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**CLAESZ., Pieter**, Vanitas with Violin and Glass Ball, c. 1628  
Oil on panel, 36 x 59 cm, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg  
Source: Web Gallery of Art, searchable fine arts image database

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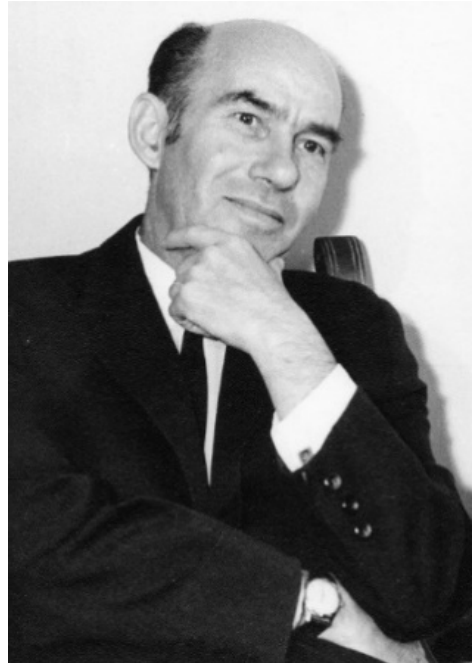
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## ON THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF ANDRÁS BENKŐ – CHURCH MUSIC RESEARCH –

ÉVA PÉTER<sup>1</sup> 

**SUMMARY.** This hereby study was written on the occasion of a conference commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of music historian András Benkő. Although the teaching and research of music history were central to his work, this paper focuses on only one aspect of it, namely his research and teaching in the field of Protestant church music, which is particularly noteworthy. His scientific work aimed at the exploration of sacred music manuscripts and the dissemination of the vocal material of early Protestant publications can be considered as a groundbreaking and addressing a gap of knowledge within the Transylvania area. His studies and reviews, published in scholarly volumes and journals, have provided a significant body of literature for pastors, cantors and religious education teachers working in Transylvania. His efforts to provide musical material for cantors in the field of vocal and instrumental ministry in churches and to raise the standard of cantorial training in the region remain exemplary to this day.



**Keywords:** manuscripts and printed church music resources, gradual, congregational hymnbooks, psalms, funeral hymns, polyphonic church singing

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Music historian and college teacher András Benkő was born on 21 January 1923<sup>2</sup> in Feiurdeni, Cluj County, Romania. He began his secondary school studies in Aiud, at the Bethlen Gábor College. This educational institution also provided instrumental training, so he acquired a solid musical education in addition to general culture. His organ studies were guided by teacher Géza Szabó.

**Figure 1**



**The Bethlen Gábor Reformed College in Aiud<sup>3</sup>**

He graduated from the Domokos Pál Péter Teachers' Training Institute in Cluj-Napoca (1944) and then began his higher music education. He first studied at the Hungarian College of Music and Drama (1946-1948), then at the Hungarian Institute of Arts, where he studied music theory and organ (1948-1950), and finally graduated as a music teacher from the "G. Dima" Conservatory of Music (1951). He received his doctorate in musicology from the "G. Dima" Conservatory of Music in 1977. His dissertation is on *Bartók și România*.

He started his teaching career as a teaching assistant at the Department of Music History of the Hungarian Institute of Arts (1949-1950), then he was assistant professor, adjunct professor and finally associate professor at the "G. Dima" Conservatory of Music until his retirement in 1985. After a break of a few years, from 1990 to 1998, he taught church music at

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<sup>2</sup> Biographical data, the photo, and publications resulting from his academic work can be found on the website created by the music historian's children. I hereby would like to thank them for the use of this website. See <https://benkoandras-zenetortenesz.com/>

<sup>3</sup> Source of photo. *Magyarország* daily newspaper, weekly supplement, 10 November 1929.

the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca and at the Faculty of Reformed Theology of the Babeş-Bolyai University, teaching church singing, methodology of teaching church singing, hymnology, history of church music. His teaching activities in the field of church music are probably related to his early studies in Aiud. As a student at the Reformed College of Aiud, he had the opportunity to gain insight into the Protestant musical heritage. In this renowned educational institution, emphasis was placed on music education. András Benkő, in his article *Ének és zene a Bethlen Kollégiumban (Song and Music at Bethlen College)*,<sup>4</sup> gives a detailed account of music education at the college, dating back to the 17th century. He himself learned to play instruments within the framework of this institution, sang in the choir of the college and was introduced to the compositions of Kodály and Bartók at the age of 15.<sup>5</sup> All of this had a great influence on his life, his career and his commitment to musicology.

His research activities are wide-ranging. In the words of Ferenc László: “As a kind of one-man institute of Transylvanian Hungarian music history, it has taken on everything that can be included in this job, from the research, publication and music-historical evaluation of documents to the promotion of the music historical past”.<sup>6</sup> What posterity appreciates most is the richness of data in musicological writings, the accuracy and precision of the information published, and the diversity of topics approached. His published volumes present the press coverage of Béla Bartók’s concerts in Romania, the music theory of the Bolyai, the work of János Seprődi, and insights into Protestant church singing. By editing textbooks, he helped to publish the research results of his time. He compiled a bibliographical catalogue of János Seprődi, István Lakatos, Aladár Zoltán and Albert Márkos. He wrote about the formation, activities and repertoire of Transylvanian choirs. His university notes have enriched the musical history knowledge of several generations. He has compiled a musical encyclopaedia with some 6000 entries for a wide range of music lovers. His informative writings, concert reports and music reviews, which were published in the Hungarian and Romanian press, are a valuable addition to the collection.

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<sup>4</sup> András Benkő. *Ének és zene a Bethlen Kollégiumban* [Song and Music at Bethlen College]. In: Györfi Dénes, Hadházi Ferenc (eds.). *A Bethlen-kollégium emlékkönyve* [The Bethlen College Memorial Book], Aiud — Cluj — Budapest, 1995, 178-187.

<sup>5</sup> András Benkő recalls the Bartók-Kodály ceremony in an interview with Tibor László. See. *Academica Transsylvanica Zene és irodalom határterületén* [On the Border between Music and Literature. Tibor László in conversation with Dr. András Benkő, musicologist]. In: *Székelyföld-Kulturális folyóirat*, Volume IV, No. 4, 2000, 49-56.

<sup>6</sup> Ferenc László. *Helikon*, 2001, 8.



His research in the field of hymnology is only a small part of his academic work, but it is an important part of his exploration of the Protestant church music of Transylvania. One cannot speak of continuous research in this field. In terms of depth, a distinction is made between writings for educational purposes, teaching material for higher education, and studies aimed at the exploration and presentation of early manuscript or printed Protestant music sources in Transylvania.

## 1. Manuscript collections of funeral hymn material

In the field of the exploration of Protestant musical sources, a study entitled *Kéziratos halotti énekek dallamai (Funeral Hymn Manuscripts)*, published in 1968 in the *Református Szemle (Reformed Review)*, is a significant contribution.<sup>7</sup> Therein, nine manuscript collections of hymns that are recorded in the Hungarian-language bibliographical literature are examined. The names of their compilers and the date of their creation are provided in the list: József Baczó's Hymnal (c. 1800), Pál Barabás (1819), Lázár Imreh (1836), Ferenc Jósa (1766), József Lugasi (1800), Zsigmond Orbán (1766), Ádám Szatsvay (early 19th century), Lajos Szentgyörgyi (1858). The ninth collection is entitled: *Hymns for DISCANT, ALTUS, TENOR AND BASS 1834*.

The earliest of these is Zsigmond Orbán's four-part hymnal. The musical material, scored in 1766 with the collaboration of four students, comprises the musical repertoire sung by the four-voice (discant, alto, tenor, bass) student groups of the reformed college of Odorheiu Secuiesc for festive or funeral services: 37 hymns for festive services and 17 burial songs, so-called funeral songs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> András Benkő. *Kéziratos halotti énekek dallamai [Funeral Hymn Manuscripts]*. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXI, No. 1-2, 1968, 62-68.

<sup>8</sup> Title of the volume. A nevezetesebb ditséreték és némely halotti énekeknek harmóniája, melyet harmoniae praesességében közönséges regulákon kidolgozott a lány nótáról való rövid explicációval edgyütt, ez ezen gymnasiumnak négy betsületes tagjaival az Udvarhelyi Ref. Gimnasium Thecajanak számára leiratott Orbán Sigmond ezek által Balo Samuel, Pap Samuel, Paal Josef, Sofalvi Samuel. Irattatott Udvarhelyen 1766 esztendőben. [The harmony of the most notable praise hymns and some funeral songs, which in harmoniae praeses was elaborated on ordinary rules with a short explanation of the soft nota, written by four members of this gymnasium for the Odorhei Reformed Gymnasium by Orbán Sigmond, Samuel Balo, Samuel Pap, Josef Paal, Samuel Sofalvi. Registered in Odorhei in the year 1766.]

Figure 2

The image displays two pages of handwritten musical notation for a four-part score of the hymn 'Jézus születél' (Jesus is born). The notation is arranged in two columns. Each column contains two systems of staves. The top system in each column shows the tenor cantus firmus (tenor line) and the voice parts (soprano, alto, and tenor lines) juxtaposed. The lyrics are written below the staves. The bottom system in each column shows the same tenor cantus firmus and voice parts, but with a different arrangement of the voice parts. The lyrics are also present. The handwriting is in a cursive style typical of 18th-century manuscripts.

**Four-part score of the hymn *Jézus születél* (*Jesus is born*) from Zsigmond Orbán's hymnal in manuscript<sup>9</sup>**

In the four-part arrangements, the tenor cantus firmus is shown, and the voice parts are not written in score-like notation but are juxtaposed. The hymnal of Ferenc Józsa, written in the same year, 1766, has the same content, arrangement and harmonization as this collection. Benkő claims that Ferenc Józsa's volume is a copy of Zsigmond Orbán's work.<sup>10</sup> He proves this assertion by highlighting the fact that Orbán himself harmonized the melodies at the beginning of the Orbán volume. At the same time, he draws attention to the description in Orbán's manuscript book of the rules of harmonization. Thus, in the end, he compares the 78 funeral hymns of different melodies in not nine, but practically eight manuscripts.

<sup>9</sup> Source based on my own photo

<sup>10</sup> In connection with Zsigmond Orbán's activities, it should be noted that he did not compile a 4-voice choral collection but instead worked to introduce the Western European polyphonic singing practice of the 18th century to Hungary. The issue is related to the work of Maróthi, the practice of singing in the Debrecen college and the development of harmonic singing in Sászcsovás.

Compared with the two 18th-century collections described above, the other manuscripts are of later 19th-century date. According to Benkő, their material mostly continues the earlier Protestant hymn tradition, but also shows newer, Western melodic patterns.<sup>11</sup> The importance of the research lies in the fact that it presents 78 funeral hymns of different melodies, while at the same time shedding light on the characteristics of the contemporary musical manuscript notation and the notational skills of the transcribers. In terms of rhythm, manuscript notation is characterized by single-note notation, rhythmic notation is rare; time signatures and barlines are not constant; the use of clefs is inconsistent; in major pitch intervals, in some cases, omitted notes are marked with dots; accidentals are omitted in a few cases.

Some of the tunes in the manuscript collections are related to folk songs and epic songs;<sup>12</sup> the influence of folk lamentations on church songs is also noticeable in the material; sequencing typical of instrumental classical music is also present. Benkő draws attention to all these points in his analysis of the melodies,<sup>13</sup> making this study of cultural historical significance.

## 2. Introduction to the *Old Gradual*

András Benkő's research on the topic of hymnology includes an examination of the church music and music history of the *Old Gradual* (Cover, Figure 3), an important Protestant publication of the 17th century. Two of his studies, *Az Öreg Graduál zenei kincse* (*The Musical Treasure of the Old Gradual*)<sup>14</sup> (1986) and *Az Öreg Graduál zenei műfajai* (*The Musical Genres of the Old Gradual*)<sup>15</sup> (1989), published three years apart, can be found in the theological journal *Református Szemle*. By describing the musical genres and melodic material presented in these two studies, András Benkő sheds light on the sources of church hymnody dating back to the 4th century, while at the same time, with a pragmatic approach, he identifies melodies from the collection of hymns printed in Alba Iulia that merit restoration in the 20th century, i.e. making them suitable for congregational use.

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<sup>11</sup> Benkő refers in his writing to the influence of Mozart's music. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXI, No. 1-2, 1968, 68.

<sup>12</sup> Such as the recitativo character and similarity of parts of the melody

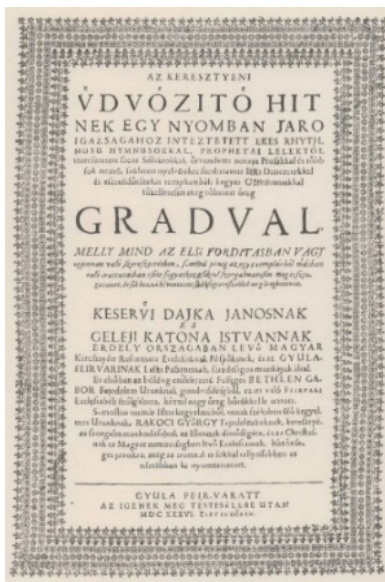
<sup>13</sup> See. András Benkő. Kéziratok halotti énekek dallamai [Funeral Hymn Manuscripts]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXI, No. 1-2, 1968, 68.

<sup>14</sup> *Az Öreg Graduál zenei kincse* [The Musical Treasure of the Old Gradual]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 5-6, 1986, 447-466.

<sup>15</sup> *Az Öreg Graduál zenei műfajai* [The Musical Genres of the Old Gradual]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXXII, No. 2, 1989, 159-166.

In his writings, he provides historical music data on the circumstances of the origins of the gradual, describes its tripartite structure, indicates the number of melodies, the characteristic elements of the musical notation,<sup>16</sup> and outlines the contemporary reception of monophonic and polyphonic singing and the use of instruments in churches. As he himself indicates, the aim of the research is “both to summarize and to supplement”,<sup>17</sup> since the literature published in Hungary has previously examined the material of the *Old Gradual* in depth,<sup>18</sup> but it provides important information for theologians and pastors in Transylvania, especially those who read theological literature rather than musical literature.

Figure 3



*The Old Gradual, Alba Iulia, 1636 - Cover*<sup>19</sup>

Benkő analyses in detail one of the most prominent melodies of the *Old Gradual*, the *adjutoria* melody beginning with “*Könyörülj rajtunk, Úr Isten/*

<sup>16</sup> Four-line staff system; use of tenor or alto clef; tone duration. semibrevis, minima, end-of-stanza longa; end-of-stanza articulations.

<sup>17</sup> Az Óreg Gradual zenei kincse [The Musical Treasure of the Old Gradual]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 5-6, 1986, 450.

<sup>18</sup> Benkő refers to the research of Péter Bod, Bartalus, Sámuel Ivánka, Károly Szabó, József Koncz, Attila T. Szabó.

<sup>19</sup> Source. <https://dka.oszk.hu/html/kepoldal/index.phtml?id=31111>

*Have mercy on us, Lord*”, tracing its melodic development and notation over more than four centuries<sup>20</sup> and drawing conclusions about the changes that have taken place within Protestant musical materials.

**Figure 4**

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Könyörülj rajtunk, Úr Isten" (Have mercy on us, Lord). It consists of six staves, labeled I through VI. Staff I is the top staff, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the staff: "Kö-nö-rülj' rajtunk Úr Isten, es hallgald meg az mi i-mad-sá-gin-kat". Staff II is the second staff, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: "KÖ nyörülj rajtunk UR ISTEN! Es hallgasd-meg A' mi i-mád-sá-gin-kat". Staff III is the third staff, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. Staff IV is the fourth staff, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, with a bracketed "b" above the staff. Staff V is the fifth staff, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. Staff VI is the bottom staff, featuring a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The score shows various melodic variations across the staves, including different note values and rests.

***Könyörülj rajtunk, Úr Isten (Have mercy on us, Lord) -  
melody variations<sup>21</sup>***

The *Old Gradual*, as a 17th century musical choral document, in Benkő's opinion, "represented and continues to represent the common heritage of the Christian churches."<sup>22</sup> He therefore recommends melodies from it that can be restored and incorporated into 20th century congregational singing practice. In an attempt to provide an even more thorough description of the musical

<sup>20</sup> From the publication of the Batthyány gradual (1556-1563) to the 1969 edition of the hymnal edited in 1923.

<sup>21</sup> Source. Kálmán Csomasz Tóth. *A XVI. század magyar dallamai [Hungarian Melodies of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century]*. Volume I. (2nd revised edition. Ed. Ilona Ferenczi), Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2017, 421, D 1774 No 92., D 1778 No 357, 477. 1.

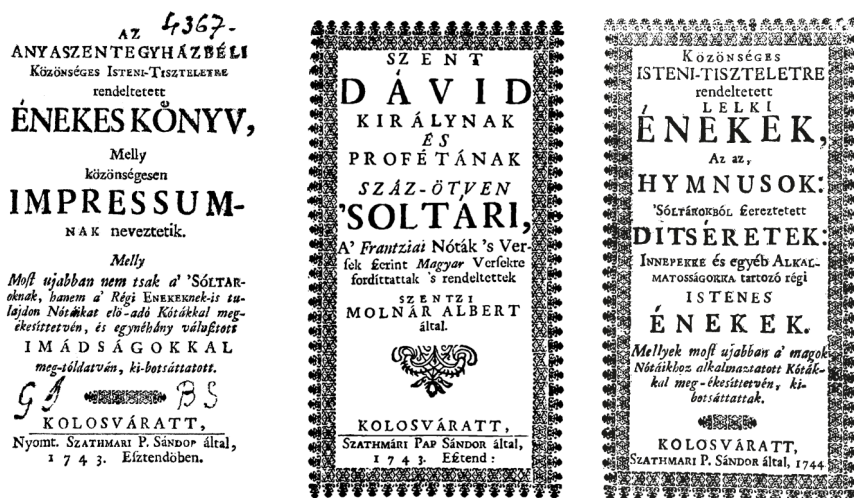
<sup>22</sup> Az Öreg Graduál zenei kincse [The Musical Treasure of the Old Gradual]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 5-6, 1986, 447-466.

material, in a study entitled *Őreg Graduál zenei műfajai (The Musical Genres of the Old Gradual)*, he describes 18 different genres, accompanied by musical examples.

### 3. Presenting congregational hymnbooks

The *Korabeli vita az 1744-es kolozsvári énekeskönyvről (Contemporary Debate on the 1744 Cluj Hymnal)*<sup>23</sup> is a unique publication. It tells the story of the genesis of the most outstanding piece of Transylvanian Reformed congregational hymnbooks. The hymnal itself is so important because it is the first of the Transylvanian Reformed congregational hymnals printed with music. It preserved and published with notation the valuable hymns of the Reformation period (16th century). In addition to the complete psalm cycle (also found in earlier hymnals printed in Debrecen), it contains the melodies of about 40 hymns and nearly 130 hymns of praise. Subsequent editions of the hymnal (1778, 1837, 1923) have already either omitted or overlooked the musical material of the Reformation period.

Figure 5



Title pages of the hymnal and two of its chapters - photos by the author

<sup>23</sup> András Benkő. *Korabeli vita az 1744-es kolozsvári énekeskönyvről [Contemporary Debate on the 1744 Cluj Hymnal]*. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 3, 219-238.

The discussion paper raises some ambiguities about the circumstances of the creation of the hymnal: who selected the hymn material, who set the melodies or the melody versions to music. The first point of contention is the identity of the editor of the hymnal, the compiler of the material.

The discussion paper is also of church – historical significance, as it describes the synodal decisions of the Transylvanian Reformed Church District in the 18th century concerning congregational singing; the principles and expectations of singing instruction and singing; the driving forces behind the functioning of the decision-making apparatus are outlined and the teaching material and methods of the Reformed Colleges are revealed. The often-blunt formulations of the disputants reflect real facts about the thinking of the time.

It sheds light on the issues of music education in the period: a special subsection deals with the way hymns were sung, the rules of singing in congregations, and the topic of music theory.

The main conclusion of the study is that, contrary to previous assumptions that Gyula István Szigeti (1678-1740) could have been one of his students who edited the 1744 hymnal, the so-called *Impressum*, it is now clear that the editor-author himself, Gyula István Szigeti, was a former professor at the Aiud College who worked on the improvement of the hymnal texts, the selection and description of the melodies, i.e. the notation, for years. Although Pál Csider Szabó,<sup>24</sup> who initiated the debate and who himself was involved in the notation of melodies, questioned the authorship of Gyula István Szigeti, the truth is clear by the end of the study, following the evidence of József Zilahi Sebess<sup>25</sup>, a short excerpt of which I am providing: ‘...at my many requests, I received scripts from the sons of István Gyula Szigeti, and these were reviewed in the *New Impressum* by a musician familiar with the topic! /.../ From all this it is clear that this work is the work of István Gy. Szigeti; why should I go on arguing, since I consider trying to do so as if someone wanted to make the sunlight brighter.’<sup>26</sup>

Why is this hymnal still of such great importance today? The hymnologist Kálmán Csomasz Tóth, evaluating the publication and its two most recent editions, points out that “...as publications with musical notes, they were ahead of similar ones from Debrecen and show the changes in the form of certain

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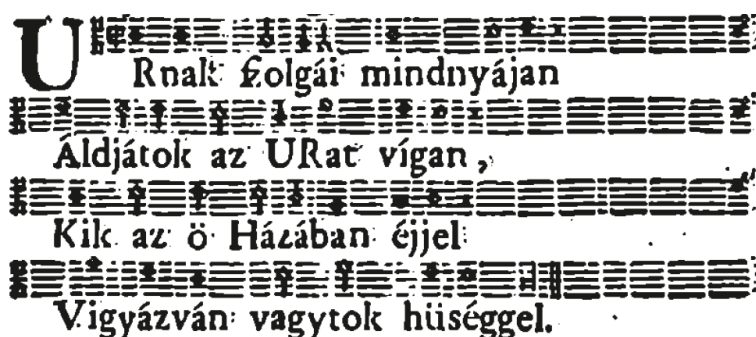
<sup>24</sup> He was a cantor in Losonc, several of his songs were published in small-format publications, and he also scored church hymns at the same time as Gyula István Szigeti.

<sup>25</sup> József Sebess Zilahi taught singing and instrument at the Aiud College and later served as a pastor.

<sup>26</sup> András Benkő. Korabeli vita az 1744-es kolozsvári énekeskönyvről [Contemporary Debate on the 1744 Cluj Hymnal]. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 3, 230.

melodies in an interesting way...”<sup>27</sup> In his study, Pastor Károly Pálffy refers to the hymnal as “the most precious source of our singing”. In terms of the graphics of the musical score, the alto clef, which has a particular shape and is used only in Transylvanian hymnbooks, is noteworthy. An interesting feature of the publication is the inclusion of a short compendium of music theory in Latin, explaining how to read the musical signs in the score, and listing and describing the musical values used in the notation of the songs (*longa*, *brevis*, *semibrevis*, *minima*, *semiminima*); explains the use of the end-of-stanza *custos* and repetition signs; associates the alphabetic and solfeggio names of notes with their position on the staff; gives instructions on the use of accidentals and provides information on rhythm and meter. The publication thus also provides the hymnbook user with knowledge of musical sight-reading. Therefore, it is also a significant piece of publication in this respect as well.

**Figure 6**



**Score of the 134th Psalm, from the hymnal published in 1744, in Cluj-Napoca  
- photo taken by the author**

Among the studies examining the sources of congregational hymnal material, we should mention the 1995 publication of the *Gyülekezeti énekeskönyveink vázlatos története (A Schematic History of our Congregational Hymn Books)*,<sup>28</sup> in which Benkő presents the hymn books published in chronological order from the first decades of the Reformation to the present day, from the hymn book of István Gálszécsi published in Krakow in 1536 to

<sup>27</sup> Kálmán Csomasz Tóth. *A református gyülekezeti éneklés [Reformed Congregational Singing]*, Református Egyetemes Konvent, Budapest, 1950, 162.

<sup>28</sup> András Benkő. *Gyülekezeti énekeskönyveink vázlatos története [A Schematic History of Our Congregational Hymn Books]*. In: (ed.) Molnár János. *Erdélyi Református Naptár 1997 évre*, Cluj, 97-102.



the Hungarian Reformed Hymn Book published in 1996. It is important for pastors, cantors and religious education teachers to know this information, since the hymnbooks in use today refer to these sources and take many melodies from them.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4. Collecting and organizing Reformed hymnal melodies

In the 1980s, Benkő and his colleagues planned to publish a new hymnal for the congregations of the Transylvanian Diocese and the Diocese of Királyhágómellék. Benkő's aim was to enrich the musical material of the Cluj Reformed hymnal, which had been edited and published in the second decade of the 20th century (1923). He knew of valuable melodies from previous centuries which were omitted from the hymnal only because cantors with little musical training were unable to learn them or because the pastors did not consider their use absolutely necessary from the point of view of content. The work was abandoned, however, because the compilation of the material for the *Universal Hungarian Reformed Hymnal* had begun. As a member of the Hymnology Committee of the Hungarian Reformed Church, he participated in this work as a music expert of the Transylvanian Reformed Church District. The hymnal was published in 1996. According to the recommendation at the beginning of the book, it was issued for the use of Hungarian Reformed congregations around the world.

Connected with the latter activity was the educational work that András Benkő carried out in 1990-1991 in the pages of *Üzenet*.<sup>30</sup> His short writings focused on the promotion of the original melodies of the psalms or on the popularization of carefully selected melodies.

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<sup>29</sup> István Gálszécsi 1536 Krakow, Gál Huszár 1560, 1574, Péter Méliusz Juhász 1562 in Debrecen, Váradí hymnal 1566, Gergely Szegedi hymnal 1562, Debrecen hymnal 1579, Péter Bornemissza hymnal 1582, György Gönczi Kovács hymnal 1592, Bártfai hymnal 1593, Imre Anderco's book of funeral hymns 1598 from Slivník, Psalterium Ungaricum 1607, The Old Graduál 1636, Miklós Tótfalusi Kis 1686, 1740 Psalter of Albert Molnár Szenczi from Maróth, 1740, Impressum - scored humnbook from Cluj 1744, Nagyenyedi Halotta [Death Hymonal from Aiud] 1769, Book of funeral hymns by István Losontzi 1778, Funeral Hymnal of Debrecen 1791, Debrecen Hymnal 1774, Old Debrecen Hymnal 1778, Cluj 1778, Hymnal (Debrecen line) 1806, Cluj 1837, Seprőd Hymnal 1908, Rehearsal Hymnal 1916, Debrecen Reformed Hymnal 1921, Cluj 1923, Budapest 1948.

<sup>30</sup> Bi-weekly church magazine

## 5. Church music writings on a variety of themes

The study of the folk tradition of Christmas carol singing and chanting in churches complements András Benkő's work on the analysis of church carols. His study on this topic, entitled *Karácsonyi ének – kántálás (Christmas carols - caroling)*, was published in 1991-1992.<sup>31</sup> He concludes that the musical material of traditional folk caroling is related to the music sung in church. The repertoire goes back several centuries,<sup>32</sup> and includes old Latin melodies from the music of the Roman Catholic denomination; hymns from gradual-type books with Hungarian translations; selections from printed Protestant hymnals (Lutheran, Reformed); German chorales, as well as melodies from Bach's chorale collection. The exact source, age, and versions of the melodies found in church and folk music collections are indicated. In examining the folk music tradition, his conclusions incorporate the experiences of collectors. With a good knowledge of the classical Christmas carol repertoire, he lists nearly 100 Christmas carols in an appendix. These can be incorporated into the repertoire of congregational choirs.

In 1994, his attention turned to another area: he examined the melodic material of the congregational hymnal published in 1923 in Cluj-Napoca and used until 1995, from the point of view of the presence of Hungarian elements. He drew his conclusions on eight points, the most striking of which was the finding that the hymnbook for Hungarian Reformed congregations was dominated by mostly foreign material, music of non-Hungarian origin. Although the hymns in the collections are published with Hungarian texts, in terms of their origin, the church repertoire includes, for example, the Geneva Psalms and new hymn texts written to their melodies, the melodies and texts of English, American, Scottish, Irish and Czech composers as foreign musical material. When looking for musical elements typical of Hungarian folk songs, no old-style Hungarian melodies were found in the material examined. A descending melodic line can be detected in some songs, reminiscent of old-style folk songs. In only a few cases, a recurring structure typical of folk songs also emerged as a main feature of new style folk songs. In terms of tonality, some of the music is in the framework of sacred folk tunes, but the melodies of the newer periods use exclusively major-minor keys.

In 1958, the book *Mit jelent nekünk Seprődi János munkássága?* (What do the works of János Seprődi mean to us?) was published.<sup>33</sup> It must

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<sup>31</sup> András Benkő. *Karácsonyi ének – kántálás* [Christmas carols – caroling] In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXXXV, No. 1, 1992, 57-69.

<sup>32</sup> With data going back to the musical material of the Old Gradual published in 1636.

<sup>33</sup> *Művelődés* Vol. XI, No. 3, 54.

be acknowledged that Seprődi's literary activities, his early folk music collections, his music criticism, and his articles on music education do not concern the field of church music. However, his work on the compilation of the musical material for the Reformed rehearsal hymnal he edited in the early years of the 20th century does.<sup>34</sup> Thus, this study by Benkő is also related to the field of hymnological research.

The work of Gábor Veress (1869-1937),<sup>35</sup> who also worked on reforming the material of the Reformed hymnal at the beginning of the 20th century, can be similarly evaluated. As a composer, he worked on the preparation of the *Reformed Choral Book* and the harmonization of funeral hymns, while as a teacher at the Aiud College he sought to raise the standard of church singing and organ playing.

## 6. Teaching material

The educational material for the training of Reformed cantors and religious education teachers, *Az egyházi ének története (The History of Church Singing)*,<sup>36</sup> a volume on hymnology, was published in 1994. In it, Benkő presented Christian church music from an ecumenical perspective. The chapters cover the following topics: singing and music in the Bible, Christian music culture and its development until the Reformation, the Reformers' teaching on music, our hymns in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Albert Szenczi Molnár, our hymnbooks in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, our hymnbooks in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. An expanded version of this volume was published in 2000, with the title: *Mondjatok dicséretet (Say a Praise)*.<sup>37</sup> Drawing on years of experience, Benkő supplemented the previously known material with an introduction to the Hungarian Reformed Hymnal published in 1996, analyzing its musical material, while at the same time a new chapter entitled *A Schematic History of European Church Music* was added. I would like to highlight the subsections on Hungarian church music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and on Hungarian church music in Romania, which contain important information previously missing.

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<sup>34</sup> András Benkő in his study (ed.) *Seprődi János válogatott zenei írásai és népzenei gyűjtése [Selected musical writings and folk music collections of János Seprődi]*, (1974 - KK, Bucharest, 496), in the subsection *Az egyházi muzsikus [The Church Musician]* outlines the work of Seprődi as a hymnbook editor.

<sup>35</sup> András Benkő. Veress Gábor (1869-1969). In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. LXII, No. 3-4, 1969, 286-292.

<sup>36</sup> Published by the Board of Directors of the Transylvanian Reformed Church Diocese, Cluj-Napoca, 1994.

<sup>37</sup> Published by the Transylvanian Reformed Diocese, Cluj-Napoca, 2000.

The works of composers such as Samu Borsay (1860-1944), Gábor Veress (1869-1937), Bertalan Tárcza (1882-1950), Géza Delly Szabó (1883-1961), Endre Csíki (1888-1949), József Birtalan (1927-2017), Mátyás Kozma (1929-1994), Ede Terényi (1935-2020), Csaba Szabó (1936-2003) are listed (without any claim to exhaustiveness). By making their works known, the repertoire of congregational choirs gets richer. The *Appendix* at the end of the volume contains a dictionary of music history and a selection of 20 choral works that can be used as a basic repertoire for church choirs.

In conclusion, András Benkő's research and teaching in the field of Protestant church music is remarkable. His work in the discovery of manuscripts and the dissemination of the vocal material of early Protestant publications is addressed a research gap in the Transylvanian region. His studies and reviews in scholarly journals and scientific publications have provided a significant source of literature for pastors, cantors and religious education teachers in Transylvania. His efforts to provide cantors with musical material and to raise the standard of cantorial education are exemplary.

*Translated from Hungarian by Juliánna Köpeczi*

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**CHALLENGES, TRENDS AND INTERDISCIPLINARY  
PERSPECTIVES IN MUSICOLOGY:  
AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCESCO FINOCCHIARO**

**CRISTINA ELEONORA PASCU<sup>1</sup>** 

**SUMMARY.** The interview with Francesco Finocchiaro offers a critical examination of contemporary musicology, addressing its evolving paradigms, methodological developments, and interdisciplinary intersections. In light of the rapid turnover of theoretical frameworks and the influence of dominant academic institutions, this discussion provides an analytical perspective on the forces shaping musicological inquiry today. Finocchiaro questions the balance between textual and contextual approaches, the potential risks of detaching the discipline from its core subject, and the systemic pressures associated with scholarly productivity. His research on silent film music serves as a compelling case study in interdisciplinary scholarship, illustrating the intersections between historical musicology, media studies, and cultural analysis. In addition, his reflections on public musicology underscore the necessity of bridging academic research with wider audiences, fostering broader engagement beyond institutional boundaries. Through these perspectives, the interview emphasizes the importance of mentorship, critical engagement, and adaptive methodologies in sustaining a rigorous and reflective approach to musicological scholarship.

**Keywords:** Musicology, Research Trends, Public Musicology, Silent Film Music.

Research is inherently dynamic, continuously expanding its frontiers and redefining its conceptual and methodological boundaries. Musicology, as a discipline, remains in constant negotiation with its epistemological

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frameworks, reflecting the evolving nature of scholarly discourse. This fluidity raises several critical questions: what are the prevailing directions in contemporary musicological inquiry? Who determines these trajectories? How should scholars engage with a field that has been extensively examined while still identifying novel research perspectives? What is the interplay between creativity and methodological rigor in scholarly inquiry? Furthermore, how should emerging researchers navigate the increasing pressures of scholarly productivity within a competitive academic landscape? In light of these concerns, we conducted an interview with Francesco Finocchiaro, a distinguished scholar whose expertise in contemporary music and silent film music provides a nuanced perspective on these issues. His reflections illuminate the broader mechanisms that shape the development of musicology, offering insights into the forces that influence research paradigms, methodological transformations, and interpretative frameworks. At the same time, he articulates a compelling argument for balance—advocating for intellectual freedom alongside methodological rigor, fostering an environment where creativity and scientific precision can coexist, and emphasizing the critical role of mentorship in shaping the intellectual development of researchers.

Francesco Finocchiaro holds academic positions at the Rossini Conservatory in Pesaro, the University of Innsbruck, and the University of Padua. His research affiliations include prestigious institutions such as the Universities of Bologna, Innsbruck, Milan, Vienna, and NYU Steinhardt. His extensive body of work has significantly contributed to the discourse on silent film music, metaphorology, and the intersections of music and media, positioning him as a leading figure in these fields.

With a publication record exceeding 60 works in three languages and over 100 international presentations, Professor Finocchiaro has made substantial scholarly contributions, including *Musical Modernism and German Cinema* (2017), *Dietro un velo di organza* (2020), and the FMJ Archive, a pioneering digital repository of critical sources on German silent cinema. His most recent research explores the complex relationships between music, media, and cultural politics, engaging with both historical depth and contemporary relevance. Beyond his research, he remains an active participant in the academic community, serving as a peer reviewer for leading international journals and co-directing editorial initiatives.

## **1. Musicology Today: Concepts and Debates**

***Cristina Pascu*** — *I would like to start with a fundamental, essential question. What are the current research directions in the field of musicology? How have these evolved in recent years?*

**Francesco Finocchiaro:** Recent musicological research tends to be structured around a few watchwords: global musicology, post- or decolonisation, topic theory, interculturality, intermediality, adaptation theory, media archaeology. (For the sake of truth, I have contributed to some of these fields myself: *mea culpa*.) We can ask ourselves what they have in common. They are all traces of what can be called a Copernican revolution in historical musicology: the shift from a view of musicology as the history of the musical work of art to a broader view of musicology as the history of musical culture (or better musical cultures). And with it, a shift from a musicological research that was flattened on the text, on the notated page, to a vision more sensitive to historical contexts, performative and receptive practices, the role of the listener, the identity of musicians, composers etc. What may be disappointing, however, is their ephemerality: musicological studies have been experiencing a sort of sinusoidal waves for several decades. New trends come into vogue, forcing the redefinition of a whole series of concepts, renaming categories and replacing the previous ones: and so on, in new waves, each lasting no more than 4 to 6 years, in a veritable *cupio dissolvi*. A periodic paradigm shift that leads to the replacement of labels and keywords to produce – not to be underestimated – new sets of conferences and publications.

— *What are the driving forces behind dominant research trends in musicology? How do they emerge, gain legitimacy, and shape scholarly discourse on a global scale?*

These waves have a certain direction: they come from more or less the same source and spread out towards the rest of the world. It is no coincidence that we have defined them all in English: they are not translations, but the original terms used in the international debate. In fact, they are all of North American origin. They have been introduced in recent years by the American intellectual elites, first in the general humanities and cultural studies, then in musicology. Not without forms of subordination and quite epigonal application.

After all, this subordination is reflected in our conversation: an Italian among Romanians could have spoken Latin. And if I spoke Italian, you would understand me very well. (After all, the great Italianist Eta Boeriu was professor of this institution for several decades.) Instead, we are speaking English, which is not the mother tongue of any of us, but it is the mother of our thoughts, as Karl Kraus pointed out: “Language is the mother of thought”, and no one can be so naive as to think that language is an exterior clothing of thoughts, but it generates them from the moment of their inception.



— *What are the risks of these approaches?*

This Copernican revolution has sometimes led to an opposite excess: a typical phenomenon of social, political and even cultural processes is that one excess is overthrown by the opposite one. Historical musicology has suffered in recent years from the disappearance of the text, or rather the ability to confront it. The recommendation made by Carl Dahlhaus more than forty years ago still seems to be pertinent: a culturological approach to music should not become an alibi for a non-literate musicology, that is, one that is unable to read a musical text. This is a phenomenon that we are already witnessing in some fields, for example in my latest field of specialisation, film music.

In the interest of a historical musicology understood as *historia civilis*, as Franco Alberto Gallo put it, i.e. the historiographical study of the musical heritage as a cultural inheritance, it would be necessary instead not to banally replace texts with contexts, but rather to reconcile a textual and a contextual approach, to pursue for example philological research and the study of performance techniques on an equal footing, to complement the immanent analysis of musical documents with the historical reconstruction of performative and receptive practices.

— *What trends do you see emerging in musicology, especially regarding interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches?*

On the one hand, interdisciplinarity has been intrinsic to musicology since its inception. Musicology was founded on the positivist model of the natural sciences. This happened during a crucial period of institutionalisation of academic disciplines at the end of the 19th century. Musicology has always relied on disciplinary influences: the positivist approach led it to consider an artefact in itself as its proper object of study; from art history it derived the concept of the history of style; from literary studies it borrowed the methods of palaeography and philology.

In recent years, large areas of historical musicology with an interdisciplinary vocation have emerged, and film music is undoubtedly one of them, probably the most important. Personally, I am also very interested, for example, in studies of the intersection between music and politics.

— *What does interdisciplinarity imply at the methodological level?*

Among the watchwords of contemporary musicology that we alluded to above, interdisciplinarity is the most common, but perhaps also the most misunderstood. Talking about interdisciplinarity is seductive, but vague: one speaks about crossing borders and spaces between different territories, but the risk is to create confusion: to outline a no man's land. Indeed, if it is clear that an object of study can be common to several disciplines, it is less obvious to understand what it means to study it with an interdisciplinary method.

The objects of study are not interdisciplinary per se, but multidisciplinary, because they do not occupy a no-man's-land between disciplines, but are shared by several disciplines and therefore by several communities of scholars, each of whom approaches them certainly not without a method, but with specific skills, a technical vocabulary and a methodology of its own: *iuxta propria principia*.

We are saying that genuine interdisciplinarity should be translated into a plurality of methods, a multi-specialism, which is the exact opposite of a certain rhetoric of interdisciplinarity, and which is best represented by the metaphor not of a no-man's-land, but of a bridge built between different disciplinary territories that nevertheless remain firm in their foundations. A plurality of methods is a multi-specialism that, in my view, can only be achieved through teamwork.

## **2. Finding and Defining a Research Field**

— *Can you give us a concrete example? How can a young researcher today identify their field of study in musicology? Are there specific strategies for discovering a unique niche?*

I do not believe that there are strategies, and I personally do not know them. I remember that, according to Siegfried Kracauer, the historian is a time traveler. He or she leaves his or her own time and visits another. In line with this image, I would advise the researcher to approach his or her journey through time as if he or she were going on holiday: go where you are more inspired, where you feel attracted, and if you find something interesting, stay there, keep close to that place, and try to find out more. Out of metaphor, there is no other strategy than reading, listening to music, talking to other scholars, attending courses, believing in the cultural mediation of lecturers, speakers, authors and mentors. If you want to get good at historical musicology, get close to someone who already is.

— *If a topic has already been explored, is there still value in revisiting it? What advice would you give to researchers who fear their chosen topic might be “overdone”?*

In my view, there is no real reason for this fear. Research in the humanities is qualitative, not quantitative. We are not topographers who have to map a territory and who have to go to unexplored lands to do so. The humanities aim to deepen historical awareness, and this is unlimited. Karl Popper said that research has no end because it proceeds through hypothesis and progressive falsification. Research knows no truths, only temporary explanations that wait to be refuted by more convincing ones. For methodological reasons inherent in the nature of modern scientific research, this fear cannot exist. Moreover, it is dangerous. The other side of this irrational fear is indeed, as one often hears young researchers and PhD students say, that someone might “steal their topic”. I have to say that there is no more naive fear than thinking “this is my subject, I hope nobody writes on this topic, etc.”, or even forbidding colleagues to write on what they think are “their topic”. It must be made clear that science is free, that subjects and fields of study do not belong to anyone, and that the use of possessive adjectives should not be tolerated. Those who think this way are only denouncing their own inadequacy in scientific research.

### **3. Research Methodology and Creativity**

— *How much creativity is necessary in research? To what extent should creativity complement scientific rigor in musicological studies?*

I believe that research is a highly creative field, a creativity that is expressed first and foremost in methodology, in borrowing categories from other disciplines, in building bridges, in opening up genuine interdisciplinary intersections. Creativity lies in the ability to look at a field of study with different eyes each time. And then it translates into the most creative act of all, which is writing. The authorial art of structuring a text, even a non-fictional one, requires not only narrative skills, but perhaps even dramaturgical strategies.

— *When faced with a creative block, what strategies would you recommend to “unlock” oneself and move forward? Are there specific methods you’ve found helpful?*

This is not an easy answer to give, but it depends on the cause. Non-fiction writing is essentially argumentative writing, so if the block is due to argumentation problems, one needs to rethink the logical process and the link between analysis and conclusions. If it is just a narrative block, it is usually enough to let the text rest for a while and then read it again after a few weeks. This usually helps to identify any breaks in the narrative flow.

#### **4. Overcoming Challenges and Research Impasses**

— *What advice would you give to researchers who experience blockages or difficulties in their research process? How can they overcome these challenges and regain their momentum?*

Once again, we must distinguish between difficulties, obstacles that may arise in the course of research for argumentative reasons, and obstacles of a personal nature. The former ones are actually the easiest to resolve because they are natural and inherent to scientific research: scientific research progresses by means of successive adjustments. In very rare cases, a research project ends with the achievement of all its objectives, and precisely those objectives that were set at the planning stage, because this would mean that the researchers had proceeded blindly, without taking into account the material results they had encountered along the research path. It is always a good idea for a research project to have both short-term and long-term objectives: analyzing a problem, a difficulty, breaking it down into parts, into segments, into steps to be tackled one by one, is the right strategy to overcome blockages and obstacles of any kind and not to be paralyzed by the enormity of the problems.

On the other hand, difficulties of a personal nature are not to be underestimated and are becoming increasingly common. Blockages or paralysis, even for long periods, can be due to insecurity, fear, feelings of inadequacy resulting from the constant confrontation and extreme competition in which research is carried out today. On the one hand, there is a level of ambition that is often excessive and disproportionate to the actual abilities of researchers who, until proven otherwise, are at the beginning of their careers. On the other hand, there is a sense of competition, a real agonism, which is taken to the extreme in academic environments, where the evaluation is based on mere arithmetic calculations of the number of publications produced, the number of conference papers and other criteria that are not qualitative but purely quantitative. The motto “publish or perish” is the sentence of despair.

— *What do you think about?*

It is not surprising that, in predisposed individuals, this mixture can be fatal, leading to real psychological disorders such as anxiety, panic attacks and, in the most severe cases, paranoid forms such as the impostor syndrome, typical of those who are convinced that they are not up to their role and are going to be discovered, or the false victimization syndrome, typical of those who believe that they are being persecuted by their colleagues or supervisors and who believe that every gesture they see is a sign of ongoing persecution. It is therefore not uncommon for even the correction of a thesis by a supervisor, or the rejection of an abstract for a conference, to be experienced paranoically as moments of bullying, discrimination or worse. It is therefore increasingly common for the selection of research staff to be accompanied by an interview with a psychologist who is able to identify hidden forms of personality disorder that can emerge in stressful situations and have a destructive effect on the person and all those who have to deal with him or her. In order to avoid all this, our watchwords should be: humility rather than ambition, gradualness rather than precociousness, slowness rather than haste, rigour rather than the speed imposed by the desire to meet the next deadline.

## **5. Personal Research Journey**

— *How did you personally choose your research topics throughout your career? Were there certain themes or questions that consistently guided your interests?*

I would be tempted to answer: by chance, as Columbus discovered America and as most discoveries are made. On the surface this may seem to be a matter of luck, but in fact it is another of the characteristics of scientific research, along with its nature of provisional certainty. Scientific research proceeds by gradual adjustments, moving from initial hypotheses to others by means of successive corrections. I was interested and attracted by the music of the early 20th century and wondered what logic governed post-tonal music in the period of the immediate abandonment of the tonal system. I began to search for the principles of formal structuring in early 20th century music. I found the first traces of thinking about these questions in the writings of Arnold Schönberg. Then I discovered that these writings were only part of a vast body of thought and a whole theory of form that was largely unknown and relegated to texts that had never been published. This was the origin of the bilingual Italian-German edition of Schönberg's treatise *The Musical Idea*.

Thus, it started with an interest in the music of the early 20th century, which gradually expanded to other genres, other composers in other countries, and so on.

— *Looking back, what are some of the most influential factors that shaped your research focus and trajectory?*

I would undoubtedly say the encounter with other scholars and mentors, which also means the encounter with books. In a word, through dialogue, collaboration with colleagues and scholars. I have benefited enormously from being a member of study groups and associations, one of which, Athena musica, I was a founding member and president-elect.

In scientific research, no one grows alone; we must avoid solipsistic closures.

