

FROM SCORE TO PERFORMANCE: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES IN MUSICAL CULTURE

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SUMMARY. This article examines the transition from score to performance in contemporary musical culture from a semiotic and communicative perspective. The musical work is interpreted as an open communicative system in which textual, performative, and perceptual levels interact. The study concentrates on the mechanisms that convert a notated musical text into a performative event and a meaningful artistic experience. The theoretical framework amalgamates musical semiotics, performance studies, hermeneutics, and embodied cognition. The mask is examined as a cultural and semiotic intermediary among composer, performer, and listener, serving as a mechanism for interpretation, role formation, and communicative transformation. The proposed model combines semiotic and performative approaches to demonstrate that performance operates as an active process of meaning production rather than reproduction of the score. The transition from notation to performance is thus conceptualized as a dynamic act of co-creation, in which musical meaning emerges through interaction, embodiment, and cultural coding.

Keywords: musical semiotics; performance; mask; communicative model; interpretation; embodiment

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Introduction

Contemporary musical culture is undergoing intense processes of transformation associated with the consolidation of performative practices and new forms of artistic communication. Music increasingly transcends the traditional understanding of the score as a fixed text that presupposes performance and is, therefore, realized through interpretative practice. Under present conditions, the nature of such interpretation acquires not only a processual dimension but also corporeal and interactive qualities. This shift towards action, event, and gesture constitutes not merely an aesthetic phenomenon but also a distinctive marker of changing modes of thought and evolving conceptions of music as a form of intercultural communication. The transition from score to performance thus encompasses at least several analytical levels, including semiotic, hermeneutic (interpretative), communicative, and anthropological. Within this framework, the musical work is conceived not as a closed text but as a dynamic sign that unfolds its semantic structure through the interaction of composer, performer, and listener. Such an approach fundamentally alters the very logic of musical experience: the listener is no longer a passive observer but becomes involved in the communicative play and participates as a co-creator of the event.⁶

The relevance of the study is determined by the necessity to conceptualize the performative turn in contemporary art, which increasingly extends into the musical sphere. Postmodern sensibility not only establishes musical performance as an aesthetic form but also transforms it into a mode of semiotic dialogue. Consequently, the roles of all participants in communication are being redefined: the composer appears as the initiator of a sign system, the performer as its interpreter and co-creator, and the audience, in turn, as an active agent of interpretation. In this context, music – emerges as one of the most fertile grounds for the implementation of contemporary communicative strategies. It is precisely here that the transition from the fixed score to the event becomes most clearly articulated: from structure to process, from text to a living gesture. At this stage, it is appropriate to turn to practical examples that convincingly demonstrate the performative nature of musical art. In the works of John Cage, Helmut Lachenmann, Sofia Gubaidulina, as well as Ukrainian composers Valentyn Sylvestrov, Alla Zahaikevych, and Bohdan Sehin, performance is understood as a form of communication that integrates sonic, corporeal, and spatial experience. Their compositions generate situations in which the score becomes merely a point of departure for an open-ended semiotic interaction.

⁶ Kharchenko et al., "Technologies as a Mediator between Creator and Audience in Postmodern Art Practices," *BRAIN*, 2023.

It is symptomatic that performative principles are increasingly realized in film music as well, which today extends far beyond an illustrative function. In the works of Hans Zimmer, Max Richter, and Jóhann Jóhannsson, music becomes an autonomous communicative layer, capable not only of accompanying but also of commenting on the visual image and entering into a polyphonic dialogue with it. Such an approach indicates a shift in emphasis from “music as background” to “music as event”, within which corporeality and affectivity emerge as modes of experience structured by cultural codes.

On the theoretical level, it is essential to refer to the concepts developed by Eero Tarasti, Lawrence Kramer, Philip Auslander, Erika Fischer-Lichte, and Marc Leman⁷, which represent the Western European tradition of musical semiotics and performativity. Their approaches integrate the analysis of the musical sign with the performer’s corporeality and communicative action. At the same time, the Eastern European humanities tradition – most notably, the ideas of Yuri Lotman⁸, enriches this discussion by foregrounding the textual organization of culture and the contextual mechanisms through which meanings are transmitted. Ukrainian cultural studies, represented by the works of Hanna Chmil, Ihor Yudkin, Oksana Karpenko and Maria Kochetkova⁹ further develops this line of inquiry by integrating semiotic, intermedial, and phenomenological perspectives, with particular attention to corporeality, temporality, and action as key means of artistic meaning-making.

