the music that invites narrative experience of the music more so than the modal reference in *Waiting for the Barbarians*.[12] Contrastively, *Waiting for the Barbarians* relies on its use of contrast within the minimalist style, which puts more of a burden on the listener's memory and attention span. Still, contrast, albeit minimal, is also of great importance for narrativity in music (see Hellmuth Margulis). In short, the opera music of *Waiting for the Barbarians* has narrativity, but *The Juniper Tree* – with its postminimalist attention for existing traditions in Western music – has a higher degree of narrativity by comparison.

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[12] See above and see McAuley et al. on the importance of "within-culture" recognizability (520).

5 Conclusion

Minimalist music has narrativity. By this I mean to say that minimalist music is capable of conveying elements that trigger the sense that a narrative is being expressed and thus incite the listener to look for other elements in the music that might further consolidate the schema of a narrative activated in their minds. In Glass' minimalist operas, the most common triggers are expressions of character(ization), setting, and plot. In all cases, however, the "feltness" or experientiality of such triggers is part and parcel of what makes these elements generate the idea that a narrative is articulated. There are different degrees of narrativity to Glass' music. *The Juniper Tree* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* are good examples of operas with a high and low degree respectively. This chapter identified two important aspects that inform this degree of narrativity.

Firstly, the complexity of the source novel has its effect on the narrativity of the music. *The Juniper Tree* is considered a more straightforward text when compared to *Waiting for the barbarians* because it adheres to a defined set of narrative schemas that create clear expectations about the narrative. *Waiting for the Barbarians* is more complex because it defies genre expectations, the focus is on the mind of the protagonist rather than on specifics of the narrative such as plot progression or character description, and it thematizes fraught issues such as postcolonialism and "the other". The more complex the source text, the lower the degree of narrativity conveyed through the music of its operatic adaptation.

Secondly, the use of postminimalist features heightens the degree of narrativity because it makes a composition more recognizable. Applied research points out that cultural familiarity with a certain music style is of great importance in understanding music as a narrative. *The Juniper Tree* features quotations of existing traditions, which is a characteristic of postminimalist music, not minimalist music. The contrast with the rest of the opera, which is deeply rooted still in the minimalist composition style, is conspicuous and creates familiarity. By comparison, *Waiting for the Barbarians* is firmly minimalist and depends on more subtle shifts that are less contrastive to the other textures of the opera. Being less immediate in the ear's perception, minimalist narrative triggers thus put a certain strain on perceptibility and memory.

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Stories of Nobody

Narrativity in Luciano Berio's Late Theater and the Case of Outis

Ruben Marzà

Abstract

Theater, broadly understood, is probably the field in which twentieth century art has challenged traditional narrativity in the most decisive way. Among European avant-garde musicians, Italian composer Luciano Berio conceived a form of "musical action" (*azione musicale*) combining musical, literary and theatrical experimentalism, balancing avant-garde procedures and traditional reminiscences in a puzzling, yet fascinating way.

More than other works from his rich catalogue, *Outis* (1996) is a relevant example of this innovative vision of musical theater. For British scholar David Osmond-Smith, "to a greater extent than any of his previous operatic works, *Outis* dispenses with linear narrative" and represents Berio's "most radical theatrical work".

After a short introduction of Berio's previous narrative experimentations, this chapter focuses on *Outis* as a major achievement of his vision of musical theater, and on the major influences which inform its peculiar conception: the essays on the folktale by Vladimir Propp and *Open work* by Umberto Eco. Other than the score and the libretto, the chapter draws on many writings of Berio himself, but also from some essays focused on his latest production to properly show the unusual structure of the piece and the complex relation between music, words and visual effects.

1 Introduction

Narrativity was one of the key targets of artistic experimentation over the course of the twentieth century: traditional and established narrative forms and structures have been criticised and deconstructed since the age of historical avant-garde. Theater, broadly understood, is probably the field in which all these experimentations found a synthesis. Particularly, Italian composer Luciano Berio conceived of a form of "musical action" (*azione musicale*) combining musical, literary and theatrical experimentalism, balancing avant-garde procedures and traditional reminiscences in a puzzling, yet fascinating way.

Berio's innovative vision of musical theater, as exemplified by *Opera* and *Un re in ascolto*, has been the object of extensive studies since the last decades

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of the twentieth century. In this context, I believe that *Outis* (1996) is a particularly relevant example. In the words of David Osmond-Smith: "to a greater extent than any of his previous operatic works, *Outis* dispenses with linear narrative" and represents Berio's "most radical theatrical work" (163).

After a short introduction of Berio's previous narrative experimentations, this chapter will focus on *Outis* as a major achievement of his vision of musical theater: I show how the refusal of traditional narrative is a key point of Berio's late works, and how literary studies and semiotics influenced his path. Other than the score and the libretto, the chapter draws on many writings of Berio himself, but also from some essays focused on his latest production to properly show the unusual structure of the piece and the complex relation between music, words and visual effects. *Outis* is a piece that, as stated by Berio himself, is supposed to reverse the traditional relation between narrative and music, arousing "a non-linear dramaturgy, which is not made of narrative causes and musical effects, but of musical causes which can produce narrative effects" (Berio, "Morfologia di un viaggio" 302, my translation).

2 "Azioni musicali": Berio and His Theater

It is not easy to find a *fil rouge* that crosses the wide and diverse production of Berio, a path that could be retraced and followed from his early avant-garde works to the mature compositions. If there is one, however, it is probably the complex and dialectical relationship between past and present, tradition and innovation – a relationship that in turn involves the ones between traditional and modern instruments, acoustic and electronic sound, absolute music and theater. Berio's musical thought is in fact a lively and continuous search for new connections between these apparent oppositions, refusing any rigid ideological scheme.

Without going further into Berio's whole *oeuvre*, it is nonetheless useful to cast a glance at his theatrical works in order to better understand the musical action that represents the core of this paper, *Outis*.

Berio wrote theatrical productions during the span of his whole career, as the following list exemplifies:[1]

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[1] A theatrical dimension informs many of Berio's works, even the ones not directly conceived for theater: this list does not include this kind of compositions (*Laborintus* (1965) for example), and not even the reworking of traditional theater works (the new finale for Puccini's *Turandot* (2001) for example). For an exhaustive list of Berio's compositions, see www.lucianoberio.org.

Table 7.1 Berio's theatrical productions.

Year	*Title*	*Premiere*
1952–59	*Allez-hop*	Venice, Teatro La Fenice, 1959
1961–62	*Passaggio*	Milan, Piccola Scala, 1963
1969–70	*Opera*	Santa Fe, 1970
1977–78	*La vera storia*	Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 1982
1979–83	*Un re in ascolto*	Salzburg, 1984
1985–86	*Naturale*	Taormina, 1985
1995–96	*Outis*	Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 1996
1998–99	*Cronaca del Luogo*	Salzburg, 1999

Theater represents the field in which all of Berio's lines of research converge, and the results are decisive for the Italian and international theatrical scene of the late twentieth century. For many of these works, Berio collaborated with important Italian writers and poets, such as Edoardo Sanguineti and Italo Calvino. The partnership with Sanguineti resulted in *Passaggio* (1961–62) and in many major non-theatrical pieces, such as *Laborintus II* (1965), *A-ronne* (1974) or *Canticum novissimi testamenti* (1989–91), while Italo Calvino contributed to *Allez-hop* (1952–59), *La vera storia* (1977–78) and *Un re in ascolto* (1979–83). But Berio's later production delves deeply into the vast world of sacred writings and mythology. *Ofaním* (1988) utilizes texts from Ezekiel and the *Song of Songs*, while *Cronaca del Luogo* (1999), with a libretto by Israeli scholar Talia Pecker Berio, contains quotes from the Bible, Paul Celan, and Marina Tsvetaeva. Since it is an exploration of the mythological character of Ulysses, *Outis* (1995–96) is no exception to this trend.

Before having a closer look at this work, it is worth examining Berio's peculiar relationship with theater. Instead of the common term *opera*, in fact, he generally employs *azione musicale* (musical action). The reason is highlighted by Berio himself in a short essay about *Cronaca del Luogo*:

> [*Cronaca del Luogo*] is not an opera, but a musical action, like all my theatrical works. This means that music generates everything and is responsible for everything [...] I wanted libretto, music and scene to possess each other with apparent freedom and in many different ways, but also to develop their own autonomy; something like the wholly defined voices of a virtual polyphony. ("Cronaca del Luogo" 304, my translation)

The same subject is dealt with in an interview with Umberto Eco:

> There are some substantial differences between an opera and a musical action. An opera is supported by an Aristotelian kind of narrativity, which tends to overcome the musical development. In a musical action, on the contrary, the musical process is at the helm of the story. (Berio, "Interview by Eco" 54)

The leading position of music seems to differentiate a musical action from a traditional opera. At the same time, however, a certain degree of autonomy is preserved in order to enable musical, textual and scenic elements to interact in multiple ways. For Berio, the key for a new theater lies in the dramaturgical discontinuity, maybe more than in the role of music – "a tendency to essentiality, discontinuity, intermittence of dramaturgy" (Berio, "Cronaca del Luogo" 304, my translation).

Here lies the primary importance of narrativity in Berio's work: in his musical actions there is no conventional plot and no conventional character "prisoner of a libretto" (Berio, "Opera e no" 268, my translation); rather, an open musical and dramaturgical space, inhabited by characters who are "absolute figures" and whose actions are exchangeable, and ruled by no superior order or fate (Berio, "Morfologia di un viaggio" 302, my translation).

In the case of *Outis* (which is the Greek term for "nobody"), this peculiar conception is directed towards the myth of Ulysses, its characters and its exploration of the themes of travel and identity.

3 A Twentieth-Century Hero: Ulysses

Homer's *Odyssey* can undoubtedly be considered one of the founding myths of Western culture, and the enigmatic figure of Ulysses (the wanderer, the unnamed, the insatiable explorer) has never ceased to inspire artists for over two thousand years.

Just to mention twentieth century Italian culture, the Homeric hero appears in poems such as *Alle Pleiadi e ai Fati* by Gabriele D'Annunzio (in the collection *Maia*, 1903), *L'ultimo viaggio* by Giovanni Pascoli (1904) and *Ulisse* by Umberto Saba (1946). He is also the protagonist of the theatrical work *Capitano Ulisse* by Alberto Savinio (1925) and, at the end of the century, of the novel *Itaca per sempre* by Luigi Malerba (1997).[2]

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[2] See the works by Edith Hall and Maria Grazia Ciani.

Of course, the Italian reception of Ulysses is deeply influenced by Dante's Canto XXVI of *Inferno*, where the hero appears among the fraudulent councilors: as it happens with other doomed souls in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, Dante's attitude toward Ulysses is quite ambivalent, oscillating between condemnation, empathy, and curiosity. The Homeric hero embodies here, much more than in the epic poem, the thirst for knowledge and the courage of going beyond human limits: rather than the hero who returns, he becomes the hero who leaves – an attitude that is perfectly epitomized in the famous triplet:

> [...] Considerate la vostra semenza:
> fatti non foste a viver come bruti,
> ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza.
> (Alighieri *Inferno* XXVI verses 118–120)

The mistake, from Dante's perspective, is to follow this path without a divine guidance, and by doing so Ulysses remains within the limits of a purely sensitive, earthly knowledge.

For Italian composer Luigi Dallapiccola, "a Ulysses who hadn't been filtered through Dante's thought would be inconceivable for an Italian today" (220); but Dallapiccola himself gave his own contribution to Italian twentieth-century reinterpretation of the myth.

The opera *Ulisse*, Dallapiccola's last theatrical work, premiered in Berlin in 1968; but it was the output of a long-lasting research that had begun in the 1930s, the fruit of a life-long interest in the Homeric hero. The opera can be conceived as an investigation of the inner restlessness of a man who is searching for himself and for the meaning of life: a search for knowledge that finds its culmination and destination in the final exclamation "Signore!" ("Lord!"), as if the discovery of God could free the man from his solitude.

Berio's interest and admiration for Dallapiccola were deep and testified by many writings,[3] even though in *Outis*, the religious dimension is much more problematic and there is no final catharsis.

However, other than by Dante, Berio's perspective is strongly influenced by Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922): if Joyce's work in general is one of the fundamental cultural enterprises of the twentieth century (and had a deep influence on contemporary music) (Klein 8), his *Ulysses* is probably one of the most influential novels of Western culture. Together with Eco and Cathy Berberian, Berio used to spend nights of reading and discussing *Ulysses*, and especially its eleventh chapter (usually known by the title "Sirens"). Those meetings, and the reflection upon the problematic relationship between music and language, led to one of Berio's masterpieces, *Thema*. In *Omaggio a Joyce* (1958), the idea of the Italian composer was to develop a "polyphonic intention", which is not just deeply "musical" for its explicit content, but whose structure is conceived as a sort of *fuga per canonem* (Dowd 147–66).

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[3] "It was Dallapiccola, more than any other, who accomplished the hard crossing that brought Italian music into the heart of Europe" (Berio, "La traversata" 347, my translation).

Beyond his interest for the complex phonetic world of Ulysses, Berio was also attracted by the possibility of playing with the original character of the Odyssey, and with those of Joyce's *Ulysses* – who in turn referred to the Homeric ones. As will become clear below, one of the peculiarities of *Outis* (even among the diverse contemporary reinterpretations of Ulysses' myth) lies in the purely musical origin of the characters, who are not portrayed as the typical, psychologically developed characters of a narration.

4 Genesis of the Work

Outis was commissioned by Teatro alla Scala in 1991. Many details about the genesis of the work can be found in a series of documents stored at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel.

The first deadline for the composition of the piece was set in July 1993, in order to have a premiere in April 1994: but the process, especially due to the very difficult birth of the libretto, took much longer. At the beginning, Berio asked British scholar Paul Carter (whose field of research included cross-cultural narration and communication) to join the project; but in spite of many meetings and discussions, the versions proposed by Carter between January 1992 and May 1993 never really met Berio's expectations, who finally decided to put an end to the collaboration.

The idea of choosing Dario Del Corno, "a great and extravagant Greek scholar" (Berio, "Morfologia di un viaggio" 303, my translation), reveals the importance of Greek world and mythology for Berio's project: an importance that never shows itself in a direct way, but rather informs the global concept of the work. At the same time, the use of quotation, the reuse and metamorphosis of materials to create new connections is a vital idea for Berio's whole musical production, and *Outis* makes no exception. It is not by chance that Homer's *Odyssey*, which was supposed to be one of the primary sources at the beginning, was gradually dismissed in favour of a much more diverse and disseminated group of literary references: Joyce, Brecht, Auden, Melville, Celan, Beckett, Catulle, to name a few.

Many of these references are in the original language: the libretto shifts continuously from Italian to English, from Latin to German and even to Italian dialects.

The beginning of the fourth Cycle is a good example of this blending of languages and quotations (the references are on the right):

> **Regista**
> Qui c'è vita in ogni stanza
> e in ogni letto:
> non c'è nulla di immutato,
> tranne la luna sul tetto. (Bertolt Brecht, *Ulysses' Heimkehr*)
>
> **Samantha**
> Mi sfiorava le labbra con le dita
> e poi mi copriva tutta.
> Il mio corpo mortale
> ha peccato sui sofà.
> Ho assegnato a ciascuno
> punti per il piacere. (W.H. Auden, *The Age of Anxiety* Part III)
> Siete. Fourteen. Siebzehn. Vingtquatre. Arbaimushmone.
> Cinquantasei. Centumseptuagintasex.
> Pentakosiatesserakontaduo. Shavakir. Bantur Abat.
> Ambaraba Guanta Spanta. Caracò Picciò Balola Puppì.
>
> **Olga**
> Ecce. Da mihi basia mille, deinde centum. (Catulle, *Carme 5*)
> Ecce nova facio omnia. (Edoardo Sanguineti, *Factum est*)
>
> **Emily**
> Quando avrai vergogna
> ti lustrerò le scarpe.
> Quando sarai stanco
> ti laverò i panni.
> Quando sarai depresso
> ti suonerò il flauto. (W.H. Auden, *The Age of Anxiety* Part IV)
> Un giorno ti darò un figlio

It is worth underlining that Berio began working on the musical score before the final libretto by Del Corno: in an interview for Italian newspaper *L'Unità*, he confirms that

> the global architecture of the work was already established, and a part of the music was already written even before the achievement of the libretto [...] Dario Del Corno understood everything immediately; we worked very well together, and of course I adapted myself to many things he proposed, too; but the general

> project was already well established. (Berio, “Interview by Paolo Petazzi” 20, my translation)

The quote above is another clear demonstration of Berio’s idea of *azione musicale*, in which music determines dramaturgical structure, and not vice versa.

Two years of intense work followed, between 1995 and 1996. 1995 also marked Berio’s seventieth birthday: a good occasion to celebrate him, one year later, with a large festival in Milan, *Milano Musica*, and to host the premiere of his new theatrical piece *Outis*. The staging took place in Teatro alla Scala on the 5th of October 1996. David Robertson was the conductor, Graham Vick the director, Timothy O’ Brien the set designer, and Ron Howell the choreographer. The reaction was very favourable in both the audience and the critics. For example, one critic said: “a perpetual movement for the pleasure of the eyes […] an organism dominated with an iron fist to give the appearance of chaos […] Robertson conducts with skill and delicacy a rich and detailed score […]” (Isotta 22). Beside the orchestra and choir of Teatro alla Scala, the vocal group Swingle Singers was involved, along with Centro Tempo Reale of Florence for the sound projection and the live electronics.[4]

Three years later, along with the premiere of Berio’s *Cronaca del luogo* in Salzburg, *Outis* was restaged at La Scala with the same cast (September 1999), and then at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris (November 1999).

5 Characters

In order to realize the peculiar narrative structure and concept of *Outis*, it is useful to look at the list of the characters:

Outis	*baritone*	Pedro	*bass*
Steve	*tenor*	Il Regista [the director]	*baritone*
Emily	*soprano*	Il Reduce [the survivor] /	
Samantha	*light soprano*	Un Prete [a priest]	*tenor*
Olga	*light soprano*	Double of Outis	*baritone*
Marina	*soprano*	Double of Emily	*soprano*
Guglielmo	*counter-tenor*	Il Suggeritore [the prompter]	*narrator*
Ada	*mezzo-soprano*	Isaac	*mime*
		Rudy	*mime*

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[4] Many photos of the premiere can be found in the online archive of the Teatro Alla Scala (see www.teatroallascala.org/archivio).

Even though the names are different, the libretto and the development of the story (as we shall see shortly) evidently suggest some comparisons with the *Odyssey*:

Outis	*Ulysses*	Emily	*Penelope*
Steve	*Telemachus*	Marina	*Nausicaa*
Samantha	*Circe*	Olga	*Calypso*

But it would be possible to suggest further levels of references, not only to the *Odyssey*, but also to Joyce's *Ulysses*, and to Berio's own private life. Outis could be Leopold Bloom, Emily could be Molly, and the choice of the name Steve could be a reference to Stephen Dedalus – but also to Berio's real son Stefano, while Marina is his daughter and Ada his mother. Rudy, the younger son of Outis and Emily, is a direct reference to Rudy of Joyce's *Ulysses*, son of Leopold and Molly. Lastly, in the first section, Guglielmo quotes directly from Bloom's words in *Ulysses* (Cross 201–21).

However, Berio insists on the fact that in *Outis* there are no traditional characters, conceived in a psychological way, but just "absolute figures" ("Morfologia di un viaggio" 304, my translation): in his theater, it is the musical process which seems to invent the psychology of the characters.

There is a statement by *Il Suggeritore* (the prompter, my translation) that recurs frequently with subtle changes, and which underlines both the peculiar reversible time of the narration and the fluid identities and relationship between the characters:

> Questo era, è Outis, figlio di Cleo. Era, o forse è ancora marito di Emily. Ebbe due figli: uno, Steve, da Emily e l'altro, Isaac, da Samantha. Fu ucciso per errore da Isaac che, senza conoscerlo, o proprio perché non lo conosceva, lo andava cercando per mare e per terra. Ma anche Steve cerca Outis partito da casa quando lui era bambino. (Cycle I)

> Questo era, è Outis, figlio di Cleo. Era, o forse è ancora marito di Emily. Ebbe due figli: uno, Steve, da Emily e l'altro, Isaac, da Samantha. Fu ucciso per errore da Isaac che, senza conoscerlo, o proprio perché non lo conosceva, lo andava cercando per mare e per terra. (Cycle II)

> Questo era, è Outis, figlio di Cleo. Marito, o forse no, di Emily. Ebbe due figli, Steve e Isaac, da Emily e da Samantha. Fu ucciso per errore da Isaac che lo andava cercando per mare e per terra. Ma anche Steve cerca Outis, partito da casa quando lui era bambino: e anche loro non si possono riconoscere – se non per una misteriosa attrazione. (Cycle III)

> Questo è Outis: una guerra senza fine lo ha strappato lontano dalla sua casa. I figli che ebbe, prima e dopo, non lo hanno mai conosciuto. (Cycle IV)
>
> Questo è Outis figlio di Cleo. Eccetera, eccetera. (Cycle V)
>
> Questo era, è Outis. Ebbe due figli, Steve e Isaac. Molte volte è stato ucciso da Isaac che, senza conoscerlo, o proprio perché non lo conosceva, lo andava cercando per mare e per terra. Anche Steve lo ha cercato invano, a lungo. Ora lo ha trovato, ma lui non lo sa. (Cycle V)

But even more than the characters, it is the peculiar cyclical structure of *Outis* that represents one of the key elements for Berio's challenge toward traditional narrativity.

6 Structure

The structure is definitely one of the peculiarities of *Outis*, even though Berio had already composed musical actions that dispensed with a traditional and linear kind of narrative. In *Opera* (1970), for example, three different narrative levels are compared and intertwined (one about the tragedy of the Titanic, one about the theater piece *Terminal*, and another about the myth of Orpheus), and everything revolves around the theme of ending and death; *La vera storia* (1978) is divided into two parts, and the second part is a transfiguration and a comment on the first one, with the same texts in a different order.

Outis, on the contrary, presents a cyclic structure with recurrent elements: instead of the traditional division into acts, there are five cycles, all starting with a different version of the same event – the accidental murder of Outis by his son Isaac. But there is a double of Outis who always survives. The following moments are all linked to a limited variety of situations, which follow one another with different orders. Despite the variations of settings, characters and musical features, it is essentially possible to retrace five general events: a starting point (the murder), a moment of danger or conflict (which usually occupies the largest part of the cycle), the overcoming of the danger, the return, and finally the journey, which can usually be found in the last section of the cycle (except for cycle III).

This modular scheme is shown below in Table 7.2:[5]

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[5] A similar chart is used by Berio himself in "Morfologia di un viaggio".

Table 7.2 Modular scheme of *Outis*' cycles.

a	Starting position. Death of Outis	Cycle I	a b c d e
b	Danger or conflict	Cycle II	a b c d e
c	Overcoming of the danger	Cycle III	a b c b
d	Virtual return	Cycle IV	a d b c e
e	Journey	Cycle V	a e b c d e

Even though it would be impossible to summarize *Outis* as one could do with a traditional opera (a summary of "what happens"), the development of each section of the work might be presented as follows:

Cycle I: Outis is killed by Isaac; his other son, Steve, sings a lament for him, and a series of images follows, a sort of "imaginative horizon for childhood" (Osmond-Smith 168). Emily, Outis' wife, appears with their son Rudy. When Pedro, the auctioneer, tries to engulf the kid, Outis' double saves him and kills Pedro. When Emily puts on her wedding dress, Outis leaves.

Cycle II: the hall of a bank suddenly turns into a grotesque brothel, after three bank clerks strip and are revealed as female. Samantha and Olga, the seductresses, make their first appearance, while Emily claims her right to sexual fulfillment. A tunnel appears on the background, as if it were between Emily's legs, and everyone enters it.

Cycle III: in an oneiric and chaotic supermarket, Steve reads a book, immune to all that consumerism. After Outis refuses the hand Steve offers him, the supermarket turns into a concentration camp. As David Osmond-Smith argues, in this cycle "the paradigm is disrupted: persecution takes over, it paralyses the scene, and the sequence of situations stops" (172).

Cycle IV: all the female protagonists talk in turn to Outis. Children enter, but the Director forces them to take toy weapons and play at being soldiers. Clowns enter and perform, followed by a procession of despaired war victims. Outis leaves.

Cycle V: The deck of a cruise ship is threatened by a storm, then Outis appears, alone, cast on a shore. He is approached by Marina, who sings to him, and then by Steve, who helps him and then leaves; Outis goes on with his journey, too. Two pianos appear: Outis and Emily, both with their double, sing together about the misunderstandings of marriage ("Non mi hai mai conosciuto./ Le tue mani contavano le promesse./ Non ti ho conosciuto mai") (*Outis* 32)). Outis is finally left to sing alone, but before he could start, the curtain falls.[6]

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[6] As David Osmond-Smith notes, the fifth cycle is full of echoes of Berio's *Opera* (another musical action, dating back to 1970): "the setting in a cruise ship, the performance with the piano on stage …" (169).

The recurring events, the nature of the characters and the oneiric setting give each cycle the atmosphere of a folktale – a narrative form that Berio had thoroughly investigated through the work of Russian scholar Vladimir Propp.

7 Propp and Eco

The strong relationship between the peculiar structure of the work and the unconventional nature of the characters witnesses the influence of two major scholars: Propp and Eco, particularly of their books *Morphology of the Folktale* and *Open Work*.

Propp's classic text was published in 1928 but came to the attention of Western society just in the late 1950s, thanks to a critical essay by Claude Lévi-Strauss. The main points of Propp's research, conducted on a particular kind of folktales, the "magic folktale", might summed up as follows: from a structural point of view, every folktale can be traced back to one type; there is a very small number of functions and protagonists compared to the variety of the contents; only a few functions appear in a single folktale, but always in the same order; finally, the folktale can be defined as a development whose starting point is a damage and whose end point is a reward of some kind, with a series of intermediate functions (see Propp 31).

From the structural point of view, then, individual characters are almost irrelevant, they are replaceable: it's their function within the narrative which matters, and the number of functions is very limited, while the number of replaceable, individual characters, locations, items and so on, is almost infinite. The charm of the folktale lies exactly in this contrast between limited functions and unlimited possibilities.

Berio applies this idea to the structure of *Outis*, but with a significant modification: there is a limited number of recurrent functions (death, danger, journey, return), but they are not always in the same order: the first two cycles follow the same sequence, but from the third cycle onwards the order changes, with a stronger presence of the conflictual moment.

The scheme realized by Susanna Pasticci, and quoted from her essay *Dynamiques du temps et de la forme dans "Outis" de Luciano Berio* (see Table 7.3), successfully conveys the changing balance between the functions and the general prevalence (from the point of view of mere duration, at least) of the danger or conflict over its solution:[7]

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[7] The scheme is largely inspired by the one by Pasticci; the width of each function is directly proportional to its actual length in the piece.

Table 7.3 Scheme of the different sequences and the relative importance of events in *Outis*' different cycles (see Pasticci).

I	Death	Conflict	Overcoming	Return	Journey
II	Death	Conflict	Overcoming	Return	Journey
III	Death	Conflict	Overcoming	Conflict	
IV	Death	Return	Conflict	Overcoming	Journey
V	Death	Conflict	Overcoming	Return	Journey

Among the major influences for Berio's theatrical work, Eco and his *Opera aperta* also play a key role. *Opera aperta* (*The Open Work*, my translation) is the title of a collection of essays, published in 1962, introducing an original perspective on contemporary art, which also involves sciences and information theory. "Art makes statements about the world through the way in which an artwork is structured [...] The only content that matters is the peculiar way in which we relate to the world and how we resolve this on the plan of the structures, of the way of forming" (Eco 266, my translation). In other words, Eco identifies a correspondence between the peculiar forming procedures of contemporary music, literature and visual arts, and the new perspectives of twentieth century scientific research: the probability theory, the informal painting and the aleatoric music, for example, share some deep attitudes and perspectives, which could be included in the general category of openness (*apertura*). The openness, which could be defined as the constitutive ambiguity of the artistic message, is as old as art itself; but for contemporary art, it has become a key and programmatic element.

The notion of open work has deeply influenced Italian and international culture. Berio himself and Eco were close friends, and many of Berio's works show the peculiar attention to openness which was identified by Eco: *Outis* does not belong to the so-called *opere in movimento* (moving works, an extreme kind of open works, whose structure and elements are not fixed, but are subject to the freedom of the performer); but it plays, nevertheless, with the wide range of possibilities given by the textual and musical references. Quoting Berio, *Outis* shows "a peculiar conception of the oral narration, characterized by the mobility and the interchangeability of its functions, and able to evoke a nonlinear dramaturgy" ("Morfologia di un viaggio" 302, my translation).

8 Music

Without going into the details of the score, it is worth to underline some elements of coherence that accompany the development of the work: for example, the death of the protagonist is always accompanied by the note B flat, while there is a recurrent melodic cell of two intervals (perfect fourth and augmented fifth) (Osmond-Smith 173).

The rich instrumentation of a full orchestra is employed, with three percussionists (playing more than thirty instruments) and no less than twenty-eight wind players: flute, clarinet and saxophone quartets often interact among them, as well as with the voices (see Fig. 7.1). The timbral dimension is therefore a vital element of *Outis*, with subtle exchanges and echoes between voices and instruments, as it often is in Berio's works and as he shows in his last piece, *Stanze*: for David Osmond-Smith, "the *Outis* 'sound' is the product of Berio's truly remarkable capacity for working at the interface between harmony and timbre" (174).

Two significative musical moments underline two decisive dramaturgical devices and are representative of Berio's relationship with poetry and with traditional music: the choir of the deportees in the third cycle and the clown waltz in the fourth.

As already seen, the importance of Cycle III lies in the fact that here, for the first time, the order of the functions is disrupted. After a situation of danger and one of relaxation, another moment of danger occurs: the choir of the deportees, which represents probably one of the most intense sections of the work. The text is taken from a poem by Paul Celan, *Die Posaunenstelle* – and it is not by chance that the voices are echoed by the powerful and dramatic sound of trombones (*Posaunen* in German). The work of Celan (its deep spirituality and its conflictual relationship with the German language) always represented a strong source of inspiration for Berio: Celan's poem "Tenebrae" constitutes in fact the opening of Berio's last composition, *Stanze*.

Another very peculiar passage, which highlights the original dialectic of tradition and innovation in Berio's music, can be found in Cycle IV. There are many children on stage who have been offered toy weapons and uniforms, to play at being soldiers; then some clowns enter the scene and perform. In this moment, a small group of instruments is on stage (a violin, an accordion, a trombone and some percussions): they play a nostalgic and grotesque waltz, a relic of folk music which seems to be in a blatant contrast with the rest of the work (Fig. 7.2).

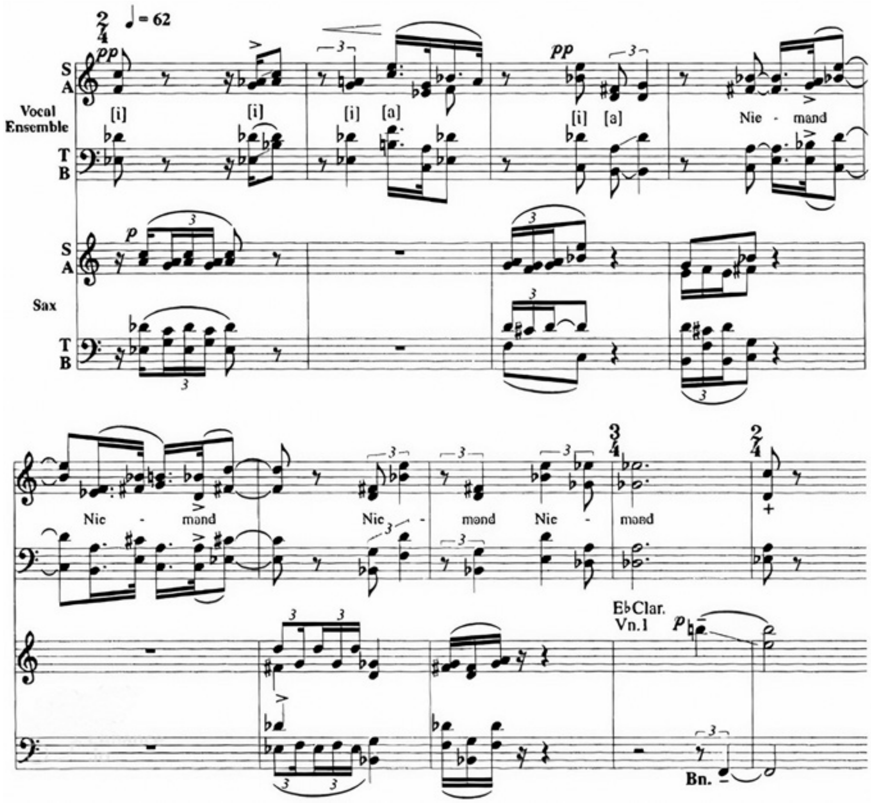

Figure 7.1 Berio, *Outis* III Cycle mm. 1–9[8].

But *Outis* on the whole is a demonstration of Berio's will of giving new life to traditional forms: the contrast between the relative simplicity and intelligibility of arias, and the chaotic complexity of other collective moments is one of the distinctive features of Berio's theater, and of *Outis* in particular.

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[8] See the strong connections between the voices and the saxophone quartet. Similar proceedings had already been used by Berio in his *Canticum novissimi testamenti* (1991), for four clarinets, saxophone quartet and eight voices.

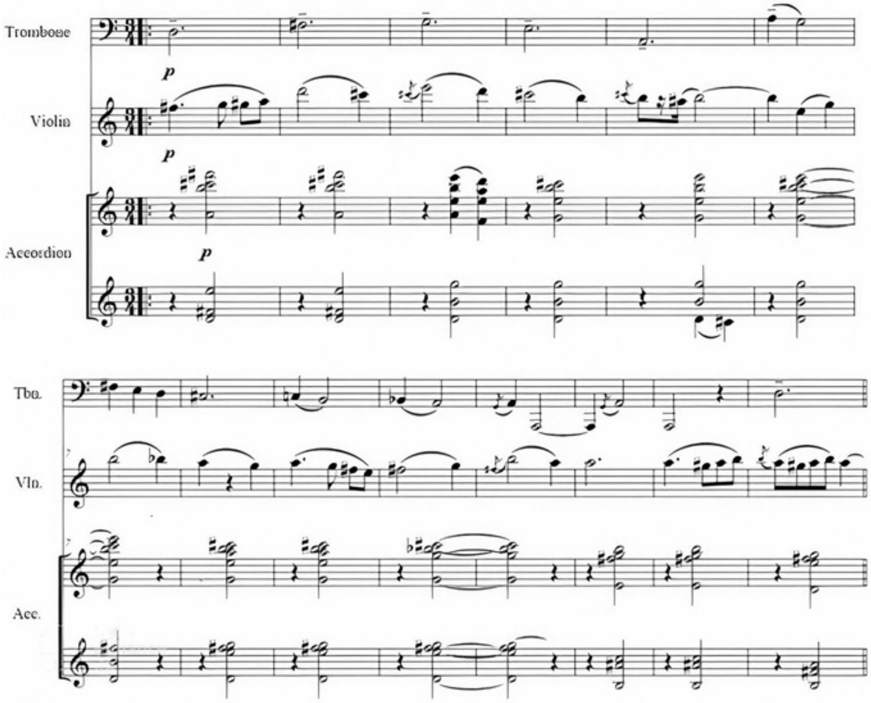

Figure 7.2 Berio, *Outis* IV Cycle "Waltz", pp. 59–60.

9 Conclusion

Despite the fact that *Outis* is not Berio's last theatrical work, it can be considered the culmination of a long-lasting research on vocality, instrumentation, dramaturgy and relation between music, text and scene.

As stated by Berio himself, there is a sort of contradiction at the core of his *azioni musicali*: on one hand, contemporary theater "must promote relative autosufficiency between musical discourse, scenic discourse and text", developing "a polyphony between three different but jointly responsible discourses, between three narratives that become one" ("Of Sounds and Images" 295–9); on the other, there is "a fundamental dominance of the musical structure" (Osmond-Smith 173). And *Outis* may be considered as a perfect example of a theater piece in which, as we have seen, music becomes the starting-point for the whole dramaturgical and narrative process.

For Osmond-Smith, *Outis* "might plausibly lay claim to being the first example of that 'other theatre'" (167), which was craved by the protagonist of *Un re in ascolto*, Berio's previous musical action.

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Queering the Musical Theater Tradition

Narrative Metareferentiality in Michael R. Jackson's A Strange Loop

Jade Thomas

Abstract

Musical theater's musical suspensions (lyric time) of spoken dialogue (book time) are often associated with excess and campiness, popularizing a (stereotypical) assumption that the genre attracts predominantly a gay audience. Following the transition from the integration to the post-integration model of musical theater analysis, queer readings of the genre often understand lyric time solely as performative breaches of narrative plot development. Such approaches to experimental art works are, according to Tyler Bradway, dominant in queer literary studies and rely on a one-sided belief that narrative represents a heteronormative teleology. Moreover, existing queer readings of musical theater do not consider the genre's racial politics of representation because "queer" is primarily defined in terms of gender and sexual orientation. Following Bradway's queer narrative theory, I apply a formalist reading to Michael R. Jackson's Pulitzer Prize-winning musical *A Strange Loop* (first performed in 2019) to consider how metareferential narrativity can assist in queering the musical theater tradition, and by extension, may comment on the genre's representational politics with regard to Black queerness. By reading lyric time as gradable implicit or explicit *mise en abymes* in Jackson's musical instead of performative breaks only, narrative is not considered as essentially heteronormative or queer. Rather, I hypothesize that dramaturgical effects of narrative forms communicate ideological messages. In the case of *A Strange Loop*, metareferential usages of narrative forms dramatize racial doubling, which, in the case of Black queer bodies, reduce their multifaceted identity to race alone. Moreover, Jackson's musical does not grant its protagonist, and hence the audience, dramatic closure. To deny a clear answer as to how to change social reality, I argue, is to queer narrative's potentially realist, teleological and heteronormative message in favor of hyperbolic, open-ended excess.

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1 Introduction

In the introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, musical theater scholar Stacy Wolf states that "[t]he American musical is a paradox" both in terms of content and form (3). Content-wise, musical theater would only offer mere entertainment, prone to superficial commercialization. However, multiple mainstream musicals reflect poignant ideological concerns in U.S. society such as gender and sexuality in *Rent* (1996), interracial relationships in *West Side Story* (1957), or community values in *The Music Man* (1957). In terms of form, moreover, musicals are intermedial art works combining formally disjunctive elements including dialogue, music, and dance (ibid.). Musical theater scholar Scott McMillin reminds us that, similar to the operatic libretto, recitative and aria, a musical has two main structural parts: book time (i.e., spoken dialogue) and lyric time (i.e., music and songs). Book time usually represents the narrative, or linear plot and character development, while lyric time signifies a performative suspension of the narrative (6–7). Following the transition from the integration to the post-integration model to analyze musical theater, lyric time, or musical disruption, has been increasingly conceptualized as a performative breach of book time's linear narrative plot development.[1]

Musical disruptions and their highly performative effects are often associated with excess and campiness, popularizing a (stereotypical) assumption that musical theater attracts a predominantly gay audience. Stereotype or not, multiple analyses of musical theater affirm this belief and scrutinize why the genre sparks a queer interest.[2] These existing queer approaches to musical theater nevertheless overlook the relationship between *Black* queerness and the musical genre because they conceptualize the term "queer" mostly in terms of gender and sexual orientation only. This observation follows José Esteban Muñoz's (1999) and Roderick A. Ferguson's (2004) queer of color critique, by which they adjust approaches that conceptualize queerness from a predominantly white, liberal perspective. Instead of using "queerness" as an umbrella term for all non-heteronormative sexualities, this chapter contributes to existing queer (of color) critique by being attentive to how other identity markers, such as race, may influence representations of gender and sexuality. Moreover, in the case of the musical theater genre, Warren Hoffman's study of Broadway's racial politics (2020) has pointed towards the ambivalent position race has taken in twentieth- and twenty-first-century commercialized American musicals.

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[1] Recent scholarly work on post-integration musical theory includes Scott McMillin and Millie Taylor (*Musical Theatre*), among others.

[2] See, in this regard, D.A. Miller, John M. Clum, and S. Wolf's (*A Problem Like Maria*) gay and lesbian approaches to musical theater.