## **6. Researching Silent Film Music**

— *Was there a particular aspect of silent film music that first captivated you? What initially sparked your interest in researching this era?*

Having studied musical modernism and the music of the early 20th century, it was natural to extend my studies to the film collaborations of composers such as Paul Hindemith, Kurt Weill, Richard Strauss, Hanns Eisler, who not only collaborated with the film industry, but also embraced cinema as an aesthetic phenomenon. This was the subject of my first monograph, as part of a research project at the University of Vienna, but I soon realized the limitations of this approach, which was still imbued with an idea of art music and cultivated composers. I realized that film collaborations by composers from the field of art music and the composition of original scores with an opus character represented only a very small part of the reality of musical accompaniment for film projections. Thanks to the dialogue with other scholars and experts, I became aware that there was a large corpus of photoplay music, theoretical writings and an extensive and articulate critical discussion going on in film and music journals. All these primary and secondary sources were largely unknown, inaccessible and waiting to be brought to light. I approached this topic in a second, larger research project that resulted in a digital database and a new monograph on the historical aesthetics of silent film music. More importantly, I saw in this topic all the hallmarks of a new epistemological paradigm for historical musicology. Consider the phenomenon of music localization, i.e. the practice of composing multiple scores for the same film. Silent film music raises questions about the

very notion of composition, of a work with aesthetic unity, of philology in the sense of reconstructing a reliable historical document. The field itself is a challenge to the traditional assumptions of historical musicology.

## 7. The Role of Public Musicology

— *How crucial is it to bring musicological research into the public sphere? What strategies can help academic research reach a wider audience?*

Public musicology is an important part of my professional activity, mainly in the form of public lectures in theatres and at festivals, but also radio interviews and collaborations with magazines and the general press. I think it is a fundamental task. And that it benefits everyone involved. First of all, it has an important social function, especially in the context of lifelong learning. Research must open up cultural heritage to inclusive participation and promote processes of learning and re-learning about cultural heritage. This means, on the one hand, the ability to address a wide audience and to develop ad hoc projects, for example by integrating digital technologies, that open up cultural heritage to people who might never access it through traditional channels such as a visit to a museum, a concert or a conference. On the other hand, addressing the so-called general public has a clarifying function for the researcher, it is a useful exercise to come out of the *turris eburnea* of the academy, to communicate with an audience of non-specialists who are not familiar with the technical jargon: it is an extraordinary exercise in clarifying language and cleaning up terminology.

— *How important is musicology?*

Of all the disciplines, we are the most fortunate because we have a potential that other disciplines do not have: music is performed, it can be heard. A concert is the most important part of public musicology. But everything we perform was not born here, here today, it has a history, what the musicologist can do is to tell the prequel of this story, so to speak, like a film or a play of which the concert shows us the last act, but to understand it you need to know the previous acts, and the musicologist can tell that. How? Not so much by giving biographical details – that introduction in the form of a lecture that no one really listens to - but by explaining how it is made, giving elements that educate people to listen to music.

— *In the context of silent film music, how can public engagement enhance understanding and appreciation of this area? Are there ways to bridge the gap between academic research and public interest?*

Here things are more complicated. For many years, film festivals have focused on the restoration of silent films with some kind of musical accompaniment. Here, however, the state of the sources should call for extreme caution, what not always happen. This caution applies first and foremost to the state of preservation of the films: even an interested public is not fully aware of what film archives really do in terms of so-called reconstructions. There is a huge contradiction between the state of the sources and the public's expectations. Indeed, the presentation of silent films at film festivals or on DVD is mainly aimed at complete films or films that appear to be complete. The magic word "reconstruction" is ideal to attract public attention. However, due to the actual state of the sources, reconstructions can only be seen as new constructions, as post-creations. They often produce something that has never been shown in this form and has never been seen by a historical audience.

## **8. Advice on Public Musicology and Silent Film Research**

— *What advice would you give to researchers interested in pursuing public-facing projects in musicology? How can they ensure their work resonates with audiences outside academia?*

This is an aspect that has long been neglected: in the past, it was thought that it was enough to give a lecture at the end of a research project in order to speak of public dissemination. Today, we know that specific professionals are needed. And we need to think about their presence from the very beginning, from the conception phase of a research project.

The design of a research project is inextricably linked to the planning of communication strategies: aspects that were once relegated to commercial marketing, and therefore viewed with suspicion, can now, within certain limits, be included in the public dissemination strategies of scientific research: let's think of the creation of a logo, a dedicated website, the appropriate use of social media, interviews with the press, the production of posters, initiatives aimed at the public. All this, I repeat, is not just an empty promotional strategy, but a useful moment of self-reflection: an exercise in clarifying language, in controlling the methods and objectives of scientific research. The imperative of all didactics also applies to the researcher: One does not really know something if he (or she) cannot communicate it to someone else, even in the



simplest terms. And in order to communicate it properly, one must first reflect on how learning processes work: that is to say that communication requires highly specialized metacognitive skills. Let's consider this simple evidence: the most effective teachers and educators are not necessarily the most learned, but the best communicators.

Indeed, musicology, like music itself, cannot live in a vacuum - it thrives when it is shared, challenged and celebrated beyond the academy. Engaging with the public is not merely promotional; it serves as an exercise in clarity and self-reflection. Public dissemination is as important as research itself.

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**INTERVIEW WITH MAESTRO RENATO BRUSON,  
CONDUCTED DURING THE MASTERCLASS IN PARMA  
(OCTOBER 25-28, 2024)<sup>1</sup>**

**SERGIU GARABAJII<sup>2</sup>** 

**SUMMARY.** This interview with Maestro Renato Bruson was conducted during a masterclass at his house-museum in Parma in October 2024. Bruson, one of the greatest baritones of the 20th century, is celebrated for his expressive singing and deep respect for the interpretative power of the word. Despite humble beginnings and no early access to music education, he rose to international fame with his debut in Verdi's *Il trovatore* and later at the Metropolitan Opera. He credits his success to his dedication, seriousness, and his chamber music training under Professor Elena Fava Ceriati, which refined his interpretative sensibility. Bruson emphasized humility, consistency, and the avoidance of shortcuts in a singer's journey. He warned against the negative influence of the media on young artists and stressed the importance of respecting one's own vocal limits. For him, vocal technique, emotional depth, and the ability to move the audience are central to true artistry. He does not believe in predefined national schools of singing but sees taste and style as cultural variations. His message to future generations is simple yet powerful: "Study, study, study."

**Keywords:** Renato Bruson, masterclass, baritone, opera singing, vocal technique, chamber music, interpretation, dedication

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<sup>1</sup> *This interview was conducted during the masterclass organized by the Renato Bruson Foundation in Parma, Italy. It was recorded with the maestro's consent and later transcribed for academic purposes*

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I had the great joy and honor not only to meet the great maestro Renato Bruson but also to work with him during a vocal interpretation masterclass held at his house-museum in the city of Parma from October 25 to 28, 2024. It was an incredibly exciting period for me, as I was about to learn from such a distinguished baritone. He is a man of strong character-direct, imposing, yet at the same time, sensitive and deeply emotional. His entire career has been marked by a profoundly expressive approach to the art of singing, one that is rooted in conveying emotion through the word.

This is how I came to know the maestro, and what particularly surprised and deeply impressed me was his willingness to grant this interview. His acceptance to contribute to my future doctoral thesis is, for me, an act of great generosity, for which I am profoundly grateful both to him and to the Renato Bruson Foundation, which has supported me in these endeavors.

Renato Bruson was born on January 13, 1936, in Granze, Padua province, and is one of the most remarkable baritones of the 20th century. Renowned for his exceptional interpretations in the operas of Verdi and Donizetti, his impressive career spanned more than five decades. He began his vocal studies at the “C. Pollini” Conservatory in Padua under the guidance of Professor Elena Fava Ceriati, who was regarded as one of the most respected voice teachers in Italy. His official debut took place in 1961 in Spoleto, in Giuseppe Verdi’s *Il trovatore*, where he performed the role of Count di Luna because of winning the *Concorso Nazionale Giovani Cantanti Lirici* in Spoleto that same year. This marked the starting point of a career that would gain increasing recognition and appreciation on an international level.

One of the key moments in his artistic rise was his debut in *La forza del destino* at the Teatro Regio di Parma in 1967. This success opened the doors of the Metropolitan Opera in New York and marked the beginning of an exceptional series of debuts on the world’s most prestigious stages. In 1970, Bruson also performed at the Romanian National Opera in Cluj, in the role of Rigoletto, further strengthening his connection with Romania.

Throughout his career, Renato Bruson collaborated with legendary conductors such as Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, and Claudio Abbado. In 1970, he performed for the first time under Muti's baton in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* at the Teatro Comunale in Florence, marking the beginning of a long-lasting artistic relationship. In 1972, he made his debut at Teatro alla Scala in Milan in Gaetano Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix*.

Among his numerous distinctions, one of the most notable is the honorary title of *Kammersänger*, awarded by the Vienna State Opera. He has performed on the world's most prestigious stages, including Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Vienna State Opera, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, and Teatro di San Carlo in Naples.

Today, his artistic legacy continues to inspire generations of artists—not only through his landmark recordings but also through his masterclasses and his exemplary dedication to the art of singing.

However, looking back at the beginnings of this career:

1. We know that your debut was in the city of Parma in the opera *La forza del destino*, alongside Franco Corelli, in 1967. Could you tell us at what age you began your vocal training? And how much did the cultural and social environment influence your education during your childhood?

(IT) Sappiamo che il Suo debutto è stato nella città di Parma nell'opera *La forza del destino*, insieme a Franco Corelli, nel 1967. Potrebbe dirci a che età ha iniziato la Sua formazione vocale? E quanto hanno influito l'ambiente culturale e sociale nella Sua educazione durante l'infanzia?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Mah, niente durante l'infanzia. Solamente che mi sono sempre dedicato perché la professione non si può raggiungere, ma mi sono sempre preso la cura di arrivare non alla professione ma alla cosa migliore. Perciò, non ho mai abbandonato la strada che avevo preso.

*“Well, nothing during my childhood. I simply dedicated myself always, because the profession cannot be attained so easily, but I always made sure not to just follow the profession, but to reach the highest level. That is why I never abandoned the path I chose.”*

2. One of the mentors who had the greatest impact on your career is Professor Elena Fava Ceriati. Do you have any other professors/mentors of similar importance?

(IT) Una dei mentori che ha avuto il maggiore impatto sulla Sua carriera è la professoressa Elena Fava Ceriati. Ci sono anche altri insegnanti o mentori che hanno avuto un'importanza simile per Lei?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** È stata molto importante per me perché, siccome era di questa zona? (...) e insegnava nel conservatorio di Padova, ed io ho imparato da lei, perché lei era una ex cantante ma di musica da camera, e io ho imparato da lei il gusto di poter cantare, di poter interpretare i personaggi con il gusto che mi diceva lei. E devo ringraziarla anche oggi sempre, perché ho imparato a interpretare e cantare.

*“She was very important to me because she was from this area (I don’t quite understand the word she says) and taught at the Conservatory in Padova. I learned from her because she was a former chamber music singer, and from her, I acquired the taste for singing and for interpreting characters, with the refinement she suggested to me. And I must thank her even today because she taught me how to interpret and sing.”*

- Ci sono stati anche altri insegnanti che hanno avuto...?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Assolutamente no. Lei ha avuto solamente come allieva la Angela Bobbi?

*“Absolutely not. She only had Angela Bobbi as a student.” (I couldn’t find anything about this name).*

3. Have you experienced episodes of anxiety or doubt in your career? How did you handle these situations?

(IT) Ha mai avuto episodi di ansia o dubbi nella Sua carriera? Come ha gestito queste situazioni?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** No, non ho mai avuto dubbi, ho avuto solamente un dubbio che pensavo di, siccome non avevo le intenzioni di fare la carriera del cantante, perché facevo tante altre cose. Perciò come cantante si può dire che ho pensato di diventare cantante quando già la carriera ha cominciato ad andare bene, ma altrimenti io no, non mi sono mai illuso anche perché non volevo fare il cantante.

*“No, I never had doubts. I only had one doubt because I was thinking that I didn’t intend to follow a singing career, since I was doing many other things. So, as a singer, it can be said that I only thought about becoming a singer when my career started to go well. Other than that, no, I never deceived myself, especially since I didn’t want to become a singer.”*



4. What qualities do you believe are necessary to dedicate oneself to the art of singing? (IT) Quali qualità ritiene siano necessarie per dedicarsi all'arte del canto?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Dipende dall'elemento, se ha l'intenzione di fare la grande carriera o gli basta cantare. Se gli basta cantare, può cantare anche nel gabinetto, altrimenti, se deve fare il cantante, deve sempre pensare di fare

il cantante perché, quando fai il cantante lo devi fare di fronte al pubblico, e il pubblico non è la critica, è il pubblico che critica e che dà il sì o no.

*"It depends on the person, whether they intend to have a great career or if it's enough for them to sing. If it's enough for them to sing, they can sing even in the bathroom. On the other hand, if they want to become a singer, they must always think about it, because when you're a singer, you have to sing in front of an audience. And the audience is not the critic; the audience is the one who judges and gives you the answer: yes or no."*

5. Regarding the "mindset of the young opera singer," how do you see the evolution of the current generation of baritones compared to those from the past? We know you mentioned that young people "want everything here and now." What could we improve? What have we lost?

(IT) Riguardo alla 'mentalità del giovane cantante lirico', come vede l'evoluzione dell'attuale generazione di baritoni rispetto a quelli del passato? Sappiamo che ha menzionato che i giovani 'vogliono tutto, qui e ora'. Cosa potremmo migliorare? Cosa abbiamo perso?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** No no, io non ho mai pensato a quelli del passato perché non ho mai avuto la possibilità di ascoltare altri del passato durante la mia carriera, perché non ero figlio di gente che aveva possibilità di farmi studiare. Io per studiare ho dovuto lavorare, perciò non avevo neanche la possibilità di ascoltare la radio perché non ce l'avevo. Perciò non ho mai dato giudizi a nessuno perché non ho ascoltato, e solamente secondo il mio gusto, ma non perché voglio fare il critico.

*"No, no, no, I never thought about those from the past, because I didn't have the opportunity to listen to others from the past during my career, as I wasn't the child of people who could afford to support my studies. To study, I had to*

*work, so I didn't even have the opportunity to listen to the radio because I didn't have one. That's why I never judged anyone, because I didn't listen to them, only according to my own taste, and not because I want to be a critic."*

- Sappiamo che ha menzionato che i giovani 'vogliono tutto, qui e ora'. Cosa potremmo migliorare?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Perché oggi come oggi ciò che rovina i giovani, perché le voci ci sono, ma ciò che rovina i giovani è la radio e la televisione e la discografia. Questi. Io a questi non ho mai pensato perché, come ho detto, quando ho debuttato qui a Parma nel '67 con Corelli, ma io non pensavo di diventare grande cantante, poi infatti, siccome sono venuti degli uditori del Metropolitan di New York e sono venuti a sentire Corelli, hanno sentito il povero Bruson e mi hanno chiesto se volevo andare in America. Sono andato in America, ma non vedevo l'ora di tornare in Europa.

*"Because, nowadays, what ruins young people-even though the voices exist-is the influence of the radio, television, and the recording industry. These. I never thought about such things, because, as I said, when I debuted here in Parma in '67, alongside Corelli, I didn't even think about becoming a great singer. In fact, some listeners from the Metropolitan Opera in New York came to hear Corelli, but they also heard 'poor Bruson' and asked me if I wanted to go to America. I went to America, but I couldn't wait to return to Europe."*

6. How would you describe the vocal technique of the "school of singing"? Which "school" forms the foundation of lyrical vocal singing, and what are its basic principles?

(IT) Come descriverebbe la tecnica vocale della scuola di canto? Quale 'scuola' è alla base del canto lirico e quali sono i suoi principi fondamentali?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Dipende sempre dall'elemento, perché l'elemento, se vuole fare la grande carriera, deve dedicarsi allo studio della carriera e del canto, altrimenti basta cantare, mentre si fa la barba può anche cantare, per dire. Ma se deve fare il professionista è un'altra cosa.

*"It always depends on the person, because if someone wants to have a great career, they must dedicate themselves to studying the career and singing. Otherwise, it's enough to sing, maybe even while shaving, so to speak. But if they want to be a professional, then that's a whole different matter."*

7. Is there such a thing as the so-called Italian, Russian, German, or American school of singing? What do you think about this aspect? What would the differences be?

(IT) Esiste una cosiddetta scuola di canto italiana, russa, tedesca o americana? Cosa ne pensa di questo aspetto? Quali sarebbero le differenze?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Il canto è sempre canto, solamente cambia il gusto – il gusto italiano, il gusto tedesco, americano, ecc., ma il canto è sempre canto.

*“Singing is always singing; only the style changes – the Italian style, the German style, the American style, etc., but singing always remains singing.”*

8. What is the foundation of a long-lasting singing technique? Specifically, in terms of correct breathing, body posture, the position of the larynx, lips, tongue, and jaw? Does the physical consistency of the body (small, large) matter?

(IT) Quali sono le basi di una tecnica di canto di lunga durata? In particolare, per quanto riguarda la corretta respirazione, la posizione del corpo, della laringe, delle labbra, della lingua, della mascella? Conta la costituzione fisica (piccola, grande) del corpo?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Per la carriera di lunga durata è solamente di sapere e avere dei consigli sani, per sapere scegliere quello che si deve fare durante la carriera, perché se si fa qualcosa fuori dal tuo repertorio, finisce anche la tua carriera. Perciò bisogna sempre dedicarsi, e seriamente. Non fare di tutto – oggi fanno di tutto per prendere soldi; no, se vuoi fare la lunga carriera ci deve essere umiltà, serietà e dedicarsi completamente allo studio di quel tipo di carriera.

*“For a long-lasting career, it is essential to know and receive healthy advice to understand what you need to do throughout your career, because if you do something outside your repertoire, your career ends. That’s why you must always dedicate yourself and do it seriously. You don’t have to do everything – today, many do anything just to make money; no, if you want a long career, there must be humility, seriousness, and complete dedication to the study of that type of career.”*

- Conta la costituzione fisica? Does physical constitution matter?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** No, no, no. Non conta, è solamente la tecnica, la serietà e la sensibilità.

*“No, no, no. It doesn’t matter, it’s only about technique, seriousness, and sensitivity.”*

9. What is the psychological preparation before producing a sound? What is the foundation of correct breathing, and how do we manage it, especially in moments of emotion and stress? (IT) Qual è la preparazione



psicologica prima dell'emissione di un suono? Cosa sta alla base di una respirazione corretta e come si gestisce, soprattutto nei momenti di emozione e stress?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** No, non c'è nessuna preparazione all'inizio. C'è solamente la serietà come si studia. Se tu studi seriamente quello, devi andare avanti con quello, altrimenti no, non puoi fare oggi una cosa e domani un'altra cosa.

*"No, there is no preparation at the beginning. There is only the seriousness with which you study. If you study that thing seriously, you must continue on that path; otherwise, no, you can't do one thing today and another tomorrow."*

- Quando siamo stressati come gestire? When we are stressed, how do we manage it?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Lo stress non deve arrivare, se sei stressato lascia tutto e riposati.

*"Stress should not appear; if you're stressed, leave everything and rest."*

10. Is it normal to have days when your voice doesn't sound right? When don't you want to sing? When are there vocal technique issues? Sometimes even feeling like giving up... What would be the solutions to remedy these situations? We would appreciate some recommendations from your personal experience.

(IT) È normale avere giorni in cui la voce non suona come dovrebbe? Quando non si ha voglia di cantare? Quando si incontrano problemi di tecnica vocale? A volte desiderando persino di smettere... Quali potrebbero essere le soluzioni per risolverli? Sarebbe un piacere ricevere alcuni consigli dalla Sua esperienza personale.

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Se non c'è la voglia di cantare, stai zitto, ma il resto non può avvenire il giorno che uno non ha la voglia. Se non hai la voglia, stai zitto e basta, senza creare problemi a te e anche agli altri.

*"If you don't have the desire to sing, keep quiet, but other than that, it can't be that someone doesn't want to sing. If you don't want to, just be quiet, that's it, without creating problems for yourself or for those around you."*

11. What are the important steps in preparing a role?

(IT) Quali sono i passi importanti nella preparazione di un ruolo?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Ah, niente, lo studio e basta. Lo studio perché nello studio, quando tu hai un ruolo da fare, devi sapere dove, quando e che

cosa faceva nella vita questo personaggio e tu devi interpretare. Solamente quello, devi studiare dove ha vissuto, quando ha vissuto e cosa ha fatto, allora è credibile lo spirito di quel personaggio, altrimenti no, canti e basta.

*“Ah, nothing, just study. Study, because when you have a role to interpret, you need to know where, when, and what that character did in their life, and you have to interpret them. That’s it. You need to study where they lived, when they lived, and what they did, so the spirit of that character becomes believable. Otherwise, no, you just sing, and that’s it.”*



12. What makes the baritone voice authentic today?

(IT) Cosa rende autentica la voce di baritono oggi?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Ah, quello non lo so, io penso che sia naturale.

*“Ah, I don’t know, I believe it’s something natural.”*

13. Why are young singers often advised to start with the Mozart repertoire, or more precisely, why is Mozart’s music considered a school of singing?

(IT) Perché ai giovani viene suggerito di iniziare con il repertorio mozartiano, o meglio, perché la musica di Mozart è considerata essa stessa una scuola di canto.

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Quello non lo so, perché ad un certo punto, se uno ha la voce e deve cantare, canta e basta.

*“I don’t know, because, at some point, if someone has a voice and needs to sing, they just sing, and that’s it.”*

14. How has your relationship with family, teachers, and fellow baritones influenced your career? Do you have any memories or inspirational moments from your collaborations with them? We know one of your sources is related to baritone Tito Gobbi, when he was the director in the production of Simon Bocanegra. Is the phrase true: *“If you want to become a Maestro, you must learn from a Maestro?”*

(IT) Come ha influenzato la relazione con la famiglia, i professori e i colleghi baritoni la Sua carriera? Ha ricordi o momenti ispiratori dalle collaborazioni con loro? Sappiamo di una Sua fonte d'ispirazione legata al baritono Tito Gobbi, quando lui era regista nello spettacolo Simon Boccanegra. È vera la frase: 'Se vuoi diventare un Maestro, devi imparare da un Maestro'?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Ho detto, i miei erano persone povere e io dovevo lavorare per studiare, perciò era solamente mia madre che mi voleva fare cantare in chiesa quando ero ragazzino, bambino, ecc. Ma non ho mai pensato di fare e di studiare canto, mai, mai, mai. Infatti, ho fatto istituto tecnico e basta.

*"I said, my parents were poor people, and I had to work in order to be able to study. Only my mother wanted me to sing in church when I was little, as a child, and so on. But I never thought about doing and studying singing, never, never, never. In fact, I only attended a technical institute, and that was it."*

(IT) Sappiamo di una Sua fonte d'ispirazione legata al baritono Tito Gobbi, quando lui era regista nello spettacolo Simon Boccanegra. È vera la frase: 'Se vuoi diventare un Maestro, devi imparare da un Maestro'?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** No. Con Tito Gobbi ho avuto sì, quando ero, lui faceva il regista che non cantava più, era a Chicago, io facevo Chenier, e sono andato a casa sua e ho chiesto consigli a lui perché lui aveva fatto tanti Simone allora, e io dovevo debuttare, e io ho chiesto dei consigli a lui per fare pure io, ma non ho mai avuto aiuti neanche vocali, solamente dei consigli.

*"No. With Tito Gobbi, yes, when I was... he was the director and no longer sang, he was in Chicago, and I was performing Chenier. I went to his house and asked him for advice because he had played the role of Simone many times, and I had to debut. I asked for advice so that I could do it too, but I never received any vocal help, just some advice."*

15. What would you like to leave as a legacy to the current and future generations of baritones, and what do you consider to be the essential lessons a young singer should learn? (IT) Cosa desidera lasciare in eredità alle attuali e future generazioni di baritoni e quali sono, secondo Lei, le lezioni essenziali che un giovane cantante dovrebbe imparare?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Io ai baritoni non voglio lasciare niente. Che comincino a studiare e imparare. Io ho lasciato tutto questo perché non ho figli, non ho la moglie che è morta, perciò tutta questa casa è rimasta allo studio delle persone che vogliono avere delle esperienze. Basta.

*"I don't want to leave anything to baritones. They should start studying and learning. I've left all of this (the museum house) because I have no children, no wife, she passed away, so this whole house is left for the study of those who want to accumulate experiences. That's all."*

(IT) Quali sono, secondo Lei, le lezioni essenziali che un giovane cantante dovrebbe imparare?

- *“Studiare, studiare, studiare.”*

16. What does “The Variability of the Baritone Voice” mean or how would you define it from your perspective?

“Cosa significa o come definirebbe, dal Suo punto di vista, la ‘Variabilità della voce di baritono’?”

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** È quello che il Padre Eterno o la natura ha dato, non c'è niente da fare. E poi, qualcuno fa dei giudizi, ma solo gli altri danno giudizi, non può uscire da noi stessi. Sono gli altri che ascoltano e danno giudizi, altrimenti devi solo studiare, studiare, studiare. Allora cominci a fare qualche cosa, altrimenti resterai sempre MEDIOCRE.

*“It is what God or nature has given, there's nothing you can do about it. And then, some make judgments, but only others can give judgments, they can't come from ourselves. Those who listen are the ones who give judgments. Otherwise, you just have to study, study, and study. Only then do you begin to achieve something, otherwise, you will remain forever MEDIOCRE.”*

C.B. - What repertoire would you suggest Sergiu to study?

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Dipende da lui, dalla sensibilità che lui ha. Non volere fare di più di quello che può fare.

Io ho imparato dalla mia insegnante che era ex cantante di musica da camera. Per 5 anni del conservatorio io ho imparato a cantare musica da camera. Quando poi ho fatto audizione a Spoleto io non sapevo l'opera, ho studiato l'opera per fare l'audizione, non è che mi dicevo 'devo fare così', no, ho fatto e basta. Perché prima ho cantato musica da camera e ho imparato a cantare con il gusto e la sensibilità.

*“It depends on him, on the sensitivity he has. He shouldn't try to do more than he can. I learned from my teacher, who was a former chamber music singer. For 5 years, at the conservatory, I learned to sing chamber music. When I then did the audition in Spoleto, I didn't know opera; I studied opera only for the audition. I didn't tell myself 'I must do it this way,' no, I simply did it. Because first, I sang chamber music and learned to sing with style and sensitivity.”*

A message to the younger generation:

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Grazie a voi, buon lavoro!

*“Thank you, good work!”*

## Notes (Masterclass)

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Se tu riesci ad entrare qui (nel cuore) a chi ti ascolta. Perché tutto quello che ho fatto io, ci tenevo molto alla parola, perché quando sono andato al conservatorio io per 5 anni, non ho studiato opera, ho studiato musica da camera. E la musica da camera, le canzoni da camera ti insegnano il fiato, ti insegnano il canto e il gusto.

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Perché l'opera, quando tu hai un costume addosso, e sei in palcoscenico e poi oltretutto sei costretto anche a fare certe cose che non fai quando canti musica da camera, quando sei davanti al pubblico nel teatro pieno, e tu canti da solo con il pianoforte, per tutta la serata, e devi concentrare il pubblico che ascolta, altrimenti non fai la carriera, hai finito. Perciò è molto importante la parola, per quello che io ci tengo molto alla parola.

*“If you manage to reach here (to the heart) of those who are listening to you. Because of everything I did, I cared a lot about the word, because when I was at the conservatory for 5 years, I didn't study opera, I studied chamber music. And chamber music, art songs, teach you breath, teach you singing and style. Because in opera, when you wear a costume and are on stage, you are forced to do things you don't do when you sing chamber music. When you are in front of the audience, in a full theater, and you sing alone with the piano for the entire evening, you must capture the audience's attention, or else you won't have a career, it's over. That's why the word is very important, and I care a lot about the word.”*

### **You must listen to your own body.**

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Io non ho mai fatto quello che volevano fare gli altri, ho mangiato sempre quello che ho voluto, ho bevuto, ho fatto quello che ho voluto

*“I never did what others wanted me to do. I always ate what I wanted, drank what I wanted, did what I wanted.”*

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Non mi sono mai privato di niente, mai fatto quello che mi dicono gli altri.

*“I never deprived myself of anything, I never did what others told me to do.”*

(IT) **Renato Bruson:** Io da ragazzo giovane avevo sempre mal di gola, e mi mettevo sempre la sciarpa, e lei mi ha detto, butta via la sciarpa e mettiti il capello, eh infatti io non ho mai avuto problemi quando sono andato in Giappone poi in America, mai.

### ***Bisogna abituare il corpo a tutto***

*“When I was young, I always had a sore throat and always wore a scarf. And she (who is she? She doesn’t mention) told me: ‘Throw away the scarf and put on a hat.’ And actually, I never had problems again, not even when I was in Japan, nor in America, never. You have to get your body used to anything.”*

In conclusion, this interview is about continuous dedication, because only through perseverance and a deep commitment to the profession can one discover authenticity. It is about selflessness and the expression of gratitude toward teachers, for, in one way or another, we are their “children.”

Singing means evoking emotion through refinement and style. Today, having a “big voice” is no longer enough, as the world is filled with singers more than ever before. However, the true essence of singing lies in treating this Creation with the utmost delicacy—the imprint of the composer, poet, and librettist—a universal heritage that we bring to life each time we shape and convey a “story” from the score.

The fact that Maestro Bruson never had doubts about his profession demonstrates his strength of character, courage, and sense of responsibility—qualities that I have felt even now, at nearly 90 years of age. Renato Bruson did not come from a wealthy family; he was poor, yet at the same time, extraordinarily “rich” through the talent he inherited. The first place where he put this gift into practice was alongside his mother in the church choir. As mentioned in the recent film, which premiered in Romania on December 20, 2024, in which Angelina Jolie portrays Maria Callas, there is a moment that struck me—where it is said that music was never born out of happiness, but out of suffering.

I, too, come from a humble family, somewhere in the north of Bessarabia. I studied on an improvised piano drawn on a table, sketching the keyboard and imagining the sounds, carefully following the fingerings noted by my teacher, because I did not have the resources to buy a real piano. And you know what? I realized that everything comes down to determination, and where there is a will, there are possibilities. That’s how I passed my exams at the school of arts, and today, as I concluded this interview, I am aware that life is like a musical score—each page different, yet always unique and special—one that, in the end, comes together to form a true “work of art.”

Another important aspect is that we don’t have to do everything “here and now.” A 89-year-old baritone reminds us of this. Many from the younger generation give up because they want to reach the peak of a fascinating career too quickly. However, singing is not about career or reaching a pinnacle—it is about love for the gift you have been given, about continuous work and exploration,

a constant refinement of the instrument through which you move and give to others. Singing means offering an emotion, a story, an individuality-it is about commitment, responsibility, and respect.

Let us follow what Maestro Bruson says, as his ideas coincide with those of another renowned Italian baritone - Leo Nucci, a maestro with a brilliant career and a great heart. During a masterclass in which I had the great honor of learning from him as well, in Donizetti's city, Bergamo, he told us: "Opera is sung theater, and the words must reach the heart." These are precisely the thoughts shared by Maestro Bruson in this interview.

Therefore, these great maestros, who are now approaching 90 and continue to give and inspire, emphasize an essential truth: the profession of a lyrical singer must be approached with utmost delicacy and responsibility. We must not confuse the competition of decibels with the art of creating through sensitivity. Singing is beyond mere technique-technique is only a foundation, a platform-but, at its core, singing is the expression of deep understanding and commitment, discipline, and a continuous devotion, always, until the very end and beyond.

## SOUND HYPOSTASES OF THE PRAYER OF THE HEART<sup>1</sup>

MIRELA MERCEAN-ȚÂRC<sup>2</sup> 

**SUMMARY.** Song has always accompanied prayer in moments of worship of man throughout time. More precisely, the sound form of prayer has proven to be a necessity of expression, communication and communion with Divinity. The Prayer of the Heart or the Prayer of Jesus Christ is simple, non-canonical, being an exercise of asceticism for Christian believers. Its text is “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!”, and its continued repetition responds to the call of the Apostle Paul who urges us in his Epistles: “Pray without ceasing!”. The practice of this prayer is part of the hesychast tradition, it is attested both in the writings of the Holy Fathers and in the practice of some Athonite monks, to this day. The testimonies of the ones who delve into this prayer converge towards the idea of ordering the mind and connecting it with the heart and with Divinity. By transcribing and analyzing the melodic types with which the Prayer of the Heart was clothed sonorously, the work aims to highlight their circulation in the environment of Christians from the Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian churches, as well as the spread, respectively the adaptation of these songs to the musical specificity of Western culture. From modal, monodic songs, processed in rudimentary polyphonies with ison, to tonal songs, harmonized in the manner of the choral, from solo to choral interpretation, or accompanied by the electronic ison, the forms of representation of these prayers are of great variety, underlining the transition from a collective, oral, anonymous creation to that of the cult musical creation represented in this exhibition by two masterpieces by the Romanian composer Paul Constantinescu.

**Keywords:** Prayer of the Heart, Jesus Christ, Christian song, sung prayer

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<sup>1</sup> *This work was published in Romanian, in a more restricted form, with the title "Song for the Prayer of the Heart", in the conference volume ISSTA (International Symposium of Science Theology and Arts) of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Alba Iulia no. 2 /2022. The translated and added version of this study aims to give the content international visibility.*

<sup>2</sup> *Prof. Ph.D. Habil., Department of Music, Faculty of Arts, University of Oradea, Romania. Email: merceanmirela@yahoo.com*





## Introduction

Song has accompanied prayer in moments of worship of man throughout time. More precisely, the sound form of prayer has proven to be a necessity of expression, communication and communion with Divinity. The Prayer of the Heart or the Prayer of Jesus Christ is considered one of the most profound and mystical prayers, it is powerful and “useful in all circumstances of life” as Father Arsenie Boca and many other priests, spiritual fathers, philosophers teach us. It is assumed that the Apostle Paul referred to this prayer when he said, “Pray without ceasing!”

It is a simple, non-canonical prayer, a hesychast one, which through repetition orders the mind and connects it with the heart, for which reason it has also been called the Prayer of the Mind. For believers, this hesychast prayer is an important ascetic exercise. The form of the prayer has changed over time from “Lord, have mercy on me” to “Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”. Other forms encountered: “Son and Word of God” or “have mercy on us” marking the transition from individual to collective prayer through singing.

Father Cleopas reminds us that this prayer should be said as often as possible but correlated with the respiratory rhythm, and Saint Gregory of Sinai urges us to say it quietly and without noise, lest the voice scatter and diminish the feeling and attention of the mind.

The hesychast tradition dating back to the early centuries of Christianity has been preserved to this day. Both through the writings of the Holy Fathers and the practice of the Athonite hermits or monks. There are many testimonies of the hesychast practice of the prayer of the heart, *The Way of the Pilgrim*<sup>3</sup> being a famous reference throughout the world of believers. In his book *A Night in the Desert of the Holy Mountain*<sup>4</sup>, Metropolitan Hierotheos describes the mystical experience of a hermit from Mount Athos who practices the Prayer of the Heart. Five stages of spiritual experience are described. The first represents the continuous, out loud recitation of the prayer, the second stage is the recitation in thought with all attention focused on the words, on the name of Jesus Christ, a concentration that gathers, orders the mind and sensitizes the soul.

The third stage is when the prayer reaches the “depths of the heart” while in the fourth stage the heart and mind unite, then the prayer “utters

<sup>3</sup> Anonymous, *Pelerinul rus, Marturisirea plina de har despre cautarea si practica Rugaciunii inimii (The way of the Pilgrim. The Graceful Confession on the Search and Practice of the Prayer of the Heart)*, Editura Herald, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Ierotheos Vlachos, *Mitropolitul Nefpaktosului, O noapte în pustia Sfântului Munte. Convorbire cu un pustic despre Rugăciunea lui Hristos (A night in the wilderness of the Holy Mountain. A conversation with a hermit about the Prayer of Christ)*, Editura Sophia, 2019.

itself" uninterruptedly. In the fifth stage, inside the soul, "a flame that burns gently and enlivens"<sup>5</sup> is felt, a sign that the Holy Trinity has made its home in the heart.

The question that arises after studying these ascetic paths is: How exactly does sung prayer correlate with these professed practices? Why did the faithful feel the need to enter the "altar" of their mind and heart and to give the spoken prayer a sonorous, sung embodiment?

*Qui cantat, bis orat* - "He who sings, prays twice", says a Latin proverb. The word addresses the mind and the sound, the music addresses the heart directly, being a link between thought and experience.

*„The Holy Fathers speak of an opening of the mind towards the infinity of God, but it seems that it is in the heart that the mind realizes this opening (...) The infinity of God cannot be experienced without the love that God has for us. And this love of God for us calls for our love (...) it is what makes our heart an organ of love. But it is a heart that (...) knows that God enters into an intimate relationship with us through Christ. This is why the mind is the one that rests in the heart. In the heart it finds the infinity of God”<sup>6</sup>.*

And through prayer, the heart sings from the overflow of this love, seeking its path, a lively flow of sounds in the melody sung with humility, asking for mercy and compassion from the "Son and Word of God."

### **Objectives and methods**

The paper aims to transcribe and analyze the melodic types of "The Prayer of the Heart" that circulate among Orthodox Christians in the Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Romanian churches, but also those that are found in other churches. The research was carried out according to the online sources since this sung prayer is not part of the ecclesiastical repertoire, it is transmitted orally, it is an anonymous creation, it does not have a well-defined functionality, the melodies being sung in churches, monasteries or recorded in studios, both individually and by vocal groups on equal voices, mixed amateur or professional choirs, both in Slavic, Latin and English languages, currently proving an extensive practice in Christian churches of various denominations.

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<sup>5</sup> Idem, p 69.

<sup>6</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Rugăciunea lui Iisus - Experiența Duhului Sfânt (The Prayer of Jesus – The Experience of the Holy Spirit)*, translated into Romanian by Marilena Rusu, Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 1995, p. 54.

## Melodic types of The Prayer of the Heart

The prayer of the heart sung by a group of nuns from the Dragomirna monastery<sup>7</sup> presents a melodic type with an archaic modal structure in the Byzantine sixth sound (ἦχος)<sup>8</sup>.

E. g. 1

Doa - mne I - su - se Hris - toa - se

2  
Fi - ul și Cu - vân - tul lui Du-mne-zeu mi - lu - ieș - te - ne pe noi

The three melodic lines, a-b-c, adopt an asymmetrical melodic pattern following the structure of the versification of 8 and 10 and 7 syllables respectively. We note that the prayer has four more syllables added to the initial verse, including “and the Word”. This emphasizes the quality of Jesus Christ as the Son and Word of God, “through whom all things were made” (*The Creed*).

The interpretation mode starts from the monodic variant to which an ostinato ison is added through repetition, then, as a third voice, a prolonged ison on the basic sound of the mode.

<sup>7</sup> Dragomirna Monastery is a monastic complex of nuns in northern Moldova, Romania, attested since 1602. The patron saint of the monastery church is the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgE6rsfTh1M>, accessed in 10.04., 12.04., 14.04., 18.04. 2023.

E. g. 2

Doa - mne I - su - se Hris - toa - se

Doa - mne I - su - se Hris - toa - se

Doa

8

Fi - ul și Cu - vân - tul lui Du - mne - zeu mi - lu - ieș - te - ne pe noi

Fi - ul și Cu - vân - tul lui Du - mne - zeu mi - lu - ieș - te - ne pe noi

The second melodic type<sup>9</sup> belongs to a metrically framed Ukrainian song, in the meter of four. The pentatonic-hemitonic melody presents anacrusis and syncopated rhyme formulas as well as being in the key of F minor, with a varied harmonization at the repetitions. It is sung in unison then gradually two- and three-voice harmonies are introduced which are ultimately “colored” with an Aeolian F modal ethos.

E. g. 3

I - su-se I - su-se Sî - nu Bo - jîi po - mâ-lui po - mâ - lui nas

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OE0tQ97Vqjk>, accessed in 10.04., 12.04., 14.04., 18. 04. 2023.

The melodic form is a-b-a and the structure of the verses is hexasyllabic, with two 3+3 hemistiches, *I-su-se, I-su-se (Je-sus, Je-sus)*, tetrasyllabic on the verses of *Sînu Bojii*, and heptasyllabic divided into two hemistiches, 3+4 *Po-mâ-lui+Po-mâ-lui-nas*.

The two-voice harmonization emphasizes the singing variation on the second repetition by doubling the melody on the upper third.

**E. g. 4**

5  
I - su-se I - su-se Sî - nu Bo-jii po - mâ-lui po - mâ - lui nas I -

9  
su - se I - su - se Sî - nu Bo - jii po - mâ - lui po - mâ - lui nas I -

The third repetition in two voices, this time with an ostinato ison on C, brings back a pentatonic modal mood color with fluctuating E–Eb.

**E. g. 5**

13  
su-se I - su-se Sî - nu Bo-jii po - mâ-lui po - mâ - lui nas I -

The repetition in three voices brings the mixtures of thirds and the ison, configuring a modal structure of Aeolian F or natural minor F in the final cadence.

**E. g. 6**

su-se I - su-se Sî - nu Bo-jii po - mâ-lui po - mâ - lui nas

The performance alternates between two-voice singing and three-voice singing, and the ending returns with the monodic version of the melody.

**The third melodic type<sup>10</sup>** is a Russian Orthodox chant very widespread among Ukrainians and also among believers in Belarus. The melodic pattern has several variants of harmonization: with ison, with ostinato ison, in doublings of thirds or sixths. The melody is very simple tetrachordic (an Aeolian or Dorian tetrachord) in transposed voice 1, made up of two phrases A and Av whose morphological units are two different motifs: a + b and a+bv

The structure of the verses is 3+5 and 4+7.

**E. g. 7**

A	Av
a + b	a + bv
3 + 5	4 + 7

In the four-voice harmonization, the mobile ison that descends to the subtone and the doubling of the melody in sixths are noticeable, voices being gradually added to the interpretation, through repetition.

**E. g. 8**

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfzXHDBSaIQ>, accessed in 10.04., 12.04., 14.04., 18.04. 2023.

2

11

Si - ne Bo - - ji po - mi - lui - nea grej - na - co

Si - ne Bo - - ji po - mi - lui - nea grej - na - co

The circulation of this melodic type in the Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian cultural space is attested by several recordings that we found in the virtual space, representing as many variants as possible that preserve the vocal character and the type of singing with ison<sup>11</sup>.

A variant interpreted antiphonally by the male choir of the Valaam monastery<sup>12</sup> in northern Russia with double ison and a more alert tempo in the heirmologic style, without the dubbing of thirds or sixths, reveals an authentic, traditional form of interpretation.

The same melody, sung solo in 4 voices by the members of the *Harpa Dei* band, in slow movement and with varied harmonization variants, expresses the atmosphere of recollection and the intimate character of prayer<sup>13</sup>.

The version of the women's choir of the Saint Elizabeth Monastery in Minsk, Belarus<sup>14</sup>, brings a more alert way of interpretation, in the manner of heirmologic singing. The harmonization has a symmetrical structure: starting from monody, singing with isons and back to monody by gradually giving up the isons.

Examples: the Valaam men's choir from northern Russia and the St. Elizabeth women's choir from Minsk.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LOVHZkfpXQ> sung in 4 voices by a Ukrainian choir, Perkovnovo Școla Spivi, accessed in 13.03 2025.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1YQISm-Nn0> solo interpretation with accompaniment of guitar and voice.

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHP4Z84a\\_WY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHP4Z84a_WY), accessed in 10.04. 12.04. 14.04. 18. 04. 2023.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfzXHDBSaIQ> soloistic song Harpa Dei (Catholic ensemble) accessed in 13.02 2025.

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uTTVE-J\\_e8&list=RD-uTTVE-J\\_e8&start\\_radio=1&rv=-uTTVE-J\\_e8&t=28](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uTTVE-J_e8&list=RD-uTTVE-J_e8&start_radio=1&rv=-uTTVE-J_e8&t=28), accessed in 10.04., 12.04., 14.04., 18. 04. 2023.

## E. g. 9

Go - - - spo di I - su - se Hri - ste

Go - - - spo di I - su - se Hri - ste

<sup>3</sup> Si - ne Bo - - ji po - mi - lui - mia grej - na - co

Si - ne Bo - - ji po - mi - lui - mia grej - na - co

Another variation is that of “The Orthodox Sisters” performed by a mixed choir in the church. It appears modified in the b phrase with the syllables melismatized differently and the ison made on three sounds D, C and A. The manner of interpretation is slow, with crowns in the b phrases. The vocal preparation is reminiscent of a professional choir.

## E. g. 10

Go - - - spo di I - su - se Hri - ste

Go - - - spo di I - su - se Hri - ste

<sup>3</sup> Si - ne Bo - ji po - mi - lui - mia grej - nu

Si - ne Bo - ji po - mi - lui - mia grej - nu

In Romanian, this melodic type is found in the interpretation of the choir of the Monastery of Saint Lawrence in Chernigov, Ukraine<sup>15</sup> and presents the following adaptation of the melody to the text of the prayer.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVAXdXpm4RU>, The Saint Lawrence choir, Chernigov, Ukraine.



Doa - - - mne I - su - se Hris - toa - se

Fi - ul lui Dum - ne - zeu Mi - lu - ieș - te - ne pe noi

The harmonization is achieved by ison on D and C by the male voices then with the addition of an ison on A and G to the treble voice creating double isons of fifths.

Interesting takeovers of this Russian/ Ukrainian song are presented in recordings that are made in the English-speaking cultural space, probably representing songs from Western Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox churches.

The English version of the choir of the Orthodox Church of Saint Theophanes from Colorado Springs<sup>16</sup> presents in phrase **b** the same pattern found in the choir of the Orthodox Sisters, as well as the slow manner of interpretation, the recording also being from the church. The lyrics are *Lord Jesus Christ/ Son of God/ Have mercy on me/ A sinner*.

Recorded in a studio by soloist Paul Lenck<sup>17</sup>, the Russian melody, this time titled “The Lord’s Prayer”, receives electronic ison and dubbing. The melodic deviation produced with the performer’s attempt to include the melodic variant transposed to a third in the second line is interesting. The modal character is thus modified, the melody receiving a tonal-functional coloring, in which the singer probably feels “at home”. The English text is adapted to the melody quite unnaturally, with unjustified text accents on unaccented melodic beats and unaccented syllables on accented beats. *Have mer-cy on me*. The Latin and

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxvqW\\_2rovA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxvqW_2rovA), accessed in 10.04., 12.04., 14.04., 18. 04. 2023.

<sup>17</sup> In the presentation text, it is asserted that this the prayer is also found in Western Christianity in the catechism of Catholic Church, as well as in conjunction with the recent innovation of Anglican Prayer Beads. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=GzduFfQxuCY>, accessed in 10.04., 12.04., 14.04., 18. 04. 2023.

Russian versions that the author posts are better adapted as far as the accents of the text and the melody are concerned<sup>18</sup>.

## E. g. 12

1  
Lord - - - - Je - sus Christ Son of God

3  
Have \_\_\_\_\_ mer - ci of me a sin - ner

5  
Lord - - - - Je - sus Christ Son of God

7  
Have \_\_\_\_\_ mer - ci of me a sin - ner

We also encountered a variant of this Russian melody in a Catholic women's choir<sup>19</sup>, the melody being intoned by two voices in bourdons of parallel thirds. The original song appears here with transformed contours, the ancient modal ethos, with the power to penetrate the world of hesychast prayer being replaced by a melody in the key of Bb major, in a measure of four fourths, with a divisional rhythm, having a cheerful, optimistic character, sung in a fast tempo. We note the absence in the last verse of the word a *sinner*. Thus, that part of the prayer that has power through the humility with which the believer repents of sins in order to be able to ask for mercy from God is lost.

## E. g. 13

5  
Lord \_\_\_\_\_ Je - sus...Crist have merci \_\_\_\_\_ on me \_\_\_\_\_

Lord \_\_\_\_\_ Je - sus...Crist have merci \_\_\_\_\_ on me \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJjvSbcSZRg>

Paul Lenck' Latin variant. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyfQo6j0Bvg> the Russian variant.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpu-3EDa-xw>, accessed in 10.04., 12.04., 14.04., 18. 04. 2023.