Within the framework of this study, particular attention is given to the phenomenon of the mask, which emerges as a distinctive cultural code capable of integrating performative theatricality with semiotic mediation between the composer’s text, the interpreter, and the audience. The mask operates not merely as a means of transformation but also as a signifier of multiple identities, thereby creating a space for play, distance, and multilayered communication.

⁷ Eero Tarasti, *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002); Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 2022); Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2008); Marc Leman, *Embodied Music Cognition and Mediation Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

⁸ Yuri Lotman, *A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990); Yuri Lotman, *Culture and Explosion* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009).

⁹ Hanna Chmil et al., “Homo Villicus in the Cinema Environment: Justifiability and Limits of the Index,” *Convergences: Journal of Research and Arts Education* vol. 17, no. 33 (2024): 123–142; Ihor Yudkin, *Fenomenolohiia kultury yak metodolohiia interpretatsii* (Kyiv: Instytut kulturolohii NAM Ukrainy, 2020); Oksana Karpenko, *Performativity and Intertextuality in Contemporary Music Culture* (Kyiv: Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, 2021); Maria Kochetkova, *Musical Performance as Communication: Interpretation and Embodiment* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).

The study aims to elucidate the patterns that govern the functioning of semiotic and communicative strategies during the transition from score to performance, while also defining the performer's role as a central figure in the construction of contemporary musical meaning. In light of this, the methodological framework of the article is conceived as an organic combination of semiotic, performative, hermeneutic, phenomenological, and cultural studies approaches. An attempt to comprehensively conceptualize musical performance as a communicative space, wherein sign-based, corporeal, and cultural codes interact, has shaped the overall structure of the article. Within this framework, particular emphasis is placed on identifying the role of the mask as a mechanism for mediating between the composer, the performer, and the listener. In recent decades, the issues of musical-text semiotics, communication, and performativity have increasingly come to constitute one of the central areas of inquiry within European humanities discourse.

State of Scholarly Development of the Problem and the Source Base of the Study

Contemporary scholarship tends to approach the musical work not as a closed and self-sufficient form but rather as an open-ended process of interaction unfolding between the author, the performer, and the listener. Accordingly, critical attention is directed not only to the internal organization of the sonic text but also to the conditions of its perception, the corporeality of the performer's gesture, the communicative space generated in the act of artistic exchange, and the broader socio-cultural context within which musical action is situated. One of the key conceptual categories that enable these dimensions to be articulated within an integrated analytical framework is the mask – a phenomenon that simultaneously fulfils semiotic, theatrical, and cultural functions, thereby allowing music to be interpreted as a system of multilayered roles, shifting identities, and ongoing transformations of meaning.

Within the Western European scholarly tradition, semiotic and performative approaches to music emerged at the intersection of linguistics, the philosophy of language, and aesthetics. A decisive turning point in this development was the work of Eero Tarasti, who formulated the concept of existential semiotics. In *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics* (Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002), the scholar emphasizes that “*Musical signs can be studied throughout their history as well as musical semiotics with its own background*”¹⁰. This statement affirms the autonomy of musical semiotics as a distinct scientific framework.

¹⁰ Tarasti, Eero. *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics*. Mouton de Gruyter, 2002, p. 14.

In another study, *Semiotics of Classical Music. How Mozart, Brahms and Wagner Talk to Us*, Tarasti proposes a four-component structural model that can be applied “to linear and temporal texts, such as music and musical performance”¹¹. The Finnish musicologist notes that this model originates as a development and modification of the “semiotic square” elaborated by the Paris School under the leadership of A.J. Greimas. The central premise of this theoretical paradigm lies in the possibility of conceptualizing mechanisms of meaning not as fixed entities, but rather as relational structures, and of making these structures explicit across all forms of discourse – from language to music, or even fashion. Moreover, Tarasti’s model is grounded in the Hegelian understanding of two modes of being – being-in-itself and being-for-itself – as well as in Kantian philosophy, according to which being-in-itself (*an sich*) denotes the inner qualities of an object that remain inaccessible to human cognition.