An apt example in this respect is Michael R. Jackson's Pulitzer Prize-winning musical *A Strange Loop* (first performed in 2019), which deals with the politics of queer racial representation in Broadway musicals. The musical centers around Usher, a Black, queer musical playwright in his mid-twenties who works as a Broadway usher at *The Lion King* while he is writing a musical about an aspiring Black, queer musical playwright who works as a Broadway usher. This narrative suggests that Jackson dramatizes his own experiences as a Black musical playwright. Apart from Usher, six other performers populate the stage and are consistently called Usher's Thoughts. The Thoughts occasionally embody members of Usher's conservative family and Black cultural icons who ask him to write a Black gospel play and stage Usher's struggles with his apparent (in)ability to write a "BIG, BLACK, AND QUEER-ASS AMERICAN BROADWAY SHOW" (15). Since Usher's writing process is dramatized by externalizing his Thoughts through characters, the play text insinuates that the musical one is watching is the musical Usher is writing and has thus a clear self-reflexive dimension. Moreover, Jeff Rogers' cover design for the 2020 play text publication of *A Strange Loop* (Theatre Communications Group) adequately visualizes the metatheatrical onset of Jackson's musical. The cover shows a Black, bespectacled man bend above a theater stage while opening the theater curtains. However, the black box the man peeks into, reduplicates his opening gesture over and over, creating the self-reflexive narrative device of a *mise en abyme ad infinitum*. Consequently, Roger's cover design suggests that narrative form plays an important role in *A Strange Loop*.

To date, however, musical theater has been largely treated as antinarrative, and narratological approaches to the musical have been scarce, even though its structural reliance on book/song alternations lends itself to narratological analysis. Within the field of queer narratology, Tyler Bradway has recently argued that antinarrative approaches to literary art works are grounded in conceptualizations of narrative as a linear, reproductive plot that imparts heteronormative ideologies (712). The marriage plot, for example, is a concrete generic manifestation of a heterosexually oriented linear plot development. Consequently, queer literary theory has conceptualized antinarrative ruptures of linear plot as queer interventions. Bradway's essay, however, "does not identify one aesthetic style (rupture) as exemplary of queerness in general or at its most essential" (713). Building on Caroline Levine's new formalist methodology, Bradway understands narrative as a "relational form, shaped by the metonymic friction of social, discursive, and corporeal forms" (ibid.). If narrative form shapes itself in mutual interaction with the socio-political context in which it occurs, its aesthetics can be rearranged, and queered, to signify multiplicity instead of linear legibility. Therefore, narrative is not essentially a heteronormative form (ibid.), nor is narrative rupture always used to convey a queer message.

In the context of musical theater, Bradway's observations are particularly relevant. This chapter takes Bradway's cue to consider how the alternations between book and lyric time have a narrative potential in musical theater, without necessarily underpinning a heteronormative message. I will especially focus on lyric time's penchant for self-reflexive, or even more specific, metareferential narrativity, especially in the post-integrated musical, and on how this metareferential narrativity can assist in queering the musical theater tradition. To do so, I will first outline the theoretical-methodological shift within academia to study musical theater not as an integrated artform, but as a post-integrated composition. I will also reflect in what way the more recent post-integration approach allows us to think about musical disruptions as potential instances of metareferential narration. Secondly, I will briefly sketch the representational legacies of the genre and its ties to queer and Black (literary) studies, which allows me to complicate the lack of formalist, narratological approaches when musical theater is studied from a queer perspective. Finally, I will put theory to practice by offering a formalist reading of Jackson's metareferential usages of narrative forms in *A Strange Loop*'s musical intervals. Ultimately, *A Strange Loop* offers an interesting case study of how narrative metareferentiality in lyric time may provide a metacommentary on the representational politics of Black queerness in musical theater.

2 Musical Theater: From the Integration to the Post-Integration Model

To elevate musical theater's status, the term "integrated musical", which recalls Richard Wagner's notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art (S. Wolf, "Introduction" 3), gained currency during the mid-twentieth century[3] to describe works of musical theater with an overblown, through-composed form, i.e., a musical without spoken parts (13).[4] As musical theater scholar Taylor has explained, a theory of integration suggests that musical intervals and spoken dialogue work together and over-ride each other to capture the inner feelings, dreams, and aspirations of the performing characters, which they will achieve by the end of the performance ("'[Title of Chapter]'" 55). Such an emphasis on linear narrativity presumes that, without the integration of the sung parts, vital information that ensures the closure of the plot is lost. Therefore, integration theory can be said to view musical theater as structured according to a dramatic plot.

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[3] According to McMillin (1), Rodger and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943) marks the historical arrival of the integrated musical on Broadway.

[4] McMillin names *Phantom of the Opera* (1986), *Les Misérables* (1985), and Disney film musicals as examples of contemporary musicals that support integration theory (13).

Since the integration model suggests that a musical's composition of book and lyric time pushes the plot forward by alternating between spoken parts and songs, lyric time functions similar to narrative *mise en abymes*. According to Lucien Dällenbach, a *mise en abyme* functions as "any internal mirror that reflects the whole of the narrative by […] reduplication" (36). As a result, a *mise en abyme*-like narrative form such as lyric time can help to sustain the dramatic action of a musical. Although musical intervals add an obvious layer of artificiality and exaggeration, the song lyrics often repeat and elaborate on the dialogue. S. Wolf and Taylor have both pointed out that lyric time's mirroring suspensions of book time evoke traditions of psychological realism in integrated musicals (S. Wolf, "Introduction" 3; Taylor, "'[Title of Chapter]'" 6). Reading the integration of book and lyric time through the lens of narrative theory affords us to formally explain how integrated musicals can achieve a dramaturgical effect of psychological realism.

Concurrent with the rise of postmodernist concepts, musical theater has, over the past 45 years, "explore[d] formal innovation, reflexivity, and intertextuality" more than linear plot development (Taylor, "'[Title of Chapter]'" 22). The term "post-integrated musical" is more prominent in academia today and foregrounds the performative excess of lyric time as a more innovative feature than musical's linear narrative structure while, importantly, the musical "still contain[s] a plot" (Ibid. 18). Hence, recent developments in the field of musical theater problematize integration theory's penchant for a realist, dramatic teleology:

> The separation of song from scene, so that each allows different aspects of plot or character to be revealed, highlights the lack of 'realism' in musical theatre performance. The musical simultaneously signifies itself as 'realistic', and is written in ways that promote the idea of integration and the suspension of disbelief, even while incorporating textual and performance strategies that undermine that framework. (Taylor, *Musical Theatre*, 6)

Taylor's acknowledgment of the realist potential of the musical tradition offers a nuanced view on the dramaturgical effects of book/song alternations. On the one hand, lyric time can create an illusion of psychological realism because spectators might interpret songs and dances as a continuation or deepening of a character's psychology – in the sense of a performed subtext. On the other hand, lyric time foregrounds the performative excess and artificiality of the genre because of the antirealistic effect of a character bursting into a perfectly choreographed song and dance routine. Similarly, McMillin has argued that musical theater's formal complexity is due to song's momentary suspension of the cause-and-effect advancement of the book in favor of the repetitive nature of music and dance (6–7). Instead of advancing characterization, post-integrated musicals momentarily suspend and double character development through lyric time, which has the effect of "chang[ing] the characters and the book into new versions of themselves that play against our normal [i.e., linear] sense of identity and story" (McMillin 21). Hence, post-integration musical theory constitutes a recent theoretical-methodological shift in studying the dramaturgical effects of conventional musical theater forms, such as the *mise en abyme*-like musical interval. This shift in approach can be said to be prompted by functional developments in musical theater, such as the fact that performative excess has become a more theatrically arresting dramaturgical effect than realist plot development in the last forty-five years.

Read through the lens of narrative theory, the post-integration approach complicates the range of dramaturgical effects that the *mise en abyme*-like form of musical intervals can achieve. In the case of an integrated musical, the *mise en abyme* triggers immersion within the story, but in the case of a post-integrated musical, that very same narrative device develops a penchant for self-reference. Werner Wolf defines self-reference in art works as

> a usually non-accidental quality of signs and sign configurations that in various ways refer or point to (aspects of) themselves or to other signs and sign configurations within one and the same semiotic system or 'type' of which they are a part or 'token' rather than to (an element of) reality outside the sign (system). (19)

Applied to the post-integrated musical, the musical interval does not hold up the illusion that the sung parts would be a realistic representation of a character's deepest desires and feelings. Instead, the musical interval intentionally refers to musical theater's structural composition of book/lyric time. Moreover, W. Wolf adds that if the object of a non-accidental self-reference is "(felt to be) located on a logically higher level, a 'metalevel', within an artefact or performance; this self-reference […] implies a statement about an object-level, namely on (aspects of) the medium/system referred to" (31). This specific type of self-reference is called "metareference" (ibid.) and elicits "at least minimal corresponding 'meta-awareness' […] in the recipient, who thus becomes conscious of both the medial (or 'fictional' in the sense of artificial and, sometimes in addition, 'invented') status of the work" (ibid.). This distinction between self-reference and metareference is important for my discussion of the *mise en abyme*-like structure of musical intervals. It is not a given that lyric time is perceived as an intentional differentiation between two levels of performance, e.g., the actor as character vs. the actor as performer. In case of non-acknowledgment, the fictionality of the story is not momentarily suspended. As the concurrent existence of integration and post-integration approaches confirms, acknowledgment of the metareferential quality of lyric time lies partly in the eye of the beholder.

Throughout this contribution, I view the *mise en abyme*-like structure of lyric time as a metareferential phenomenon because there is always some kind of doubling present – be it the repetition of dialogue in song or the expansion of character into performer.[5] To account for instances when the musical interval's metareferentiality might be too weak to be perceived, I draw on W. Wolf's differentiation between implicit and explicit metareference (44). I view implicit *mise en abymes* to be more characteristic of integrated musicals, in which metareferentiality is so implicit that the performative level of lyric time is hardly perceivable. This is particularly the case for the through-composed musical in which every line is sung. Explicit *mise en abymes*, then, are to be found more often in the post-integrated musical. Especially Stephen Sondheim's post-integrated musicals are clear examples of the use of explicit *mise en abyme*. Notable examples are *Sweeney Todd* (1979) or *Into the Woods* (1987), in which the opening songs are used to introduce an embedded narrative through third-person (choral) narration which momentarily suspends the fictionality of the story and openly refers to the genre's structural composition of book/lyric time. Summing up, the musical interval approximates the narrative form of the *mise en abyme*, but it can be used to different dramaturgical effects ranging from realist to metareferential ones. The fact that narrative embedding disrupts narrative linearity corroborates Bradway's claim that narrative does not necessarily impart linear, heteronormative ideologies.

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[5] One might argue that lyric time constitutes an ontological transgression between two levels, e.g., between character and the performer, and should therefore be read as a narrative metalepsis instead of a narrative *mise en abyme*. However, one should not confuse narrative embeddedness with narrative transgression. Narratologist Gérard Genette defines narrative metalepsis as "[t]he transition of one narrative level to another" (234), which creates a paradoxical crossing between ontologically lower and higher narrative levels. By contrast, lyric time remains conventionally clearly separated from book time so that we should speak of narrative embeddedness. That is not to say that metalepsis cannot occur within a *mise en abyme*-like interval, since transgression often requires an embedded frame to be crossed.

Moreover, following earlier queer literary theory and its evaluation of explicit narrative ruptures as operating queerly, implicit *mise en abyme* has potentially a larger appeal to heteronormative, teleologically emplotted stories.

3 Musical Theater and its Relation to Queer and Black (Literary) Studies

Despite its structural complexity, musical theater has mostly been the subject of multiple cultural analyses. Broadway musical, in particular, displays signs of racial anxiety. Hoffman rightly points to "the connection between whiteness and the American musical" (5). Both thematically and structurally, Hoffman explains, musical theater is about forging community: a group of characters comes together and unites in song and dance. Lyric time imparts a sense of utopian optimism because every problem in the story seems to get fixed by jolly singing and dancing (ibid.). According to Richard Dyer, the utopianism of musicals is transmitted through the cheerful feelings that lyric time embodies rather than by transmitting a concrete utopian worldview (177). Nevertheless, he adds, problems experienced by identities beyond the white liberal norm are often not the stuff musicals are typically made of, which is partly due to the genre's entertainment value (184). Musical theater is "a type of performance made for profit" (Dyer 176), and since, as Hoffman maintains, "[c]ommunity really means *white* community" (6, original emphasis) in musical theater, non-white identities have been largely excluded from musical theater.

Such racial blindness also characterizes early studies of musical theater. Since the late 1990s, the transition from the integration to the post-integration model to analyze musical theater has been accompanied by an increasing number of queer analyses of the musical genre. Miller's *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical* (1998) and Clum's *Something for the Boys: Musical Theater and Gay Culture* (1999) illustrate that musical theater's utopian songs and its diva characters have been the source of much gay male interest. Alternatively, S. Wolf's study *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical* (2002) argues that female musical characters of mid-century Broadway classics bend heterosexual character expectations in favor of a lesbian interpretation. In doing so, these early analyses align queerness almost exclusively with gender and sexual orientation.

However, non-white queer identities are often omitted from art works that are said to have a queer aesthetic. As of the early 2000s, queer of color critique has addressed the multiple ways in which racial dimensions of identity have systematically been overlooked by earlier studies. Muñoz and Ferguson are both pioneering critical voices in the field that make a case for thinking about queerness at the intersection of, e.g., race and class. Both Muñoz and Ferguson locate queer theory's liberal politics as the source of its colorblindness, or as the latter lucidly puts it: "queer of color analysis presumes that liberal ideology occludes the intersecting saliency of race, gender, sexuality, and class in forming social practices" (4). As a result of this, queer Black subjects have been pushed into a precarious minority corner by liberal hegemony. In his contribution to the field, Muñoz introduces the concept of "disidentification" as an umbrella term for "the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship" (4). When a disidentification is performed, this often results in a campy, over-the-top appropriation of assumptions that circulate within hegemonic society about queer people (3). In doing so, Muñoz explains, the minority subject can reclaim these stereotypical images to counter the abject spectacle that the dominant ideology perceives them as, and instead appear glamourous and desired (3). Muñoz's theorization explains why the campy aesthetics of musical theater spark so much queer interest. In addition, it urges theorizations of queer of color subjects to not only take into account prevailing assumptions about sex and gender roles, but also images that are located at the intersection of sexuality and race.

Similarly, recent theorizations of Blackness indicate that the process of racial doubling assists in obscuring Black queer bodies. According to Harvey Young, racial doubling creates an abstract "black body", a racialized metonymy for blackness, which is the result of "popular connotations of blackness [...] mapped across or internalized within black people" (7). Young's concept of the black body demonstrates how Blackness overshadows other intersectional identities such as sexual orientation, gender, or class because it is predominantly one's black body, and all the racial connotations attached to it, that "has been *made to be given to be seen*" (12, original emphasis). Young's theorizing resonates with American critical race theorist W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness. Du Bois defines double consciousness as "this sense of always looking at one's self through the ideas of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (8). This sense of constant two-ness, as Du Bois calls it, refers to the precarious situation of Black people in the U.S., who are judged through a white, hegemonic lens.

This chapter proposes to study the politics of racial representation in musicals both from a formalist and ideological perspective and argues that musical theater lends itself to scrutinizing racial issues owing to the genre's *mise en abyme*-like narrative structure. I put theory to practice in the next section by presenting a formalist reading of Jackson's Pulitzer Prize-winning musical *A Strange Loop*. Throughout my close reading, I approach *A Strange Loop* as a post-integrated musical for two major reasons. Firstly, the musical's premise of a playwright-character writing his own musical implies that some degree of metareferentiality with regard to the genre's book/song alternations is present. Secondly, Usher's self-identification as a Black, queer man plays an important role in his (in)ability to write a Broadway musical. Since my discussion of queer and Black (literary) studies shows that bodies appear double-coded, if not multiple-coded, the post-integration model is a more apt lens to account for the ways in which the musical represents Usher's multifaceted identity. In a nutshell, I argue that Jackson's metareferential usage of the *mise an abyme* assists in queering the musical theater tradition beyond the performative camp quality of the musical interval. In addition, my analysis illustrates how metareferential narrativity allows Jackson to comment on the genre's racial politics of representation.

4 Narrative Metareferentiality in *A Strange Loop*

A Strange Loop's opening immediately highlights its self-reflexive dimension. The stage directions indicate that spectators are faced with "*Blackness*" and hear "*Intermission chimes*" (11). Suddenly, lights shine on Usher "*with his back to us, ringing chimes from the back of a theater, which manifests as a strange loop in his mind, along with silhouettes of his Thoughts*" (ibid.).[6] Once his Thoughts start calling his name, Usher "*turns around, chiming"* and directly addresses the audience by asking them to return to their seats because "the second act is about to begin!" (ibid.). Telling spectators that they will witness "performers running down the aisles and wearing pantaloons and gaudy flower robes that [...] indicate the wholesome beauty of 'Mother Africa'" (11–12), Usher refers to his job as an usher at *The Lion King*. Casually ("What else? Oh, yes!"(12)), he reminds the audience that "[i]n the background, there will be a young [...] American descendant of slaves [...], obsessing over the latest draft of his self-referential musical *A Strange Loop*! And surrounded by his *extremely* obnoxious Thoughts!" (12, original emphasis). With the play starting *in medias res*, Usher's speech suggests that his narrative is only the minor inner story framed by the Disney spectacle the audience supposedly wants to visit.

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[6] My analysis is based on the 2020 play text publication by the Theatre Communications Group. References to the 2019 recording of the Off-Broadway production at Playwrights Horizon, archived at the New York Library for the Performing Arts, are included if specific costume, lighting, scenographical, or acting decisions enrich the analysis. In the Off-Broadway production, different from the play text, Usher immediately faces the audience and is seen writing, which visualizes the play's metareferential quality even more explicitly.

A Strange Loop should be called a metamusical because Jackson self-reflexively uses the narrative conventions of the musical theater tradition, such as the musical chorus. The stage directions indicate that Usher's Thoughts fulfill the long-standing convention of creating an ensemble performance, without actually referring to them as chorus: "A spectrum of bodies that are Usher's perception of reality inside and out. They come in many shapes and sizes. But they are all Black. And they are as individual in expression as they are a unit" (5). Using the chorus to embody Usher's Thoughts, Jackson explicitly references the psychological realist tradition of integrated musicals.

At first sight, the book/song alternations of *A Strange Loop* also seem to work towards an integrated, linear narrative. The "(Opening) Intermission Song" lyricizes Usher's aspiration as well as struggles to write a "BIG, BLACK AND QUEER-ASS AMERICAN BROADWAY SHOW" (15). Compliant with integration theory, the song sets forth a clear goal to be achieved by the end of the musical, which will provide Usher's story with dramatic closure. Moreover, the musical interval can be interpreted as operating as an implicit *mise en abyme* that mirrors the content of book and lyric time to the extent that one might perceive the opening song as a realist representation of Usher's inner feelings. First, Usher addresses the actual audience through dialogue and introduces himself using an excessive list of adjectives to describe his personality and ambitions. He is a "young overweight-to-obese homosexual and/or gay and/or queer, cisgender male, able-bodied-university-and-graduate-school-educated, musical-theater-writing, Disney-ushering, broke-ass middle class, far-Left leaning Black identified-and-classified American descendant of slaves [...]" (12). He then performs the opening song, or chorus, together with his Thoughts and sings about his personality and aspirations so that the hyperbolic form of the musical interval echoes the exuberant list of adjectives Usher used to describe his personality in book time. If the chorus and ensemble performance are regarded as a thematic and formal mirroring of Usher's descriptions of himself, one could interpret the opening song as a realist expression – despite its over-the-top execution – of Usher's, and by extension, Jackson's inner psychology since there is enough reason to read *A Strange Loop* as a self-dramatization of the author's life.[7]

While *A Strange Loop* relies on the realist effect of integrated musicals, it does so in a metacommentary way. Although the opening song sets the plot surrounding Usher's aspiration to write a Black, queer musical into motion, a dialogue between Usher and his Thoughts in book time right after the song's performance suggests that *A Strange Loop* might not progress in a linear way:

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[7] Similar to Usher, Jackson is Black, queer, lisping, and has worked as a Disney usher.

> THOUGHT 5: Okay, so what's the tea, bitch?
> USHER: Ummmmm …
> THOUGHT 2: Where's the sweat, Usher; you're not even trying!
> THOUGHT 6: What's next, what's next?
> USHER: I don't know-
> THOUGHT 4: Well, you better figure it out!
> THOUGHT 1: And fast! (18)

This conversation between Usher and his Thoughts shows that Usher is aware of the conventions of the integrated musical, but also that he does not know how to attain his goal, writing that Black, queer Broadway show. Moreover, Usher's inability to write in the realist tradition of the integrated musical is illustrated by the Thoughts' polyphonic nature, which renders the *mise en abyme*-like nature of the musical interval more explicit. Whenever the Thoughts join Usher in lyric time, they take up different secondary roles: they can appear as a Thought, but also as Mom, Dad, Usher's agent, or a Black cultural icon such as James Baldwin or Zora Neal Hurston. As such, the Thoughts assist in visually and aurally queering Usher's identity into a multitude of different intersecting facets. The costume design and choreography of *A Strange Loop* underscore this effect. Rather than wearing everyday clothing, the Thoughts are dressed in brown-greyish work-out clothes, which can suggest the abstract nature of one's mind but also highlights the artificiality of the chorus by referring to their uniformity. In performances of *A Strange Loop*, choreographer Raja Feather Kelly made the Thoughts shift during the opening song from synchronous dance steps to asynchronous movements by the time the song ends, further underscoring Usher's fractured perspective on reality, but also breaking the illusion of the chorus' seemingly effortless and immersive performance. Hence, *A Strange Loop*'s formal metacommentary on the genre's structural conventions renders it a post-integrated musical rather than an integrated musical.

The songs in *A Strange Loop* persistently repeat Usher's apparent inability to write a Broadway musical as a Black, queer man and intensify his increasing displeasure with his body. The "(Opening) Intermission Song", for example, associates writer's block and formal experiment with whiteness: "NO ONE CARES ABOUT A WRITER WHO IS/ STRUGGLING TO WRITE/ THEY'LL SAY IT'S WAY TOO REPETITIOUS/ AND SO OVERLY AMBITIOUS/ WHICH OF COURSE MAKES THEM SUSPICIOUS/ THAT YOU THINK YOU'RE FUCKING WHITE!" (13–14). The song "Inner White Girl", then, lyricizes how Usher tries to channel his "inner white girl" to write his musical because, according to him, "WHITE GIRLS CAN DO ANYTHING, CAN'T THEY? BLACK BOYS MUST ALWAYS OBEY THEIR MOTHERS!" (25). At the same time, Usher's Thoughts accompany his identity crisis musically by singing: "WHO, WHO IS YOU?" on loop (28). Importantly, even if Usher literally sings that writing a Broadway musical involves channeling (feminized) whiteness, the character list explicitly states that his Thoughts are Black (5). By creating an explicit instability between Usher's sung description of himself and the visual manifestation of his identity, *A Strange Loop* self-reflexively comments on the stereotypes of white queerness attached to the Broadway musical as well as the genre's racial politics. Hence, Usher's artistic stasis and self-racialization correspond to Du Bois' term "double consciousness", and result in his queerness getting overshadowed by his Blackness.[8]

The musical interval "Tyler Perry Writes Real Life" crystallizes precisely the self-racializing effect of double consciousness and, in yet another self-reflexive move, comments on ideological messages that are attributed to certain subgenres of musical theater. The interval is preceded by a conversation in book time, in which Usher's agent, called Fairweather, asks him to become the ghostwriter of Tyler Perry's gospel plays. Tyler Perry is a real-life African American media mogul, who has written, directed, and acted in several successful gospel plays and television adaptations centered around the character of Madea, a conservative Black matriarch. According to gospel music scholar Deborah Pollard, "[t]he gospel musical stage play as it appeared from 1989 through 1999 is a vibrant theatrical form for, by, and about black people and represents a continuation of the dramas and rituals of the black Church" (2). Gospel plays often dramatize domestic hardships such as drug abuse, AIDS, adultery, etc., while the Bible is portrayed as a remedy for these hardships. At once popular with many Black Americans, the genre also perpetuates stereotypes about Black family life (ibid.). Usher refuses Fairweather's offer because he does not want to take part in a musical genre that, according to him, "RIDE[S] THE CHITLIN' CIRCUIT" (46).[9] Following his refusal, his Thoughts adopt the roles of Black cultural ancestors including Harriet Tubman, Carter G. Woodson, James Baldwin, Zora Neal Hurston, the book/movie adaptation *12 Years a Slave*, and Whitney Houston, who all "*get him* [= Usher] *together*" (47) and question his authority to talk badly about Perry: "WHO THE FUCK IS YOU, *NIGGUH*?" (ibid.).[10] According to them, Usher is a "race traitor" and "ass licker" (46), while Perry is a real Black man, who does not want to please the white community with fanciful Broadway musicals but writes for the Black community about "true" Black life and its hardships. However, the Thoughts sing about Perry's gospel plays in stereotypical terms:

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[8] Also, the marketing of the Off-Broadway production stresses a link between Du Bois and *A Strange Loop* since both Jackson and Tim Stanford, Playwrights Horizons' artistic director, reference double consciousness in the program booklet (2–3).

[9] Gospel plays normally premier on the "Chitlin Circuit", a Black theater for the masses, dating back to the 1920s (Gates 44).

[10] Jackson's play text includes a number of contentious expletives that should preferably not be repeated in print or speech. I decided to provide full quotes of the original text in a

> ALL THOUGHTS:
> HE WRITES STORIES 'BOUT FAT (UH-HUH) BLACK WOMEN WIT' WEAVES (UH-HUH) FINDING LOVE AND REDEMPTION
> WIT' MUSCLE-BOUND BLACK MEN WHO OWN THEY OWN BUSINESS AND TRULY LOVE THE LORD! AND TRULY LOVE THE LORD! (48)

Associating Black women with voluptuous body types and great hair, and Black men with virility and religious fervor does not immediately come across as an inclusive and diverse way of characterizing Black life. To equate such depictions to real life, then, seems a stretch, but the ancestors insist that Perry "WRITES STORIES WE CAN SWALLOW LIKE POPEYES CHICKEN AND BISCUITS" (48). By racializing the Black experience in terms of food traditions, it becomes clear that the ancestors have internalized the stereotypes of the abstract black body, and that they render these stereotypes easily digestible through entertaining songs and dancing. Oddly enough, the cultural icons Usher's Thoughts embody are known for having written against racial stereotypes, rendering their internalization of the white gaze and support of Perry's stereotypical gospel plays hard to imagine. Baldwin's novels, for instance, explore Black queerness, while the life accounts of Tubman, Woodson, and the autobiographical movie adaptation *12 Years a Slave* are illustrative of Black people's fight against slavery. The reason for Usher's conflation of Perry with the ancestors may lie in the fact that they all, except for Houston's gospel-inspired R&B repertoire, represent the Black experience to a realist effect. "Tyler Perry Writes Real Life" should therefore not only be read as a satiric comment on self-racializing tendencies in Black popular entertainment, but also as Usher's own burden of accurately representing Black life and honoring the ancestors as an African American artist. Moreover, earlier in the musical, Usher's family members have been feeding his artistic stasis by pushing him to write a gospel play just like Perry and regard the genre as a true-to-life format as opposed to the "white girl music" (24) Usher loved to listen to as a teen. They especially praise Perry's know-how to "bring everything together wit' all the *stories*? And all the *singing*? And all the different people *talking?*" (24, original emphasis). Usher's family demonstrate that formal integration in gospel plays, despite the

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couple of instances because such racialized language forms an important part of Usher's self-racialization.

musical genre's potentially metareferential quality, represents stereotypical ideas of Black life as truth by rendering them easily digestible through performative excess.

The psychological realist function of the musical interval and ensemble performance are further undermined in *A Strange Loop* by the hyperbolic performative aesthetics of the chorus used to foreground Usher's subjective perception of Black cultural icons which contrasts with their realist legacy. In the play text, the adjectives "Motherfucking" and the italicization of the surnames "Tubman" and "Woodson" highlight that the Thoughts embody a particular, hyperbolic image of the actual Tubman and Woodson: "THOUGHT 2: I'm Harriet Motherfucking *Tubman*. And I got a problem wit' you." (47, original emphasis). The excessiveness that the play text emanates has been accurately transposed Off-Broadway by specific costumes, lighting, and sound effects. The ancestors ominously enter from holes in the stage floor as if literally rising from their graves and wear the historical costumes they are associated with. The scene culminates in "[*a*]*n entrance we won't soon forget*" (47) as Houston's disco-coffin dramatically rises from the stage floor. "Tyler Perry Writes Real Life" illustrates how Usher wants to break free from an artistic tradition that portrays Black life through a realist mode of writing, which cultural figures such as Perry and the ancestors represent. By depicting the ancestors in this way, Usher suggests that he feels that the hyperbolic aesthetics of musical theater is a more accurate genre to narrate his non-normative, queer experience of Blackness. At the same time, "Tyler Perry Writes Real Life" suggests that the gospel musical play's appeal to a normative and stereotypical view on Blackness depends on performative excess, albeit through formal integration. Hence, the song illustrates that correspondences to specific ideological views emanate from the ways in which narrative form is used to achieve a specific dramaturgical effect and, thus, opposes stances that identify a narrative device with a specific (heteronormative) message.

In the end, Usher does not achieve dramatic resolution, and the audience are confronted with a repetition of the opening image: "*Usher turns his back at us as in the beginning*" and "*rings his chimes*" (95). Asking himself if "[t]hat's really how the show ends? […] Does he get the change he wants so badly? […] Or does he not change and it just starts all over again?" (95–6), closure is delayed. Usher then suggests that "maybe […] [t]he audience can't go home […] [u]ntil he faces himself?" (96). In a metaleptic move, written into the play text, he "*turns to the audience and faces himself*" (ibid.)[11] and sings the musical's closing song, "A Strange Loop (Finale)":

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[11] It is important to note that the metaleptic effect is explicit for readers of the play text but may only be implicit for those watching a performance of *A Strange Loop*.

USHER: […] I SHOULD STOP OVERTHINKING
AND DO THE THING THAT'S TOUGH
UNLEASH MY HUNGRY LION
'CAUSE DOROTHY'S HAD ENOUGH
OF TOXIC TYLER PERRY
AND WHITE GAY MALE TYRANNY
AND MY SECRET INNER WHITE GIRL
THOUGH SHE IS DEAR TO ME.

BUT WOULD THAT BE SUFFICIENT?
OR WOULD THAT BE A SHAM?
'CAUSE EVEN WITH THOSE ACTIONS
I'M STUCK WITH WHO I AM

SOMEONE WHOSE SELF-PERCEPTION
IS BASED UPON A LIE
SOMEONE WHOSE ONLY PROBLEM
IS WITH THE PRONOUN "I"
MAYBE I DON'T NEED CHANGING
MAYBE I SHOULD REGROUP
'CAUSE CHANGE IS JUST AN ILLUSION (98)

The closing song's first verse indicates Usher's growing self-acceptance. He is adamant to not let himself and his actions be restricted anymore by ideologies that are detrimental to his self-worth, such as Perry's stereotypical gospel plays, the gay community and its racism, and the whiteness of Broadway musicals (personified by his "secret inner white girl" (98)). In the second verse, Usher questions if shrugging off the white gaze is possible. He might accept himself but stays "stuck with who [he] is" (ibid.), a Black man whose multifaceted identity easily gets overshadowed by racialized stereotypes. The final verse, then, lyricizes Usher's awareness of the fictional nature of racial doubling that shapes his self-perception, implying that his negative sense of self is ultimately illusionary, too.

Moreover, having Usher "*tur*[*n*] *to the audience and fac*[*e*] *himself*" (96), *A Strange Loop* uses narrative metareferentiality to dramatize the racial doubling of the abstract black body. The stage direction marks a metalepsis by extending the process of double consciousness to the auditorium and entangles character and spectators. For Usher, to face himself, is to face the racial other that white hegemony projects on his queer Black body. Usher might not radically break the fourth wall, but the stage direction implicates the audience as active meaning-making agents in Usher's self-formation, rather than casting them in the role of passive dramatic observers as his direct address in the opening scene does. Once this implicit intrusion of the audience within the fiction has been established, Usher "[*f*]*aces his Thoughts*" and closes the play by singing that "IF THOUGHTS ARE JUST AN ILLUSION/ [...] THEN WHAT A STRANGE [...] STRANGE ... LOOP ..." (99). Clearly, the musical's finale song does not delineate a concrete alternative to Usher's present artistic stasis. As David Savran writes, the finale song: "rather than wrapping things up, leaves us only with the knowledge of the insubstantiality and ephemerality of ... everything" (221). However, dramatic change and closure are part of the realist tradition of white heteronormative integrated musicals, which formally enhance psychological realism because of their narrative linearity, while Usher wants to break free from that very tradition of representing Black life. *A Strange Loop*'s finale suggests that to deny the protagonist, and hence the audience, a sense of closure, let alone a definite answer as to how to change social reality, is a way of formal and ideological queering of the musical theater tradition.

5 Conclusion

This chapter's reading of *A Strange Loop* presents narrative metareferentiality as a productive dramaturgical object of study to explain the potential queer appeal of musical theater. Adopting a formalist approach has enabled me to demonstrate that lyric time can take on a narrative form with varying degrees of metareferentiality ranging from implicit to explicit. For instance, *A Strange Loop* sometimes references the integrated musical's psychological realist traditions of representation by employing implicit *mise en abymes*, even to the extent that Jackson could be accused of sustaining the self-racialization of double consciousness endlessly through repetitive songs. Nonetheless, lyric time in *A Strange Loop* more often takes on the form of explicit *mise en abymes*, which highlight the musical's hyperbole and artificiality, and serve to dramatize racial doubleness in the context of Black queerness. Yet, as my reading of "Tyler Perry Writes Real Life" illustrated, an aesthetics of excess does not always communicate a progressive stance towards queerness. The exaggerative quality of campy lyric time can also be used to make stereotypes more easily consumable for an audience, as is often the case in popular gospel plays but also in many mainstream Broadway musicals. However, Jackson's narrative metareferentiality permits that campy intervals do not lead to dramatic closure. Denying a clear answer as to how to change social reality queers the narrative's potential realist, teleological, and heteronormative messages in favor of hyperbolic, open-ended excess. Hence, my reading of *A Strange Loop* argues that the potential to queer the musical theater tradition depends very much on the dramaturgical effect to which narrative forms are put to use.

Jackson's Pulitzer Prize win as well as Lin-Manuel Miranda's win for his smash hit musical *Hamilton* (2015) and Daniel Fish's 2015 revival of Roger and Hammerstein's by-now classic integrated musical *Oklahoma!* with an ethnically diverse cast, suggest that Broadway might be – albeit slowly – rethinking its representational politics. Further research in musical theater studies could take up a formalist approach to explore if, and how, other politically self-aware musicals comment on, and potentially queer, musical theater traditions in the twenty-first century.

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SECTION 3

Narrativizing Music Through Different Media

Musical Stimulacra Are Narrative(s)

Music beyond Sound in Concert Program Notes

Ivan Delazari

Abstract

This chapter explores the contribution of verbal texts to the narrative potential of untexted music. It argues that concert program notes may conditionally become vehicles of musical narrativity insofar as their readers at classical music venues are prepared to identify the content of each annotation as the content of the annotated piece. Program notes are regarded as *musical stimulacra* (sic): they *stimulate* the readers' interest in the annotated music and encourage them to *simulate* each composition mentally. Providing readers with verbal narratives about the musical works on the program, these supplementary verbal surrogates of music can be considered as prompts or cues of musical narrativity because they affect the way listeners make sense of the performed compositions in storylike terms. Even a minimal impact of program notes on the readers' sensitivities may allow for classical music to be heard and remembered more distinctly than would otherwise be the case. The chapter addresses several samples from the St. Petersburg Philharmonia library collection of program notes to illustrate the basic narrative strategies program annotators adopt – most importantly, mapping the music on the background storyline of the composer's life and work and representing tonal procedures and features as acting and visible narrative entities.

1 Introduction

This chapter explores the contribution of verbal texts to the narrative potential of untexted music. It argues that concert program notes may conditionally become vehicles of musical narrativity insofar as their readers at classical music venues are prepared to identify the content of each annotation as the content of the annotated piece. Program notes are regarded as "musical stimulacra" (sic): they *stimulate* the readers' interest in the annotated music and encourage them to *simulate* each composition mentally before listening to it. Providing readers with verbal narratives about the musical works on the program, these optional, even marginal verbal surrogates of music can be considered as prompts or cues of narrativity in the music because they affect the way listeners make sense of the performed compositions in storylike terms. Even

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a minimal impact of program notes on the readers' sensitivities may allow for classical music, in the broadest sense of the term, to be heard and remembered more distinctly than would otherwise be the case. Once the audience establishes a connection between the annotation and the actual piece of music, the former begins to infuse and inform the latter with narrative elements that are much easier to memorize or reproduce in some form than the audible but complex form of a symphony or a concerto.

In its original sense, I delineated the concept of musical stimulacra as passages of *fiction* that, through narrative form or content, prompt readers to experience music vicariously, in a variedly intense mode of mental simulation (see Delazari xiv-xviii). Literary prose that features music-related subjects and/or imitates musical structures was theorized comprehensively in Werner Wolf's *The Musicalization of Fiction* (1999), which deliberately avoids reader-response issues. Rethinking "musicalized fiction" as "musical stimulacra" addresses those issues by leaning on the approaches to narrative immersion developed in cognitive narratology. If fiction engages readers with experiences from its imaginary universe, so do stories about music and musicians. Such stories, however, are not confined to literary narrative. This chapter extends the initial boundaries of musical stimulacra to embrace *non*-fictional accounts of music.

Unlike novels, concert program notes – leaflets or booklets distributed at classical music venues to introduce the audience to the performed repertory – are normally too short and fragmented to create immersive narrative storyworlds. Apart from listing the scheduled titles of musical works and movements, they often comprise biographical information about the composers, conductors, soloists, and orchestras as well as critical overviews of the pieces of music to be performed. As a handy reference source, such compilations invite selective browsing rather than close reading from beginning to end. The entire document may be quite stimulating for its reader's concert anticipations by identifying contributing parties (*characters*), outlining its schedule (*time*), and creating the general atmosphere of the event, but it is particularly the entries on individual pieces, under their eponymous headings, that may function as musical stimulacra. Either written by or adapted from professional musicologists, annotations to specific works are not meant to substitute the music textually (as the case tends to be with fiction), but they supplement it with a paratextual "threshold" of interpretation (cf. Genette 1–2) and, in that sense, determine the reader's perception of each corresponding piece. Writers of program notes construct a brief verbal narrative about the announced composition. By pointing out selected technical, affective, narrative, and contextual properties of the music, these annotations stimulate readers to build a mental image of the work to stand alongside the actual performance. Once some equivalence between the performed piece and the annotated subject is assumed, verbal and musical notes intermingle.

Every musical work has an origin story: how and why it was composed, how it relates to music history, who performs it first, and what makes it meaningful for the times to come. Yet among the infinite variety of phenomena that characterize the piece either literally, through the technical provisions of its score, or figuratively, by its presumable rapport with its creator's biographical circumstances (*metonymy*) and with any external imagery the music may resemble (*metaphor*), some of those phenomena are more narrative than others. For example, a celebrity's life is arguably more like a story than a single mental picture evoked by a particular musical phrase or a whole harmonic progression. Concert program annotations provide perceptual and interpretive aids for non-expert listeners of classical music by integrating the heterogeneous formal, semantic, and contextual aspects of musical compositions into a narrative model. That model might be neither correct nor exclusive, but it amplifies the audience's spontaneous narrativization of the music and channels it toward a more musicologically informed listening experience than a fleeting sequence of idiosyncratic "imaginary content analogies" (Wolf, *Musicalization* esp. 58). Musical stimulacra thus manipulate their readers. However, as the argument below aspires to demonstrate by addressing several samples from the St. Petersburg Philharmonia library collection of program notes, the manipulation does not ruin the music. Instead, those notes seek to serve as a mere point of departure for musical experience. Those in no need of such an aid are free to ignore it.

2 Theoretical Background

As Lawrence Kramer contends, two things we do to music apart from listening to it are to "mimic the music and [to] talk about it" (39). In a sense, composing and performing are forms of mimicking that are more elaborate than one's out-of-tune whistling, but verbal references to music also have their mimetic dimension. In a reading listener's embodied mind, the words about music trigger musical imagery and partake in a cognitive exchange with the "actual" experiences of (making sense of) music (see Delazari xvi, 14–5). Read in spatial and temporal proximity to the performance, program notes preview or echo the structured sound of the annotated piece.

Writers of fiction incorporate music into characters' lives and discursive techniques, which exposes readers to vicarious musical experiences through empathy and mental simulation. Passages that either render musical compositions, performances, and recollections or suggest analogies between textual and musical structures appeal to the reader's musical sensitivities. As a result, a mental image of music accumulates itself in the mind, which may further result in a strong urge to listen to actual music and thus intensify the musical impression (see Delazari 65).

