

THE RHYTHMICALLY, MELODICALLY AND RHYTHMIC- MELODICALLY ANALOGIES IN RICHARD WAGNER'S OPERAS

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SUMMARY: In Richard Wagner's opera the composer put the rhythm both in the service of the musical dramaturgy and also in the melody, the harmony, the polyphony, the orchestration and the musical form. The rhythmic and the melodic analogies of his musical works do not have this trait because of the lack of ideas of the composer. These are rhythmic and melodic archetypes, which are called ancient motifs. This paper presents, in an analytical taste, these motifs, illustrating their analogy through musical examples.

Keywords: Richard Wagner, rhythmic, melodically, analogies, leitmotif

1.1 The Rhythmical Analogies

In the world of the Wagnerian leitmotifs, one of the fundamental analogies on a rhythmical plan can be found in the family of the signal-type motifs. More often these are the warrior motifs. They make the (violent or less violent) action to start, or the intention of the action on a physical plan, as it can find its musical expression in the pointing rhythm that is put under the more or less taking again action. We compare in this respect the two motifs from the musical work *Lohengrin - Motiv der Anklage* (The Motif of the Accusation) and *Gotteskampf-Motiv* (The Fight of the Gods) with a motif from the musical work *Rienzi – Huldigungsthema* (The Motif of the Faith Oath):

Ex.1.1

Etwas langsam.
(Er schreitet feierlich einige Schritte vor.)

Spross. Nun führe' ich Klage

p *f* *ff* *ff Hörn.*

Cb. *A A*

Lohengrin, I. Part, 1. scene (m. 171-175.) – *Motiv der Anklage*

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Ex. 1.2

ALLE MÄNN. 173. *ff*

CHOR
Zum Got - tesgericht! Zum Got - tesge - richt! Wohl - an! (Der König zieht
sein Schwert u.
stößt es vor sich
in die Erde.)

scheiden!

Br. Pk. *cresc.* Pos. u. Tb.

Ch. b. trem.

KÖN.
Dich frag' ich, Friedrich, Graf von Telramund! Willst du durch Rumpf auf

S. Pos.

Lohengrin, I. Part 2. scene (m. 173-178.) – Gotteskampf-Motiv

Ex. 1.3

Allegro maestoso. ♩ = 96.

wann! Er - schallt, er - schallt, ihr Frei - er klän - ge! Stimmt Ju - bel - lie - der an!

sän - ge, der Freiheit uns gewann. Erschallt, ihr Klän - ge! Stimmt Ju - bel - lie - der an!

Reo. *

Rienzi, Huldigungsthema

Next to the pointing, repeating rhythm that characterize each motif the melodically development is relevant in some parallel octaves of the motifs from Lohengrin, together with the chord sustaining (that is also characterized through the repetitive times) of the leitmotif from the opera *Rienzi*.

The usage of this pointing and repeated rhythmical impulse is frequent at Wagner, as it can obviously be found to the other musical works that belong to Wagner. The examples to illustrate this are many, but in order to illustrate this phenomenon we just use three of them.

Another rhythmical analogy that is presented is manifested in the leitmotifs that belong to the same category of signal-type motifs. However, this time, the signal is made by the sound that is pointed by the repetition. The rhythmical formula includes the triplet in itself for so many times. In this respect, the rhythmical structure of *Warnungs-Motiv* (The Motif of the Warning) from *Lohengrin* is nothing more but an increase of the rhythmical structure of *Motiv der Entschlossenheit* (The Motif of the Decision) from the opera *Rienzi*.

Ex. 2.1

Lohengrin, Warnungs-Motiv, III. 2. (m. 227-235.)

Ex. 2.2

Rienzi, I., Motiv der Entschlossenheit

The *Warnungs - Motiv* is a leitmotif that is making it to come into being gradually along the musical work as it comes to be real in the above-presented form only in the act III, scene 2, measures 227-235. It appears frequently as it is interwoven between the recitative phrases with a strident dynamics (*forte*, *fortissimo*) as it has a role of a nervous tension. Along the musical work this leitmotif appears for 152 times.