At the same time, as E. Tarasti observes, when *an sich* enters a social context, its essence is transformed into being-for-itself (*für sich*) and is determined precisely through this social dimension¹². To Hegel’s distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself, the Finnish musicologist adds another crucial component – namely, the perspective of the subject itself, or the personal “I,” referred to in French as *Moi*. This makes it possible to introduce two additional modes of being: *an-mir sein* (being in-myself) and *für-mich sein* (being for-myself).

In addition to *Moi*, E. Tarasti introduces the concept of *Soi*, which likewise refers to the “I,” yet one that is formed under the influence of society. *Soi* also operates on two levels: first, it denotes the concrete embodiment of values and norms through social institutions (being-for-oneself); second, it refers to the abstract ideas that a society considers significant – such as beauty, patriotism, or harmony (being-in-oneself). Both *Moi* and *Soi* constitute integral components of our inner subjectivity. Tarasti aptly notes that social norms exert influence upon us precisely because we have internalized them ourselves. Thus, what is dictated by society (*Soi*) may affect, or even subordinate, the personal self (*Moi*).

On the basis of the components *Moi* and *Soi*, E. Tarasti proposes to distinguish four states, or levels, of the subject’s being within the model: 1) *Moi1* refers to our corporeal and physical existence, characterized by energy, desires, and a chaotic nature. 2) *Moi2* denotes the personality shaped through habits, upbringing, and communication. 3) *Soi2* (or *Moi3*) corresponds to a

¹¹ Tarasti, Eero. *Semiotics of Classical Music: How Mozart, Brahms and Wagner Talk to Us*. De Gruyter Mouton, 2012, p. 138.

¹² Idem, p. 135.

personality fully subordinated to social norms and rules. Finally, 4) Soi1 (or Moi4) signifies the general values and ideals of society, such as morality, culture, or tradition¹³.

Such an approach makes it possible to conceive of music not as an encoded object, but rather as a space of communicative events. As E. Tarasti writes: "In every musical text, discourse or expression, we have these four aspects: (1) Concrete physical material appearing as musical gestures and musical desires, more or less chaotic wave-like formations of the kinetic energy of music. (2) Musical 'actors' or persons, which are the more stable anthropomorphic entities, like musical motifs and themes; these have clear-cut profiles and constitute units of musical narration. (3) In music we have social norms, manifesting in (a) rhetorical figures, (b) topics, i.e. style features internalized from musical or non-musical social fields, and (c) genres, the social frameworks necessary for musical communication. (4) Every musical unit has an aesthetic aspect of content, being the values or ideas which the music conveys or signifies"¹⁴.

Thus, E. Tarasti's model may be interpreted as a pathway from score to performance in the following manner: the composer formulates a certain idea and embodies it in the work's textual structure, which the performer decodes and animates through sounding realization. The listener, by entering the field of musical interaction, completes the semantic construction, returns it to a transcendental dimension, and thereby forms a renewed perspective on music, culture, and the self. E. Tarasti's concept describes four aspects of the musical text – from physical sonority to philosophical and aesthetic meanings such as irony, tragic expressivity, or sublimity, which reveal the deeper significance of music as different modes of its being. At the same time, the model demonstrates the dynamics through which musical meaning unfolds between the compositional idea, the textual articulation, the act of performance, and the listener's perception.

This process may be conceptualized as a three-level structure:

(1) the upper, transcendental (noematic) level – the realm of ideas, values, cultural archetypes, and genre-based structures that provide music with semantic intentionality and generate the meaning potential of the musical text;

(2) the immanent (sign-based) level – the structure of the text itself, with its own system of signs, themes, rhetorical figures, harmonies, and rhythmic-intonational complexes, etc., where ideas acquire material form; and

¹³ Tarasti, Eero. *Semiotics of Classical Music: How Mozart, Brahms and Wagner Talk to Us*. De Gruyter Mouton, 2012, pp. 136-137.