Another example that reflects the integration of this prayer into the repertoire of believers from cultural spaces other than Orthodox ones is a tonally functional anonymous<sup>20</sup> creation for four voices in the form of a harmonized chorale, probably performed by an amateur choir since we could not fit the song into a unified meter (2/4 alternates with the  $\frac{3}{4}$  measure). The tonality of C minor, the harmonization with the chords of the dominant and the VI degree in the second verse *Have mercy on me*, the way of interpretation with a rich dynamic and strong choral voices, betray more a collective, dramatic, spectacular spirit, a pathetic prayer, rather than an intimate prayer of a humble heart.

## E. g. 14

Lord Je-sus Christ Son of\_ God have mer-ci on\_ me a sin - ner

Lord Je-sus Christ Son of\_ God have mer-ci on\_ me a sin - ner

The following melodic type is found in churches in Romania. The melody is taken from the repertoire of the Oastea Domnului<sup>21</sup> movement. The key is F major; the melody has two phrases of 4 and 3 measures respectively that are sung individually or collectively and has the same function as the other prayers dedicated to divine service.

## E. g. 15

Doa - mne I - su - se Hris - toa - se Fi - ul lui Dum - ne -

zeu Mi - lu - ie - ște - mă pe mi - ne pă - că - to - sul.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxiLd5nBTy&t=512s>, accessed in 10.04., 12.04., 14.04., 18.04. 2023.

<sup>21</sup> The Lord's Army is a movement within the Romanian Orthodox Church, which came into being in 1923. After 1948 the movement was declared illegal by the communist regime in Romania. Its members were sentenced to hard years in prison.

The circulation of this “Prayer of the Heart” sung today in various religious cultural environments represents a picture of modern society that takes over much of the external form of a song, modifies it, without making the effort to preserve and integrate its ethos, in fact its essence (Spirit). It thus receives a form of a content that has lost its primary function, that of intimate communion with God.

From oral and anonymous practice to the cult musical creation, signed by a composer, the “Prayer of the Heart” becomes a source of inspiration and traverses naturally the path from a creation with a utilitarian function to one with an aesthetic function.

In Romanian musical creation there are two works inspired by the Prayer of the Heart. They were signed by the composer Paul Constantinescu and are two emblematic creations for the *Burning Bush*, a spiritual movement that came into being in 1946, after the war. “The burning bush, which burned and was not consumed” (Exodus 3) is the symbol of the Unceasing Prayer, therefore the Prayer of Jesus. This interpretation belongs to the Hieroschemamonk father Daniil Teodorescu, the initiator of the Burning Fire, who died in prison of Aiud<sup>22</sup>. This movement included clergy, students, monks, philosophers, teachers, mathematicians and scientists, university professors, writers, journalists, musicians, visual artists, who attended and gave conferences and lectures at the Antim Monastery in Bucharest, on the topic of man’s faith in a materialistic world, a world that loomed menacingly in the ideas of the new atheist communist regime that followed the second great world conflagration in Romania<sup>23</sup>. Since 1948, the communist political Police began to monitor the activity of the *Burning Bush* and in 1958, arrests began, 16 of the movement’s members were imprisoned and sentenced to hard labor between 15 and 25 years, with sentences of “conspiracy against the regime”, “legionary conspiracy”, “conspiracy against the constitutional order”, absurd motivations, unproven in the trials held behind closed doors. The testimonies of the survivors of communist prisons are shocking: convicted without guilt, beaten, humiliated, starved, kept in the cold, tortured until extermination, they resisted through strong faith and prayer. “From cold, starvation and terror, the word of God flourished”<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.crestinortodox.ro/religie/rugul-aprins-temnita-69599.html>

The testimony of Father Sofian Boghiu in 1996, a member of the Burning Bush, imprisoned by the communist regime.

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.procesulcomunismului.com/marturii/fonduri/mart45\\_64/gombos\\_miscarea\\_spirituala\\_rugul\\_aprins.htm](https://www.procesulcomunismului.com/marturii/fonduri/mart45_64/gombos_miscarea_spirituala_rugul_aprins.htm) drd. Stelian Gombos (PhD. Candidate).

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.cuvantul-ortodox.ro/recomandari/rugul-aprins-miscarea-antim/> TVR Report, the show Universe of Faith.

The legacy of this movement's activity has not been lost. As a result of philokalia and resistance through culture, conferences were held, hymns were composed ("The *Akathist* of the *Burning Bush*" – Sandu Tudor), paintings, frescoes and mosaics were created (Olga Greceanu), a poetic and religious literary creation of great depth flourished (V. Voiculescu), books were written about this movement that inspired subsequent generations<sup>25</sup>.

**Paul Constantinescu**, inspired by the *Burning Bush* movement<sup>26</sup>, wrote three works: "The Troparion of All Saints" and two creations composed in 1946 on the text of the Prayer of the Heart, two masterpieces that represent the integration of this prayer sung into the repertoire of religious music.

The first is conceived in the form of an infinite canon symbolizing uninterrupted prayer, the second, a fugato written for male choir, both created with aesthetic purposes and finality or, if they are performed in the Church, a functional finality, relevant to the fact of living. From this point of view, Fr. Stelian Ionașcu states that "The Prayer of the Heart as an individual practice thus becomes the Prayer of the Church, as a liturgical breath in public divine worship"<sup>27</sup>.

E. g. 16

Glas I  $\int$   $\Pi\alpha$   $\frac{1}{T}$

I  $\pi$  Doam - ne li - su - se Hris - toa - se

II  $\epsilon$  Dum - ne - ze - u - le

III  $\zeta$  Fi - ul mi - lu - ieș - te - ne

IV  $\pi$  pre noi

**Paul Constantinescu *Prayer of the Heart* (infinite canon) transcribed in psaltic notation by Hieromonk Petroniu Tănase<sup>28</sup> (the Roman letters indicate the entries of the voices in the canon)**

<sup>25</sup> <https://ziarullumina.ro/actualitate-religioasa/documentar/pagini-din-arhiva-rugului-aprins-viata-ca-un-oratoriu-189748.html>

Author: Marius Vasileanu.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Constantinescu wrote the two Byzantine oratorios during the period of intense activity of the Burning Bush Movement, *The Passion and the Resurrection of the Lord*, the first version 1943 and the final version 1948, respectively *The Nativity of the Lord* - 1947, works for which he was awarded a significant sum of money by the Antim Monastery. Apud Vasile Vasilache, *De la Antim la Pocrov (From Antim to Pocrov)*, Editura Eikon, București, 2015, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> Stelian Ionașcu, *Rugăciunea inimii de Paul Constantinescu (The Prayer of the Heart, by Paul Constantinescu)*, in CHIPUL, NUMELE ȘI SLAVA, *Simpozion Internațional de Știință, Teologie și Artă*, ISSTA 2022, Alba – Iulia 9-10 mai 2022, p.345

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem* p. 343.

1  
Doam - ne Ii - su - se Hris - toa - - - se,

2  
Dum - ne - ze - - u - - le Fi - - - ul

3  
mi - lu - ieş - te - ne pre noi

**Paul Constantinescu *Prayer of the Heart* (infinite canon)  
transcribed in linear notation**

Since these works have been thoroughly treated by Fr. Stelian Ionaşcu<sup>29</sup>, I will not go into analytical details but will only add a few structural and harmonic considerations to the second Prayer of the Heart.

The same theme of the „infinite canon” here is presented monodically in the bass voice. The fugue exposition with the response to the upper fourth is perfectly adapted to the modal language in which the fourth represents a (tonal modal) plagal relationship. The exposition is a model of polyphonic stratification in which it appears semanticized through the ascending entries from bass to soprano, the symbol of the increase in the intensity of experience in collective prayer. The theme presented in the A Aeolian mode (or transposed voice 1) and the response in the D Aeolian (or voice 1) are counterpointed successively, constituting on the harmonic vertical a modal-diatonic jewel, the fruit of the inspiration of a “craftsman” who deeply understood the spirit of Orthodox singing.

<sup>29</sup> Stelian Ionaşcu, in *op. cit.* and in the book *Paul Constantinescu și muzica bizantină românească (Paul Constantinescu and the Romanian Byzantine Music)*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 90-93.

D Aeolian

Aeolian I IV V 6/4 VI IV I

IV I I IV I IV I VI II

Paul Constantinescu: *Prayer of the Heart*, m. 8-21

Thus, from the polyphonic plot, we can distinguish plagal-type harmonic relationships, chords without thirds, relationships with subtone (gradual harmonic progression) or relationships of thirds<sup>30</sup> that give the polyphonic discourse archaic coloristic “iridescences” of a special charm.

E. g. 19

I V<sub>4/3</sub> I<sub>6</sub> II<sub>6/5</sub> V I<sub>4/3</sub> II/V I<sub>4/3</sub> IV 7

D Aeolian

II<sub>6/5</sub> I<sub>4/3</sub> II<sub>6/5</sub> I<sub>6aj</sub> V<sub>6/4</sub> I V<sub>6</sub> I IV V

Paul Constantinescu: *Prayer of the Heart*, m. 22-28

<sup>30</sup> “What governs modal relationships are the interchordal relationships of undertone, plagal, authentic, and third.” *Apud* Hans-Peter Türk, *Aranjamente corale (Choral Arrangements)*, Acad. de Muzică Gh. Dima, Cluj Napoca, p. 3.



A scheme of the form would include the three states described by Fr. Stelian Ionașcu: the exposition or accumulation of experience, the culmination or incandescence zone of experience, and the hesychast silence in the final episode<sup>31</sup>.

Fig. 1

EXPOSITION – accumulation	DEVELOPMENT	climax	FINAL EPISODE
R	Tv		ison
T	Cp	Cp with cells in stretto	tv1 Head.t.v.
R		Cp	t.v
T		Cp	tv
		T	tv.
A Aeolian; D Aeol; A D	A Aeolian	E Aeolian	
m. 1 -----28	29----- 35----- 36-----	42	43-----52

Paul Constantinescu: *Prayer of the Heart*, the scheme of form<sup>32</sup>

E. g. 20

Paul Constantinescu: *Prayer of the Heart*, m. 47-52

<sup>31</sup> Stelian Ionașcu, *Rugăciunea inimii de Paul Constantinescu (The Prayer of the Heart, by Paul Constantinescu)*, op. cit., p. 344-349.

<sup>32</sup> **Cp**= counterpoint with cells imitated in *stretto* formed from the head of the theme; **cap t.v.** varied thematic head in microimitations; **tv** varied thematic head.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cc6MpWgKcHo>. The Nicolae Lungu choral, conductor Stelian Ionașcu. Accessed in 10.04., 12.04., 14.04., 18. 04. 2023.

## Conclusions

The description of the melodic hypostases of the Prayer of the Heart has revealed to us the existence of several types and forms of singing practiced by Christians of different denominations. Coming from the Eastern hesychast tradition, the Prayer of the Heart appears sung in the Romanian and Russian faith space with modal melodic designs in the VI and I voice, respectively, simple in structure and melodic design, revealing an archaic modal ethos. These melodic types present a harmonization (rudimentary polyphony) achieved spontaneously in the practice of collective singing, both through mixtures of thirds or sixths, after the model of the bourdon and through the ison specific to the Byzantine ethos. The Ukrainian melody as well as the three-voice choir in C minor (possibly sung in a Protestant church) are anonymous tonal-functional creations, possibly of more recent date. Of all the melodic types described, the Russian melody is the most widespread, being sung all over the world (we recently heard it sung by believers in Jerusalem for Easter, proof that it has already been adopted as a pilgrimage song). Once it leaves the Orthodox space, this melody takes on unnatural contours, unfit for tonality, with lyrics clumsily adapted to the English language, losing its ethos and the vibration of interiorized experience. The Prayer of the Heart by Paul Constantinescu is a model of cultured creation realized in the spiritual diatonic modality of church singing, of great depth of spiritual experience. We can thus reconstruct the evolution of this prayer from the intimate character, of individual singing haloed by the vibrations of the mind and heart, to the collective character of singing in the Church, with humility, piety or pathos. The last stage is represented by the musical creation, through which this prayer emerges from anonymity and conquers the concert hall, symbolically marking the transition from the inside to the outside, from hesychasm to community, communion and communication, from spiritual functionality to spectacular aesthetics (perhaps offering us a picture of the spirit of our current society).

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## THE PROSOMIA OF THE EIGHT MODES ACCORDING TO DIMITRIE CUNȚANU

DANIEL MOCANU<sup>1</sup> 

**SUMMARY.** The aim of the present study is to analyse the prosomia recorded in the ecclesiastical musical tradition of Transylvanian, based on the collection of „Cântări bisericești” (Church Hymns), published by Dimitrie Cunțanu in 1890 in Vienna. The collection represents a significant attempt to standardize the Orthodox liturgical singing of the Metropolis of Transylvania, aligning itself with similar efforts previously undertaken in Wallachia and Moldova. By means of a historical-musicological research method, the present study highlights the context of the emergence of these melodic variants, the characteristics of the included prosomia, as well as their impact on contemporary musical practice. Prosomia, introduced as melodic interpretation models for hymns lacking their own musical line, constitute a point of intersection between the Byzantine tradition and the influences of Transylvanian folk music. The research reveals the presence of varied modal structures, including diatonic and chromatic modes, with a limited ambitus, a predominance of syllabic rhythm, and modal adaptations specific to the Transylvanian cultural-religious context. These features initially facilitated the integration of the prosomia into the musical repertoire but were later affected by the lack of continuity in the musical training of church singers and the preference for oral transmission of the hymns. In this context, the analysis of cadential formulas and modal particularities highlights an attempt to harmonize the Byzantine tradition with the musical and social realities of the Orthodox communities in Transylvania. The study highlights the fact that, despite their historical and pedagogical importance, Cunțanu’s prosomia have been gradually marginalized, being preserved only in a few parishes in southern Transylvania. The causes of this decline in visibility can be attributed to the lack of specialized singers, the formulaic structures, and melodic lines, distinct from the traditional system of the eight ecclesiastical modes. Additionally, the lack of interest in institutional frameworks to support the continuity of the tradition of prosomia and the preference for adapting hymn texts to the melodic structures of the resurrection troparia contributed

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to their diminishing role. The present study provides a detailed insight into the process of adapting the Byzantine musical tradition in Transylvanian space and the dynamics between orality, local cultural influences, and efforts to standardize prosomia. The conclusions provide a basis for future research on the mechanisms of adaptation and transformation of ecclesiastical singing and contribute to the understanding of the evolutionary dynamics of liturgical music in Transylvania, as well as the potential for revitalization of this musical heritage with identity and cultural value.

**Keywords:** prosomia, ecclesiastical music, Dimitrie Cuțanu, Transylvania, orality.

In 1890, when Dimitrie Cuțanu published *Cântări Bisericești* in Vienna, the religious music in the Metropolis of Transylvania was only modestly aligning itself with the editorial projects initiated in the early 19th century in Wallachia and Moldavia. With a small number of pages and minimal content in terms of the essential hymns for the various religious services, the collection set out in linear notation a version that was intended to be normative for the entire region. In addition to the specific chants for Vespers, the Divine Liturgy and the Mass, the collection also included a series of chants, called prosomia, which were introduced to serve as melodic models for the chants that had no melody of their own. Of all the prosomia included in Cuțanu's collection, only a few remain in use today, and even those are preserved in only a handful of areas in Ardeal. Unlike other regions of Romania, where prosomia have become widely accepted as melodic models, they failed to establish themselves as a standard in Ardeal.

The present study aims to highlight those prosomia recorded by Cuțanu that have survived over time and are still in use today, as well as to describe their modal framework.

The aim of this endeavour is multiple. Firstly, to describe the historical context, which was the basis for the fixing in linear notation of the prosomia in the Transylvanian version. Secondly, to provide a general analysis of the musical structures of the prosomia. This aspect is particularly important because the modal structures of the prosomia recorded by Cuțanu differ significantly from those he used to construct the eight ecclesiastical modes. Thirdly, the study examines the prosomia preserved in the oral tradition today. The continued presence of certain prosomia in a few parishes in southern Transylvania demonstrates the dynamic transformations that have occurred over several decades, highlighting the modal structures and cadential formulas that have withstood the test of time and remained part of the chanting practice. Last but not least, the study aims to reintegrate into the active repertoire of Transylvanian chanters singing those prosomia that exhibit the most widespread variability, ensuring their continued use in contemporary liturgical practice.

Given the nature of this research, which intersects hymnography and musicology, we employ a dual methodology: one specific to liturgical theology and another specific to musical theology. From a hymnographic perspective, following the structuralist approach of Robert F. Taft<sup>2</sup>, we emphasize the role of prosomia as hymnographic models in liturgical chanting at the kliros.

As for the musical analysis of the theme, we will proceed to highlight the modal structures and the cadential system of the prosomia set by Dimitrie Cunțanu<sup>3</sup>, we will inventory the prosomia melodies collected by Professor Vasile Grăjdian in 2012 and we will make brief descriptions of their modal structure. The musical analysis model we propose is based on the analytical grids used by Victor Giuleanu<sup>4</sup>, Gheorghe Ciobanu<sup>5</sup>, Vasile Stanciu<sup>6</sup> and Maria Alexandru<sup>7</sup>.

### Terminological clarifications

The term *podobie* (prosomia) comes from the Slavonic (Подобѣва) *podobeva* - meaning pattern, norm. The lexeme *podobie* is synonymous with the Greek term (προσομοια) *prosomia* - similar, analogous. In both cases, the term is used to describe the troparion (troparion), stihira (sticheron), the hymn that is sung according to a specific melodic model<sup>8</sup>.

Within Byzantine religious poetry we cannot speak of a classical metric system. Whereas classical poetry was governed by the prose of metrical symmetry, where the metrical accent was dominant, Byzantine liturgical hymns followed a tonic rhythm, based on a stressed syllabic system.

<sup>2</sup> Taft, Robert. "The structural analysis of Liturgical Units: an essay in methodology", in: *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, Washington, D.C. 1984, pp. 187-203.

<sup>3</sup> A modal analysis of the church chants after Dimitrie Cunțanu was made in: Daniel Mocanu, "Stylistic features of church music after Dimitrie Cunțanu, a default typology", *Studia UBB Musica*, LXVIII, Special Issue 1, 2023, p. 225 – 260.

<sup>4</sup> Giuleanu, Victor. *Melodica bizantină. Studiu theoretic și morfologic al stilului modern neo-bizantin*, (*Byzantine Melodica. Theoretical and morphological study of the modern neo-Byzantine style*), Editura Muzicală, București, 1981.

<sup>5</sup> Ciobanu, Gheorghe. *Studii de etnomuzicologie și bizantinologie*, (*Studies in ethnomusicology and Byzantinology*) vol. I, Editura Muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor, București, 1974.

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<sup>7</sup> Alexandru, Maria and Tsougras, Costas. "On the Methodology of Structural Analysis in Byzantine and Classical Western Music - A Comparison", in: *Symposium "The Current State of Byzantine Musical Studies after 75 Years of MMB"*, Copenhagen, 17th (June 2006), pp. 1-19.

<sup>8</sup> Wellesz, Egon. *A history of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1998, p. 244; Petre Vintilescu, *Despre poezia imnografică din cărțile de ritual și cântarea bisericească*, (*On hymn poetry in ritual books and church chant*) Editura Partener, Galați, 2006, p. 113; W. Christ et M. Paraniakas, *Anthologia graeca carminum christianorum; adornaverunt*, 1871, p. LX. LXI, LXVIII.

In hymnographic poetry, vowel quantity - whether long or short - played no role. The tonic accent used in hymnography did not indicate the duration of syllables, their quantity, or timbre, but rather a rise in pitch, a melodic inflection in height. The stressed syllable was called oxytone (sharp), while unstressed syllables were referred to as grave. Tonic prosody did not consider vowel length but rather the special quality of pitch height and the degree of its sharpness<sup>9</sup>. The specificity of the Greek language played a crucial role in Byzantine prosody<sup>10</sup>.

In hymnographic poetry, the tonic accent followed strict and rigorous rules: it had to be positioned at the same interval in each stanza, matching exactly the number of syllables in the first stanza, which served as the model. This created a fixed rule - syllabic and accentual parity - ensuring that each stanza had the same number of syllables as the model stanza. Consequently, liturgical hymnography developed a syllabic system or syllabic meter, which ensured a tonic rhythm<sup>11</sup>.

Byzantine hymnographers resorted to this writing technique because they could create a hymn that could not be altered by the intrusions of wrong teachings, without altering the meaning and the entire structure. Not only was the melody fixed, but also the initial letters of each verse and all syllables were counted and set in place. This technique was intended to ensure that, when quoting Scripture, all its elements remained in the divinely intended order, without a single syllable being displaced. If needed, every article of the teaching of the faith, every acclamation of the martyrs, can become a stanza petrified into a song, without any outsider being able to introduce any extraneous element<sup>12</sup>.

If a hymnographer did not compose a new hirmos for the ode of a canon, they could use an older hirmos that had already gained popularity in liturgical practice. The subsequent troparia, centered on the theme of the canon, followed the metric and melodic model of the hirmos. The grammarian Theodosius of Alexandria describes this process: "To create a new poem, the hymnographer, after choosing a suitable hirmos for the subject, or composing one himself, then writes troparia that imitate the hirmos syllable by syllable and accent by accent, ensuring that the stressed syllables correspond to the accented beats in the melody".<sup>13</sup>

Thus, we can conclude that isosyllabia (syllabic equality) and homotonia (accentual alignment) are the two fundamental rules of Byzantine hymnography. These two principles alone were sufficient to give rhythm to religious poetry.

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<sup>9</sup> Bouvi, Edmond. *Poètes et mélodes : étude sur les origines du rythme tonique dans l'hymnographie de l'Église grecque*, Impr. Lafare frères, 1886, p. 97-98.

<sup>10</sup> Bouvi, Edmond. *Poètes et mélodes*, p. 349.

<sup>11</sup> Pitra, J.B. *Hymnographie de l'Église grecque*, Roma, 1867, p. 11-12.

<sup>12</sup> Pitra, J.B. *Hymnographie de l'Église grecque*, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Bouvi, Edmond. *Poètes et mélodes*, p. 355.

The principle of isosyllaby had already belonged to classical lyricism, being the fundamental principle, present throughout the centuries in choral poetry, characteristic of Dorian lyricism. The second principle, that of homotony, replaced classical prose based on the quantity of vowels. The transition from classical lyricism to the principles of Byzantine lyricism was gradual. "Prose became poetry, without having pretended so, and hymn composers became poets"<sup>14</sup>.

As the number of liturgical celebrations increased, hymn writers had to compose new hymns. These hymns needed to be set to simple, familiar rhythms that could be easily learned by congregations. Since they were used in worship and sung by both the kliros and the congregation, the variety of melodies had to remain limited. If too many melodies had been composed, it would have complicated the service, making it difficult to prepare a daily celebration with unique music. In such circumstances, hymnographers used hymns and rooted melodies as melodic models for new creations. This led to the emergence of three categories of hymnographic compositions: *idiomela*, *automela* and *prosomia*.

The ancient *meloidoi* (hymn composers) composed *hirmos*, *idiomela* and *automela* and the hymnographers focused on composing *psosomias* and *podobias*.

*Idiomela* and *automela* were composed as standalone hymns, each with its own melody. The key difference was that while *idiomela* were self-contained and not intended to be imitated, *automela* were specifically designed as models for *prosomia*. Instead, the *automela* serves as a model for other *troparia*. When composing a new *troparion*, the hymnographers started from the rhythms and melody of an older *troparion*, modelled it on an older *troparion* and imitated it in terms of isosyllaby and homotony.

Care was taken to maintain the same number of syllables and the same pattern of accents. This principle allowed new *troparia* to be easily sung to the melody of the *automelon*. The *troparia* that imitated an *automelon* were called *prosomia* (*podobii* in Romanian). In Orthodox liturgical books, the *troparia* have an indication at the front of the *troparia*, indicating the text with which the model *automela* begins, to indicate the melody to be sung.<sup>15</sup>

In the Greek musical tradition, for each ecclesiastical mode, there exist multiple *prosomia* serving as models for hymns found in liturgical books<sup>16</sup>. In the case of the hymns contained in the *Mineion*, *Triod* and *Pentecostarion*,

<sup>14</sup> Bouvi, Edmond. *Poètes et mélodes*, p. 273.

<sup>15</sup> Vintilescu, Petre. *Despre poezia imnografică* p. 113; W. Christ et M. Paranikas, *Anthologia graeca*, p. LX. LXI, LXVIII.

<sup>16</sup> Here you can find a complete overview of the ornaments used in the Greek musical tradition: <https://www.imkorinthou.org/keimena/misc/Prosomia.htm>



before the troparia and sticheres, we find a number of indications referring to the voice in which the hymn is to be sung and the prosomia/ prosody which serves as a model. In the Greek tradition we find this metrical and syllabic concordance between the model prosomia and the written hymn.

On the other hand, in the liturgical languages of other Orthodox Churches, such as Romanian, Slavonic, Serbian, Bulgarian, Georgian, this principle of strict metric alignment was lost due to the nature of translations. Hymns were often translated more freely, without preserving the homotonia (accentual alignment) and isosyllabia (syllabic parity) of the original texts. As a result, prosomia could no longer be applied precisely, as their melodic structures no longer matched the translated texts. This loss of structural symmetry forced church singers to improvise the melodic line of prosomia, trying to remain as faithful as possible to the original cadences.

### Prosomia in the Romanian Musical Tradition

From the 19th century onwards, we observe a pronounced interest on the part of psaltists and music teachers in the printing and distribution of books containing the prosomia of church chants<sup>17</sup>. This indicates that aligning with the Greek musical tradition was a clear objective among the pioneers of Romanian psaltic music. Generally speaking, analysing these collections of

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<sup>17</sup> *Irmologhiu sau Catavasier care cuprinde în sine toate irmoasele sau catavasiile sărbătorilor împărătești de peste an, troparele, condacele și exapostilarile.* (The *Irmologhion or Catavasier, which includes all the hirmos or catavasias of the royal feasts of the year, the troparion, Kontakion and exapostilarion*) Cuprinde și podobiile tuturor glasurilor, Binecuvântările și Slujba morților și altele. Traducător, editor și tipograf: Anton Pann. București, 1846; *Albina muzicală. Coprinzînd în sine tipurile cele mai uzitate ale Prosomiilor (Podobiilor) celor opt glasuri, făcute a se cînta întocma ca în grecește, și cîntări sărbătoreale din Triod, Pentecostar, Octoih și Minee, aplicate la tipuri întocma ca în grecește.* (The *Musical Bee. It contains in itself the most common types of the Prosomials (Podobials) of the eight-modes, made to be sung in the Greek form, and festive songs from the Triod, Pentecost, Octoih and Mineon, applied to the Greek form*) De Arhiereul Ghenadie fost Episcop de Argeș. Cu bine-cuvîntare Înalt Prea Sfințitului Arhi-Episcop și Mitropolit al Ungro-Vlahei, Primat al României și Președinte al Sfințitului Sinod D. D. Calinic Miclescu. București (Tip. Toma Teodorescu), 1875; *Podobiile, troparele Învierii, troparele și condacele praznicelor și sfinților mari.* (The *prosomia, resurrection troparion, troparion and Kontakion of feasts and saints*) Editor: I. Popescu Pasărea. București, 1904; *Podobiile, troparele Învierii și alte cîntări din Triod și Pentecostar.* Editor: I. Popescu Pasărea. București, 1921, 1925; *Podobiile celor 8 glasuri, (The prosomia of the eight modes)* după Anton Pann și cîntări din Triod și Pentecostar, precum și troparele și condacele sfinților și praznicelor. Editor: I. Popescu Pasărea. București, 1934; *Albina muzicală (podobiile celor opt glasuri și alte cîntări), de arhiereul Ghenadie Țeposu.* București, 1985; *Cîntările Sfintei Liturghii (Hymns of the Holy Liturgy)* (în dublă notație). Editor: Pr. Nicu Moldoveanu. București, 1991.

songs, in contrast to the collections of psaltic music in the Greek tradition, we note the reduced number of prosomia that the authors tried to disseminate among Romanian singers. In fact, we have selected those podobes that have the highest recurrence in Byzantine hymnography and present the most familiar and performed melodic patterns. The analysis of translated and Romanianized prosomia is not the object of this study. The problem is quite complex and will be the subject of future research.

For the purposes of this study, we will focus only on the prosomia that Dimitrie Cunțanu chose to include in his book of church hymns.

The second section of Dimitrie Cunțanu's *Cântări bisericești* (Church Hymns) is dedicated to the ecclesiastical prosomia. Describing how these hymns were gathered and selected, Cunțanu states: "I was indebted to the church for an important group of songs until 1884. They were the "Podobiile" By 1884, I still owed the Church an important group of hymns: the prosomia of the eight modes, which had been so neglected that even in our seminary they were no longer taught, and thus no one knew them, except in part. However, I wished to secure for the Church the right to these hymns, once widely used and even prescribed for divine service in our ritual books. So, after inquiring far and wide about who might still know the prosomia as our elders once sang them, I was directed to the cantor of our church in Daneș, in the protopresbyterial district of Sighișoara, a certain Simion Florea, an elderly singer who, according to his own account, had served the Church, both as a teacher and cantor, since 1837. After I invited him in writing, offering to cover his travel expenses to and from Sibiu, provide his meals, and compensate him with a daily allowance, he accepted my invitation and came to sing the prosomia for me. Thus, from June 5 to June 14, 1884, I wrote down the prosomia exactly as the cantor Simion Florea sang them for me. In this way, with the help of the Almighty, after long and painstaking work, accompanied by significant personal sacrifices, I was able to complete my collection of church hymns with models for all the melodies prescribed in the ritual books of our Holy Church"<sup>18</sup>.

### Who was Simeon Florea?

Simeon Florea (1818–1892) was born in the village of Daneș, where he spent his childhood and attended the local Orthodox confessional school. His education was directed toward a teaching career, following the professional

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<sup>18</sup> Popa, Pr. Valeriu. *Școala Ortodoxă Română de Cântăreți bisericești Dimitrie Cunțan din Sibiu, (Dimitrie Cunțan Romanian Orthodox School of Church Singers from Sibiu)*, Anuarul II, 1927, 1937-1947, Suceava, 1947p. 8-11.

formation model of the time. After completing his pedagogical training, he worked as a teacher in various Romanian confessional schools in the villages of Seleuş, Hoghilag, and Criş, near his hometown.

In addition to his teaching duties, he served as a church cantor in the Orthodox Parish of Daneş. According to his own testimony, he had direct collaboration with Dimitrie Cunţanu, a professor of church singing at the Andrei Şaguna Academy in Sibiu, highlighting his active involvement in the religious and cultural life of his era. Local accounts suggest that church singing was a lifelong passion for Simeon Florea, and he may have also had connections with Anton Pann<sup>19</sup>.

The prosomia collected by Cunţanu were later revised in the second edition of his collection by Professor Timotei Popovici, who removed certain hymns. Popovici observed that the relative standardization of Cunţanu's chant did not necessarily eliminate other oral variants of church singing that coexisted in Transylvania. Acknowledging this reality, in 1925, Timotei Popovici, together with Candid Popa and Aurel Popovici, sought to improve Cunţanu's book by introducing some alternative versions, likely drawn from oral tradition. They justified their project as follows: For the new edition to meet contemporary needs, it must undergo revision. This revision can be done in two ways: by upholding the melodies used in the archdiocese, but making the necessary corrections, or by applying the principle of unification of church chant. Thus, they recommended that the new edition be reprinted, subjecting the entire material to revision both in terms of melodies and the application of texts. Texts with melodies which in the course of time had proved practically useless because of their cumbersome structure should be adapted to melodies currently in use, as these are more suitable. The attempt of Timotei Popovici and his collaborators to update Cunţanu's collection was not well received at the time<sup>20</sup>, which seems to have discouraged other attempts - which would not have served, among other things, the tendencies of uniformity (of "unification") pursued by the ecclesiastical authority, both regionally and, later, nationally, tendencies to which Timotei Popovici also refers in passing, in the lines of the *Preface to the 1925 edition*<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Vichente, Dăngulea. "Simeon Florea, fost cântăreţ bisericesc la Biserica *Sfântul Nicolae* din Daneş", ("Simeon Florea, former church singer at St. Nicholas Church in Daneş") in: *Actualitatea Dăunăşeană*, iunie 2012, anul 1, nr. 3, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> As evidenced by the fact that the following editions of D. Cunţan's book, although published by T. Popovici (3rd edition in 1933 and 4th in 1944, also published in Sibiu), return to the initial version, that of the 1st edition, from 1890.

<sup>21</sup> *Cântările bisericesci după melodiile celor opt glasuri al sf. biserici ortodoxe culese, puse pe note si aranjate de Dimitrie Cunţanu, (Church chants after the melodies of the eight voices of the Holy Orthodox Church, collected, put on notes and arranged by Dimitrie Cunţanu)* Ediția a II-a, Sibiu, 1925.

Catalogue of the prosomia from the collection of songs compiled by Dimitrie Cunțanu and Timotei Popovici.

**Table 1**

<b>The Modes</b>	<b>Podobia 1st, 3rd, 4th edition after Cunțanu</b>	<b>2nd edition after Cunțanu, revised and added by Timotei Popovici</b>
I	Ceea ce ești bucuria (You who are the joy) Prea lăudaților mucenici (Most praised martyrs) Mormântul Tău (Your Tomb)	Ceea ce ești bucuria Prea lăudaților mucenici Mormântul Tău
II	Casa Eufratului (House of Euphrates) Când de pe lemn (When from the wood)	Când de pe lemn - 4
III	De frumuseștea fecioriei tale (Of the beauty of your virginity) Fecioara astăzi (The Virgin today)	De frumuseștea fecioriei tale - 4
IV	Ca pe un viteaz (Like a mighty warrior) Dat-ai semn (You have given a sign) Spăimântat-s-a Iosif (Joseph was amazed) Arătatute-ai astăzi (Show yourself today) Cela ce ești chemat (That which you are called)	Dat-ai semn
V	Cuvioase părinte (Venerable Father) Bucură-te cămară (Rejoice, oh, bridal chamber)	Bucură-te cămară
VI	Toată nădejdea (All our hope) Îngereștile puteri (The Angelic Powers)	Toată nădejdea Învierea Ta, Cristoase
VIII	O, prea mărită minune (Oh, too great a wonder) Pe înțelepciunea (On wisdom) Ce vă vom numi (How we will name you)	O, prea mărită minune

Timotei Popovici's collection contains fewer prosomia than the 1890 version. This is due to the fact that Popovici together with the other editors decided to promote only those melodic variants that were still in use. The revision and promotion of only some of the prosomia drew the attention of

the decision-makers at the level of the Metropolitan Synod, who considered that the proposed approach was detrimental to the standardisation and preservation of the Transylvanian musical tradition. Opposition to the new edition also came from church singers who were already familiar with a certain melodic structure fixed in linear notation. Although the tradition of singing by notes was not yet well established among church singers, with its emphasis on orality, they resisted the changes made by the new edition of 1925. This led to a new edition of the 1890 edition without additions or revisions. In this sense, Cunțanu's first edition remained a monument of church chant, hardened in the structures he had established at the end of the 19th century.

Considering the dynamics of the evolution of church music in Transylvania, strongly influenced by the pressure of oral tradition, we can say that the prosomia set by Cunțanu remained, with small exceptions, melodic models hardened in time, without having any connection with the way they were to be played over time.

### **Modal analysis of the prosomia**

From the outset we must state that it is necessary to make a series of observations regarding a possible classification of the prosomia, a classification of a provisional nature, but which has been outlined since the beginning of the analysis process, following the listening of the recordings made by Vasile Grajdian. Thus, it was quickly realised that some variants are very close, if not identical, to the version printed by Dimitrie Cunțanu, while others show a progressive accumulation of melodic-rhythmic and ornamental variations, reaching, in some cases, forms considerably different from the reference version represented by Cunțanu's edition. Many of them end up being sung on the structure of the resurrection troparion in the corresponding mode.

Concerning the comparative study of the recorded prosomia, we have encountered some problems related to the nature of orality. The framing of the oral version in a measurable system poses difficulties because of intonation, rhythm, which often falls into the *ad libitum* or *rubato* style, and ornamentation. Recognizing these transcription challenges, Professor Vasile Grăjdian proposed a methodological precaution: continually referencing the actual recordings. This (actual) recording is, after all, the most faithful frequency (and rhythmic, "temporal") transcription of sound reality, much more faithful than that provided by any of the "classical" notation systems<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> *Cântarea liturgică ortodoxă din sudul Transilvaniei: cântarea tradițională de strană în bisericile Arhiepiscopiei Sibiului (Orthodox Liturgical Chant in the South of Transylvania: traditional lectern chanting in the Sibiu Archdioceses)*, Vasile Grăjdian, Sorin Dobre, Corina Grecu, Iuliana Streza, Sibiu, Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu, 2007, p. 133.

The nature of the differences between the version established by Cunțanu and the one performed by various church singers is due to several considerations. Firstly, there is the lack of musical literacy. The lack of minimal musical literacy led to rote learning of melodic patterns which they later applied to various hymn texts.

Musical memory played a fundamental role in preserving and transmitting prosomia. Frequently repeated hymns were retained more easily, while less frequently used ones were adapted or forgotten<sup>23</sup>.

Music memory is suitable for songs that are frequently repeated in services<sup>24</sup>. For new, complex and rarely performed hymns, the liturgical singer has essentially two main options. The first and most accessible option is to adapt the liturgical text (such as that of a troparion) to an already familiar melody, which is considered suitable from both a musical and an expressive perspective. In this context, the cantor may use the melody of the prosomia specified for that hymn or, in the absence of knowledge of that prosomia, may interpret the text using the troparion form of the indicated voice. In such cases, the interpretation may be adjusted to more faithfully reflect the character of the liturgical text. At the same time, the melody may be subtly altered to emphasise the solemnity of the hymn, while maintaining stylistic coherence. This practice of musical adaptation is frequently found among singers in Ardeal, reflecting a flexible and contextualised approach to hymn interpretation in the Orthodox liturgical tradition<sup>25</sup>.

The second option for performing complex and rarely used hymns is to learn a system of musical notation and develop some solfege skills, even at a late stage or in a rudimentary form.

This synthesis between the oral tradition and the reading of the score contributes to a deeper and more flexible understanding of the musical text, allowing the performer to preserve the authentic character of the liturgical chant, but also to gradually integrate new musical elements. Thus, the process of musical learning does not involve a simple transition from orality to notation, but a complex and dynamic interaction that continues to

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<sup>23</sup> Wellesz, Egon. *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, ed.II, Oxford, 1961, p. 325 ș.u.: "the construction of melody in Byzantine church musică was based on the combination and linking together of a number of melodic formulas characteristic of the way (the voice) in which the song was composed. The mode (...) is not just a scale, but the sum of all the formulas that constitute the quality of an Eh". This definition is in line with that given by Chrysanthé de Madythe in her *Mega Teorêtikon tis mousikês* Trieste, 1832, p.198; v. și *ibid.* (E.Wellesz, *op.cit.*), p. 340.

<sup>24</sup> Grăjdian, Vasile. *Cântarea din sudul Transilvaniei, (Songs from southern Transylvania)* p. 134.

<sup>25</sup> Mocanu, Daniel. "The tradition of "cunțanu" church music between the orality and the uniformization trends", in: *Studia UBB Musica*, LXIV, 2019, 1, pp. 291 – 314.

shape the interpretation of Orthodox hymnography in the contemporary context<sup>26</sup>.

As for the prosomia found in Cunțanu's collection, we will only emphasise some essential aspects related to their modal and cadential structure, and a more in-depth examination of them will be the subject of future research. The study of these prosomia will allow a better understanding of the interpretative diversity existing in the Transylvanian tradition and will contribute to the consolidation of a broader perspective on the dynamics and evolution of church singing in this cultural space. In analysing each individual prosomia, we will consider the way in which the voice is structured, as well as the modal scale (and implicitly the gender), the functional modal gearing (specifying the place where the modal base and the modal dominant are located) and the cadence system.

### Modal analysis of the prosomia

The prosomia are in the irmologic style<sup>27</sup>, but some of them also present aspects of the peculiarities of the sticheraric style, which is characterised by slightly melismatic singing, with few vocalisations, with decent vocal prolongations that do not hinder the understanding of the text of the song. This style is played with a moderate movement and corresponds to the andante movement<sup>28</sup>. Another important aspect to be noted with regard to the modal scales is the numbering of the steps within them: according to a long-established practice, the steps are numbered with Arabic numerals for those above the modal base and with Roman numerals for those below the modal base, similar to the way they are treated in ethnomusicological studies<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Grăjdian, Vasile. *Cântarea din sudul Transilvaniei, (Songs from southern Transylvania)* p. 135.

<sup>27</sup> Is characterized by predominantly syllabic, unornamented singing, with few melismas and corresponds to the allegretto movement, with a lively, lively tempo, moving at a steady, steady speed. The irmologic style appears in two forms, the antiphon and the troparion.

<sup>28</sup> Styharic songs, in the unfolding of the melodic flow, develop, in a balanced way, some melismas. Melisms are the group of two to three or more sounds accompanying syllables. The syllables carrying melisma coincide with rhythmic (tonic) accents, because melisma emphasizes the importance of one syllable in the context of the others in the word. (Victor Giuleanu, *Melodica...*, p. 68; Mihaela Corduban, "Pasajele melismatice și rolul lor în muzica psaltică" ("Melismatic passages and their role in psaltic music"), in revista *Byzantion*, Academia de Arte George Enescu, vol.II, Iași, 1996, pp. 121-123).

<sup>29</sup> In other words, the base will be given the number 1, the other sounds will be notated: with Arabic numerals on the right, with Roman numerals on the left of the modal base, whatever it will be (Gheorghe Ciobanu, "Muzica bisericească la români, ("Romanian church music") pp. 188-189, nota 147; Elena Chircev, *Muzica românească de tradiție bizantină, (Romanian music in the Byzantine tradition)* p. 20, nota 1 și p. 39, nota 1).

### The modal scale of the prosomia in Mode 1

The prosomia in the first verse, “You who are the joy”; “Most Praised Martyrs” belong to the diatonic genre and use two musical scales.

The two prosomia use a modal scale<sup>30</sup> of minor mood, belonging to the Aeolic folk mode.

E. g. 1



The modal gearing is represented by the E4 sound which is the base of the prosomia and the A4 sound, 4th degree, dominant.

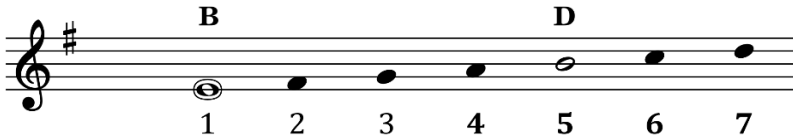
Final cadences (tonic): E4;

Perfect cadences: E4;

Imperfect cadences: A4.

“Most praised martyrs”

E. g. 2



The modal gearing is represented by the E4 sound, which is the base of the podoba and the E4 sound, the 4th degree, the dominant.

Final cadences (tonic): E4;

Perfect cadences E4;

Imperfect cadences: G4, B4.

<sup>30</sup> Modal sound systems are also functional systems, the sounds that make up a mode being differentiated and prioritized according to the role they play in the configuration of the mode. It should also be emphasized that the functions that sounds perform in modal structures are melodic in nature, being generated by their role in the modal melody, whereas in tonality, the functions of sounds are harmonic in nature, arising from the relationships of sounds on the harmonic plane (Giuleanu, Victor. *Tratat de teoria muzicii, (Treatise on music theory)* vol. 1, Editura Muzicală Grafoart, 2013, pp. 234-235).



The prosomia “Your Tomb” uses a natural musical scale of major state, belonging to the ionic mode. In the melodic unfolding, we find a modulatory process of passage from a major mode to a parallel mode or to the homonymous minor mode. The major-minor parallelism can be observed in the sections where the melody unfolds around the tonic (tonic) and the G4 sound is altered with the natural. The two modulatory passages change the melodic line and intervallic structure from the major mode of the ionic mode built on the E4 sound to the minor mode of the E4-based Aeolic mode.

**E. g. 3**



The modal framework is represented by the E4 sound, which is the base of the prosomia and the A4 sound, the 4th degree, the dominant.

Final cadences (tonic): E4;

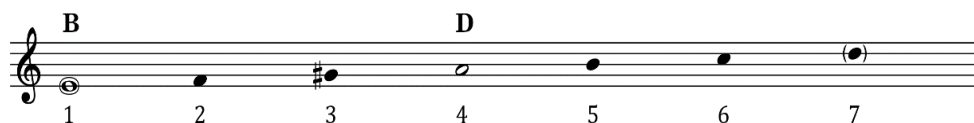
Perfect cadences on: E4;

Imperfect cadences: F4.

**The modal scale of the prosomia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> mode**

The prosomia “House of Euphrates” uses a chromatic musical scale with a base in E4, borrowed from the scale of the 6<sup>th</sup> modes, which, in the stycheraric version recorded by Dimitrie Cunțanu has a chromatic structure. The modal structure of the prosomia is similar to the version of the antiphon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> modes “I lift up my eyes to heaven” recorded by Dimitrie Cunțanu as a model of chant for the hymns written in this voice.

**E. g. 4**



The modal framework is represented by the E4 sound, which is the base of the prosomia and the A4 sound, the 4th degree, the dominant.

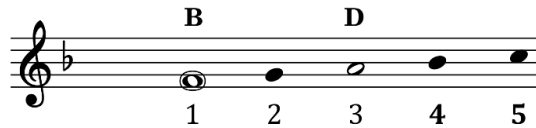
Final cadences (tonic): E4;

Perfect cadences on: E4;

Imperfect cadences: A4.

The prosomia “When From the Wood” uses a major-state musical scale, belonging to the ionic mode.

**E. g. 5**



The modal framework is represented by the F4 sound, which is the base of the prosomia and the A4 sound, the dominant 3rd degree.

Final cadences (tonic): F4;

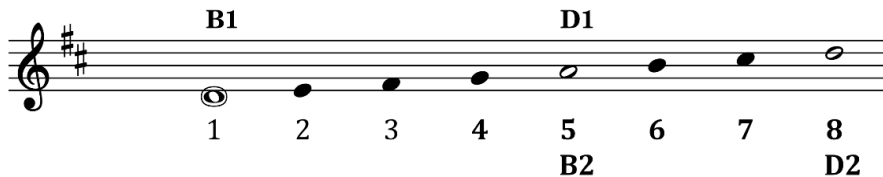
Perfect cadences on: F4;

Imperfect cadences: A4.

### The modal scale of the prosomia in the 3rd mode

The prosomia “Of the beauty of your virginity”, uses a scale with a main base on D4 and the dominant on A4, a secondary base on A4 and the dominant on D4, belonging to the major state ionic mode.

**E. g. 6**



Final cadences (tonic): D4;

Perfect cadences on: D4;

Imperfect cadences: A4.

The prosomia “The Virgin Today”, uses a double modal framework characterised by minor-major parallelism. The main base is on E4 and the dominant on G4, and the secondary base is on the A4 sound and the dominant on D4. In the melodic unfolding of the prosomia, the structure that stands out is the minor-state structure, based on the E4 sound.

**E. g. 7**

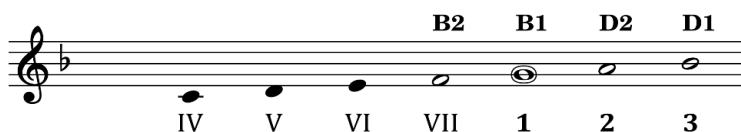


Final cadences D4;  
 Perfect cadences E4;  
 Imperfect cadences: G4.