The audience's desire to listen, which brings one to a music venue in the first place, may be buttressed by the printed materials shortly before it is satisfied by the concert per se. The perceptual presence of the performed work in the same setting in which perusal of the musical stimulacrum occurs gives program notes an extra charge of experientiality, so the writer's eloquence in inspiring musical imagery in the reader's mind is less decisive here than in a "musicalized" novel. The narrativity of music is thus mediated – even substituted and, in a sense, resolved – by the more readily narrative parameters of the annotation. Even if we reject Eero Tarasti's stance that music in general is "a fundamentally narrative art" by virtue of its constructive properties (283), it might be difficult to deny that any verbal description of particular music, including Tarasti's, will infuse it with narrative coordinates. In an expert's and a layperson's languages, signposts of some entities changing their states along the temporal dimension of music will inescapably be identified. In other words, the verbal (literary) medium, which Wolf considers as *strongly narrative* because it approaches prototypical narrative most closely on a gradable scale of narrativity ("Transmedial Narratology"; see also chapter 3 of this volume by Wolf), imposes its own storylike features on the music. The signs printed on the program pages will merge and interact with the sounds of the performance, shaping a common signified in the listener's mind. If we admit that language and narrative in general are pervasive cognitive tools of human understanding and memory, verbal narrativizations are one way of experiencing the non-verbal in a narrative way. Telling us a story about the music and/or decrypting a story the music itself might be telling us, concert annotations supplement the music without replacing it and affect our musical experience by making it more definite and memorable.

The "Triangular Iceberg of Musical Experience" model (Delazari 21) attempts to reconcile some opposing philosophies of music and its narrative potential by mapping them onto a common terrain. The model indicates that physical sound – the most widely accessible form of music – is only the tip of the iceberg (A). In Roman Ingarden's phenomenological (10–15) and Roger Scruton's analytic (74–5) aesthetics, the musical work is divorced from its performance: somewhat counterintuitively, music is *not* sound at all but something entirely *beyond* sound. Below the water surface, the base of the "Iceberg" triangle stretches between its other two apices: one conceptualizes music as metaphorical movement of tonal entities through an abstract acousmatic space guided by a purely formal logic (B), while the other translates the sonic signals (A) and the tonal procedures (B) into concrete cinematic images closest to conventional narratives – with characters and events in imaginary storyworld settings (C). Unlike the definitions of music prioritizing among those extremes, the "Triangular Iceberg" model suggests that actual listening experiences are negotiations of all three, in proportions determined by the listener's musical background and formal training.

The three sides of musical experience are neither isolated nor mutually excluding. In fact, there is a circularity to the way they are inter-translatable, which could be illustrated by the following *Bildungs*-metanarrative:

- A child is exposed to musical sounds along with all other noises (A).
- The child learns to tell musical sounds from non-musical ones within a given musical culture and use metaphorical language to describe it, e.g. "high" and "low", "Peter", or "wolf" in the eponymous Sergey Prokofiev (A+C).
- At another stage of musical education, the young person might be introduced to performance practices and such abstract notions as notes, melodies, scales, chords, keys, registers, dynamics, and progressions (B+A).
- In learning more about music, the person faces figurative language describing sounds and formal elements through emotional context and narrative imagery, usually through explanatory verbalization, e.g. "the invasion theme returns" in Dmitri Shostakovich's *Seventh Symphony* or "here comes the opera section" in QUEEN's "Bohemian Rhapsody" (B+C+A).
- If one proceeds to acquire the performative and perceptive skills of a music professional – composer, critic, theorist, and so on – the acousmatic hearing displaces the acoustic and cinematic ones as redundant, and a silent study of the score may suffice (B).

Other anecdotal trajectories could be drawn to illustrate the same theoretical point. For example, the trajectory above may include replacement of the Western diatonic idiom with an alternative one, up to the extreme end of the spectrum where one recognizes any combination of accidental sounds registered under given conditions as music (a total relapse to A). As such, it is clear that the "Iceberg" angles are interdependent; they engage in forms of interconnected, circular motion.

An important consequence of the circularity of this model is that a similar motion exists in verbalizations of music, where the three components of musical experience are manifest in vocabulary and grammar. We may notice that even the abstract language of music theory is never purely descriptive and retains a degree of narrativity insofar as sentences with subjects and verbs notate certain events, and melodic parts and harmony are said to interact.

Scored timbral properties and dynamic characteristics of sound are also the subjects of such refined descriptions. Additionally, less technical narrativizations of a musical piece by a “naïve listener” deeply touched by it emotionally also exist. These often reflect some of the “objective” structural logic that the piece reveals to an advanced expert.

In fiction, musicology, or casual conversation, verbal renditions of music also reflect that fundamental complexity of how music functions in human life. Music is never just pure sound, pure form, or pure story. Musical events are bound to verbal and visual, historical and geographical, social and emotional contexts. Words do enter our experience of listening to music, and no refined abstract thinking about music can be achieved without language and narrative. Framed with words, sounds become more structured, musical ideas more explicit, and dormant stories emerge to make music more meaningful to even the most abstract-minded of us.

Concert program annotations are targeted primarily at laypersons, but nonetheless interested listeners. Such an annotation typically contains some background information about and a reduced approximation of the musical work, pointing out climactic moments and offering a general model to structure the listening. The aid is optional: not everyone purchases the program and reads it, while those who do might be affected by it in fairly different ways. At the end of the night, though, the notes contribute to keeping music around.

3 Note on Corpus

Concert annotations differ across musicological cultures and individual venues. Instead of hypothesizing what could be found in such annotations globally, this chapter leans on partial archival research into the program leaflets and booklets collected at the Library of St. Petersburg Academic Philharmonia named after D. D. Shostakovich. How do annotators – anonymous compilers and prominent musicologists – represent music in such notes? Do they always narrativize it while simultaneously attempting to be faithful to a potential narrative outline stipulated by formal parameters of the score, or do their verbal reproductions of music digress from the score to extra-musical phenomena? The answers to these questions formulated in this study are neither universal nor statistically verified, since its material is local and processing methods are restricted to my close reading of a selection of annotations. Yet even several hundred fragments devoted to specific musical works demonstrate particular trends that are summarized in the subsequent sections and illustrated with a few examples.

The St. Petersburg Philharmonia Library holds a complete stock of concert program leaflets and brochures from the centennial history of the concert hall, which was established by the Bolshevik cultural authorities in 1921. When the former St. Petersburg Noble Assembly building was turned into a public music performance venue, the Bolsheviks regarded it as a powerful means of providing the working class with the best of its former exploiters' high culture. As the first Philharmonia chief conductor Nikolai Andreyevich Malko explains in 1928, the concert hall opened access to symphony orchestra music to mass audiences (9–10). To accomplish that enlightenment project, concerts became supplemented with introductory lectures by musicologists, serialized according to trends and themes in music history, and supplied with printed materials to equip listeners with a vocabulary for claiming the Western music heritage. Not every Philharmonia program dating back a hundred years contains annotations of all items on each night's repertoire, and the layout and size of the annotations vary over time. However, the annotating standard set by the founding father of Soviet musicology Boris Asafiev, alias Igor Glebov, in the 1920s and 30s, is still traceable in the extracts and compilations from contemporary music critics in the recent Philharmonia booklets.

Asafiev's multi-page critical brochures on Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, and Glazunov were enclosed with the program listings on the nights when those composers' works were performed. They were reprinted for as long as the state-funded Philharmonia could afford it, under the label of its own press, nationalized as everything else was in the Soviet Union. As the concert repertoire increased while the state funding did not, program leaflets between the 1940s and 90s would be supplemented with just one or two very short annotations covering only part of the night's repertoire, depending on which compositions had corresponding annotations in stock, and giving no credit to writers. In the late 1990s, glossy colorful brochures sponsored by private and corporate advertisers replaced the minimalist leaflets, now leaving more space to performers' accolades and photographs than to musicological remarks on the performed works. Still, the inclusion of such annotations has been Philharmonia's consistent institutional policy all along. Since this chapter's focus is on narratological and not historical issues, diachronic trends in the annotating styles are considered here only insofar as they affect the notes' narrative features. While some of those features recur, a certain standard of what to listen *for* is set and passed over to the audience.

The patterns discussed below are inferred from the Philharmonia main stage (*Bolshoi zal*) programs of 1921, 1969, and 2019. The three years are samples of a century-long history that were randomly chosen as representations of its early, middle, and present periods. The findings below appear to delineate those narrative characteristics of program annotations that are not subject to historical, socio-economic, or other contextual constraints. No statistical methods to quantify and subdivide them into classes of a comprehensive typology have been applied. For now, it suffices to indicate that the collection at the library or any similar stock of annotated concert programs may provide more precise and formalized data on how music is narrativized. The following sections only contain prolegomena for a more comprehensive study. They display two features that concert program annotations impose on instrumental music, whose immanent narrativity, as this volume's Part I attests, has always been subject to some doubt.

4 Program Notes as Embedded Narratives of Biography and Creation

The narrative scenario we repeatedly encounter in the Philharmonia program notes presents musical works as embedded narratives with several narratorial entities claiming to communicate to the reader and listener directly. The fact that each annotation is narrated by a critic or compiler tends to be camouflaged by the annotator's status as a non-fictionist. The music – the subject matter of program notes – is real, as the concert performance is expected to demonstrate shortly. The composer who wrote it is real too, as the dates and facts across the notes efficiently testify. Judgments and assertions about the music become automatically charged with a degree of the same factuality. The annotator pretends to be absent from such an objectivistic account of the musical work and delegates narratorial responsibilities to a represented subject – most typically, the annotated composer as the character of his own life and narrator in his own music.[1] The writer of the notes relates biographical data about the composer as unmediated facts, which the composer "tells" by living them through and reflecting them in music. As a result, the reader is encouraged to transcend the act of reading momentarily and occupy a receptive position within the realm of the annotation, whose storyworld is supposed to be a past state of the real world the reader also inhabits. Thus, composers become diegetic narrators speaking directly to listeners in a musical language, which annotations pre-translate to readers for smooth concert communication. This habitual manipulation, of which both the writers and the readers may well remain unaware, convinces the reader that the annotation is authorized to speak on the composer's behalf. The story of how and why the composer came to create the piece intermingles with the story *in* the piece even though no explicit claim is made that those two stories are identical. The reader is now encouraged to take an engaged position with respect to the narrative the music tells and acquire the unique emotional, cultural, and historical experience the music is said to transmit. Anything that might be fictional in either the music or its verbal narrativization is circumnavigated by the deliberate obscuring of the embedded structure. The embeddedness is hidden by the annotator because they insist on their reliance on biographical and historical data as well as the actual music score.

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[1] In the three-year sample, there is not a single female composer performed on the main stage of the Philharmonia, hence "his".

A critic may thus prescribe grammatically that the listener's supposed emotions are the properties of the work itself, whereby the reader is challenged to experience them for real. Consider Marina Malkiel's 2019 exegesis of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's violin concerto in D major: "In the first movement, what is felt is not anthemic delight but nervous excitement. It then finds a resolution in the sorrowful Canzonette" (6).[2] The figure of the experiencer is hidden in the passive voice, but the reader is unmistakably the one who is prescribed to feel what is rendered as objective properties of the music. The reader's assumed position as a concert audience member determines by default that the borders between the musical storyworld and the listener's feelings are transparent. We are assigned the role of a participatory witness to the musical story, where, predictably, the composer is our interlocutor and the major storytelling entity in charge. The narrativity in this example is only weakly induced, as is the case with the medium of instrumental music in general. Or, to put it in Wolf's terms, in both Tchaikovsky and Malkiel, narrativity mainly relies on a "core narreme" of experientiality (see "Transmedial Narratology" 261–2, 279).

Two extra considerations are relevant to this case. First, in Monika Fludernik's celebrated and widely disputed "natural" narratology, experientiality is not *a* core but *the* core of narrativity. It is an important foundation to musical narrativity (see Hauer) competing with Tarasti's structuralist and Wolf's transmedial categories ("Transmedial Narratology"). Once the opening of Tchaikovsky's concerto is associated with "nervous excitement" and the "Canzonette" is identified as "sorrowful" (Malkiel 6), it no longer matters what exactly happens in the hypothetic storyworld to induce those emotional states. The experience is communicated, so its seminal details such as particular actions/events and agents/characters are replaced irreversibly with their affective substitutes.

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[2] Program booklets have no pagination. For this chapter, pages are numbered skipping the "cover" with the photo and logo of the hall and starting from the left side page of the first spreadsheet. Where annotations come separately from the program on two- or four-page sheets enclosed, the reconstructed pagination starts from the beginning of the sheet.

The narrative of internal experience overrides its external narrative cause. Second, in Malkiel's verbalization of the Tchaikovsky, Wolf's other basic narremes of representationality and meaningfulness are delivered: Tchaikovsky's movement represents the composer's as well as our own feelings, which are meaningful to us insofar as we experience them. Grammatically, the annotator omits the feeling subjects, reattributing the emotions to a musical storyworld as its objectified events. The affects of excitement and sorrow are *what happens in* the music: they are now the *facts* of the Tchaikovsky concerto, not its arbitrary *effects* on the audience. Yet by naming the feelings, the text implies the feeling subjects and encourages the reader to enact the emotions in subsequent listening, when each affective event is to occur in the performed work itself.

Annotations habitually open with an indication of the causal connection between the composer and the music: biographical information about the composer is incorporated into all of them. In biographical emplotment, which is the most obvious technique of narrativizing instrumental music (see Kivy 3–4; Neubauer 120), the composer is the implied narrator of and the overt character in the (auto)biographical story the annotator ascribes to him. The narrated experience may well be musical, since, after all, composition is a large part of a composer's life. At stake are the composer's feelings expressed in and motored by the music: it is not that a feeling comes first, and then it is signified musically, but it crystallizes *in* the music, to which the event of creation is essential.

The Philharmonia program notes suggest that the main interpretive key to classical music for popular educational use is borrowed from the Romantic Age: the work is fundamentally a portal to the personality of a genius, though it does not tell us what the genius liked for breakfast. Instead, as Asafiev puts it in his brochure reused in several Philharmonia seasons featuring Tchaikovsky's orchestral repertoire, music both encrypts "the main line of [Tchaikovsky's] creative development" and provides a clue to "the crypts and stashes of his life" (Glebov 3). There is an ideal correlation, even equivalence, between the composer's life and his *oeuvre*. In Asafiev, this correlation rests on the concept of *symphonism*, which is neither a generic feature of all symphonies nor an instrumentational quality of orchestral works but the omnipresent "organic development", a correlation between "quantitative multiplicity and qualitative tension", i.e., "the main impetus of musical motion […] striving to restore the rhythmic, dynamic, and tonal balance of sound that is being repeatedly violated" (Glebov 5). The terms in which Asafiev defines symphonism are abstract but narrative, even narratological: like a story, "musical texture is nothing but a combination of incessant alterations between balance – violation of balance – restoration of balance" (Glebov 5). Life maintains the same pattern, and the composer's mind functions accordingly. Thus music, somewhat counterintuitively, determines and objectifies the composer's accidental experiences and personal emotions. Asafiev's section on Tchaikovsky's works depicts Tchaikovsky's compositional practices on particular occasions as contributions to a grand metanarrative beyond the composer's control: while the "explosive flexibility of the first theme in the opening movement of the *Fourth Symphony* strives to avoid a cadence completion", the "disturbing image of the hostile external power, so distinct in the *Fourth* and *Fifth Symphonies,* has disappeared completely from the *Sixth,* which was finished shortly before the composer's death" (Glebov 13, 18). Symphonism embeds the life of a composer. For example, Tchaikovsky, who narrates his version and part of that grand design in his individual works, is a character in his own music.

In later program notes by Philharmonia annotators, such as the anonymous 1968 introduction of Ludwig van Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony enclosed with the concert program of 1 June 1969 ("Людвиг ван Бетховен"), the profound assumptions of Asafiev's organicist phenomenology of music are reproduced rather reductively, whereupon the transcendental narrative of universal symphonism disappears behind the composer's more mundane self. The annotator regards the *Sixth Symphony* as a chapter in the unfolding story of Beethoven's "life and work", to use a critical cliché, in which events are individual compositions created under specific circumstances. For example, Beethoven's birdsong is presented as though it was once truly Beethoven's own experience that he later supposedly narrated in the famous *Pastoral* score. Readers of the program notes thus assume that Beethoven's music in performance allows them to vicariously witness the life of its creator, both as a genius and a rural walker. A series of structural repeats, twists and turns of themes, rhythms, dynamics, and timbres all become the composer's narratorial self-projections. The narrative is intersubjective – so that when the annotator renders its plot, it is "man", not "Beethoven", who "leaves town, walks the forest, rests near a stream, and hears the voices of birds" ("Людвиг ван Бетховен" 1). In short, what program notes never fail to do is to place a human subject into the narrative center of the musical action and offer the reader and/as listener to identify with a diegetic stance in the musical story, which belongs initially to the composer. To facilitate the flow of narrative imagery, St. Petersburg Philharmonia programs from the 1990s to this day publish composers' portraits. The journey of listening to music integrates the experience of looking into the composer's eyes, while the story expressed in program notes is the one that the composer simultaneously narrates, stage-directs, and acts in, through melodic figures and harmonic moves.

With less overtly programmatic pieces, correlations between sound, form, and narrative imagery are still readily found, while the biographical embedding is always at hand to provide specific historical clues to symphonic narratives. For example, Sergey Slonimsky's 1966 annotation of Prokofiev's *Sixth Symphony*, which we find enclosed with the concert listing of 5 October 1969, reproduces the standard narrative of Shostakovich's *Seventh*: in the opening movement, listeners are assigned to hear a struggle between German military marches and a Russian folk song standing for the people's resistance to invaders depicted in an "invasion theme" (Slonimsky 2), while Prokofiev's operas are mentioned (Slonimsky 3) to map the noted musical features on the storyline of the composer's overall creative development.

In a sense, program notes provide non-programmatic, absolute music compositions with what program music composers such as Richard Strauss or Hector Berlioz achieve in their paratextual cues about *Don Quixote* or *Symphonie fantastique* respectively, namely a functional narrative grid that a non-expert listener may utilize for parsing, interpreting, and emoting a piece of music much more intensively than by confronting it without such a narrative tool. Music philosophers may condemn such reliance on biographical listening as primitive or irrelevant (see Kivy 4; Scruton 144–5), but such standard musical stimulacra allow a non-expert audience to enter and experience classical music from the narrative corner (C) of the "Triangular Iceberg of Musical Experience" – an open door for some listeners that they might miss otherwise. In the Soviet musicological tradition, the composer's life and work are seen as different but mutually translatable parts of the same story, so biographical bias is not particularly seen as a digression from the music.

5 Musical Stimulacra as Negotiations Among Visual, Formal, and Sonic Entities

Annotations are not only external narratives of biography and creation: like fictional musical stimulacra, each tends to include portions of information from the other two apices of the "Iceberg". Addressing their presumably non-expert readership, program notes do use some technical terminology to account for the music's abstract form and refer to the expected auditory properties of the performed piece.

Stating that "unexpected tonal modulations are similar to sudden turns of the pathway that open unexpected perspectives on the same landscape" in the first movement of Beethoven's *Sixth* ("Людвиг ван Бетховен" 2), the annotator orients the reader toward an integrated listening of the symphony as a narrative of landscape watching. The tonal events on the acousmatic side of musical experience are claimed to parallel familiar perceptive acts of a countryside *flaneur*. Contrary to Asafiev's musical essentialism, the music here is secondary to some tellable experience, whose hypothetical significance to the original experiencer – Beethoven himself – is long gone, but whose power to endure depends on the listener's capacity to reproduce mentally the same course of events and have the feelings those events evoke. Affecting the listener with what once might have been the composer's joys and sorrows now detached from his biographical self, music acquires the power to perpetuate experiences and transport its audiences to other times and places outside the concert hall at any moment of listening. "In the incessant flow of sporadic motifs, in the endless playing of the strings the immersive musical images arise" ("Людвиг ван Бетховен" 2): abstract notions are paired with specific sonorities associated with familiar instruments and more pastoral imagery of dancing peasants or waving trees joins in to complete the stimulacrum. In a single sentence, readers are taken naturally from sound to form to concrete image, witnessing Beethoven's thunder, lightning, and rainfall through orchestral fortissimo in the fourth movement. Narrativizing the fifth movement, the annotation registers a structural closure, equipping the listener to recall and retell the story of Beethoven's *Pastoral*. The effect of an average annotation is thus to draw our attention to the music by convincing us that even the visual imagery we may generate in mind-wandering is already there in the musical storyworld, and that in seeing things through sound, we are not distracted from but faithful to the musical essence of the piece, whose images, moods, events, and formal elements are scored and stored narratively *in* that music.

In the grammar and syntax of musical stimulacra, themes, motifs, and sonorities are said and pictured to perform various acts on each other, sometimes interchangeably, so every musical composition outlines a narrative track with a beginning, middle, and end embedded in the composer's life, his oeuvre, and music history. Fighting the stereotype that classical music is an esoteric mystery for the chosen few, musical stimulacra keep moving it toward a narrative clarity via words even though, in a strict sense, that clarity is a lie.

In light of the educational ambitions behind Philharmonia programming, the metamusical narrative is meant to be built from individual works by individual composers, so composers' names often stand for trends and styles of music. While noting down intertextual patterns, quotations, and allusions between Russian and Western musical idioms and presenting each composer's work as a contribution to the master narrative of classical music, concert programs apply their rhetorical arsenal to construct a less personalized musical history that comprises various stories on such foundations as, for instance, the use of certain instruments. For example, in Vladimir Goryachikh's annotation to the concert program of 11 January 2019, the main character is the cello. Instead of two separate stories centered on the composers Tchaikovsky and Vielgorsky, whose cello works were performed that day, Goryachikh relates one story about the musical instrument on display that evening. As a result of such narrative combination, the composers are both either characters or episodes in the story told by and about the cello. The instrument, which is defined by its unique sonority, is also the source of the musical material, not vice versa: we are asked to listen for and recognize its voice, which provides the root for the story in each composition. Instead of exploiting the cinematic imagery from apex C of the "Triangular Iceberg" in another narrative of biography and creation, Goryachikh privileges the physical sound tip (A) of the Iceberg. The musical stimulacrum the writer constructs is filled with timbre, register, and dynamic characteristics of the cello. Such a defamiliarizing narrative strategy allows the annotator to restructure the audience's expectations in accordance with the thematic intention of the concert producers: the instrument is to speak for itself as diegetic narrator in the audience's presence, where they would normally be overshadowed by the composer's narratorial self. The material history of musical sound foregrounded in those notes, which appear to be quite exceptional,[3] resists the idealistic and essentialist aesthetics of pure music as sublime force of profoundly immaterial nature. The romantic myth of great composers as the only worthy heroes in music history is supplemented with a celebration of the actual sound and craft of the cello.

Goryachikh's deliberate transfiguration of two independent compositions into a narrative cycle featuring the cello as their common protagonist still focuses on the music, switching the reader's attention from the composers' lives each work is normally believed to express to a new sonic outline emerging through the concert program compilation. In that sense, Iosif Raiskin's introduction of Philip Glass' *Second Violin Concerto* to the Philharmonia concert attendees on 19 February 2019, is an even more radical exception notable in the light of this volume's interest in contemporary music (*see especially the discussions of Steve Reich's narrativity in Part IV*). Raiskin's reference is purely to musical form on the acousmatic end (B) of the "Iceberg". He contends that any minimalist composition is "assembled from an incessantly flowing sequence of gradually shifting patterns" (5). The rest of the annotation is the story of when, where, and how Glass composed the piece, so no attempt was made at connecting the sides of the "Iceberg" into a musical stimulacrum. As a result, the annotation is what the program notes skeptics would argue all program notes are: a disposable addition to the music, a distraction from serious listening.

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[3] In 1921, 1969, and 2019, no other instrument-themed programs were on the Philharmonia's listings.

Had the Philharmonia accommodated more contemporary repertory on top of its habitual classics, annotations in the form of bio notes on composers rather than musical stimulacra integrating life and music would probably be more common. Raiskin's refusal to narrativize Glass' score may be related to the doctrine about minimalism's non-narrativity – an existing stereotype that other chapters in this volume also undermine. Suffice it here to give one contradictory example to this common belief, namely Glass' stable success as a film composer, whose music contributes highly to its respective films' narrativity. In addition, the conceptual limitation Scruton establishes with respect to his central concept of the acousmatic space is that the internal logic of the tonal movement in that space only works for the diatonic idiom, where tones do necessitate, presuppose, and direct one another (see Scruton 281, 285) – quite narratively, as we have noticed. Even though Glass's idiom is generally diatonic, his tonal developments are aborted through repetition, so there is indeed little Raiskin could tell his readers about the music that would not be heard immediately in the musical texture itself – a self-evident recurrence of elements that could be associated with anything at all but nothing in particular beyond their own sound. Of the three sides of the "Triangular Iceberg" – namely, the sound, the form, and the concrete narrative imagery – only the form, the "gradually shifting patterns" (Raiskin 5), remains relevant to the musical experience.

6 Conclusion

The program notes accompanying thousands of performances that took place in St. Petersburg Philharmonia activate the narrative potential of music through musical stimulacra. A comparison between program notes and music-representing passages of fiction may reveal more similarities than differences. However, one difference is perhaps that the musical works are performed subsequent to their verbal surrogates in space and time. As such, the annotations on concert programs might impact their readers more directly and efficiently since many of the entities those notes render can be matched with actual phenomena happening promptly in the concert hall. Still, similar to musical stimulacra in novels that "have no obligations of being faithful to their 'originals'" (Delazari 138), the sections of the program leaflets or brochures that thematize each work directly never attempt to reconstruct the composition in full. Instead, they tend to alternate between the composer's life story and the most memorable turning points in the musical structure to make a consistent and continuous narrative out of both. Emotions that readers are "programmed" to experience while listening to the piece are attributed to the music itself. As a result, a typical communicative frame linking the composer as sender, the music as medium, and the audience as receiver of a narrative message emerges and is maintained throughout the annotation. Program notes are not novels, but despite their unexciting musicological origins and documentary, almost archival status, they seek to be no less appealing and immersive than their fictional counterparts.

The narrative language of program annotations as stimulacra addresses all the aspects of musical experience shown in the "Triangular Iceberg" (see Delazari 21). Most commonly, metaphorical and technical expressions of the annotation serve to build a connection between the music and its creator's biographical and artistic stance. In that case, both the concrete imagery invoked by tonal events and the abstract properties of form inferred from the score are related to stages of the composer's life and work. Now and then, references to timbral properties of musical sound made by certain instruments also contribute to that typical narrative design otherwise focused on the composer. On rare occasions, the focus shifts to a foregrounding of purely musical elements in special topic concert programs – for example, those devoted to musical instruments. Even though most annotations are biased in favor of classical score creators, they do not normally confine themselves to the role of mere biographical entries. Annotators aspire to have music and life inform one another and to tune the reader's expectations toward several aspects of musical experience. Listening to the same music would be different without reading those words. Mimicking the music mentally while going through its abbreviated verbal supplement, readers find new ways of making instrumental sound relevant to the stories in their minds. The favor may be returned, once the audience hears the work resonating with its verbal preview, so that the musical stimulacrum is true.

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Music and Narrative in Art Exhibition Audio Guides

"Beckmann & Amerika"

Jarmila Mildorf

Abstract

The texts presented in audio guides for art exhibitions constitute an interesting textual genre: they mix biographical storytelling with art history and ekphrasis. The role of music in audio guides has not received major scholarly attention, especially not in connection with its narrative functions. Mostly, audio guides are viewed from functional and pragmatic, rather than aesthetic, perspectives. After a general discussion of aspects of audio guide listening, this chapter focuses on a selection of audio guide texts that were used in conjunction with music for pictures in the exhibition "Beckmann & Amerika", shown at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt from October 2011 to January 2012 and subsequently published in catalogue-cum-audio format by Hatje Cantz.

The audionarratological analysis reveals how music is employed sparingly but quite to a purpose in the examples, also fulfilling intriguing narrative functions. Thus, they serve, for instance, as an abstract to the narrative or as a complex thematic bracket. The music may "double" or amplify what the audio guide narrative says; it may also serve as a bridge or transition between different narrative parts. These "syntactic" and "semantic" functions ultimately contribute to an *artistic* deployment of music even in the pragmatic narrative genre of audio guide texts.

1 Introduction

The texts presented in audio guides for art exhibitions constitute an interesting textual genre because they mix biographical storytelling about the artist's life with art history and ekphrasis, i.e., a verbal description of the painting at hand. The art piece itself may *tell a story*.[1] In that sense, audio guides can be said to combine documentary with fictional aspects and descriptive with narrative textual strategies. The role of music in audio guides has not received major scholarly attention, especially not in connection with its narrative functions. Some exceptions are Maria Elisa Fina's (2017) study about the role of music

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[1] Whether pictorial art can narrate is a question hotly debated among narratologists and art critics. For an overview, see Wolf, "Das Problem der Narrativität".

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in city audio guides in English and Italian and my (Jarmila Mildorf's) (2016) discussion of an audio guide used in an art exhibition about Gustave Courbet.

Presumably, audio guides are mostly viewed from pragmatic, rather than aesthetic perspectives and the music used in audio guides – if music is used at all – is perhaps considered largely ornamental or as mere background music. In this chapter, I want to set straight such misconceptions by demonstrating how artistic the use of music can be even in such pragmatic and informative genres such as audio guide texts. The case study presented in this chapter comprises audio guide texts that were used for pictures in the exhibition "Beckmann & Amerika". The exhibition was shown at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt from October 2011 to January 2012 and displayed pictures that Max Beckmann (1884–1950) had painted while living in America in his later life. I draw on recordings of these audio guide texts that were made available, together with copies of the paintings they discuss, in book form in the multimedial book series *Kunst zum Hören* published by Hatje Cantz.[2] The book does not contain any written descriptions. The aim of this publication format is to offer a quasi catalogue of the exhibition while also conveying a sense of how visitors received the information during the actual exhibition. Of course, when listening to the recordings, one is no longer immersed in the spatiotemporal context of the original exhibition. I will comment on the significance of that context below. Still, one forms an impression of the connection between audio guide text and painting, and it certainly becomes possible to explore how and at which points music was used in the audio guide.

After a general discussion of phenomenological aspects surrounding audio guide listening and some reflections on what is needed when analysing music in audio guides, I will discuss in some depth the few instances when music occurred in the guided tour of Beckmann's paintings. I will draw on audionarratology (Mildorf and Kinzel, *Audionarratology, Narrating Sounds*; Mildorf, *Aural World-Making*; Bernaerts and Mildorf) as a methodological toolkit to analyse the interfaces between music and narrative in the examples and to discuss the impact music has on narrative trajectories and framing, mood and characterization.

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[2] The texts were written by Ursula Vorwerk and spoken by Christian Redl. Steffi Herrmann and Mingus Ballhaus directed the recordings, and Lutz Oldemeier served as the producer. The CDs were burnt at KMS Kafitz Medienservice. This line-up already indicates what a complex medium audio guides are and that it is exceedingly difficult to ascribe *authorship* to any one single person unless one focuses very narrowly on verbal text or other individual components of audio guides alone.

2 Preliminary Reflections: Listening to Audio Guides as a Special Auditory Experience

Listening to audio guides seems to be an activity targeted primarily at one's auditory sense perception or audioception. However, it is better understood as a corporeal and therefore multisensory activity (see Schulze). One does not listen to the audio guide text in a vacuum, even though one could say that the intimate listening situation usually involving headphones does create some kind of sound *bubble*. However, even this *bubble* is situated in a three-dimensional space and a specific moment in time, and listeners are always positioned physically as well as emotionally in a particular way vis-à-vis the art object they look at. In fact, one need not even be in a static position while listening to a text about a specific piece of art. Listeners may, and often do, move about in front of the object or painting, or they already begin moving towards the next object while the text for the previous object is just about to finish. One can conceive of listeners' mobility as a spacing and re-spacing that creates constantly changing sound layers. At each viewing position that listeners assume, they will inevitably be confronted with other, extraneous noises, voices and various other sensual stimuli that may distract them and potentially interfere with the audio recording. Other people's talk and movements, obstacles to one's visual perception of the art object, olfactory stimuli such as the mustiness of a room, even the perception of other human bodies in close vicinity all contribute to a complex multisensory experience while one is listening to and hoping to concentrate on what is said in the audio guide. Listeners' attention must therefore be factored in when considering the narratives that unfold in audio guides.

The actual listening experience itself is already quite complex. Drawing on Rolf Großman's concept of "auditory dispositives",[3] which seeks to foreground the material conditions of the listening experience, Holger Schulze breaks those dispositives down into spatial, temporal and narrative ones in the context of audio guide listening. He argues that "we attune ourselves to a mixed media constellation of (a) materially fixed recorded objects, their reverberation time in recorded space and its specific reflections, and (b) of a technical apparatus with its specific means of sound transmission and reproduction" (Schulze 198). These two dimensions of the audio guide text and the medium by which it is transmitted are further embedded in the architectural space of the venue, which may lead to all manner of expected or unexpected side effects, as I pointed out above.

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[3] The term "dispositive" goes back to Michel Foucault (1976), who writes of dispositives of power, by which he means a conglomeration of assumptions and conceptual preconditions, tacit or openly expressed, against the background of which discourses and social interactions unfold.

Walking through this architectural space also has a temporal dimension to it as each visitor chooses his or her own pace. Schulze maintains that "as we are moving our concentration wanders, digresses and re-focuses according to the speed, the rhythm, and the environment of our movement" (202). What he leaves out in his discussion is the way in which the audio guide recording also expands the space-time parameters of the here and now of the museum or gallery exhibition. When immersing themselves into an audio guide story, listeners are invited to imaginatively move into another time and space, namely those of the artist's life world and the context of the art piece's production. Furthermore, the art piece itself may depict or reference a particular moment in time and location, thus adding yet another, imaginative spatiotemporal layer to the reception experience.

The order in which art pieces are looked at also entails a specific timeline. Usually there is a system to the way in which exhibits are presented to visitors, e.g., in thematic clusters or in chronological order. However, visitors may obviously flaunt a predetermined *course* or *direction* and look at art pieces in reverse or even random order. This may ultimately change any potential narrative trajectory that the original order was meant to put in place and may thus create new, unintended trajectories.

When it comes to the "narrative dispositive" in audio guide listening, Schulze acknowledges the fact that audio guides make us listen to narratives, although he does not specify what he means by that term. He seems to be mostly concerned with how sounds can function as "actors" (203) and how sound recordings' "corporeal and kinaesthetic agency" (204) may affect listeners physically and psychologically. And yet, it is precisely the experience of such corporeal and kinaesthetic agency that begs the question how exactly sounds, music, voices and silence create such effects and, more importantly for the context of my discussion, how they intersect with narrative structures in audio guides as I sketchily laid them out above. I want to approach these questions by applying the methodological framework of "audionarratology", which I explain further in the next section.

3 Audionarratology

Till Kinzel and Mildorf (*Audionarratology*) proposed audionarratology as a new subcategory of narratology to take into focus the interface between sounds and narrative. They saw a lacuna in narrative studies, where transmedial approaches had primarily taken into view visual or audio-visual media and genres such as, for example, graphic fiction, film and TV series, video games, vlogs, the theatre and opera, or verbal storytelling in digital formats such as fanfiction, hyperfiction and social media (see, for example, Elleström; Friedmann; Mueller and Rajaram; Page; Thon). The visual bias in transmedial narratology has persisted to this day, and Mildorf and Kinzel (*Audionarratology, Narrating Sounds*) argued and continue to argue that much can be learned from paying attention to *sound-only* media and genres (see also Bernaerts and Mildorf).

Notable exceptions have been the fields of narrative and music and, broader still, word and music studies (see, among many others, Döhl and Feige; Gess and Honold; Grabócz; Meelberg; Mildorf, "Musik"; Wolf, "Literature and Music"), to which the present volume also contributes, and which is one important scholarly inspiration for audionarratology, alongside sound studies and radio drama narratology. However, unlike narrative and music studies, audionarratology seeks to cover sounds in their various manifestations, e.g., structured sounds (music, spoken language) vs. unstructured sounds (noises, laughter and other paraverbal forms of expression), natural sounds (voices, animal sounds, sounds in nature) vs. artificial or technologically created sounds (instrumental music, sounds of machines) and of course silence as the usually significant absence of sound.

Even though existing work in audionarratology in recent years has largely focused on radio drama as an art form that exclusively employs sound (see, for example, Mildorf, "Sounding Postmodernity", "Music and Politics", "Ja, ja, so schön klingt das Schreckliche", "Auricularization and Narrative-Epistemic Stance"), the original scope of audionarratology has always been more comprehensive and has also included what one may call pragmatic or nonfictional genres and media such as audio guides, documentary radio features or interviews, for example. As I shall argue in this chapter, audio guides in fact illustrate very nicely how the boundaries between informing and entertaining, fact and fiction, life and art can become blurred and what music can contribute towards this. Before I move on to the discussion of my examples, I would like to say a few words about what is needed when studying music in audio guides.

4 Analysing Music in Audio Guides

In order to analyse music in audio guides, it can be helpful to draw on existing research on the use of music in radio drama (De Benedictis; Hobl-Friedrich; Huwiler 60–62; Mildorf and Verhulst; Verhulst and Mildorf) and in film

(Kloppenburg) because this scholarly work offers some technical vocabulary and reflections on narrative functions of music.

One of the key questions one needs to address from the start is how words and music are related to one another in audio guides. This can be looked at on a thematic level, whereby the main focus is on how words and music co-construct the narrative and what each of these elements contributes to it. One can also consider words and music in terms of their structural relationship, e.g., concerning their positioning in the background or foreground or their overall distribution ratios across the audio guide text. Many audio guides do not make use of music at all. Given what I said above about audio guides' demands on attention, one can see why music may be employed sparsely at best: since both spoken words and music call for audioceptive processing in the brain, their parallel or synchronous usage may become another source of distraction or mental overload.

Another question concerns the choice of music. Producers may draw on existing music or they may commission composers to write original pieces. Needless to say, the latter option is more costly and therefore presumably not as widespread. The music may be selected from a particular style or genre, e.g., pop or classical music, jazz, folklore and others. The choice of genre is inevitably bound up with the thematic thrust of the narrative told in the audio guide and the kind of mood the audio guide seeks to convey or create. Finally, it is worthwhile looking into the exact sequence that was chosen from a musical piece and what happens there musically, as well as the context out of which that sequence was taken. The selected excerpt may evoke an idea, offer a counter-idea or even create irony (see, e.g., Mildorf "Music and Politics"). Doing this kind of close musical analysis of course usually requires access to the actual musical score, which is not always given.

One also needs to pay attention to the instrumentation used because certain instruments may be associated with particular topics or moods. Furthermore, the different timbres of instruments, alongside the melody they play, may underline atmospheres, images or feelings expressed in the audio guide text. Since music has an affective dimension to it that can touch people to the core (see Juslin), its usage in audio guides may ultimately contribute to an emotional tone which in turn may lead to greater enjoyment of the museum or gallery tour as such (see de Teffé and Müller-Hagedorn).

Moreover, the placement and distribution of music in the audio guide tour and in individual sequences therein are important factors. I already mentioned background and foreground as vital categories in this connection, but one may also ask whether music is placed at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of an audio guide text and how it is juxtaposed with the verbal text. Radio drama scholars have also distinguished between "syntactic" or "semantic" functions of music (Hobl-Friedrich 76; Huwiler 61), i.e., whether music supports the structuring of scenes, for example, as "curtain" music analogous to the curtain in theatre performances, or whether it supports the meanings and themes expressed in a given scene. As Mildorf points out elsewhere ("The Interplay of Sound Tapestry and Music"), that distinction is often hard to maintain as syntactic and semantic functions may overlap. Still, as an analytical category this set of terms is useful. Film scholar Josef Kloppenburg further distinguishes among "syntactic", "expressive" and "dramaturgical" functions of music (139). The syntactic function corresponds to Mechtild Hobl-Friedrich's and Elke Huwiler's in that it refers to structural functions of music. Their *semantic* function is split into *expressive* and *dramaturgical* functions in Kloppenburg's framework, whereby the former entails all affective and persuasive aspects of music, and the latter concerns the functions music assumes to contribute towards story and plot creation, e.g., through characterizing people and setting, serving as a leitmotif and the like.