¹⁴ idem, pp. 137-138.

(3) the existential level – the realm of the subject (composer, performer, listener/spectator), namely the sphere of interpretation, gesture, and affect, through which the text is actualized in performance or in reception.

E. Tarasti aptly notes that the trajectory of meaning moves from the upper level of ideas and concepts through the sign-based structure of the text toward its actualization in performance and reception. At the same time, a reverse movement also takes place – from the listener's lived experience toward a renewed interpretation of the ideational level. Thus, combining E. Tarasti's model with the three-level scheme makes it possible to conceptualize music as an integral process of meaning-making in which the composer, the performer, and the listener participate on different levels. Within such a framework, music appears not merely as a text, but as a "living organism" in which all levels remain in constant interaction and communicative motion.

Within a model of musical communication that unfolds from the composer's conception through performative realization and the listener's reception, a pivotal role is played by the mechanism of mediation – that is, the direct transmission of meanings between the participants in this process. One of the most universal and flexible instruments of such mediation is the phenomenon of the mask. It should be noted, however, that within this context the mask is understood not merely as a stage attribute or theatrical make-up, but primarily as a semiotic mechanism that enables the encoding, transmission, and interpretation of musical meanings between the composer, the performer, and the listener.

Within this framework, the phenomenon of the mask in music may be approached from several analytical perspectives. In the communicative chain "score – performance – reception," three principal levels of the mask's functioning can be distinguished, each corresponding to a particular participant in the communicative process and to a specific stage in the actualization of meaning in music. The first level is the composer's mask (textual/stylistic), which encompasses genre codes, stylistic topoi, and rhetorical figures – in other words, all those elements that construct a "stylistic mask".¹⁵ The composer's mask also includes tempo indications, affective markings, orchestral and timbral effects, and characteristic textural types, which, even prior to the act of performance, establish a certain frame of interaction between composer and performer and orient the interpretative trajectory of the work.

¹⁵ Tarasti, Eero. *Musical Semiotics Revisited*. Springer, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91938-5>

The second level, the performer's mask, is realized as a mask of interpretation and manifests itself through articulation, phrasing, dynamics, timbre, pedaling, the performer's corporeal kinetics, and stage behavior. It is at this level that the sign-based structure of the score becomes enlivened in sounding realization as a corporeal – affective gesture, whereby music emerges as an event. Accordingly, the mask of interpretation functions as a crucial link between the textual structure and its acoustic embodiment.

The third level is the cultural-perceptual one, at which the mask of reception becomes apparent as a system of genre-based expectations, the decoding of cultural codes, and interpretative strategies through which the listener perceives music as an event. What is decisive in this process is not merely the "recognition" of music, but also the active construction of its meaning through the involvement of one's intellectual and emotional experience. It is precisely here that a sonic occurrence is transformed into a musical-semantic experience.

The phenomenon of the mask within the "score – performance – reception" chain may also be interpreted in light of the three-level structure of E. Tarasti's model. At the transcendental level, the mask functions as a repository of meanings, cultural orientations, and philosophical-aesthetic conceptions of music¹⁶. In this respect, differences emerge between Western and Eastern, particularly Chinese, worldview traditions. In Chinese cultural thought, musical concepts are most often associated either with moral self-cultivation in accordance with Confucian ethics or understood as a form of ritual communication with ancestors within Daoist practices. Such an understanding of the mask exists prior to the act of listening and predetermines the direction of interpretation.

At the sign-based level, the phenomenon of the mask operates as an interpretative programme that facilitates meaning-making for both the performer and the listener. For the performer, it becomes an instrument that makes it possible to "read" the semiotic texture of the work within the cultural code to which it belongs. This, in turn, enables the performer to construct an interpretation that is semiotically grounded. Thus, the rhetorical figures of Baroque music function as semantic signs that the performer decodes through appropriate agogics, tempo, phrasing, and dynamics. In this sense, the mask appears as a tool of decoding. For example, within the Western tradition, the musical-rhetorical figure of anabasis employs ascending musical motion, which may be decoded as a sign of hope, ascent, or spiritual striving, depending on the stylistic mask "assumed" by the performer or listener.