If we extrapolate the presence of this rhythmical formula to the creation of the other composers, we can notice its assiduous presence in the first place, in the musical works that belong to Beethoven. We can take one example in

this respect, namely, the part II (*Marcia Funebre*) from *Symphony III*. There, inside the substratum of the melodically line the chords rely their rhythmical accompaniment on this formulae of the repeated sound under a triplet form and it is finalized by adding of another sound or to a row of the repeated sounds.

Ex. 3

L. van Beethoven – III. Symphony (*Eroica*), 2. part, m. 6-11.

The *Symphony IV* of P. I. Tchaikovsky has a strident start with the same formula:

Ex. 4.1

P. I. Tchaikovsky – IV. Symphony, I. part, m. 1-7.

This formula also can be found in the basic rhythm of *The Bolero*.

Ex. 4.2

Ravel – *Bolero*, m. 5-8.

1.2. The Melodically Analogies.

In the case of the melodically analogies of the leitmotifs, a special attention has to be given, in the first place, to the leitmotifs that have a monodic conceiving. Without pretending to exhaust the subject, we have to see comparatively in this context, three leitmotifs: *Unheil-Motiv* (The Motif of the Misfortune), *Versuchungs-Motiv* (The Motif of the Temptation) from the opera *Lohengrin*, and *Entsagungs-Motiv* (The Motif of the Giving-up) from the musical work *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Ex. 5.1

Lohengrin, II. act, 1. scene, m. 1-6.

Ex. 5.2

Lohengrin, II. act, 1. scene, m. 12-17

Ex. 5.3

Die Meistersinger, III. Act, *Entsagungs-Motiv*

The name of these motifs suggests a somber atmosphere- misfortune, temptation, giving-up even if they are full of expression. Without being identical from a melodically point of view, there is a similarity between them. All these motifs are conceived in the low register, they have a descendant profile, and they are reeling between two sounds that are situated to an interval of a minor ninth, and a minor seventh respectively. By inversion, these intervals are transformed into a minor second and a major second respectively.

Another special category that is related from a melodically point of view, is constituted by those leitmotifs that partially or totally rely on the descendant chromaticism. This is the case of the following leitmotifs: *Trennungsklage* (The Sorrow of Separation), *Bestrickungs-Motiv* (The Motif of the Fascination), *Motiv der Wehmut* (The Motif of the Pain in the Soul) from the opera *Lohengrin*.

Ex. 6.1

The musical score for *Lohengrin*, Prelude, measures 58-67, features the *Trennungsklage-Motiv*. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of three systems of music. The first system is for piano (*ff*), the second for piano (*più p*), and the third for piano (*pp*). The first system includes a vocal line (S. pschrahig) and a piano accompaniment. The second system is a piano accompaniment. The third system includes a piano accompaniment and a section for Tromp. Pos., Fl., and Vl. Fl. with "Vl. allein" markings. Red arrows and circles highlight specific melodic motifs and intervals across the systems.

Lohengrin, Prelude, m. 58-67, Trennungsklage-Motiv

Ex. 6.2

Mässig langsam. **FRIEDR.**
schwacher Gottes ist, der ihn beschützt. Du wildest
von Schauer ergriffen, mit leiser, bebender Stimme. *pp*
Scherme dich! Willst du doch geheimnisvollen Geist mir neuer be-rücken? Die Schwelger strecken sich zur Eughl.

ORT auf den Pallas deutend.

Lohengrin, II. act, 1. scene, m. 254-260, Bestrickungs-Motiv

Ex. 6.3

langsam.
Zweifels Macht dich ruhin? Willst du die Fra-ge an mich thun?
Mein Retter, der mir Heil gebracht! Mein Held, in dem ich muss vergehn!