From an audionarratological perspective, one also needs to distinguish between *diegetic* and *non-diegetic* music, i.e., music which is part of the presented storyworld and music that is external to it. Since audio guide texts are only partially narrative in nature and contain large chunks of expository or descriptive text, this set of terms is perhaps not so suitable. Fina introduces the terms "narrative/description-specific" and "narrative/description-independent" instead (94). However, one may object here that music independent of the narrative or description is barely conceivable since it will always have some connection to the content of the audio guide text, if only by association. So perhaps Fina's terms could be modified and replaced by "narrative/description-internal" and "narrative/description-external" as these expressions connote whether music is played as part of or referenced in the description/narrative or whether it constitutes more of an external framework. However, this boundary is ultimately blurred, especially if one factors in listeners' perceptions and mental processing, since even music placed *inside* an audio guide text evokes larger contextual (emotional, cultural, etc.) aspects that listeners are tacitly or openly invited to also draw upon while listening (see Brattico and Pearce). Generally speaking, one's terminology in this connection depends on whether one takes a more structuralist or cognitive/contextualist approach to music in audio guides.

With these analytical questions in mind, I now turn to my examples. In the following, I offer short transcripts I made of excerpts of the recordings, which I discuss alongside their English translations (all mine) since the original spoken-language texts are in German. Square brackets indicate overlaps between music and spoken text. Note that the transcripts do not render the full audio guide texts for each of the paintings but only excerpts that are in immediate vicinity to the musical pieces used.

5 Examples from "Beckmann & Amerika"

5.1 *"Begin the Beguine" (1946)*

The first time music is used in the audio guide tour of Beckmann's works is in the text accompanying the painting "Begin the Beguine" (1946).[4] It is preceded by a snippet from the eponymous song by Cole Porter, here in a version sung by Frank Sinatra,[5] which the speaker accordingly refers to right in the beginning:

> *Music*: "When they begin the Beguine, it brings back the sound of music so tender, it brings back a night of tropical splendour" [music fades to the background and eventually out].
> *Speaker*: ["Begin the Beguine" heißt dieses in der Nachkriegszeit sehr populäre Lied von Cole Porter und auch dieses erstaunliche Bild, das Beckmann 1946 malte. Er lebte nach wie vor in Amsterdam.] (CD *Beckmann & Amerika*, track 4)
>
> "Begin the Beguine" is the title of this song by Cole Porter, which was very popular in the postwar period, and also of this astonishing painting that Beckmann painted in 1946. He still lived in Amsterdam at the time. (Ibid., my translation)

For almost 19 seconds of the recording, the song is played on its own before the voice of the speaker can be heard and the music is made to recede into the background, still continuing there until the speaker finishes his first sentence. The song combines vocal and instrumental music, and the lyrics already introduce a word-music relationship into the audio guide text, which in turn enters such a relationship with the song (word-music-word). The song excerpt sets in when Sinatra begins with the lyrics, the short instrumental introduction is left out. Still, one could consider this to be the beginning of the song, and it aptly mentions another beginning, namely the moment when a band starts playing the Beguine, which reminds the singing persona in this song of a lovely experience of a tropical night. The idea of a beginning is thus already doubly present, both in the song's onset and on the thematic level of the lyrics. This then constitutes the opening to the audio guide recording. One could say that the song fulfils a signalling function here.

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[4] The painting can also be looked at here: https://www.beckmann-gemaelde.org/727-begin-beguine.

[5] The copyright information given in the book about this song is: "Begin the Beguine", Frank Sinatra, Alex Stordahl and His Orchestra, Crates Digger Music Group.

At the same time, the song is about the Beguine, a dance from Martinique and a musical style that was very popular in the first half of the twentieth century. The song thus shares its main theme with the painting the speaker is currently talking about. The painting shows a rather wild and dynamic group of musicians and dancers, together with what appear to be tropical birds in the background. The "night of tropical splendour" seems to be re-enacted in the painting. In that sense, the song could also be said to serve as an *abstract* to the audio guide narrative at this point because it anticipates its main topic. This juxtaposition also suggests a causal relationship between song and painting. However, it is not clear whether the song actually served as a source for Beckmann's painting. This is merely suggested by the fact that the audio guide text explicitly links the popularity of the song to the time when Beckmann painted this picture and foregrounds the fact that song and painting share the same title, as if Beckmann's title was a quote. Most likely this interpretation is correct. However, what is more interesting is how the audio guide text, without having to expressly verbalize that causal connection itself, invites listeners/ viewers to arrive at this interpretation by using this specific musical example as an introduction.

The music does more at this moment: not only does it open the audio guide text, it also confers on it a certain atmosphere. The song is exhilarating and light-hearted, and it adds to the picture another layer of dynamism because one can imaginatively *see* the dancers move as well as literally *hear* the music to which they are moving. Moreover, the music may trigger memories of viewers' own previous life experiences (see also Jäncke) and may thus influence the real-time perception of the picture. Generally speaking, the music amplifies or extends the scene presented in the painting and thus potentially augments the immersive experience of viewers.

5.2 *"Die Walküre" (1948) – The Valkyrie*

The ways in which connections are drawn between works of art and the artist's life world can also be seen in the second example, where the audio guide presents the painting "Die Walküre" (1948):[6]

> *Speaker*: Schon bald nach seiner Ankunft in Amerika beginnt Beckmann mit der Walküre ein Gemälde mit einem sehr deutschen Motiv. Es ist wahrscheinlich Brünnhilde, die berühmteste der Wotanstöchter, die er hier abbildet. Beckmann

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[6] The painting can also be looked at here: https://beckmann-gemaelde.org/764-die-walkuere.

> hat während der Arbeit aber nicht nur die Nibelungensage im Kopf, sondern auch Richard Wagners [Ring des Nibelungen.]
> *Music*: [music starts playing softly, then loudly and gradually fades out again …]
> *Speaker*: [Seine erste Frau, die Opernsängerin Minna Beckmann-Tube, hatte des Öfteren die Brünhilde gesungen.] Beckmann, der trotz Scheidung sein Leben lang eine enge Beziehung zu ihr pflegt, nennt sie in seinen Briefen schon mal liebevoll-ironisch „edle Minna". Damals schreibt er ihr häufig und berichtet aus Amerika. Ob ihm durch den intensiven Briefkontakt mit Minna wieder die Walküre in den Sinn gekommen ist? Durchaus denkbar. (CD *Beckmann & Amerika*, track 17)
>
> Shortly after his arrival Beckmann begins to paint 'The Valkyrie', a painting with a very German motif. It is probably Brunhild, the most famous of Wotan's daughters, that he depicts here. However, Beckmann not only has the *Song of the Nibelungs* in mind when working on this painting, but also Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. […]
>
> His first wife, the opera singer Minna Beckmann-Tube, had sung the part of Brunhild quite a few times. Beckmann, who keeps a very close relationship with her all his life despite their divorce, sometimes addresses her in his letters as "noble Minna", tenderly, but also with a touch of irony. Back then he writes many letters to her, sending reports from America. Could it be that this vibrant exchange of letters brought back the Valkyrie to his mind? It is well possible. (Ibid., my translation)

The text begins with a brief description of what can be seen in the picture, presumably Brunhild, one of the Nordic god Wotan's daughters. It is interesting that the text phrases this information as an assumption, with the modal adverbial "wahrscheinlich" suggesting that the speaker is not entirely sure about the female figure depicted in the painting. Technically, it could be any of the Valkyries. This hedging move becomes even more surprising when considering the next piece of information given in the audio guide. The speaker informs us that Beckmann not only thought of the *Song of the Nibelungs* but also of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* when painting this picture. This is stated matter-of-factly, without any hedging move, even though what is said can only be utter speculation. Who would know what an artist thought when doing his art?

Interestingly, as soon as Wagner's opera cycle is mentioned, an excerpt from the famous "Ride of the Valkyries"[7], which opens Act III of the opera *Die Walküre*, the second of the four operas of *Der Ring der Nibelungen*, is played with a crescendo or increase in volume to capture and foreground the dramatism of this musical sequence. The music is given centre-stage before it fades into the background to make room for the speaker, who resumes his text. He now begins to talk about Beckmann's first wife, Minna, an opera singer Beckmann divorced but stayed in touch with for the rest of his life. This *romantic* biographical story element is connected to the painting by detour of the music because we are told that Minna often sung the part of Brunhild. Even though the facts presented here – the subject of the painting, operatic roles that Minna sang and Beckmann's relationship with his first wife – are not necessarily causally linked, they are brought into a causal connection in this audio guide narrative by the way in which they are ordered in a logical sequence. Only towards the end of this part does the text assume a slightly more hypothetical stance again. The question suggests that the inspiration for Beckmann's painting might have been his regular correspondence with his wife. It also opens up a whole potential subtext that listeners are tacitly invited to think about: Did Beckmann possibly miss his first wife, who was now so far away? Did he miss Germany and therefore resorted to a *German* subject matter in his painting?

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[7] The copyright information given in the book for this piece is: "Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Walkürenritt", from Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Wiener Philharmoniker, conductor: Georg Solti, 1998 Decca Music Group Ltd.

Audio guide narratives about art pieces seem to have a tendency to draw on artists' lives as explanatory frameworks for their paintings. As this example also demonstrates, listeners are fed the kind of information they probably are looking for: human interest stories which allow them another form of *access*, even if only imaginatively, to the artist as a person. The music in this example fulfils the function of connecting the narrative trajectories about the historical context for the painting and Beckmann's life story as well as the description of the painting itself. It is the hinge or bracket that is thematically related to all of these parts. The music thus assumes both semantic and syntactic functions in this case. I would even argue that because one can hear the music the audio guide narrative's *logic* is made even more compelling for listeners. The music in a sense corroborates and helps us *see* the connections between life and art as they are explained in the text.

5.3 *Großes Stillleben mit Saxophonen (1926) – Still Life with Saxophones*

The third instance of music occurs in connection with the painting "Großes Stillleben mit Saxophonen" (1926).[8] The picture shows a selection of musical instruments, with two saxophones being central, albeit not quite in the foreground of the painting. The audio guide text fittingly starts with Bix Beiderbecke and his Wolverine Orchestra's jazz piece "Copenhagen", here in a performance by McKenzie & Condon's Chicagoans.[9] The piece used for the recording is mainly played by two saxophones, which corresponds nicely to what can be seen in the picture. Before the text even begins, the music already provides some local colour concerning the time period in which the painting was created: the roaring twenties.

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[8] The painting can also be looked at here: https://beckmann-gemaelde.org/257-grosses-stillleben-mit-musikinstrumenten.

> *Music*: plays and [fades to the background while the speaker talks]
> *Speaker*: ["Der Lärm des gelben und des grünen Saxophons durchrast die Seele mir wie buntgefleckte Riesenschlangen. Ich weiß es wohl: der Urwald ists, durch den ich gehe."]
> *Music*: plays louder again, then [fades to the background]
> *Speaker*: [Diese poetischen Zeilen schickt der frisch verheiratete Beckmann] 1926 aus Frankfurt an seine ferne Ehefrau Mathilde, genannt Quappi. Gelb und grün sind auch die beiden Saxophone auf seinem Stillleben aus demselben Jahr. Eine Hommage an den Jazz der Zwanziger Jahre. Die Saxophone liegen nicht wirklich auf den Möbeln; sie schweben eher im Raum. (CD *Beckmann & Amerika*, track 28)
>
> "The noise of the yellow and green saxophones rushes through my soul like huge snakes speckled with many colours. I know it full well: it's the jungle I am walking through." [...]
>
> In 1926, Beckmann, who has just got married, sends these poetic lines from Frankfurt to his wife Mathilde, also called Quappi, who is far away. Yellow and green are also the colours of the saxophones in his still life from the same year. An homage to jazz music from the 1920s. The saxophones are not really lying on the furniture; they rather levitate in the room. (Ibid., my translation)

Unlike in the first two examples, the music recedes into the background but does not stop once the speaker begins to talk. The first stretch of text, in which the speaker quotes from a letter Beckmann sent to his second wife in their early marriage at a moment when they were far apart, is consistently accompanied by the jazz music in the background. The music turns louder and very lively again in a kind of interval before the next stretch of text begins. Here, the speaker explains and contextualizes the quotation he has just read out. The lines quoted from the letter strike one as rather poetical, which the speaker also notes. Beckmann seems to give expression to his sense of restlessness and unease in the image of the two saxophones that trouble his soul like big snakes. The reference to the "jungle" reminds one both of a primordial setting that holds many dangers and of big cities, which have often been referred to as modern-day jungles. Without further biographical information, one is left to speculate what exactly this image might refer to.

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9 The copyright information given in the book for this piece is: "Copenhagen", McKenzie & Condon's Chicagoans, 1994 Timeless Records.

The speaker then explains that the painting also contains a yellow and a green saxophone, thus drawing a potential link between the letter and Beckmann's painting. Indeed, one forms the impression that Beckmann might be referring to his work of art here; where else would he have come across such saxophones? As with the previous example, the audio guide text interlocks the biographical narrative and an expository moment of ekphrasis that offers information about the picture. However, in this instance the direction is from biography to a discussion of the painting. The music once again functions as a hinge or joint connecting these strands. At the same time, the lively and uplifting quality of the music seems to stand in stark contrast to the rather subdued tone of the quotation from the letter. Rather than merely amplifying the mood, it seems to offer a counterpoint, suggesting a mismatch between the buzz that surrounded Beckmann in Frankfurt and the rather complex feelings he had about his life and work. As in the previous example, one is left to wonder whether Beckmann perhaps missed his wife, but again, this is pure speculation triggered by the audio guide narrative. The music potentially also creates a synaesthetic experience as viewers are encouraged to perceive the sounds as emanating from the saxophones painted in the picture.

Another tacit narrative trajectory that is implied by this picture concerns the division of Beckmann's life into a *German* and an *American* part. As I mentioned at the outset, the focus of the entire exhibition was on pictures Beckmann painted in his later life while he was in the US. The present picture constitutes an exception since this was painted while he was still in Germany. However, with the saxophones as an homage to jazz music the painting takes up an *American* theme, as it were, thus perhaps anticipating Beckmann's later life. By contrast, the *German* theme of the Valkyrie in the previous example seems to imply some nostalgia about the lost home country. The usage of the respective musical examples can be said to underscore this implicit *narrative* about Beckmann's development. The final example goes in a similar direction.

5.4 *Stillleben mit Cello und Bassgeige* (*1950*) – *Still Life with Cello and Double Bass*

The painting "Stillleben mit Cello und Bassgeige" (1950)[10] is presented right beside the previous example in the exhibition, and the audio guide text, immediately following the previous one, draws strong connections between those two paintings, almost as if they constituted a diptych, while in truth they are 24 years apart. Again, musical instruments are at the centre of the painting – according to the audio guide's explanation, this was a popular subject matter for Beckmann. The audio guide text in the beginning suggests that music as a theme was so important for Beckmann because he himself had great musical talent and because he was married to musicians:

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[10] The painting can also be looked at here: https://beckmann-gemaelde.org/808-stillleben-mit-cello-und-bassgeige.

> *Speaker*: Der hochmusikalische Beckmann liebt aber nicht nur Jazz, sondern auch Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Ravel, Hindemith. Auf vielen seiner Bilder kommen Musikinstrumente vor. Seine erste Frau, Minna, ist Opernsängerin, Mathilde eine ausgebildete Violinistin. Für Beckmann verzichtet sie auf eine Karriere als Musikerin. In Amerika findet sie dann Freundinnen, mit denen sie regelmäßig musiziert.
> *Music*: Begins to play and [continues in the background while the speaker starts speaking again.]
> *Speaker*: [In Beckmanns Stillleben Cello und Baßgeige, 1950 in New York gemalt, herrschen die warmen Klänge von Streichinstrumenten.]
> *Music*: Plays more prominently again and continues [in the background while speaker begins to speak again.]
> *Speaker*: [Wie auf dem Jazz-Stillleben sind auch hier die Gegenstände meist paarweise vorhanden. Das Cello auf dem Tisch und die Baßgeige rechts, zwei Champagnerflaschen, zwei Kerzen, die einen festlichen Rahmen andeuten. Während Beckmann im Frankfurt der Zwanziger Jahre dem Jazz huldigt, widmet er in Amerika sein Stillleben der klassischen Musik aus Europa.]
> *Music*: Continues to play more loudly and then fades out. (CD *Beckmann & Amerika*, track 28)
>
> Beckmann, who has great musical talent, not only loves jazz but also Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Ravel, Hindemith. Many of his pictures show musical instruments. His first wife, Minna, is an opera singer, Mathilde is a professional violin player. For Beckmann, she gives up the prospect of having a musical career. In America, she then finds friends with whom she regularly plays music. [...]
>
> In Beckmann's still life Cello and Double Bass, painted in New York in 1950, the warm tone colours of string instruments predominate. [...]
>
> Like in the jazz still life, things come mostly in pairs here. The cello on the table and the double bass on the righthand side, two bottles of champagne, two candles, which suggest a festive occasion. While Beckmann pays homage to jazz while living in Frankfurt in the 1920s, he dedicates his still life painted in America to classical music from Europe. (Ibid., my translation)

It is noteworthy that in this example, the music – the canon from Pachelbel's Canon and Gigue in D major[11] – continues all the way through the recording once it sets in, moving between foreground and background but never ceasing, even when the speaker talks. The placement of the music is interesting as it begins precisely at the moment when the speaker tells listeners about the fact that Beckmann's second wife, despite having given up a career as a violin player for her husband, continued to play with female friends she found in the US. At this point in the text, the music seems to continue where the verbal narrative has just left off, suggesting that the music we hear might be music Mathilde was playing with her friends. In that sense, the music *dramatizes* the moment for us while also continuing the narrative by means of *showing* rather than *telling*.

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[11] The copyright information given in the book for this piece is: "Kanon", from: Johann Pachelbel, Kanon und Gigue in D-Dur, Academy of Ancient Music & Christopher Hogwood, 1994 Decca Music Group Ltd.

Parallel to the music, the painting also focuses on string instruments. The choice of music thus again corresponds to the painting's subject matter as well as to that specific moment in the painter's or rather, his wife's, life story. Furthermore, because it is a Baroque piece which is widely known even by non-connoisseurs of music, it triggers associations with Early and Classical music, thus underlining what the audio guide text goes on to explain: Beckmann, now in America, pays homage to Classical European music whereas he paid homage to American music while still in Germany. Again, the musical example chosen illustrates the idea proposed by the text even though we cannot be sure whether Beckmann's wife really played Pachelbel. If Beckmann truly knew this composer[12] – strangely enough, he does not appear in the list of composers Beckmann apparently liked, according to the audio guide text – then the music would also be an implicit testimony to Beckmann's musical erudition because interest in Early or Classical music is generally associated with being educated and *cultured*. The music chosen here would thus seem to carry – whether this was intended by the production team or not – some cultural-symbolic implications that enrich the verbal text of the audio guide. Even without this reference to Beckmann's biography, the music, given its popularity, can be said to serve the function of making the picture relatable because viewers recognise this *kind of* music and the associations it triggers.

6 Conclusion

What all these musical examples share is the fact that they are not obscure pieces but rather well-known exemplars of the kind of music they represent.

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[12] Beckmann is likely to have met or at least have heard about Gustav Beckmann, a musicologist who was the first to publish Pachelbel's canon in 1919 (Beckmann 1918–1919). Both Beckmanns lived in Berlin at the time, and with Minna being an opera singer and thus part of the musical *crowd*, it is unimaginable that the two Beckmanns should not have crossed paths. However, I was unable to find further information on this.

They are easily recognisable for an audience interested in the respective musical direction and may even have been heard by a much larger audience. This already indicates that, if music is used in audio guides, relatability seems to be a key concern, just as it is in other mass and social media. Nevertheless, music can still add an artistic dimension to the primarily informative genre of audio guide texts.

My audionarratological analysis reveals that music is employed sparingly but quite to a purpose in the examples. The different excerpts taken from dance music (Frank Sinatra's "Begin the Beguine"), jazz (McKenzie & Condon's Chicagoans' "Copenhagen"), opera (Richard Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen") and Baroque music (a canon by Johann Pachelbel) not only relate thematically to the paintings they accompany; they also fulfil intriguing narrative functions. Thus, they serve, for example, as an abstract to the respective audio guide narrative or as a complex thematic bracket or joint that links and integrates a picture's description with the biographical narrative about the artist and the painting. The music may *double* or amplify what the audio guide narrative says, thus effectively becoming a *co-narrator* in another medium; it may also serve as a bridge or transition between different narrative parts. These "syntactic" and "semantic" or, in Kloppenburg's terms, "syntactic", "expressive" and "dramaturgical" functions, I argue, ultimately contribute to an *artistic* deployment of music even in the pragmatic narrative genre that audio guides constitute. More research is clearly needed to explore the scope of usages of music in audio guide production.

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Non-Narrativity and Parody in Samuel Beckett's Radio Play *Words and Music*

Pim Verhulst

Abstract

Samuel Beckett's radio play *Words and Music* has drawn radically different responses from composers. However, one in particular – the score written by his cousin, John, for the BBC – is perhaps more instrumental than any other in helping us understand the relationship between Music and Words in the script, owing to the author's involvement in the collaboration. What I seek to argue on the basis of this production, originally broadcast by the Third Programme on 13 November 1962, in combination with the text as published, is that it parodies program music made to express themes. Additionally, I will attempt to show that, contrary to the usual effect of textual framing, what the radio play achieves is not a narrativization of music, but a "denarrativization" of language, under music's non-narrative influence. In order to make this point, the chapter will combine a range of methodologies, including genetic criticism and archival research, (audio)narratology, musicology and philosophy. With regard to the latter, I will relate Arthur Schopenhauer's esthetic theories, typically foregrounded in the critical discourse on *Words and Music*, to Vladimir Jankélévitch, who was a contemporary of Beckett and considered music as an inexpressive art form while criticizing the German philosopher's Neoplatonist metaphysics.

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As the French musicologist and philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch has stated: "A single literary text lends itself to an infinity of radically unforseeable musics […]. Given a particular poem, it is impossible to predict the song that a composer will extract from it" (*Music and the Ineffable* 62). Much the same could be said of a radio play that takes music for one of its narrative components, as is shown by various composers' radically different responses to Samuel Beckett's *Words and Music*. However, one in particular – the score written by his cousin, John Beckett, for the BBC – is perhaps more instrumental than any other in helping us understand the relation between Music and Words in the script, due to the author's involvement in the collaboration. What I seek to argue on the basis of this original production, first broadcast by the Third Programme on 13 November 1962, combined with the text as published, is that it parodies

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program music made to express themes. Additionally, I will attempt to show that, contrary to the usual effect of textual framing, what the radio play achieves is not a narrativization of music, but a *denarrativization* of language, under the non-narrative influence of music. In order to make this point, I will combine various methodologies, including genetic criticism and archival research, (audio)narratology, musicology and philosophy. With regard to the latter, I will relate Arthur Schopenhauer's esthetic theories, typically foregrounded in the critical discourse on *Words and Music*, to Jankélévitch, who was a contemporary of Beckett and considered music as an inexpressive art form while criticizing the German philosopher's Neoplatonist metaphysics.

1 Music, (Non-)Narrativity and Radio Drama

Musicologists and narratologists have long debated whether music is capable of storytelling. In her influential book *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, Monika Fludernik redefined the concept of "narrativity" to break with the dominant formalist tendency that considered the primary features of narrative to be plot or action. Alternatively, Fludernik proposed the term "experientiality", arguing that what characterizes a text as "narrative" is the degree to which readers can recognize or relate to a story, which does not have to be a series of events. As Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck paraphrase Fludernik's main point in their *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*: "It suffices to encounter on any textual level an anthropomorphous agent who has certain experiences" and who "displays emotional involvement" (172). On the one hand, Fludernik's proposition is thus more inclusive, as it foregrounds the role of the reader; on the other hand, it has been criticized by advocates of "unnatural narratology" (see Alber and Richardson), for its tendency to naturalize or exclude non-human agents, as well as anomalous depictions of experience and emotionality, even of time and space. It is also text-oriented, which renders it problematic for transmedial storytelling or largely non-textual art forms.

To allow for the analysis of music as narrative, Finnish musicologist and semiologist Eero Tarasti has suggested a "minimal condition of narrativity", which he defines, somewhat broadly, as "the transformation of an object or state of affairs into something else through a process that requires a certain amount of time" (283). In order to gauge the change that an object or state of affairs undergoes over time, it must have formal building blocks affected diachronically by structural processes of some kind. Consisting of notes that can be arranged and combined in patterns of varying complexity, music meets the minimum requirements for narrativity as set out by Tarasti. Whereas he "does not claim to be able to show that music is able to *tell* particular stories", its syntactic nature does allow him to "show which structures in music enable us to *associate* it with stories" (283). As such, for Tarasti, too, the listener has an important role to play in his musical redefinition of *narrativity*. Even if the structural complexity of music is something only the trained ear of the professional can fully appreciate and understand, amateur listeners are equally able to connect with it on a more conceptual or personal rather than analytic level, often determined by the degree to which music has been culturally associated with narrative, through repetition and habit, or verbally framed.

In this sense, Tarasti distinguishes between two types of music that together make up a scale or continuum of increasing abstraction. At the most abstract end, we encounter the pure or "'absolute' music of the Western erudite tonal art", unmediated by language, in which case "we may think of the meaning that the composition tries to convey as an abstract plot" (283). According to Emma Kafalenos, this vague sense of "emplotment" is what makes it possible for listeners to "(re)construct a causal sequence of events – events that except for their causal relations remain otherwise unspecified" (278). Applying to music Roland Barthes' distinction between "readerly" and "writerly" texts, as set forth in his *S/Z*, Kafalenos goes on to claim that "instrumental music, because it is unburdened by the semantic meanings (however polysemous) attached to verbal signifiers, is more *writerly* than even the most plural constructs made from words" (280). Put differently, the more abstract a piece of music, the more subjective, personal and associative its meaning will be for listeners, especially in the case of dissonant music not written in a specific key or mode and without conventional harmonies, e.g., atonal, achromatic or serial compositions. This has led scholars to conclude that, "when unaccompanied by text or paratext, instrumental music shares narrative features but should probably not be thought of *as* narrative" (ibid.).

At the other end of the spectrum, we have music that is *narrativized* by language. As Marie-Laure Ryan phrases it, being itself "an art made of signifiers without signifieds, music eludes verbal description" (267), but it can be concretized or substantiated by means of words. Contrary to "absolute music", "program music" is a classical composition that attempts to express in music a narrative that is essentially non-musical. Typical examples are musical interpretations of myths, novels, fairy tales, and folk tales, often accompanied by a booklet or *program* including the titles of the movements and an introduction to direct the listener's imagination. Some of the most heavily narrativized musical forms include the *lied*, a typically German type of song from the Romantic period, often setting a poem to moody piano music, or the opera, in which usually pre-existing stories, though not exclusively, are acted out and sung under the guidance of an orchestra. Modern equivalents of these classical forms are, of course, musicals and pop songs, which both have a substantial verbal dimension that is tied to instrumentation in different forms and degrees. Although we do not tend to think of them as *literature*, in each of these acoustic genres, music takes on a variety of narrative functions, like it does, for example, in film soundtracks (see Kinzel and Mildorf).

A genre that has often been overlooked in this regard is radio drama. Scholars such as Mechtild Hobl-Friedrich, Martin Shingler and Cindy Wieringa, Angela Ida De Benedictis, or Elke Huwiler (*Erzähl-Ströme*, "Storytelling by Sound") have undertaken pioneering studies of the various ways that music is used for radio plays, in both structural and semantic terms, e.g., to bracket scenes or to provide commentary, as well as on the intra- and extradiegetic levels, i.e., inside or outside the storyworld (see also Mildorf and Verhulst). The score used in Beckett's *Words and Music* – though entirely intradiegetic – deviates from these more standard narrative functions, which makes it difficult to fit into existing typologies. Being the kind of radio play where music assumes what Huwiler calls a more "iconic" status, it is less constrained by traditional storytelling ("Storytelling by Sound" 62). Instead, music takes on the role of a proper character or personage, and therefore does not just shape or qualify the dramatic action but actually takes part in it. In order to gain a better understanding of *Words and Music* and how its eponymous protagonists interact with one another, it is necessary to first take a brief foray into Beckett's complicated relationship with music, as well as the cultural-historical context in which his radio play came about.

2 Beckett and Music

Beckett highlighted music – together with painting – as aesthetically more advanced models for innovative, avant-garde literature as early as the 1930s. In one of the diaries that he kept during his tour of Germany, Beckett noted on 26 March 1937 that what he admired about the art was the "dissonance that has become principle & that the word cannot express, because literature can no more escape from chronologies to simultaneities […], tha[n] the human voice can sing chords" (qtd. in Nixon 167). Elaborating on these very same ideas some three months later, in a letter of 9 July 1937 to the German art critic Axel Kaun, Beckett expressed his fear that, unless the written word was to be used as "a dizzying path of sounds connecting unfathomable chasms of silence", the question would always remain: "is literature alone to be left behind on that old, foul road long ago abandoned by music and painting?" (*Letters* Volume 1 518)

While Beckett was thus seemingly open to creative exchanges between literature and music or painting, he remained categorically – if naïvely – opposed to any merging between distinct art forms. This he repudiated as a type of "*Gesamtkunstwerk*" in a letter of 3 January 1951 to French art critic Georges Duthuit: "I want a theatre reduced to its own means, speech and acting, without painting, without music, without embellishments" (*Letters* Volume 2 218). Beckett responded in a similar vein to composer Edouard Coester, who in 1954 enquired if he could set *Waiting for Godot* to music:

> I have already publicly expressed my opposition to any stage music. […] For me that would be an awful mistake. A very different case would be music inspired by the play and I would be flattered by any venture in that direction. But, in saying that, I have in mind instrumental music, no voices. […] [T]his drama which you seem to have felt so keenly, if you thought fit to translate it, however freely, into pure music, that would interest me a great deal and give me great pleasure. (*Letters* Volume 2 475–6)

Objecting to what in principle would amount to an "adaptation" of his stage play with added music, Beckett seemed much more amenable to what we could consider an interpretation or a translation in musical terms, devoid of words.

Radio drama, an acoustic genre that inherently features music alongside several other expressive modalities, including speech and sound effects, would challenge Beckett's views on the matter. Between 1957 and 1959, he allowed extracts from his prose works *Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* and *From an Abandoned Work* to be aired on the BBC Third Programme with music composed by his cousin, John Beckett. As he explained in a letter of 23 December 1957 to producer Donald McWhinnie: "John wrote that he would do the music differently if he did it again. But I thought it was right, in a spirit not of reinforcement but of otherness, boots more by chance than design to the hero's arse" (*Letters* Volume 3 79). Perhaps a decisive factor in what made these collaborations acceptable for Beckett was that the two components were not to be heard simultaneously, in counterpoint, but alternatingly, the music functioning more like intermezzos between the textual fragments.

As such, the broadcasts of these prose selections contrasted markedly with yet another musical venture that Beckett – uncharacteristically – authorized in the early 1960s, namely an opera adaptation of his stage play *Krapp's Last Tape* by the Romanian-French composer and musician Marcel Mihalovici. In his biography of Beckett, James Knowlson explains that for this occasion the author sat at the piano flanked by Mihalovici and German translator Elmar Tophoven, to alter the play in English, French and German by adding or removing words and syllables, so the texts would align perfectly with the score (496–7.; see also Van Hulle 126–7). Still, despite his efforts, Beckett did not like the result, too much having been taken over by design and too little left to chance, perhaps. After he attended rehearsals on 12 February 1961, he reported to Barbara Bray: “as expected not much left of my old wearish and his voices” (qtd. in Verhulst, *Samuel Beckett’s Radio Plays*). Five days later, on 17 February, Beckett witnessed the opening night, concluding that the music had overpowered his words: “text rather obliterated” (*Letters* Volume 3 399).

This experience would be pivotal for the genesis of the radio play *Words and Music*, another joint venture between Beckett and his cousin. Immediately after attending some run-throughs of the *Krapp* opera, on 16 February 1961, Beckett made two jottings in a notebook under the title “Words Music” (qtd. in Van Hulle 59). The missing conjunction at this early stage hints at a still uncertain relationship between the two. Such is also borne out by the first manuscript draft of the radio play, begun the next day. It breaks off prematurely after just one folio, in mid-sentence, with the unfinished question: “Can music” (BDMP11, EM1, 02r).[1] This phrase, which would not raise eyebrows as the title of a minimalist composition by Steve Reich or John Cage, or something from the contemporary classical music repertoire of Bang on a Can, in Beckett’s case betrays extreme irresolution about the collaboration of words and music in his new script for radio. On 20 February 1961, he told Barbara Bray: “Wrote a page for John. Unexpected twist already, i.e., great troubles” (qtd. in Verhulst, *Samuel Beckett’s Radio Plays*).

3 John Beckett Collaboration

Providing a way out of the creative impasse was the correspondence Beckett struck up with his cousin over the next few months, as John was convalescing in bed from a car accident on the way home after a concert. Unfortunately, these letters themselves have not survived, only those from the late 1960s onwards, thus postdating the collaboration on *Words and Music*. Nevertheless, from Beckett’s correspondence with Barbara Bray and Jacoba van Velde, it is clear that, having decided it would be better not to visit his cousin in Dublin, he sporadically wrote to him, and they also spoke over the phone between mid-February and early December 1961. The script was now finished, and Beckett passed it on to John, who wrote the music, although without showing the score to his cousin until almost a year later, in October 1962, when they met again, in England, for the first time after the crash. By then, the music had already been pre-recorded by the BBC, but Beckett would still make minor tweaks to it in the studio. This working method seems to have caused some confusion about the nature of their relationship. On the one hand, Knowlson claims that "John Beckett soon wrote his music [...] totally independently" (497). On the other hand, according to Everett Frost, who consulted with the author about a new production in the late 1980s, "Beckett apologised that, now at an advanced age and increasingly in poor health, he felt unable to enter once again into the kind of collaborative or consultative effort that he had once given his cousin, John" (47). The truth lies somewhere in the middle.

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[1] This shorthand notation refers to page 02r in the first English manuscript of *Words and Music*, available as part of module 11 on the website of the *Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project* (see Neyt and Verhulst).

While each did finish their part of the script separately, there was always creative dialogue. In fact, the idea to collaborate on a radio play went back to as early as 1956 and had taken many different forms over the years, including a sick couple whose incessant coughing drowned out the music, and a duo of tyrants before they were paired down to just the one, i.e., Croak (see Verhulst, *Samuel Beckett's Radio Plays*). In view of this close alliance, be it mostly by letter, and Beckett's approval of his cousin's earlier scores for the prose fragments, the original BBC production of *Words and Music* that featured John's music is a crucial reference point for an understanding of the relationship between the protagonists in the radio play. Be that as it may, the version re-recorded by the American composer Morton Feldman in 1987, for a Beckett Festival of Radio Plays, is by far the most often discussed in scholarship on the piece. This is largely due to its earlier distribution on CD and in MP3 format, while the original recording by John Beckett was not released until some twenty years later by the BBC and the British Library (see Beckett, *Works for Radio*). The author himself was responsible for recommending Feldman, but not because he disliked his cousin's music.

John withdrew his score shortly after the BBC broadcast on 13 November 1962, but Marjorie Perloff – as well as other critics before and after her – wrongly concluded from this gesture that the music had been "evidently considered less than satisfactory by all concerned" (7). On the contrary, all available archival evidence confirms that Beckett was pleased with his cousin's score, which rather reflects John's severe judgment of his early work as a young and still inexperienced composer (see Gannon). In his letters to Barbara Bray, Beckett commented that the score "looks very good" (11 October), that the music was "very fine" (18 October) and that, after hearing it for a second time, he "liked the music even better than first" (30 October). This praise was not just reserved for friends, as to Philip Newby, the Controller of the BBC Third Programme, Beckett stated in no equivocal terms that he "greatly liked John's music" (qtd. in Verhulst *Samuel Beckett's Radio Plays*). Katherine Worth, one of the few critics to discuss the original score, "liked its austerity […] and touches such as a faint suggestion of plainsong, which picked up the quasi-medieval notes in the text", leading her to conclude: "It was hard to see why the composer had withdrawn it" (38). In view of these positive assessments, and to counteract its long neglect, it is time for a reassessment of the original production.

4 Parody and Denarrativization

Unlike Morton Feldman's score, which is consistently serious and reverent in tone – though certainly not lacking in dissonance – John Beckett's version is not moving or beautiful in the sense of intimate chamber music. On the contrary, it sounds chaotic and unruly. What comes across more readily in his musical interpretation of the script is the absurd nature of the task that the two protagonists are forced to carry out by their master, Croak, who orders them to express what he calls three "themes": "Love", "Age" and "The face". This has led Clas Zilliacus to label the radio play as a "mock opera" (103), but actually several musical as well as literary genres are pastiched.

At first, Music is audibly at a loss, producing somewhat unsteadily what Beckett in his directions terms "*Soft music*" with "*great expression*" (*All That Fall* 74). When Croak commands it to play "Louder!" (74), Music abandons the high-pitched string notes for brass, the horns playing "*fortissimo*", in a low register, with "*all expression gone*" (75). This is followed by a sequence of so-called "*Love and soul music*" (75), initiated by the same violin, but soon joined – and drowned out – by a Gothic-sounding electric organ and the occasional drum roll or cymbal clash for dramatic effect. Words' attempt to express the same theme unwinds in a highly rhetorical and uninspired philosophical exposition that sounds like a bad imitation of Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, delivered in an "*Orotund*" tone of voice (74) that shifts to "*Very rhetorical*" (75) at the end.

The second theme proceeds in similar fashion, described vaguely in the directions as "*Age music*" (76) – whatever that may signify. Music has no idea either, it seems, as it proceeds in the same waveringly ominous tone of before, the focus now being on strings and brass again – fittingly so, for the heartstrings that the melodramatic content of the poem aims to tug at and the pomposity of its language. Words only manages to stammer a few scattered phrases on its own. It is not until it joins forces with Music, for the very first time in the radio play, that they produce something akin to poetry, although the result is more like a spoofed ballad or *lied*, yet without the rhyming and out of sync:

> Age is when to a man
> Huddled o'er the ingle
> Shivering for the hag
> To put the pan in the bed
> And bring the toddy
> She comes in the ashes
> Who loved could not be won
> Or won not loved
> Or some other trouble
> Comes in the ashes
> Like in that old light
> The face in the ashes
> That old starlight
> On the earth again. (Beckett, *All That Fall* 77)

This is the first of two passages that had to be re-recorded. As we learn from Beckett's letters to Barbara Bray, the actor Jack MacGowran, who played Words, had "sung too well" (qtd. in Verhulst, *Samuel Beckett's Radio Plays*). What Beckett had in mind, according to sound engineer Michael Bakewell, was "a voice somewhere between a corncrake, a castrato and a knife-grinder" (73). This again stresses the satirical nature of the endeavour. In the opinion of Jonathan Kalb, "neither his cousin nor subsequent composers have been up to the task" that Beckett set, because in none of these productions "[m]usic convinces us that it has at least held its own in the strange mimetic competition with Words" (132). In my view, the "strange mimetic" nature of this "competition" is precisely why Words and Music cannot but fail, at least for Beckett. As such, limited to a merely subservient or 'programmatic' role when put together, what they are made to perform by Croak is nothing but a travesty.

Perloff argues that the "ungainly syntax" and "archaicizing language" give the poem "a parodic edge" (9). The many similarities with W. B. Yeats' "The Tower" have often been noted by critics (Okamuro 19). Not only can its depiction of "[d]ecrepit age" be detected in the subject matter of this first poem from *Words and Music*, also its mentioning of a peasant girl whose "eyes" and "face" the lyrical "I" recalls, as well as the "narrow stairs" of the titular tower, are echoed in Croak's themes and his explanation for arriving tardy: "I am late, forgive. [*Pause*.] The face. [*Pause*.] On the stairs. [*Pause*.] In the tower. [*Pause*.]" (Beckett, *All That Fall* 74) The title of the radio play invokes another of Yeats' poems, "Words for Music Perhaps", and the first line from "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" – "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree" (Yeats 44) – is quoted almost literally at one point by Words: “Arise then and go now the manifest unanswerable” (Beckett, *All That Fall* 75). Indeed, Beckett re-read Yeats’ work in the months leading up to the genesis of *Words and Music*, the actual copy – though without annotations – still being preserved in his personal library (Van Hulle and Nixon 37). This strongly suggests that the mockingly parodic tone, not just of this poem but of the radio play in its entirety, was carefully calculated and thus meant to be reflected in the music as well.