¹⁶ Tarasti, Eero, ed. *Musical Semiotics Today: New Perspectives*. International Semiotics Institute, 2020.

In Beijing opera (jingju), the phenomenon of the mask is presented in an explicitly visual form and possesses its own color-based system, which immediately enables recognition of a character type. Through the semantics of color, the listener/viewer already knows how to interpret a given operatic figure: red signifies loyalty and bravery, white indicates treachery and cunning, while black conveys straightforwardness and strength. The recipient instantly reads the character's role through a visual code that activates expectations and semantic associations. In this case, the mask exists not only as a visible stage element, but also within the spectator's consciousness as a cultural "programme" that supports the comprehension and interpretation of the event.

The final level is the existential one, where the mask enters its most dynamic phase. It is precisely here that it responds, adapts, and is modified in real time "here and now," depending on how the music itself is presented – its dynamics, timbral coloring, and even the performer's stage behavior – as well as on the context in which music is perceived during a concert, a ceremony, or an online broadcast. In Eastern traditions, particularly within a Confucian framework, even the strongest emotions tend to be expressed with restraint, since the listener's "mask" is oriented toward maintaining inner balance and harmony¹⁷.

Thus, the phenomenon of the mask may be understood as a mediating instrument within the semiotic structure of music, which integrates transcendental, immanent (sign-based), and existential levels in accordance with E. Tarasti's model. The mask functions as a mediator that enables the movement of meaning from the composer's intention to interpretation and reception, as well as the reverse movement in the form of new semantic constructions shaped through the listener's experience.

Alongside this line of inquiry, Lawrence Kramer, in his work *Interpreting Music* (2011), advances a hermeneutic conception of music as a "text in action". For Kramer, interpretation is not an auxiliary procedure, but an intrinsic component of the work's very structure: musical meaning is not transmitted but generated in the process of performance. He broadens the notion of the musical text by incorporating extra-musical factors that function as cultural codes and social roles, grounded in the listener's individual experience. Kramer's scholarship has provided a foundation for the development of contemporary interpretative studies within Western European musicology¹⁸.

¹⁷ Klein, Michael, and Robert Cogan, eds. *Musical Semiotics in Growth: Essays in Honor of Eero Tarasti*. Indiana University Press, 2017.

¹⁸ Kramer, Lawrence. *Interpreting Music*. University of California Press, 2011.

A crucial component of this discourse is provided by the performative aesthetics of Erika Fischer-Lichte. In *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (London/New York: Routledge, 2008), she writes: “The peculiar mode of experience that a performance provokes – blurring distinctions between artist and audience, body and mind, art and life – is here framed as the breeding ground for a new way of understanding performing arts, and through them even wider social and cultural processes”¹⁹.

This statement is fundamental for understanding musical performance, as it foregrounds the reciprocal transformation of communicative subjects, in which performer and listener exchange positions, and the action itself becomes the site where meaning emerges.

The problem of performative authenticity in the age of media is examined in detail by Philip Auslander (*Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2022). For Auslander, “liveness” is not a biological attribute but a communicative strategy that can arise even within digital environments. In this sense, the mask becomes a metaphor for the mediatized performer: it conceals physical distance while simultaneously producing an illusion of presence²⁰.

Within the framework of cognitive theory, Marc Leman (*Embodied Music Cognition and Mediation Technology*, 2011) conceptualizes music as a form of embodied cognition (embodied listening)²¹. The performer’s body is not merely an instrument but also a mode of thinking. It follows that musical action is always two-layered: semiotic (the transmission of meaning) and corporeal (the experiencing of meaning). On a broader cultural level, these ideas are further developed by Nicholas Cook *Music as Creative Practice* (2018) and Clarke, Eric F., and Nicholas Cook, eds. *Empirical Musicology: Aims, Methods, Prospects* (2004), who analyze music as a social process in which the boundary between production and reception becomes provisional. In this context, performance may be understood as a “language without a text” that exists only in the moment of communication²².