**The modal scale of the prosomia in the 4th mode**

Prosomia “Like a mighty warrior” uses a double modal structure, characterised by minor-major parallelism.

**E. g. 8**



The modal structure is represented by the G4 sound which forms the main base of the prosomia and the B4 sound, the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree, the dominant. This structure is based on the natural Doric minor mode. The secondary base of the melody is built on the sound of F4, with the dominant on the sound of A4, and uses the scheme of the ionic mode. The weight of the melodic lines between the two minor-major structures is equal. At the end of the prosomia we find a modulatory passage, a Phrygian structure, with the second step lowered.

Final cadences (tonic): G4;  
 Perfect cadences G4;  
 Imperfect cadences: F4.

The prosomia “You have given a sign” uses a scale belonging to the aeolian minor mode. The modal framework is represented by the A4 sound which is the main base of the prosomia and the D4 sound, 4<sup>th</sup> degree, the dominant. The second base is built on the G4 sound, the dominant being the C4 sound, 3<sup>rd</sup> degree.

The characteristic of this structure is the minor second and the diminished fifth on the tonic. In the unfolding of the melodic line, the instability of the second step can be observed: B4 natural – B4 flat, which changes the structural character. It is the secondary base of the voice that is more emphasised.

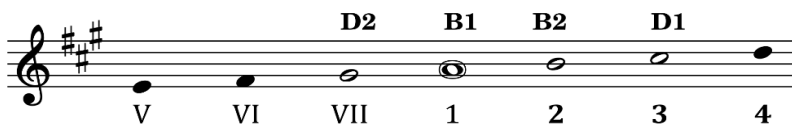
**E. g. 9**



Final cadences (tonic): A4;  
 Perfect cadences on: A4;  
 Imperfect cadences: G4.

The prosomia “Joseph was amazed” uses a scale characterised by the existence of a double modal structure. The main base is on the sound of A4 and the dominant on the sound of C4 and uses a scale belonging to the major state ionic mode. The secondary base is on the B4 sound and the dominant on the G4 sound. The secondary structure of the lute belongs to the doric minor mode. To this structure is added a modulatory inflection of a phrygic nature, the C4 sound being lowered.

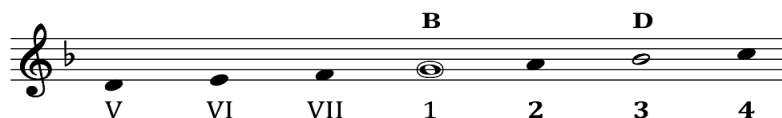
**E. g. 10**



Final cadences : A4;  
 Perfect cadences: A4;  
 Imperfect cadences: B4.

The prosomia “Show yourself today” uses a scale belonging to the Doric mode. The modal gear consists of the base on the G4 sound and the dominant on the B4 sound.

## E. g. 11



Final cadences (tonic): G4;

Perfect cadences on: G4;

Imperfect cadences: B4.

The prosomia “That which you are called” is made up of two superimposed modal microunits that act alternately in the unfolding of the melodic flow. So, we have a double modal framework.

The first and most common microunit is an Aeolian tetrachord, with the main base on the A4 sound (1st degree) and dominated by the C4 sound (3rd degree). In the ascending course, we observe the mobility of the 2nd degree (the B4 sound) through the ascending alteration of the B4 (B4 flat and B4 flat and B4 flat).

The second microunit is the G4 – B4 flat trichord, in which the secondary base is on the G4 sound (7th degree) and the dominant on the B flat sound (2nd degree).

This intervallic structure resembles the V scale, the irmologic, troparion form.

## E. g. 12



Final cadences: A4;

Perfect cadences A4;

Imperfect cadences: G4.

### The modal scale of the prosomia in the 5th mode

The prosomia “Venerable Father” uses a minor Aeolian scale, based on the G4 sound and dominant on the 3rd degree, the B4 sound.

E. g. 13



Final cadences: G4;  
 Perfect cadences G4;  
 Imperfect cadences: F4, D4.

The prosomia “Enjoy the pantry” has the same modal structure as the podobia “That which you are called”, which Dimitrie Cunțanu has placed in the fourth voice

### The modal scale of the prosomia in the 6th mode

The prosomia “All Our Hope” uses a double modal framework with two modal structures, one based in E4 and the other a minor third based in G4. The main structure in the melodic unfolding is the one based in E4, stretching within the limits of an Aeolian pentachord, of minor state.

The second structure, based in G4, unfolds within the confines of a major tetrachord. In the melodic course one can observe the alternation of the two layered modes, the major-minor parallelism.

E. g. 14



Final cadences (tonic): E4;  
 Perfect cadences: E4;  
 Imperfect cadences: G4, A4.

The prosomia “The Angelic Powers” uses a musical scale made up of a chromatic tetrachord (with the augmented/ frigic second). The base of the prosomia is on the D4 sound and the dominant on the G4 sound.

## E. g. 15



Final cadences (tonic): D4;  
 Perfect cadences on: D4;  
 Imperfect cadences: G4, C4.

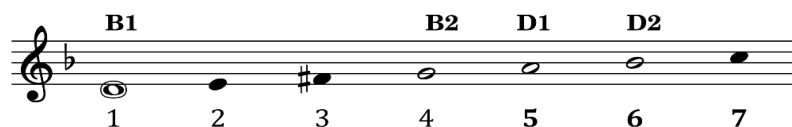
### The modal scale of the prosomia in the 8th mode

The prosomia “Oh, too great a wonder” is made up of two superimposed modal microunits that act alternately in the unfolding of the melodic flow. Thus, we have a double modal structure.

The first and most common microunit consists of a major-state mixolydian tetrachord, with the main base on the D4 sound (1st degree) and the dominant on the A4 sound (4th degree).

The second microunit is made up of the G4 – B4 flat minor trichord, in which the secondary base is on the G4 sound (7th degree) and the dominant on the B4 flat sound (2nd degree).

## E. g. 16



Final cadences (tonic): D4;  
 Perfect cadences on: D4;  
 Imperfect cadences: G4, A4.

The “On Wisdom” and “How we will name you” are distinguished by the presence of a single functional framework, consisting of a major-state, ionic pentachord. The base of the voice is on the sound of F4 and the dominant on the sound of C4.

## E. g. 17



Final cadences: F4;  
 Perfect cadences: F4;  
 Imperfect cadences: A4, B4, C4.

## **Synthesis of the analysis of Dimitrie Cuntanu's prosomia**

The prosomia noted by Dimitrie Cuntanu constitute a distinctive expression of the Orthodox liturgical musical tradition in Ardeal. The analysis of these prosomia reveals a series of specific musical features that differentiate them from other forms of church singing, but also a series of particularities that facilitate their use in church services by singers with minimal musical knowledge.

The modal systems of Dimitrie Cuntanu's prosomia are built on diatonic and chromatic modal bases close to those of the Transylvanian tradition of church chants and to those of Byzantine music. However, there is a Western tonal influence in general, and an influence of folk music in particular, through the use of modal structures reminiscent of Romanian folk modes.

The melodic-rhythmic structure of the prosomia is characterised by a clear melodicity, without an abundance of melisma, which facilitates intonation. The predominantly syllabic or lightly melismatic rhythm supports the understanding of the liturgical text, while at the same time enabling church singers to sing without major technical difficulties.

Another defining characteristic is the restricted ambitus of the songs, which rarely exceed the range of an octave. This deliberate limitation serves a twofold purpose: on the one hand, it ensures the accessibility of the chants for the church community, and on the other hand, it contributes to the preservation of a sober and balanced style, appropriate to the liturgical climate.

The musical phraseology in Cuntanu's prosomia presents a balanced structure, with clearly defined cadence points. These allow for a coherent articulation of the liturgical text, respecting the principle of unity between the music and the hymn text. The cadences are often of the authentic or plagal type, with the function of supporting the theological discourse.

Transylvanian folk music has left its mark on some melodic lines and certain intervallic structures in Cuntanu's prosomia. Particularly noteworthy is the specific way in which the intervals of thirds and fourths, characteristic of Romanian folklore from this region, are used. This aspect confers an autochthonous character to the songs and facilitates their recognition and assumption by the faithful.

A particular feature of Cuntanu's prosomia is the framing of some songs in other modal scales than those used for the setting of liturgical tone. This innovative approach suggests an intention to adapt the musical tradition to the musical and community realities of Ardeal.

The formulaic apparatus of the prosomia differs from that of the melodies of traditional ecclesiastical modes.



An intriguing aspect of Cuntanu's work is the absence of a specific prosomion for the 7th voice. This peculiarity raises questions about the criteria for the selection and structuring of the prosomia. Possible explanations could be related either to a difficulty in adapting the specificity of the 7th mode to the requirements of the Transylvanian community, or to an omission in the process of systematisation of the chants.

The prosomia that we find today in the oral tradition are few in number. From researching the archive of the priest Vasile Grăjdian, which contains thousands of recordings from 110 church singers from the area of the Metropolis of Transylvania, we found the following prosomia: "What Joy Thou Art" (1 variant), "Thy Sepulchre" (3 variants), "When on the Wood" (4 variants), "House of the Euphrates" (3 variants), "Of Beauty" (4 variants), "Thou Art Showing Thyself Today" (4 variants), "Like a valiant man" (4 variants), "As the mighty man" (4 variants), "O Joseph, O Joseph, O Joseph, O Joseph, O Joseph" (3 variants), "Rejoice in the pantry" (1 variant), "All hope" (1 variant), "O most blessed wonder" (2 variants)<sup>31</sup>.

Following the research of the prosomia recorded from church singers by Professor Vasile Grăjdian, we can outline some important aspects. First of all, the melodic and cadential structure of these songs shows significant changes compared to their original version, as recorded by Dimitrie Cuntanu. These changes can be explained by the strong influence of the oral tradition, which, in the absence of formal musical education and against a background of musical illiteracy, led to the adaptation of the melodies over time. At the same time, the lack of professional stranger singers has contributed to these variations, emphasising the natural process of transformation of melodic lines.

Another significant aspect is the small number of variants of the prosomia. This reality suggests that these songs were not consistently assimilated into the liturgical practice of singing in the kliros, remaining rather at the level of nineteenth-century musical testimonies. They did not become part of the musical practice, but rather maintained a marginal presence, without becoming an organic part of the church repertoire.

A relevant observation in this context is the closeness of the prosomia to the structure of the resurrection troparia, corresponding to the respective tones. This tendency could be interpreted as the result of a natural adaptation, specific to community musical practice, in which oral transmission favoured the simplification and standardisation of melodic lines according to the stronger models.

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<sup>31</sup> The recordings come from the project: 'Systematic research and valorization of the oral treasure of peal singing in the churches of the Archdiocese of Sibiu', carried out between 2002-2004.

However, in spite of these transformations, there are also some prosomia that have kept their melodic structure almost intact, remaining, by and large, faithful to the variants recorded by Dimitrie Cunțanu. Relevant examples are “Virgin today”, “Show yourself today” and “Beauty”. The persistence of these melodic lines could indicate a greater stability of these songs, either because of their popularity or because of their liturgical significance, which favoured their transmission in a form close to the original one.

The analysis of these poems reveals a complex musical landscape, in which the dynamics between oral tradition, the social context and the level of musical education of the singers have determined a specific evolution of the liturgical repertoire. The results of this research emphasise the importance of further studies in this area to better understand the mechanisms by which church music adapts and preserves itself over time, while reflecting the cultural and spiritual identity of the communities that practise it.

### **Why don't they sing the prosomia after Dimitrie Cuntanu today?**

Today, the prosomia composed and notated by Dimitrie Cuntanu can rarely be heard in the Orthodox churches of Ardeal, this phenomenon being determined by a series of historical, cultural and musical factors, which have decisively influenced the reception and integration of these songs into musical practice. In the following, we will highlight the main causes which, in our opinion, explain the absence of the prosomia in the current Transylvanian musical repertoire.

One of the major factors is the way these chants have been approached in theological training institutions. In theological seminaries and Orthodox theological faculties, the chapter on the prosomia has often been neglected or treated superficially. There are several reasons for this: firstly, the absence of these songs from the repertoire of church singers, which has meant that interest in them has been low. Secondly, the melodic structure of Cunțanu's prosomia is considered by many singers to be cumbersome and difficult to assimilate, due to the melodic-cadential formulae which differ from those found in chanting at the kliros in Transylvania. These formulas, although valuable from a musicological point of view, failed to be integrated into the musical repertoire. Thirdly, the singers' disinterest in singing according to the prosomia can also be explained by the fact that learning these melodic patterns requires additional effort, in a context in which many church chanters are self-taught and lack formal musical education.

Another determining factor is the desire to standardise church singing at national level. With the intensification of efforts to unify the Romanian Orthodox musical repertoire, the adoption of a common musical style based on

the Byzantine tradition was favoured. In this context, Cuntanu's prosomia, although representing an important part of the musical identity of the Transylvanian region, were perceived as a regional peculiarity that was difficult to harmonise with the general unification trends. Thus, the specific character of Transylvanian prosomia influenced as much by the Byzantine tradition as by Western tonal and local folkloric elements, failed to prevail against the influence of classical psaltic music, which gradually spread throughout the country.

Also, the melodic structure of Cuntanu's prosomia was an obstacle to their popularisation. These songs are built on modal scales different from those used in the known and present melodic formulae unaccustomed to those accustomed to the musical style specific to the Transylvanian tradition. The adaptation of these prosomia to Western linear notation, although intended to facilitate learning, created additional difficulties for singers trained exclusively orally. The lack of stable sound cues and the differences in structure from traditional singing led, over time, to the abandonment of this repertoire.

Another essential aspect is the discontinuity of the oral transmission of the prosomia. The oral tradition was, for centuries, the main means of preserving and perpetuating church singing in Transylvania. However, in the case of Cuntanu's prosomia, this mechanism did not work efficiently. The lack of specialised singers, as well as the absence of an organised system of teaching and learning these melodic patterns, meant that the prosomia were gradually forgotten. With the passage of time, even those that had survived in the collective memory underwent significant changes, being adapted to the pattern of the troparia.

In church chant in Ardeal, there was a generalised tendency to adapt the hymn texts to the melodies of the Resurrection troparia, corresponding to each liturgical mode, instead of using the melodies of the indicated prosomia. This practice, justified by the desire to facilitate the singing by using already familiar models, contributed directly to the decrease in the frequency with which Cuntanu's prosomia were used. Over time, this practice became generalised, becoming the norm in many parishes in Ardeal, which accentuated the process of forgetting the prosomia.

In conclusion, the gradual disappearance of Dimitrie Cuntanu's prosomia from Transylvanian musical practice reflects a complex combination of cultural, educational and functional factors. Their neglect in theological training institutions, the desire to standardise the singing on a national level, the difficulties generated by the specific melodic structure and the discontinuity of oral transmission led, over time, to a progressive marginalisation of this repertoire. This transition towards standardised liturgical singing has resulted in the loss of a valuable musical heritage which reflects the identity and cultural

particularities of the musical tradition of Transylvania. An in-depth study of these prosomia and the rediscovery of their musical value could, in the future, contribute to a better understanding and appreciation of the diversity and richness of church singing in this region.

## Conclusions

The study of the prosomia recorded by Dimitrie Cuntanu reflects a complex interaction between the Byzantine musical tradition, oral transmission, local folk influences, efforts of musical standardisation in Transylvania and the adoption of the Western linear notation system. This musicological approach represents a significant attempt to standardise liturgical chant in Ardeal, with the aim of establishing a unitary reference point for the musical interpretation of liturgical hymnography. However, the dynamics of orality and the tendencies to standardise exclusively the chants according to the system proposed by Cuntanu have gradually led to the marginalisation of these melodic models in current liturgical practice.

The analysis of the prosomia reveals a diversity of modal structures, including diatonic and chromatic modes, marked by obvious influences of Transylvanian folk music. The restricted ambitus, the predominance of syllabic rhythm and the adaptation of melodic formulae to the needs of less experienced church communities are essential features that initially facilitated the assimilation of prosomia in the Orthodox worship in Ardeal. However, the perpetuation of these models was compromised by the lack of continuity in the musical-liturgical training of new generations of church chanters, which led to a significant decrease in the frequency of the use of prosomia in liturgical practice.

A remarkable aspect of Dimitrie Cuntanu's collection is the absence of a prosomion dedicated to the 7th voice, which raises a series of questions related to the methodology used and the selection criteria applied. This musical lacuna gives rise to the hypothesis of a possible difficulty in adapting the particularities of this voice to the modal system promoted by the author or of a deliberate selection based on the liturgical relevance of the prosomia.

At the same time, the adaptations of the cadential formulas and the distinct formulaic apparatus highlight an attempt to harmonise the Byzantine tradition with the musical specificity of the Orthodox communities in Transylvania. These changes reflect a concern for contextualising liturgical chant according to local cultural and social realities, integrating melodic elements familiar to parish communities.

Cuntanu's prosomia constitute a reference material for Byzantine musicological and ethnomusicological research, providing insights into the interaction between local and ecclesiastical musical traditions. The study of these melodic patterns allows the identification of cultural influences and the processes of adaptation and transformation of Orthodox church music in Transylvania.

The prosomia recorded by Dimitrie Cuntanu are not just simple liturgical chant models, but represent a bridge between Byzantine tradition, Transylvanian cultural specificity and the need for musical accessibility for local Orthodox communities. Their importance lies in preserving and reflecting the regional musical identity, facilitating the process of learning and applying them in church services, and providing researchers with a valuable tool for analysing the evolutionary dynamics of Transylvanian liturgical music.

Nowadays, only a few prosomia from Cuntanu's collection are still in use, especially in the parishes of southern Transylvania. Their persistence in certain areas attests to their cultural and musical-liturgical value, emphasising the need for a re-evaluation of this tradition in the current context of peal practice. The present study provides a solid basis for future research, with a view to elucidating the mechanisms that determined the structural transformations of the prosomia and to assessing the possibility of revitalising this musical heritage of liturgical and cultural importance.

*Translated from Romanian by Angelica Marcu*

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## A FRAMEWORK FOR THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MUSIC THEORY TEXTBOOKS

ÁDÁM MIKE<sup>1</sup> 

**SUMMARY.** This study proposes a novel framework for the comparative analysis of music theory textbooks, with particular focus on harmony instruction in Hungarian secondary-level music education. The research addresses a critical gap in both national and international scholarship: despite the acknowledged pedagogical importance of textbooks, no comprehensive comparative analysis exists that evaluates their structural and didactic dimensions within the discipline of music theory. Drawing from Ágnes Dárdai's influential work in textbook analysis, the study adapts her comparative methodology to meet the specific demands of music pedagogy. The analysis is structured into three methodological phases: macrostructural examination, microstructural analysis of selected chapters, and evaluation of thematic coherence with particular attention to the treatment of chords borrowed from the parallel minor. This framework contributes to the evolving discourse on textbook theory, curricular alignment, and the role of disciplinary specificity in educational materials.

**Keywords:** comparative textbook analysis, music theory education, Hungarian music theory textbooks

### Introductory thoughts

The successful process of teaching and learning, and the realization of educational objectives, depends not only on the personality and professional preparedness of the teacher, but also on the use of appropriate textbooks. The use of well-chosen textbooks – those with outstanding professional quality and content tailored to the specific age group – lays the foundation for the high-level performance in theoretical music subjects. At the outset of our research,

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we formulated a key question: among the music theory textbooks currently in use in Hungary, which are the most suitable for supporting the acquisition of intermediate-level music theory knowledge? Which textbooks are most coherent with the national curriculum, and which offer content, structure, and methodological apparatus best aligned with a modern, musically grounded approach to music theory education?

In order to achieve a deeper understanding and analysis, it is essential to examine the five music theory textbooks currently in use. These are as follows: Lőrinc Kesztyer: *Összhangzattan* (Harmony, 1928, 1952); György Ligeti: *Klasszikus összhangzattan* (Classical Harmony, 1954, 2014), and *A klasszikus harmóniarend* (The Classical Harmonic System, 1956, 2015); Oszkár Frank: *Hangzó zeneelmélet* (Sounding Music Theory, 1990, originally published as *A funkciós zene harmónia- és formavilága*, [The Harmonic and Formal World of Functional Music], 1973); István Györffy – Tamás Beischer-Matyó – Nóra Keresztes: *Klasszikus összhangzattan* (Classical Harmony, 2009); Zsolt Gárdonyi – Hubert Nordhoff: *Összhang és tonalitás* (Harmony and Tonality, 2012).

These works are best examined using the comparative method, one of the three recognized approaches in textbook analysis, alongside the individual and group methods.<sup>2</sup>

In this study, we attempt to develop a set of criteria suitable for the comparative analysis of music theory textbooks. This is a necessary endeavor, as to our knowledge, no scientifically grounded comparative study of music theory textbooks has been undertaken either in Hungary or internationally. While the widely accepted analytical framework developed by Ágnes Dárdai – based on international research – is a valuable reference, it is only partially applicable to music textbooks.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, there is a clear need to construct a specific framework tailored to the analysis of music theory textbooks.

### **A Brief History of Textbook Research**

In the learning process, the textbook serves as the learner's companion and is the primary source for acquiring new knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Based on content orientation, textbooks can be categorized as curriculum-aligned, knowledge-transmitting, activity-based (workbook), teacher's guides, test

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<sup>2</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *A tankönyvkutatás alapjai (Foundations of Textbook Research)*. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. „Tankönyvelemzési modellek a nemzetközi tankönyvkutatásban (Textbook Analysis Models in International Textbook Research).” *Iskolakultúra*, 9(4), 1999. pp. 44–53.

<sup>4</sup> Báthory, Zoltán & Falus, István. (Eds.) *Pedagógiai Lexikon – III. kötet (Pedagogical Encyclopedia – Volume III)*. Keraban Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1997.

books, or anthologies. According to their target audience, three main types are distinguished: textbooks for dual use (students and teachers), for students only, or exclusively for teachers.<sup>5</sup> In line with the requirements of modern pedagogy, textbooks must meet high standards in terms of content, structure, and presentation. A high-quality textbook is logically structured, its content aligns with the curriculum, is professionally impeccable, features a well-designed didactic apparatus, and is both aesthetically pleasing and user-friendly.<sup>6</sup>

International textbook research, aimed at textbook analysis, has a history dating back almost 150 years.<sup>7</sup> Areas of textbook studies include textbook criticism, textbook evaluation, textbook methodology, textbook history, textbook pedagogy, textbook theory, and textbook analysis.<sup>8</sup> This history can be divided into four periods: the first and longest spans from the early 19th century until the end of World War I, followed by three significantly shorter periods – the interwar years, the post-World War II era until 1980, and from 1980 to the present.<sup>9</sup>

Interest in textbook content emerged in the early 19th century during peace movements, as scholars recognized that textbooks often included content beyond disciplinary knowledge that could influence students' value systems. The first phase of textbook research thus aimed to identify, correct, and filter such content.<sup>10</sup> The first major textbook revision conference took place in Paris in 1889, where participants declared that textbooks could serve as sources of hatred. They called for the removal of false statements – particularly those relating to war propaganda – aligned with pacifist principles.<sup>11</sup>

Although World War I interrupted these efforts, the movement resumed and strengthened in later decades. A 1949 report noted: "The lack of mutual understanding and the prevalence of hatred among nations can largely be attributed to the nationalism nurtured in textbooks."<sup>12</sup> During the interwar period, educators' unions in several European countries identified and

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<sup>5</sup> Benedek, András. *Oktatáselméleti kérdések a szakképzésben (Theoretical Questions of Education in Vocational Training)*. Műszaki Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Nagy, Sándor. *Az oktatáselmélet alapkérdései (Fundamental Questions of the Theory of Education)*. Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *A tankönyvkutatás alapjai (Foundations of Textbook Research)*. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Dala, Mária. „A tankönyv és hatása (The Textbook and Its Impact).” *Tankönyvelméleti tanulmányok*, edited by János Tibor Karlovitz, Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986. pp. 20–49.

<sup>9</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>11</sup> Diestel, Suse-Marei. „Die internationale Schulbuchverbesserung – Ein Beitrag zur Konfliktforschung (International Textbook Improvement – A Contribution to Conflict Research).” *Beiträge zur Konfliktforschung*, 5(1), 1971. pp. 56–100.

<sup>12</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *op. cit.* p. 26.

advocated against problematic textbooks. In France and Germany, some were withdrawn from circulation. In 1919, the "Union of the North" was founded to foster understanding among Scandinavian countries – Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and later Iceland and Finland. The League of Nations also joined the textbook revision movement. The International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC), also founded in 1919, began reviewing member states' textbooks and opposed the inclusion of false or misleading information.<sup>13</sup>

Following World War II, UNESCO and later the Council of Europe continued the revision efforts initiated by the League of Nations. UNESCO emphasized the importance of factual accuracy in textbooks, recognizing their role as mass communication tools contributing to mutual understanding among peoples.<sup>14</sup> During this time, the idea of international textbook comparison emerged, as a means to examine how nations represented themselves and others. Several comparative and contrastive studies – mostly in Germany and focusing on history textbooks – were conducted during the 1950s.<sup>15</sup> The leading institution was the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, led by Georg Eckert. To foster textbook harmonization, international conferences were held in 1947, 1950, and 1951.<sup>16</sup>

Until the late 1970s, textbook research primarily focused on revision and harmonization. While the GEIIS conducted other forms of research as well, a more diverse and expansive approach to textbook studies began in the 1980s.<sup>17</sup> Jeismann formulated the guiding principles of the new era of textbook theory in 1979, emphasizing that international textbook research must evolve beyond marginal corrections and root itself in the dynamic developments of scientific disciplines.<sup>18</sup> He outlined a conceptual framework for modern textbook theory characterized by: scientific rigor, practice-orientation, interdisciplinary competence, and multidimensional methodological skills.

In Hungary, textbook research began in the late 1960s. Until the turn of the millennium, only three comprehensive scholarly works were published in this field – by Ágnes Szokolszky, Tibor Csík, and Katalin Varga. In addition, a number of shorter papers and journal articles were published.<sup>19</sup> A breakthrough came with the work of Ágnes Dárdai, who not only provided a detailed account of

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<sup>13</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *A tankönyvkutatás alapjai (Foundations of Textbook Research)*. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Johnsen, Einar Broch. *Textbooks in the Kaleidoscope*. Høgskolen, Oslo, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. „Az összehasonlító tankönyvkutatás nemzetközi tapasztalatai (International Experiences in Comparative Textbook Research).” In *Educatio*, 9(3), 2000. pp. 498–508.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*. p. 501.

<sup>19</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *A tankönyvkutatás alapjai (Foundations of Textbook Research)*. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest, 2002.

the history of textbook research in Hungary and abroad, but also introduced analytical methods and models, presenting the potential of comparative textbook analysis through a comprehensive case study.

Today, textbook research is institutionalized, with university departments and research institutes worldwide specializing in the study, analysis, and comparison of educational textbooks.

### Methods of Textbook Analysis

One significant area of textbook theory that gained prominence in the 1980s is textbook analysis. Ludwig Meyers was the first to categorize textbook analysis methods in his 1973 work *Zur Problematik der Analyse von Schulgeschichtsbüchern*. In this publication, he distinguished between three types of textbook analysis: individual analysis, group analysis, and comparative analysis. He also identified three primary analytical approaches: descriptive-hermeneutic analysis, quantitative content analysis, and qualitative content analysis.<sup>20</sup>

The descriptive-hermeneutic method regards the textbook as a historical document and employs an analytical approach similar to source criticism.<sup>21</sup> This includes an examination of the textbook's origin, the circumstances of its creation, the background of the author, and a critical assessment of its content.<sup>22</sup> Among quantitative methods, volume analysis and frequency analysis are particularly emphasized, although valence analysis and contingency analysis are also commonly used. These methods produce verifiable data, thereby balancing the subjectivity often associated with descriptive approaches.

In addition to these, the qualitative content analysis plays an essential role in textbook analysis. This method involves a microstructural breakdown of the textbook and an in-depth examination of specific sections to determine the nature and extent to which particular content elements are represented. In contemporary scholarship, it is widely accepted that no single method should dominate textbook analysis. Instead, an integrative approach combining descriptive, quantitative, and qualitative methods is recommended for a comprehensive and balanced evaluation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Meyers, Ludwig. „Zur Problematik der Analyse von Schulgeschichtsbüchern (On the Problems of Analyzing School History Textbooks).” *Gesichte, Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 12(1), 1973. pp. 722–739.

<sup>21</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *A tankönyvkutatás alapjai (Foundations of Textbook Research)*. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Kéri, Katalin. *Bevezetés a neveléstörténeti kutatások módszertanába (Introduction to the Methodology of Educational History Research)*. Műszaki Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *op. cit.*

## The Textbooks and Their Authors to Be Examined

In the spring of 2021, we conducted a survey among music theory teachers working in Hungarian secondary-level music conservatories, focusing on their textbook usage practices. The participating educators identified five primary textbooks in use. Below is a brief overview of these works and their authors.

Lőrinc Kesztyer (1892–1978) was a composer and music theory teacher, a student of Zoltán Kodály. He taught at the National Music School and its successor, the Bartók Béla Secondary School of Music.<sup>24</sup> His most recognized work, *Harmony – The Theory of Classical Music Harmony*, published in 1928, was once used in every secondary-level music education institution across Hungary and is still in use in some places today. Based on a mechanical, non-aural training approach, the book was likely influenced by Rischbieter's often-referenced work, reflecting strong German pedagogical influence. Kesztyer's textbook is highly detailed, well-structured, and segmented. It provides a reliable foundation for beginners to learn harmony, even without teacher guidance, thanks to its outstanding didactic structure and clear language.<sup>25</sup> While it emphasizes the importance of aural development, it includes only limited examples of real musical contexts for the harmonic phenomena it presents. This lack of musical excerpts is the book's most significant shortcoming, despite its division into 28 chapters and 34 lessons.

György Ligeti (1923–2006), the world-renowned Hungarian composer, ethnomusicologist, and music theory teacher, emigrated to Germany and later Austria after 1956. A student of Ferenc Farkas and Sándor Veress, he taught at the Liszt Academy between 1950 and 1956.<sup>26</sup> During this period, he authored two textbooks: *Classical Harmony* and *The Classical Harmonic System*. Originally published in 1954 and 1956, they were banned following Ligeti's emigration but reissued in 2014 and 2015. The books support the learning of harmony from the Bach-to-Beethoven period, offering concise explanations of key rules, numerous excerpts from classical works, exercises, and aural training materials.<sup>27</sup> He references the methods of Leo Weiner, Pál

<sup>24</sup> Boronkay, Antal. (Ed.) *Brockhaus Riemann Zenei Lexikon (Brockhaus Riemann Music Encyclopedia)*. Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1984.

<sup>25</sup> Sárosi-Szabó, Márta. „A zenei elméleti tárgyak iskolarendszerű tanításának múltja Magyarországon (The past of school-based teaching of music theory subjects in Hungary).” In *Zenepedagógiai kutatások – A zeneoktatás megújuló módszertana*, edited by Judit Váradi, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen, 2019. pp. 139–174.

<sup>26</sup> Steinitz, Richard. *Ligeti György – A képzelet zenéje (György Ligeti – The Music of Imagination)*. Editio Musica, Budapest, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Ligeti, György. *Klasszikus összhangzattan (Classical Harmony)*. Editio Musica, Budapest, 2014. p. 5.

Járdányi, and Lajos Bárdos. Though well received upon first release, the books' practical use was effectively nullified by their decades-long suppression.

Oszkár Frank (1922–2019) was a composer and music theory educator, having taught at the Miskolc Secondary School of Music, the Juhász Gyula Teacher Training College in Szeged, and the Liszt Academy.<sup>28</sup> Author of numerous college lecture notes, harmony and form textbooks, and theoretical writings,<sup>29</sup> his 1973 textbook *The Harmonic and Formal World of Functional Music* served as the basis for *Sounding Music Theory* (1990). The latter introduced a reformist approach: it presents harmonic principles through real musical examples, ordered by frequency and typical occurrence. Musical excerpts were not only shown in score but also included as audio examples on cassette. Among the textbooks examined, this one aligns most closely with the official secondary-level music theory curriculum—perhaps unsurprisingly, as Frank himself authored the 1997 version of the curriculum published by the Ministry of Education.

István Győrffy (b. 1954) is a composer and music theory teacher who, after studying composition in Moscow, began teaching at the Pécs Secondary School of Arts and currently teaches at the University of Pécs, Faculty of Music.<sup>30</sup> In addition to his compositions, he has authored several theoretical writings, teaching aids, and books – most notably *Classical Harmony* (2009). In writing this textbook, Győrffy was assisted by two of his former students: music theorist and teacher Nóra Keresztes and composer-theorist Tamás Beischer-Matyó. The book's structure and pedagogical approach are closely related to Frank's work. In the preface, Győrffy explicitly acknowledges the influence of his former teachers, Oszkár Frank and Éva B. Sípos.<sup>31</sup> Among the textbooks studied, this one offers the most diverse use of Viennese Classical sources, including numerous quotations from Beethoven's theoretical notes and Mozart's Attwood Studies.

Zsolt Gárdonyi (b. 1946) is a Hungarian-born composer, organist, and music theory educator living in Germany. He is a professor at the Hochschule für Musik in Würzburg and a former student of Ferenc Farkas.<sup>32</sup> His most important contribution to music theory pedagogy is *Harmony and Tonality* –

<sup>28</sup> Boronkay, Antal. (Ed.) *Brockhaus Riemann Zenei Lexikon (Brockhaus Riemann Music Encyclopedia)*. Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1984.

<sup>29</sup> Szendi, Ágnes (Ed.) „Frank Oszkár köszöntése közelgő 95. születésnapja alkalmából (Celebrating Oszkár Frank on the Occasion of His Upcoming 95th Birthday).” In *Parlando*, 59(3), 2017. n.p.

<sup>30</sup> Bence, Gábor & Gálos, Miklós. *Korárelőjátékok az Evangélikus Énekeskönyv énekeihez (Chorale Preludes for the Hymns of the Lutheran Hymnal)*. Magyarországi Evangélikus Egyház Luther Kiadója, Budapest, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Győrffy, István; Beischer-Matyó, Tamás & Keresztes, Nóra. *Klasszikus összhangzattan (Classical Harmony)*. Rózsavölgyi és Társa, Budapest, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Gárdonyi, Zsolt. *Életrajz (Biography)*. 2020. [http://www.gardonyi.de/vita\\_zsg\\_ma.html](http://www.gardonyi.de/vita_zsg_ma.html)

*Stylistic Features in the History of Harmony*, first published in Hungarian in 2012, translated by Boglárka Terray. The book was co-authored by Hubert Nordhoff. Gárdonyi's textbook stands out in several respects. Its first German edition was published in 1989 by Möslers Verlag in Wolfenbüttel. Another major difference is its broader chronological scope: it covers not only classical functional harmony but also late-Romantic harmonic phenomena that deviate from traditional function theory. Owing to the complexity of its language, depth of analysis, and high level of scholarly rigor, the book is more suitable for use in higher education or as a teacher's manual than as a secondary school textbook. Within secondary education, it may be appropriate for use by advanced students specializing in music theory.

An important and noteworthy observation is that all the textbook authors discussed hold degrees in composition and have remained active as composers while teaching music theory. As noted earlier, historically, the teaching of music theory was often the responsibility of composers. This dual expertise suggests a strong interdisciplinary link between music theory and composition.

### **Comparative Framework for Music Theory Textbooks**

In her seminal work *The Foundations of Textbook Research* (2002), Ágnes Dárdai presents a detailed case study based on the comparative analysis of Austrian, German, Swiss, and Hungarian history textbooks. The working tables she developed and applied during this research laid the groundwork for subsequent comparative textbook analyses in Hungary. However, her system of criteria must often be revised, updated, and adapted to the specific disciplinary context in which it is applied. This also applies to the analysis of music theory textbooks, with the added difficulty that, to our knowledge, no similar study has yet been conducted either in Hungary or internationally.

Therefore, it is justified to develop a new framework for the comparative analysis of music theory textbooks—specifically those dealing with harmony—based on the widely accepted criteria and working tables established by Dárdai (2002), but adapted to the unique characteristics of this field.

As mentioned earlier, among the five textbooks selected for our study, none covers counterpoint, and only one—Oszkár Frank's work—includes material on musical form. Thus, the only element that can be uniformly compared across all five is the treatment of harmony. The analysis framework we propose is divided into three main categories. The first phase involves macrostructural analysis, which aims to understand the textbooks as a whole, focusing on their overall organization and structural components, followed by the in-depth examination of a selected chapter. In the second phase, we analyze the structural elements within that chapter—specifically the main text

and the didactic apparatus. The third phase focuses on the thematic and content-related emphasis, and the internal coherence of these focal areas within each textbook.

**Table 1**

Elements	Data	Measurement /per textbook
Total length		Number of pages
Length excluding appendices		Number of pages
Appendices		Number of pages
Table of contents		+ clear - cluttered
Preface, introduction		+ present - absent
Glossary		+ present - absent
Bibliography		+ present - absent
List of musical scores		+ present - absent
Exercise book		+ present - absent
Answer key		+ present - absent
Number of chapters/lessons		Quantity (count)
Period of cited musical works		Year (form-to)
Year of first edition		Year
Year of edition examined		Year

**Analysis of the Structure of the Music Theory Textbook  
(Source: Based on Dárdai, 2002 – edited by the author)**

The first analytical table focuses on understanding the general structure of the textbooks, examining their length, segmentation, and the number and types of appendices. Dárdai's (2002) originally proposed template was adapted and expanded to address the specific features of music theory textbooks. These additions include specialized appendices such as musical score indexes, collections of examples, corresponding answer keys, and the inclusion of the dates of composition for the cited musical works. This last element is particularly important, as it allows for an assessment of which musical periods and harmonic practices the textbook covers. We also added the year of original publication, and the edition year of the copy analyzed. Knowing the publication date is essential; for instance, Lőrinc Kesztyer's textbook, originally published in 1928, underwent significant revision by the author in 1952.<sup>33</sup> The editions currently in circulation are reprints of the 1952 version, and it is likely that the 1928 edition is no longer in use. For this reason, we focused our analysis on the 1952 edition.

<sup>33</sup> Sárosi-Szabó, Márta. „A zenei elméleti tárgyak iskolarendszerű tanításának múltja Magyarországon (The past of school-based teaching of music theory subjects in Hungary).” *Zenepedagógiai kutatások – A zeneoktatás megújuló módszertana*, edited by Judit Váradi, Debrecen, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, 2019. pp. 139–174.



After assessing the overall structure of each textbook, we proceeded to examine their content units. We defined eight professionally grounded and clearly distinguishable analytical categories, which can be further divided into subtopics. Following the foundational chapters on diatonic triads and seventh chords, we identified the primary groups of altered chords—such as the Neapolitan sixth, secondary dominants, minor mode chords, and augmented sixth chords. Furthermore, we introduced two essential categories: one for miscellaneous chords, and another for non-harmonic topics in harmony instruction. The latter includes theoretical concepts that lie beyond standard chord progressions, such as suspensions and modulations. Each of the textbooks we analyzed contains elements that extend beyond the curriculum-mandated material, illustrating additional harmonic phenomena not universally covered but pedagogically relevant.

**Table 2**

Elements		Data	Measurement /per textbook
Foundational Knowledge	Basic concepts		Page; 1,2,3 <i>(1: separate chapter; 2: subchapter; 3: integrated in multiple places)</i>
	Primary triads		Page; 1,2,3
	Secondary triads		Page; 1,2,3
	Secondary sixth chords		Page; 1,2,3
	Primary sixth chords		Page; 1,2,3
	One six-four		Page; 1,2,3
Diatonic Seventh Chords	Dominant seventh		Page; 1,2,3
	Inversions of dominant seventh		Page; 1,2,3
	Seventh chord on the seventh scale degree and its inversions		Page; 1,2,3
	Other seventh chords		Page; 1,2,3
	Seventh chord sequences		Page; 1,2,3
Neapolitan sixth			Page; 1,2,3
Secondary Dominants	Dominant of the dominant		Page; 1,2,3
	Secondary dominants		Page; 1,2,3
	Diminished triads		Page; 1,2,3
	Diminished seventh chords		Page; 1,2,3
Borrowed chords from the parallel minor	Minor subdominant		Page; 1,2,3
	Minor tonic		Page; 1,2,3
	Minor dominant		Page; 1,2,3
Augmented sixth chords			Page; 1,2,3
Other harmonies			Page; 1,2,3
Harmony-related knowledge beyond chord structures			Page; 1,2,3

**Structure of the Content Units of the Music Theory Textbook  
(Source: Based on Dárdai, 2002 – edited by the author)**

The earliest music theory curricula granted teachers considerable freedom in determining the order in which chords were to be taught. It was not until 1980 that the Ministry of Education published *The Curriculum for Education and Instruction in Secondary-Level Music Schools*, which specified which chords and chord progressions should be learned in which academic year. However, even at that point, no mandatory sequence was established. Among the textbooks analyzed, there are significant differences in structure and in the sequence of content units. This can be attributed, on the one hand, to the relatively late and superficial nature of official curricular regulation, and on the other, to the pragmatic orientation of the textbook authors—all of whom were (or still are) practicing music theory teachers and composers. As such, their works reflect their own tried-and-tested pedagogical methods and instructional sequences. An interesting observation is that Keszler’s textbook was published 24 years before the official launch of Hungary’s secondary-level music education program, while Ligeti’s book predates the 1952 educational reform by only two years.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the content, structure, and didactic elements of these textbooks, an analytic approach is required. In conducting macrostructural analyses, subcategories must be defined.<sup>34</sup> These subcategories are derived from the main elements of the second analytical table, which we may also refer to as thematic units. The following section introduces the analytical criteria developed for the subcategory titled “Borrowed chords from the parallel minor”. This subcategory can be further divided, in terms of content, into three thematic elements: Subdominants in minor, Tonic chords in minor, Dominant chords in minor. Each of these elements is examined based on three key parameters: the extent of their treatment (volume), their proportional weight within the chapter, and their degree of independence from other material. (Table 3.)

**Table 3**

Elements		Data	Measurement/ Borrowed chords from the parallel minor Chapter
Minor Subdominants	Extent		Pages
	Proportion within the chords in minor keys chapter		%
	Degree of separation		1: separate chapter; 2: subchapter; 3: integrated in multiple places
Minor Tonic	Extent		Pages
	Proportion within the chords in minor keys chapter		%
	Degree of separation		1,2,3

<sup>34</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *A tankönyvkutatás alapjai (Foundations of Textbook Research)*. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest, 2002.

Elements		Data	Measurement/ Borrowed chords from the parallel minor Chapter
Minor Dominant	Extent		Pages
	Proportion within the chords in minor keys chapter		%
	Degree of separation		1,2,3

**Structure of the Chapter(s) on Borrowed chords from the parallel minor and Their Thematic Units  
(Source: Based on Dárdai, 2002 – edited by the author)**

Using Table 4, the examination of the structural elements and the didactic apparatus of the given subcategory can be conducted. The length of the text and the quantity of illustrations can be easily analyzed.<sup>35</sup> However, mapping the quality of the didactic apparatus is considerably more challenging, as its assessment is subjective and cannot be examined through exact methods. This depends on factors such as the consideration of age-specific characteristics, the diversity of motivational tools and illustrations, the nature of questions and tasks, as well as the language and style of the writing.<sup>36</sup> All of these aspects constitute criteria for the learnability of the textbook.

**Table 4**

Elements		Page	Quantity	
Main text length	Introduction			
	Explanatory text			
	Summary			
	Total			
Didactic apparatus	Sources			
	Questions, exercises			
	Tables			
	Musical notation examples	Musical excerpts Practice examples		
	Total			
Empty spaces				
Total length of the thematic unit				

**Structural Elements and Didactic Apparatus of the Chapter(s) on Borrowed chords from the parallel minor and Their Thematic Units  
(Source: Based on Dárdai, 2002 – edited by the author)**

<sup>35</sup> Dárdai, Ágnes. *A tankönyvkutatás alapjai (Foundations of Textbook Research)*. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest, 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Kaposi, József. „A tankönyv szerepének változásai (Changes in the Role of the Textbook).” *Válogatott tanulmányok II.*, edited by József Kaposi, Szaktudás Kiadó, Budapest, 2015. pp. 113–132.

The last two tables are worktables for the third phase of the investigation, which assist in analyzing the content-related and thematic focal points and their interrelations. The chapter on „Borrowed chords from the parallel minor” is divided into content units and subunits. The members of the chord family, distinguishable according to their functions — the minor subdominants, minor tonics, and minor dominants — constitute the content units. The harmonies belonging to this form the content subunits. First, the elaboration of the units and subunits is measured, that is, the amount of information the author provides about the given harmonies. (Table 5.)

**Table 5**

Degree of Elaboration	Minor Subdominant				Minor Tonic		Minor Dominant	
	IV	IV <sup>6</sup>	II <sup>6</sup>	II <sup>7</sup> and its inversions	VI	I	VII <sup>7</sup>	V <sup>9</sup>
Detailed, differentiated								
Brief, incomplete								
Sporadic, undifferentiated								

**Elaboration of the Content Focal Points of the Chapter(s) on Borrowed chords from the parallel minor and Their Thematic Units  
(Source: Based on Dárdai, 2002 – edited by the author)**

Finally, the number of illustrations associated with the given subunits constitutes the examined area. Two categories were established. The category of textual illustrations includes the presentation of rules and explanations, while the category of musical notation examples comprises specific excerpts from musical works and practice examples written by the textbook author. (Table 6.)

**Table 6**

Illustrations (Quantity)		Minor subdominant				Minor tonic		Minor dominant	
		IV	IV <sup>6</sup>	II <sup>6</sup>	II <sup>7</sup> and its inversions	VI	I	VII <sup>7</sup>	V <sup>9</sup>
Textual									
Notation	Musical excerpts								
	Practice examples								

**Number of Illustrations Corresponding to the Content Focal Points of the Chapter(s) on Borrowed chords from the Parallel Minor and Their Thematic Units  
(Source: Based on Dárdai, 2002 – edited by the author)**

*Translated from Hungarian by Edit Nagy*

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## THE POSSIBILITIES OF UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE PLATFORMS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

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**SUMMARY.** The digital native generations have unique media consumption and learning behaviours shaped by their daily exposure to technology. The social media platforms, in particular Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, are key channels through which younger users can discover music and access some educational content. These platforms can not only be used for entertainment, but can also provide opportunities for informal and formal music education. Classical music is frequently featured in memes and viral trends, increasing its accessibility and relevance for younger audiences. Particularly, certain elements of social media platforms are particularly effective in integrating music education through visual and interactive content. Through customised, interactive lessons, educators can harness learners' knowledge of digital tools to deepen musical knowledge and stimulate interest, as well as increase motivation and promote inclusion. Age-appropriate and socially relevant tasks can bridge the generation gap in education. To be inclusive and effective in music education, it is essential that teaching methods are adapted to evolving digital habits.