Quite tellingly, for the last movement, no explicit theme is assigned. After the third one, “The face”, which wrests an affected piece of poorly written eighteenth- or nineteenth-century prose from Words, spoken “*Reverently*” (Beckett, *All That Fall* 79), followed by a “*Change to poetic tone*” (79) and by “*warmly sentimental*” (77) tunes from Music, Croak falls silent all of a sudden, only letting out an “[*Anguished.*] No!” (79). This emboldens his servants to freestyle a little:

> Then down a little way
> Through the trash
> Towards where
> All dark no begging
> No giving no words
> No sense no need
> Through the scum
> Down a little way
> To whence one glimpse
> Of that wellhead. (80)

Hugh Kenner regards this final sequence as an “intricate rich Symbolist poem” (169), although it is difficult to say what it symbolizes exactly. Words and Music briefly appear to be on equal footing, the words amounting to more than merely accessories to the music, the music to more than an acoustic backdrop for the words. They mutually enhance one another, first by taking turns, then together. Music adopts a sparse, minimalist aesthetic with high-pitched notes of violin and low-pitched trills of electric organ; Words, in turn, assumes a verbal style that is fragmentary and dense, hardly expressive of anything at all and mostly consisting of function words. John McGrath suggests the term “semantic fluidity” to describe this phenomenon, i.e., “when words or music are repeated to such an extent that meaning or signification, typically brought about through connected affiliations, begin to dissolve” (99). However, because music in general – by its very nature – is “semantically fluid”, up to a point, especially compared to language, and since all of Beckett’s work could be regarded as such, not just the later iterations, I find McGrath’s term somewhat imprecise to identify a shift in the author's writing or in his approach to language through music.

Rather, I suggest that Beckett *denarrativizes* words under the non-narrative guidance of music, ridding it of calculated reason as well as cheap sentimentality. This term is not to be confused with *denarration*, more narrowly interpreted by Brian Richardson as "narrative negation in which a narrator denies significant aspects of her narrative that had earlier been presented as given" (168). With reference to Fludernik's reconceptualization of *narrativity*, what Beckett attempts to do here is arguably even more extreme, namely to unwind language by distorting its typical linearity or chronology to such an extent that storytelling is reduced to a seemingly random string of words, verging on the inexpressive. There is not even an "experiential agent" anymore to whom a reader or listener could relate. To still classify these words as "narrative" would require a definition as broad as Tarasti's for music, with the verbal phrases functioning more like notes and chords – or, as Beckett described his work in a letter of 8 December 1957 to Alan Schneider, "fundamental sounds" (*Letters* Volume 3 82). Instead of *narrativizing* the score, as is usually the case in more traditional instances of verbal framing, here some of music's inherent predisposition towards abstraction is imparted on the words. In doing so, the final poem in *Words and Music* comes quite close to what Beckett envisioned for literature in the 1930s.

5 Schopenhauer, Jankélévitch, and the Inexpressive

Yet Words and Music never truly meld. At the close of the radio play, there remains a sense of irreconcilable otherness, despite this brief moment of rapprochement. The last word of the poem, the enigmatic "wellhead", appears to hold a deeply personal and overwhelming – but never disclosed – symbolic meaning for Croak, who drops his stick and shuffles off stage on his carpet slippers, after which Music plays alone and Words lets out a "*Deep sigh*" (Beckett, *All That Fall* 81). In conversation with Theodor Adorno, Beckett claimed that the radio play "ends unequivocally with the victory of Music" (qtd. in Zilliacus 114), and to Worth he similarly remarked that "Music always wins" (16). This comment has been related to Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy (see Pilling; Prieto), which Beckett was reading in the early 1930s for his essay on Marcel Proust. Because "music is the Idea itself, unaware of the world of phenomena, existing ideally outside the universe", he writes, "Schopenhauer […] separates it from the other arts, which can only produce the Idea with its concomitant phenomena" (*Three Dialogues* 91–2). Or, in Schopenhauer's own words:

> It does not therefore express this or that particular and definite joy, this or that sorrow, or pain, or horror, or delight, or merriment, or peace of mind; but joy, sorrow, pain, horror, delight, merriment, peace of mind themselves, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without accessories, and therefore without their motives. (338)

Adding words to music, as in an opera or any type of program music, but also a radio play, is thus "a hideous corruption of this most immaterial of all the arts", in Beckett's paraphrase of Schopenhauer (*Three Dialogues* 92). But even without this verbal dimension, the "essential quality of music is distorted by the listener", Beckett maintains, "who, being an impure subject, insists on giving a figure to that which is ideal and invisible" (92). In the case of *Words and Music*, this "impure subject" is, on the one hand, personified by the intradiegetic Croak and his subjective associations with the word "wellhead" in the last poem, which may be erotic (see Ackerley) and play on psychoanalytic imagery (see Verhulst, "(Self-)Censorship"). On the other hand, the "impurity" is embodied by the extradiegetic listener. As Catherine Laws observes, this makes the radio play a highly volatile one:

> [T]he fact that the music could not be composed by Beckett and therefore changes with the individual composer involved in each production has always rendered the word-music opposition, and hence the play as a whole, somewhat problematic. [...] [A]lthough the Music remains unspecified, the play seems to proceed as if its role is clear and understood; despite the built-in indeterminacy here, Music seems to be treated as if it will be and mean the same in any realisation [...], the ideal and essential art in the Schopenhauerian tradition. (279)

This reasoning only applies to the radio play as a script, i.e., how Beckett conceived of it, with music being merely a philosophical or esthetic concept. When the script is actualized through a composer, be it John Beckett, Morton Feldman or still another, their music is effectively "re-narrativized", each time anew through the verbal framing of the text – and differently for each individual listener, as Kevin Branigan also points out (215–6).

This is precisely what Vladimir Jankélévitch criticizes Schopenhauer for in his essay *La Musique et l'inéffable* (1961), published in the same year when Beckett was writing *Words and Music*, namely that he always speaks of "*meta-music*", in a "romanticized" sense, which makes his assertions "at once arbitrary and metaphorical" (*Music and the Ineffable* 12). Instead, Jankélévitch counters, in line with a similar point that novelist Michel Butor was making around this time, "what must be argued over is music's 'realism'", not "the privilege enjoyed by a kind of more-than-phenomenal music" (*Music and the Ineffable* 12–3). In thus rejecting Schopenhauer's monolithic approach, Jankélévitch distinguishes between "Romantic" music, on the one hand, which is the most expressive kind, and "anti-Romanticism", on the other hand, which encompasses "Impressionism", where atmosphere prevails over emotion and a much more radical "search for the inexpressive" (*Music and the Ineffable* 30) takes form. The latter Jankélévitch associates – not always in a positive way – with modern music, arguing that "today's composers shut out any form of too-human languor", resulting in the almost complete "erasure of the human figure" (Ibid. 34–5). This evolution we can also trace in John Beckett's score, where the most inexpressive of music eventually brings forth the most inexpressive kind of language and vice versa. In this sense, it is perhaps no coincidence that Beckett had been listening to dodecaphonic composers such as Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern in the years preceding *Words and Music* (Knowlson 496).

In addition to a practical application of Schopenhauer's theory, Beckett's mocking treatment of the collaboration between Words and Music also entails a playful parody of the German philosopher's esthetics and its shortcomings – an awareness that was already present in Beckett's essay *Proust*, as Céline Surprenant reminds us (42–3). His remark about music's superiority to words must therefore perhaps not so much be read in the sense of Schopenhauer's Neoplatonic metaphysics, but in terms of what Jankélévitch conceptualizes as the "inexpressive 'espressivo'" (*Music and the Ineffable* 139), according to which all music expresses, paradoxically, without expressing anything at all – a goal Beckett famously set himself in his *Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*. What it expresses, or the degree to which it does so, depends on the type of music and the listener, but also on the extent to which both have been culturally conditioned, which is a much more nuanced stance than Schopenhauer's, as Beckett well realized in the 1960s, and one that is also more in line with current academic debates on music's narrative potential.

6 Conclusion

While Beckett knew Butor, both being authors under the Minuit imprint, it is not clear to what extent he was familiar with Jankélévitch's work. The philosopher was a close friend of composer Marcel Mihalovici and his wife, the pianist Monique Haas, who regularly attended concerts with Beckett in Paris and frequented the same artistic milieus, so it is certainly likely. Together with Mihalovici's opera adaptation of *Krapp's Last Tape*, this may well have had a bearing on Beckett's (critical) revisitation of Schopenhauer for *Words and Music*. Still more significant, it seems, was the brief joining of artistic forces with his cousin, John, throughout the late-1950s, on prose adaptations for the BBC, which eventually culminated in the radio play. It remains unknown what caused their creative parting of ways, but the impact of the partnership does cast doubt on the commonly held assumption that "by far the most fruitful musical collaboration was that between Beckett and Morton Feldman" (McGrath 87–8), which did not take place until the 1970s and 1980s. This is much later than the tendency towards "denarrativization", as analyzed in this chapter, began to manifest itself in Beckett's work, directly resulting from an increased "musicalization of the spoken word" in his fiction, as Werner Wolf has called it (288).

McGrath dismisses John's music as rife with "Romantic-tinged textures" (117), yet apart from being an unsubstantiated as well as an inaccurate description of the score as a whole, it risks missing the point. Beckett self-consciously parodied Romantic poetry (Yeats) and philosophy (Burke, Schopenhauer) in the text of his radio play, so it is not surprising that the music should follow in the same vein. As a canonized avant-garde author, Beckett could afford such whimsical playfulness, but his younger cousin, who was still making a name for himself, could not. As Humphrey Carpenter shows in his study of the Third Programme and Radio 3, the BBC was antagonistic towards experimental composers like Elisabeth Lutyens, largely overlooked in the 1950s and not given a forum on the air until the early 1960s (147–8, 206–7). While Beckett landed John several commissions and drew him out of his musical comfort zone, it is possible that the latter preferred to avoid any associations with the avant-garde soon thereafter, wary of the potential damage it could do to his career, which was far more traditional or conventional than that of his (in)famous literary cousin. As such, this case study illustrates that a historicized approach, cognizant of archival materials as well as institutional contexts, is at least as important as an interdisciplinary one for the study of music in radio drama.

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SECTION 4

The Limits of Narrativity: Storytelling Through Minimalist Music

Layers, Textures, and Structures

Towards a Theory of Narrative Space in Post-Minimal Music

Pwyll ap Siôn

Abstract

Minimalism, and the postminimalist styles that followed it, arguably constitute some of the most influential musical developments of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. However, one of minimalism's most innovative features – its conception of time – has often been understood in relation to principles that govern Western Classical tonality, albeit at the opposite end of the temporal spectrum: a-teleological rather than teleological, non-narrative rather than narrative.

Starting from the premise that traditional narrative perspectives have largely failed to fully capture its forms and functions, this chapter will set out a theoretical and interpretative paradigm for analyzing minimalist music based on concepts relating to narrative space. Tropes relating to narrative space have been applied in literature and film but have rarely been considered in relation to music. The main part of this chapter will consider three examples from the postminimalist repertory – by Michael Torke, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass respectively – to illustrate how concepts relating to narrative space operate in each case. In Torke's *Adjustable Wrench* (1987), space acts as a container for the composer's application of a layering technique that creates gradual terraced transitions across each section. In Reich's *Proverb* (1995), the music and text's sense of perspective is spatially magnified and intensified in the way textural space is used to control and regulate elements such as repetition and augmentation. In Glass' "Etude No. 20" (2012), for piano, the music's architectonic dimensions are the result of a network of interconnected paradigmatic sections. If narrative threads are to be found in minimalist and postminimalist music, it is necessary to conceptualize them according to notions of space, by drawing on concepts such as frames, places, settings, locations, and arrangements, which in turn can be understood according to existing music-analytical parameters, such as layers, textures, and structures.

•••

> *Music consists of sound; unchanging and unchanged, it expands in space* [...] *laying claim to space just as sound does.*
>
> (Jürg Frey, "And on it went")

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1 Introduction

Music and narrativity has generated much debate over the years and no more so than in relation to minimalist and post-minimalist music.[1] Minimalism is regarded as one of the most significant movements to have emerged during the second half of the twentieth century. Presenting a radical challenge to post-Second World War European and American modernism when it first arrived in the mid-to-late 1960s, the music of its main proponents – La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass – brought about a re-evaluation of the function of musical form, structure, style, and aesthetics. Subsequent generations – so-called post-minimalists such as John Adams, Nico Muhly, Sarah Kirkland Snider, and Julia Wolfe – fused minimalism's innovative qualities with other styles (ranging from medieval and renaissance music to classical forms and gestures, jazz, pop, rock, and so on). Both minimalist and post-minimalist styles offered new modes of understanding and methods of critical analysis, yet scholarly accounts on the subject have struggled to articulate what these narrative meanings might be. If different narrative forms are required for this music, what analytical and interpretive tools might therefore be developed to illustrate them?

Starting from the premise that traditional narrative perspectives have fallen short in illuminating its forms and functions, this chapter advances the notion of *narrative space* as a new theoretical and interpretative paradigm for analysing minimalist music. In general, narrative space has received far less attention than concepts relating to time in narratological studies (Buchholz and Jahn 551). As noted by Alenka Koron, the traditional function of literary settings, landscapes, and environments was to provide support for literary characters and their actions (360). Likewise, vertical conceptions of musical space feature less in scholarly discussions on minimalism. Nevertheless, the language of narrative space – such as frames, places, settings, locations, orientations, positions, and arrangements – can also be applied to musical contexts. According to Marie-Laure Ryan et al., space can become a "focus of attention" on its own or serve a variety of narrative roles ranging from a "symbolic meaning" to "a principle of organization" (1). In fact, when considered in relation to minimalist music, this spatial conception of form may reflect the composer's own intentions in a more accurate way.

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[1] The author wishes to thank the editors for their assistance in the completion of this chapter, especially Carolien Van Nerom, and to the anonymous reviewers' helpful reports and comments. The chapter was completed during a period of research leave given by Bangor University, to which the author is very grateful. Thanks to Professor Zoë Skoulding for her suggestion in the first place about applying narrative space to minimalist music. Assistance in preparing the diagram for Reich's *Proverb* was provided by Holly Shone.

The main part of this chapter will apply narrative principles to three examples from the post-minimalist repertory – by Michael Torke, Reich, and Glass respectively – to suggest how narrative space can operate for each example. In Torke's *Adjustable Wrench* (1987), for ensemble, narrative space functions as a container for the composer's application of a layering technique designed to create gradual terraced transitions across each section. In Reich's *Proverb* (1995), for voices and ensemble, the music and text's sense of perspective is spatially magnified and intensified through the way in which textural space is used to control and regulate other elements in the music, including repetition and augmentation. In Glass' piano "Etude No. 20" (2012), the music's architectonic dimensions form a network of interconnected paradigmatic sections. However, before discussing each example in further detail, an overview of scholarly literature on minimalism and narrativity is required to show how traditional time- and linear-based approaches have often failed to address issues that are central to one's understanding of this important musical style and genre.

2 Narrativity, Minimalism, and Post-Minimalism

Since its inception in the 1960s, minimalist music's narrative dimensions have been subject to several revisions and reconsiderations. During the 1970s and 1980s, its structures were placed at the opposite end to Classical and Romantic music. Minimalism's emphasis on formal abstraction, literalism, and objectivity, formed a set of values that were antithetical to the music of, say, nineteenth-century Romanticism, whose programmatic qualities readily offered themselves to narrative interpretations. When Wim Mertens summed up the situation in the early 1980s in an oft-quoted passage that "[the] music of the American composers of repetitive music can be described as non-narrative and a-teleological" (17), not only was he summarising prevailing musical-critical opinions about the subject (as found in the previous writings of Ivanka Stoïanova, Dominique Avron, Guy Rosolato, and others), but was also representing the views and attitudes of its composers. For example, in an interview in 1975, Glass observed that "the thing you notice is that [this music] has no narrative content as we know it [...] there is no story of any kind in the music; there's no development in that sense" ("Interview by Raymond Gervais and Robert Lepage" 34).

Glass' view – that the music he was writing at the time possessed "no narrative content" – became the norm when discussing narrativity and minimalism (Ibid.). Non-narrative and a-teleological (i.e., non-directional) references to this music appears throughout its history and development. To cite another Glass example, when discussing their opera *Einstein on the Beach*, Glass and director Robert Wilson stated that if it contained "a story", it would have to be "supplied by the imaginations of the audience, and there was no way for us to predict, even if we wanted to, what the story might be for any particular person" (K. R. Schwarz 135). This view worked to minimalism's advantage as it served to set it apart from previous musical movements. As K. Robert Schwarz pointed out, the lack of narrative in minimalism was seen as a positive attribute because it "served to free the viewer" (135). If a story wasn't being communicated explicitly in the music, listeners could provide their own narrative structures, or dispense with them altogether.

Linked to the perceived lack of clear narrative content and function of minimalist music was its use of repetition and process. Literal and/or extensive repetition were seen to counteract traditional modes of goal-directed motion and development, suspending the music's flow and arresting its forward thrust and momentum. Likewise, because of its application of strict, predetermined musical processes, minimalism's automated nature was seen to further problematize the notion of agency that was central to any narrative interpretation. To give an example, one might find the presence of very little narrative content in an early example of minimalism, such as Reich's *Pendulum Music* (1968), where several suspended microphones are made to swing above a set of amplified speakers to create intermittent feedback sounds. In fact, the persistent use of repetition (feedback elicited by each microphone and speaker) and process (the pendulum motion, creating a series of ever-closer pulsing sounds and ending with a continuous drone), prompted Reich to describe *Pendulum Music* as an example of "audible sculpture" (Reich, *Writings on Music* 95).

According to Joshua Banks Mailman, the kinds of automated processes associated with minimalism possessed "a significant challenge to musical narrativity because [they hindered] the listener from assigning agency to individual events within the unfolding musical work" (Mailman 127). Nevertheless, it paradoxically remained the case that repetition resulted in *difference*, and processes often generated unpredictable outcomes. Repetition-as-difference is captured in composer John Cage's discovery, upon listening to Young's music, that what he thought all along was "not the same thing after all, but full of variety" (Reynolds 52); while for Reich, listening to an automated process ensured that there were "still enough mysteries to satisfy all" (*Writings on Music* 35). These musical processes appear to possess more in common with multiform narratives in so far as they offered listeners a different set of perceptual outcomes within the limited means set out by the process. As Janet H. Murray observes, multiform narratives attempt to "give simultaneous form" to the endless possibilities and potentialities provided in any given moment, allowing the viewer or listener to "hold in [their] minds at the same time multiple contradictory alternatives" (43–4).

While early minimalist compositions pointed to the influence of minimalist art, drawing further analogies with space, its music remained measured according to the yardstick of previous musical traditions. Christophe Levaux has summarised the way in which early writings on the subject often focus on differences between minimalist repetition and repetition in Classical music. In the latter, it was "narrative and explanatory, finalizing, directional and functional", while in the music of Reich and Glass, it was "nonnarrative, nondirectional and [anti-functional]" (140).[2] In critical discourses on the subject, by the 1990s minimalism's non-narrativity had acquired the status of something oppositional to the past. Non-narrativity became synonymous with *anti-narrativity* in discussions on the subject by Eero Tarasti and others (see, e.g., Tarasti 285).[3]

The story does not end here, however. While minimalism's anti-narrativity was linked to notions of harmonic stasis (Kramer 54–7; Strickland 123), an alternative viewpoint emerged during the 1990s, which argued that stasis had been used to exaggerate minimalism's non-narrative characteristics. In his discussion of minimalism and popular music, Jonathan W. Bernard claimed that minimal music was not static and in fact its musical processes established a set of expectations in listeners. According to Bernard, *The Well-Tuned Piano* (1964) – one of Young's most narratively informed piano works, where themes are marked with evocative programmatic titles such as "The Theme of the Dawn of Eternal Time", "The Goddess of the Caverns Under the Pool", and "The Sunlight Filtering Through the Leaves" – contained "directionality and progression" that "[revealed] clearly teleological motivations" (Bernard, "Theory, Analysis and the 'Problem'" 262).

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[2] One could pick out several references to support this view, including Jonathan Kramer's definition of "nonteleological music" that has "only its present, but no past and no future" (Kramer 384) or Richard Taruskin's description of Glass' opera *Einstein on the Beach* as "another nonlinear, nonnarrative theatrical presentation …" (394).

[3] This view was firmly established by the 1990s and remained entrenched well into the twenty-first century. As recently as 2008, when the Dutch dancer Anna Teresa De Keersmaeker suggested to Reich that his music "[told] stories now", the composer responded by saying that "no stories were ever told" – not even in works rooted in documentary material, and therefore potentially more open to narrative readings – such as his multimedia operas *The Cave* and *Three Tales* (Reich, *Conversations* 240).

If minimalist music set up a series of expectations in the listener, suggesting that it possessed narrative qualities, what might these be? Susan McClary's writings offer potential answers. According to McClary, minimalist music counteracted libidinal tendencies governing the aesthetic of Western musical culture since the late Classical Era, with its emphasis on goal-orientation, directionality, and what McClary termed "the climax-principle" (*Feminine Endings* 130). Minimalism offered an alternative route. In the opening from Glass' *Glassworks* (1982), McClary notes that the experience of time "differs markedly from the goal-oriented trajectories within which we usually find these tonal gestures" (*Conventional Wisdom* 144). Glass' piano piece recontextualizes the familiar harmonic patterns and procedures of Romantic music, inviting the listener, as McClary states, to "notice how its signs work to produce their still-powerful effects" (*Conventional Wisdom* 144).

In *Glassworks*, minimalist techniques appear to dispossess music of its forward-motion by replacing it with what Robert Fink has called "its own logic of interruption" ("Going with the Flow" 208). Musical gestures assimilate the character of nineteenth-century Romanticism only to circle back on themselves before setting off again on another cycle of harmonic simulations. McClary's analysis prompts her to reconsider the narrative terms of the post-minimalist aesthetic. In much the same way that Glass' "Opening" inhabits a liminal space between Classical teleology and minimalist a-teleology, post-minimalism appears to *want it both ways* by drawing on elements that belong to both traditions, old and new.

As a result of *wanting it both ways*, Bernard claims that the post-minimalist aesthetic has taken a backwards step in using "tonal-sounding chords that mimic functionality without even coming close to matching the complexity of its operations in common-practice music" ("Minimalism, Postminimalism" 131). Whatever the case, the music of Adams and Torke and the later works of Reich and Glass encouraged a form of perceptual hybridity where goal-directed motion takes place within a delimited minimal space. Fink has suggested that this music is quasi-narrative, demanding a kind of dialogical or *double* listening, coining the term "recombinant teleology" to describe it. As Fink points out: "it's not that useful to imagine that there's some music that has goal direction [...] and then there's some music that doesn't, like minimalism or disco, but in fact what you're usually talking about is a whole spectrum of possible ways of organizing teleology" ("Interview with Molly Sheridan"). Rather than seeing narrativity/teleology and non-narrativity/a-teleology as opposite ends of the spectrum, Fink encourages the listener to ponder further on what these recombinations might be in relation to post-minimal works: “Instead of parsing musical styles as either teleological or not, we can contrast musics that perform *classical teleology* – Beethoven, Brahms, Berg, the Beatles – with various *recombinant teleologies* displayed by repetitive concert and dance music” (*Repeating Ourselves* 43).

If Fink’s “recombinant teleology” offered a way back into the narrative fold for minimalism, music in general has been unable to shake off the sense of ineluctable linearity with which it’s associated. Whether lasting a few seconds, as in Anton Webern’s *Drei Kleine Stücke*, Op. 11 (1914), for cello and piano, or many hours, as with Erik Satie’s *Vexations* (*ca.* 1894), all music starts in one place and ends in another, tracing its own temporal curve. Even when a composition ostensibly remains *in the same place*, as is the case with Young’s *Composition 1960 #7* (an interval of a fifth with the direction “to be held for a long time”), one’s perception and understanding of its sound will change across time.

Discussions about the nature of narrativity and minimalism have thus remained linked to metaphors of linearity where the mechanics of desirability and flow, conflict and resolution, remain paramount. Mertens’ historical explication of minimalism’s concepts, Tarasti’s overview of its anti-narrative character, Fink’s “going flat” – each one starts from the premise that linearity guides our musical perception. Even when harmonic and melodic motion is substituted for other parameters (such as rhythm), their function in minimalist music is perceived in similar ways to tonal movement, as kinds of substitute or *surrogate* harmonies.[4]

3 Narrative Space and Post-Minimal Music

Still, linear narrativity’s victory has not been without challenges coming from other directions. Spatial conceptions of musical form can certainly be found in writings on the subject. Jonathan Kramer coined the term “vertical music” to describe Karlheinz Stockhausen’s concept of moment form (Kramer 384–5), while Paul Paccione has proposed the idea of grid-based forms as a “spatial model in twentieth-century music” (Paccione 14). In his discussion of György Ligeti’s music, Bernard identified the composer’s use of voice leading as a property of the music's spatial functions, resulting in "bandwidths of varying [densities]" ("Voice Leading" 250). Tarasti's discussion of minimalism, atemporality, and anti-narrativity concludes by drawing on philosopher Henri Bergson's concept of *temps d'espace* to demonstrate that "narrativity, in music as in other sign systems, is based on *spatial*, temporal and actorial categories" (285, emphasis added).

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[4] See, for example, the beat-class set analysis of Reich’s music by Richard Cohn (“Transpositional Combination of Beat-Class Sets”), or by John Roeder (“Beat-Class Modulation”). In the absence of any harmonic directionality the focus turns to rhythm as a means of aping this kind of teleological motion.

Notions of space have also informed analysis in areas ranging from affect theory to eco-musicology. Rebecca Leydon's theory of repetitive tropes was developed to connect minimalist music to various emotional states, which then become "figures of identification" for the listener. Leydon's tropes – the maternal, kinetic, mantric, totalitarian, motoric, and aphasic – act as "container metaphors" for the music, to use a term borrowed from narrative theory (Koron 363).[5] Narrative space also underpins Jesse Budel's reading of Reich's *Music For 18 Musicians*, where the work's macromorphological and micromorphological levels are subjected to principles governing acoustic and soundscape ecology. Soundscape transitions reflect "shifts in ecological [activity] […] over the course of a specified temporal cycle" (Budel 3). Even on the level of musical notation, minimalist scores such as Terry Riley's *In C* (1964), Fredric Rzewski's *Les Moutons de Panurge* (1969), both for mixed instrumentation, or Michael Nyman's *1–100* (1976), for multiple pianos, and several other compositions dating from the 1960s and 70s, sought to verticalize their musical contents by setting the score within the space of single page or a set of short instructions.[6]

How, then, can musicological discourse adopt some of the narratological tools of literary analysis? As previously noted, terms such as frames, settings, locations, orientations, and arrangements, can also be applied to musical contexts. Ryan et al.'s five levels of narrative space in literary forms offers a useful starting point. The first, spatial frames, are signifiers of familiarity, appearing in a novel as common nouns, place names and objects that help orientate the reader. The spatial frame of music likewise might incorporate signifiers of familiarity: recognisable sounds and timbres, melodic shapes, chord sequences, patterns, and rhythms. The second level is spatial setting, which is defined by Ryan et al. as a "relatively stable socio-historico-geographic category that embraces the entire text" (24). *Setting* in a musical sense could relate to the use of certain genre conventions or formal archetypes (*Sonata Form*; *12-bar Blues*), references to (or use of) a particular style (or set of styles), or other devices which *sets* the composition in its particular context.

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[5] For example, the maternal trope (e.g., a mother gently rocking her baby to sleep) implies a "safe holding environment" for the listener, what David Schwarz has called "the sonorous envelope" (7), which calls to mind the kinds of oceanic and immersive states of listening that one associates with ambient music (see e.g., Hagood 2019).

[6] It is worth noting that there are also several text-based works dating from this time which conceptualise *linearity*, too, the most obvious being Young's *Composition 1960 #10*, where the instruction on the score reads: "Draw a straight line and follow it".

A third level is described by Koron as the novel's "story space", where fictional names and other naming devices are specific to the novel or story. Koron also connects this idea with "spaces of intertextuality" (365) within a piece of fiction, namely "direct citations […] echoes and allusions" (366). In music, these intertextual spaces may include specific or generic references to other musical styles or may incorporate self-quotation. A fourth level is described as the novel's "storyworld", which sets up interpretative spaces in the text that are then completed by the reader (or listener) through *filling in* the textual gaps in the narrative. The final category is the novel's "narrative universe" – the way in which its reality is constructed through characters' "beliefs, wishes, fears, speculations, hypothetical thinking, dreams, fantasies and imaginative creations" (Ryan et al. 25). Music may not construct reality quite in this way (although a genre such as opera comes close at times); instead, it offers what Koron describes as "an aperspectivist depiction" of the world (369). Perspective thus becomes "a matter of non-corporeal, temporally and spatially undelineated consciousness, powered by memory or imagination" (Stanzel 369).

How, then, can some of narrativity's methodological tools be applied to examples from the post-minimalist repertory to elucidate concepts of spatiality in this music? The following three examples will aim to apply these concepts in relation to narrative layers, textures, and structures.

Case Study 1: Narrative Space and Layering in Section 1 of Torke's Adjustable Wrench

Premiered in 1987, Torke's *Adjustable Wrench* fuses pop music sensibilities with Classical compositional practices in what John Roeder describes as a "hybridised technique" ("Hybrid Composition" 122). *Adjustable Wrench* does this on several levels. On the surface, the composition's main theme utilizes a common – even clichéd – harmonic gesture found in 1980s pop music, namely a double appoggiatura resolving upwards by step onto the tonic chord. At the beginning of *Adjustable Wrench*, a Db-major chord is stated over an Eb bass which resolves upwards by step to an Eb minor seventh chord (see Example 1, m. 5).[7] Other well-known examples which make use of this harmonic gesture include 1980s American television signature tunes such as *Hill Street Blues* (Mike Post, 1981) and *St. Elsewhere* (Dave Grusin, 1982), or the opening chorus line to rock band Toto's 1982 hit song "Rosanna" (to the words "meet you *all the way*").[8] All these examples belong to the same decade as *Adjustable Wrench*, predating Torke's composition by only a few years.

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[7] Some writers have attempted to link *Adjustable Wrench*'s chord sequence to specific 1980s pop songs. Bernard suggests that it is "distantly related" to a track called "Compromise" by Jellybean (aka John Benitez) from his 1984 album *Wotupski!?!* (Bernard, "Minimalism and

The starting point for *Adjustable Wrench* – its musical story-space, if you will – is therefore a familiar harmonic signifier belonging to 1980s American pop, which acts as a spatial frame for the music. Pop influences nevertheless run deeper than surface appropriations of harmonic gestures and rhythmic shapes. Torke fuses the kind of mixing and production techniques associated with pop music with harmonic and melodic transformation and development more commonly found in Western art music than pop. This hybrid approach gives *Adjustable Wrench* its particular narratological quality.

According to the composer, the eleven-minute work for chamber ensemble is arranged into "four identifiable sections" (Torke). This analysis will focus on the first section, which ends at measure 116. Presented in the form of a theme and variations, the theme is stated in measures 1–48 and is divided into a standard AA'BA structure.[9] The opening ten-note melody, heard in measures 1–4 in oboe and clarinets, makes use of only three pitches (G♭, A♭ and B♭). The melody is then repeated in measures 5–8 with harmonized chords in clarinets, bassoon, and piano, bringing into play the pop song chord sequence (see Fig. 12.1). This establishes a chord pattern within a basic four-measure structure where the music pivots between aeolian E♭ minor and G♭ major during the first and second halves of each phrase.

Pop" 345 n14). Roeder compares it to the opening riff in Van Halen's hit song "Jump" ("Hybrid Composition" 130).

[8] Countless examples can be found in (mainly American) pop songs from the late 1970s and early 1980s: for example, a whole sequence of rising *appoggiaturas* form the harmonic basis for the introduction and verses of Christopher Cross' "Never Be the Same" and "Sailing" from his debut album *Christopher Cross* (released by Warner Bros., 1979), or the harmonic riff at the beginning of Chicago's "If You Leave Me Know". A similar effect is achieved on "The Light Is On" from the same album by Christopher Cross. The pattern also appears at the ends of each phrase in the chorus of Michael McDonald's "I Gotta Try", from his solo album *If That's What It Takes* (released by Warner Bros., 1982). It wouldn't be an exaggeration to suggest that this harmonic gesture characterizes the entire sound of a certain genre of American popular music from the late 1970s and early 1980s.

[9] Roeder's analysis also divides the theme into a similar AA'BA scheme ("Hybrid Composition" 136). The scheme effectively follows the standard thirty-two measure form found in jazz, to which an eight-measure introduction and coda have been added.

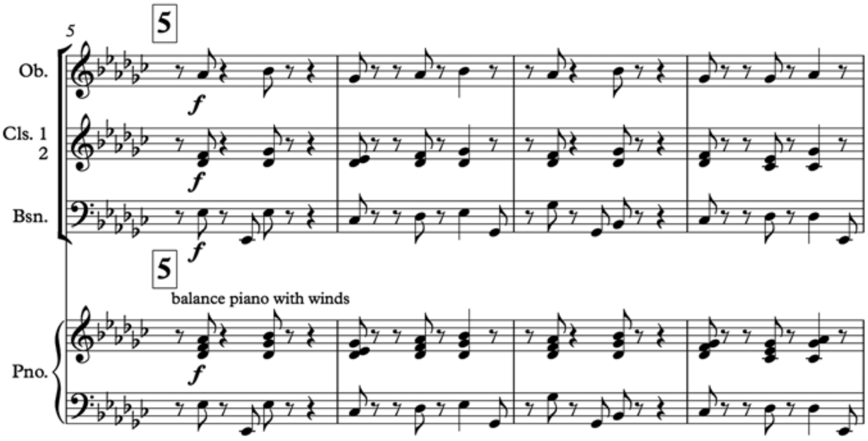

Figure 12.1 Torke's *Adjustable Wrench*, mm. 5–8.

With a rhythmic grid of thirty-two eighth notes well established by this point (8 × 4 measures = 32), a countermelody idea is added to the repetition of the main theme (A') in measures 17–24. A second melody is then given to the theme's second "B" section (mm. 25–32), which flirts momentarily with related key areas such as D♭ major and B♭ minor, before the return of "A" at Letter C in the score (mm. 33–48), thereby rounding off the first complete statement of the theme.

Between measures 49–120, Torke then applies a process of gradually adding and subtracting lines to existing layers of *Adjustable Wrench* in a series of connecting variations. The principles behind Torke's technique can be grasped by looking at its application between measures 49–72. The first layer (labelled "A" and boxed in Fig. 12.3) states the main theme in strings and synthesizer in a rhythmic variation of the opening theme.

Torke then adds a second layer ("B") between measures 53–56 in the form of a countermelody in oboe and clarinet (see Fig. 12.3), its rhythms falling in-between the main theme to create hocket-like exchanges between both layers.[10]

Torke then adds a third layer ("C") to this texture in measures 57–60 in the piano, which effectively doubles and reinforces layer "B" (see Fig. 12.4).

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[10] Roeder's detailed rhythmic and metric analysis also points out the "constant hocketing" effect heard throughout this section ("Hybrid Composition" 140).

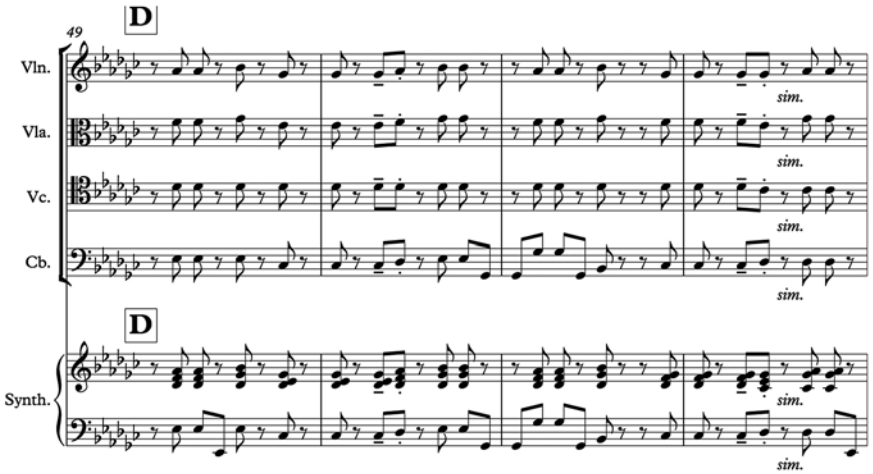
D
49
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Synth.
sim.

Figure 12.2 Torke's *Adjustable Wrench*, main theme, between mm. 49–52.

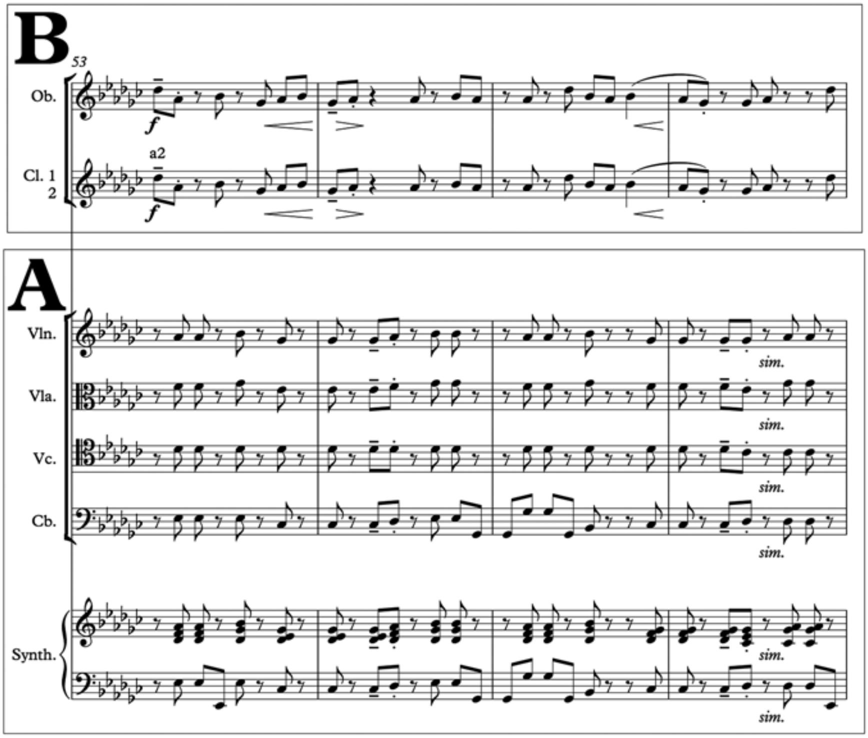
B
53
Ob.
Cl. 1 2
a2
f
A
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Synth.
sim.

Figure 12.3 Torke's *Adjustable Wrench*, layers A & B, mm. 53–56.

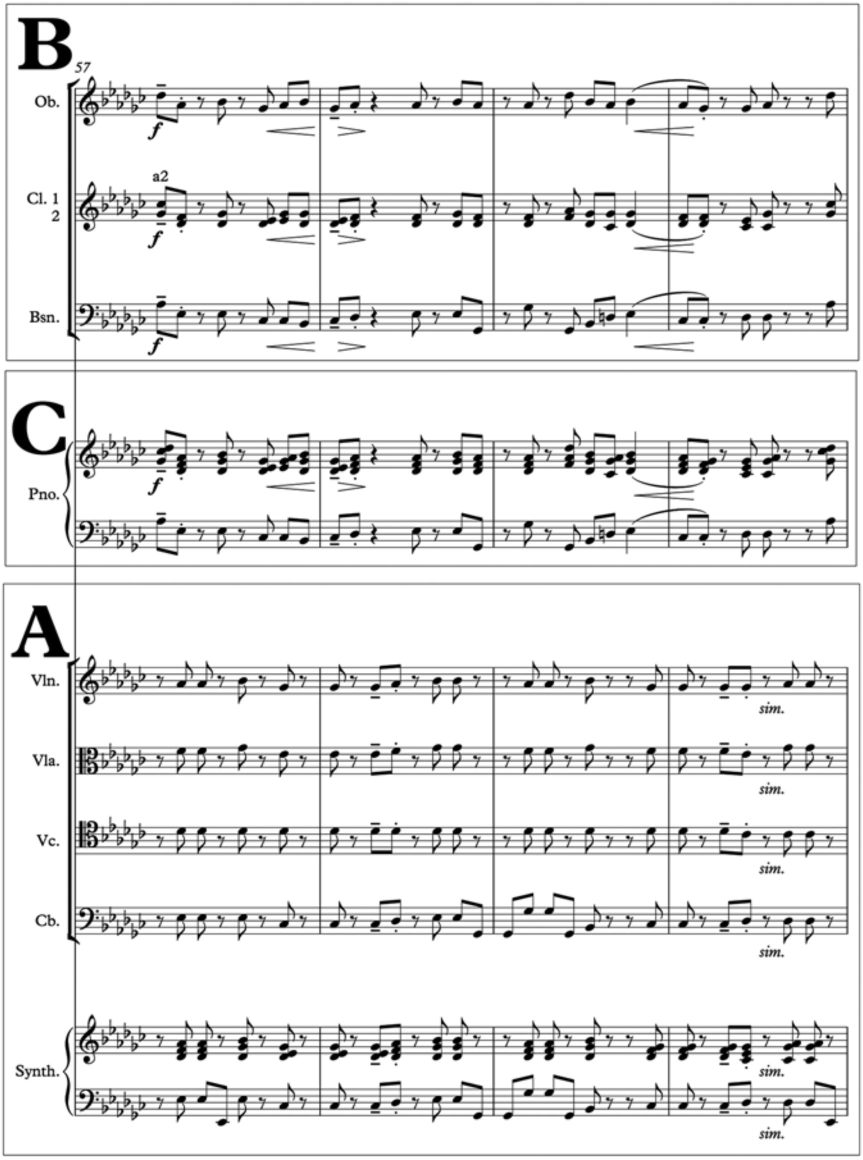
B
57
Ob.
f
a2
Cl. 1
2
Bsn.
C
Pno.
A
Vln.
sim.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
Synth.