Thus, within the Western European tradition, a multi-vector model of musical semiotics has emerged – one that moves from the analytical description of textual structures toward the investigation of performative experience.

¹⁹ Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. Routledge, 2008, p. 11.

²⁰ Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2022.

²¹ Leman, Marc. *Embodied Music Cognition and Mediation Technology*. MIT Press, 2008.

²² Cook, Nicholas. *Music as Creative Practice*. Oxford University Press, 2018; Clarke, Eric F., and Nicholas Cook, eds. *Empirical Musicology: Aims, Methods, Prospects*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Within the Eastern European tradition, considerable scholarly attention has likewise been devoted to such aspects of the topic as textual structure, cultural memory, and the phenomenon of the mask, with a particular emphasis on the semiotics of culture understood as an integral system. In his works "Text and Audience Structure" (1990) and *Semiotic Theory of Culture* (1990), Yuri Lotman laid the foundations for conceptualizing art as a mechanism of communication²³. In his view, music constitutes a "text of culture", in which every sign is capable of recoding and interpretation. Subsequent studies further elaborated and deepened the notion of the "cultural code", a key category for understanding artistic communication. In musical terms, this implies that a work is invariably perceived through the listener's system of expectations and habitual patterns of interpretation. Although these studies were primarily concerned with literature and the visual arts, they nonetheless provided a methodological foundation for later attempts to analyze music as a semiotic structure²⁴.

A new stage within the Eastern European tradition systematized approaches to the analysis of musical communication, defining performance as a "dual system of signs", namely a representational one (which fixes the text) and a communicative one (which generates action). The mask thus becomes a means of transformation, an instrument of play, and a way of overcoming the boundary between the personal and the collective, between authenticity and role. Within Ukrainian humanities, the issues of musical semiotics, performativity, and communicative strategies have been actively developed since the late 1990s. One of the leading theorists in this field is Ihor Yudkin, who, in his works *Meaning and Structure of the Musical Work and Interpretation as Communication*, substantiated a model of musical interaction as a multi-level system of relationships between the author, the performer, and the audience²⁵.

Oksana Karpenko, in her books *Music as a Space of Communication and Performativity of Contemporary Art*, analyses the transition from the notated text to the living event of sounding. She conceptualizes musical action as a form of intermedial interaction in which sound, movement, image, and space converge. In her interpretation, the mask functions as a metaphor for the performer's role, through which one "enters" the musical space by transforming one's own corporeal identity²⁶.

²³ Lotman, Yuri M. *A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. I.B. Tauris, 1990; Lotman, Yuri M. "Text and Audience Structure". *Universe of the Mind*. I.B. Tauris, 1990.

²⁴ Lotman, Yuri M. *Culture and Explosion*. Mouton de Gruyter, 2009.

²⁵ Yudkin, Ihor. *Fenomenolohiia kultury yak metodolohiia interpretatsii*. Instytut kulturolohiï NAM Ukrainy, 2020.

²⁶ Karpenko, Oksana. *Performativity and Intertextuality in Contemporary Music Culture*. Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, 2021.

The studies of Maria Kochetkova *Musical Performance as Communication: Interpretation and Embodiment* (2022) further develop the theme of corporeality in the performative process. They demonstrate that semiotic analysis cannot be confined to the text alone: it is necessary to take into account the performer's position as a carrier of cultural memory. In their scholarship, the mask acquires an additional meaning – as a metaphor of identity that is continuously modified through interaction with the listener²⁷.

In contemporary Ukrainian compositional practice, the phenomenon of the mask is realized through the theatricalization of sound and performative strategies. In the works of Alla Zahaikevych, Valentyn Sylvestrov, and Yevhen Stankovych, one can observe a tendency towards the creation of a “musical character” – a sonic mask that simultaneously embodies both the composer and the performer. For instance, in Zahaikevych's works for electronics and live performance, the mask becomes apparent through the distribution of roles between acoustic and digital sound; in Sylvestrov's music, it is manifested in the use of quotation as a means of “masking” one's own voice through another stylistic idiom.