ELSA (in heftigster innerer Aufregung und in schamvoller Verwirrung.)

Lohengrin, II. act, 5. scene, m. 418-420, Motiv der Wehmut

It is also the case of the *Schlaf-Motivs* (The Motifs of the Sleep) from the musical works *Siegfried*, *Die Walküre* and *Gotterdammerung*.

Ex. 7.1

ERDA.

Wirr wird mir, seit ich er-wacht, wild und kranz kreißt die Welt! Die Walkü-re, der
 Weak waz I since I a-woke: wild and strangeseems the world! The warnaiden- the

espressivo *pp* *pp* *pp*
 con Ped.

Wa-la Kind, büsst in Ban-den des Schlaf's, als die wis-sen-de Mut-ter schließ? Der den
 witch's child- pines in penance of sleep, which her wis-domful mo-ther shares? Doth then

Siegfried, III. act, 1. scene – *Schlaf-Motiv*

Ex. 7.2

WOTAN. (Er küsst sie lange auf die Augen.) (Sie sinkt mit geschlossenen Au-
 ab, so küsst er die Gott-heit von dir!

pp *pp* *ppp dolceissimo.* *pp*

gen, sanftermattend, in seine Arme zurück. Er geleitet sie zart auf einen niedrigen Mooshügel zu liegen, über den sich
 eine breitästige Tanne ausstreckt.) *dolce.* *pp dolce* *espress.*

Die Walküre, III. act, 3. scene – *Schlaf-Motiv*

Ex. 7.3

poco riten. (She throws the cord
(Sie wirft das Seil

Welt - e - - - sehe zu Hauf ge - schieh.te - te Schei - te.
world's ash - - - tree is heaped, a fo - rest of fag - gots.

back; the 2nd Norn unwinds it and throws it back to the 1st!
zurück, die 2^{te} Norn windet es auf, und wirft es der ersten wieder zu.)

2^{te} NORN.

Wollt ihr wissen wie das wird? Schwinget, Schwestern, das
When this will be would ye ween? Stretch then, sis - ters the

pp dolce

pp dolce

Ped ⊕ Ped Ped

Götterdämmerung, I. act, 1. scene – Schlaf- Motiv

These motives that are gradually chromatic and descendant express on the one hand, sorrow, fascination and pain of the soul and, on the other hand, the deepening in a state of apparent death, of sleep. Five from the six leitmotifs have a steady dynamics of *piano* and *pianissimo*, respectively. The *Motiv der Wehmut* starts in *fortissimo* and, along one measure it is crushed in *tremolo pianissimo*. This motif expresses the pain of the Lohengrin's soul. The motif intervenes almost to the final of the act II (scene 5) on the plan of the dramatic action. Elsa, after her approaching by Ortrud and Friedrich "turns around with a pain in her eyes due to the doubt and she falls to the feet of Lohengrin, being deeply shaken".

Lohengrin: "Elsa, come up! In your hand
It is the secret of all the luck!
You are in doubts?
Are you tempted to ask me?"²

Motiv der Wehmut

² Wagner, Richard, *Lohengrin, Libret*, in vol. Wagner, Richard, *Olandezul zburator*, in Rom. by St. O. I osif, Ed. pt. Lit., Bucuresti, p. 243.

Along the descendant chromaticism, the diminished dynamics, we have as a characteristic for these leitmotifs the rare or retained tempo, the length of time of the long values (minims, semibreves), together with the ornaments – *tremolo*, *arpeggio* and *the turn*.³

Another category of melodically analogies can be found in the leitmotifs that are largely developed from a melodically point of view. We look comparatively to the *Liebesentzücken-Motiv* (The Enchantment of the Love) from *Lohengrin* and *Duett Holländer-Senta* from *Der fliegende Holländer*.

Ex. 8.1

LOHENGRIN.