Figure 12.4 Torke's *Adjustable Wrench*, layers A, B & C, mm. 57–60.

With three layers now in play, Torke removes layer "A" from measures 61–64, leaving "B" and "C". He then adds another layer ("D") in the form of a trumpet melody in measures 65–68 (Fig. 12.5), the trumpet's rhythmic patterns of "D" now falling in-between the lines in layers "B" and "C".

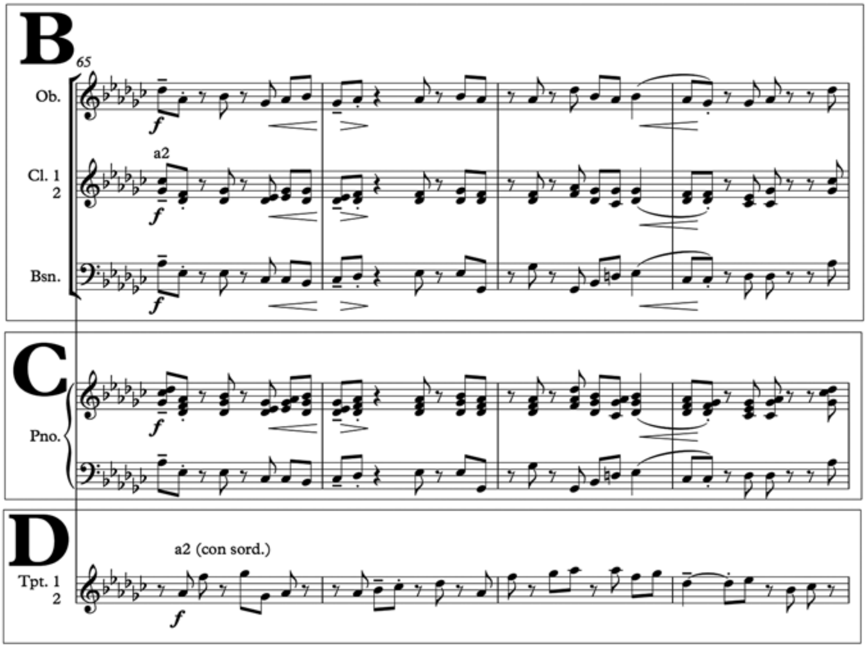

Figure 12.5 Torke's *Adjustable Wrench*, layers B, C & D, mm. 65–68.

At measure 69, a further layer ("E") is introduced in French horn, trombone, and marimba, nesting in-between and supporting layer "D", and generating a more astringent bitonal sound in its use of both *white note* and *black note* combinations on piano, marimba, and brass. At this point, the superimposition of four musical layers is heard simultaneously for the first time in the composition (see Fig. 12.6).

At measure 73, layers "B" and "C" drop out of the texture, leaving "D" and "E". Layers "G" and "F" are then added in measures 77–80 in woodwind and strings/synth respectively; and so the process continues until the opening theme reappears at measure 113, drawing Section 1 of *Adjustable Wrench* to a close.

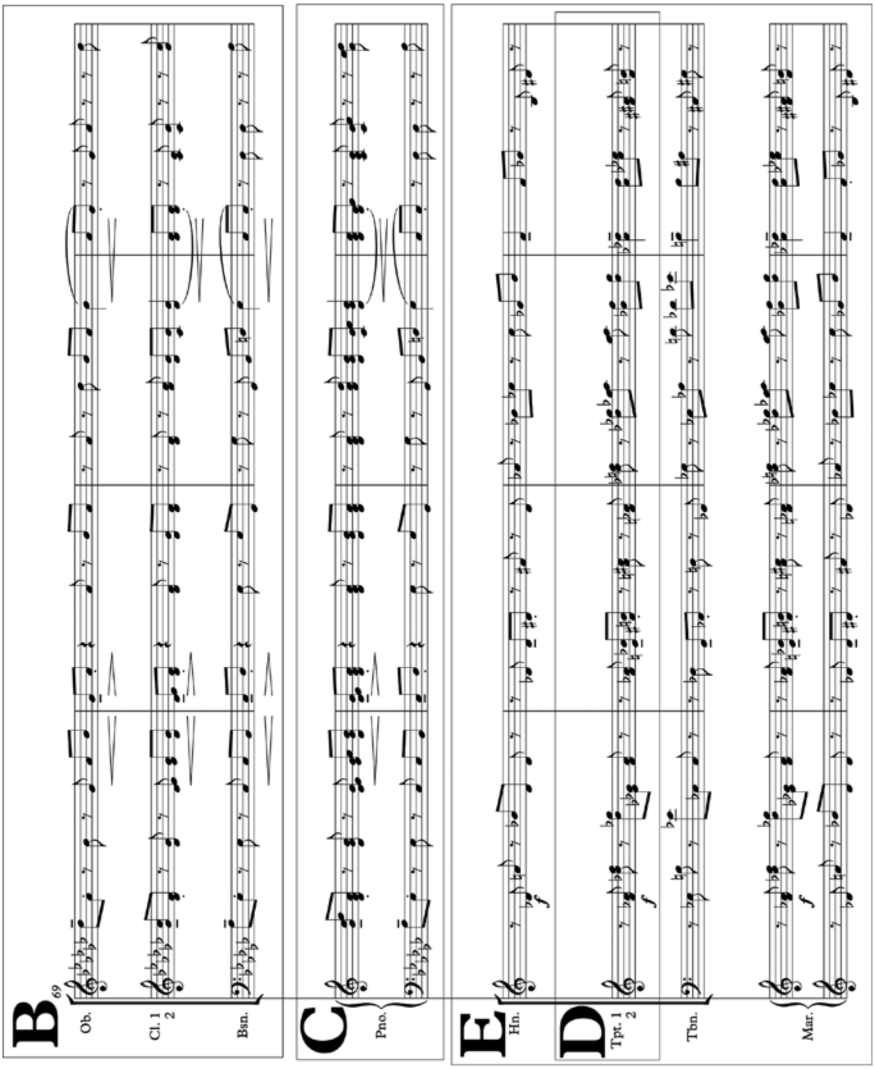
B
69
Ob.
Cl. 1 2
Bsn.
C
Pno.
E
Hn.
D
Tpt. 1 2
Tbn.
Mar.
f

Figure 12.6 Torke's *Adjustable Wrench*, layers B, C, D & E, mm. 69–72.

Table 12.1 Distribution of musical layers in Section 1 of Torke's *Adjustable Wrench* (mm. 49–116).

Bars:	**49–52**	**53–56**	**57–60**	**61–64**	**65–68**	**69–72**	**73–76**	**77–80**	**81–84**	**85–88**	**89–92**	**93–96**	**97–100**	**101–104**	**105–108**	**109–112**	**113–116**
strings/keyb.	A	A	A														
ob./cl./fag.		B	B	B	B	B											
pf.			C	C	C	C											
tr.					D	D	D	D	D								
cor./trb./marimba						E	E	E	E								
strings/keyb.								F	F	F							
ob./cl./fag.								G	G	G	G	G	G				
pf.									H	H	H	H	H				
tr.												I	I	I	I		
cor./trb./marimba													J	J	J		
strings/keyb.															K	K	K
fag./cor.																	return of main theme

Table 12.1 outlines this process across the opening section of *Adjustable Wrench*, with layers A–K placed vertically along each column with instrumental combinations presenting layers formed across each row. This additive (and subtractive) process is summarised in Table 12.2, which reveals a kind of syntagmatic chain comprising sixteen composite layers (where A = 1; A + B = 2; A + B + C = 3 … K = 16). The principles behind Torke's technique results in a quantitively different layer with each statement.

At the same time, certain elements are retained. It is worth noting that a sense of textural accumulation occurs during the middle part of Section 1 of *Adjustable Wrench*, adding textural density, with the longest syntagmatic chain appearing between D–H, while the layer repeated the most times is G. Also, as shown in Table 12.1, a certain logic is applied in the way in which layers are assigned to specific instruments and their combinations. Torke rotates the order of instruments such that "A" relates to "F" (strings and keyboard); "B" to "G" (oboe, clarinets, and bassoon); "C" to "H" (piano); "D" to "I" (trumpet); and "E" to "J" (French horn, trumpets, marimba).

Table 12.2 Additive and Subtractive Process in Section 1 of Torke's *Adjustable Wrench* (mm. 49–116).

A																				
A	+	B																		
A	+	B	+	C																
		B	+	C																
		B	+	C	+	D														
		B	+	C	+	D	+	E												
						D	+	E												
						D	+	E	+	F	+	G								
						D	+	E	+	F	+	G	+	H						
										F	+	G	+	H						
												G	+	H						
												G	+	H	+	I				
												G	+	H	+	I	+	J		
																I	+	J		
																I	+	J	+	K
																				K

This block-like approach of repeating and replacing lines and layers, which has precedents in the music of several earlier twentieth-century composers from Stravinsky to Cage's early percussion pieces,[11] generates a gradual process whereby the music transforms incrementally in a manner that is a little reminiscent of some of M. C. Escher's well-known drawings.[12] The effect is like the well-known game where someone whispers a short phrase into the ear of the person sitting next to them, which is then passed around until its meaning becomes altered through a partial mishearing of each iterative phrase.

Torke's layering technique possesses a dual function, however. The process begins by taking the music away from the main theme's point of origin only to return to it by the time the music arrives at layer "K". Nevertheless, by this point the theme and its layered variations have moved from tonic Eb minor to B minor – from flat-side to sharp-side – establishing the tonality for Section 2 of Torke's composition, which starts at measure 121 by developing the opening theme's material in relation to a repeating passacaglia-style bass line that alludes this time to another pop genre of the 1970s and 80s: funk.

When looking at *Adjustable Wrench* in this way, the work's unusual title starts to make sense. The fixed movement of the "wrench" itself is presented through a rigid thirty-two-beat eighth-note grid and chord sequence that forms its main theme. In narrative terms, this grid provides *Adjustable Wrench* with its spatial frame, while the pop-inspired chord sequence gives the music its stylistic "setting". Both elements govern its structure. These layered variations form incremental adjustments along the work's surface – repositioned nodes that simulate the pivotal turning movement of a wrench – each forming a syntagmatic chain of metonymic musical relationships and associations.[13]

Case Study 2: Narrative Space and Texture in Part 1 of Reich's **Proverb** *(mm. 1–197)*

Although a linear element underpins *Adjustable Wrench*'s forward trajectory, it is kept in check by the work's blocklike design. In Reich's *Proverb*, the linear aspect is obvious from the start. Composed for three soprano and two tenor voices, two vibraphones and two electric organs, the vibraphones are the only pair of instruments treated harmonically, since the function of the two organs is to support and sustain the soprano's vocal lines throughout, turning melody into harmony. This linear motion is also aided by *Proverb*'s stylistic context and general "setting", which along with Reich's closely interlocking and overlapping lines and pulsing rhythmic patterns features flowing melismatic lines that evoke the polyphonic style and spirit of early thirteenth-century composer Pérotin.[14]

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[11] For an account of Stravinsky's use of block forms and his influence on minimalist composers, see Cross 17–80; 170–89. Cage's application of temporal blocks using a micro-macrocosmic rhythmic structure in works such as *First Construction* (*in Metal*) (1939) is discussed in Pritchett 16–20.

[12] For example, "Reptiles" (1943) and "Drawing Hands" (1948).

[13] For further comparison with the schematic design of an adjustable wrench, see Roeder, "Hybrid Composition" 124–5.

A further narrative dimension is provided by *Proverb*'s use of a phrase taken from German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein: "How small a thought it takes to fill a whole life!" (57). Nevertheless, Reich's treatment of the phrase pushes against any sense of narrative forward-momentum. It's the only phrase that's heard throughout the work's fourteen-minute timespan. Reich sets the phrase seven times across its three main sections in ever-increasing and expanding temporal arcs. (Three short statements are additionally given in the Coda section.) One need only compare the length of the opening statement of the phrase, which is heard in measures 1–11 (around eighteen seconds long on the "Theatre of Voices" recording conducted by Paul Hillier) with its seventh (and final) iteration from measures 384–627 (a section lasting an epic four-and-a-half minutes on the same recording) to get a sense of the way in which the same material is subjected to radical expansion and temporal augmentation from beginning to end.

The principle of extension and expansion works on both micro and macro levels. Reich starts by extending Wittgenstein's original phrase by repeating the line's opening half in his setting: "How small a thought it takes to fill a whole life! How small a thought". This serves to draw the phrase's oxymoronic quality to the surface. In much the same way that a small thought fills a whole life, a whole musical world is now contained within the small *thought* stated at the beginning of *Proverb* (see Fig. 12.7). As Reich states, his aim was to try to embody the phrase in the music: "That is, the 'small thought' is the idea of canon or round" (*Writings on Music* 193).

While this phrase undergoes a kind of musical *concretization* through statement, repetition and gradual expansion, a dual perceptual process also starts to emerge. On the one hand, in stretching each line, the phrase becomes magnified and intensified. This enables the listener to potentially *get inside* the sound in an immersive way: the music starts to take on an embodied form.

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[14] Reich has readily acknowledged the influence of Pérotin on *Proverb*, saying, "I actually had [a score of Pérotin's] *Viderunt omnes* at the piano, and wrote everything out on one staff [...] [what] was exciting [...] was looking at the Pérotin very closely and seeing exactly what I would steal and what I wouldn't steal" (Woodley 464). This transcription appears in Reich's Sketchbook 45 (dated "9 April 1995"), housed in the Steve Reich Collection at the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

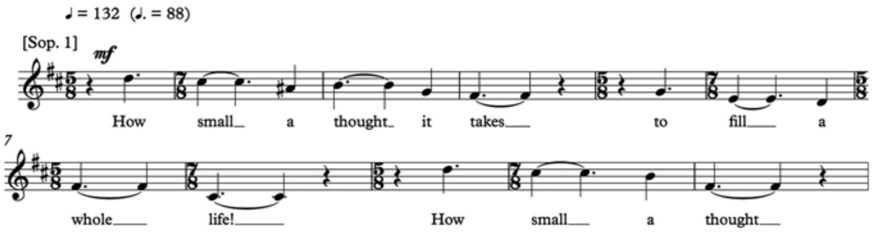
♩ = 132 (♩. = 88)
[Sop. 1]
mf
How small a thought it takes to fill a
7
whole life! How small a thought

Figure 12.7 Reich's *Proverb*, opening phrase (mm. 1–11).

On the other hand, Reich's use of a large-scale augmentation process creates a distancing effect not dissimilar to the experience of viewing a very large object from afar.[15] The music floats free from its textual meaning. Magnification and a sense of magnitude lie in a state of paradoxical coexistence: small thoughts contained within whole lives and entire worlds.[16] In Ron Woodley's words: "It is as though the sheer intensity of gaze focused on the initial theme, through all the canonic and augmentational procedures, has not so much exhausted its potential as purified it somehow to [a] more essential form" (479).

The notion of *Proverb* as a sound object, distilled into its "essential form" seems fitting, yet little research has been conducted to explore how the work's panoramic sweep and sense of space is communicated through the music. Instead, attention has focussed on the use of canonic techniques in *Proverb* and principles derived from medieval music to illustrate Reich's putative use of "extended contrapuntal shaping" (Woodley 468), or how studies of the composer's sketches help support or contradict existing analyses of this work (and others) by Reich (Bakker and ap Siôn 99–123).

Linked to the statement and realization of lines and their interaction in *Proverb* is a concept of narrative space that utilizes textures as lattice-like interconnected patterns. Using Woodley's division of *Proverb* into an ABA structure with Coda (479), Figure 12.8 sets out the work's textural makeup in relation to Section 1 (mm. 1–197). Following the score layout, voices and instruments are placed from top to bottom in the following order: vibraphones 1 & 2, keyboards 1 & 2, sopranos 1–3, tenors 1–2. Each band indicates a kind of textural *heat map* for each voice and instrument. Measures are indicated horizontally across the top line. The dashed vertical lines mark divisions in the work's opening section, as follows: first statement of main theme in soprano 1 and keyboard 1 (mm. 1–11); second statement of main theme in sopranos 1 & 2 and keyboards 1 & 2 (mm. 12–26); third statement of main theme in sopranos 1–3 and keyboards 1 & 2 (mm. 27–57); first *organum* section in tenors 1 & 2, with sopranos 1–3 and keyboards 1 & 2 (mm. 58–89); fourth statement of main theme in sopranos 1–3, vibraphones 1 & 2 and keyboards 1 & 2 (mm. 90–160); and finally, the second *organum* section in tenors 1 & 2, with vibraphones 1 & 2 and keyboards 1 & 2 (mm. 161–197).

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[15] In his discussion of *Four Organs* (1970), for four electric organs and maracas – an earlier Reich composition which makes use of a similar augmentation process – Sumanth Gopinath also draws on metaphors associated with space travel (Gopinath 19–59).

[16] It is therefore fitting that the image accompanying the Hillier Ensemble's Nonesuch recording of *Proverb* on YouTube is that of Enceladus, the sixth-largest moon orbiting Saturn, as seen from space (see "Steve Reich – Proverb").

When *Proverb* is viewed through this lens, texture becomes as much an integral part of the work's design as Reich's augmentation process, intricate web of contrapuntal relationships, or the interlocking and shifting rhythmic patterns heard in the vibraphone parts. Reich does this in several ways. Textural character and identity are established at the beginning through *Proverb*'s use of matching pairs of instruments in relation to musical content: soprano 1 plus keyboard 1 and soprano 2 plus keyboard 2 become carriers of the main melody; the two tenors become carriers of the *organum*-based, Pérotin-inspired idea; while two vibraphones carry the pulse-based idea.[17]

Textural accumulation occurs during the opening section, with two lines becoming four at measure 13, four becoming six at measure 31, and six becoming seven at measure 58 (seven layers only become eight at measure 268). Reich also applies contrast and variation within this scheme by adding tenors to sopranos and keyboards in the fourth section (mm. 57–89), substituting vibraphones for tenors in the fifth section of Part 1 (mm. 90–151), and layering tenors alongside vibraphones and keyboards for the final section of Part 1 (mm. 161–197). The omission of lines within each composite layer (e.g., sopranos in the latter section), is as much a defining feature as the inclusion of new lines, adding textural space and separation, while textural continuity is generated through sustained lines (seen in Fig. 12.8 in the horizontal bands that run across several sections), or dovetailing effects (as used in the tenor voices in section 6).

What do these combinations, accumulations, variations, and inclusions add up to in *Proverb*, then? The clue lies in Reich's own admission that the work was partly written as a homage to Pérotin. As previously mentioned, the French medieval composer's influence on the work can be heard most clearly in the sections featuring the two tenor voices, when they are duetting against sustained notes in the sopranos. As Reich notes, these moments "clearly resemble

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[17] The two keyboards play what Reich calls "a Baroque organ sample", which, if not available, should be substituted for "a non-vibrato mild double reed sound" (*Proverb*).

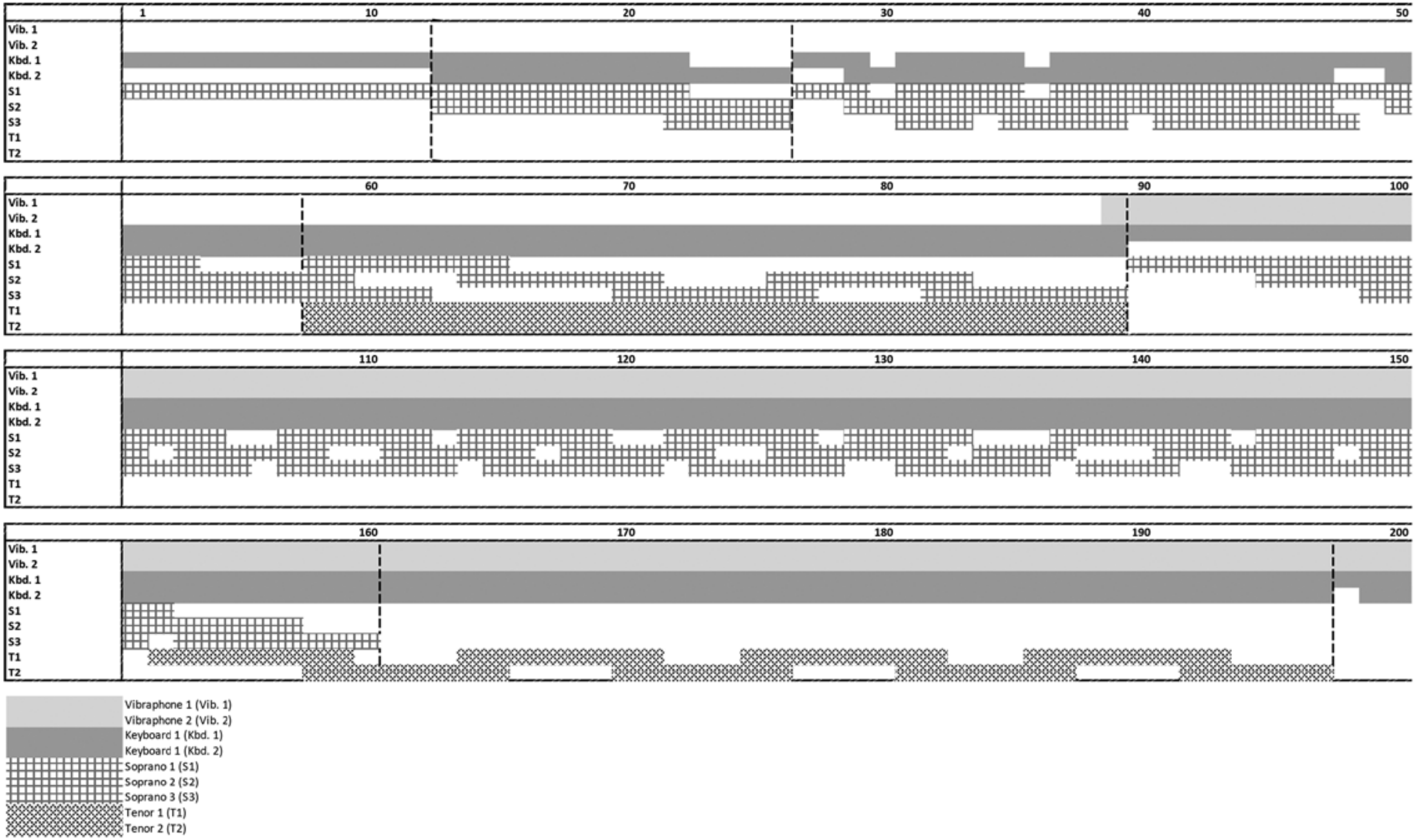

Figure 12.8 Textural Layout in Section 1 of Reich's *Proverb* (mm. 1–197).

[the kind of] three-part organum" heard in compositions such as Pérotin's *Viderunt omnes* (*Writings on Music* 191).

This influence runs much deeper in *Proverb*, however. Several writers have drawn parallels between Pérotin's use of *organum* and the impressive gothic architecture of Notre Dame cathedral. In much the same way that increasingly melismatic lines appear in the higher duplum and triplum voices above a slow-moving tenor line (for example, in a *clausula-motet* such as *Homo quo vigeas / Et gaudebit* from the early thirteenth century), the arches that form the architectural base of Notre Dame (and other structures that belong to the Gothic style) are replicated higher up through augmentation and diminution. As Charles Jencks notes, the interior horizontal bays seen inside the cathedral act "as different choral voices". Nathan de Broize-King has also attempted to analogise the comparison further in relation to Pérotin's music by suggesting that the lowest voice resembles the lowest architectural level, comprising one bay, the tenor line "is represented by the middle level", which shows "more complexity [...] and ornamentation", while the stained glass at the top of the structure represents "the florid organum" (16).

Reich's music is seen to operate in much the same way. As shown in Figure 12.8, the tenor voices in Sections 4 and 6 provide support for the upper lines in a manner resembling their function in Pérotin's music. Even when the tenor lines are absent in *Proverb*, the idea of the whole relating to its parts – macro reflecting micro, base generating superstructure – remain important throughout. *Proverb*'s use of textural space thus possesses a function that is of equal importance to other elements in the work, since Wittgenstein's notion of an entire world contained inside a single idea is crafted through the composer's use of textural space, while his homage to Pérotin extends to the way in which texture is treated mimetically – to mirror the architectonic designs of medieval music.

Case Study 3: Narrative Space and Structure in Glass' "Etude No. 20"

Whereas textural space in Reich's *Proverb* supports both the work's material design and *universe*, this final example applies narrative space in relation to structure in a piano etude by Glass. Composed in 2012, Glass' "Etude No. 20" is the last in his second (and most likely, final) set of ten studies. While Glass noted that his intention in completing Book 2 was to "[develop] new strategies regarding rhythmic and harmonic movement" ("Philip Glass about his Etudes"), he also stated that "the music in Book 2 quickly began to suggest a series of new adventures in harmony and *structure*" (*The Complete Piano Etudes* iii, emphasis added). This can be heard in the opening statement of the theme, where shifting C major and Ab major chords set up a series of neo-Riemannian-like harmonic relationships that are explored in various ways throughout the etude.[18]

"Etude No. 20" stands somewhat apart from the rest of the Book 2 set in certain respects. At over ten minutes and 147 measures' long, it is one of Glass' most substantial piano studies. It possesses a more self-contained and autonomous identity and has often been performed as a separate, standalone composition. Its slow tempo and expressive quality also mark it out from the more rhythmically-animated studies in faster tempi, such as Nos. 11–13. Its shifting major-minor harmonies, introspective mood, unexpected juxtapositions, and flowing Romantic qualities, impart a bittersweet, valedictory tone to the music, signalling a kind of *farewell*. In fact, as examined in more detail below, some of the music heard in the etude was originally written for Godfrey Reggio's film *Visitors* (2012), which was described by the film's director as "a requiem" (Reggio 353).

Table 12.3 Formal Structure of Philip Glass' "Etude no. 20".

Bars	**Theme A**	**Theme B**	**Theme C**
1–13	First Statement (A1)		
14–21		First Statement (B1)	
22–55			First Statement (C1)
56–76		Second Statement (B2)	
77–93			Second Statement (C2)
94–103	Second Statement (A2)		
104–109		Third Statement (B3)	
110–115	Third Statement (A3)		
116–120			Third Statement (C3)
121–147		CODA	

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[18] These harmonies can be located along what Cohn describes as the "[n]orthern" hexatonic pole ("Maximally Smooth Cycles"). A neo-Riemannian analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter but would add to the existing body of analytical literature on Glass' music (Haskins; Aelmore). For a detailed neo-Riemannian analysis of John Adams' opera *Nixon in China* (1987), see Timothy A. Johnson.

What kind of requiem is evoked in Glass' etude, then, and how does the music convey a sense of closure? The answer lies partly in the etude's structural design. As outlined in Table 12.3, three musical ideas are stated and developed, labelled here as Themes A, B and C. Theme A is first stated in measures 1–13 ("A1"), followed by the first statement of Theme B ("B1") in measures 14–21. Theme C ("C1") is heard between measures 22–55. Each one of these themes is heard three times during the etude but stated in a different order with each recurring set of statements.

Theme "A" comprises three rising iterations of a three-note melody in the piano's right hand based on compound intervallic patterns of a C major triad (see Fig. 12.9). This figure is heard against a series of rising and falling C major and A-flat major triads in the left hand. At measure 7, these compound intervals are in effect *filled in* to form an ascending scale-like melody covering an octave from C5 to B5, a seventh above. In measures 10–11, a series of two-note patterns are heard in the melody against falling sixths and thirds-based patterns in the left-hand, which foreshadow Section 3. The music resolves onto a chord of F major in measures 12–13, bringing the first statement of Section 1 to an end.

At measure 14, the etude moves to A minor with a brief first statement of Theme B, its paired two-measure phrases each repeating twice to create a concise eight measure unit (see Fig. 12.10). Nevertheless, the opening's C major tonality is preserved in the right-hand melodic line's triadic C-E-G movement, supported by Glass' trademark oscillating minor thirds and fourths in repeating eighth-note figures.

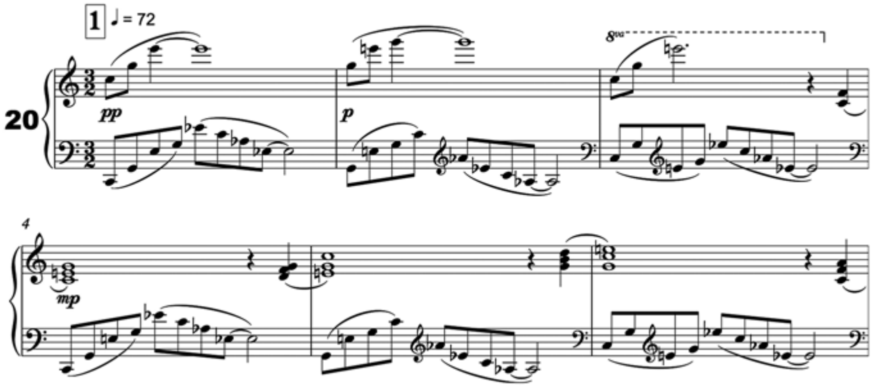

Figure 12.9 Glass' "Etude No. 20", Theme A/Section 1 (mm. 1–6).

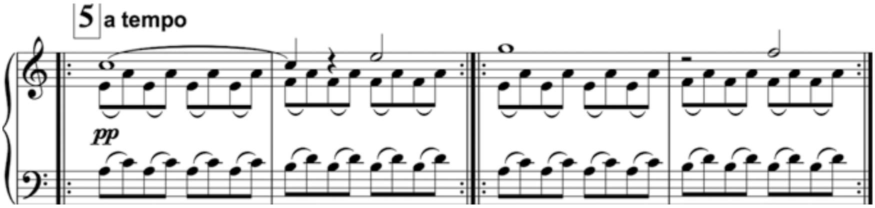

Figure 12.10 Glass' "Etude No. 20", Theme B/Section 2 (mm. 14–21).

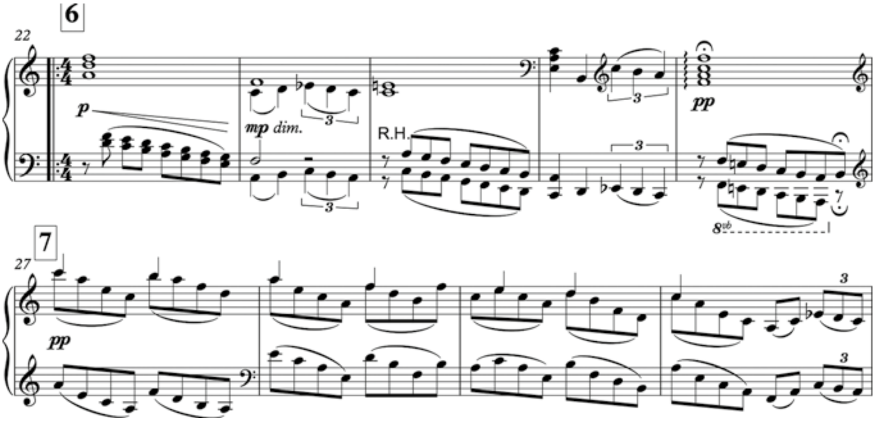

Figure 12.11 Glass' "Etude No. 20", Theme C/Section 3 (mm. 22–30).

Section C is first introduced at measure 22, which starts on a chord of D minor (see Fig. 12.11). As previously noted, the descending scale-like figures heard in the left hand in measures 22, 24, and 26 are derived from similar patterns heard at the end of Section A. To this figure Glass adds a five-note turn-like motive in measures 23 and 25, which shift ambiguously between Eb and E natural. The middle part of Section C (mm. 27–34) returns to A minor with a descending seven-note melody that spans an entire octave (from C6 to C5) before shifting briefly to C major at measures 35–36. The entire section is then repeated at measures 39–55.

As shown in Table 12.3, each of these sections forms the basis for a paradigmatic structure where each segment is stated in the following order: A1+B1+C1 / B2+C2+A2 / B3+A3+C3. This is followed by a final Coda-like section in measures 121–147. As mentioned above, Glass reshapes the etude's structural space by changing the order of each statement. "A2" appears at the end of the second block of repetitions before being placed in-between "B3" and "A3" in the final iteration, while theme "B" is stated at the beginning of blocks two and three. Theme "C" is heard at the end of both the first and last section.

The impression given by these structural reconfigurations is of shifting perspectives, but the role and function of each theme also changes as a result. For example, bookending the opening two sections (from mm. 1–103) with theme "A" means that its return is delayed, with the first eighty-one measures of the etude taken up exploring themes "B" and "C". Theme "A" is almost forgotten by this point, so its return at measure 94 constitutes a strong sense of return. This is soon followed by theme "A"'s third and final recapitulation in measure 110. Nevertheless, the "A" material becomes shorter with each statement, as if fading into the distance. The reverse can be said of theme "B", which appears only briefly in Section 1 (eight measures long). It is then developed and extended in far more dramatic ways during the statement of "B2", using a fuller texture, more expansive register, and dynamic contrasts between loud and soft. By contrast, its final iteration between measures 110–115 is very brief – a mere echo or trace of the original. Out of the three themes, theme "C" is developed the least, with "C2" an exact repetition of "C1" minus a repeat of the entire section, as happens in "C1". As with "A3" and "B3", "C3" also appears in truncated form. Each thematic statement of Theme "C" presents the previous one in telescopic form, with its appearance in Sections 1, 2 and 3, fifty-five, forty-seven and sixteen measures respectively.

The twenty-six-measure Coda overlaps and dovetails with "C3", with measures 117–120 repeated as measures 126–129 of the Coda. It starts by drawing on the parallel sixths and thirds movement of theme "C" before focussing on the oscillating major and minor third figures featured in theme "B". In effect, the Coda synthesizes all three elements, as the falling scale harmonised in thirds and sixths heard in theme "C" (e.g., m. 22), that returns in the Coda in measure 125, is in fact first introduced at the end of Section 1, in measure 12.

While these structural pillars support each thematic statement, the music often moves hesitantly: its direction and destination remain unclear. For example, the opening theme sets out on its journey only to lose itself amongst the other two themes. It eventually finds its way back only to circle around on itself in confusion. There are parallels here with earlier Glass pieces, such as the "Opening" from *Glassworks* (as seen in McClary's analysis, previously discussed), but here the music's circularity remains hidden from view, lying beneath its surface. When the opening theme does reappear, its arrival is sudden – its presence is unannounced and unexpected.

The sense of closure and finality in Glass' etude is given further context when heard in relation to Reggio's film *Visitors* (2012). Part of Glass' soundtrack for this film was subsequently repurposed for the piano study. While the first part of *Visitors* presents the viewer with a series of slowly moving images of people's faces staring into the camera's lens while it pans across the screen,[19] the section featuring the music reheard in "Etude No. 20" focusses instead on deserted buildings, empty streets, decaying trees and rotting landscapes – as if the entire human race has been wiped out by some catastrophic unknown event.[20] The still, photographic quality of Reggio's monochrome images also encourages the viewer to construct a narrative sequence as one might do while looking at a series of paintings in an art gallery. In the director's words: "Each member of the audience must become the storyteller, must become the character and plot of the film" (Reggio 353).

Glass' etude imparts more fluidity to the static images, and Reggio has stated that the music was meant to provide "a narrative for the film" (350). Glass' narrative structure thus suggests a series of steps or stages. One could map the passage of time from birth, youth, middle age, and old age to each thematic statement. The first set of statements, with their open-spaced intervals, suggest inquisitiveness, exploration, endless possibilities; the second, an awakening and existential realization that the vitality and fecundity of youth will not last forever; the final, resignation and, eventually, acceptance that old age and death are inevitable. a sense of loss suggesting the absence or disappearance of thoughts and memories. Like Reggio's ghost towns, what remains of the music is its shell-like surface, but one senses here that the shell is inside a person's mind rather than projected through the desolate landscapes of the film, and the loss and confusion of memory that comes with old age.

4 Conclusion

This chapter set out by asking how minimalism got into narrativity and how to get out, to rephrase a well-known expression by musicologist Joseph Kerman. It has argued that the organizational principles underpinning minimalist and post-minimalist music function as much according to ideas relating to space as they do to time. If narrative threads are to be found in this music, it is necessary to conceptualise them according to notions of narrative space, such as location, position, arrangement, distance, direction, orientation, movement, place. These in turn can be contextualised according to existing music-analytical parameters, such as layers, textures, and structures.

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[19] The effect results in a kind of detached voyeurism – of *watching being watched* – as suggested in the title of the final track on the soundtrack recording to *Visitors*, called "The Reciprocal Gaze". At one point, the image of a Gorilla is also placed amongst the sequence of human faces, one of the film's most arresting moments.

[20] In fact, these scenes were filmed in Louisiana in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina in 2005. Having visited the area on several occasions after the event, Reggio observed that the place had become "like a huge set for the ruins of modernity, a modern Pompeii" (349). In the soundtrack to *Visitors*, this music carries the title "Gone", which reinforces the idea of disappearance. The entire segment occurs between 00:57:00 – 01:11:00 of the film.

The three examples studied in this chapter have attempted to show how this methodological approach can potentially generate some interesting results in relation to minimalism and narrative space. In Torke's *Adjustable Wrench*, the spatial frame is generic (1980s American pop), in Reich's *Proverb*, signifiers of familiarity are applied to evoke ancient and modern, old and new. In Glass' etude, the spatial frame is intertextually bound up with the music's absent story space as originally provided by Reggio's film images. In *Adjustable Wrench*, the layers of shifting simultaneities generate their own narrative continuity, while in *Proverb*, musical texture provides architectural support and orientation for the music. In Glass' "Etude No. 20", the music's multiple structures provide space for a dialogue between three thematic ideas that suggest a kind of life-cycle narrative but remains unresolved at the end.

Layers, textures, and structures are related, of course, forming three interconnected angles in any analytical triangle. Future applications of the methods presented in this chapter might apply all three aspects to a single work or set of works. For example, while principles relating to musical layering form the basis for Michael Nyman's *In Re Don Giovanni* (1977), the music's organisational principles are also guided by texture and structure. Likewise, an analysis of Reich's *Music for Eighteen Musicians* (1976) might start by relating its eleven-chord harmonic grid to the concept of structural space before turning to the work's use of layers and textures. It is intriguing to imagine how future methodologies could be applied to other minimalist works in order to rethink the narrative terms of this important musical style and aesthetic of the late twentieth and twenty-first century.

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"Your Music Tells Stories Now"

Sorting Out Narrativity in Steve Reich's Plastic Haircut

John Pymm

Abstract

The focus of minimalist scholarship has been on the so-called "big four" of minimalism: Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and LaMonte Young. Recent writing, such as O'Brien and Robin's (2023) book *On Minimalism: Documenting a Musical Movement*, offers a re-working of this narrative to present the "stories of lesser-known figures, or lesser-known stories about the bigger names".

This chapter takes the second of these approaches and explores a lesser-known story about Reich, the minimalist composer about whom most has been written, although virtually all of it focusing on works following the composition of his seminal phase pieces *It's Gonna Rain* (1965) and *Come Out* (1966). It explores the backstory of a much earlier (and unacknowledged) piece, Reich's sound collage for the experimental film *Plastic Haircut* (1963), an excellent example of a much lesser-known piece that has received little attention from scholars. *Plastic Haircut* is contextualized, deconstructed and analyzed. This forms the basis of a discussion as to what stories are woven into the fabric of Reich's approach and the way the piece acts as a blueprint for how the composer would use speech snippets as the basis for documentary in later speech-based pieces.