The performativity of film music deserves particular attention, as in contemporary culture it extends far beyond its traditional functional role. Music in cinema increasingly appears not as a “background accompaniment” but as an active agent of communication that interacts with the image, the spatial dimension, and the spectator's body²⁸. In the works of Valentyn Sylvestrov (Kyiv Frescoes, Melody) and Myroslav Skoryk (Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors), as well as in the recent multimedia projects of Alla Zahaikevych (VJ Peremoga, Within Sound), music functions as a performative event capable of initiating emotional and cognitive resonance in the viewer. The performativity of film music is manifested in the ability of the musical gesture to transform the meaning of the visual sequence and to generate new temporal and spatial dimensions. In this sense, film music approaches live performance, since its perception invariably involves processes of corporeal empathy and the listener's “inner conducting.” In cinema music “plays” not only within the film but also within the spectator, producing an effect of double action – both aesthetic and performative. This type of music demonstrates that performance may exist even without a stage: in the very act of listening, which becomes a space of communication between image, sound, and consciousness.

²⁷ Kochetkova, Maria. *Musical Performance as Communication: Interpretation and Embodiment*. De Gruyter, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110783454>

²⁸ Kharchenko, Polina. “Interaction of Visual and Musical Components in the Structure of Contemporary Screen Works.” *Integratiyn de las Ciencias Fundamentales y Aplicadas en el Paradigma de la Sociedad Post-Industrial*. Vol. 3, 24 Apr. 2020, Barcelona, Spain, pp. 116–117. <https://doi.org/10.36074/24.04.2020.v3>

Thus, a comparative consideration of Western, Eastern European, and Ukrainian approaches demonstrates that the concept of the mask constitutes a universal analytical instrument for examining musical communication. Within the Western tradition, it is closely related to the categories of role, identity, and performativity; within the Eastern European framework, it resonates with the notions of the cultural code and the theatrical gesture; while within Ukrainian scholarship, it is associated with the figure of the interpreter as a mediator between text and action. The mask functions as a distinctive “transitional sign” between the world of the score and the world of performance, enabling the transformation of meanings.

Thus, the analysis of the current state of research and the existing scholarly contribution to the chosen topic allows us to conclude that contemporary music studies are shifting from a static model of the text toward a dynamic model of action. Within this new paradigm, the mask becomes a key to understanding the performative process as a communicative act in which semiotic, corporeal, and cultural levels converge. Below, several practical case studies of semiotic analysis are presented in relation to the issues addressed in this article.

The score as an open text

The idea of the open text in compositional practices of the second half of the twentieth century emerged as an opposition to rigidly determined notation. It was embodied in Earle Brown's December 1952, where the score appears as a graphic field that merely outlines possible trajectories of sound rather than fixing a result. In *Sonic Meditations* (1971–1974), Pauline Oliveros abandons traditional notation and proposes verbal instructions orientated toward the process of deep listening. The score becomes a medium of communication that does not transmit sound but creates the conditions for its shared experience. In Alla Zahaikevych's electroacoustic works, open structure is often realized through a flexible interaction between instrument and electronics, in which the performer independently constructs timbral and temporal dynamics. In such cases, the score is not a completed text but a semiotic matrix that is activated in the act of performance.

The fact that the musical score becomes merely a point of departure for an open-ended semiotic interaction is highly characteristic of multimedia and eco-music, relatively recent directions in contemporary musical practice. At the same time, multimedia and eco-music (sometimes these practices can be interconnected) exemplify the performative turn in contemporary music culture, in which the focus shifts from the musical work as a closed,

composed object to performance as a spatial, temporal, and environmental event. Such practices undermine the notion of a fixed, hierarchical authorial center, replacing it with a decentralized model of shared creative agency. As Gvantsa Ghvinjilia states, using the example of eco-music and multimedia works by Georgian post-avant-garde composer Eka Chabashvili, in her numerous multimedia and eco-music genres, music increasingly functions as a communicative process rather than a one-directional act of transmission from composer to listener. Among the most profound examples that can be named are the multimedia composition with elements of eco-music *The Symphony-Exhibition Khma (Voice)* and the eco-music project *Let's Listen to Caves*, where the audience is involved as co-performers and even co-composers, thereby demonstrating that musical meaning is not simply conveyed but actively co-created through participatory engagement. Within this framework, the listener can be redefined as a co-author whose actions, perceptual choices, and ecological awareness actively shape the unfolding musical event, providing a concrete realization of theoretical models that emphasize participation, embodiment, and shared meaning-making in contemporary musical practice. Thus, when the traditional stereotypes of the "stage ecosystem" and the relationship between the composer, the performer, and the spectator are changed, it shows an evident example of an open-ended semiotic interaction (Ghvinjilia, Gvantsa, 2025, p. 216).²⁹

The mask as a strategy of communication. Theatricality and performativity.