**Keywords:** social media, music education, digital generation

Generation Z is about to enter high school, and some of Generation Alpha are already in school, so while online platforms are constantly changing, we already have some idea of their consumption habits on which to base our new

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ideas. According to Zsolt Körmendy, “In order to tailor our inclusive education and music education activities to the receptive skills, attitudes, and habits of the target groups, we need to know them.”<sup>3</sup>

McCrinkle defines the next generation, the Beta generation, as those born between 2025 and 2039, and predicts that by 2035 this group will make up 16% of the world population.<sup>4</sup> He defines the next generation in roughly 15-year increments, but the unpredictability of history makes it unnecessary to look that far ahead. McCrinkle also makes the point that “The times, technologies and social events that we live through shape us all but are more defining for those experiencing them in their formative years.”<sup>5</sup> However, it can be predicted with relative certainty that „Generation Beta will be a technologically integrated generation, as well as a curious one, one that values diversity, and embraces change and difference”.<sup>6</sup>

### Using social media in our time

In an article by Nadine Koutsou-Wehling<sup>7</sup>, based on the eCommerceDB 2022 survey, the Alpha generation aged 12 to 15, use social media platforms are the third most frequently used by members of the Alpha generation to discover new music, after looking at funny posts and memes. The survey was conducted with 13 and 15-year-olds who were asked about the social networking sites they visited over a one week period. The results show that 74% of Generation Alpha respondents use Instagram, while 70% of the respondents use TikTok, while Facebook is in third place with 62%<sup>8</sup> (Figure 1).

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<sup>3</sup> Körmendy, Zsolt. *Koncertpedagógia, a Befogadóvá Nevelés Alternatív Útja. (Concert-Pedagogy, as an Alternative Path of Reception-centered Education)* 2015. Eötvös Loránd University, PhD dissertation. *ELTE.EDIT*, <http://hdl.handle.net/10831/32860> p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> “Generation Beta Defined.” *McCrindle*, 2024, [mccrinkle.com.au/article/generation-beta-defined/](http://mccrinkle.com.au/article/generation-beta-defined/). [Accessed 9 April 2024]

<sup>5</sup> “The Generations Defined.” *McCrindle*, 3 Dec. 2024, [mccrinkle.com.au/article/topic/demographics/the-generations-defined/](http://mccrinkle.com.au/article/topic/demographics/the-generations-defined/). [Accessed 8 March 2025]

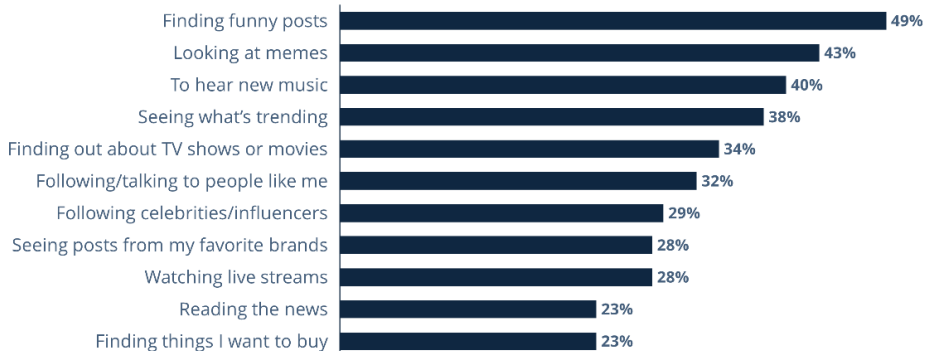
<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Koutsou-Wehling, Nadine. “Gen Alpha: Age Range, Social Media & Online Shopping Trends .” *ECDB.Com*, 12 June 2024, [ecommercedb.com/insights/gen-alpha-age-range-meaning-what-marketers-need-to-know-about-the-new-consumer/4747](http://ecommercedb.com/insights/gen-alpha-age-range-meaning-what-marketers-need-to-know-about-the-new-consumer/4747). [Accessed 10 April 2024]

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

**Figure 1**

**TOP REASONS GEN ALPHA USERS CITE FOR ENGAGING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, 2022**



Notes: "What are your main reasons for using social media?", GWI Kids survey in 16 markets. Base: n= 9,908 respondents aged 12-15 who identify as social media users.  
Sources: GWI.

**ECDB**

**Responses of 12-15 year olds to the question about what they use social media for<sup>9</sup>**

According to an analysis of 2024 social media usage on DataReportal, the most visited sites worldwide by 16-24 year olds are social media platforms, music content sites are in fifth place. Among the age groups shown, they are the most frequent users of music content.<sup>10</sup> However, data on younger generations can often be misleading, as the load of a platform age to register, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat, those under 13 would not officially appear, but age verification is easy to circumvent, it is practically a matter of conscience.

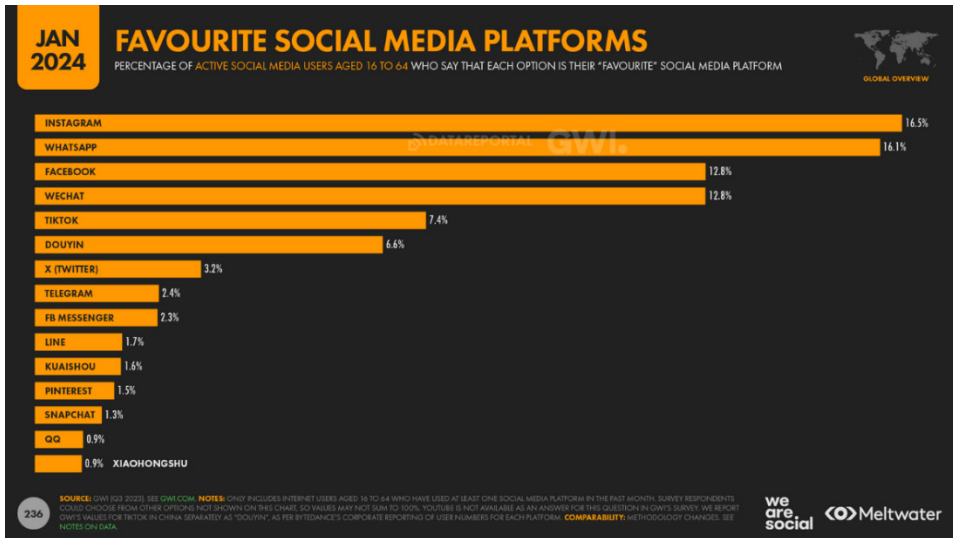
For the 16 to 64 age group, the most popular social media platform among global Internet users, according to the above analysis, is Instagram<sup>11</sup> (Figure 2). Based on these data, it can be assumed that Instagram could be a potentially useful platform for the connection of generations, as both students and teachers fall into this age group.

<sup>9</sup> source: <https://ecommercedb.com/insights/gen-alpha-age-range-meaning-what-marketers-need-to-know-about-the-new-consumer/4747>

<sup>10</sup> Kemp, Simon. "Digital 2024: Global Overview Report - DataReportal – Global Digital Insights." *DataReportal*, DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, 23 Mar. 2025, [datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report](https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report). [Accessed 9 April 2024]

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Figure 2



**Most popular social media sites in 2024 for the 16-64 age group<sup>12</sup>  
 Social media presence of the younger age group**

There are many social media sites and apps that people use to chat, post comments, share pictures, connect with friends, or even play games. Parents and educators also have different views on the age at which children are ready to create their own social media accounts. There is increasing pressure on the secondary school age group to be connected online but the world of social media is not without its dangers. Since anyone can post and share different types of content, videos, pictures, ideas, advice, opinions, the social media, they may be exposed to inappropriate content and patterns of behaviour, which they need to be prepared for. Moreover, as the Internet also provides a kind of facelessness, they may say or do things that they would be less likely to do offline, in real life, including excessive sharing. This facelessness also means that it is easy to fake profiles, which can lead to abuse. Whether or not a child is ready to use social media sites can be influenced by their age, developmental stage, and maturity, which can affect their ability to have a safe and positive experience and make appropriate choices.<sup>13</sup> The solution to these is not to ban them, as the world of the internet is now fully part of everyday life, so the right way forward is to make people aware of the dangers and prevent problematic situations.

<sup>12</sup> source: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overviewreport>

<sup>13</sup> "Is Your Child Ready for Social Media?" *CEOP Education*, [www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/articles/is-my-child-ready-for-social-media/](http://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/articles/is-my-child-ready-for-social-media/). [Accessed 14 April 2024]

The registration age mentioned above, generally older than 13 years, was introduced due to data protection laws, since online services cannot collect or store personal data of children under 13. When considering a child's access to social networks, parents should consider whether the child's current social and emotional skills and their maturity makes them capable of coping with the pressures of social networks use, the risks, the emotional impact, the unpredictable nature of social networks use, and whether it can be used responsibly.<sup>14</sup>

## Facebook

The Facebook platform is definitely worth mentioning as one of the first global social media platforms. With over 20 years of existence and, of course, its ease of use, most age groups are represented on the site with a personal profile. Facebook as a learning platform is also a matter of mixed opinion, but Kárpáti, in a study on the use of social media in education, highlights that Facebook for learning purposes can enhance social life in real life, as well as in the online space, and can be seen as a digital learning tool that can increase active participation and motivation of learners, thus it can be an important tool for informal learning.<sup>15</sup>

The 2012 study mentions among the possibilities the creation of a separate teacher profile, different closed or open groups for a class to share important information about a subject or a project.<sup>16</sup> Not necessarily class communities, but in the field of common interests, professions, hobbies, there are many possibilities to create a group. "Community of practice" groups exist where people can share professional advice, experiences, upcoming events, pictures, videos, and memes. However, the 13-17 age group only accounts for about 2.9% of Facebook users<sup>17</sup>, so this platform is not the most suitable for reaching the younger age group.

## TikTok

One of the popular platforms for sharing short music videos is TikTok, which content also transfers to other social media platforms. However, in

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Kárpáti, Andrea, et al. "Közösségi Média Az Oktatásban – Facebook-Esettanulmányok" (*Social Media in Education – Facebook Case Studies*) *Iskolakultúra*, vol. 22, no. 10, 1 Oct. 2012, pp. 11–42.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Facebook Statistics You Need to Know in 2024." *Herd Digital*, 28 Feb. 2024, [herd.digital/blog/facebook-statistics-2022/](https://herd.digital/blog/facebook-statistics-2022/). [Accessed 14 April 2024]

terms of the issues surrounding social media use, such as content control and protection of personal and sensitive data, TikTok is one of the more dangerous and less secure platforms, and is therefore not yet the most suitable platform for the younger age group.

Fears about TikTok data collection have led to legislation in several countries, in India, Nepal, and Pakistan, for example, a complete ban has been imposed. In Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Taiwan, Belgium, Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands and the United States, government employees are banned from using the app on their government devices, in France all government employees are banned from using the platform in all government departments, and employees of EU decision-making bodies are recommended not to use the app, even on their own devices. The United States has for several years raised and is negotiating the full ban.<sup>18</sup> After a few hour-long shutdown in January 2025, the app has been brought back and there are still ongoing negotiations about the future of TikTok in the United States.

## Instagram

Instagram is the social media platform with the highest usage among 13-64-year-olds, according to the data mentioned earlier.<sup>19</sup> The platform is more or less based on visuality, sharing photos and videos. For the videos we want to share, we can choose music from a music library, similar to the way early silent films were shown.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, music manuals were provided to accompany films in which, for a particular scene, mood, or situation, musicians could draw up a few musical examples that could be used. Instagram's music selection works in a similar way. The algorithm generates recommendations for you, and you can choose from popular tunes and browse by genre, but also by mood, event or situation. In many cases, the results include classical quotations.

The most commonly used classical quotation for scary themes is Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, which was not originally related to any eerie topic, but started to be used in this context in various films. The work is also used on organ or other instrumentation in several horror films, one of the first examples

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<sup>18</sup> Papp, Attila. "Karnyújtásnyira Került a TikTok Betiltása AZ Egyesült Államokban." (*TikTok is within reach of being banned in the United States*) 24. Hu, 8 Apr. 2024, 24.hu/kulfold/2024/04/07/tiktok-betiltas-egyedul-allamok-kina/. [Accessed 14 April 2024]

<sup>19</sup> Kemp, Simon. "Digital 2024: Global Overview Report - DataReportal – Global Digital Insights." *DataReportal*, DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, 23 Mar. 2025, datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report. [Accessed 9 April 2024]

being the 1931 Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the overture to Rossini's *William Tell* is widely associated with horseback riding and cowboys, and may even be a representation of haste and hurry. If we are engaged in some satisfying, precise, but even completely unnecessary activity that is still fun for some reason, then Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* is the perfect choice. Of course, trends come and go, and popular music is represented in a higher percentage, but in our opinion, classical music quotes are more timeless, so generational differences are not as much of a problem. A survey commissioned by the British Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in 2022 showed that 87% of children in the UK encounter orchestral music in their daily lives, but are more likely to do so at home than at school, with film music taking first place, the next most popular way to listen to orchestral music is on YouTube and other social networking sites.<sup>21</sup>

On social media platforms, including Instagram, content creators, known as influencers, can have a big impact on consumers. The personality of the content creator is a defining factor and can be used to build communities. A social media personality can capture the interest of young people and influence their tastes. The displayed content may also include educational materials that may shed light on interesting facts. This could include the aforementioned examples of the origins of the classical music quotations mentioned earlier, outlining interesting facts in music history, or quotations in popular music.

Such a meme-like revelation has recently been made about Beyoncé's new album *Cowboy Carter*. In the song *Daughter*, the singer quotes the 1783 aria *Caro mio ben*, which has made it familiar to the layman. Similarly, Lady Gaga used the fugue in B-flat minor from Bach's *Wohltemperiertes Klavier*, Volume I, 1722 for her 2008 song *Bad Romance*, and the *Prelude in F minor* from Volume II, 1744, is the basis for the 2004 song *They* from Jem. Such entertaining introductions can also stimulate interest and encourage the reception of the original works.

Some music institutions, orchestras, and concert halls also have social media, but also musicians and music educators are represented on the platforms. Among the content displayed are short videos with features that can help with listening development. These include features that have opportunities to practice pitch spacing, triads, and rhythm examples. There are several profiles on the platform that produce this type of content. Among the features are response selection options, so that a tapped or clapped rhythm can be selected from the options provided. In a similar way, you can also use the feature to recognise

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<sup>20</sup> Hall, Sophia Alexandra. "What Makes J.S. Bach's Toccata in D Minor so Terrifying?" *Classic FM*, 27 Oct. 2021, [www.classicfm.com/composers/bach/why-toccata-d-minor-so-terrifying/](http://www.classicfm.com/composers/bach/why-toccata-d-minor-so-terrifying/). [Accessed 14 April 2024]

<sup>21</sup> Hall, Sophia Alexandra. "Research Says Orchestral Music Is More Popular on Social Media than in Schools – Tiktok Star Cody Fry Explains Why." *Classic FM*, 16 July 2022, [www.classicfm.com/discover-music/music-education/cody-fry-tik-tok/](http://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/music-education/cody-fry-tik-tok/). [Accessed 14 April 2024]

a chord, feature or interval being played, even asking for the pitch of a single note in a series of multiple notes. For posts, the tagging or hashtags can help to browse similar topics.

The previously mentioned memes and funny viral content also appear on the interface, which can make recognition easier and learning more feel at ease, and even encourage and inspire some people to create their own content. According to Szűts (2018), “virality is the process by which a piece of information (text, image, sound, video) gets maximum exposure for the size of the potential audience over a short period of time, while spread by a large number of users who voluntarily choose to share it.”<sup>22</sup> And memes are “an idea, a concept, a unit of thought that is meaningful in itself, which person-to-person through the mediation of culture and Internet communication channels.”<sup>23</sup>

Memes are usually short-lived, as they are mainly based on current events, but in many cases they can also be related to specific themes or subcultures.<sup>24</sup> In the context of music history, music literature or even music theory, such content occurs, often related to a particular composer or instrument. Fans of Chopin or even those who do not like Wagner can find content profiles, but pianists or violinists can also discover sites where specific features, problems, and characteristics of their profession are discussed.

## YouTube

Although YouTube is not a classic social media platform, it is a great place to create communities. Music and music education institutions and orchestras have YouTube channels, so we can watch live or recorded concerts, and the site also has a music streaming function.

The youngest generation, as reported by parents, is using this platform the most frequently. Millennial parents prefer this platform due to the YouTube Kids content separator feature, which allows children as young as a few years old to become consumers.<sup>25</sup> It is no coincidence that the first of YouTube’s highest-viewing videos to date at the time of writing is a song for children, Baby Shark, which was uploaded seven years ago, has 14 billion views, and 50% of the top ten videos are content for children.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Szűts, Zoltán. *Online - Az Internetes Kommunikáció És Média Története, Elmélete És Jelenségei. (Online. The History, Theory, and Phenomenon of Internet Communication and Media)* Wolters Kluwer Hungary Kft., 2018. p. 232

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 394

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> “The Top 15 Social Media Platforms Gen Alpha Uses.” *YPulse*, 15 Feb. 2023, <https://www.ypulse.com/article/2023/02/15/the-top-15-social-media-platforms-gen-alpha-uses/>. [Accessed 14 April 2024]

<sup>26</sup> “Most Viewed Videos of All Time.” *YouTube*, 2024, [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLlraQAtI\\_h2r5g8xGajEwdXd3x1sZh8hC](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLlraQAtI_h2r5g8xGajEwdXd3x1sZh8hC). [Accessed 14 April 2024]

As a video sharing platform, YouTube can be used to consume both longer and shorter content, including e-learning content, as well as entertainment and educational material. Educating people to be receptive to classical music coupled with visuals is certainly not a new idea. If we talk about classical music and visuals as a means of reception, we might think of Disney's 1940 animated film *Fantasia*, in which Walt Disney, with the help of Leopold Stokowski and Deems Taylor, wanted to bring classical music to the general public through animation.<sup>27</sup> I believe that a similar idea, adapted to the present day, can be implemented through the YouTube platform.

There is, of course, content of this kind on the video-sharing portal, but in Hungarian language, and their quality does not necessarily make them suitable for the generation growing up in the digital age. At the same time, the right visual content may be appropriate to educate people to be receptive. YouTube on the Learning Project platform offers a very wide range of video content. "From literature to nuclear physics, from popular culture to the history of the antique literacy, learning materials are available on a wide horizon. In this way, it is practically one of the world's largest free multimedia libraries for educational purposes".<sup>28</sup>

The Classics Explained channel, which produces animated content in English, features videos between 10 and 20 minutes, each featuring a classical music work. The videos discuss the composer, the creation of the work, its content, its characters, music theory, orchestration, and its afterlife, all presented in a professional, yet humorous and accessible way. Due to the duration of the videos, of course, not complete works are performed, but the relevant musical excerpt is always heard during the storytelling.

The possibilities are, indeed, inherent in the nature of online platforms and social media, the features change and expand from day to day, so that there is a constant flow of new and different features, therefore we must strive to be constantly keep up to date. Music streaming services can also be used for browsing, but these are more targeted, direct searches.

### **Ideas to implicate social media in music education**

In our view, inclusion of some elements of the possibilities offered by social media in music education can aroused interest of students, and incorporation of elements of online opportunities can improve their motivation for the subject and their receptive skills. However, it is important to introduce

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<sup>27</sup> *The Fantasia Legacy: The Concert Feature*. Directed by Jeff Kurtti, Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2000.

<sup>28</sup> Szűts, Zoltán. *A Digitális Pedagógia Elmélete. (The theory of digital pedagogy)* Akadémiai Kiadó., 2020. p.124.



age-appropriate options into the lessons, which can greatly contribute to the deeper understanding of the topic.

The younger, upper-grade age group, i.e. children around 10–14 years old, are already at home in the world of technological devices, and the implementation of such methods can strengthen their motivation to master the subject. Above-mentioned educational YouTube videos, or perhaps self-made videos, can deepen the absorption by involving visuality. In order to capture the mood and content of individual music listening elements, students can even create their own mood images or short videos, thus giving their own story and content presented in the form of a video clip or short film to the pieces they have learned. It is also possible to reverse the method, meaning that music can be selected from a number of music options to match the perceived mood of a video segment or image.

In the case of operas, the age group can create a key scene in the online space, similar to online construction games, and create the characters. Tasks can be created based on the model of online escape rooms, whose difficulty can be tailored to the given age group and adapted to the current curriculum. Rhythm formulas, functions or melodies linked to numbers, years, melody fragments, maps, symbols can be used in a variety of ways, and multi-path tasks can also be created. The tasks may even include rhythm exercises and musical details that require real reproduction in an interactive way, such as the exact repetition of a rhythm, singing a given pitch or a short melody fragment, which are also trends on social media platforms. During the tasks, individual or collective solutions can be required, so that communication and social skills and mutual attention can be developed in the case of a joint solution.

The above-mentioned methods can also be applied to the 14-16 year old age group. In their case, however, a greater musical literacy can be assumed, and they can then choose a musical excerpt for which they make videos. In the case of program music works, a short, summary similar to the trailers used to announce films can be made using a similar method, in which case the essential musical themes of the piece are also summarized, so that an abbreviated, condensed version can be made from it, which also develops the students' knowledge of format. Presumably, most of the 14–16 year old age group already has their own social media profiles, enabling them to search for musical excerpts themselves, their own favorite, and even include popular music materials among the options.

For this age group, more complex abstract thinking-requiring tasks can be created for online escape rooms, but students can also create simpler paths of their own within the framework of individual or group tasks in project work. Within the framework of project work, the age group may even create their own songs using given musical excerpts and given tracks. The previously

mentioned memes can also color the subject and serve as motivation. In the case of a video or image-based meme, a subject requires background knowledge, implying knowledge of the subject is assumed, and thus the students feel “initiated”, which can serve as motivation for acquiring further knowledge and creating their own memes.

## Overall

The learning mechanisms and information processing of Generation Z, Alpha, and the next Beta generation are completely different from previous generations due to digitalisation. On-line platforms and social media sites are part of their lives and identities, and the Internet is their primary source of information. Graphic representation, the emphasis on imagery, is a complete paradigm shift in the way of thinking and processing information, but also in the way we process learning, which we must adapt to. Short micro-contents are based on visuality, but they also have musical trends related to different moods and emotions, situations, including many classical music quotations. This awareness and use of these classical music can become more popular and to promote an inclusive education.

The last decades of education have seen the emergence of various digital and on-line opportunities, which can be applied, but without the constant vigilance and training of teachers, generational differences make it increasingly difficult for teachers and students to connect and understand each other. Accelerated technological development means that digital methodological elements need to be constantly updated in order to approach students’ everyday use of technology, and social media platforms play an important role in this.

There are of course dangers associated with being on social networks, but by clarifying these, preparing for these situations, and providing appropriate education and prevention for the younger generation, problematic situations can be prevented and identified. With good quality content or elements of content that are familiar to the age group, we could practice rhythm, interval, triad, and function recognition in a simple way that suits the generation, and we could convey works of musical literature and interesting facts about music history, thus helping education and fostering receptiveness.

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## EXPLORING LEARNING AND UNLEARNING (II): EFFECTIVE STUDY METHODS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE OF PROFESSIONAL SINGERS

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**SUMMARY.** Education today no longer means just memorizing information and mastering technical procedures. Education today means exploring and discovering as many things as possible from diverse fields that can shed new light on your own field of interest. Education is more creative today, and is now accessible worldwide, just a click away. But discernment in choosing the valuable paths and what we do with the extensive information we acquire; the power to create a coherent structure, the adaptability and the energy to combine training with a broad vision – these are skills that will make the difference in education. *The future belongs to those who will never stop learning*<sup>2</sup> - this modern mindset is like a *motto* for my articles on *learning and unlearning*. This article attempts to outline why individual study is a necessity for singers as it has always been but must be structured by a clear methodology in which each participant is also a co-author. Because each artist presents his uniqueness – benefiting from anatomical-physiological and psychological particularities – the study methods are permanently adapted to everyone. A good teacher knows and practices these permanent adjustments of his pedagogical manner to effectively respond to the needs of each young singer in training. But the singer in his individual practice also needs to become aware of the benefits of a progressive adaptation and particularization of his personal training. And to periodically review the correctness of his vocal technique, of his artistic perspective, using tools such as unlearning and re-learning. This mental flexibility, combined with an analytical and conscious study – can lead to a more efficient education and good training for young singers. The structure of the article includes topics such as: Effective study

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<sup>2</sup> Simon, Stefania, *The Future Belongs to Those Who Never Stop Learning*, Minimalist Brain, Medium, 2021.



methods for professional singers; Singer's individual practice in approaching a new musical score; Unlearning Tasks; Creativity in vocal training; Time Management for Singers.

**Keywords:** learning, unlearning, music education, study methods in singing, time management, vocal pedagogy, creativity in vocal training

When a singer begins his training for a professional career, there are three major tasks that his teacher will guide him: 1. how to build the voice<sup>3</sup> (the "invisible" instrument); 2. how to develop the most important performance skills (coaching the technical and interpretive singing aspects) and 3. how to assimilate basic information about vocal health and longevity, healthy habits in preventing disease and singing voice rehabilitation.

The study of singing cannot be a rigid nor completely standardized procedure although the basic information related to vocal technique or interpretation is common. Why the study of singing needs to be extremely carefully conducted, in an adaptable and creative manner, is primarily due to the need to adapt all the knowledge to each individual: the study of singing is always personalized. "The individual unified variability of the vocal instrument suggests that there cannot be a unified vocal behavior for all singers. Rather, the vocal technique taught needs to be adjusted and optimized for each individual. Diversity is introduced on several levels, i.e., by gender (see e.g. different formant tuning strategies for males and females in their upper range, resulting in different jaw opening paradigms); by voice category or *fach* and more subtle anatomical variations such as distinct geometric features of the hypopharynx, different mucosal wave speeds or variations in the geometry of the vocal folds and the glottal channel, whose systematic influences on singing technique and voice classification are as yet largely unexplored"<sup>4</sup>.

Although anatomical and physiological peculiarities have an undeniable impact on the human voice, at a deep but extremely concrete level – an individual's psychological evolution, his culture and the environment from which he comes – influence his timbre and his voice just as strongly. "What makes the human voice identifiable, unique and recognizable? The fact is that every human being, and every artist, carries in the slightest nuance of his voice the gift inherited from his ancestors - talent, the sum of his life's

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<sup>3</sup> "Voice Building (derived from the German term "Stimmbildung"), primarily comprising the functional and physiological aspects of singing" (Gill, Brian P; Herbst, Christian T., *Voice Pedagogy – What do we need?* Logoped Phoniatr Vocol. 2016 Dec;41(4):168-73, p. 1).

<sup>4</sup> Gill, Brian P; Herbst, Christian T., *op.cit*, p. 4.

experiences, the full range of his emotional and personal knowledge, the stamp of his geographical and social origins and the cumulative cultural knowledge - which over time makes his voice an identifiable, recognizable trademark.”<sup>5</sup>

The study of singing is *par excellence* practical, a face-to-face meeting between disciple and teacher, in which a dialogue develops, concepts, sensations, correct reflexes are trained, but also a certain musical intelligence and artistic culture. No book, no textbook can replace direct communication and practical exercise in the study of singing.<sup>6</sup>

Although it is generally preferred for beginning singers to train most of the time under a teacher guidance – for direct supervision in building correct reflexes; the individual practice of each student is indispensable in the development and improvement of an artist, at any age. A correct method for individual training, learned from the very beginning, makes time much more efficient for artistic development, for correct memorization and assimilation of the repertoire.

The purpose of individual study is vocal training and artistic progress: to build by repetition new skills in the emission and sustaining of sound, the so-called “reflexes” (basically new neural networks), to solve technical difficulties, to achieve an optimal sound quality, to deepen the musical pieces from multiple perspectives, to train expressiveness and naturalness in interpretation, to memorize the score.

The stages of individual practice evolve from physical vocal training to the broader processes of documentation and analysis, supported by reading and comparative auditions. The principle of order and method are only *the tools*, but they must always be logically motivated by a precise *purpose*. This purpose - in the individual study - can be exploration and knowledge, building the voice and the correct technical reflexes, but also to develop a personal way of singing that responds both to aesthetic and spiritual needs of the public. Music is an art with a major impact on human consciousness. In the study of music, a discussion about aesthetic, cultural and spiritual values is also necessary, for the correct definition and distinction between *form* (study method) and *content* (the deep meanings of the studied works). From this perspective, we can understand the purpose of extensive documentation in the study process. These documentations can give a real perspective and depth in the true knowledge of a complex musical work, such as a Lied or an Aria (which belongs to a larger work of art from - an opera or an oratorio). Not only solfeggio and formal, harmonic, melodic and rhythmic analysis will

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<sup>5</sup> Hary, Judit, *Vocal pedagogy - reflections on how to teach proper speaking and singing to students*, Studia UBB Musica, LXVIII, 2, 2023, p. 208.

<sup>6</sup> Radu, Cristina, *Metode de studiu pentru tinerii cântăreți. Note de curs pentru anii I-IV IMC Licență* (Study Methods for Young Singers), Ed. Ikono, Brașov, 2024, p. 5.

shed light on the decoding of the meanings and expressiveness of a work. It is not enough to even go through and translate the entire literary text, otherwise this is mandatory. It is necessary to go deeper with the documentation process: to explore a character from a psychological perspective, or to have the ability to fit the musical work into a cultural context and artistic style. The competence that an artist acquires in time develops through assimilation and processing of information, not just with its knowledge. Therefore, the purpose of individual study is to be able to best assimilate the content of a score, both from a musical and interpretative point of view.

In a relatively recent television presentation, historian and philosopher Yuval Noah Harari<sup>7</sup>, author of the bestsellers *Sapiens*, *Homo Deus* and *Nexus*, asked some disturbing questions: What are we preparing young people for? Future generations will face a world completely different from ours, what education can we give them for this new, deeply technological world? – and developed the idea of the necessity to train and to reinvent yourself, to adapt to the extremely dynamic and changing societies of the future. This training begins in the study room, where you discover, train and reinvent yourself countless times. The process of individual practice is a skill that is good to cultivate throughout our lives, along with curiosity, wonder, playfulness and an appetite for experimentation and novelty.

## Effective study methods for professional singers

### *How often should singers practice?*

Singers' practice should be regular – because singers should train both mind and body in order to obtain good singing habits in vocal technique (breathing, emission, posture), they are dealing with muscle memory. This is why singers' practice should have always clear objectives and a precise target.

Why is purposeful practice a necessity? Swedish psychologist Anders Ericsson argues that *Homo Sapiens* (the knowing man) would be more aptly called *Homo exercens* (the practicing man), because humans are aware that they can only improve their abilities through practice. In his book, *Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise*<sup>8</sup>, he points out that there are two types of practice: *naive practice* (the allocation of time for something without any criteria) and *purposeful practice* (where the practitioner has a clear goal, pursues it with total concentration, and constantly seeks feedback from competent people).

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<sup>7</sup> Yuval Noah Harari & Russell Brand, *The Future of Education*, Penguin Talks, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> The book was published by Ed. Publica in Bucharest, 2016 with the title "*Peak, Secretele performanței de top și noua știință a expertizei*".

Consistency of study is also an important topic to be aware of for those who want to perform in a certain field. I recall here the well-known rule of 10,000 hours. Inspired by Ericsson's studies, British journalist Malcom Gladwell wrote the essay *Outliers: The Story of Success*<sup>9</sup>, in which he shows that the time dedicated to developing a certain skill makes a difference in terms of performance. If, for example, it takes about 1 hour to have a basic introduction to a new field; after 10 hours we obtain a broader perspective on the main concepts; after 100 dedicated hours we will reach an average level in the discipline practiced, and after 1000 hours we will become what we call specialists; however, it takes 10,000 hours of exercise and practice to reach a top, high level of performance and mastery in a certain field.

The authors Hector Garcia (Kirai) and Francesc Miralles<sup>10</sup> state that perseverance and well-articulated study are indispensable for this endeavor, but each person decides how much time they want to dedicate to achieving such a goal, and in this regard they also made a calculation, which expresses the time you need to reach top performance, depending on the interval you allocate to your daily practice:

- 8 hours daily x 5 days per week = 5 years;
- 4 hours daily x 5 days per week = 10 years
- 2 hours daily x 5 days per week = 20 years;
- 1 hour daily x 5 days per week = 40 years...

#### *How long should a singing practice session be?*

It is necessary to nuance this topic when it comes to singers. The distribution of the dedicated 10,000 hours of individual study for the goal of excellence – must be adapted to each type of musician. Unlike a regular instrumentalist (like a pianist, violinist or flutist etc.) a singer can't afford to sing continuously for eight hours a day. Excess can lead to vocal cord fatigue and even premature wear of the voice. This means that the vocal practice should be shorter but effective.

According to the stage of technical development, a singer can practice between 15-30 minutes once in a session, if he is beginner level and he's not familiar with what means to sing technically right. The individual practice time can extend to 40-60 minutes for intermediate singers and to several hours, for advanced or professional singers.

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<sup>9</sup> The book was published by Ed. Publica in Bucharest, 2016 with the title "*Excepționalii: Povestea succesului*".

<sup>10</sup> Garcia, Hector (Kirai), Miralles, Francesc, *Metoda Ikigai, secrete japoneze pentru a-ți descoperi adevărata pasiune și a-ți atinge țelurile în viață*, (original title: *Ikigai, The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*) Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest 2019, pag. 45.



However, the study of a singer is not limited to vocal training and consists of several procedures such as body exercises, text translation, exercises for correct pronunciation (as the declamation of the text, in various foreign languages), formal analysis of scores, knowledge and assimilation of the structure of larger works (such as an entire role of an opera/ oratorio/ operetta/ modern musical work), large documentation of the studied works and the stylistic aspects of the artistic epoch. And also, many musical auditions (audio and video tutorials, master classes, professional performances, musical movies...) In conclusion, as a singer, you can dedicate many hours to study music and literature, but in your individual practice, the singing sessions should be adapted to your actual level of training.

*How should singers study?*

### **Body Training**

The sound of the human voice is more than a mental construct; it is a wave of energy emitted in physical space. Producing an artistic sound involves participating of the body as much as that of the singer's mind. The entire body is the singing instrument and for this, it is necessary to shape it through sports and constant physical training. "Classical singing is a complex and multifaceted skill that requires the amalgamation of multiple cognitive, perceptual and motor functions. The teaching of classical singing is consequently a unique skill that holds further complexity. The singer is required to achieve and maintain consistently high-performance development of a specific motor activity, much like the sports athlete."<sup>11</sup>

Sport develops our breathing capacity, body flexibility and plasticity, restores a harmonious posture, tones the muscles and significantly increases our resilience to physical effort. It also increases our immunity, our mental and physical health. Practicing sport gives the body extra endurance and stamina during long performances; it teaches us essential principles such as energy dosing. It also influences mental processes: increasing the power of concentration and attention, restoring security and self-confidence, increasing resilience in the face of criticism and exaggerated self-criticism; in the face of inherent failures, which sometimes occur and can be a good antidote against depression or procrastination.

The purpose of performing physical exercises before starting any vocal training is to stimulate the body and prepare it for sustained engagement in the singing process. Exercises activate energy in the body, straighten and

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<sup>11</sup> Crocco, Laura; McCabe, Patricia; Madill, Catherine, *Principles of Motor Learning in Classical Singing Teaching*, Journal of Voice, Volume 34, Issue 4, July 2020, p. 567.

open the posture (open ribs, wide chest, raised spine), and are useful for good anchoring in the body, in the breath-support process.

Recommended exercises are Pilates, Yoga or any personalized set of medium-intensity physical exercises for warming the body. Breathing exercises, which involve long, deep inhalations and exhalations, as well as the apnea technique are also good tools for singers.

## Voice Training

Voice building is certainly the most central area of voice pedagogy. It is concerned with “building the instrument”, by establishing motor control and behavioral patterns which allow sustainable healthy voice production within the limits of “acceptable” or “beautiful” singing as determined by the chosen singing style and aesthetics.”<sup>12</sup>

The singer’s regular training includes a series of melodic and rhythmic vocal exercises, called vocalize. The purpose of vocalizing is to achieve ease and freedom in singing, even in the most difficult technical passages or in extreme registers.

The vocal exercises can help develop the technique, expand the vocal range, equalize registers, increase singing endurance, train vocal virtuosity (by practicing agility and speed, or addressing difficulties related to wide intervals) and even acquire a more generous volume of the voice (vocal strength and penetration). They contribute to the correct imposition and also to the correction of emission defects that may occur in the “passage” area, to the control of vibrato, of sound dynamics, to learning the correct opening of the mouth, or the correct position of the tongue during emission, etc.

The vocal exercises can be performed by the singer to warm up, to train the voice before starting the study of the repertoire or can also be done independently - in sessions dedicated exclusively to vocal technique training.

There are a lot of vocal exercises, each teacher using his own set, according to his preference and habit, but adapting them to the technical development needs of his students. Personalizing the set of vocal exercises for each student is particularly important. “A voice pedagogue who indiscriminately applies her vocal exercises to all her students based on the sole fact that these exercises were good for her is comparable to a doctor who only prescribes the medications that cured her own diseases.”<sup>13</sup> If the teacher does not do it, then the singer himself should create his own personalized set of vocal exercises.

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<sup>12</sup> Gill, Brian P; Herbst, Christian T., *op.cit*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Gill, Brian P; Herbst, Christian T., *op. cit*, p. 4.

Vocal parameters that require practice and technical skills:

- Breathing: “in the case of professional speaking or singing - singers, actors, teachers, priests - the aim is to achieve a correct, robust, strong, audible quality of voice, which requires the acquisition of technical breathing techniques developed for this purpose.”<sup>14</sup>
- The vocal range, which can be extended and equalized through study. The wide range, the homogeneous evolution from the low register to the high register, the diverse vocal colors, the virtuosity and versatility, are the mark of native talent doubled by technical performance and at the same time the product of rigorous, constant and long training.
- Personal timbre
- Proper resonance - professional voices use in singing a focused emission of sound, with an efficient resonance. An opera singer can sing for hours without the help of amplification (without a microphone), overcoming the massive sonorities of the orchestra, without tiring and without destroying his vocal potential.
- Controlled vibrato
- Correct and expressive intonation
- A varied dynamic of sounds in musical phrases (expressive nuances) The richness of the nuances that a voice can reproduce, bring an extra eloquence and refinement to the interpretation, making it credible in front of the audience
- Virtuosity - Agility and malleability of the voice in virtuoso passages, in the coloratura technique, heroic acutes
- Proper diction – the correct and expressive articulation of vowels and consonants, corresponding to the phonetic requirements of the international languages used in the Opera, Lieder and Oratorio repertoire
- Correct posture in singing
- Training the resilience, the energy in body and in mind focus: increasing vocal resilience for sustained effort over extended periods of time, without tiring the cords and larynx. “The energy which the singer brings to the performance greatly influences the success of the communication with an audience. For example, if ordinary conversation requires a certain level of energy, singing to an audience will require much more! If that energy is not present, the communication will be weak.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hary, Judit, *op.cit.*, p.208.

<sup>15</sup> Campbell, Ross, *Singing – An extensive Handbook for All Singers and Their Teachers*, Novordium Limited UK 2017, p. 75.

### **Singer's individual practice in approaching a new musical score**

When a singer starts studying a new musical work, it is always good to have an overview and then analyze. A documentation about the composer, the stylistic characteristics of the epoch and the particularities of the compositional style, of the literary source and also the analysis of the musical structure – contributes to deepening a broader vision of the artistic work.

Then follows the decomposition of the work into its component parts and the separate training of the music and of the text.

The literary text is the first to be studied. "Learning music and learning words take place in different parts of the brain. It becomes easier to memorize if you address one of these at a time. It is worthwhile to treat the lyrics as text which can be recited independently of the music. After the words have been committed to memory in this way, the process of rehearsal reconnects them with the music"<sup>16</sup>

First, the text must be read cursively, identifying the particularities of the respective language and the challenges related to diction.

Diction is one of the essential parameters of a professional singer's technique. It is often called "the singer's politeness". The study of diction focuses on 2 important aspects:

- the proper articulation of words in the language in which the text is sung/ or recited, paying attention to the particularities related to the consonants or the colors of vowels.
- intelligible articulation of the text - the ability to correctly emit vowels and consonants in legato, following an appropriate phrasing, considering the natural accents of the text and the meaning of the words (to recite the text like a theater actor). Also, it is important to pay attention to the intelligible unification of words in long musical phrases, in a manner opposite to their syllabic and meaningless singing.

Also, the complete translation of the text is one of the first steps that a singer needs to take when studying for a new score. "We remember best that which is meaningful to us. We might expect classically trained singers, while memorizing the words and music of songs, to attend separately to the semantic meaning of the words and the compositional structure of the music"<sup>17</sup> Understanding the meanings of the text leads not only to the subsequent finding of the appropriate interpretative expression but also has a precise purpose in identifying the moments of breathing. Locating and marking the

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<sup>16</sup> Campbell, Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>17</sup> Ginsborg, Jane, *Classical Singers Learning and Memorising a New Song: An Observational Study*, *Psychology of Music*, 2002, 30, p. 60.

right moments of breathing in the score is essential at the beginning of the study and is done considering both the musical writing and the meaning of the text - for a good phrasing. One will never breathe in the middle of a word. After the breaths are noted in the score, they will be constantly considered during the separate practice of the text and of the music, to be rigorous memorized by the singers' mind and the body (muscles' memory) who must get used to supporting the air throughout the length of the phrases.

After this first reading process has been completed and breaths have been marked in the score, the rhythmic reading of the text follows. It is essential that the singer beats/marks his metrical landmarks while reading the text along with the musical rhythm. Speaking the words aloud and counting aloud (while reading text from the score) is an essential exercise for learning the text.

Rhythm is of the utmost importance. If the singer discovers rhythmically difficult passages in the score, he will study them separately from the text. Later he will resume those passages by combining the text with the rhythm of the music - repeating as many times as necessary to solve the passage correctly and practicing progressively, from a slow tempo to the tempo desired by the composer.

The study of the music begins with the solfeggio, but the singer has to remember that "a musical score is a complex semiotic object that excels at conveying musical information in a human readable format." (Francesco Foscarin) In this respect, the singer should pay attention to every single detail of the musical score: the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic aspects, the nuances indicated by the composer, the tempo changes, the articulation modalities (legato, staccato, etc.) and even the directing instructions that some composers expressly note in the score.

Learning the musical content of the score should be done with the utmost rigor because anything learned incorrectly is very difficult to correct later. At this stage, the melodic and rhythmic passages are studied separately from the text, the singer beating the tempo pulse. "Counting helps musicians to maintain a steady pulse and to produce rhythms accurately. It also provides a framework within which musicians can keep track of where they are in a piece of music, to plan and to sequence musical events. Counting beats aloud through rests and long notes while reading from the score, may well contribute to the proficient memorizers' speed and accuracy of memorizing. Teachers recommend using auditory and, to a lesser extent, muscular memory rather than visual memory for the musical score. Strategic memorization can involve the use of different kinds of memory (for example, auditory, visual and muscular)."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ginsborg, Jane, *op. cit.*, p. 59, 61, 93.

After the music is learned correctly through rhythmic solfeggio and the text is added, after the technical problems are solved and the singer manages to sing the entire work at the tempo desired by the composer, the most exciting part follows that of configuring interpretive ideas.

Configuration of the personal interpretive vision on the aria/song or of an entire opera role approached – is deeply related to investigation of the psychology of the character, his/her attire, attitude and relationships with the other entities of the drama. The details that help to outline these aspects, as well as the visualization, with the help of the imagination, of the physical and gestural representations of the embodied character – is one of the most exciting stages of the study. This stage is achieved gradually, with the increasing proximity to the role studied by assimilating the details of the score and the information explored through the complex process of documentation.

An artist does not always have access, in his private life, to similar experiences of his roles embodied on stage. This prevents him from using exclusively information from his personal experience in outlining the characters, and forces him to sharpen his sense of observation, searching outside himself: in literature, but also on the street, in the everyday landscape. He will complete with his imagination many elements of the complex puzzle of the human personality of the character he is researching. In composing a role, the sense of observation and imagination are cardinal points.

The next step in the laborious practice of a singer is to train to adapt himself mentally and vocally (through the vocal and interpretative technique) for the the most authentic reproduction of the musical score meanings and the studied character.

### **Mind Training & Stress Management**

Awareness and mindfulness are needed in individual practice, monitoring bodily sensations and recognizing markers that indicate possible vocal excesses or technical errors, which can damage the vocal instrument over time. These markers can be pain or tension felt in the throat; any discomfort in the larynx; vocal fatigue; hoarseness; tightness in the cervical area/ shoulders/ lips/ jaw/ or tongue; overventilation; abundant secretions that “parasitize” the sound; hissing voice; capretto (trembling voice). When the singer identifies one or more of these “symptoms” it is necessary to stop singing and evaluate what he did wrong, or what was insufficient (perhaps in the support of the breath, in the sound projections..), or what was in excess (too much air volume, too much pressure in larynx, singing too loud / too high/too long). After becoming aware of the problem, the study process can be resumed, after a hydration break, or after the singer takes a few deep breaths to refocus their attention.

Training the mind through study, documentation, memorization, meditation, awareness, imagination; mental representations, experimentation and creativity – is specific to artists. These abilities along with extended concentration are developed over time, through training and through the scenic experience.

Cultivating resilience and determination (motivation combined with will) leads to results and creates the possibility of overcoming physical obstacles (vocal ailments, illnesses) or psychological ones (performance anxiety, stress generated by fierce competition, nervousness, various blockages, disappointments, emotional turmoil). Determination is fueled by real motivations (passion for singing, desire to overcome certain limits, desire to assert oneself, desire to communicate a message, desire to evolve, to share in communion with the audience the values you believe in, to educate, etc.).

Managing emotions is another aspect of mind training, a key point in preparing a singer for a lyrical career. Singers can be subjected to major stress in their preparation for stage performance and when they are exposed in front to a large audience during the representation. They need to train their mind and the body to confront and manage stress, nervousness and stage fright – through learned breath techniques and relaxation. “Increasing competition among musicians on the contemporary scene means additional requirements in terms of preparing of versatile and competitive singers, i.e. students who have acquired stable and high-level technical skills and who cope with the competitive environment. It became evident that younger students and students with less singing experience need greater psychological support from the teacher. In vocal pedagogy, besides developing vocal technical side, more emphasis should be put on knowledge and skills that help students to adjust to the pre-performance situation. Exercises and techniques facilitating and ensuring good performance should be given to students simultaneously with the development of technical skills. Knowledge about developing pre-performance preparedness may be vital in the training of singers, given that the profession of a classical singer today requires readiness for performing in a very tight, worldwide competition.<sup>19</sup>

### **Coaching yourself in singing practice and also requesting feedback from teachers or other professionals**

When studying alone, it's good to have clear goals set, whether they are technical or interpretative: every session of individual practice must be dedicated both to improving vocal technique and to learning the repertoire.

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<sup>19</sup> Kiik-Salupere, Vaike; Ross, Jaan, *Two Complementary Aspects of Contemporary Vocal Pedagogy*, Problems of education in the 21st century, Volume 20, 2010, p. 93, 101.

To improve the vocal technique, it is necessary to focus on the aspects you want to assimilate or develop, one by one. Choose one technical thing you have learned from your teacher, such as breathing, support, releasing tension from the jaw, projection in emission... and insist on learning it properly.

Studying the repertoire, it is necessary to learn properly a score (both music and text), to study one by one every phrase in order to solve technically or dynamically difficult passages, but also to build up stamina and create resilience (to be able to support and sing an entire piece of music to the end). This requires physical endurance obtained through training, but also mental concentration and focus.

I mentioned in “Mind Training & Stress Management” about the necessity of awareness and mindfulness in the individual practice and how important is to pay attention of every marker that indicate possible vocal excesses or technical errors. For self-control in individual study of singers, mirror, water and a recorder are extremely useful tools. Water keeps you hydrated and is essential for optimizing a lot of physical and cognitive processes. It improves the focus of the mind and the state of awareness. The mirror shows you in real time any grimace or jaw sway, tension. Recording rehearsals helps you progress faster by becoming aware of the technical aspects that need improvement and also of your interpretative objectives. You can auto evaluate your practice day by day and rate your progress.