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The story of *minimalist music* has taken shape over four decades since the first scholars began to document and analyze the works produced by a group of four composers who became known as "minimalists", a term that none of them was happy to own and which did little justice to any of their music. The music of LaMonte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Phillip Glass – the so-called "big four" of minimalism – came to dominate the scholarly story about this music. As Kerry O'Brien and William Robin put it in the introduction to their 2023 revisionist history, *On Minimalism: Documenting a Musical Movement*: "[t]here's a story you may have heard before; it gets repeated a lot. It's one story, but it's about four people" (1). What follows is a re-working of the story through the presentation of documents that present "the stories of lesser-known figures, or lesser-known stories about the bigger names" (Ibid. 3).

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This chapter builds on the second of O'Brien's and Robin's intentions, that is, exploring a lesser-known story about a bigger name – perhaps the biggest name – Reich, the minimalist composer about whom most has been written, although virtually all of it focusing on works following the composition of his phase pieces *It's Gonna Rain* (1965) and *Come Out* (1966). My intention here, though, is to explore the backstory of a much earlier (and unacknowledged) piece, namely Reich's sound collage for the experimental film *Plastic Haircut* (1963). Reich's sound collages from the 1960s are, as a group of pieces, an excellent example of a much lesser-known story in the output of a very well-known composer. They have received little attention from scholars, their very existence generally treated as peripheral, tolerated as a mere by-product of the composer's search for a distinctive musical voice before chancing on the compositional style known as phasing.

Reich has told the story of his compositional journey many times and often foregrounds his accidental discovery of the technique of phasing (see Reich, *Conversations*). But this obscures the point that the initial compositional spark was Reich's interest in working with human speech and also, to a lesser extent, the music he produced for non-narrative theatre works with the San Francisco Mime Troupe. *Plastic Haircut* was first screened at the Mime Troupe's Capp Street studio on 25 January 1964. The significance of the Mime Troupe is well documented by Dean Paul Suzuki (esp. 186–7) and also by Ross Cole, even though for Reich, the significance of non-narrative theatre faded rapidly once the phased repetition of small musical subjects found its place at the heart of his musical language.

So what are we to make of Reich's sound collages – seven narrative-based works produced in the two-year period between January 1963 and January 1965. I have written elsewhere about the sound collages produced during the composition period of *It's Gonna Rain* (Pymm, "Minimalism and Narrativity") and *Come Out* (Ibid., "Dramatic Sound Collage"), particularly the narrative relationship between these collages and the final compositions. These two pieces are readily acknowledged by Reich in his oeuvre and he uses them as an entry point for telling his story. *Plastic Haircut* is not mentioned on Reich's official website and – as with its successor, *Livelihood* (1964) – the collage comprises the actual composition rather than a preparatory sketch for it. Reich produced seven sound collages during the period 1963 to 1965 and they are set out in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1 Reich's Narrative-based works from 1963–1965.

January 1963	*Plastic Haircut*
August 1963	*Ruzzante's Maneuvers*
December 1963	*King Ubu*
February 1964	*Along Came a Spider*
July 1964	*Tartuffe*
November 1964	*Livelihood*
January 1965	*It's Gonna Rain* or *Meet Brother Walter in Union Square after listening to Terry Riley*

Reich's sound collages create narrative through the assemblage of short speech snippets, yet, his incessant repetition of small musical units seems an unlikely place to look for narrativity. A breakthrough moment came eventually in 2008, when choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker put to Reich the question: "Your music tells stories now. Do you agree with this interpretation?" (de Keersmaeker and Reich), a rather cheeky suggestion that the composer's music had somehow acquired narrative properties over the course of four decades. Reich's reaction was predictable: a firm rebuttal of the idea that he was trying to create narrative at all, but with a tantalizing suggestion that the source materials somehow served to create their own narrative. Reich offers no suggestions as to how an audience might make sense of these source materials, simply that they will have to "sort it out" for themselves.

> In the vocal pieces no stories are told, but there is certainly subject matter though always treated somewhat abstractly. There is yet a third category of pieces that use pre-recorded voices and sounds of life around us, including machines […] Again, no stories are ever told, but real documentary subject matter is talked about with differing implications the audience must sort out for themselves. The essence of these pieces is that they are rooted in documentary material. (de Keersmaeker and Reich)

In an earlier interview on US public radio, Reich had been more accommodating, explaining that listeners were not expected to engage in an act of unguided narrative construction but should be directed by the stories embedded in a piece's source material. The key, therefore, to understanding narrative in Reich's speech-based music must lie in the documentary sources. Since most audiences are unlikely to be familiar with these, I have probed the sources in the Steve Reich archive in the Paul Sacher Stiftung to gain an understanding of how the composer uses them. I have therefore taken up Reich's challenge to try and *sort out* what these narrative implications actually are in the soundtrack for the film *Plastic Haircut*.

As already indicated, *Plastic Haircut* is a piece anchored in Reich's experience of non-narrative theatre, experimental film, and tape music. Reich has since ignored the impact of non-narrative filmmakers on his work before 1965, just as he has downplayed the influence of Luciano Berio in using recordings of human speech as compositional source material. There are exceptions, such as Reich's 1994 interview with K. Robert Schwarz, in which he acknowledges the influence of Berio's tape music in using snippets of recorded speech as compositional material. The appeal to Reich is, however, the emotive quality of the inflexions of speech, which seem to have made a great deal more impact on him than the meaning of the words themselves:

> The person who wrote *Omaggio a Joyce* and *Parole*, which is one of the sexiest pieces of electronic music ever made, really had a keen ear for speech, and I think Berio really confirmed and pushed me in the direction of exploring speech as a source for tape music. ("Interview by Schwarz" 6)

The expressive qualities of the human voice have long held attraction for Reich and an area of investigation not yet documented is a comparative transcription of the pitch, range, rhythm, and timbre of the voices that he uses as source material. Whilst this might produce a mapping of the perceived emotional temperature of the piece, it would tell us little about the structuring of speech snippets to create narrative. Hugh Davies suggests that "the best surviving source for Reich's earliest style would be an archive of experimental films" on the basis that their non-narrative approach is reflected in the episodic music Reich composed for them (194). It is fitting, therefore, that the sound collage for *Plastic Haircut* was created for film since the style has its roots in that genre.

The genre can be traced back to the work of experimental German film director Walter Ruttmann, whose 1920s films incorporated collages of sound, words, and music. The same principle of using source sounds from the concrete world was subsequently developed by composer Pierre Schaeffer in his 1948 *musique concrète* piece, *Étude aux chemins de fer*.[1] Advances in technology in the 1950s enabled the style to develop further through the splicing of magnetic tape to create montages consisting of isolated sonic events, juxtaposed to allow the possibility of creating a timeline and narrative structure. *Musique concrète* therefore embraces the developing style of "epic" and "absurdist theatre" of the time: episodic, non-naturalistic, non-linear, and with a concern for challenging rather than reassuring its audience. Whilst the approach could be described as non-narrative, a more appropriate description might be "non-linear narrativity" where specific events have narrative potential depending on the way in which the composer orders them.

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[1] Schaeffer's piece has coincidental parallels with Reich's speech-based work. It uses aspects of *needle-in-the-groove* music as some vinyl records make use of lock-grooves, meaning that the recording cycles continuously. It also consists entirely of recordings of railway locomotives, perhaps presaging their usage in *Different Trains*.

In *Plastic Haircut*, Reich uses only pre-recorded material from the source LP, *The Greatest Moments in Sport*. This contrasts with the directorial approach he would go on to take in *Different Trains* and *WTC 9/11* in shaping what is actually said to the extent of prompting his interviewees to say particular words or even say them in a particular way (see for example Casey, pp.164–167). Reich appoints himself to the role of auteur, the creator of narrative whose editing of sound sources lands somewhere between linear story and cartoon strip with the gaps left to be filled in by the listener. In this role, Reich gives himself complete freedom to select, adapt or reject material to shape a story that reveals his own creative choices as much as the narrative content of the material itself. Indeed, the individual speech snippets are effectively non-narrative until assembled by the auteur, who takes ultimate responsibility for the shape and narrative direction of the story. A further stage is the controlling of tensions between the design of the collage and the vocal fantasia that emerges at points as musical elements collide while Reich subjects them to repetition. This leaves the listener with the question as to what remains of the original sound sources and the extent to which the original meaning of individual snippets is protected from erasure, if at all.

Reich's approach to the assembling of these speech snippets is non-narrative: the chunking of dialogue into self-contained units of text that can be arranged in a manner that fragments the original timeline and introduces indeterminate time lapses between frames to create a narrative. But in what sense does this create anything approaching a narrative? Barbara Postema's *Narrative Structure in Comics: Making Sense of Fragments* explores the way in which cartoon strips create meaning – the assembling of a series of static images to tell a story, often implied rather than stated. At the heart of Postema's explanation is her contention that the style is essentially about creating gaps or absences to guide the reader through a purposeful narrative. The opening may start at any point in the *plot – in medias res* – and may end at any opportune moment, to be decided by the auteur. The gaps are of indeterminate length, which is an excellent example of how the reader is left to fill in these gaps him/herself.

Reich's understanding of the narrative/non-narrative potential of experimental film crystalized in 1968 when he came across the experimental film *Wavelength*, which had been created the previous year by the Canadian visual artist Michael Snow. Reich contacted Snow – who lived in New York from 1962 to 1972 – to tell him of the influence of *Wavelength* and an enduring friendship was formed, with Snow subsequently performing in Reich's *Pendulum Music* in May 1969. The two men spoke at length of their work in a joint interview at the Toronto Reference Library on 12 April 2016 (see "Steve Reich and Michael Snow").

Wavelength lasts for 43 minutes and contains little that could be described as action, the most significant feature being the steady zooming in of a camera on an unchanging scene in a room, described by Suzuki as

> one of the earliest examples of Structuralist or Constructivist cinema. Like the works of the minimalist composers, it is characterized by long durations in which changes occur slowly and gradually, through a readily perceptible process. The duration and seeming static quality of the film allow the viewer the necessary time to notice and inspect the subtle detail, the minutiae of the scene. […] It consists of a single, slow zoom lasting forty-five minutes moving across Snow's loft towards a photograph of the ocean on the wall opposite the camera. (186–7)

Reich includes a chapter on *Wavelength* in his *Writings on Music*, emphasizing his belief that the viewer has a responsibility to act as listener-participant in the co-creation of narrative and especially so in the gaps in the film. On three occasions, Reich refers to the narrative gaps in *Wavelength*, in each case reiterating the point that when watching the film you should "complete it in your head" ("Wavelength" 36–7). Snow was clearly taken by the idea of a cartoon strip with its imprecise ability to communicate time passing through the indeterminate gaps between frames. As a child, he had developed a fascination with cartoon strips, and created *Aeroplane Ace 1938* which he would later use in the book he produced to accompany his 1970 exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

The comic strip offers a form of narrative in which the sequence of events reflects the normal order of things. The narrative speed may be quite unequal as a result of the indeterminate gaps between frames, meaning that, while the overall time frame in which the events take place is unclear, there is a strong sense of directionality to the storyline. This plays out clearly in the approach taken by Reich to constructing a narrative in *Plastic Haircut*.

Plastic Haircut features two other significant figures from Reich's professional collaborations: R. G. Davis, founder of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and

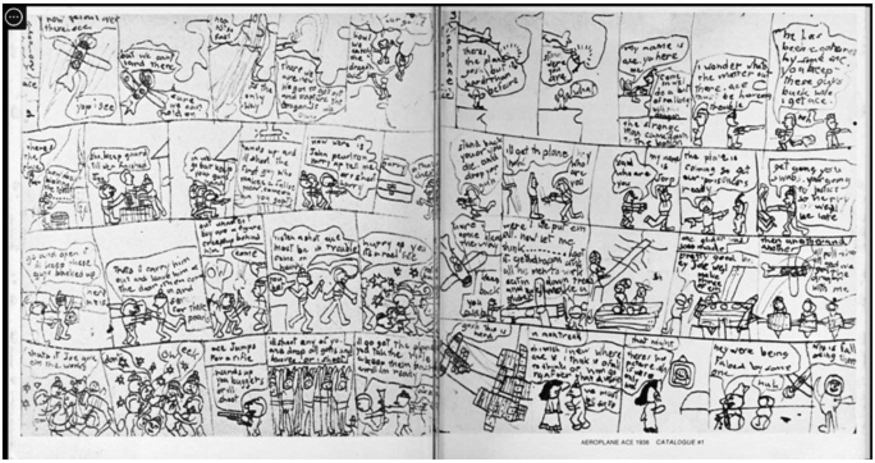
yep i see
sure we can't hold on
it's the only way
how we catch the dragon ace
hands up and ill shoot the first guy who makes a false move
now were is John pearlson
go and open it ill keep these guys backed up
hurry up you its a real fire
ace Jumps for a rifle
hands up you buggers or ill shoot
theres the plane yes but its harder than before
here you are
my name is ace, you here
i wonder whats the matter out there. ace must be haveing trouble
the dragon was comeing to the beacon
stand back or your ded
ill get the plane
hey who are you
who are you
my name is Joe
the plane is coming so get our prisoners ready
get going you swabs, your going to justice
then another and another
in montreal
that night
hey were being followed by some one
huh
AEROPLANE ACE 1938 CATALOGUE #1

Figure 13.1 Snow, *Aeroplane Ace 1938* (King 19).

artist William T. Wiley, who notably collaborated with Reich in experimental pieces in the late 1960s. Both men perform against an absurdist backdrop of symmetrical forms which Bruce Weber has described as a "mesmerizing, rapid-fire series of kooky visual images, including an actor in a wizard's cap, brief clips of a nude woman, geometric shapes, and several constructed objects, including a pyramid and a swinging eye" (A24). Reich's monaural soundtrack consists of a sound collage, a manipulation of existing material taken – not from archival speech recordings (as would be his approach in subsequent sound collages) – but from an existing source, an LP entitled *The Greatest Moments in Sport*.

There is little in Reich's personal diaries or interviews to suggest any significant love of sport, apart from childhood reminiscence of hearing that LP. A commercially successful recording, *The Greatest Moments in Sports* was only released as a Columbia Masterworks LP in 1955,[2] and features archival commentaries on the achievements of over forty historic moments, chronicled in voice and sound; twenty-five highly eminent sports personalities, akin to a "Who's Who" of sporting success between 1920 and 1954; and individual stories knitted together through the commentaries of four narrators that portray collectively a range of cultures and nationalities.[3] Despite their achievements, the sportsmen and women on the LP recording themselves have no agency save through four well-known voices, each functioning as a distinct heterodiegetic narrator: Mel Allen as a baseball commentator, Don Dunphy for his boxing reports, Marty Glickman for track and sports coverage, and veteran announcer Clem McCarthy.

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[2] At the time of the release of the record in 1955, Reich was about to enter his twenties and this is unlikely, therefore, to be the same recording he recalled having heard as a child.

The sportspeople whose achievements form the basis of the reports are not identified on the recordings, although their names are printed on the liner notes. Baseball players form the largest group: Lou Gehrig (1903–1941), Al Gionfriddo (1922–2003), Carl Hubbell (1903–1988), Cookie Lavagetto (1912–1990), Connie Mack (1862–1956), Babe Ruth (1895–1948), Bobby Thomson (1923–2010), and Johnny Vandermeer (1914–1997). There are a number of eminent figures from the world of boxing: Jack Dempsey (1895–1983), Tony Galento (1910–1979), Joe Louis (1914–1981), Gene Tunney (1897–1978), and Jess Willard (1881–1968). The LP presents four athletes renowned for their olympic track prowess: Roger Bannister (1929–2018), Glenn Cunningham (1909–1988), Jesse Owens (1913–1980), and Josy Barthel (1927–1992), as well as American footballers Roy Riegels (1908–1993), and Knute Rockne (1888–1931), with tennis champion Helen Jacobs (1908–1997).

Robert Nelson's film *Plastic Haircut* consists of three sections, with the first and third being identical, each lasting for six minutes and displaying a montage of bizarre images. The repeat of the opening section is accompanied by a satirical interview with Nelson as to the filmmaker's artistic intent, clearly conceived within the worldview of its time, with its racist caricature of an Indian film maker by R. G. Davis. Reich's soundtrack accompanies the three-minute middle section during which time the screen is unintentionally blank. The film turned out to be experimental in more ways than had been anticipated. Nelson's inexperience as a film editor meant that Reich's soundtrack was inaccurately aligned with the film, resulting in its being played against a blank screen and functioning to all intents as an independent sound collage (see "Steve Reich First Piece").

Notwithstanding Reich's lack of stated interest in sport, he sets up the piece as a sports event: the varieties of different games, tournaments, matches, and contests collide boisterously as Reich juxtaposes and overlaps different styles of speech in a similar style to the original LP, each operating almost as musical subjects as the work progresses. The resulting soundtrack for *Plastic Haircut* therefore hovers somewhere between the timed structure of a boxing match – with its recurrent bells between rounds – and the frantic energy of a horse race, both of which are alluded to in the speech snippets themselves. There is a clear difference, however, between the cartoon strip, with its sense of direction and climax, and the achrony created here as snippets are removed from the LP and placed with little sense of continuity.

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[3] The Columbia recording AX-5000 was produced by Bud Greenspan and James Hammerstein and also included a 20-page souvenir booklet "profusely illustrated with memorable photographs of these great moments and a special article by Red Smith". A smaller 7" version of the record was also released exclusively for the Gillette Razor Company. For the full details of the album, see *Keyman Collectibles*.

The structuring of the speech samples is set out in the table (13.2) below.

Table 13.2 Deconstruction of *Plastic Haircut*. Square brackets are used for words that were inaudible or unclear. The forward slashes are indications of omissions, passing of time, or speech that is cut off or that fades away.

Time	**Speech**	**Other sounds/commentary**
06:01		Ambient crowd noise, sounds of distant marching bands, cheerleaders etc. fading in.
06:02		
06:03		
06:04		
06:05		
06:06		
06:07		
06:08		
06:09		
06:10		
06:11		
06:12		
06:13		
06:14		
06:15		
06:16		
06:17		
06:18		
06:19		
06:20		
06:21		
06:22		
06:23		Boxing bell rings

Table 13.2 Deconstruction of *Plastic Haircut* (*cont.*)

Time	**Speech**	**Other sounds/commentary**
06:24	The winner/ and still the world's heavyweight champion	
06:25		
06:26		
06:27		
06:28		
06:29		
06:30	[unclear]/ Outstanding contender	
06:31	I'm gonna hit him/ hit him Get knocked out if you don't watch out/ watch out/ watch out	
06:32		
06:33		
06:34		
06:35		
06:36	He's a fine [unclear]	
06:37		
06:38	He's riding at a gallop	
06:39	He's riding at a gallop [louder]	
06:40	And still/	
06:41	It's time to quit	
06:42	Hit me [harder] hit me [harder]	
06:43		
06:44	That was just as bad	
06:45		
06:46	/ erm, would never get up but unfortunately he did	
06:47		
06:48		
06:49	Wise decision as the results showed	
06:50	The boy can do/ can do	
06:51		
06:52		
06:53		
06:54	There's a horse internationally famous/ as [unclear] he represents	
06:55		
06:56		
06:57		

Table 13.2 Deconstruction of *Plastic Haircut* (*cont.*)

Time	**Speech**	**Other sounds/commentary**
06:58	Still Scarfield/ Still Scarfield	
06:59		
07:00	got it, why/ a radio game	
07:01	April to October/ they go on forever	
07:02	I think the only way I could have beaten Joe is with a baseball bat / with a baseball bat [louder]	
07:03		
07:04		
07:05		
07:06		
07:07	for a national pastime	
07:08	/ never be equalled	
07:09	Can you hear a wonderful stadium/ and a wonderful crowd	
07:10		
07:11		
07:12	Came the fabulous Swede	
07:13	[indistinct] a fire trauma	
07:14	/ gave blood/ America would	
07:15	Be more safely	
07:16	/ [everyone] here in Germany has been very nice to me	
07:17		
07:18	I thought I was gonna knock them out in the first round	
07:19		
07:20	Careless, I should've knocked 'em out/ Careless, I should've knocked 'em out/ I should've knocked 'em out	
07:21		
07:22		
07:23	Despite the fact that I was hit seven times in succession	
07:24		
07:25		
07:26	Fills the record books	
07:27	you know it was just as bad	
07:28	other arm is concerned,	
07:29		
07:30	and	

Table 13.2 Deconstruction of *Plastic Haircut* (*cont.*)

Time	**Speech**	**Other sounds/commentary**
07:31	I can't tell you/	
07:32	Part of my professional obligation	
07:33		
07:34	my same old punch	
07:35	think that's just wishful thinking	
07:36		
07:37		
07:38	winner and still champion	
07:39		
07:40		Boxing Bell
07:41		Boxing Bell Both of these "Boxing Bell" entries also sound like a piano playing a repeated chord, as part of a jazz trio.
07:42	it's for my life/ never that much [reversed]	
07:43	carry the ball	
07:44	Got notes for the	
07:45	Ah/huh, ah/huh	
07:46		
07:47	worshipped by	
07:48	[indistinct]/ Along with thousands	
07:49		Boxing Bell
07:50		
07:51	fifteen	
07:52	and counting	
07:53	right up a [unclear]	
07:54	all bad	
07:55	obligation	
07:56	a pastime/those in	
07:57	by by by	
07:58		Ambient crowd noise
07:59		
08:00	Right up a clean round	
08:01	and little cause	

Table 13.2 Deconstruction of *Plastic Haircut* (*cont.*)

Time	**Speech**	**Other sounds/commentary**
08:02	a sixth round/ by by by	
08:03	all bad	
08:04	Fourth of/	
08:05	The Swede	
08:06		
08:07	The Swedes	
08:08	The track man	air horn descending [minor third]
08:09	cosmic fight	
08:10	Seven times in succession	
08:11	Succession	
08:12	And the succession	
08:13		
08:14	and still/ and still	
08:15		
08:16	and still the heavyweight	
08:17	champion of the world	
08:18		Background noise
08:19		Bell
08:20		Final section, with very rapid switching between background noise of crowds cheering, sound of bell, repetition of individual words and syllables occasionally emerge.
08:21	got notes for the/	
08:22		
08:23		
08:24		
08:25	for the lock	
08:26		
08:27		
08:28	the Swede	
08:29	then	
08:30	the Swede	
08:31		
08:32		
08:33		
08:34		
08:35		
08:36		

Table 13.2 Deconstruction of *Plastic Haircut* (*cont.*)

Time	**Speech**	**Other sounds/commentary**
08:37		
08:38		
08:39		
08:40		
08:41		
08:42		
08:43		
08:44		
08:45		
08:46		
08:47		
08:48		
08:49	They're going crazy	Background noise of crowds and racing horses hooves on turf
08:50	They're going crazy	
08:51		
08:52		
08:53		Cheer
08:54	Nelson-Davis "interview" on film commences	Fade out to silence
08:55		
08:56		
08:57		
08:58		
08:59		

The table (13.2) reveals the loose narrative structure of the film and its absurdist juxtapositions. The opening section consists entirely of ambient crowd noise, with sounds of cheering interspersed with the music of distant marching bands, reminiscent of the New England of Charles Ives. After twenty-three seconds, the first boxing bell rings and a section of composite dialogue begins. This is based initially on the announcement of the boxing world heavyweight champion, moving to "riding at a gallop" with "a horse in the lead" and leading to references to beating "Joe with a baseball bat" at 07:02. A European dimension is introduced at 07:12 as the "fabulous Swede" is announced, which is quickly followed by the assertion that "everyone in Germany has been very nice to me".

The boxing bell at 01:40 increases the pacing of the speech snippets, spurred on by a further bell at 01:49. Amid further references to “the Swede” and “seven times in succession”, the collage rises to a climax at 02:16 with the assertion “still the heavyweight champion of the world” and a final bell. The last section contains rapid switching between the background noise of crowds cheering and the bell sounding, with individual words and syllables – notably “the Swede” – emerging from the cacophony. And so the style continues throughout, with zany moments created by the juxtaposition of comments taken from different sports, interspersed with crowd noise and other ambient sounds.

Reich's collage amounts to an Artaudian bombardment of the senses, confirming Reich's description to Michael Nyman that it “turned into noise through over-dubbing with loops, rather like a surrealist rondo” (Nyman 230). Similar things could be said about the effect of how the texture intensifies in *It's Gonna Rain* and *Come Out*. *Plastic Haircut* also anticipates Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1969), in which the repeated playback of the same re-recorded statement resonates with the room in which the recording takes place, to the point where words ultimately become unintelligible, ageless utterances incapable of temporal measurement (Strickland 39).[4]

> Though the textual fragments are short, one can make out the voices and what is being said. Near the end of the work, the fragments come at a rapidly accelerating pace, they are overlapped, and the sounds eventually degenerate into noise. (Suzuki 443–4)

Whilst Reich's intention in using speech was for the listener to “hear what the original sounds were” (“Interview with Gross”), his success in achieving this is patchy. Although many stories are embodied within the speech samples, the editing of the dialogue creates an entirely new meaning and reflects the absurd nature of Davis' film, a parody of the type of experimental film of the period with the organization of the speech snippets creating some entertaining combinations:

> Certain disjunct phrases follow each other for deliberate satiric effect (‘beaten with a baseball bat/a national pastime’), whereas others are selected for their melodic or rhythmic profile and repeated (‘still champion’/‘a baseball bat’/‘in succession’/‘should've knocked ‘em out’); the prominent phrase ‘the fabulous Swede’ perhaps makes reference to Nelson himself. (Cole 326–327)

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[4] Reich claims that for him, the most important pieces of that period of electronic tape music were *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1956) and *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969).

Which brings us back to where we started in responding to Reich's challenge of sorting out narrativity in the source materials and thus in the piece itself: what stories does the piece tell, or at least, what narrative threads hold it together? It should be remembered that the collage lasts for only three minutes, covering the middle section of *Plastic Haircut*. It is preceded (accidentally, as we now know) by a six-minute silent montage of images and followed by the mock interview with the Indian filmmaker, neither of which have any immediate connection with sport.

While acknowledging Cole's assertion that the work is influenced heavily by "funk art", it is nonetheless possible to trace some consistent narrative themes. The framing narrative for the collage, however, is the energy and focus of the ruthlessly competitive arena of elite sport, created by the interaction of disciplined competitors in highly charged sporting moments. There is a tension between discipline and unpredictability, to a large extent an indicator of what would happen subsequently in the phase pieces. Indeed, the style, pacing, and energy of many of the speech snippets clearly foreshadow the impassioned, expectant tones of Brother Walter in *It's Gonna Rain*. In contrast to Walter's eschatological proclamations, however, the energy in *Plastic Haircut* is a recreation of previous great sporting moments but with equal lack of specificity as to when they happened. All other narrative aspects of the piece exist in this sense of timelessness.

There are three layers in the texture of *Plastic Haircut:* the isolated voices of the competitors themselves, the interspersed moments of professional commentary, and the ambient crowd noises that envelop several of these moments of greatness. The resulting collage was clearly intended to accompany the series of images in the first part of the film, although not in any sense of being diegetically related. In fact, the eventual outcome of the collage being played against a black background may have heightened audiences' attention to those words that can be picked out among the cuts and collisions of the speech material. What levels of narrative could they be expected to sort out, then, given that so many of the constituent clips are short and unattributed?

Despite this, a number of narrative themes emerge and collide within this frenetic level of energy, reflecting the struggle to assert physical prowess; the specific sports of boxing, racing and baseball; national identity; and "othering". The collage is separated into three sections by musical interjections from the two boxing bells, which have musical associations of a piano playing a repeated chord, perhaps as part of a jazz trio, and the air horns with their falling minor third. The first section, from 6:01 to 7:41, starts with clear references to boxing: "the world's heavyweight champion", "outstanding contender", which become interspersed with racing and "riding at a gallop", and an "internationally famous" horse with its undertones of the Fugue for Tin Horns from Frank Loesser's *Guys and Dolls*.

The second section, from 7:42 to 8:08 is far less specific with shorter speech snippets that are difficult to link to a specific sport: "got notes for the", "worshipped by", and "a pastime". There is also a darker tone with the phrase "all bad" occurring twice, and picked up in the descending minor third of the air horn. There is also the restatement of the only identifiable individuals, "the Swede/s" and "the track man", although only the Swede is referred to multiple times, having been introduced in the first section as "the fabulous Swede". A third, more triumphant section between 8:09 to 8:53 introduces the idea of the cosmic fight. It restates the heavyweight champion of the world and culminates in the crowd going crazy.

Reich's recollections of the piece do little to assist the attempt at sorting out narrativity. His abiding memories of the film lie instead in its shortcomings and the lack of alignment between sound and image, combined with the apparent amateurish nature of the film itself. Reich's subsequent work with Nelson was similar in style. *Thick Pucker* and *Thick Pucker II* both use sound montages in the same way as *Plastic Haircut* – although in the later works they accompany images in the film.

So what does *Plastic Haircut* tell us about Reich's approach to narrative? There is nothing that can be said about reception history since the work is not included in Reich's acknowledged canon (cf. "Works"). The significance of *Plastic Haircut* lies in its rediscovery rather than its reception: the unearthing of narrative elements in the work of a composer who has been reluctant to acknowledge narrativity in his pieces. Yet *Plastic Haircut* creates the style of narrative for his later speech-based pieces: namely, the creation of story through the juxtaposition of vocal snippets, albeit loosely organized. Despite the fragmented and non-referential nature of these vocal snippets, there is clear intention to create a linear "non-narrative".

Reich clearly attached little significance to the creation of sound collages. Approached in September 1965 by filmmaker Truman Nelson (no relation to Robert Nelson) to create a sound collage that would eventually become the precursor to *Come Out*, Reich responded with the explanation that (despite having created several of them), sound collages were not his stock-in-trade ("Interview with Grimes" 1). His enthusiasm for them certainly waned once he had discovered the principle of phasing short musical motifs rather than assembling speech snippets into a linear, narrative/non-narrative structure. In sum, the abiding significance of *Plastic Haircut* does not lie in its success or otherwise as a soundtrack to a film, but as a blueprint for how Reich would go on to use speech-based material as the basis for a documentary and video opera in *Different Trains*, and *The Cave*, and as a means of shaping and communicating a story in which the listener accepts the responsibility for filling in the gaps and sorting out narrativity.

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Indexing a Narrative

Gestural Patterns, Plentitude, and Cultural Metonymy in Steve Reich's Music for Pieces of Wood

Martin Ross

Abstract

Music for Pieces of Wood (1973), a work in three sections for five claves, was one of Steve Reich's first works to explicitly focus on pattern development, specifically between composite patterns and build-up patterns. In this chapter, I use indexical processes to propose a narrative interpretation of this purely rhythmic work. I first analyze how the pattern interactions create musical gestures: through the process of deixis, a listener can observe how composite patterns influence the quality of every build-up pattern by the former directing a listener towards the latter. The gestures formed create a local narrative trajectory whereby each section reaches a point of textural saturation known as plentitude. By using a fulfillment-based *telos* and likening the musical gestures to dialogic interactions, one can identify formal markers of plentitude as the claves exhaust their pattern functions in each section. Examining how Reich used African music adds a culturally fundamental interpretive layer to this analysis. Through a metonymic lens, I consider the contextual parallels between African compositional techniques and Reich's performance practice of the 1970s. The metonymic context further affects both the musical gestures formed and how listeners can interpret the work from different cultural perspectives.

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In Steve Reich's instrumental process music of the late 1960s, patterns were subjected to audible musical processes that drove the work by gradual change to a predetermined completion. Shortly after, Reich's works exhibited more articulate and salient forms in which change and, subsequently, completion were determined primarily by texture. The pattern remained the focal point and was crucial to Reich's compositional style following his process music. In his works in the 1970's, Reich focused on how he could develop the pattern rhythmically, texturally, and dynamically.

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One of the first works that highlighted pattern development was *Music for Pieces of Wood* (1973),[1] a work for five clave players that develops unique rhythmic pattern interactions in sections of six, four, and three beats. Within each section, Clave 1 plays a constant eighth-note pulse, Clave 2 plays a fixed pattern, and Claves 3–5 enter in consecutive iterations by substituting rests with notes, known as Reich's "build-up" technique. The three sections begin with successively shorter periodicities (6/4, 4/4, 3/4), thus formally *compressing* each instance of textural build-up.

This chapter explores the narrative potential of *Pieces of Wood* by asking three questions. First, can rhythmic patterns create a narrative? Second, can we assign an alternative goal to explain the work's narrativity? Finally, can we add significant context to a narrative interpretation by discussing how Reich utilized African materials? I investigate these questions by using several indexical processes to show how the composer's composite and build-up patterns signify the work's progress gesturally. In my analysis, musical gestures are determined by how and when build-up patterns originate as a rhythm (a vertical entity articulated by the composite pattern) and over time become a pattern (a separate, linear entity from the composite pattern).

Due to the work's minimal design and instrumentation, my narrative interpretation is motivated by a fulfillment-based *telos*. The aforementioned gestural activity is further contextualized when the ever-growing composite pattern deictically points to each build-up pattern. Not only does this pointing affect the build-up pattern's quality, but the pattern interactions elicit an iconic resemblance to dialogue. Each section is marked by textural plentitude: as Clave 5 completes their build-up pattern, the texture (and the dialogue by extension) becomes saturated enough to reach a level of fulfillment that a listener can recognize.

Lastly, examining the non-western music Reich used in his compositional processes, notably from African rhythms, recognizes the debt Reich owes as well as adds a culturally fundamental interpretive layer to this analysis. Through the indexical process of metonymy, I look at the contextual parallels between African performance and Reich's performance practice of the 1970s. The metonymic context further affects both the musical gestures formed and viewing the work as a whole. The trajectory of gestural events and processes in this work serve as the basis for a minimal but significant narrative interpretation. The evolving gestural patterns afford a potential narrative interpretation for an engaged and active listener.

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[1] Henceforth *Pieces of Wood*.

1 Following Process Music

In his process music, spanning from *It's Gonna Rain* (1966) to *Four Organs* (1970), Reich used musical processes that determined both the form and the content of the work to its instructed completion. In the composer's words, "[m]aterial may suggest what sort of process it should be run through (content suggests form), and processes may suggest what sort of material should be run through them (form suggests content)" (*Writings on Music* 34). Moving into the 1970s, Reich searched for ways to evolve from such predetermined structural rigidity. Because of the expanded role of the performer, Reich's works in the 1970s saw the beginning of a performance practice specifically tailored to the composer's evolving interests. Along with composing for larger ensembles, moving away from electronic to acoustic instruments, and focusing on the intricacies of the pattern, Reich was beginning to establish a new minimalist style.

Though some of Reich's 1970s works carried over process music's rhythmic attributes (e.g., *Clapping Music*'s rotational pattern progression; *Drumming*'s use of phase as a technique to shift patterns), newer works removed the form-content fusion. In his seminal article qualifying minimalist music as an aesthetic, style, and technique, Timothy Johnson discusses how form, texture, harmony, melody, and rhythm are integral in creating a "minimalist style". For my intents and purposes, the rhythmic attribute is of the most interest. Johnson characterizes rhythm in the minimalist style as ubiquitous repetitive patterns, and their organization, combination, and individual shapes provide the primary points of interest (see 748). Rhythmic change in Reich's process music, either by phase or augmentation, was the primary focal point. Such change relied on fixed, relatively short rhythms or patterns to convey the process realization. Moving forward, Reich's patterns became longer, which made them more susceptible to different compositional techniques.

Although Johnson's descriptions of the stylistic attributes are meant to encompass the style of multiple composers, they shed light on how Reich adapts and shifts from the rigid procedures of process music into the development of works with more formal, textural, harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic variety. For Reich, rhythmic patterns became longer, the music was not subjected to an overall process, a plural usage of harmonic sonorities was employed, and primarily acoustic instruments were used. This laid the groundwork for what would be the conventionalized techniques abound in his works to come.

African Materials

Reich's choice and configuration of patterns beginning with his process music are fundamentally grounded in African music. Though the composer explains that non-western influence manifested in his thinking and his own musical structures (*Writings on Music* 71; 106–7), Reich's intense study of African music and its application in his music necessitates discussion of cultural appropriation. In his comprehensive essay "Afro-Electric Counterpoint", Martin Scherzinger provides musical, analytical, and archival evidence explaining how Reich's engagement with east, central, and southern African music is "*the* foundational feature of his basic compositional endeavor" ("Afro-Electric Counterpoint" 264, emphasis in original). For Scherzinger, such an endeavor is less about a "confirmation" of what Reich was already thinking than it is "a thoroughgoing debt to African musical thought" ("Afro-Electric Counterpoint" 260).[2]

There are three notable aspects that impacted Reich's thinking. First, Reich read literature on African music by ethnomusicologists Arthur Morris Jones, Gerhard Kubik, Kwabena Nketia, Simha Arom, Paul Berliner, Hugh Tracey, David Rycroft, and John Blacking. He even corresponded with many of these scholars about their research, sourcing recordings, and transcribing African music. These conversations occurred before he began composing his process works in the mid-1960s.[3] Second, Reich spent the summer of 1970 at the University of Accra to study West African drumming. Third, sketches of the pattern in *Clapping Music* (1972) and *Pieces of Wood* show how Reich questions whether his patterns sounded "too African" ("Afro-Electric Counterpoint" 295–96).

The pattern in Reich's *Clapping Music, Pieces of Wood, Music for 18 Musicians* (1974–76), and *Sextet* (1984), known as his *signature* pattern,[4] consists of eight onsets (attacks) within a twelve-beat measure. The onsets are grouped as 3+2+1+2 with rests separating each grouping. This pattern derives from the *standard pattern* played by the *gankogui* or *atoke* in music of the Ewe people of Ghana as well as a common *makwa* handclapping pattern in the *Mbira dza Vadzimu* music of Zimbabwe. The *gankogui* pattern and Reich's signature pattern are shown in Figure 14.1.[5] These onset arrangements allow for multiple metric possibilities and ambiguity. I will address this in further detail later.

One of the most significant attributes in African music that Reich used in his music was inherent patterns. Inherent patterns are underlying sub-patterns

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[2] See Agawu esp. ch. 4, or Gopinath for further insight.

[3] See also Scherzinger, "Curious Intersections" for more information on African music's impact on Reich's process music.

[4] Cf. Yust for further discussion on Reich's signature rhythm, and Ross, *Gesture in Steve Reich's Music* on signature pattern.

[5] Scherzinger shows one *makwa* pattern as a rotation of the *gankogui* pattern: instead of 1+1+2+1+1+1, it is 1+1+1+2+1+1 ("Afro-Electric Counterpoint" 287).

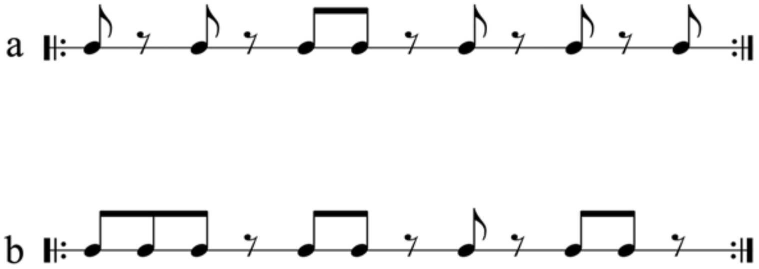

Figure 14.1 a) The *gankogui* standard pattern b) Reich's signature pattern.

within an overall composite pattern. When a listener identifies inherent patterns, they are identifying what Reich describes as their own "psychoacoustic by-products" within the music (*Writings on Music* 35). Resultant (or resulting) patterns are Reich's compositionally explicit form of inherent patterns. In *Violin Phase, Phase Patterns*, and *Drumming*, Reich has a separate performer play an inherent pattern, one that is the *result* of the composite pattern.[6]

Even though it does not make use of resulting patterns, the African performance practice behind inherent rhythms/patterns (and resulting rhythms/patterns by extension) are essential to performing *Pieces of Wood*. Scherzinger summarizes three conditions for inherent rhythms set by Kubik as such:

> Recall that Kubik's conditions for the emergence of inherent patterns include largeness of intervals (to facilitate the audible delinking of individual tones from their module and permit gestalt formation with different modules), a high-speed and unaccented approach to performance (to avoid the constraints of a singular metric entrainment), and the registral overlap between parts (to facilitate the fusion of individual tones to produce additive lines). ("Afro-Electric Counterpoint" 283)

The second condition – a high-speed and unaccented approach – is integral to performing *Pieces of Wood* and other Reich works in the 1970s.[7] For Reich, an even value in his attack thus leave the patterns to their own natural rhythmic devices: patterns are layered in such a way to provide their own rhythmic ambiguity without the need for accents. In his book on performance practice in Reich's music, Russell Hartenberger explains that performing even attacks "allows the listener and the player to hear patterns that are repeated for an extended period of time *in different ways* and creates the interest in pulse-based repetitive music" (32, emphasis added). This intentional rhythmic ambiguity creates possibilities rather than vagueness, thus allowing a listener to entertain multiple rhythmic interpretations.[8]

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[6] Composite patterns, which consist of the fixed pattern and its transpositionally related (shifted) patterns, are commonly mistaken as resulting patterns.