Ath - miest du nicht mit mir die sü - ssen Duf - te? O wie so hold be -
 S.gedämpft.
 rau - sehen sie den Sinu! Ge - heimnissvoll sie na - hen durch die Lüf - te, - frag - los -
 - geb ih - ren Zau - ber ich mich hin -

Vel. *immer pp*

Lohengrin – Liebesentzücken-Motif, III. Act, 2. scene, m. 122 – 138.

³ In the leitmotif *Trennungsklage* of the opera *Lohengrin*, the turn (measure no 63) has a special importance, as it is situated in the symmetry point of the leitmotif.

Ex. 8.2

con portamento

S. Er steht vor mir mit lei-den-vol-len Zü-gen,

H. Bild zu mir; wie ichs ge-

S. es spricht sein un-er-hör-ter Gram zu mir, kann tie-fen

H. träumt seit ban-gen E-wig-kei-ten,

piu p, *pp*, *Bl.*, *r.H.*

Duett Holländer-Senta from *Der fliegende Holländer*, II. Act

The melodically phrases from the beginning of the two leitmotifs presents a very similar profile. In the case of a melody of a larger respiration, the melodic debut by a gradual ascendant evolution it offers an opening that creates the elation feeling. A significant thing is the fact that this gradual evolution takes place between the limits of a fourth interval where the melodically line "sits down" by using a longer duration (see: *Duett Holländer-Senta*), or by repeating of the sound (see: *Liebesentzücken-Motiv*).

In the case of both leitmotifs, the orchestra is limited to the harmonically supporting of the melodically line by tensioning and then by releasing the atmosphere through soft *crescendos* and *diminuendos*. The fundamental dynamics of both of the leitmotifs is diminished as the intensity (*pianissimo*, *piano*), the tempo of the motifs is a steady, calm one (*Ruhig bewegt*, *Sostenuto*).

1.3. The Rhythmic-Melodically Analogies

The first rhythmic-melodically analogy that I present here belongs to the signal-type motifs. Therefore, we came across to a surprising similarity between the *Morgenruf* (The Morning Call) leitmotif from *Lohengrin* and the leitmotif *Kampffanfare* (The Fight Fanfare) from *Rienzi*.

Ex. 9.1

TEN. *f* In Frühversammeltensder Ruf, *p* gar viel,
 CHOR I. BASS. *f* In Frühversammeltensder Ruf, *p* gar
 TEN. In Frühversammeltensder Ruf, gar
 CHOR II. BASS. *f* In Frühversammeltensder Ruf, *p* gar
 S., Hörn. u. Fg.

Lohengrin, Morgenruf-Motif, II. Act, 3. Scene, m. 104-107.

Ex. 9.2

Die Colonna.
 (im Abgehen.)
 Für Co - lon - -
 Für Co - lo -
 Trp. Pos. Hör.

Rienzi, Kampffanfare-Motif, I. Act

The melodically profile of the two motifs is 100% identical. From a rhythmic point of view, the beginning of the motif is a little different as it is the duration of the final sound but, apart from these small differences the rhythmical profile presents also a surprising similarity. In a certain measure, *Morgenruf* can be interpreted as a *Kampffanfare*. A surprising thing is the identical tonality of the two motifs and their common dynamics (both of them are conceived in *forte*).

The following leitmotifs also present from a rhythmic-melodically point of view, striking similarities. They belong to the family of the signal-type motifs, namely, *Weckruf* (The Wake-up Call) from *Lohengrin*, *Walhall-Motiv* from *Das Rheingold* and *Siegesmarsch* (The Winner's March) from *Rienzi*:

Ex. 10.1

Auf dem Thurme. *entfernt.*
p Tromp. *Tromp.* *mf* *3*
Auf dem Thurme. *entfernt antwortend.* *dim.* *p* *p* *3* *più p*

Auf dem Thurme. *entfernt.*
f *3* *dim.* *p* *p* *3* *più p*

Lohengrin, Weckruf-Motif, II. Act, 3. Scene, m. 4-15.