However, it is essential to obtain a professional assessment of your individual study and practice, by consulting your teacher/ mentor/coach or a professional who can regularly check your progress. This can restore your goals, motivation and offer encouragement. Also, it can have a major impact in preventing bad habits and bad techniques and offer faster improvement and an accelerate progress.

### **Unlearning Tasks**

Unlearning is giving up what is no longer true, or relevant, or helpful. In the dynamic process of learning - unlearning is one of the most difficult moments, especially if we talk about singers and body reflexes formed for breathing management or for the sound emission mechanisms.<sup>20</sup> During individual training, persistent bad habits in vocal emission or breath control can lead to serious vocal injuries. That is why it is necessary for the teacher to initiate discussions about vocal hygiene and about problems that can arise

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<sup>20</sup> Radu-Giurgiu, Cristina, *Exploring Learning and Unlearning In Singing Technique (Breath)*, Studia UBB Musica, LXVIII, Special Issue 2, 2023, p.191.



from a bad vocal technique or bad singing habits (singing too loudly, brutal forging of the high register, continuing to study for a long time even though the muscles are tired, covering the sound too early). The young singer needs to know when to stop when certain indicators (such as vocal fatigue, hoarseness or lack of focus) occur during individual training. And of course, to make the necessary technical adjustments. “Most professionals in the field agree that vocal health education - including instruction on vocal anatomy and physiology, vocal hygiene, optimal use of the speaking voice, and early warning signs of functional vocal pathologies —plays an important role in preventing vocal disorders. The singing teacher acts as the first and main source of vocal health knowledge for singers.”<sup>21</sup>

From my pedagogical practice I have often noticed certain situations in which students have difficulty rehearsing pieces studied in the past because they were learned with wrong technical reflexes or even with musical mistakes. “If the song is not learned accurately, then it will not be memorized accurately.”<sup>22</sup> Many musical arias or songs, learned earlier in time, when the student was in the beginner level with a rudimentary vocal technique, present problems when they are re-entered into the study after a longer period. This fact follows a natural consequence: muscle memory. More precisely, the musical works were memorized together with certain reflexes and sensations that return intact even if in the meantime the singer has evolved and has a much better vocal technique. “Muscles “remember” the actions they perform. The more often these actions are repeated, the more efficient the muscles become at doing them. Training a voice involves building up muscle memory which allows the voice to work at its best. A singer may arrive for their first lesson with muscles which are under-active, over-active or used incorrectly. Breaking down old habits and creating new ones which are more efficient is an essential part of teaching singing”<sup>23</sup>

That is why in the process of resuming arias or songs studied in the past, it is sometimes necessary to correct or to unlearn the bad habits in vocal emission, the musical mistakes or the bad pronunciation of the incorrectly assimilated text – learned in the past in a certain musical work – and to relearn a score accurately, with a new technical approach, from the current vocal technical perspective, achieved in present.

The Unlearning process is primarily a process of awareness of the new vocal stage and the contents that need to be updated or corrected.

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<sup>21</sup> Latham, Katherine; Messing, Barbara; Bidlack, Melisa, *Vocal Health Education and Medical Resources for Graduate-Level Vocal Performance Students*, Journal of Voice, Volume 31, Issue 2, March 2017, p. 251.e3

<sup>22</sup> Ginsborg, Jane, *op.cit.*, p.94.

<sup>23</sup> Campbell, Ross, *op.cit.*, p.20.

The process of correcting or updating in the new manner of singing the vocal emission, breath support and other technical aspects – can be difficult, or even impossible sometime, especially when the student sings on “autopilot”, without consciously and actively participating in the steps initiated by the teacher/ coach. It became sometimes more useful to resume the study of that work from scratch, as if it were a new acquisition in the repertoire – and approach the study through the prism of the singer’s current technical and interpretative level.

These aspects once again reveal the importance of establishing a correct individual study method for singers, right from the beginning. The more a piece is learned accurately from the very beginning and seriously deepened in terms of the music, text, style and vocal technique - once it is memorized, this acquisition will be resumed even after long periods of time - with all the details fixed in a correct and secure way.

### **Creativity in vocal training**

Creativity plays an essential role in the preparation for a professional lyrical career, in vocal pedagogy and in individual practice. Creativity and adaptability are needed to find the right and personalized teaching formula for each singer because anatomical and psychological peculiarities make each individual a unique artist.

Each voice has its own particularities, its own timbre, but also its own needs to develop. Some need to work more on certain parameters, others need to improve other specific aspects of vocal or interpretative technique.

Each teacher should adapt the vocalizations to the developmental needs and particularities of each student’s voice. Also, each singer is welcome to make their own personalized set of vocalizations for vocal warm-ups or for approaching different repertoires. All these adaptations, improvisations and customizations in combining certain new melodic and rhythmic formulas for vocalizations are aspects of vocal creativity. “Creativity is the driving force that ensures human evolution and the key element in every art, but its specifics and its dynamic are still a subject of research and wonder.(...) Improvisation is an important feature of the human brain, with implications outside the music spectrum, one of the main tools in human evolution, that facilitates adapting to environmental changes, helps us to solving problems and communicating actively using tools of improvised speech.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Zan, Luiza; Drăgulin, Stela, *Vocal improvisation – a cognitive and a psychological process*, Studia UBB Musica, LXVIII, Special Issue 2, 2023, p. 207.

But the most evident impact of artistic imagination and vocal creativity is in the interpretative field, where singers are forced to recreate the psychological profiles of the characters they embody - both through the colors of their voices and through the modeling of phrasing, accents, nuances, mimicry, gestures, and stage presence. The individual time dedicated to study is transformed into a laboratory of exploration and creation, not just of polishing vocal technique.

Another aspect of creativity is favored in singing training by repetition. We might be tempted to think that repetitions lead to routine, but in fact they can produce new free associations and probe new content. "The French word for rehearsal is "repetition". Successful performance is the outcome of creative repetition. Each time the phrase, section or entire song is repeated in rehearsal, the music should be brought more and more to life and closer to performance. This repetitive process should not be sterile and mindless, but creative and enjoyable."<sup>25</sup>

I would not like to conclude without emphasizing one more aspect related to creativity in contemporary singing pedagogy: flexibility and versatility. For centuries, the opera genre has developed and grown in popularity, and singers have been forced to develop their technique both to cover an increasingly demanding repertoire, with increased technical and expressive complexity, but also to cope with the sound of larger orchestras and with the challenges created by modern tuning, which is higher than in the Baroque era. However, with the invention of both recorded and amplified sound - in the modern era, voice study can take many forms to adapt to multiple styles and arise the concept of "cross-training". "Tremendous advances in the field of vocal pedagogy have given the profession an opportunity to approach teaching voice in a different way. It is time to recognize that students can be taught multiple styles healthily, enabling them to become more flexible and marketable performers. The key is the functionality and flexibility obtained with the proper techniques of cross-training."<sup>26</sup>

### **Time Management for Singers**

This brief introduction to singing methods for young singers cannot be concluded without a few thoughts about time management. Time management is a process of planning and conscious control of time to achieve chosen objectives. Its basic principles are: Planning, Prioritization and Action itself

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<sup>25</sup> Campbell, Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson, L. C. (2019). *Bel Canto to Punk and Back: Lessons for the Vocal Cross-Training Singer and Teacher* (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2019). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/5248>, p.VI

(achieving objectives). Time management is proactive, not reactive, which means that intelligent time management strategies are best designed and prepared in advance.

What activities should singers plan? Studying for exams, auditions, competitions, concerts, performances; studying for their debut in a new role; organizing a specific ritual on the day of a concert; but also, other personal objectives, health monitoring, various activities in the daily ritual, etc.

In preparing for an artistic career, but also during its development, any singer reserves consistent periods of time to practice and develop their technical vocal skills, as well as acting and public communication skills, or networking skills. Not only vocal virtuosity, but absolutely all other aspects require constant training. But to successfully prepare for a specific goal (such as a competition or debuting in a new role), the dedicated time must be structured.

Competitional activity is a constant in the life of a lyrical performer, whether it is singing competitions, auditions, or maintaining a status. Training for this competitive activity begins during university and continues during the affirmation and development of a lyrical career. It is training that involves both the physical and psychological aspects of the singer, requiring discipline and good organization. For a clear picture, I divided this process into several stages:

- Documentation on national and international competitions/auditions: information about place and period of the event, required repertoire, deadline for registration, jury, prizes, booking transport and accommodation, etc.
- Planning the competition/audition calendar for the respective year
- Choosing the repertoire
- Planning the actual study period (starts at least one month before the competition date)
- Planning the time for assimilation period (the penultimate week/a few days before the last week of study before the competition)
- Planning the day of the concert/ competition/audition
- Conclusions (evaluation process, self-evaluation and setting the next objectives)

In preparation for a competition, the more extensive and complex the repertoire is, the better it is for the artist to plan an appropriate amount of time for studying, memorizing the pieces and deepening them optimally, from a technical and interpretative point of view. Otherwise, the stress inherent in the competition will be added to the stress of not knowing enough the repertoire he has to present and the fatigue that accumulates in the last hundred meters

before the competition, when trying to “make up” for lost time. Each singer knows his own learning pace and can thus decide how much time he needs. But preparation and training before a competition, especially when the pieces are already known, begin at least a month in advance. My recommendation for the last two weeks before the competition is to plan a break of a few days (the so-called “assimilation period”) and then resume the repertoire at a moderate pace, training but also conserving the energy so that it can manifest at maximum in the competition.

The assimilation period. The body, mind, muscles need a break after a sustained effort, to process and assimilate information. Just as during the night, while we rest, the brain defragments all the information received during the day, selects, sorts and sends each one to its “little house” - similarly, such a process is necessary after our mind and body have studied a new repertoire, worked out down to the smallest details for several weeks. As we noted above, a period of a few days of break is precisely optimal to let this repertoire be assimilated more deeply. It is also a moment of refreshment after which all the details will fit better into the “puzzle”.

The day of the competition/ concert/ performance: Going through the biographies of many opera singers or their interviews, but also from my own experience, I can say that the day of the concert must be managed in a special way. Every artist has their own eating or rest rituals on the day they have a concert or an important performance. Some sleep more, others take a total vocal break, others do sports, but most hydrate well and conserve their energy during the day for the event that will take place in the evening. I would just point out a few elements for good planning of a day when an exam or a concert will take place:

Organizing a precise schedule for the day.

- Punctuality is extremely important and arriving at the Concert Hall at least one hour before the scheduled start of the exam or performance is essential for the artist’s calm and safety. Because singers need a period of adaptation to the environment in which they will sing (both acoustic and in terms of temperature), and in the case of an opera performance, a substantial amount of time is also needed to put on costumes and stage makeup. In addition to the time of arrival at the Concert Hall, it is necessary to schedule in advance: the hours dedicated to rest (it is good for the body to be awake at least 2-3 hours before singing!), meal times (it is not recommended to eat 1-2 hours before singing, because the body would be too involved in the laborious process of digestion), time for a short rehearsal (the vocal exercises who need to be done right before singing).

- Impeccable preparation and suitability of clothing, accessories and makeup – adapted to the location, the event and the time of day.
- The moment of concentration. I believe that it is useful that before entering the stage each singer has a moment of concentration within himself. A moment in which to deepen and slow down his breathing rhythm, to sing fragments of the piece in his mind (imagining all the sensations of support and sound resonance, but also the details of mimicry and stage play, as if he were singing the piece in front of the audience) and especially to create an optimal inner state to enter the stage: with a confident, secure, elegant feeling and especially with...joy! Joy brings back the release, disperses the artist's stress, cancels the silent pressure of the audience/jury. A bright face, with a positive energy and relaxed attitude will ensure a good entering the stage for any artist. And it's good not to forget, even in the most stressful moments, why we do music and art... because it brings joy to us and those who we share it.

As for learning a new role from the opera, operetta or musical repertoire – this is a more elaborate process, which starts from learning the arias and later the ensembles, goes through a vast process of documentation and training, and finally is polished through multiple rehearsals on stage, together with the director, conductor, set designer and the large ensemble of soloists, choristers, orchestra, ballet and people who make possible a complex and astonishing show such as an opera performance. To the degree of seriousness and efficiency in organizing the singer's study depends on – both the success of a debut and the subsequent resistance of the role over time, as intact as possible in the artist's memory. The more detailed a new role is worked on by the artist in the process of personal training, the more organically assimilated it will be in his mental, emotional and muscular (!) memory. In this way, restoring that role after a longer period will be less difficult. The study of opera role will be the subject of a separate article.

## **Conclusions**

The ideas presented in this article represent a process (work-in-progress) and not a finality. The study methods have been presented that a student or a professional singer can test and master, practicing them personalized for their needs and objectives.

Individual study can be structured in three stages, starting from analysis and documentation – then to the decomposition of a work into its component elements and their separate practice, in order to bring them to a

good stage of execution – and ending by reuniting the essential elements of the work, adjusting them accordingly, until they will render not only the entirety of the musical piece studied but also an interpretative vision of it, already outlined in the study process both through documentation and through the actual training of the piece.

The article emphasizes that a vast education and sustained personal training is essential in the formation of a singer and that is why it is good that it is guided by a correct method. To obtain significant results in the preparation of a lyrical career in the highly competitive musical environment of today, the singers' personal practice should be done with accuracy and consistency.

The processes of unlearning and relearning become inevitable when singers manifest a lack of accuracy in the study and memorization of scores, or when they acquire certain bad habits in their vocal technique. These processes, however, can also mark moments of revision of a singer's vocal and interpretative technique, his desire to experiment with new ways of expression. The article offers pragmatic information about study methodology, Time Management and aspects of creativity in the modern training of singers.

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## MUSICAL-ARTISTIC EVENTS OF YOUNG STUDENTS AS A FACTOR IN STRENGTHENING INTRA-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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**SUMMARY.** This paper aims to highlight the importance of musical-artistic events organized in schools and communities from the perspective of fostering lifelong artistic competencies. The study seeks to identify the attitudes of primary school teachers toward musical-artistic events through an applied questionnaire. To assess the extent to which such events contribute to the development of artistic competencies and the strengthening of school-family-community partnerships, an exploratory study based on a questionnaire administered to primary education teachers was conducted.

**Keywords:** music, competencies, partnership, benefits, community

### Cultural Awareness and Expression

Throughout life, humans must adapt to each developmental stage to successfully respond to external demands. The constant changes in society, as well as economic and educational dynamics, require individuals to pursue continuous improvement and modernization across various life domains. While early life focuses on personal formation and educational tasks, adulthood emphasizes professional, social, and familial responsibilities.

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In recent decades, the European Commission has prioritized the formulation and implementation of a set of competencies<sup>3</sup> related to lifelong learning, optimizing human adaptability to daily challenges. These competencies bridge the educational system with subsequent human activity, enhancing quality of life by covering all domains critical to human development. Policymakers and European researchers have closely collaborated in designing, measuring, and monitoring these competencies.<sup>4</sup>

The European Commission continuously refines these areas, aiming to deliver high-quality education through institutions within the educational system. Emphasis is placed on diverse competency-based teaching strategies, lifelong learning in favorable educational contexts, and the core components of competencies: knowledge, skills, and attitudes that foster personal growth.<sup>5</sup>

According to European Commission documents, *Cultural Awareness and Expression* – central to this study – is defined as:

*Competence in cultural awareness and expression involves understanding, and having respect for, how ideas and meaning are creatively expressed and communicated in different cultures and through a range of arts and other cultural forms. It involves being engaged in understanding, developing and expressing one's own ideas and sense of place or role in society in a variety of ways and contexts.*<sup>6</sup>

This description underscores creativity, artistic expression, and the acquisition of cultural and intercultural competencies – valuable assets in modern society. It promotes *enculturation*<sup>7</sup>, ensuring continuous, open, and accessible cultural-artistic events for all community members. Communities thrive when members collaborate, create joint projects, and engage in artistic communication, whether as artists or art enthusiasts.

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<sup>3</sup> Literacy, Multilingualism, Numerical, scientific and engineering skills, Digital and technology-based competences, Interpersonal skills, and the ability to adopt new competences, Active citizenship, Entrepreneurship, Cultural awareness and expression; Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/key-competences> (accessed 24.03.2025)

<sup>4</sup> Hoskins, Bryony; Deakin-Crick, Ruth. "Social Justice, Research and European Policy: defining and measuring key competences in education". In *European Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 7, nr. 3, 2008, pp. 308-310, DOI: 10.2304/eej.2008.7.3.308.

<sup>5</sup> Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools, p. 5, <https://www.eursc.eu/BasicTexts/2018-09-D-69-en-2.pdf> (accessed 24.03.2025)

<sup>6</sup> Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools. *Op. Cit.* p. 10. (accessed 24.03.2025)

<sup>7</sup> Enculturation - the process of learning cultural values by transmitting them to the next generations in a given culture; taken from Bocoș, Mușata; Răduț-Taci, Ramona; Stan, Cristian. *Dicționar Praxiologic de Pedagogie (Praxiologic Dictionary of Pedagogy)*, Vol. II, Editura Paralela 45, Pitești, 2016, p. 96.

Artistic education, a cornerstone of aesthetic and cultural education, synergizes to develop complex artistic and cultural competencies<sup>8</sup>, ensuring lasting acquisitions through varied activities. Collaborations between institutions with distinct characteristics enable multifaceted learning experiences, enhancing the formation of targeted artistic competencies.

Music, as a primary art form, holds significant importance in cultural events and intercultural exchanges. Early musical education for young generations should thus be a priority for national education systems. Consistent musical training positively impacts individual development, fostering intellectual, emotional, and social growth, including:

- Enhanced perceptual and linguistic abilities through improved auditory discrimination;
- Knowledge transfer between domains influenced by similarity;
- Improved literacy skills;
- Mathematical competency development via rhythmic notation and arithmetic connections;
- Superior intellectual performance in children engaged in regular music practice;
- Increased creativity, abstract thinking, improvisation, and motor skills.<sup>9</sup>

Given music's profound cognitive, emotional, and social implications, society must prioritize facilitating artistic events for communities.

### **School-Family-Community Partnership**

Research demonstrates that strong partnerships among stakeholders influencing individual and societal development enhance student learning and engagement. Analyzing school-family relationships, Marin and Bocoş highlight that quality family involvement boosts multiple intelligences, urging educational institutions to devise strategies for deeper family participation in school activities<sup>10</sup>. Parental support fosters stronger bonds with children

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<sup>8</sup> Sârb, Diana Elena. *Perspective interculturale și intertextuale în mediul universitar (Intercultural and intertextual perspectives in universities)*. Editura MediaMusica, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, pag. 69.

<sup>9</sup> Hallam, Susan. "The power of music: Its impact on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people." In *International Journal of Music Education*. 28, 2010, pp. 269-289, DOI 10.1177/0255761410370658.

<sup>10</sup> Marin, Diana; Bocoş, Muşata. "The Effects of a High Family Involvement in Pupils' Education". In *Education Facing Contemporary World Issues*, 2019, pp. 875–883, <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.08.03.105> (accesat 25.03.2025).

and communities<sup>11</sup> creating shared educational visions and optimal child development through collaborative efforts.

The community's role is integral to partnerships that outline clear societal development directions (E.g. 1). This decades-old model, encouraged in modern diverse societies, balances unity in diversity toward common goals. Mutual respect and recognition of expertise among educational stakeholders lead to improved academic and non-academic outcomes<sup>12</sup>.

**E. g. 1**



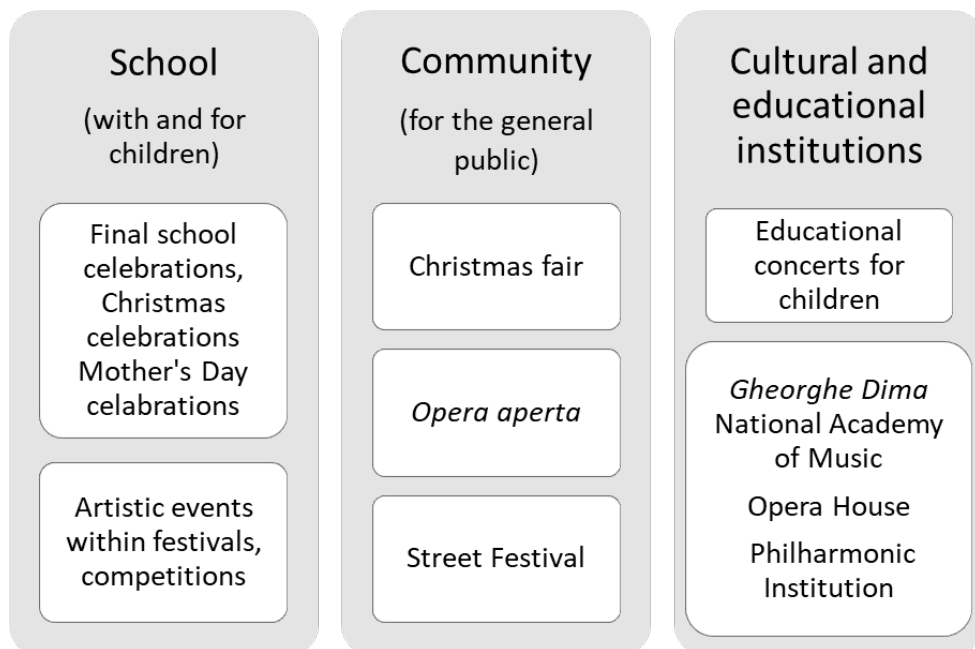
**Partnership model**

The education system, comprising all entities contributing to quality education, offers precise and complementary directions to schools. Libraries, museums, exhibitions, concerts, and theater performances provide favorable teaching-learning contexts for students and teachers to experience and assimilate artistic content and values, regardless of the type of art.

A robust partnership among the three entities requires parental involvement in extracurricular artistic events of local or national interest, ensuring optimal preparation and execution. Such events occur in schools, communities, and specialized artistic or educational institutions (E.g. 2).

<sup>11</sup> Molina, Sarina. "Family, school, community engagement, and partnerships: an area of continued inquiry and growth." In *Teaching Education*. Vol. 24, nr. 2, 2013, pp. 235-238, DOI: 10.1080/10476210.2013.786894. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263424157\\_Family\\_school\\_community\\_engagement\\_and\\_partnerships\\_an\\_area\\_of\\_continued\\_inquiry\\_and\\_growth](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263424157_Family_school_community_engagement_and_partnerships_an_area_of_continued_inquiry_and_growth) (accessed 26.03.2025).

<sup>12</sup> Paik, Susan; Choe, Shirlye; Gozali, Charlina; Kang, Christine; Janoyan, Anais. "School-family-community partnerships: supporting underserved students in the U.S.". In *Aula Abierta*, vol. 48, nr. 1, 2019, pp. 43-50; DOI: 10.17811/rifie.48.1.2019.43-50, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331552824\\_School-family-community\\_partnerships\\_supporting\\_underserved\\_students\\_in\\_the\\_US](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331552824_School-family-community_partnerships_supporting_underserved_students_in_the_US) (accessed 27.03.2025).



**Types of artistic events**

### **Artistic Events and Their Community Benefits**

Certain artistic events profoundly impact children and youth. Educators and parents must select age-appropriate performances that cultivate solid artistic competencies, shaping future artists or audiences.

An example of an artistic event, which ensures a smooth transition into the world of music, are the educational performances that are organized especially for children, by the institutions that provide many high-level cultural events. Every season, the Opera House, the Philharmonic and the *Gheorghe Dima* National Academy of Music in Cluj-Napoca offer teachers and parents the opportunity to choose between a variety of seasonal artistic performances suitable for the age of children.

Educational performances for and with children, organized by *Gheorghe Dima* National Music Academy in Cluj-Napoca, provides effective educational contexts in which children can experience music in a practical way, through musical games, active music listening, vocal and instrumental performances.

The Academy's *Interactive Didactic Workshops* (within the *Art and Education Conference*) and *Dima Youth* educational shows involve children working with teachers and student, future teachers, in enjoyable, interactive settings<sup>13</sup>. Approaching music through musical games, body percussion, voice and instrument exploration provide valuable resources for teachers organizing such artistic events.

These events allow students to encounter live instruments, to play, to sing, and practice music through age-appropriate songs and exercises. Stories about composers and instruments further enrich their experience, aiming to build successful musical communities benefiting all stakeholders.

In addition to these events, other community-wide events, organized for the entire community, include *Christmas Fair*, featuring seasonal songs, *Opera aperta*, which brings people together, introducing classical music downtown, the *Celebration of the City Days*, when pop, traditional and cultured music concerts are presented to the whole community.

Regardless of type, artistic events yield benefits for schools, families, and communities, such as:

*Benefits for Schools:*

- Showcase musical achievements from teaching-learning processes;
- Demonstrate artistic diversity (songs, instrumental music, body percussion, dance);
- Reinforce the importance of *Music and Movement* in curricula.

*Benefits for Families:*

- Pride in children's achievements and community recognition;
- Appreciation of artistic effort;
- Observing children in non-academic contexts.

*Benefits for Communities:*

- Formal platforms for school recognition;
- Cultural diversity and local authority involvement in music-based projects.

## **Musical-Artistic Events in Schools**

Schools place significant emphasis on organizing class-wide, school-wide, and inter-school celebrations for various occasions, such as the end of the academic year, Mother's Day, School Days, and local or religious events<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Sârb, Diana Elena, 2023, *Op.cit.*, pag. 77.

<sup>14</sup> Bocoș, Mușata; Răduț-Taciu, Ramona. *Dicționar de pedagogie (Dictionary of Pedagogy)*. Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2020, p. 1822.

With decades of tradition, these events serve as an "effective means of formative influence on preschoolers and students, ensuring educational contexts where interactions occur under novel conditions and contribute to the cohesion of learner groups"<sup>15</sup>. Promoting the outcomes of the efforts invested by educators and children is essential, adding diversity to formal education.

The creativity of teaching staff—in selecting repertoires, designing scripts for celebrations, and crafting time-efficient, thematically appropriate programs—alongside children's artistic competencies, is prominently showcased in such musical-artistic events.

However, securing sufficient rehearsal time to achieve high-quality outcomes remains a challenge. This raises the question: Could the musical-artistic results of the teaching-learning process, conducted in schools, be presented in alternative formats while maintaining the same level of satisfaction?

To identify the significance of these events for educators and the challenges inherent in their execution, we conducted a research study, detailed in the following sections.

### **Research methodology**

The main objective of this descriptive study is to identify the attitudes of primary school teachers towards music and artistic events in the context of the partnership between educational institutions and the community.

The secondary objective of the research is the descriptive analysis of the need to reinvent and reinterpret the concept of musical-artistic event, through the lens of the factors that influence this.

The participants are 59 primary school teachers, 53 of them from urban areas, 6 from rural areas. 42 of the teachers interviewed have a first teaching grade, 9 - a permanent grade, 7 - a second teaching grade and 1 is a beginner.

The research instrument is designed to identify the factors influencing teachers' attitudes and decisions regarding the planning and performance of musical and artistic events with students. The questionnaire contains 23 questions distributed in 5 subscales covering the objectives of the musical-artistic events, their benefits for the pupils and the school, factors influencing decisions about the type of event, satisfaction after the event, alternatives for the type and the way of conducting the event. The questionnaire is designed using Google Forms and completed online by responding teachers.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem



## Results

In this section, we present the results based on the research instruments used in the research framework, based on descriptive statistics. Data processing was carried out using the statistical package Jasp for Windows, version 0.17.1.

In order to identify the attitude of teachers towards planning and performing a musical-artistic event with students, we present the descriptive statistics obtained for the scores on the objectives, benefits, factors influencing the organization of events of this type, and satisfaction after the completion of the whole process. The results are presented in the tables.

**Table 1**

Item	Valid	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
I1. Organizing musical and artistic events is a way to celebrate something, to mark an important moment in children's lives.	58	4.379	1.023	1.000	5.000
I2. Musical-artistic events are an opportunity to explore new horizons.	59	4.627	0.740	1.000	5.000
I3. Through musical-artistic events we are promoting our class, our school.	59	4.356	1.030	1.000	5.000
I4. Through musical-artistic events we become popular in the community and strengthen partnerships and collaborative relationships with various institutions.	59	4.373	0.869	1.000	5.000
I5. Through musical-artistic events we emphasize the qualities, the talents of the students.	59	4.610	0.766	1.000	5.000

### **Descriptive statistics for the questionnaire results on objectives of music and artistic events of primary school students**

From the analysis of the data provided in Table 1, it can be seen that the results of the descriptive study reveal that the objectives of the music and artistic events are primarily aimed at the students involved. The highest mean was obtained for the item that tracks how respondents relate to the idea that musical-artistic events allow the exploration of new horizons ( $m=4.627$ ,  $s.d.= 0.740$ ). Another item that scored a high mean ( $m= 4.610$ ,  $s.d.= 0.766$ )

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is that musical-artistic events bring out the qualities, the talents of students. We conclude from this that, in the opinion of the teachers who were interviewed, musical-artistic events are organized and carried out more to highlight the students' talents and open up new perspectives to them than to attract exposure. The low score on the item Organizing musical and artistic events is a way to celebrate something, to mark an important moment in the children's lives ( $m=4.379$ ,  $s.d.=1.023$ ) shows, however, that the occasion of a concert/performance/evening etc. is not necessarily driven by the learners' needs.

**Table 2**

Item	Valid	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
I6. For students, musical and artistic events are a source of relaxation.	59	4.288	1.001	1.000	5.000
I7. For students, musical and artistic events provide the right context for teamwork.	59	4.322	0.860	1.000	5.000
I8. When involved in musical-artistic projects, students socialize at a higher level.	59	4.305	0.895	1.000	5.000
I9. The active involvement of students in musical and artistic events naturally develops all kinds of skills.	58	4.207	0.932	1.000	5.000
I10. If the school organizes a lot of musical and artistic events, the school gains prestige.	59	4.203	0.924	1.000	5.000

**Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire results  
on benefits of music-artistic events**

From the analysis of the data provided in Table 2, results that primary school teachers mainly identify the benefits that music and artistic events have first and foremost for students. The results of the descriptive study indicate the highest value for the context that these events provide for teamwork ( $m=4.322$ ,  $s.d.=0.860$ ) and a higher level of socialization ( $m=4.305$ ,  $s.d.=0.895$ ). However, in terms of the potential for students' active involvement in music and arts events to develop all types of skills naturally, the score

obtained is relatively low ( $m= 4.207$ ,  $s.d.= 0.932$ ). The lowest scores are obtained for the gain that the educational institution could gain from music and arts events in terms of prestige ( $m= 4.203$ ,  $s.d.= 0.924$ ). The results indicate that although respondents consider that it is beneficial for students to be involved in music and artistic events, they do not see the importance of this for the school and the community.

**Table 3**

Item	Valid	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
I11. When I organize musical and artistic events, I consider first and foremost what children like.	59	4.475	0.774	1.000	5.000
I12. When I organize musical and artistic events, I am mostly influenced by the genre broadcasts in the media.	59	2.729	1.096	1.000	5.000
I13. When I organize musical and artistic events, I always think about satisfying parents.	59	2.610	1.051	1.000	5.000
I14. The musical-artistic events I organize with my students are very much a reflection of my artistic beliefs.	59	3.729	0.997	1.000	5.000

**Descriptive statistics of questionnaire results on factors influencing teachers' decisions regarding musical-artistic events**

From the analysis of data provided in Table 3, results that teachers are most influenced by children's wishes ( $m= 4.475$ ,  $s.d.= 0.774$ ) and least influenced by audience wishes ( $m= 2.610$ ,  $s.d.= 1.051$ ), respectively by the genre broadcast in the media ( $m= 2.729$ ,  $s.d.= 1.096$ ). The results confirm the previously stated idea that activities of this type are primarily centered on students' needs, interests and capabilities.

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**Table 4**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Devia- tion</b>	<b>Minim.</b>	<b>Maxim.</b>
I15. After the musical-artistic events I organize and perform with my class I am always very satisfied.	58	3.983	0.783	2.000	5.000
I16. After the musical and artistic events organized with my students I usually analyze and identify the elements that made the activity successful.	59	4.288	0.744	2.000	5.000
I17. I regularly integrate successful musical elements into artistic projects.	59	3.932	0.944	1.000	5.000
I18. I can easily identify musical-artistic elements that I have to give up in the future because they do not contribute to the success of the events.	57	3.860	0.915	2.000	5.000
I19. I notice that the students actively participate and enjoy the musical and artistic events performed on different occasions.	57	4.263	0.973	1.000	5.000
I20. Children promote their own events and invite extended family (uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc.) as well as friends and other contacts.	58	4.121	0.880	1.000	5.000
I21. I am always more attentive to immediate feedback from the audience than to verbal post-event congratulations.	58	4.190	0.760	2.000	5.000
I22. Audience reactions determine the direction of the next musical and artistic project I will organize.	59	4.017	0.820	2.000	5.000

**Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire results  
on the satisfaction level after musical-artistic events**

From the analysis of the data provided in Table 4, we note that the results of the descriptive study show a major concern of the teachers to note the success of the event held and its value in future actions. The highest mean

was obtained in the item that asks if after the musical-artistic events there is an analysis of the factors that contributed to the success ( $m=4.288$ ,  $s.d.=0.744$ ). The result shows that, for teachers, identifying the elements that ensure success is a driving force for future events. The idea is confirmed by the scores obtained for items 21 ( $m=4.190$ ,  $s.d.=0.760$ ) and 22 ( $m=4.017$ ,  $s.d.=0.820$ ), which refer to immediate feedback, audience reactions. However, the lowest score is recorded with regard to identifying the weaknesses of an event ( $m=3.860$ ,  $s.d.=0.915$ ), and the repeated use of elements that ensure success ( $m=3.932$ ,  $s.d.=0.944$ ). According to the data, the score indicating the level of satisfaction after a specific musical/artistic event organized and performed with students is relatively low ( $m=3.983$ ,  $s.d.=0.783$ ). We deduce that the analysis of post-event satisfaction is predominantly emotional, without reference to a set of well-articulated objectives or criteria.

The responses to item 11, If not the party, then what? highlight a range of activities that involve strong partnerships between educational institutions, family and community. Among the alternatives listed we mention: workshops with the active involvement of parents, participation in events organized by different cultural institutions, thematic excursions, carnivals, karaoke, talent show type activities, etc. 10% of the respondents consider that music lessons are sufficient for the aesthetic-musical education of primary school pupils.

## Discussions

The analysis of the results revealed that teachers' attitudes towards musical and artistic events with the children are more focused on their needs and wishes than on the partnership between school, family and local community. However, the reality is not uniform and compact, but rather contradictory. Although the teachers participating in the study state that in planning and performing musical and artistic events with students they set their objectives based on the needs and interests of the children, the initiative is not the result of an intention to celebrate, to mark an important event in their lives. We conclude from this that this type of event is organized in response to expectations or requests from the environment or institutional partners. However, they are not positioned among the beneficiaries of cultural events, but are mentioned as potential providers of cultural-artistic services, as an alternative to traditional musical-artistic events. We therefore understand that the attitude of the teachers interviewed towards musical and artistic events with primary school pupils is at such a level that they are aware of the importance of focusing them on the needs, interests and concerns of pupils, but do not perceive their impact in the context of partnership relations between educational institutions and the community. We also understand that teachers show a strong need to change

the paradigm, to reinvent and reinterpret the concept of the musical-artistic event through the factors that influence this, but not enough concern to create this change.

The limitations of the present study are given by the small number of respondents, the specificity of the sample of subjects, with an unbalanced proportion in terms of age and level of teaching experience, and the research instruments used, so that the results provide only a partial overview of the reality analyzed.

### **Final considerations**

The study findings reveal a positive attitude among teaching staff toward organizing musical-artistic events in schools, as these are perceived as relevant opportunities for students' personal and social development. Teachers prioritize children's preferences and needs, reflecting a student-centered approach. However, despite the potential of such activities to strengthen school-family-community relationships, the partnership dimension is often perceived as marginal or secondary.

There is a pronounced need to reconfigure the design and implementation of artistic events by integrating a collaborative and sustainable vision that synergistically leverages the contributions of all involved educational stakeholders. Sustainable partnerships built among schools, families, and communities can transform these events into authentic platforms for learning, inclusion, and social cohesion.

To fully harness the impact of artistic education in schools, it is necessary not only to preserve artistic traditions but also to embrace innovative forms of cultural expression and inter-institutional collaboration. Musical-artistic events can thus evolve beyond mere festive occasions into true formative tools and catalysts for education rooted in values, diversity, and belonging.

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## CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING VOCAL TECHNIQUE AND STYLE IN VARIOUS TREATISES FROM THE 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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**SUMMARY.** The early 17<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the establishment of Italian vocal art, that would become a reference point for other vocal idioms and the source of *bel canto*. Italian singers and their art were considered examples worthy of imitation, numerous German or French sources referring to the vocal mastery of the Italians. The present study aims to present several European treatises of the 17<sup>th</sup> century — Italian, Spanish, German, and French — gradually revealing the evolution of European vocal art, from the early Baroque and its *seconda prattica*, to the final decades of the century, marked by the growing dispute between the Italian and French style and vocal technique. Throughout the study, similarities and differences are pointed out, revealing that the requirements regarding vocal technique are rather similar for all the singing idioms. What distinguishes the various schools of singing are aspects related to the particularities of the language, that also leads to the adjustment of certain technical demands. Secondly, questions regarding style or the execution of ornaments seem to set the Italian and French vocal idioms apart. The present article represents the first part of a research that is dedicated to the analysis of various historical sources of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries — as valuable milestones for the establishment of the great 19<sup>th</sup> century singing methods. Historically informed performances require the singer to become acquainted with the historical period to which a particular composition belongs, its treatises and other theoretical sources of the period, eventually arriving to a better understanding of the score and a more accurate construction and delivery of the vocal discourse. Finally, the authors wish to emphasize that the historical sources referred to in the current study represent only a small portion of the theoretical writings of the period, and that the chosen works were considered representative for the current research — but not necessarily the most important.

**Keywords:** voice, word-painting, singing, vocal registers, vibrato

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## Introduction — Developments in music and vocal performance at the border between the Renaissance and the Baroque

In the late Renaissance, even before the Camerata de' Bardi (or the Florentine Camerata) proclaimed that the musical discourse should follow the meaning of the text ("*prima le parole, dopo la musica*"), composers aimed to emphasize the meaning of the words and make the poetic text more intelligible through the compositional techniques they employed. The Council of Trent, summoned between 1545 and 1563 to counterbalance the challenges brought about by the Reformation, declared that composers should focus on the intelligibility of the text, thus placing the musical discourse in the service of the words.<sup>3</sup>

To renounce the polyphonic musical discourse entirely was not yet possible, however composers strove to simplify the polyphonic texture or arrange the discourse in a manner that made the text more easily understood. *Word painting* was an approach that governed the composition of the Italian madrigal or the French chanson, the composers aiming to emphasise the meaning of the poetic text, the emotions conveyed by the words, using certain musical elements, such as melodic or rhythmic formulae or dissonant intervals. The use of well-established melodic or rhythmic elements with the purpose of depicting emotions lay the foundation for the *doctrine of the affections* (or *affects*) or *Affektenlehre*. Derived from the theories proposed by rhetoric and oratory, the doctrine of the affections gained popularity in the seventeenth century and claimed that passions could be represented through visible or audible signs, offering composers practical guides to follow.

According to this new approach, the poetic text was placed in the foreground, while the musical discourse was meant to emphasize the meaning of the words. To make the text more intelligible, gradually more transparent musical textures were preferred instead of the intricate polyphonic constructions.

Separately, but approximately at the same time, two groups of artists tried to suggest concepts and ideas that could direct the musical discourse toward new horizons: in Italy the *Camerata de' Bardi* paved the way for the *second prattica*, while in France the group of poets *La Pleiade* had a significant contribution for the evolution of French music. The ideas discussed and proposed by these two groups have led to the composition of vocal works that required singers to adapt their vocal technique in order to obtain a particular sound — desired, appreciated, and described in the treatises of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the early treatises the authors simply described the qualities of

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<sup>3</sup> Council of Trent, "Canon on Music to Be Used at Mass," September 1562 quoted in: Reese, Gustav. *Music in the Renaissance*. New York: Norton, 1959, p. 449.

the ideal voice, while in later sources singers were offered practical advice and recommendations. However, solutions for the discussed vocal issues were not clearly explained. The ideas regarding vocal production and the qualities of the sung voice, described in these works, serve as basis for the evolution of singing techniques, as these will be described in the great treatises of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### The Italian Treatises and Historical Sources

The innovative ideas and approaches to art and music proposed by the Camerata de'Bardi had a significant impact on the evolution of the musical discourse and vocal performance of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it is important to recall several ideas exposed in the writings of such members of the groups as Count Giovanni de' Bardi (1534–1612), Vincenzo Galilei (1520–1591), or Giulio Caccini (1551–1618).

A group of intellectuals, musicians, and poets from the late Renaissance Florence, the Camerata de'Bardi gathered regularly to discuss questions regarding music and art. From its first meeting in 1573, the Camerata had a significant activity between 1577–1582. One of the main ideas discussed was the revival of the aesthetic ideals of ancient Greek art and dramatic style. Thus, the musical compositions inspired by these views aimed to recreate the style of ancient Greek music, even though the ancient sources the Camerata referred to were scarce and poorly understood at that time, leaving room for speculation.

In the *Discorso sopra la musica anticha e 'l cantar bene* (1578), addressed by Giovanni de' Bardi to Giulio Caccini ("*Called the Roman*"), Bardi explained his desire to revive the ancient functions of music: namely, to second poetry and move listeners to various passions.<sup>4</sup> However, Bardi did not go as far as Vincenzo Galilei, who advocated the return to monody in his *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna* (1581–1582). The type of singing proposed by Bardi should be accompanied by instruments, in which he included ensemble singing as well.<sup>5</sup>

In his *Discorso*, Bardi speaks about "*that kind of music that is put into practice singing — whether in ensembles or solo — to the accompaniment of instruments*"<sup>6</sup>, and offers definitions to such concepts as *music*, *harmony*,

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<sup>4</sup> Palisca, Claude V. *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations*. Music Theory Translation Series. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Bardi in Palisca, *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

*rhythm*, explains the distribution and use of the *tonoi*, and gives advice regarding the use of musical instruments. At the same time, Bardi considers that the practice of music in his time, could be divided into two parts: “one is that called counterpoint; the other we shall call the art of good singing.”<sup>7</sup> A good composition should be able to move the listener, to evoke a certain ethos, while the composer should strive to arrange the verse in such a manner that the words can be comprehensible, offering clear indications to the singer, so that unnecessary improvisation can be avoided. *Good speech and excellent diction*<sup>8</sup> are imperative requirements for a good singer. Referring to a fine singer of that time, Bardi mentioned the wide vocal range, resonance, and sweetness of the voice<sup>9</sup> — qualities that were appreciated, even required from the singers of the period. Nonetheless, all these qualities are spoiled when the singer gives little to no importance to the poetry and poetic accents. Like other contemporary musicians, Bardi makes a clear distinction between solo singing and ensemble singing, stressing the importance of “uniting one’s own voice well with others, making with them a single body,”<sup>10</sup> when singing in an ensemble. To respect the beat and the indications in the score was crucial from Bardi’s point of view: “I would add [R13r] that the best thing a singer can do is to perform a song well and punctiliously, as it was composed by its creator. And do not do as some, who — and it is comical — from the beginning to the end so spoil a madrigal with their unhinged passaggi, thinking that they will thereby be considered clever, that even the composer does not recognize it as his offspring.”<sup>11</sup>

The *Discorso* was one of the first theoretical writings to emerge from the Camerata, paving the way for the new direction in which music and singing were to go: the *stile recitativo*, a new style of performance, which led to the birth and evolution of opera. Bardi’s manifesto was followed by *prefaces*, such as the ones written by Ottavio Rinuccini, Giulio Caccini, and Jacopo Peri to *L’Euridice* (1600) and the preface Caccini wrote to his *Le Nuove Musiche* (1602), in which he described the qualities a good singer should possess, striving to offer practical advice for singers.

Caccini’s collection of monodies and songs for solo voice and accompaniment, *Le Nuove Musiche*, is one of the earliest and most important examples of composition in the *seconda prattica* style that characterizes the early Baroque. Caccini used the term *stile moderno*, to emphasize the differences between this type of composition and the earlier works. Palisca

<sup>7</sup> Giovanni Bardi in Palisca, *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> Giovanni Bardi in Palisca, *Op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>9</sup> Idem.

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Bardi in Palisca, *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>11</sup> Giovanni Bardi in Palisca, *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

considers, however, that Caccini's conception regarding the monodic style failed to develop beyond a certain point and that his compositions remain conservative and quite far from the *stile recitativo* proposed by the Camerata.<sup>12</sup>

In his *preface*, Caccini highlighted the importance of the text and wrote out the ornaments that he considered most suitable for expressing the *affects* of the words. According to Stark, Caccini employed the word *affetto* to suggest the ability to arouse strong emotions in the audience, using a particular vocal technique.<sup>13</sup> The ideal voice was full and natural (*voce piena e naturale*), avoided falsetto (*le voci finte*), and should not be constrained to accommodate to other voices (through the latter statement Caccini advocated for solo singing).<sup>14</sup> A good voice had to be supported by good control of the breath, and the ability to execute a *crescendo*.

According to these affirmations, as well as conclusion of a careful analysis of Caccini's compositions, it may be affirmed that the early 17<sup>th</sup> century vocal works employed a limited vocal range, which didn't require the tenor voice, for example, to solve issues regarding register changes. Caccini himself advocates for transposition when necessary, suggesting that the singers choose the version of a score that is most suitable for their vocal possibilities. This could be explained through the fact that Caccini, as his contemporaries, placed great importance on the intelligibility of the text — which is more clearly understood if sung or declaimed in the middle register of the voice. On the other hand, Stark believes that this approach could suggest that Caccini was “a one-registered singer who eschewed falsetto and knew nothing of covered singing”.<sup>15</sup> This observation could be true, in part because the treatises of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century warn against the use of the falsetto but refrain from giving solutions to problems related to vocal registration issues.

The rhetorical importance of the ornaments (*effetti*) is also emphasized in Caccini's *preface*. *Effetti* were deemed important to increase the expressiveness of the text. Caccini also illustrated several vocal devices necessary in affective singing: *intonazione della voce* or *clamazione*, *esclamazione* (a close description of what Manuel Garcia would later explain as *messa di voce*)<sup>16</sup>, and *sprezzatura* (a concept that could be explained as rhythmic flexibility in the rendition of the vocal discourse).

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<sup>12</sup> Palisca, Claude V. *Baroque Music*. Third Edition. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall History of Music Series, 1991, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> Stark, James. *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*. University of Toronto Press, 2003, p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> Caccini, Giulio. *Le Nuove Musiche*. English translation by H. Wiley Hitchcock. Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1970, p. 98. [English translation of Caccini's 1602 *Le Nuove Musiche*].

<sup>15</sup> Stark, James. *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> Idem, p. 159.

A few years later, in 1605, Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) published his *Fifth Volume of Madrigals*, also announcing the publication of a theoretical work that would respond to those who attacked the new style of composition. The work was to bear the title *Seconda prattica, ovvero perfezione della moderna musica*, however such a theoretical work belonging to Monteverdi was not found. Throughout this period, Monteverdi expressed his approach to the new *stile concitato* or *genere concitato*. This new Baroque style, developed by Monteverdi and illustrated in such compositions as *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624), *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* (1639), or *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642) is characterized by such effects as rapid repeated notes, ornamental patterns, and extended trills, employed to emphasize agitation or anger.