[7] When describing African claps, Jones says, "[t]hey remain constant and *they do not impart any rhythm on the melody itself*" (Jones 21).

2 Musical Gesture

Pattern development in *Pieces of Wood* can be qualified gesturally. In his book on gesture in common-practice music, Robert Hatten asserts that gesture relies upon "the ability to recognize the significance of energetic shaping through time" (93). I will use Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics to establish the gestural framework for this analysis. Peircean semiotics works in threes: there is an overarching triad of signification as well as three different categorical trichotomies, consisting of three signs within each trichotomy. The triad of signification includes a Representamen, an Object, and an Interpretant.[9] Peirce explains, "A *Sign*, or *Representamen*, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its *Object*, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object" (CP 2.274)[10]. In other words, a Sign or Representamen represents or signifies an Object, leading a subject to create an Interpretation. Naomi Cumming describes the principal value of a semiotic theory as "the guidance it gives to the process of interpretation itself" (*The Sonic Self* 80). Thus, a semiotic framework can explain how the dialogue is represented through the pattern such that one can create gestural interpretations.

Peirce's second trichotomy, consisting of an icon, index, and symbol, concerns the sign's relation to its object. Icons evoke a likeness or resemblance to their object. Indices create connections to their object such that a subject's attention is directed towards it. It can signify the direction or position of an object. Symbols form stipulated relationships to their object, typically by means of convention. Much of the time, the shared agreement symbols possess by such stipulated means is embedded culturally.

Musically, Cumming explains that gesture acts as a semiotic interpretant ("Subjectivities" 8). This analysis consists of two significant interpretations in *Pieces of Wood*. First, I discuss how the composite pattern's repetition indexes a listener toward the build-up pattern's development. This indexing allows a listener to reorient the build-up pattern. The engagement from this indexical process allows gestural activity to emerge. A subsequent interpretation will serve as the crux of the narrative potential in the work. The indexical gestures will shift from being an interpretant of the pattern interaction and become an iconic representation of narrative dialogue. Felicia E. Kruse explains the semiotic impact behind this:

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[8] This also can extend to metric interpretations, as is shown in Horlacher.

[9] These labels are capitalized in the context of the triad, but they can also be lowercase.

[10] Following the standard scholarly citations of Peirce's work, in-text reference of *Collected Papers* is by CP volume and paragraph.

> The functional relativity of the elements of the sign relation and of Peirce's categories themselves – the fact that, for example, what serves as an interpretant (a Third) in one sign relation can become a representamen (a First) in a subsequent act of semiosis – suggests that in the performance and hearing of a musical work, the boundary between "musical" meanings and at least some "extramusical" meanings is a pragmatically shifting one. (773–4)

If the gestures can signify a resemblance to dialogue (i.e., conversing back and forth), a possible narrative trajectory can be mapped onto the work. According to Kruse, shifting between what is "musical" (the patterns) and "extramusical" (dialogue) is made possible by functional relativity. The next section is an analysis of how the build-up and composite patterns create a gestural interpretant.

3 Music for Pieces of Wood

Like *Clapping Music*, this work utilizes the same 3+2+1+2 signature pattern but subjects it to a different compositional technique: the build-up pattern. Although Reich's earlier *Drumming* uses the same technique, among others, *Pieces of Wood* exclusively focuses on Reich's treatment and development of the pattern, which functions as the fixed pattern in the beginning 6/4 section.[11] As the work progresses, the signature pattern combines together with the build-up pattern in its different stages. This allows for an analysis solely focused on the patterns and their perception. The stylistic choice of rhythmic ambiguity, achieved through even attacks, creates several subjective possibilities for interpreting how patterns build up and become part of the composite pattern.

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[11] Also known as the "basic" pattern. Whomever plays this is the "steady" or "static" part (Hartenberger 95).

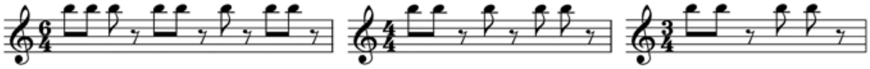

Figure 14.2 Reich, *Music for Pieces of Wood*, Clave 2's fixed patterns, one for each section; acceleration of periodicity from 6 to 4 to 3 quarter-note beats.

The Build-up

For five clave players, Reich's *Pieces of Wood* takes a more simplistic approach to the pattern development. The work is divided into three sections, one in 6/4, one in 4/4, and one in 3/4. I will focus primarily on the first section in this analysis with the implication that the concepts discussed are applicable to the other two. Along with the Clave 1's constant pulse, Clave 2 plays the fixed pattern. Figure 14.2 below shows Clave 2's fixed patterns in each respective section.

While beginning with the signature pattern in this section, Reich removes material while shifting to the new sections. The first two beats in the 6/4 measure are removed to make the 4/4 section, and the second beat in the 4/4 section is removed to make the 3/4 section. At the same time, Reich maintains patterns with a palindromic distribution of onsets: 3+2+1+2, 2+1+2, and 2+2.[12]

Claves 3–5 create build-up patterns as such: as the fixed pattern (Clave 2) plays with the pulse (Clave 1), Clave 3 enters with a single onset. Figure 14.3 shows Clave 3's build-up in the 6/4 section. After an agreed-upon number of repeats, Clave 3 moves into the next measure where a rest is substituted with a beat, creating an additional onset. This continues until Clave 3 has matched the same number of onsets as Clave 2: eight onsets in the 6/4 section, five in the 4/4 section, and four in the 3/4 section.

Reich tends to build up patterns where the spacing allows for the consecutive onsets (two and three consecutive eighth notes) to occur near the end of the build-up, with the triple consecutive onset always appearing last. After Clave 3 matches the volume of Claves 1 and 2, Clave 4 enters and repeats the same build-up compositional process. The final patterns will always be transpositions of Clave 2's fixed pattern.[13]

Indexing and Textural Repetition

The actions that performers take to realize the score's potentialities and make them actual can be defined as a semiotic index. According to Peirce, "[a]nything which focuses the attention is an index" (CP 2.285). The index is the most apparent sign to a subject because it draws the attention towards

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[12] The 6/4 pattern is symmetrical when accounting for the repeat: 3+2+1+2(+3). This subsequently creates a type of elided symmetry.

[13] See Cohn for more discussion on transpositionally related patterns in Reich's music.

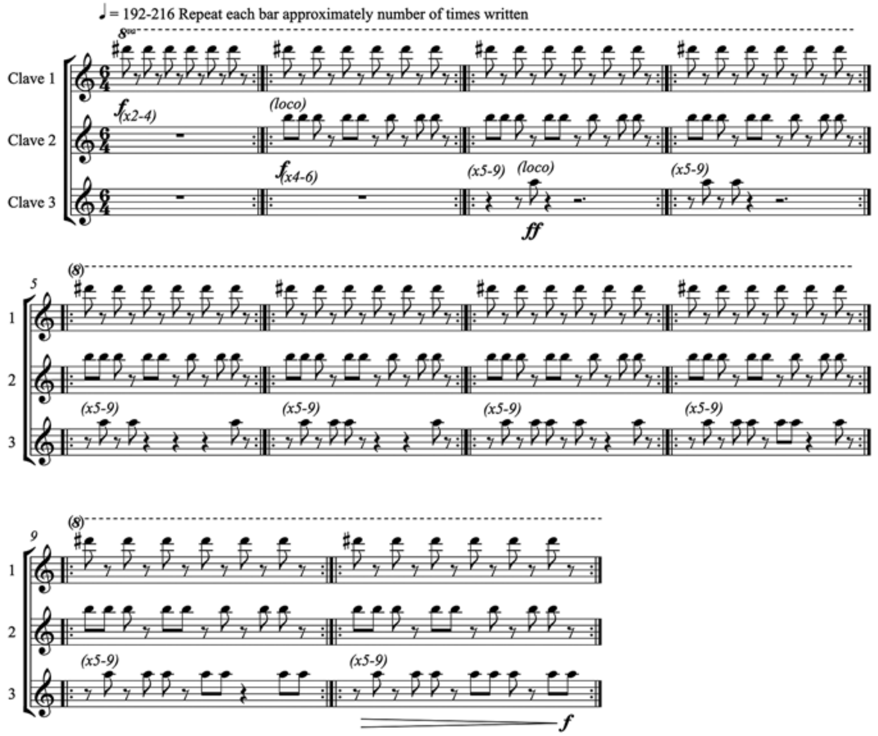

Figure 14.3 Reich, *Music for Pieces of Wood*, mm. 1–10, Clave 3's build-up in the 6/4 section.
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the object to which it signifies, or, in an atemporal context, it is indicative of the object to which it signifies. In his article on ceremonial mbira music of Zimbabwe, Tony Perman explains, "[i]ndexicality is defined by contiguity, it directs attention, and is necessarily tied to the here and now" (68).

The process of indexical pointing is known as deixis, which "draws attention to the immediate present, the here and now" (Perman 69). This here and now, known as haecceity, "is the essential foundation for trance, flow, participation, communitas, and the possession that defines ceremonial success" (Perman 69–70). Sustaining attention in the form of active participation is a beneficial component for one listening to minimalist music. A listener engaged in the work's haecceity will readily distinguish between different types of pattern interactions in *Pieces of Wood*. The unaccented approach, fast tempo, and repetition in the work will also maintain contiguity with a listener familiar with minimalist music and/or African music.

In a performative context, David Lidov states, "[t]he immediate expression of physiological values in sound as performed nuance is indexical" ("Mind and

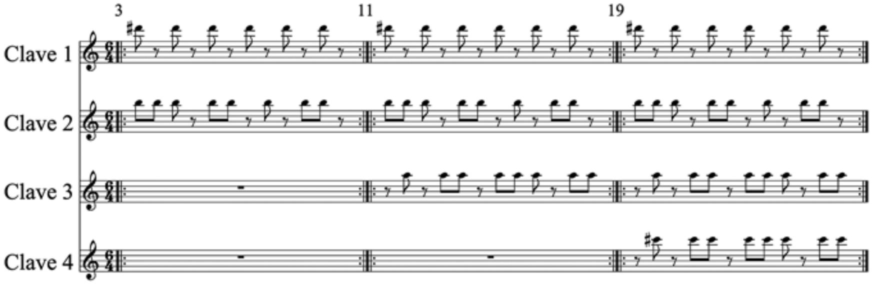

Figure 14.4 Reich, *Music for Pieces of Wood*, 6/4 section, mm. 3, 11, and 19, showing completed composite patterns.

Body" 74). Along with the type of pattern being played, performative nuance in *Pieces of Wood* is motivated by repetition. In his writings on musical repetition, Lidov outlines three referential types: a formative repetition that interprets what is repeated, a focal repetition that is self-referential, and a textural repetition "which points away from the repeated material to other musical signs while, at the same time, influencing their quality" (*Is Language a Music* 29). Textural repetition is commonly found in the composite pattern of *Pieces of Wood* and other Reich works, as the composite pattern functions as the underlying pattern being played while the build-up pattern is developed.

With every development (i.e., every subsequent build-up pattern), a denser composite pattern is created. Clave 4, for example, will have a denser composite pattern when it progresses with its build-up than Clave 3's respective build-up; the same goes for Clave 5's build-up compared to Clave 4's. The composite patterns in the 6/4 section are shown in Figure 14.4. The overall texture becomes denser with every new onset addition, and by the addition of Clave 3's full pattern added in measure 11, the composite pattern creates a measure of consecutive eighth notes.[14]

The number of designated repetitions at the beginning, as shown in Figure 14.3, fits textural repetition's behavior, elaborated by Lidov as such:

> Textural repetition occurs with the continuing repetition of an idea more than three or four times, which cancels out its own claim on our attention and thereby refers our focus elsewhere, to another voice or to a changing aspect. The figure maintains, nevertheless, a background influence on our musical consciousness. (*Is Language a Music* 35)

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[14] The location of each amalgamation to the composite pattern is the measure following the completion of the build-up pattern. This allows for the build-up pattern to end in one measure and join the composite pattern in the following measure. For Clave 2, this means the measure following its initial presentation.

The composite pattern is continuously maintained while a build-up pattern develops, making its repetition saturated enough to direct one's attention to the build-up. In her book on James Brown and Parliament, Anne Danielsen attributes textural repetition to Reich's music (161).[15]

Reich further confirms the repetition's indexicality for every layer added to the composite pattern through his treatment of dynamics. Whereas Claves 1 and 2 maintain a *forte* dynamic throughout, Claves 3 and 4 begin their onsets at *fortissimo*. Once their build-up patterns are finished, their dynamic diminishes to a *forte*, matching the volume of the rest of the composite pattern.[16] The composite pattern's textural repetition and the change in volume are both deictic processes. While attending an ancestral spirit ceremony (*bira*) in Zimbabwe, Perman recounts a performance of "Sumba," a common ceremonial *mbira* piece. The *mbira* player began the work as the primary performer both melodically and rhythmically. They were soon joined by someone on the *hosho* (gourd shakers) to serve in a secondary role that reinforced the beat with a secondary pulse. Perman elaborates on the deictic function of the *hosho*:

> The *hosho* drove proceedings with its deixis of now. The predictable repetition inherent in the style, combined with the tension produced by the subtle anticipation of the second pulse in the *hosho*, to sustain the attention to the here and now needed for the kinds of experiences that lead to trance and communitas; the sound's haecceity points to a continuously emerging present. (71)

The build-up and composite patterns are analogous to the roles the *mbira* and *hosho* played in the particular performance of "Shumba", respectively. The composite pattern will direct a listener to a continuously emerging present, the here and now. In *Pieces of Wood*, this consists of the ongoing build-up patterns steadily substituting rests with onsets and the ever-growing composite pattern affecting their quality.

The Indexical Gesture

How the repetition changes the quality of the build-up pattern is unique in that it offers a listener a choice: allow their perception of the build-up to homogeneously interact with the composite pattern or allow the build-up to heterogeneously develop against the composite. The former perception is vertical, and the latter is linear.

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[15] However, I take issue with Danielsen's claim that the "repetitive texture" in Reich's music "becomes a curtain of sound while our attention wanders in other directions" (161). Textural repetition indexes a listener to something specific (e.g., the build-up pattern) rather than letting one's mind wander. I believe the difference between minimalist music and groove-based music she covers in her book is that minimalist music's repetition is unavoidable.

[16] Clave 5 also begins *fortissimo* but, again, it is not applicable to the work's textural repetition.

The work's formal design allows a listener to follow which clave part plays their build-up against the composite pattern; the latter's texture becomes thicker as each section progresses. This largely involves the clave's vertical interaction with the composite pattern and the emergence of a linear pattern. In other words, when does the build-up become a recognizable pattern? By the third build-up measure in the 6/4 section, there are two onsets in close proximity and one further away. By the fourth build-up measure, a listener has familiarized themselves with the substituting part of the build-up, and the rhythm has enough onsets for the substitutions not to be considered spontaneous. Instead, the pattern grows with more onsets either before or after a listener perceives to be what I call the "initiatory point" (IP) of the pattern.

Figure 14.5 shows a comparison between Clave 3's original build-up in the 6/4 section and a reorientation of the pattern. The substitutions made from left to right in the reoriented pattern create a 2+1+2+3 pattern, a retrograded onset counterpart to Clave 2's fixed pattern.[17] Also, the triple consecutive onset is complete at the end of the measure rather than the beginning. The reoriented pattern continually adds onsets that, due to the new position of the pattern, favor the start of the pattern (the IP) as the new *one* by the fourth build-up measure rather than waiting for the triple consecutive onset.

A listener's conscious experience will allow them to shift their attention to match how they perceive the rhythmic arrangement. At some point in the build-up, a listener's attention moves away from the anticipation of the next substitution in relation to its initial starting position of the build-up. Instead, it moves towards its relation from their own established starting position, where they believe to be the beginning of the pattern. Such a listening experience is informed not by treating the first note in the build-up as *one*, but a new *one* that is informed by the build-up itself. As an example, perhaps the focus shifts away from the triple consecutive onset as the starting point, which is how the 3+2+1+2 signature pattern begins, and towards the 2+1+2+3. The effect of the fixed pattern informing the build-up pattern and vice versa is shown in Figure 14.6.

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[17] By "retrograded onset counterpart", I mean that it is implied that the 2+1+2+3 would start with an onset. If it were a true retrograde of the signature pattern, then it would begin with an eighth-note rest.

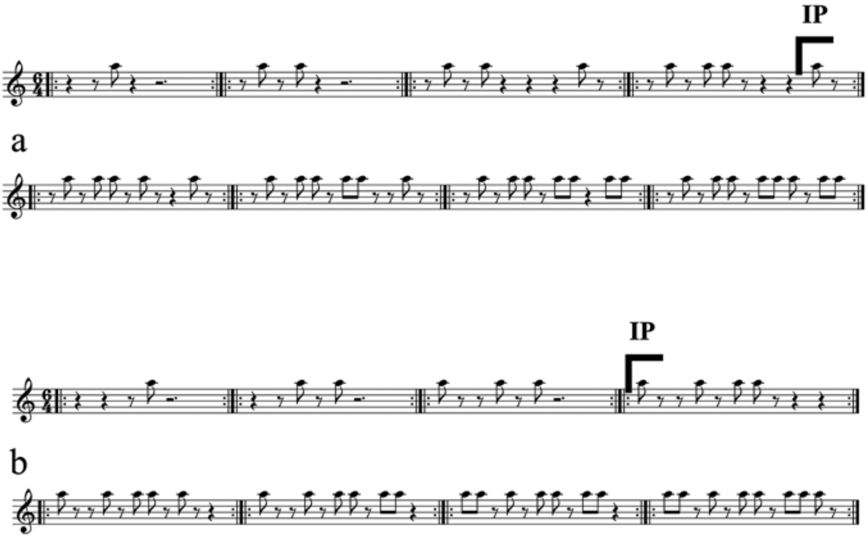

Figure 14.5 a) Clave 3's original build-up (see mm. 3–10) and b) a reorientation of the initiatory point (IP) based on where a listener experiences the rhythm becoming a pattern (Steve Reich, *Music for Pieces of Wood*).

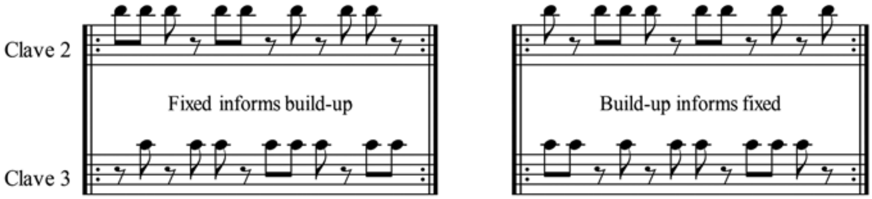

Figure 14.6 Clave 2's fixed pattern in dialogue with Clave 3's build-up pattern with respect to point of initiation. (Steve Reich, *Music for Pieces of Wood*).

When a listener can manipulate the pattern such that the build-up informs the fixed pattern, thereby altering the given figuration and creating their own subjective somatic event, the pattern becomes a gesture. Subsequently, a listener can go through the same semiotic processes in the 4/4 and 3/4 sections. Their interpretations are informed by a new fixed pattern, different build-ups, and a textural repetition that allows the performer and listener to determine when the vertical rhythm becomes a linear pattern. As Claves 4 and 5 initiate their build-up, the fixed pattern informing the build-up becomes more complex due to the thicker texture. Thus, it is increasingly probable that a listener will focus on the build-up, and subsequently the textural repetition from the composite pattern becomes more indexical. The indexicality's rate of change speeds up when moving to the 4/4 and 3/4 sections. Though it follows the same build-up formula, a listener must adapt by anticipating the shorter patterns at a faster rate.

4 Minimalist Narrativity

On a larger scale, the engagement with this indexical gesture leads to a second act of semiosis: the interpretant created by the pattern interaction will now be considered an iconic representation of dialogue. This representation grounds the narrative reading of *Pieces of Wood*. In his article on narrative archetypes, Byron Almén asserts that music that "would be expected to be listened to as narrative" requires 1) a syntax that could group constituent elements into dialogic and/or conflictual relationships, 2) a continued coherence of these groupings, 3) teleological directedness, and 4) "cultural preconditions of performance which permit or invite a listener to be attentive to the above features" (8). *Pieces of Wood* contains all four of Almén's required features. The two main constituent elements, which present themselves into a dialogic relationship from a narrative perspective, are the composite pattern and the build-up pattern. Every time the dialogue between one build-up pattern and the current composite pattern finishes, which has its own relationship of interest, a novel dialogue begins between a new build-up pattern and a denser composite pattern. Subsequently, one can interpret the dialogue becoming more involved. Such a dialogue in this work is only possible through Almén's fourth feature: a performance practice that allows a listener to interpret not only rhythmic ambiguity (via performing even attacks and a fast tempo), but also allows them to properly engage with the pattern relationship (our dialogue).

A Fulfillment-based telos

Teleology has been addressed in minimalist music scholarship, notably by Robert Fink in his 2005 book *Repeating Ourselves*. Fink describes Reich's music as "pulse-pattern minimalism", defining it as "minimalism *as* repetition, particularly as repetition with a regular pulse, a pulse that underlies the complex evolution of musical patterns to alter listener perceptions of time and *telos* in systematic, culturally influential ways" (20). Pulse-pattern minimalism is a particularly apt way to describe *Pieces of Wood*, given that both attributes in the definition are the musical content.

Because minimalist music subverts typical anticipations and expectancies, Fink suggests a "recombinant teleology" that expands rather than restricts works to a teleological/nonteleological dichotomy. Per Fink, "any music with a regular pulse, a clear tonal center, and some degree of process is more likely to be an example of recombinant teleology" (43). Fink's recombinant teleology considers more works to have teleological tendencies (i.e., not only goal, but also climax, fulfillment, and completion). Teleology factors into any work insofar as there is a goal in mind. For example, works that follow a tonal syntax use the tension between consonance and dissonance, both harmonically and melodically, to come towards (or disrupt) a goal. Most times, regarding the former outcome, this goal is a resolution. The denial of a teleological goal, however, is typically not prescribed by the work, but by an interpreter – in our case, the analyst.

In their work on narrative engagement in twentieth-century music, Almén and Hatten assert that Reich's process works "seek to erase or preclude narrative […] by finding ways to discourage a listener from imposing a narrative reading" (60). Moving into the 1970s, Reich creates ending points within sections through different changes, mainly instrumental and through the pattern. These changes are primarily motivated by texture. Hatten discusses this as a deictic act that can be tracked gesturally: "*Deictics* may either point to a concrete object, or in the case of narrative pointing, to a relative location in the gestural space that corresponds to the relative positioning of events in narrative time" (105, emphasis in original).

In *Pieces of Wood*, there are two locations in which deictics can guide us in narrative time. The first includes areas containing the aforementioned rhythm-to-pattern formulation made possible by textural repetition. The other is the transitions from the 6/4 section to the 4/4 section, and the 4/4 to the 3/4 section. The 6/4 and 4/4 sections articulate their respective "endings" by switching from the final composite pattern (after Clave 5's build-up is complete) to playing the fixed pattern in unison (a "unison pattern") in Claves 2–5.

A Narrative Marked by Plentitude

However, the final 3/4 section does not use a unison pattern to articulate its completion. Furthermore, presence of one final composite pattern in lieu of a unison pattern builds the ultimate tension before the work is complete. The tension created by the dense texture is motivated by plentitude. According to Hatten, "[a]s part of a compositional *premise*, plentitude may be understood as a desired goal achieved by processes that lead to the ultimate saturation of texture, and fulfillment – perhaps even apotheosis – in the case of a theme" (43). A *textural* plentitude in *Pieces of Wood* may be understood as a teleological goal that is marked in its progression by gestural events (e.g., pattern dialogue and build-up completions). By the end of each section the build-up process reaches its highest level of textural saturation. Clave 5's completion of its build-up pattern marks a stage of plentitude as fulfillment of a textural premise. As the piece formally compresses, the activity is intensified by a quicker rate of progression.

One of the striking formal characteristics in *Pieces of Wood* is that Reich follows a formula for the first two sections – he presents the fixed pattern in Clave 2, builds up the patterns in Claves 3–5, and ends with a unison pattern – but not in the final section. Along with Reich compositionally evolving towards a minimalist style, the answer as to why there is no unison pattern in the final 3/4 section might lie in Clave 5. I previously discussed how the part never has the chance to contribute to the textural repetition. It does, however, function as an ending point by repeating its final build-up measure longer than any of the other build-up measures in each section. In the Universal Edition score, Claves 3 and 4's instructed repetitions in build-up measures are 5–9 times in the 6/4 section, 10–16 times in the 4/4 section, and 12–18 times in the 3/4 section. However, Clave 5 is instructed to repeat its final build-up measure 8–16 times, 16–32 times, and 24–48 times in each respective section (*Music for Pieces of Wood*).

These longer repetitions by Clave 5 establish that the final build-up pattern is complete, subsequently creating a *complete* composite pattern, yet the 6/4 and 4/4 sections are marked even further with a unison pattern in Claves 2–5. From these interactions, our gestural *dialogues* have enough repetition at the level of the pattern and the level of the section for a listener to determine when the dialogue is complete. Hartenberger recalls an audience's reaction that is consistent with this interpretation:

> Despite the ambiguity created by the sense of downbeat displacement with each new attack in the build-ups, the structure of *Music for Pieces of Wood* is straightforward and can be clearly heard by listeners. In fact, at a concert many years ago in the Netherlands, the audience broke into cheers and applause when [James] Preiss completed the final build-up in the third section of the piece. (173)

The audience's applause is a response to textural plentitude. The final 3/4 section omits the unison pattern, yet there was enough familiarity from what came before for an attentive audience to recognize a section and, soon following, the work's completion.

Metonymic Influence

The audience's response was seemingly informed by recollection and previous experience with minimalist music. They recognized that Clave 5's completion marked the end of the 3/4 section just as it did with the previous two.

A second indexical process, where habits, memory, and context influence present actions, is known as metonymy. Unlike drawing attention to an object through deictic pointing, metonyms direct a subject towards their object by reference (i.e., objects are not in existential relation to metonyms).

Given that such references can be culturally motivated, non-western music can potentially impact the *Pieces of Wood* analysis from a culturally metonymic standpoint. While summarizing Reich's debt to African music, Scherzinger states, "[t]he full range and subtlety of Reich's intertextual resonance can only be perceived if its African components are reconstituted as one of its fundamental referents" ("Afro-Electric Counterpoint" 280). The gestural activity and narrative interpretation is made possible by the *makwa/gankogui* pattern, even/unaccented attacks, and a fast tempo. Given these African referents, can we add an additional layer that considers the cultural implications?

Consider the *bira* ceremony Perman attended. The following explains metonymy's effect on the ceremony:

> Each of the objects that mediums use to generate an icon of the ancestral *mudzimu* spirit is a metonym of that spirit. The clothing worn, the snuff consumed, even the mbira played, are indexically associated with *vadzimu* (pl. of *mudzimu*) and their ceremonies as attributes of those spirits because of a previously established existential contiguity in previous ceremonial experiences. As these associations are repeated and confirmed over time, the recognition of the object represented, the spirit, becomes habitual, even conventional. (Perman 71)

Given this, a subject can potentially engage with *Pieces of Wood* through a metonymic process created by previous knowledge and experience of African music.

If the African referents serve as metonyms, they can connect the contiguity from past events with the present. To give an example, suppose someone listening to *Pieces of Wood* has a previous understanding of the interaction between a lead performer (*kushaura*) and a following performer (*kutsinhira*) in Zimbabwean Shona music (in the "Shumba" performance Perman attended, these were played by the *mbira* and *hosho*, respectively). In this *Pieces of Wood* scenario, metonymy works if a listener believes there is a resemblance (iconic likeness) between the *kushaura/kutsinhira* interaction and the build-up/composite pattern interaction. This is all contingent upon whether there is a connection to be made. Are there enough similarities between the *hosho* indexing the *mbira* and the composite pattern indexing the build-up? It can be argued that both interactions fall under a general *lead/accompaniment* type of performance.[18] The resulting interpretations from both metonymic scenarios vary depending on the interpreter's judgment of how Reich uses African materials. Based on the interpretive subject, it can confirm anything between paraphrasing, quotation, borrowing, and appropriation.

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[18] This connection leads to third indexical process: replica indexing. "When a sign's deictic and metonymic attributes bring its type (a legisign) into the immediate present with the

Metonymy's effect on a narrative reading in *Pieces of Wood* posits a different scenario. Reich's work demonstrates his shift toward formally articulate pieces over predetermined processes. Per Scherzinger, Reich's *Electric Counterpoint* (1987) cites formal processes found in the *Ippy* horn music of the Banda Linda people in the Central African Republic ("Afro-Electric Counterpoint" 298). These processes include parts consecutively entering at different pitch intervals, using even attacks and a fast tempo. There could be a connection made between the staggered entrances in *Pieces of Wood* to *Electric Counterpoint* and Banda Linda music by extension.[19] Again, the result of this cultural metonymic process from a narrative perspective will depend on an interpreter's judgment.

5 Conclusion

My analysis of *Pieces of Wood* focused on two different acts of semiosis. First, a listener's engagement with the interaction between composite and build-up patterns established musical gestures. These gestures are informed by textural repetition: the composite pattern's repetition indexes a listener toward the build-up pattern. This deictic repetition allows one to focus on the build-up process rather than the pattern's vertical relation to each composite pattern.

A narrative reading allows the created gestural interpretant to also be considered as an iconic representamen to dialogue. In all three sections, every completed build-up pattern creates a denser composite pattern and thus a more involved form of dialogue. Clave 5's completed build-up patterns mark formal stages of textual plentitude, where the texture reaches a level of saturation that cannot be developed further. Textural plentitude is made possible by a fulfillment-based *telos* that acknowledges a type of completion in the work while accounting for the subversive attributes of minimalist music.

Beyond the work, there is analytical merit in recognizing the debt Reich has towards African music when creating his minimalist style. It opens up another avenue that explores whether cultural metonymy can affect a listener's

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purpose to replicate, it becomes indexical" (Perman 73). Replicating this type of indexing in *Pieces of Wood* would require an agreement upon the lead/accompaniment type of performing.

[19] Harmony is irrelevant – the pitched claves serve to differentiate parts from one another rather than provide, for example, a sense of pitch centricity.

interpretation of a work like *Pieces of Wood*. More insight into the connections between African music and narrative potentiality in Reich's music is certainly worth exploring further.

Rather than simply inferring a dialogic trope within the music to explain the patterns' interactions without any further context, qualifying the energetic events as gestures established the needed signification behind this minimal work. From this semiotic perspective, which is further made possible by a listener engaged in an attentive process, *Pieces of Wood* exemplifies how a simple composition can still create narrative potential.

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List of Contributors

Álvarez Baamonde, Silvia

Silvia Álvarez Baamonde is a PhD candidate in Musicology at Sorbonne University in Paris. After studying the cello and music theory, she received a Master's Degree in Musicology from the Paris Conservatory (CNSMDP), where she obtained three First Prizes in Aesthetics, Music Culture, and Twentieth-Century Harmony. She holds an *Agrégation* in Music and she completed a second Master's Degree in Education at the Paris National Institute for Teaching (INSPE). Her research areas include intertextuality and intermediality in contemporary music, and postmodern opera from a gender studies perspective.

ap Siôn, Pwyll

Pwyll ap Siôn is Professor of Music at Bangor University, Wales. He organized the first ever international conference on minimalist music at Bangor University in 2007 with Tristian Evans. Recent publications have included chapters in *Rethinking Reich* (Oxford University Press, 2019), which he co-edited with Sumanth Gopinath, *Einstein on the Beach: Opera beyond Drama* (Routledge, 2019), and *Howard Skempton: Conversations and Reflections on Music* (Boydell & Brewer, 2019). He regularly writes for *Gramophone* music magazine and has contributed reviews to *Bachtrack* online music website.

Bouckaert, Bart

Bart Bouckaert studied at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel where he obtained the First Prizes for harmony, counterpoint, fugue, music history, as well as Higher Diplomas for chamber music and percussion. He also obtained his "Masters in Orchestral Conducting" and a PhD degree in arts at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. In October 2000, he became the second finalist of the "Settimo Concorso per Giovani Direttori d' Orchestra", a competition for young opera directors in Spoleto in Italy. Bart Bouckaert has conducted and continues to direct orchestras and ensembles at home and abroad. He currently serves as professor in orchestral conducting and contemporary music at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel.

Dayan, Peter

Peter Dayan is the author of seven books (and many essays) whose fundamental theme is the complex and often opaque relationship between art, in all media, and verbal language, especially critical language. The latest of these books is *For the Love of Art* (2022), which begins and ends with tales of being tongue-tied by music. From 2008 to 2021, he was Professor of Word and Music Studies at the University of Edinburgh, and from 2014 to 2019, Obel Visiting Professor at the University of Aalborg. He is now (mostly) retired, but is working on a *Concise Handbook of Word and Music Studies*.

Delazari, Ivan

Ivan Delazari is an assistant professor in the Department of Languages, Linguistics and Literature at Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan. He is the author of *Musical Stimulacra: Literary Narrative and the Urge to Listen* (Routledge, 2021). His articles have appeared in *Comparative Literature Studies, CounterText, Genre, Narrative*, and *Style*, and he has chapter contributions to volumes in the series "Narratologia" (de Gruyter), "Palgrave Studies in Music and Literature", and "Word and Music Studies" (Brill). He was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar (2009–2010), a Hong Kong PhD Fellow (2014–2017), and the International Society for the Study of Narrative Alan Nadel awardee (2017).

De Munck, Marlies

Marlies De Munck teaches philosophy of music and aesthetics at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Antwerp. She is also affiliated with the Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (University of Antwerp), where she supervises doctoral research projects in the arts. Her own research focuses on the cultural-historical evolution of artistic meaning processes, with a focus on music. She is the author of philosophical essays on music and art, including *Why Chopin Did Not Want to Hear the Rain* (2017), and *The Flight of the Nightingale: A Philosophical Plea for the Musician* (2019). Currently, she is working on a new book about the future of classical music.

LeBlanc, Jimmie

Jimmie LeBlanc is a composer of instrumental and mixed music and teaches at the Université de Montréal's Faculty of Music. His works have been performed locally and internationally by ensembles such as Contrechamps, the Quasar Quartet, Esprit Orchestra, and many soloists. He is the recipient of the 3rd prize at the Lutosławski Award in 2008 and the Jules-Léger Prize for new chamber music in 2009. He is currently editor-in-chief of the *Revue musicale OICRM*, responsible for the Cahiers d'analyse section of the journal *Circuit: musiques contemporaines*, and his theoretical research revolves around musical semiotics and aesthetics from the perspectives of both analysis and composition.

Marzà, Ruben

Ruben Marzà is an Italian saxophonist and musicologist. He obtained a PhD in Musicology at the Universities of Florence and Strasbourg: his dissertation (*Dal suono al senso, dal senso al suono. Luciano Berio, Edoardo Sanguineti e la neoavanguardia italiana*) deals with the relationship between Italian avant-garde music and poetry in the 1950s and 1960s. The revised text has been published by Mimesis, Milan, in March 2023.

As a musician, he performed in hundreds of concerts in Italy and Europe: with the saxophone quartet "Cherubini" he recently recorded the album *Origines: 19th Century European Saxophone Quartets*. He is a professional journalist and writes for the most important Italian magazines concerning classical music: *Amadeus* and *Suonare news*.

Mildorf, Jarmila

Jarmila Mildorf teaches English language and literature at Paderborn University. Her research interests are in the fields of socionarratology, autobiography, second-person narration, audionarratology, radio drama, fictionality, dialogue, the medical humanities. She is the author of *Storying Domestic Violence: Constructions and Stereotypes of Abuse in the Discourse of General Practitioners* (University of Nebraska Press 2007) and *Life Storying in Oral History: Fictional Contamination and Literary Complexity* (De Gruyter 2023) and has co-edited numerous collections and special journal issues, among them *Radio Art and Music: Culture, Aesthetics, Politics* (Lexington Books 2020), *Audionarratology: Lessons from Radio Drama* (OSU Press 2021) and *Word, Sound and Music in Radio Drama* (Brill 2024).

Peeters, Ann

Ann Peeters (1981) holds a joint PhD degree in Italian Literature awarded by both the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the Università di Pisa (2013), for which she studied the intertextual relations between Alessandro Manzoni's *I Promessi sposi* and the various opera adaptations based on the novel. Currently she is an associate professor at the Department of Linguistics and Literary Studies. Her current research interests focus on intertextuality, intermediality, multilingual literature, multilingualism in higher education and multilingual pedagogies.

Pymm, John

John Pymm is Emeritus Professor of Music at Sheffield Hallam University and also Visiting Professor of Music at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK. He has undertaken extensive research on the source materials of Steve

Reich's speech-based music at the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel, and this was the basis of his PhD from the University of Southampton. John has presented his research at many international conferences and is a contributor to *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music* (Ashgate, 2013) and *Rethinking Reich* (OUP, 2019). Between 2013 and 2019 he was President of the Society for Minimalist Music.

Ross, Martin

Martin Ross received his PhD in Music Theory from University of Western Ontario in 2023. His dissertation, "Gesture in Steve Reich's Music and its Signification," uses gesture and Peircean semiotics to explore subjective levels of attention, influence, and understanding in Reich's music from the late 1960s to the mid 1980s. He has presented his research at theory and musicology conferences across North America and Europe. He has sat on the Music Theory Midwest executive board as a student representative as well as coordinated the 20th Annual Western University Graduate Symposium on Music. He is currently a standing committee member for the Society for Minimalist Music.

Thomas, Jade

Jade Thomas holds an MA in English and German Literature from Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). As of November 2021, she is a fellow of the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) affiliated to VUB. Her PhD project is called "Representing Blackness: Metatheater and Genre Remediation in 21st-Century African American Plays" (grant number 1147222N) and scrutinizes play texts by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Jackie Sibblies Drury, Jeremy O. Harris, Aleshea Harris and Michael R. Jackson. Her work has been published in *English Text Construction*, *The Journal for Literary and Intermedial Crossings*, and *IdeAs: Idées d'Amériques*.

Van Nerom, Carolien

Carolien Van Nerom has a Master's degree in literary studies English-Dutch from Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). She is also a Master of arts in Music. She studied clarinet with Benjamin Dieltjens at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel. Her research interests include narrativity of music, cognitive literary studies, and contemporary literature and music. Her articles have been published in journals such as the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Music Studies*, or the *Journal for Literary and Intermedial Crossings*. Her most recent publication is a chapter on Philip Glass' *The Fall of the House of Usher* as a slow narrative in a collection called *Slow Narrative Across Media* (Brill 2024). Carolien previously received a research grant from the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO). She is currently an academic assistant at the faculty of languages and humanities at VUB.

Verhulst, Pim

Pim Verhulst is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oxford and a teaching assistant at the University of Antwerp. His work focuses on radio drama and intermediality in postwar fiction from the British Isles, topics on which he has published in various journals and essay collections. Most recently, he co-edited *Radio Art and Music* (Lexington, 2020), *Tuning in to the Neo-Avant Garde* (Manchester UP, 2021), *Beckett's Afterlives* (Manchester UP, 2023) and *Word, Sound and Music in Radio Drama* (Brill, 2023). His latest monograph, *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Radio Plays*, is appearing with Bloomsbury and University Press Antwerp.

Wolf, Werner

Werner Wolf (werner.wolf@uni-graz.at) is emeritus Professor and Chair of English and General Literature at the University of Graz, Austria, and was Vice Director of the Centre for Intermediality Studies at Graz (CIMIG). His main areas of research include literary theory (aesthetic illusion/immersion, narratology, metafiction/metareference, implied worldview), functions of literature, 18th- to 21st-century English fiction, and intermediality (literature – music – visual arts). His publications include: *Ästhetische Illusion und Illusionsdurchbrechung in der Erzählkunst* (Aesthetic Illusion and the Breaking of Illusion in Fiction, 1993), *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (1999), *Selected Essays on Intermediality* (ed. Walter Bernhart, 2018). He is also (co-)editor of volumes 1, 3, 5, 11, 14, 15 and 19 of the book series "Word and Music Studies" (1999–2022) and of volumes 1, 2, 4–6, and 11 of the series "Studies in Intermediality" (2006–2018). For more details, including his publications on music and narrativity, see his homepage: https://homepage.uni-graz.at/de/werner.wolf/.

"Music and its Narrative Potential" is a book about musical stories. It is a collection of thoughts on how music evokes narratives through its medium-specific strategies.
This book is a multi-faceted consideration of narratives expressed through music. There are several threads and themes that flow and recur through its different chapters, the most prevailing of which are contemporary music, interdisciplinary approaches, contemporary narratology, and intermediality.

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