Ex. 10.2

mf *dim.* *p*
Rea. * *Rea.* * *Rea.* * *Rea.* *

(Die Burg ist ganz sichtbar geworden. — Fricka erwacht: ihr Auge fällt auf

p *dim.*

Rea. * *Rea.* * *Rea.* * *Rea.* *

Das Rheingold, Walhall-Motif (b), 2. Scene

Ex. 10.3

Er-tö - net laut, ihr Freu - den - lie - der, und
Allegro molto *ff*

ehrt die tap - fern Sie - ger hoch!

Rienzi, Siegesmarsch,

The tonalities of the three leitmotifs are different. Although they start from different heights and they have different tonal colours, we can remark the interval identity of the melodically profile of the motifs: *Weckruf* and *Walhall*.

The rhythm of the *Walhall-Motiv* is the diminishing of the rhythm of *Weckruf* motif. Nevertheless, their dynamics is different but the tempo is a moderated one in both of the cases.

The debut melodically profile of the leitmotif *Siegesmarsch* from *Rienzi* is also related to the two previous leitmotifs.

We compare in the following lines *Hochzeitweihethema* (The Theme of the Nuptial Sacrament) from *Lohengrin*, with *Chor der Friedensboten* (The Chorus of the Peace Announcer) from *Rienzi*.

Ex. 11.1

Etwas langsamer.

(Als die beiden Züge in der Mitte der Bühne sich begegnen, ist Elsa von den Frauen Lohengrins zugeführt worden; sie umfassen sich und bleiben in der Mitte stehen. Acht Frauen umschreiten feierlich Lohengrin und Elsa, während diese von den Edelknaben ihrer schweren Obergewänder entkleidet werden.)

ACHT FRAUEN (nach dem Umschreiten.)

Wie Gott euch

VIERT SOPR.

VIERT ALTE.

Etwas langsamer.

se lig weih te, zu Freu den weih euch wir;

dim. p

dim. p

p

Lohengrin, Hochzeitweihethema, III. Act, 1. Scene, m. 67-82.

Ex. 11.2

Moderato con anima

Ihr Rö - mer, hört die Kun - de des hol - den Frie - dens an!

pp (a capella)

Rienzi, Chor der Friedensboten, 1. Motiv, II. Act

There are visible similarities of a rhythmic-melodically profile and also, it is the common solution of the using of the repeating bass sounds.

The last examples that we present in this context are *Unheil-Motiv* (The Motif of the Misfortune) from *Lohengrin*, and *Sehnsuchtsschmerz-Motiv* (The Pain of the Strong Wish) from *Tristan und Isolde*.

Ex. 12.1



Lohengrin, Unheil-Motiv, II. Act, 1. Scene, m. 1-7.

Ex. 12.2



Both of the leitmotifs express a sombre state of mind. An interesting thing is that both of them are situated in the opening measures of an opera act. In both of the cases this is the act II. Their relating is relevant.

But, the main analogy of these leitmotifs is only rhythmic-melodically. There are contrasts between them on the tempo, the dynamics, the register, the tonality and the orchestration plan.

Returning to the similarities and summarizing my observations, in this paper I have analyzed the leitmotifs. From a melodically and rhythmically point of view the leitmotifs constitute the essence of the opera. In the operas which are created successively by Wagner we found more rhythmic and melodic similarities. However, we found analogies of leitmotifs in his previous works, too. In a few sentences, I mentioned some other composers, such as Tchaikovsky or Ravel. It is evident, the composers learn from each other, and by studying their works they influence each other. Sometimes, they take over composing solutions. This fact does not mean that they had copied each other. The existence of the rhythmically and melodically analogies in one and the same composer's different works can be explained by the fact that the earlier composed works continues to live in a latent form in the composer's memory. These similarities unify their style and provide a logical continuity to their oeuvres. At the same time, these are rhythmically and melodically archetypes, which are called ancient motifs.

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