In the foreword to the volume of his eighth book of madrigals, *Madrigali Guerrieri, et amorosi*, published in 1638 in Venice, Monteverdi reflects on the manner in which music is able to express the principal human passions, or affections: “I have reflected that the principal passions or affections of our mind are three, namely, anger, moderation, and humility or supplication; so the best philosophers declare, and the very nature of our voice indicates this in having high, low, and middle registers. The art of music also points clearly to these three in its terms “agitated,” “soft,” and “moderate” (*concitato, molle, and temperato*). In all the works of former composers I have indeed found examples of the “soft” and the “moderate,” but never of the “agitated,” a genus nevertheless described by Plato in the third book of his *Rhetoric* (...) And since I was aware that it is contraries which greatly move our mind, and that this is the purpose which all good music should have (...) for this reason I have applied myself with no small diligence and toil to rediscover this genus.”<sup>17</sup>

As illustrated in the vocal writing of *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (first performed in 1624 in Venice and published in Monteverdi's eighth book of madrigals), *stile concitato* required singers to clearly declaim the text, and have perfect control of the three registers of the voice<sup>18</sup>, in order to express the *agitated, soft, and moderate* (*concitato, molle, and temperato*)

<sup>17</sup> Claudio Monteverdi in Strunk, Oliver. *Source Readings in Music History. From Classical Antiquity through the Romantic Era*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1950. p. 413. English translation of the original edition of the foreword (Venice, 1638). A facsimile of Monteverdi's *Foreword* is published in Vol. 8 of Malipiero's edition of the collected works.

<sup>18</sup> The term *register*, in the present context, is rather related to the manner in which softness, moderation, or agitation are expressed — to the *emotional registers* — and not to the vocal registers discussed in the following centuries. Since no other source of the century speaks about three vocal registers, it can be assumed that Monteverdi referred to the registers of dynamics (volume and intensity), used to mirror the meaning of the text: *piano* for softness and *forte* for emotional intensity.

*affects*, previously mentioned by the composer. At the same time, rhythmic precision was also important, since the composer preferred well-established rhythmic formulae to express contrasting *affects*.<sup>19</sup>

Rightfully considered one of the first music historians, the Florentine theoretician Giovanni Battista Doni (1595–1647) criticized the musical practices of his epoch and published several treatises that represent valuable sources of information regarding the music composition and performance of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Among his notable writings the two-volume edition of essays must be mentioned, written between 1640 and 1647, and published in 1763 in Florence, under the title *Lyra Barberina*. The second volume of the *Lyra Barberina* contains an ample chapter titled *Trattato della musica scenica*, that deals with theatrical music. The author also tackles several issues related to vocal emission.

Doni argued that *stile recitativo* was not entirely suitable for opera, recommending that declamation be reserved for narrative purposes, while the more lyrical parts of the discourse were to be composed according to the *stile madrigalístico* of the *seconda prattica*.<sup>20</sup> He also makes a clear distinction between the *trillo* (or *increspamente*) and *tremolamento* (*trillo imperfetto*). Doni considers that the *trillo* represents the vibration of the voices, it does not alter the tone, and it is suitable especially for cadences and supported notes, best used in cheerful musical passages.<sup>21</sup> The *tremolamento* was considered more feminine and suitable for the evocation of sadness. It is not entirely clear, whether the term *trillo* refers to the natural vibration of the vocal folds, while *tremolamento* could refer to tremulousness. Nonetheless, Doni suggested that the vocal vibrato was an imitation of the string vibrato.<sup>22</sup>

Doni also devotes a few pages to his thoughts on the assignment of certain roles to particular voices, according to their timbre.<sup>23</sup> Similar to his predecessors and contemporaries, Doni writes about the importance of equalizing the vocal registers, referring to the correct emission of the high notes<sup>24</sup> — he mentions the desired outcome, but does not explain the technical mechanisms for achieving this.

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<sup>19</sup> Claudio Monteverdi in Strunk, Oliver. *Op. Cit.*, p. 414.

<sup>20</sup> Doni, Giovanni Battista. *Lyra Barberina Amphicordos: accedunt eiusdem opera*. Edited by A.F. Gori and G.b. Passeri in 2 volumes [*Trattati I* and *Trattati II*]. Firenze: Ant. Franc Gorius, 1763. vol. II, *Trattato della Musica Scenica*, pp. 31–33.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*, pp. 71–72. See also: Stark, James. *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>23</sup> Doni, *Op. Cit.*, pp.85-85.

<sup>24</sup> Stark, James. *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

According to Stark, what we refer to as the *old Italian school of singing* can be traced back to the music of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, “*the first golden era of singing*”, when vocal technique and the new styles of recitative and monody were harmoniously united – as the works of Caccini and Monteverdi prove.<sup>25</sup> Polyphony was rejected in favour of solo singing, which implied that singers must comply to new requirements. The preferred voice had to be full and natural, the singer had to avoid falsetto. As early as 1592, Lodovico Zacconi wrote about *voce di petto* and *voce di testa* in his treatise *Prattica di musica*. In this context, *voce di testa* refers to falsetto, Zacconi arguing that he preferred chest voices that did not sound dull, neither shrill.<sup>26</sup> His point of view was further cultivated in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The concept of naturalness and avoidance of falsetto referred to the equalization of the vocal registers as well, to a smooth and imperceptible transition between the registers. When singers failed to achieve freedom in singing (especially in the high register), the resulting sound was not pleasant, nor acceptable — as the above-mentioned sources confirm. However, neither of these authors offered practical advice regarding vocal technique.

Despite the fact that it is not clearly reflected in historical sources, vibrato seems to have been considered a normal part of artistic singing<sup>27</sup> – as also suggested by the frequent parallel in treatises between the string vibrato and vocal emission.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, a strong distinction was made between the natural vibrato and vocal tremulousness, or *tremulo*, which was considered a flaw.

## Spanish Sources

One of the most important Spanish treatises of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, *El melopeo y maestro* (1613), was written in Spanish by Pedro (Pietro) Cerone (1566–1625), an Italian musician who travelled to Spain and served in the Royal Chapels of Philip II and Philip III. This monumental work, consisting of 22 “books,” 849 chapters, and 1,160 pages, faithfully restates the thoughts of Zacconi on the qualities of the singing voice, at the same time offering insights on the social position of the musician and his behaviour. Cerone compares the Spanish musical training and composition to the Italian musical practices, proving to be extremely conservative for his time. Nonetheless, his

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<sup>25</sup> Idem, p. 197.

<sup>26</sup> Zacconi, Lodovico. *Prattica di musica utile et necessario si al compositore*. Venezia: Girolamo Polo, 1592, p. 56.

<sup>27</sup> Stark, James. *Op. cit.*, pp. 123–130.

<sup>28</sup> See also: Rousseau, Jean. *Traité de la viole*. Paris: Ballard, 1687, pp. 100–102.

work is considered an important historical document on the Spanish musical practices of the time. The treatise also offers observations regarding the execution of ornaments. Strunk considers, however, that the work offers an “*indigestible mass of information and misinformation*”, even useless ideas, also pointing to its conservative, old-fashioned tone.<sup>29</sup>

## The German Treatises

The views expressed in the Italian treatises were echoed by German composers and theorists as well. In 1618 Daniel Friderici (1584–1638), cantor, conductor, and composer, published *Musica figuralis oder neue Unterweisung der Singe Kunst*, in which he refers to the refinement and naturalness of the singing voice, that should be *zitternd* (trembling), *schwebend* (floating), *bebend* (pulsating).<sup>30</sup> The description refers to the vibrato<sup>31</sup>, a desired quality of the singing voice. Some sources consider that this *vibrato* is not the one referred to in the modern sense, but rather it is a recommendation for the voice to be emitted with freedom and without force.<sup>32</sup>

Michael Praetorius (1571–1621) published between 1614–1620 *Syntagma Musicum*, a musical treatise in three volumes. In the present, the work is considered one of the most valuable sources for historically documented performance. The treatise consists of three volumes: *I. Musicae Artis Analecta*, *II. De Organographia*, *III. Termini musicali*. In the third volume, chapter nine, Praetorius offers instructions regarding singing, referring to the new Italian style and the teachings of Giulio Caccini and Giovanni Battista Bovicelli. He considers that apart from a solid technique, singers must be able to express accents and affections, proving a good intellect and understanding of music — the three requisites for beautiful singing, according to the author, are *nature*, *art or doctrine*, and *practice*.<sup>33</sup> Praetorius mentions the vibrato, as one of the first desirable qualities in a singing voice, referring to the natural vibrato of a well-placed voice: “(...) a nice, pleasant vibrato (not, however, like some are accustomed to in school, but clearly restrained)”.<sup>34</sup> The fullness of the sound

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<sup>29</sup> Strunk, Oliver. *Op. cit.*, p. 262.

<sup>30</sup> Friderici, Daniel. *Musica figuralis oder new Singekunst*. Reprint edited after the 1614 edition by Erns Langelütje. Berlin: R. Gaertner, 1901, p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> Stark, James. *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>32</sup> Wistreich, Richard. *Vocal performance in the seventeenth century in The Cambridge History of Music Performance*, edited by Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell. Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 402.

<sup>33</sup> Praetorius, Michael. *Syntagma Musicum III*. 1619. Translated and edited by Jeffery Kite-Powell. Oxford Early Music Series. Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 215.

<sup>34</sup> Idem.



(related to the freedom of vocal emission) is described through the syntagm: “a smooth, round throat suitable for diminutions.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, the voice had to be round, but also capable of executing ornamental passages.

As other authors of the period, Praetorius places great emphasis on phrasing, recommending the singer to train his breathing in order to be able to sustain long tones. The problem of *false* is mentioned here as well, Praetorius advising against the use of this *half voice* that is forced, instead choosing a suitable vocal range that allows the singer to sing with a “full and bright sound”<sup>36</sup>.

Like other contemporary theoreticians, Praetorius is against excessive ornamentation on behalf of the singers, who thus spoil the pieces they perform, making them unrecognizable and unintelligible. Even though he supports the study and performance of virtuosic scales, he also believes that a singer’s training must include diction. Ornaments are related to the expressive rendition of various affects, as the Italian treatises also revealed.

Among the flaws of the voice, Praetorius mentions singing through the nose, stifling the voice in the throat, and singing with clenched teeth.<sup>37</sup> In the conclusion of the chapter, Praetorius refers to a future work dedicated to singers (which was never published), that would detail the ideas previously exposed. He also offers examples for the execution of diminutions, suggestions for the execution of various ornaments.

Contemporary of Schütz and Praetorius, Johann Andreas Herbst (1588–1666) is considered one of the most important German theoreticians of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1642 he published *Musica Practica*, a treatise on the art of singing, in which the author gives advice regarding tasteful ornamentation. Herbst was an important figure in a time when Italian compositional and performance practices were imported to Germany. This is reflected in the Venetian polychoral style of his early works, for example. Despite the fact that he did not employ the monodic style and recitative, he nonetheless based his ideas regarding singing on the Italian manner (particularly on the concepts exposed by Caccini and Praetorius). Herbst calls for a bright and sonorous sound, that could be achieved without the use of *false*. The singer was also required to have “eine schöne liebliche zittern und bebende Stimme”, while the diminutions were to be executed with a round throat (referring to the freedom of the sound, owing to mastery of vocal technique).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Idem.

<sup>36</sup> Idem.

<sup>37</sup> Praetorius, Michael, *Op. cit.*, p. 216.

<sup>38</sup> Herbst, Johann Andreas. *Musica practica sive instructio pro symphoniacis (in first edition)*. Nuremberg: J. Dümmlers, 1642.

French singer and teacher, Manuel Garcia was familiar with the work of Herbst, which he quoted in his *Traité complète de l'art du chant*, published in 1847.

Another important treatise on the German vocal performance of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is *Von der Singe-Kunst oder Manier* (published around 1650) by Christoph Bernhardt (1628–1692). Like other sources, the work contains ambiguous explanations, such as those regarding artistic devices: Bernhardt mentions the *fermo* (steady emission) and *the trillo (ardire)*, and cautions against the *tremulo*, or vocal tremulousness. Bernhardt also distinguished between various Italian style of singing: *alla Romana*, *alla Napolitana*, *alla Lombarda*. He also speaks extensively about singing *forte* and *piano*, in order to achieve various technical accomplishments in singing.<sup>39</sup>

The description of a narrow vibrato is present in most German treatises. Georg Falck (1630–1689), in his *Idea Boni Cantoris* (1688) speaks about a pleasant vibrato that flows from the throat but must not be articulated in the manner that resembles the sound of a goat (the later Italian treatises refer to this defect as *capretto*).

### **The French Treatises and the Dispute Between the French and Italian Styles**

17<sup>th</sup> century French vocal music owes much to the innovation brought about in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the group of poets *La Pléiade*, who aimed to revive French language and poetry. Desiring to strengthen the bond between poetry and music, in 1570 Jean-Antoine de Baïf founded the *Académie de Poésie et de Musique* and developed the *musique mesurée*. Music had to follow the rhythmic and metrical construction of declamation, *musique mesurée* becoming one of the most important concepts in the music of the late Renaissance, as mirrored by the works of such composers as Claude Le Jeune. *Musique mesurée* also played a significant role in the evolution of the *air du cour*,<sup>40</sup> a genre that would gradually replace the French chanson and grow in popularity in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

It is interesting to note the similar concepts that governed the French and Italian music in the late Renaissance and early Baroque, and to draw a parallel between the concepts of the Italian Camerata de' Bardi and those voiced by the French *La Pléiade*.

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<sup>39</sup> Bernhardt, Christoph. *Von der Singe-Kunst oder Manier*. Ca. 1650. Translation by Sion M. Honea available on-line: [https://www.kastrat.se/\\_doc/Bernhard%201657.pdf](https://www.kastrat.se/_doc/Bernhard%201657.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Karácsony, Noémi; Rucsanda, Mădălina Dana. *The Evolution of the French Chanson during the Renaissance: From the Parisian Chanson to the Pléiade Chansons, and the Air du Cour* in *STUDIA UBB MUSICA*, LXVIII, Special Issue 1, 2024 (pp. 83–100).

Numerous French theoretical works refer to the dispute between French and Italian music, a rivalry that could be explained through several factors: the dispute between the supporters and opponents of Lully, during the reign of Louis XIV; the quarrels between the supporters of French opera and those of Italian opera, known as *Les Querelles des Bouffons*; Gluck's reform of the opera and the impact of *opera buffa*.

The evolution of the *air du cour* owes much to the compositional efforts of Pierre de Nyert, Michel Lambert, and Beningne de Bacilly (1625–1690). Bacilly published in 1668 his *Rémarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, consisting of three parts: the first exposes the principles of singing, while the second and third are concerned with pronunciation. Bacilly makes a distinction between the *pretty (belle)* and the *good (bonne) voice*. According to him, a pretty voice is endowed with *belle cadence*<sup>41</sup>, translated by certain sources as *vibrato*.<sup>42</sup> Bacilly also speaks about large (*grande*) and small (*petite*) voices, seeming to prefer smaller and higher voices, due to their flexibility and ability to execute ornaments.<sup>43</sup> He also seems to have a more favourable approach regarding the use of *falsestto* and considers that *falsesttists* are able to render certain intervals or expressions more clear and refined than tenors (probably referring to the lack of register equalization in certain tenor voices). Nonetheless, Bacilly seems to appreciate the roundness of sound in singing. In the chapters devoted to pronunciation and consonant inflection, Bacilly speaks about the prolongation of consonants, depending on the *affect (passion)* the singer desires to express. The articulation of consonants would not alter the emission of the vowels, which were supposed to be governed by the steady airstream (onto which the consonants should also be directed).<sup>44</sup> Bacilly also mentioned *disposition*,<sup>45</sup> referred to in certain sources as *throat articulation*, employed in the execution of *agréments*, elaborate doubles or ornamented second verses of airs.<sup>46</sup>

The *air du cour* composed and performed during the reign of Louis XIV could have exhibited a more pronounced Italian influence, as revealed by the comparison between Bacilly's treatise and that of Jean Millet (1618–1684), *La belle methode ou l'art de bien chanter* (1666). Most of Millet's works were

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<sup>41</sup> Bacilly, Bertrand de. *Rémarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*. Paris: Guillaume de Luyne, 1671, p. 38.

<sup>42</sup> Stark, James. *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>43</sup> Bacilly, Bertrand de. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 41–44.

<sup>44</sup> Sanford, Sally. *National Singing Styles in A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, edited by Stewart Carter. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012, p.14.

<sup>45</sup> Bacilly, Bertrand de. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 48–51.

<sup>46</sup> Sanford, Sally. *Op. Cit.*, p.13.

probably destroyed during the French Revolution, with four arias and two motets preserved in this treatise. Millet attempted to adapt mid-17<sup>th</sup> century French ornamental practice to Italian style<sup>47</sup>, his treatise revealing that to him the art of singing was rather related to the art of ornamentation. Millet believed that the terms used to designate ornaments, such as *traits de gorge*, *portaments de voix*, *agréments*, *passages*, or *roulades* were related either to the manner in which these were produced (*traits de gorge*, for example), or they were defined in a general manner. Therefore, he preferred to use terms that suggested the location of the ornaments: *avant-son* (an accelerated movement of sound, just before the main note), *reste du son* (a short sound after the note), and the *roulade* (an elaboration of the main note; *passage*).<sup>48</sup> His description of the *trill* (*tremblement*) is as ambiguous as certain other terms, described by his contemporaries, Millet considering that it is impossible to learn its execution from written examples only.

As other authors of the century, Bacilly and Millet compared French *air du cour* with the singing of Italian compositions. In all these sources the differences regarding vocal technique and style are emphasized, with certain dissimilarities explained through the differences between the French and Italian language, as will be shown by the treatises of Abbé Francois Ragueneau and Jean Laurent Le Cerf de la Viéville, published in the first decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

As the Italian and German treatises, the French stressed the importance of pronunciation, the clarity and intelligibility of the sung text. The delivery of the text could become more refined when the singer paid great attention to the articulation of the consonants. Poor pronunciation, wrong placement of the accent, the incorrect placement of ornaments and execution of trills were considered vocal faults, as were singing in the nose, incorrect or poor projection of the sound. Of utmost importance were correct intonation, also mentioned in the treatise of Bacilly, flexibility, evenness (referring to the equalization of registers),<sup>49</sup> and sonority.

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<sup>47</sup> Cohen, Albert. "Jean Millet 'de Montgesoye (1618-1684)" in *Recherches sur la musique française classique*, vol. 8, Paris, Éditions A. et J. Picard, 1968, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas, Barbara E. *Jean Millet's L Art de bien chanter (1666): A Translation and Study*. Thesis. Graduate School of the University of North Texas, 1998, pp. 13–16.

<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to note that the French treatises, as the Italian and German sources, also speak about two registers (referring to *falsestto*) and don't seem to offer any solutions to the equalization of registers.

## The Voice of the 17th Century — Conclusions

Ulrich argues that the renunciation of the *falseto* could be related to the advent of the castrati, in the last half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>50</sup> The vocal emission of these singers allowed for the high register to be sung with more power and brilliance. The historical sources of the 17th century reveal that the *falseto* emission, that was either weak or shrill and often out of tune, was no longer acceptable, nor could the new requirements of the *seconda prattica* be accomplished without the equalization of registers. The presented sources reveal that most musicians speak about two registers (*voce di testa* and *voce di petto*), yet neither offers practical solutions for singers who deal with problems regarding equalization of registers or the correct emission and placement of sound.

With the early Baroque, the contribution of women to the public performance of music grew in importance, thus the treatises distinguish between the female and male voice types. In Italy, another preferred vocal type alongside the *castrato* is the female *alto* or *contralto* voice. Especially in the compositions of the early Baroque, the tessitura employed by composers for roles designated as *soprano* today are easily accessible for mezzo-soprano singers. This could emphasize the fact that vocal designations were very much related to vocal colour, rather than extension.

If the “*prima le parole, dopo la musica*” point of view required clear diction, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century the vocal discourse gradually became more ornamented, leading composers to write about the execution of various types of ornamentations. French music, in particular, is very sensitive about the correct execution of ornaments, as revealed by such treatises as those of Marin Mersenne, Bernard de Bacilly, or Jean Millet.

Another interesting trait is the expansion of the vocal range throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, leading to new requirements in vocal technique, expressed in the treatises of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Virtuoso singing will gradually be replaced by the transition toward a more balanced musical language in the dawn of the Classical period, which combined the wide vocal range with the capability of the singer to execute ornaments – but expressed in a different stylistic idiom.

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<sup>50</sup> Ulrich, Bernhard. *Concerning the Principles of Voice Training During the A Cappella Period and until the Beginning of Opera (1474–1640)*. Translated by John W. Seale. Minneapolis: Pro Musica Press, 1973, p. 100. [First published as *Die Grundsätze der Stimmbildung während der A Cappella Periode und zur Zeit des Aufkommens der Oper 1474–1646* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1912)].

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## PERFORMANCE TRANSCRIPTION AS A VARIETY OF MUSICAL INTERPRETATION: AN EXAMPLE OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH'S *PRELUDE AND FUGUE IN C MINOR BWV 549* ARRANGED FOR BUTTON ACCORDION

KATERYNA CHEREVKO<sup>1</sup>, OKSANA PYSMENNA<sup>2</sup>

**SUMMARY.** The article is devoted to consideration of the specifics of performance transcriptions as one of the varieties of musical interpretation, focusing on the development of accordion repertoire, particularly the transcription of baroque polyphonic compositions. The aim is to explore the interpretative aspects of J.S. Bach's *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor BWV 549* adapted for accordion, considering the instrument's technical and acoustic characteristics, as well as playing techniques. Through a comprehensive analysis, it demonstrates the importance of transforming the timbre of the organ piece to suit the accordion's sound while capturing its figurative and ideological essence through diverse technical approaches to button accordion performance. Considering the textural intricacies of polyphonic compositions, their transcriptions for accordion are regarded as interpretive "renditions." The performance interpretation of such pieces involves not only the faithful reproduction of the musical score but also the utilization of a range of technical playing techniques specific to the accordion. The proficient amalgamation of these techniques' hinges on a deep understanding of various musical and expressive devices, the nuances of musical language, and the structural organization essential for the professional transcription of an organ composition for accordion.

**Keywords:** transcription, interpretation, Baroque music, polyphonic composition, Johann Sebastian Bach, performance, button accordion

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## Introduction

Button accordion art is a unique phenomenon in the world musical culture. Its rapid development has led to the emergence of many outstanding button accordion performers. Considering the short history of the development of the instrument, the peculiarity of the formation of the accordion repertoire remains a problematic issue. After all, it is known that the process of formation and enrichment of the repertoire relates to the improvement of the design of the instrument, which leads to the expansion of technical capabilities for performers. The gradual increase in the level of performing skill led to a change in the role of the instrument in musical art. Accordingly, the popularity of the accordion grew, which contributed to the formation of its repertoire. However, to this day, a significant part of the button accordion repertoire consists of adaptations of classical samples of music from previous eras, the study of which is aimed at the formation of the musical and aesthetic taste of the accordion performers and the development of their artistic thinking. It is known that transcriptions have always been part of the repertoire of pianists and violinists, but they are of special importance for accordionists. These works not only expand the accordion repertoire, but also give performers the opportunity to master the technique of performing works written for other instruments. Thus, in this process, the dynamization of creative searches in solving artistic, technical, stylistic, and interpretive tasks while preserving the artistic aesthetics of the composer's original text becomes important in this process.

The inclusion of transcriptions in the button accordion repertoire is primarily due to the limited number of original works written specifically for the instrument. Therefore, transcriptions hold an important place, as they broaden and enrich the repertoire, enhance the technical possibilities of the instrument, and foster the development of button accordionists' performance skills. Significant among these transcriptions are those of works by prominent composers of the 17th-19th centuries, particularly the polyphonic compositions of the Baroque era, with J. S. Bach at the forefront. Bach's works, characterized by a multifaceted palette of imagery and a rich genre spectrum, have inspired a wide range of transcriptions and adaptations.

Bach's *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C Minor* is an excellent example of Baroque polyphonic music. The popularity of this piece among accordionists stems from performer-created transcriptions. This article aims to identify the distinctive features of performing a transcription of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C Minor* on the accordion, focusing on the instrument's technical-structural characteristics, its timbral and acoustic qualities, and the specific playing techniques required.

## **Methods and methodology of scientific research**

The problems of this article led to the use of a wide methodological base of research, which consists of a complex of scientific methods: source studies - when studying scientific works devoted to the consideration of transcriptions in musical art, problems of musical interpretation; historical - when outlining the specifics of the interpretation of the works of J.S. Bach; of a musicologist - when considering the specifics of transcriptions as a component of the repertoire of button accordion players. When considering the transcription of the *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor BWV 549* by J.S. Bach, for a multi-timbral button accordion with ready-made chords, it is necessary to use various methods of musicological analysis: methodical-performance (playing techniques, performance technique, timbre-acoustic features) and musical-theoretical (for outlining the form, dramatic development of the work, expressive means, etc.). In the performance analysis, attention is focused on the choice of performance techniques, tempos, dynamic shades, and registers; melismatic, phrasing, application and articulation are analyzed.

## **Literature review**

The question of performance interpretation of musical compositions is highlighted in numerous works by musicologists and performers in general. The complexity of the interpretation process is due to the reproduction of not only the figurative and ideological content of the work, stylistic features, but also considering the individual skill of the performer - all this constitutes a complex, multi-level approach to the sound realization of a musical work. The essence of performing interpretation is the individualization of approaches to the performance of works. However, a fixed version of the interpretation of a musical work is translation or transcription, which captures the moment of interpretation by transforming the musical text into accordance with the technical and constructive features of the musical instrument.

The specificity of the topic of the article encourages the involvement of a wide range of scientific works related to the history of the development of accordion art in general, namely, attention is focused on the ways of creating a repertoire for the accordion M. Davydov (2000), I. Yergiev (2004), the specifics of the formation of professional technical performance skills of accordionists M. Davydov (1983, 2004), V. Knyazev (2004), A. Semeshko (2002). A separate group consists of scientific works that highlight the problems of interpretation of works in musical art and consider the transcription and translation of musical works as a musical genre: M. Oberyukhtin (1973), N. Ryzhkova (2006). The central place in our research is occupied by the works devoted to the features of transcriptions and translations of the works of J.S. Bach for button accordion.

In his work, "Theory of translation. Status, problems, aspects", when researching translation problems, A. Schweitzer<sup>3</sup> develops categories of equivalence and adequacy, highlighting their common and distinctive properties: for adequacy - process, for equivalence - result. The author writes: "... the content of the category "adequacy" is correspondence to the communicative situation, and the content of equivalence consists in the correlation of texts."

The importance of transcriptions in the history of the development of musical art is considered in a few scientific works. F. Busoni notes that despite the existence of a few unsuccessful processing of the original works, the transcription "...does not destroy the original version and the latter does not suffer any losses due to the first... Good, majestic "universal" music remains the same no matter what instrument it sounds on."<sup>4</sup>

L. Godovsky<sup>5</sup> believes that transcriptions do not diminish the value of the original work, but sometimes "transcriptions, treatments, paraphrases, if they are conceived in a creative way, are something that really exists, which in terms of value can be a masterpiece and even surpass the original composer's work".

The main task of the authors of translations is to preserve the main ideological direction, dramatic and compositional idea of the work. However, at the same time, a new work appears from the translator's pen. Based on this, V. Moskalenko<sup>6</sup>, studying the issue of the original work and the new work as a result of translation or transcription, introduces the concepts of "composer's work" and "performer's work". The author considers translation as a phenomenon of musical interpretation. Transcription is always associated with a change in the timbre-register plane of the sound of a musical piece, therefore it is important in the process of instrumental translation to reflect the emotional-intellectual atmosphere, the spirit of the era as the most important component. This can be achieved with a deep understanding and as close as possible to the signs of the corresponding style period. The main task of the transcription of the work, as well as its musical interpretation in general, consists in "aesthetic renewal, revealing the expressive possibilities of the object of interpretation, in its adaptation to new life needs"<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Schweitzer, Albert. *J. S. Bach*. Warszawa, 2009, p. 99

<sup>4</sup> Cited by Rudenko, Volodymyr. "Concert violin transcription of the 20th century and problems of interpretation". In *Musical performance*, Issue 10, 1979, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Godowski, Leopold. "About transcriptions, arrangements, and paraphrases". *School of piano transcription*. Moscow, 1961. p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Moskalenko, Victor. *Lectures on musical interpretation: Teaching manual*, Kyiv, 2013. URL: <https://knmau.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/V.-Moskalenko-Lektsiyi-z-muzichnoyi-interpretatsiyi-Navchalnij-posibnik.pdf>, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

Therefore, transcriptions of musical works can be considered in the context of musical interpretation, as one of the varieties of interpretation of the original text by the translator and performer. In accordion performance, the practice of combining the interpreter and the performer in one person is common. The timbre specificity of the chosen accordion and the peculiarities of the performance technique on the instrument play an important role in the creation of the interpretation of the work by the accordion performer, the reproduction of those visual and sound characteristics that the composer's work contains. Therefore, in the proposed article we will use the concepts of performing transcription, musicological and composer interpretation<sup>8</sup>.

### Theoretical framework

Transcriptions, arrangements, translations or adaptations, processing and their classification require terminological clarification, because the specifics of the appearance of these types of works in musical art cause a certain terminological ambiguity. All these terms come from different languages, so they are sometimes used as synonyms. The common characteristics of these musical works is that in their content they imitate original musical compositions, however, they are aimed at transforming the original musical material.

Let's turn to the definition of terms in encyclopedic editions. "A transcription is essentially the adaptation of a composition for an instrument or instruments other than those for which it was originally written. An arrangement is a similar procedure, although the arranger often feels free to take musical liberties with elements of the original score"<sup>9</sup>. The American Federation of Musicians defines arranging as "the art of preparing and adapting an already written composition for presentation in other than its original form. An arrangement may include reharmonization, paraphrasing, and/or development of a composition, so that it fully represents the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic structure"<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Performance transcription is a type of interpretation that involves the translation of a musical work (original source) for performance on another instrument or group of instruments.

Musicological interpretation is a type of interpretation based on a complex analysis in musical-theoretical and historical-stylistic aspects. In such an analysis, the musicologist tries to follow the logic of construction and dramaturgy of the piece. The composer's interpretation is expressed by genres of musical transcription: paraphrases (suites or fantasies on themes from other works), etc.

<sup>9</sup> Arrangement and transcription. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/art/instrumentation-music/Arrangement-and-transcription#ref530216>

<sup>10</sup> Arrangement. URL: <https://www.classiccat.net/dictionary/arrangement.php>

Today, there is enough works dedicated to the study of this problem, however, in them, the authors use different interpretations of terms. N. Ryzhkova defines transcriptions as "...a special kind of music, which differs significantly from the composer's creativity in terms of its origin, status, functioning, which should be considered as a special genre variety"<sup>11</sup>. Thus, transcriptions occupy a separate place in the system of genres of musical art and are included in the category of derived genres according to the specifics of their origin.

Based on the comparison of the musical texts of the original work and the derivative (transcriptions) and determination of the level of their similarity, three categories of transcriptions are distinguished. The first includes arrangements of musical works in which the author's text and the text of the interpretation are practically identical, that is, contain a small number of differences. The main indicators of the ratio of the text of the arrangement and the original text are the preservation of the form of the work, the texture of the presentation, melody, etc. The differences may relate to the timbre palette of the musical piece in accordance with the specifics of the sound of the instrument. Instead, the greater distance of the interpretation text to the original source characterizes the second group of transcriptions. In these works, the interpretation becomes a variant of the original work with the obligatory preservation of the figurative content of the composition. This group includes works that transform the original text – arrangements, and works on "themes": capriccios, divertissements, dances, variations, etc. The third group of derivative genres includes works in which the text of the original source is modified to the extent that it changes its meaning, melodic, harmonic, and compositional aspects of the composition. This group includes fantasies and paraphrases.

The classification of transcriptions by M. Yu. Borysenko<sup>12</sup> is based on the timbre component, on the so-called "two-author transcription". Accordingly, the author divides transcriptions into transcriptions- and transcriptions of processing. The heterogeneity of the genre of transcriptions is revealed in the heterogeneity of stylistic synthesis, the interaction of the "original system" and the "version system". "... in "strict" transcriptions, textural and intonation changes do not violate the initial thematic structure, compositional and dramaturgical logic and form. In contrast to them, in "free transcriptions" a significant modification of the textural-intonation side of the work leads to changes in thematic structures, up to the appearance of new ones, which leads to significant changes at the compositional and dramaturgical level"<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Ryzhkova, Natalia. Transcription: theoretical aspects of the genre. Petrov O. (ed.) *In memory of M. Etinger*. Astrakhan: Institute of Advanced Training for Teachers, vol. 1. 2006, p. 70.

<sup>12</sup> Borysenko, Maria. *Genre of transcription in the system of individual compositional style* (Thesis PhD). Kharkiv, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Cited by Ryzhkova, op.cit., p. 73.

B. Borodin considers transcriptions as a method of transforming the works of previous eras into the musical space of today<sup>14</sup>. The researcher singles out two methods of transformation of the musical text, namely the technical one - the exact reproduction of the text in "another system", and the interpretive one, which is "not only a phenomenon of performing art or a composer's form of work with the original text, but also as a "fixation of artistic values"<sup>15</sup>.

The transcription of a musical work can be considered in a broader way because it is connected not only with a change in the tonal component of the work, but also with the appearance of new interpretations of the composer's work in the work of instrumentalists. Therefore, transcriptions as a special genre of musical art can be considered from the point of view of performing interpretation and considered as one of the varieties of interpretation of the work. Considering the differences that exist when considering the parameters of interpretive versions, in our opinion, the classification offered by the Ukrainian researcher of new methods of understanding the artistic meaning of a musical work, Viktor Moskalenko, seems logical: "... let's distinguish the following types of interpretation: listening, editorial, performing, composer directorial, technological and musicological"<sup>16</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the circle of musical interpreters includes musicians-performers. The result of the sound of the musical text depends entirely on the performer-interpreter, who acts as an intermediary between the creator of the music and the listener. But, as noted by V. Moskalenko, expanding this concept, in addition to performing musicians, musicologists, music directors, music teachers, this circle can also include "those composers who in their music turn to the transformation of artistic material from the works of other authors or from their own works"<sup>17</sup>. That is, authors of translations, transcriptions, arrangements, etc. can be considered musical interpreters. "Varieties of musical interpretation also include performing translation."<sup>18</sup>

As you know, the realization of a musical work as an original example of musical art takes the following path: composer-interpreter-listener. So, the composer and the performer are the main ones in this triad. The activity of a composer-interpreter, i.e., the process of interpreting the original source combines several factors: highly artistic musical material, that is, the properties of the material, the goals, and tasks of the artist, as well as the talent, artistic taste, professionalism, and personal characteristics of the interpreter. In this

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<sup>14</sup> Borodin, Boris. *The phenomenon of piano transcription: the experience of complex research* (Thesis of Doctor of Arts). Moscow, 2006, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Cited by Ryzhkova, op.cit., p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> Moskalenko, op.cit., p.8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

context, the term “musical interpreters” is often used - people engaged in interpreting activities<sup>19</sup>. Since the circle of musical interpreters includes not only performing musicians, but also musicologists - theorists, historians and critics, a comprehensive analysis of musical expressive means complements the component of “musical interpretation”.

### **Specifics of Transcribing Bach’s Polyphonic Works for Button Accordion**

Translations and transcriptions, as one of the phenomena of musical interpretation, acquired the meaning of an independent genre even in the time of J. S. Bach. The composer created about five hundred new versions of his own and other people’s works. His pen includes translations of concerts by A. Vivaldi, G. Ph. Telemann, B. Marcello, J. A. Reinken. Turning to the genre of translations, J.S. Bach “boldly introduces elements of organ, vocal, and orchestral writing into piano music. Unconcerned about the limited possibilities of the harpsichord, J.S. Bach considers it either as a singing instrument, or as a whole orchestra in miniature, which includes both soloists and orchestral accompaniment.”<sup>20</sup>

F. Busoni, researching the genre of transcriptions, in the work of J.S. Bach, notes the specifics and features of the sound of a musical piece when it is transferred from one instrument to another: “In order to bring the essence of “processing” into the role of an artistic phenomenon in the reader’s assessment with one decisive blow, it is enough to name J.S. Bach. He was one of the most prolific transcribers of his own and others’ pieces, especially as an organist. From him, I learned to recognize the truth that good, great, “universal music” remains the same, no matter what instrument it sounds on. However, I also learned another truth - that different instruments have different (their own) language, in which they convey this music always in a slightly different way”<sup>21</sup>.

A. Schweitzer wrote in his monograph about the great composer: “Bach, having a certain passion for translations, would have approved of pianists who promote his organ work”<sup>22</sup>. One of the famous accordionists, F. Lips, expressed an interesting opinion on this matter “... Bach would not be against the fact that his music was promoted by accordionists as well. If the accordion

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Alekseev, Aleksandr. *History of piano art. Part 1, 2*. Moscow: Music, 1988, p. 63.

<sup>21</sup> Busoni, Ferruccio. *The first appendix to the first volume of J.S. Bach's "Piano of Good Tune"*. Leningrad. Moscow: Music, 1941, p. 141.

<sup>22</sup> Schweitzer, op.cit., p. 233.

had existed in the time of French harpsichordists, who knows, maybe many works in the original would not have been written for the organ, violin or harpsichord, but for the accordion”<sup>23</sup>.

A few specific and original aspects can be found in the translations for button accordion of organ works. The use of a button accordion with free-bass system opened the opportunity for accordionists to perform polyphonic compositions. Among them are the works of ancient masters, modern foreign and Ukrainian composers, which previously could not be performed on the button accordion with ready-made chords. The peculiarity of the sound of polyphony on the chosen button accordion is determined by its characteristic features: natural singing, the possibility of polyphonic sound, the ability to sustain long sounds with a wide range of dynamic shades. All this allows you to preserve the “fluidity” inherent in polyphonic music in the movement of voices, the relief of their sound. This is facilitated by the small scale of the right and left keyboards, which allows you to cover a wide range of voices in simultaneous sounding. Preservation of the semantic load of horizontal lines is facilitated by the possibility of their full execution on one of the keyboards. The full-fledged sounding of organ works on the button accordion is also explained by the fact that the organ and accordion share the same principles of sound creation.

### **Performance Analysis of J.S. Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C Minor* in Transcription for Button Accordion**

The cycle *Organ prelude and fugue in C minor* belongs to the early samples of the composer's organ works. It is known to have been written before 1723 and exists in two editions, BWV 549 (in the key in *C minor*) and BWV 549a (in the key of D minor) and was notated in the soprano key. “The ambiguous title “Pr Praeludium o Fantasia Pedaliter ex Db” that appears in Moller Handschrift copy of Prelude & Fugue in d, BWV 549a...”<sup>24</sup>. The composer himself changed the tonality of the work with a certain goal - avoiding D4 in the pedal part. In the process of improving contrapuntal writing, J.S. Bach often made changes to his own works. Among them, the change of the melodic lines of the middle voices, their ratio in the bass. Preludes contain the most corrections, because the nature of their thematic material and a “freer” construction made it possible to make corrections.

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<sup>23</sup> Lips, Fridrih. “About transpositions and transcriptions”. In *Bayan and accordionists*, vol. 3, 1977, p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> Stauffer, George. *The organ preludes of Johann Sebastian Bach*. Umi Research press, 1980, p. 19.



The whole cycle has a rather modest scale - only 88 bars (*Prelude* - 29 bars, *Fugue* - 59 bars). The commonality of figurative and thematic content, which unites the prelude and the fugue, can be traced in intonation connections, which is rarely found in Bach cycles. It is not difficult to detect the proximity of intonation turns, their similarity in character and types of melodic movement. This is a different expression of one leading dominant thought, which in the prelude is reflected detachedly and contemplatively, and in the fugue - more emotionally and dramatically. Thus, the thematic material exposed in the prelude is more deeply and concentratedly reproduced in the fugue. In this sense, the prelude fulfills its role — it introduces the main moods and thoughts of the entire cycle.

The prelude is written in The Thought-Composed, Sectional Form. It begins with a strict exposition of the thematic material (passagework) in the low register of the pedal part. The opening material contains the thematic grain of the prelude, a short four-note motif with a characteristic ascending fourth (V-I-VII#-I) and a mordent on the last note. The rhythmic organization of the motif is preserved in each subsequent performance. The thematic material of the prelude is an instrumental type of melodic line, which is built on the repetition of the motif at a different pitch with slight intonation changes. In bars 1-2, the melodic line rises sharply from C3 to C4, maintaining a characteristic rhythmic organization (three sixteenths and a quarter) and a mordent. Each stop is highlighted with a mordent on I-III-V-I degrees of tonality. In this way, the tonality of the work is confirmed and fixed. In bars 3-8 there is a downward movement of the melodic line with broken chordal passages of sixteenth durations, with a short-term modulation in E-flat major (in bars 5, 6 and the first part of bar 7), which is carried out as a continuation of the previous movement, a descending diatonic sequence with broken adjacent degree consonances : D-S-III-II-T with a conclusion in SII<sub>4/3</sub>, which moves to D<sub>4/3</sub> in C minor with a return to the low register and an emphatic cadential ending.

It should be noted that the organ pedal sounds quite loud and massive in the low register, so in the translation for the button accordion, octave duplication of two hands is used to reproduce the appropriate timbre of the sound. Thus, the sound of the low register of the left keyboard is combined with the sound of the “bassoon + clarinet” registers an octave higher in the right keyboard, which is accordingly reflected in the notation of the piece (bars 1-8) for the accordion (Example 1).

**J. S. Bach. *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor, Prelude* (bars 1-4)**

When processing the musical text of the initial construction and when adapting it for performance on the button accordion, special attention should be paid to the execution of cross-out mordents, which are performed due to the duration of the main note with a mandatory attack on the first sound. If this rule is ignored, the semantic accent will mechanically shift to the last note of the mordent. As a recommendation, it is possible to consider performing mordents using the *leggiero* technique, which involves playing with finger strokes with arbitrary movements from the brush. M. Davydov recommends practicing this technique as follows: "To master the *leggiero* technique, you should practice the strokes of each finger from the swing for a long time. It is necessary to avoid straining or shaking the hand. Overcoming the resistance of the keyboard here is achieved by the weight of the fingers through a blow from above."<sup>25</sup>

After a detailed introduction, the first section of the *Prelude* begins (bars 9-18), which is characterized by a developmental type of exposition. Against the background of sustained bass, in a polyphonic and imitative texture, the main motif is performed, which alternately sounds in each voice. Each repetition of the motif undergoes variant-melodic changes; however, its rhythmic organization is preserved. The texture of the prelude resembles a

<sup>25</sup> Davydov, Mykola. *Fundamentals of formation of performance skills of a button accordionist*. Kyiv: Music Ukraine, 1983, p. 10.

fugato, with an imitative introduction of the voices and a gradual thickening of the sound. Therefore, when performing the theme of the prelude on the button accordion, it is appropriate to change the register to “organ” — “bassoon + piccolo” (Example 2).

E. g. 2



**J. S. Bach. *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor, Prelude (bars 9-10)***

The specificity of the texture of the prelude can cause certain performance difficulties for the accordionist when simultaneously playing a sustained bass on a ready-made keyboard and undertones on an optional keyboard in the left-hand part. In part, performers solve this problem with the help of the “sticky bass” function, which is equipped with modern instruments of the brands “PIGINI” (models: Super Bayan Sirius, Sirius Kuma, Nova) and “BUGARI” (model series “Conservatory”). This function helps to solve the problem of many physiological difficulties when performing on the button accordion wide textured layers of organ work, especially with polyphony in the left-hand part. This technical and constructive improvement of the instrument involves the fixation of a certain button in the bass keyboard (withstand the required duration of the sound), which allows you to simultaneously perform the organ section and the parallel textural exposition of the material, regardless of the range.

The first section of the form is modulating and ends in G minor (the key of the natural dominant). The general imitative movement of the voices continues; however, characteristic cadence features appear in the bass voice—sustained sounds D3-D2- F#2-G2. The extended cadence is harmonized by the side dominant consonances of the introductory seventh degree and the diatonic sequence that sounds on the sustained tonic organ point – G major (bars 14-18.):

$$VII_{6/5} \rightarrow D (D) | VII_7 -- | \rightarrow t - s_{6/4} (g) | t - D_{4/3} - t | t - II_{6/4} - t_{6/4} - VII_{6/4} - t ||$$

A characteristic feature of this construction is tonal and tonal variability: F minor – C minor – F minor – C minor – F minor – C major. In bars 20 and 24, the fluid nature of the prelude is interrupted by decisive chords in the homophonic harmonic exposition in tonality C minor:  $D_2 - t_6$  (bar 20) and  $D - D_{6/5} \rightarrow s$  (F minor, bar 24). On the button accordion, these chords should be performed with *marcato* stroke in combination with smooth blowing of the bellows, emphasized by a firm attack and dynamics *forte*. The *Prelude* ends with a light Picardy Third – cadence in C major, which suggests the lofty and heroic mood of the fugue.

The performance of organ works on the button accordion, and particularly the Bach's cycles proposed for consideration in this work, requires the performer to possess melodic technique, which involves the performance of the musical canvas with *legato* and *legatissimo* strokes. The use of these articulations enhances sound quality and contributes to the integrity of the melodic structures. M. Davydov's recommendations are important in the work on improving the melodic technique: "In the melodic technique, it is especially important to subtly feel the tips of the fingers. *Legatissimo* is literally "sculpted" with light, flexible and, if necessary, powerful movements. It is necessary to avoid excessive pressure on the keyboard, striving for the freedom of the wrist joint in combination with expediently active work of the fingers..."<sup>26</sup>.

When performing the *Prelude*, it is necessary to focus attention on a clear change of the bellows, which would correspond to the end or beginning of musical phrases. The difficulty of changing the bellows in the *Prelude* is caused by the texture of the presentation, in which short melodic sequential constructions sound on the organ section. The additional load in the process of conducting the bellows corresponds to the dynamic plan of the *Prelude*, which involves a gradual increase in volume from *mf* in the 9th bar to *f* in the second half of the 20th bar, with the subsequent preservation of the dynamics until the last bar. Considering the above, changes of the bellows should be made in accordance with the bass line of the organ section, guided by the individual physiological capabilities of the performer and the individual technical and structural capabilities of the instrument.

The three-voice fugue is based on a uniform subject, in which we find three phases. According to structural features, the topic belongs to the "i-m-t" formula: initium-movere-terminus (beginning-development-completion). So, the initial phase (bars 1-2) is built from two phrases in a variant arrangement; the development phase consists of a developed two-beat phrase based on the initial motive; the conclusion (terminus) modulates to the key of the minor dominant – G minor. The ending of the theme (G2) coincides with the beginning

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

of the response (G3, at the beginning of the 5th bar). The subject of the fugue sounds eager and energetic, it is presented in sixteenth durations in combination with fourth and eighth durations (Example 3).

## E. g. 3

Moderato

**J. S. Bach. *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor*,  
subject of the *Fugue* (bars 1-4)**

The tonal answer (*risposta*) to the modulating subject (bars 5-8) undergoes changes only in the terminus phase, it is transposed in such a way as to return to the main tonality – C minor. The answers enter one by one, conquering the register space. The order of entry of voices: bass – alto – soprano. The second answer sounds in the version given in the subject, but a perfect octave higher.

In general, the fugue is arranged in a three-part form with expositional, middle, and final parts. The exposition of the fugue, which consists of three main movements of subject (C minor – G minor – C minor, bars 1-12), is performed with a gradual increase in dynamics from *mf* to *f*. Such a dynamic solution stems from the sublime-heroic nature of the thematic material and is achieved by the gradual expansion of the texture by including new voices.