The phenomenon of the mask in music manifests itself through ironic distancing, theatricalization, or the simulation of style. In Mauricio Kagel's *Match* (1964), performers engage in an "instrumental dialogue" in which gesture and facial expression become equivalent to musical events, while the "mask of play" exposes the social nature of musical interaction. In Georges Aperghis's *Récitations for voice* (1978), vocal articulation becomes a mask of language: the performer utters sounds devoid of semantic meaning, producing an effect of communicative failure. In Volodymyr Runchak's chamber works, the communicative strategy is constructed as an interaction between performer-characters who embody social roles through musical and plastic gestures.

²⁹ Ghvinjilia, Gvantsa. "The Evolution of Music and Musician Students' Views on Ethical Dilemmas Related to Transhumanistic Music." *Rast Musicology Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2025, pp. 201–237. <https://doi.org/10.12975/rastmd.20251326>

In Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1969), theatricality emerges not through action, but through an acoustic process of self-reflection – the space “performs itself.” It becomes a “theatre of listening,” in which each echo functions as a sign of acoustic transformation. The phenomenon of the mask in relation to theatricality is particularly vividly manifested in Boris Alvarado's work *Raven*, where the use of costumes and masks by the vocalists reinforces the semiotic dimension of communication. Black-and-white capes and bird-like masks with beaks create a double image of the performer – between the human and the symbolic – which corresponds to the concept of the mask as a mediator between compositional intention, performance, and reception. Such a visual code shifts the musical act into the sphere of the ritual sign, in which the “raven” appears as an archetype of transformation and a liminal state between life and death, silence and sound, fully consistent with the semiotic strategies of contemporary music.

The works discussed demonstrate that contemporary music functions as a multi-layered communicative system. The score becomes an open text, the performer becomes a mask of interpretation, performance becomes a theatre of action, and the listener becomes an active decoder of meanings. All links within the “score – performance – reception” chain form a shared space in which communication is transformed from a process of transmitting information into a process of co-creating meaning. It is precisely this shift – from fixed structure to action, from text to event – that defines a contemporary understanding of music as a dynamic system of meanings in which semiotic, corporeal, and cultural codes interact.

Conclusions

The analysis conducted allows us to argue that the transition from score to performance in contemporary musical culture should be described not as a linear “reproduction of the text”, but as a dynamic process of semiotic mediation involving at least three levels: the compositional, the performative, and the receptive. Within this model, the score appears not as a closed structure but as an open matrix of potential meanings that are realized through performative action and the listener's experience. E. Tarasti's model and the associated three-level scheme (the transcendental, sign-based, and existential dimensions) have proven to be a productive instrument for describing the movement of meaning within a musical work – from the ideational conception to the performative event and its interpretation by the listener.

Thus, the principal outcome of the study is the conceptualization of musical work as an open communicative system in which semiotic, performative, and cultural codes interact. The score is understood as a potential text that acquires ontological completeness only in the act of performance; the performer is approached as the bearer of a mask of interpretation, which both structures and problematizes meaning; and the listener is positioned as an active interpretant who transforms a sonic event into lived experience. The proposed integration of E. Tarasti's model, performance studies, and the analysis of the phenomenon of the mask makes it possible to outline the transition from score to performance as a process of co-creating meaning, in which music emerges not only as an art of sound but also as a form of cultural thinking and intersubjective dialogue. A promising direction for further research lies in extending this model to digital, networked, and immersive formats of performance, where the mechanisms of the mask, the open score, and participatory listening acquire new, media-conditioned configurations.

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