With each subsequent conduction of subject, it rises in intervals of pure fifths — from the first conduction in the small octave to the third - in the three-lined octave. It should also be noted that the first three performances of the subject are quite bright because the remaining voices of the fugue do not create “opposition” to them. A partially restrained counter subject is added to the uniform and motor subject, laid out in sixteenth notes, which is built on

contrasting material to the subject, mainly in eighth and quarter notes. The second counter subject is freely composed. This free counterpoint built on a material like the first counter subject and sounds more like a harmonic addition to it, often duplicating individual motifs in parallel thirds and sixths.

The development section does not contain contrasts, but it sounds a bit detached. The tonic-dominant tonal plan is preserved — the subject follows five times in the keys G minor – C minor - C minor - G minor -C minor, each performance of which is separated by episodes (interludes). The subject and its motifs are performed simultaneously in different voices and are often duplicated by parallel sixths and tenths.

The basis of the construction of the middle section is not the tonal principle of development, but the variant-developmental one. Episodes (interludes) are based on the first two phases of the subject. The motive of the melodic cadence is cut off, and in its place a further variant development is given, mainly with the help of sequential movement.

The development section is separated from the following by a cadence laid out by rhythmically increased durations: quarter notes in II-V-I-I degrees (39 bar), preceded by a series of deviations through lateral dominants to the keys of C minor, G minor, E-flat major and a descending diatonic sequence with parallel triads in 1<sup>st</sup> inversion:

*VI<sub>6</sub> - V<sub>6</sub> - IV<sub>6</sub> - III<sub>6</sub> - II<sub>6</sub> - I<sub>6</sub> in C minor (bars 37-38)*

In the final section, the subject is not presented in the original presentation. Its motif appears once at the beginning of the section in an intermedial unfinished version in the lower voice with homophonic accompaniment in the upper voices and establishes the main tonality. The sound of the active and moving subject is “accompanied” by the measured movement of the voices, which forms a harmonic progression with clearly defined functional relationships:

*t | sII<sub>7</sub> - D<sub>7</sub> - t - D<sub>43</sub> | t<sub>6</sub> - D<sub>65</sub> - t - D<sub>65</sub> - t - s | D<sub>7</sub> etc. (bars 40-43)*

The fugue ends, traditional for baroque works, with a stop on a tonic with a Picardy third. Against its background, a virtuoso fantasy-recitative additional plagal cadence of T-s-T, which is built up by wave-like movements of the thirty-second. The last sustained tonic chord (with duplications) leaves a sense of the solemnity of the sound from the rather stormy variant development of the fugue.

When performing a fugue on the button accordion, you should pay attention to the clarity of the performance of each theme introduction and its execution. This especially applies to moments when the theme sounds in the left-hand part. Due to the structural features of the instrument, namely the

absence of timbre registers (this applies to older models of ready-to-choose accordions, in particular the “Ukraine” model), the sound of the musical material in the left-hand part may be somewhat dull and indistinct. The main strokes for the performance of this fugue are *legato*, *non-legato* and *marcato*, which are combined with active and maximally even blowing of the bellows.

The *legato* stroke implies a clean relationship of adjacent sounds, which is achieved by hitting, pushing or pressing a key as quickly as possible and simultaneously removing the finger from the previous one. At the same time, there should not be any caesuras and gaps in the sound. Insufficient auditory-motor control on the part of the performer in working on this stroke often leads to the influx and merging of neighboring sounds. M. Davydov describes the basic conditions for correct *legato* performance as follows: “Independence of fingers and their timely readiness to press the key, coordination with a free but ready-to-act brush of the hand; muscle rest between strokes; the constant pursuit of ever greater speed, economy of swing, and power of the fingers; continuous activation of auditory attention aimed at optimal accuracy...”<sup>27</sup>. The main part of the musical material of the fugue, which includes the sixteenth-note motifs of the theme, the development section and the final section with a virtuosic additional cadence, is performed with a *legato* touch.

The *non-legato* stroke is close to the *legato* stroke, but it differs from the previous one by the presence of a caesura before the appearance of each subsequent sound. The duration of notes and caesuras can be different depending on the artistic intentions of the performer. This stroke is used in works of an energetic and assertive nature, it is well suited to the execution of the motifs of the theme, which are presented in octave and quarter durations, and is also the main stroke of the countersubject or free counterpoint in the exposition and development (mid-entry) sections of the fugue.

The *marcato* stroke involves an emphatic, firm attack using directed some energy combined with smooth movement of the bellows. It should be used when playing the chords in the final section that accompany the theme. The use of a *marcato* touch in the final section gives the sound a courageous and active character. For an emphasized performance of three chords:  $t_6 - II_6 - D_7$  with duplications (45 bars) in the intermediate unfinished version of the theme, you can use one of the types of playing with a *marcato* stroke – *portamento-marcato*. The essence of performing with this method consists in actively pushing the bellows and maintaining the dynamic tension of each sound, interval or chord at the level of the initial attack with the maximum endurance of their durations.

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<sup>27</sup> Davydov, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

The performance of the fugue theme is also complicated by the presence of two trills (Example 3) at the end, which require separate processing by the performer. The trill is an element of skill, and its speed and evenness of performance are determined by the orderliness of movements, constant and continuous contact of the fingers with the surface of the keyboard. When mastering the trill game, it is necessary to ensure that the hand is as close as possible to the keyboard, and the speed of finger movements does not clamp the executive apparatus. To improve the performance of the trill, which in this case consists of six notes, you can resort to playing with odd rhythmic groups, that is, dividing it into two triplets. Such practice of the trill with the addition of another accent and displacement of the rhythmic support will be useful for increasing the accuracy of the strike of each finger, reactivity and rhythmicity of movements.

The timbre-dynamic plan of the fugue is not too diverse. The dynamic gradations in the exposition and development sections are between *mf* and *f*, only in the final section the dynamization occurs on a wider scale and passes through the *f*, *sp*, *f*, *pp* and *ff* levels. Considering such a dynamic plan and the small size of the fugue (59 bars), the main timbre register for its performance is "bassoon + piccolo", which has a very similar sound to the organ. In the context of the interpretation of this work, this register is well combined with the sound of the left keyboard of the accordion. The change of timbre register can be used only to perform the cadence of the fugue. To do this, you need to turn on the "tutti", which will give the cadence more brightness and sound power on *ff*.

When choosing the tempo of the fugue, the editor's recommendations should be considered, since tempo instructions are extremely rare in Bach's works. Moderato tempo is indicated in the *Fugue* c-moll. But, as a rule, slower tempos are preferred. "Performing Bach's organ works for a long time; you begin to prefer slower and slower tempos. ... The outline of the piece should appear before the listener in a calm plasticity. He must also have time to imagine the internal connection and proportion of the parts. If the impression of vagueness and vagueness remains, the work cannot affect the listener"<sup>28</sup>.

The slow temp of performance gives the performer the opportunity to understand the logic of the construction of parts and their comparison, the peculiarities of the expressive means of each of them. The prelude has an improvisational-fantasy character; therefore, it is performed freely, without haste measured and moving with an emphasis on the recitative-dramatic content; the fugue is more organized, it preserves uniform movement and complementarity of rhythm, which results from its constructively clear and strict structural structure.

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<sup>28</sup> Schweitzer, *op.cit.*, p. 227.



The performance of polyphonic compositions on the accordion involves the process of setting up a convenient and logical fingering. The main burden falls on the right hand, which is tasked with performing two, and sometimes three, horizontal melodic lines. For each line to be drawn in relief, it is clearly necessary to expose the correct fingering. The expediency of fingering is evaluated from the point of view of ensuring the smoothness and naturalness of the unfolding of the music. It is necessary to analyze the melodic lines, strokes in all voices, and, accordingly, set the fingering. It should be noted that the fingering is not permanent for all performers, as it depends on many components: the individual performer's apparatus, the system and design of the instrument (including additional rows of the keyboard); the strokes of each and all voices of a polyphonic composition are of great importance.

In the considered polyphonic cycle, the section (18-21 bars) from the development section of the *Fugue* (Example 4) is the most complex from the point of view of fingering.

E. g. 4

**J. S. Bach. *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor*,  
subject of the *Fugue* (bars 18-21)**

In this fragment, the main difficulty is the combination of *legato* and *non-legato* strokes in the right-hand part. The solution to this problem is provided by the fingering strategy, which involves using fingers (5th, 1st) on the buttons located next to each other, as well as changing fingers when

moving from one row to another. In this way, the resources of the executive apparatus are saved for the clear presentation of the subject and the preservation of the coherence of the *legato* performance.

A clear plan for changing the bellows should also be added to the fingering strategy, without which all previous recommendations may lose their proper meaning. Since all instruments differ in their design, as well as the hermetic qualities and structure of the bellows chamber, accordingly, the map of changes in bellows (stretching and compression) for performers will be different. It also depends on the register, dynamics, strokes. Therefore, each performer independently sets places for changing the direction of the bellows movement. At the same time, it is necessary to consider generally accepted rules. The appearance of each new voice should be emphasized by changing the bellows (*Fugue* bars 5, 9, 13, 17, etc.); and a change of harmony (*Prelude* – bars 12, 14, 16). It is important to consider the strength and activity of the bellows. Even with the sound of the dynamic *p*, the bellows should be tight and assertive.

## Conclusions

The *Organ Prelude and Fugue in C minor BWV 549* J. S. Bach belongs to the bright examples of polyphonic music of the Baroque era. This piece entered the repertoire of accordionists in the form of a transcription.

A detailed examination and comprehensive analysis of the work demonstrate that a key aspect of transcribing an organ piece for the multi-timbral button accordion is the transformation of its timbre to suit the specific sound characteristics of the instrument. The interpretative reproduction of the figurative and ideological content of the work is achieved through various accordion techniques, aimed at closely approximating the sound of the original organ compositions.

Given the textural features of polyphonic works, their transcriptions for accordion should be viewed as interpretive “versions.” Performance interpretation in such works goes beyond merely reproducing the musical text; it also involves the application of a wide range of technical performance techniques specific to the button accordion. Mastering these techniques relies on understanding several musical and expressive tools, the nuances of the musical language, and the structural elements that are essential for a professional transcription of an organ work to the button accordion.

Methodical recommendations for the performance of polyphonic works on the multi-timbral button accordion are based on the specifics of the performance techniques revealed in the analyzed work:

1. The specifics of the performance of the theme in polyphonic work. To preserve the semantic and tonal unity of the thematic material, it is necessary to adhere to the principle of its complete presentation in one keyboard. In some cases, when transferring a theme from one part to another, you should use the tool “combination” of unison sounds on different buttons.

2. Distribution of voices of the polyphonic texture according to the performing techniques of playing the button accordion. The main load during the distribution of voices in polyphony should fall on the performer’s right hand (tremble button), which can cover a larger number of voices. Conducting thematic material on the bass button should not contain many voices, and if possible, the topic should be presented unanimously, which gives greater freedom and dynamic “flexibility” of performance.

3. Strokes. Transcribing a musical work for the button accordion requires consideration of the instrument’s technical and structural features. This includes how strokes are applied, how they are notated in the musical text, and how these factors influence the overall sound character of the performance.

Therefore, the fullest and most vivid rendition of Baroque organ works can only be achieved when performed on multi-timbre button accordions. Both the organ and the accordion share common principles of sound production—they belong to the keyboard-wind family of instruments, feature tempered tuning, produce sustained tones, and offer registers that allow for changes in timbre and dynamic of sounding. These capabilities enable the button accordion to significantly expand its range, thereby enhancing the artistic potential for the performance.

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## HARPSICHORD OR PIANO? DEVELOPMENT OF BACH'S “ITALIAN CONCERTO” BWV 971 PERFORMANCE IN MODERN MUSICAL PRACTICE

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**SUMMARY.** This article compares piano and harpsichord interpretations of J. S. Bach's *Italian Concerto in F Major*, BWV 971. I've often wondered "How to play Bach's music correctly?" This question stemmed from historical authenticity in interpretation. Authentic performances of Bach's compositions raise a variety of problems regarding sound, technique, and style. This is due to the fact that Bach composed during a period in history when the organ, harpsichord and the clavichord were the primary keyboard instruments. It is possible to perceive and experience Bach's music in a fundamentally different way depending on whether it is played on the piano or the harpsichord. Because dynamics cannot be altered and there is no pedal, the harpsichord demands a crisper and more distinct polyphony between voices. Articulation and ornamentation are crucial for clarity on the harpsichord, and phrases need to be formed by agogic and rhythmic shaping. When playing the piano, the performer has the ability to express themselves freely through the use of dynamics. A more expressive sound that is more closely related to vocal emotion is possible. When there is an excessive amount of pedalization or an extremely passionate attack, there is a possibility that the polyphony will become distorted.

**Keywords:** harpsichord, piano, Italian concerto, authenticity, early music

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## Introduction

According to Daniel E. Freeman<sup>3</sup>, before Bach, a minimum of six composers of Italian descent created solo concertos for keyboard and orchestra in the Italian style: Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, Francesco Durante, Giovanni Battista Martini, Domenico Auletta the Elder, Giuseppe Sammartini, and Giovanni Benedetto Platti.

The first composer is credited with writing the first Italian concerto, which was composed for two harpsichords and a string quartet in the key of C major. The manuscript for this piece was discovered in the Rotterdam newspaper in 1939, as stated by Marvin E. Paymer. The author examines the authenticity of this work in his doctoral dissertation, writing that it “must be considered authentic by our criteria”<sup>4</sup> at the conclusion of his analysis. Therefore, this piece is still considered to be one of the oldest Italian concertos.

The *Italian Concerto* transposes concepts of this style into a solo harpsichord work, employing a register opposition that mimics the *tutti* and *solli* alternating characteristic of the Baroque concerto. This style originates from the Vivaldian aesthetic, noted for its clear formal structure, sequential development of musical phrases, and dynamic contrasts across sections. In this work, Bach exhibits a profound comprehension of the Italian style and the capacity to modify it for a soloistic setting, all while preserving the tenets of Baroque musical rhetoric.

### 1. Distinctive Italian characteristics in Bach’s keyboard works

Published in 1735 as the first section of *Clavier-Übung II*, the *Italian Concerto* BWV 971 ranks among Bach’s most frequently executed pieces for harpsichord with two manuals, alongside the *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988, and the *French Overture in B minor*, BWV 831<sup>5</sup>.

Despite the aforementioned compositions, Bach opted for the *Italian Concerto* to align more closely with the prevailing galant style of the era. The juxtaposition of the *Italian Concerto* and the *French Overture* in *Clavier-Übung II* illustrates Bach’s musical interpretation of the stereotypical competition between two prevalent genres of the period, both of which evolved in reaction to the rising popularity of the Galant style.

<sup>3</sup> Freeman, Daniel E. “The Earliest Italian Keyboard Concertos.” In *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1985, pp. 121–45. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/763792>. (8 Mar. 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Marvin E. Paymer. “The Instrumental Music Attributed to Giovanni Battista Pergolesi: A Study in Authenticity”, PhD. diss., City University of New York, 1977, p. 272

<sup>5</sup> <https://breznikar.com/article/johann-sebastian-bach-12-the-most-beautiful-piano-pieces/4619> (9 Mar. 2025)

The artistic influence of the *Italian Concerto* is undoubtedly derived from the composer Antonio Vivaldi, whose works Bach examined and transcribed extensively. Bach's transcriptions of Vivaldi's works include *L'estro armonico*, whose concertos have been enlightening for numerous musicians. Bach encountered Vivaldi's music upon his arrival in Weimar. He presumably acquired copies of Vivaldi's concertos through the Prince of Weimar, who had journeyed to Netherlands. Bach transcribed concerti op. 3, 9, and 12 for solo harpsichord, while the concerti for two violins op. 3, op. 8, and op. 11 were transcribed for double-manual organ with pedalboard.

The *Italian Concerto* BWV 971, a quintessential composition for solo harpsichord, exemplifies the Italian solo concerto paradigm. In this work, Bach adeptly crafts an orchestral illusion solely with the harpsichord, oscillating between "soloistic" segments and expansive portions that imply the presence of a *tutti*. This design originates from the *ritornello* style established by Vivaldi, wherein a principal theme recurs intermittently, establishing a balance between contrast and coherence.

### **1.1. The ritornello principle**

In his paper "Some Thoughts on Italian Elements in Certain Music of Johann Sebastian Bach," Peter Williams<sup>6</sup> contended that Julius August Philipp Spitta introduced the concept of correlation in Bach's evolution of the ritornello form, especially within the solo concerto form, in 1873. Nonetheless, the ritornello was already evident in Bach's early compositions, encompassing a variety of genres such as arias, solo sonatas, ensemble concertos, and organ chorales.

Also, Johann Kuhnau influenced the young Bach, especially when the Italian sonata was more popular over the French suite. In the sonatas BWV 963 and BWV 967, Bach exhibited Italian influences. The assessment of a ritornello form's maturity relies on elements like motivic growth and episode coherence; yet cross-genre comparisons pose challenges.

Bach explored the ritornello form in his organ compositions during the Weimar period, namely in toccatas and chorales. Comparing both forms is intricate, as chorales incorporate an inherent ritornello through the repeating of melodic lines, whereas toccatas employ distinct thematic returns.

In Weimar, Bach encountered Albinoni's concertos and perhaps examined Italian influences via associations with Telemann and Pisendel.

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<sup>6</sup> Williams, Peter. "Some Thoughts on Italian Elements in Certain Music of Johann Sebastian Bach." In *Recercare*, vol. 11, 1999, pp. 185–200. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41701304>. (8 Mar. 2025).



The extended Bach's fugues, with the recurrence of the principal theme in the central sections, illustrated another way in which the ritornello shaped his works. This structure is particularly evident in the finale of *Brandenburg Concerto No. 4*, reminiscent of the fusion of fugue and concerto found in Albinoni's works.

In *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, several fugues exhibit a distinct ritornello structure, but others straddle the line between ritornello and alternative forms. *Sonata BWV 963* demonstrates that Bach was already investigating the ritornello in many manners. Nonetheless, the precise impacts of Italian models remain challenging to ascertain.

Bach used Italian features, including themes presented in open octaves, episodes derived from broken chords, and certain sequential patterns. The concluding movement of the *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5* is not a cadenza; rather, it is an episode constructed on ritornello ideas.

Bach employed Italian terminology not alone for tempo but also to evoke Italian stylistic elements. The *Toccatà, Adagio* and *Fugue BWV 564* features an Italian *Adagio* characterized by an *arioso* theme accompanied by a pizzicato bass. The overabundant incorporation of Italian terminology in *BWV 565* prompts inquiries regarding its legitimacy.

The authenticity of the ritornello in the Italian concert form is crucial for comprehending the evolution of Baroque music. In Bach's work, this form is not adopted mechanically but rather reinvented and assimilated into a distinctive style, enhanced by Italian and German influences.

The *Italian Concerto BWV 971* exemplifies Bach's assimilation and transformation of this concept. This work emulates an orchestral concerto, employing the ritornello to organize the interaction between the *tutti* and the *solì*. The themes of the ritornello are explicitly articulated and reappear intermittently, producing a sense of cohesion akin to Vivaldi's concertos. Bach, however, enhances the form with intricate polyphony and a more sophisticated motivic discourse than that of Italian composers.

## **1.2. The Galant style**

Although the names "baroque" and "classical" have been retrospectively applied to classify 17th and 18th-century music, Bach's contemporaries were acquainted with the concept of *galant*, a style distinguished by clarity, balance, and simplicity. While Bach's musical language is conventionally linked to the baroque style, specific compositions, such as the *Italian Concerto*, exhibit an incorporation of galant elements.

The *Art of Fugue* exemplifies Bach's contrapuntal discipline, in stark contrast to the more jovial and approachable style of the Galant period. In the *Italian Concerto*, Bach incorporates elements typical of this style, such

as symmetrical phrases, distinct harmonic structures, and a more transparent texture, clearly differentiating between melody and accompaniment. In contrast to the approach of the late Baroque, which relies on the ongoing evolution of the subject material, Bach here employs distinctly defined and rationally structured melodic processes.

The first and third sections of the concerto are designed in rondo form, exhibiting an architectural clarity characteristic of the galant style. The third section features a comprehensive summary of the episodic content, echoing the sonata form that would later dominate the galante concertos of the late 18th century.

The *Italian Concerto* is characterized by a leisurely harmonic pace, simpler progressions, and a distinct tone shift, in contrast to the intricate and chromatic manner of other works of Bach. In the second section, the *Andante*, there exists an expressive melody influenced by the Italian *bel canto* tradition, highlighting the contemporary elements in Bach's works.

## 2. Comparative analysis

### 1<sup>st</sup> Movement – no tempo signature

A significant element of dynamics in Bach's keyboard compositions is the distinctly articulated and abrupt dynamic shifts. His keyboard compositions lack terminology like "crescendo" or "decrescendo" because of the constraints of the instruments available during that period. The subtleties employed by Bach in the *Italian Concerto* serve merely as a "guide" for the utilization of harpsichord manuals.

From the very beginning we notice the *forte* indication, so for harpsichord must be used the first manual, coupled with the second one, for a more richer sound.

E. g. 1



J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 1st mov., mm. 1-7.

The first chord has always been a problem; it has to be arpeggiated or not? From my point of view, on the harpsichord, a chord is arpeggiated when we want to emphasize it, to give it importance, to make it deeper. We can do the same thing on the piano, even if the instrument helps us to play louder, in *forte*. So on both piano and harpsichord, the first chord can be played arpeggiated. Also, on harpsichord, the performer can add notes to the chord, for a fuller sound.

This section represents the *tutti* and has an energetic and vibrant character. One can notice here full resonant chords, big leaps, as octave or sixths leaps and a constant movement in the bass line, reminiscent of basso continuo.

The beat remains consistent until m. 27, but then the presence of two quarter notes signifies a cessation in the rhythm and, concurrently, in the musical narrative, culminating in a robust cadence VI-V-I.

**E. g. 2**



**J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 1st mov., mm. 25-30.**

Subsequent to this cadenza, the solo part emerges. This passage features a distinct accompaniment of eighth notes, with the soprano line notated in a higher range with a sixteenth-note rhythm and occasional ornamentation. These attributes impart a significantly more expressive and dramatic coloratura to the soprano line.

**E. g. 3**



**J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 1st mov., mm. 31-36.**

The distinction between forte and piano will be executed suddenly in *piano*, without a *decrescendo*, to highlight the *tutti-solo* effect. In this section, the left hand will perform on the upper manual of the harpsichord, while the right hand will remain on the lower manual to execute the solo line as effectively as feasible.

It is crucial to highlight that contemporary practice favors the equalization of all rhythmic groups, particularly those containing the smallest note values (e.g., demisemiquaver). In Baroque practice, the situation is entirely reversed. Groups of thirty-sharps will be executed as ornaments, hence they will not be performed with precise evenness or tallied. A similar instance occurs in measures 37-38, where groups of thirty-second notes will be performed at an accelerated tempo, since they serve as an ornamentation. This fact come from the Baroque practice called "notes inegales" (unequal notes), a principally Baroque performance practice of applying long-short rhythms to pairs of notes written as equal<sup>7</sup>.

E. g. 4



J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 1st mov., mm. 37-39.

In m. 129 from the example below, the performer should be played with the left hand on the top manual and with the right hand on the bottom manual. This way, the melody line is much more emphasized than the accompaniment.

E. g. 5



J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 1st mov., mm. 126-129.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.freemusicdictionary.com/definition/notes-inegales/> (11 Mar. 2025)

Differences in dynamics as well as in sound texture will be established by *touché* on the piano and by changing manuals on the harpsichord. In this part, the textural difference between *tutti* and *solo* sections should be emphasized.

In the example below, measures 46-52 are the solo part, so it will be played on the upper manual on the harpsichord, and on the piano with a more airy *touché*, and measures 53-55 are the *tutti* part. On the harpsichord, the performer will move on the lower manual with both hands, and on the piano he will use a deeper *touché*, imitating the full sound of a orchestra or a chamber ensemble.

E. g. 6

**J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 1st mov., mm. 46-55.**

Another important aspect is fingering. In mm. 5-6, normally piano players would use more fingers, for example, 4-3, 3-2. On the harpsichord we can use historical fingering, so we can use only 3-2, thus also emphasizing the sigh effect that the motive calls for.

E. g. 7

**J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 1st mov., mm. 31-36.**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Movement - Andante**

The term *Andante* means “going” or “walking” forward. It is very important that the performer will count every beat in this manner, like walking in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time signature.

A significant component is the left hand's ostinato, which mimics the heartbeat. The left hand's touch on the piano should be delicate and ethereal. Achieving this on the piano is challenging, since the performer must maintain a high level of finger control to avoid unintended accents that disrupt the tranquility of the ostinato.

Pedaling should be as effortless as the *touche*. Depressing the pedal excessively, particularly with low register notes, will cause the two repeated D's to obscure the pulse of the heart effect.

Pedaling on harpsichord is possible only with the fingers, using the *overlegato* mechanism. In this second movement it can be used on the first two melodic lines of the bass, in thirds.

Conversely, on the harpsichord, the left hand will utilize the upper manual to emulate the piano's sonority, allowing the expressiveness of the melodic line to emanate from the lower manual. The harpsichord doesn't require control of the *touche*, but the projection of sound and the right musical character in the mind can easily be emphasized on this instrument. Also, a more controlled touch on the keys can help to make the sound mellow.

### E. g. 8



### J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 2nd movement, mm. 1-4.

The performer's ingenuity is particularly challenged by the instrumentation. In the initial two measures, the performer may envision three melodic bass lines: the first two lines could be executed by a violin and a viola, while the third line symbolizes the heartbeats.

Opposed to the French style, in the Italian style is written out. Here, we have all the ornaments written in the score, down to the shortest note value.

The weight of this component is preserving the equilibrium between *rubato* and non-*rubato*. While the left hand sustains the ostinato rhythm in the eighth notes movement, the right hand engages in spontaneous writing. This part ought to be unrestricted. The performer may postpone specific beats or notes within the measure to accentuate their significance. This is particularly crucial on the harpsichord, since dynamic aspects are absent; thus, articulation and *rubato* are vital to reestablish the expressiveness and beauty of this section.

The performer can also approach the principle of *notes inegales*, a principle often used in Baroque music practice. This principle gives vocality and expressiveness to the melodic line and can be used on both piano and harpsichord.

On the piano, the melodic line on the right hand, which is inspired by the Italian *bel canto* technique, can be emphasized by a deeper, more sung *touche*. / On harpsichord, this line will be emphasized by the choice of the first manual, the lower one, as indicated in the score by the dynamic *forte* and *piano*.

The final crucial component is ornamentation. I will specifically concentrate on the appoggiaturas. An appoggiatura is a dissonant sound that resolves into a consonant one. The performer can amplify the dissonant sound on the piano, sustaining it, until resolving into a consonant sound with a decrescendo. This will enhance the musical discourse and provide the necessary vocal quality.

The dissonant sound on the harpsichord in an appoggiatura cannot be amplified, but it can be postponed. Consequently, the dissonant note will be postponed, and the performer will try to connect the dissonant sound to the consonant sound by an over legato. This produces the decrescendo effect on harpsichord.

**E. g. 9**



**J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 2nd mov., m. 8.**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Movement - Presto**

This part, in rondo form, is characterized by vivacity and virtuosity. The rhythmic liveliness is very important to suggest, from the very beginning, through the syncopation of the right hand.

**E. g. 10**



**J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 3rd mov., mm. 1-5.**

HARPSICHORD OR PIANO? DEVELOPMENT OF BACH'S "ITALIAN CONCERTO" BWV 971  
PERFORMANCE IN MODERN MUSICAL PRACTICE

An essential aspect to note is the articulation, which is notably diverse in this section. In measure 3, there is a form of rhythmic articulation, wherein the initial eight note of the group of four eight notes is separate from the remaining.

E. g. 11



J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 2nd mov., mm. 1-3.

Another example of articulation is in mm. 9-10, where the last note in the eighth notes group will be distinct, not the first:

E. g. 12



J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 2nd mov., mm. 6-10.

The weight of this part lies in the very abrupt character changes, but also in the dynamics. On the piano, the performer will need very precise dynamic changes in both hands. In most cases, the right hand plays *piano*, and the left hand *forte*, and after four bars, it changes. This can be hard to execute the first time, so it requires special attention.

On the harpsichord, this change of dynamics is even harder to execute because of the changing manuals. The performer will have to practice each movement of the sudden change from the top to the bottom manual and vice versa. Sometimes it is even harder, because one hand plays on the lower manual, the other hand plays on the upper manual, and suddenly they have to switch positions.



## E. g. 13

J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 3rd mov., mm. 23-34.

Bach implements polyphonic discourse in this movement. At the piano, these sections can be emphasized by the *touche*, but on the harpsichord they will be emphasized by the speed of attack and the duration of the notes. The notes to be emphasized will be longer.

## E. g. 14

J. S. Bach, *Italian Concerto* in F Major, BWV 971, 3rd mov., mm. 17-22.

## Conclusions

This article highlights the profound impact of the Italian style on Johann Sebastian Bach's *Italian Concerto BWV 971*, as well as the interpretative challenges this work poses in the context of period and modern instruments. Bach succeeds in translating the principles of the Italian concerto, in particular the structure of the ritornello and the opposition between *tutti* and *solì*, into a piece conceived exclusively for the harpsichord. This fusion demonstrates both his ability to assimilate external influences and his skill in adapting them to a language of his own, balancing formal clarity with profound expressivity.

An essential aspect addressed in the article is the difference between harpsichord and piano performance, each instrument having its own constraints and expressive possibilities. The elements set out in this article are part of my own artistic experience. By studying both instruments, I have been able to find a multi-cultural approach to this work. The harpsichord requires clear articulation and abundant use of ornamentation to compensate for the lack of dynamic variation. The piano, on the other hand, allows greater control over dynamics and a lyricism closer to vocal expression, but requires special attention to maintain clarity of melodic lines and stylistic authenticity.

Despite Bach's style being perceived as conservative or antiquated during his era, the *Italian Concerto* demonstrates its susceptibility to contemporary influences. The work exemplifies a synthesis of Baroque contrapuntal expertise and the emotional lucidity of the galant style, underscoring Bach's capacity to incorporate contemporary aspects into his musical vernacular.

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## “ADAGIETTO” BY GUSTAV MAHLER IN THE PERFORMANCE PRACTICE OF CHINESE CONDUCTORS: INTERPRETATIVE ASPECTS

TYMUR IVANNIKOV<sup>1</sup>, YINUO GENG<sup>2</sup>

**SUMMARY.** This article explores the distinctive features of the performance interpretation of Gustav Mahler’s symphonies within the context of contemporary Chinese conducting practice. It identifies the main trends in how Chinese orchestras are engaging with Mahler’s symphonic repertoire, as well as their interpretive strategies. The conducting style of Long Yu is analyzed in comparison with the interpretative tradition of Leonard Bernstein, allowing for a deeper understanding of the differences between Eastern and Western approaches to Mahler’s orchestral dramaturgy. Comparative analysis of tempo-rhythmic development, dynamic balance, and orchestral texture in various conductors’ performances highlights the influence of cultural traditions on interpretative practice. The growing interest in Mahler’s symphonies in China is shown to contribute not only to the expansion of national orchestral repertoires but also to the emergence of new performance standards that integrate European traditions with local stylistic characteristics. The findings make it possible to broaden the musicological panorama of the modern reception of Mahler’s symphonies and contribute to further research into the processes of cultural adaptation of European academic music to the East Asian artistic space.

**Keywords:** performance interpretation, conducting practice, Long Yu, orchestral dramaturgy, cultural adaptation, Chinese orchestras, Chinese musical culture, European musical tradition, Gustav Mahler’s symphonies.

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## Introduction

In today's cultural space, symphonic music performance remains relevant, as it not only reflects the development of society's aesthetic guidelines, but also actively shapes them through a variety of repertoire strategies and various concert formats. Large-scale festivals, the expansion of the network of concert halls, and the ever-growing interest in digital broadcasts and sound recordings all testify to the continuous demand for the high art of symphony, which encompasses both the classical and romantic heritage and modern or avant-garde examples. In this context, performers must master not only virtuoso technique and a deep understanding of the score but also demonstrate exceptional interpretive insight to adequately realize the composer's semantic and aesthetic concepts.

An illustrative example of a performance challenge is the work of Gustav Mahler, who went down in music history as one of the most influential masters of the late Romantic symphony. His large-scale and complex in terms of drama and formative features, his classical cycles, saturated with philosophical and existential issues and innovative compositional methods, require a significant level of conducting skill and serve as a kind of "quality mark" in the context of world performance practice.

China is no exception, where today there is a growing interest in Mahler's work. The development of the local network of professional orchestras, the expansion of educational institutions, and the entry of Chinese conductors on the international stage have created favorable conditions for the inclusion of Mahler's heritage in the local repertoire. This process is taking place not only in view of high performing self-assertion, but also as a response to global trends that outline Mahler's cycles as a kind of benchmark for large-scale symphonies of the XX century. That is why the study of the specifics of the interpretation of Mahler's symphonies in China becomes an important step towards understanding how the iconic compositions of Western European musical culture enter new cultural paradigms and continue their evolution in a foreign cultural environment.

The relevance of this article is determined by several factors that align with the context of contemporary musicology. First, the symphonic oeuvre of Gustav Mahler remains a pivotal reference point for the ongoing development of the symphonic genre in global academic music practice. Despite the extensive body of research dedicated to Mahler's life and work, the analysis of performance approaches to his music within the cultural context of China has yet to receive sufficient theoretical elaboration. Second, the rapid institutionalization of orchestral art in the People's Republic of China - including the expansion of professional ensembles, the active international tours of Chinese conductors,

and the synthesis of Western and Eastern aesthetic models – create a unique basis for musicological discourse. Third, the growing interest in Mahler's music in China opens new perspectives for investigating the transnational circulation of cultural values: how large-scale symphonic works are integrated into local performance practices, how they are received by audiences, and how new interpretative strategies are being developed. Thus, research into the performance specifics of Mahler's symphonies in China not only broadens the musicological panorama of global discourse but also helps to uncover the mechanisms by which European large-scale academic compositions are manifested in other cultural paradigms.

*The aim of this article* is to examine the specific features of the performance interpretation of Adagietto from Gustav Mahler's Fifth Symphony in the context of contemporary Chinese musical culture, in particular to reveal the main performance trends, analyze repertoire approaches, and outline the influence of Mahler's heritage on the formation of artistic guidelines for Chinese orchestras and conductors.

Gustav Mahler's symphonic heritage has long been a subject of research in musicology. The questions arising from this phenomenon cover various aspects of the composer's creative method and style evolution, only indirectly touching upon the problems of symphony performance. For instance, Donald Mitchell<sup>3</sup> explores the connection between song tradition and symphonism, and Constantin Floros<sup>4</sup> investigates timbral dramaturgy and formative principles. David Hurwitz<sup>5</sup> places emphasis on performance aspects, while Norman Lebrecht<sup>6</sup> explores the global impact of the composer on the musical culture of the XX-XXI centuries. Renate Ulm<sup>7</sup> analyzes the historical context and the reception of Mahler's symphonies. A valuable source is the work of Irina Barsova<sup>8</sup>, which investigates Mahler's orchestral language, dramaturgy, and certain interpretative aspects of his symphonic works, which are important for understanding the composer's music.

Along with this, within Chinese musicological discourse, interest in Gustav Mahler's work has recently been growing, due to both the expansion of professional music education and the persistent efforts of Chinese conductors

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<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, Donald. *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death. Interpretations and Annotations*. Boydell Press. 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Floros, Constantin. *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*. Amadeus Press. 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Hurwitz, David. *The Mahler symphonies: an owner's manual*. Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press. 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Lebrecht, Norman. *Why Mahler? How One Man and Ten Symphonies Changed the World*. Faber & Faber. 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Ulm, Renate. *Gustav Mahlers Symphonien: Entstehung, Deutung, Wirkung (Bärenreiter-Werkeinführungen)*. Bärenreiter Verlag. 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Barsova, Irina. *Symphonies of Gustav Mahler*. Moscow: Soviet Composer. 1975.

and orchestras to popularize Western European symphonic masterpieces. Representative examples include a monograph by Lin Hengzhe<sup>9</sup>, which, among other topics, addresses issues of performance and interpretation of the Viennese composer's symphonies. However, a comprehensive and systematized overview of the reception of Mahler's work in the People's Republic of China is still lacking. Furthermore, comparative analysis between different interpretative approaches, and comparison with Western models of interpretation remain largely unexplored. Therefore, the current review of scientific sources proves the urgent need for a focused study that would elucidate the specific characteristics of interpretative understanding of Mahler's performance practices in China today and assess the influence of these practices on the evolution of both domestic and global musical culture.

## Results

Generalization of analytical observations published in the reports of the world-famous online analytical magazine *Bachtrack* over the past few years<sup>10</sup>, shows that the symphonic heritage of Gustav Mahler occupies an extremely prominent place in the world performance practice of today. On the one hand, the leading orchestras of Europe and North America regularly include Mahler's monumental symphonies in their programs, as they are the benchmark of professional maturity and performance potential of the ensemble. On the other hand, in recent years, there has been a significant expansion of geographical coverage, as not only traditional "Mahler" centers (Vienna, Berlin, New York) are turning to the complete cycle of his symphonies, but also orchestras in Asia, particularly China and South Korea. This leads, firstly, to the growing attention of festival organizers and concert hall managers to the late Romantic repertoire, and secondly, to the further popularization of Mahler's work, whose music is able to effectively represent the orchestra in the globalized musical space.

It is worth emphasizing that *Bachtrack*, analyzing the statistics of concert activity in many countries, consistently records the high dynamics of performances of Mahler's symphonies. Among the key factors of popularity

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<sup>9</sup> Lin, Hengzhe. 林衡哲.《西方音樂巨人：馬勒》.台北縣：望春風文化 (Mahler, the giant of Western music: My time has come). Yuanliu. 2011.

<sup>10</sup> <https://cdn.bachtrack.com/files/409805-Annual%20classical%20music%20statistics%202024.pdf> (accessed on 22.05.2025); <https://cdn.bachtrack.com/files/350970-Annual%20classical%20music%20statistics%202023.pdf> (accessed on 22.05.2025); <https://cdn.bachtrack.com/files/293747-Annual%20classical%20music%20statistics%202022.pdf> (accessed on 22.05.2025).

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are the scale of the form and the inevitable dramatic intensity of Mahler’s scores, which attracts the audience and guarantees high emotional involvement of the audience. At the same time, this opens up space for interpretative diversity: each conductor develops their own approach to the tempo-rhythmic logic, sound balance, and symbolic and philosophical layers embedded by the composer.

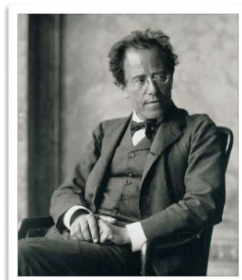
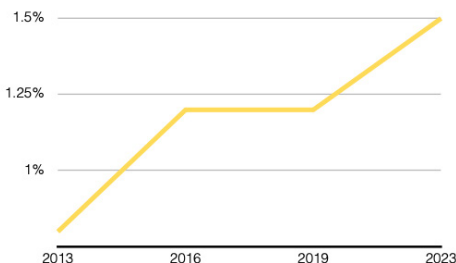
To confirm this, we note that according to the Bachtrack report for 2024, Mahler’s Symphony No. 5 was ranked sixth in the list of the most performed orchestral compositions. The report for 2022 mentions his Symphony No. 3, which was ranked 12th in the top 100 works of the XX century that were performed during the year. And the 2023 materials indicate an increase in the precedents of performances of the composer’s symphonies over the past ten years (from 2013 to 2023) and emphasize that his Symphony No. 1 “Titan” has become the most popular.

E. g. 1

## HOT OR NOT?

Mahler and Weill on the rise

Number of performances of Gustav Mahler  
(percentage of all listings)



Mahler's most performed work is his *Symphony no. 1*

### Performance schedule of Mahler’s compositions according to Bachtrack. Report for 2023

Thus, Mahler’s current place in the performing hierarchy is related to several aspects. Firstly, orchestras and conductors themselves perceive the composer’s symphonies as a challenge and an opportunity to demonstrate high professionalism. Secondly, concert organizers, focusing on the sustainable interests of the public, offer “Mahler’s” programs to expand the repertoire palette and raise the level of concert practice. Thirdly, the global dimension is manifested



in the fact that Asian, Latin American and other “new” music centers are attracted to Mahler’s monumental works as a kind of “test” of the maturity of their own performing groups. As a result, the symphonic heritage of the Austrian composer not only continues to retain a significant position in the canon of world academic art but also has the potential for further expansion due to the general increase in the number of concerts and festivals dedicated to the musical heritage of the late XIX - early XX centuries.

At the same time, a study of Bachtrack reports in recent years leads to the conclusion that Chinese orchestral performance practice has not yet reached the peak of its development, because, unfortunately, none of the Chinese orchestras has been ranked among the world’s top 10 orchestras in the last three years. Nevertheless, in 2022, Chinese conductor Elim Chan took 12th place in the TOP 100 conductors and became the first female conductor in the ranking.

An analysis of conducting approaches, as reflected in numerous performances by leading Chinese orchestras, allows us to identify a group of maestros who are actively shaping the symphonic repertoire and systematically engage with both canonical “classical” masterpieces and expansive works of late Romanticism. Of particular note is a cohort of conductors who regularly include Gustav Mahler’s symphonies to their programs, thereby demonstrating their orchestras’ readiness to engage with this highly demanding musical language.

Yu Long, for example, has repeatedly performed Symphonies No. 1, No. 4, and No. 5, in addition to selecting movements from other symphonic cycles of the composer. His work with the China Philharmonic Orchestra and the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra evidences a sustained and profound interest in Mahler’s dramaturgy. Yang Yang works in the similar way: his interpretation of Symphony No. 1 (Titan) with the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra is marked by its ambitious scale and reflects the conductor’s aspiration to present Chinese ensembles on the world stage.

Zhang Lu, who collaborates with both the Shanghai Youth Symphony Orchestra and the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, has also made a significant contribution to Mahler’s popularization in China. His interpretations of Symphonies No. 5 and No. 7 reveal a refined balance between traditional late-Romantic idioms and a search for fresh interpretative accents. A comparable “Mahler’s approach” is evident in Xia Xiaotang’s performance of Symphony No. 7 with the China Philharmonic Orchestra, in which the conductor displays agogic flexibility and an expansive unfolding of thematic material.

The work of Shao-Chia Lü with the National Centre for the Performing Arts Orchestra is characterized by a high level of professionalism; his performance of Symphony No. 3 reflects a deliberate attempt to deepen the orchestra’s

repertoire through one of Mahler's most monumental and philosophically rich scores. Likewise, Huang Yi's use of Adagio from Symphony No. 5 in the context of concert programs of the China Philharmonic Orchestra serves as a notable example of interpretative engagement with Mahler's expressive idiom.

From a conducting perspective, Mahler's symphonies are increasingly being affirmed as repertoire that signals both the interpretative maturity of orchestras and the exploration of the spiritual and existential dimensions of late Romantic art. Conductors such as Yu Long, Yang Yang, Zhang Lu, Xia Xiaotang, Shao-Chia Lü, and Huang Yi, who systematically engage with Mahler's scores, form a distinctive stratum of China's performance elite, attuned to the new complexities of timbral polyphony, dynamic contrast, and profound philosophical expression. Through their efforts, the ongoing "Mahler boom" in China is taking on clearly defined contours, enriching the broader canon of symphonic masterpieces and positioning Chinese performers within the international circle of leading interpreters of high Romanticism.

Comparing the strategies of performing Mahler's symphonies by different conductors is an extremely difficult task, given the complexity of the music itself, the number of interpretations, and the existence of "benchmark" versions. At the same time, one of the most famous interpreters of the Austrian composer in China is Long Yu, a world-class conductor whose work helps to strengthen the position of Western classical music in China. He performs extensively with the country's most prestigious orchestras both at home and abroad, representing his country on the international stage.

To demonstrate the peculiarities of Long Yu's interpretative version, let us turn to Adagio from Mahler's Fifth Symphony, which we will compare with one of the "benchmark" interpretations by L. Bernstein. It is well known that the initial public presentations of Mahler's Fifth Symphony gave rise to polarized assessments among critics and listeners. The resonance in Vienna was also symptomatic, where, after the premiere there, some critics openly condemned the audience's "inability" to distinguish between true aesthetics and a passion for the "bizarre." The author's own dissatisfaction led to a rewrite of the composition in 1911. Despite all this, the Fifth Symphony, and especially Adagio, has become one of the most popular compositions in the academic repertoire.

Gustav Mahler's Fifth Symphony is not only a style turning point in the composer's work, but also an important milestone in the development of the symphonic genre. By abandoning the poetic word, the composer greatly enhances the role of the musical fabric, enriching it with expressive and constructive possibilities. This tendency determines the specifics of the symphonic form, contributing to the active development of polyphonic texture, the emancipation of individual voices and new technical requirements for performance. Mahler's

orchestra is a complex organism in which various lines of orchestral evolution of previous centuries are intertwined. In general, the Fifth Symphony is a complex artistic structure in which Mahler not only develops new principles of orchestral writing but also creates a multilayered symphonic narrative. The composer offers us a kind of illusion of resolving the tragic conflict, creating an artistic image of overcoming.

The structural logic of the symphony is based on the principle of large-scale form creation. Mahler himself outlined the main milestones of its dramatic development, organizing the five movements into three large sections. The central parts – the third, fourth and fifth – are a sequence of states, where the fourth part, on the one hand, is a concentrated philosophical meditation, and on the other hand, serves as a semantic epigraph to the finale. Researchers interpret Adagietto as an instrumental Lied, a “romance without words” for strings, laconically supplemented by a harp part, emphasizing its subjective time dimension. The “infinite melody” in the spirit of Wagner, which is the basis of Adagietto, is based on major diatonic motifs with ascending sustained motifs, and the melodic line unfolds within a single process of wave-like development that eventually returns to the starting point. In the middle section, the movement is revitalized by a change in intonational patterns (for example, a descending septet) that precedes the finale. The polyphonic complexity of the music also draws attention to itself, as the fabric is formed as a result of complex counterpoint work.

One of the key elements of the symphonic language of Adagietto is timbral expression. Its orchestral palette becomes a carrier of meaning, and the timbre acquires an independent artistic value. In this aspect, the use of the harp is indicative: while in the Romantic tradition it performed mostly a decorative function, creating a halo of sonority, in Mahler’s case this instrument goes beyond the traditional orchestral coloring, imitating the sound of the piano, which opens up new expressive possibilities.

Adagietto from Gustav Mahler’s Fifth Symphony is one of his most famous compositions, full of deep lyricism and symbolic connotations. Its interpretation has undergone significant changes during the XX and XXI centuries, demonstrating the flexibility of the interpretative possibilities of Mahler’s music. In this context, the performances under the direction of Leonard Bernstein, who played a key role in popularizing Mahler’s work and consciously positioned his music to resonate with the social cataclysms of the XX century, are particularly significant.

Known for his deep personal approach to Mahler’s music, Bernstein offers an interpretation in Adagietto that is characterized by a slow tempo and expressive agogic. The music lasts more than 10 minutes, making this one of the longest interpretations in the history of performance. His version is based

on romantic expression: the tempo is breathy, variable, with expressive rhythmic strains that create a sense of meditative, almost frozen time. This performance takes on a special emotional significance due to its historical context: it was in a similar interpretation that Adagietto was performed at Robert F. Kennedy's funeral in 1968, which fixed its perception as music of mourning and sorrow.

Instead, Long Yu approaches Adagietto from the perspective of the contemporary conducting school, tending toward a more restrained and structured performance. His tempo is closer to the original meaning of Adagietto – moderately slow, but not overly extended. The duration of his version is about 8 minutes, which gives it greater rhythmic stability and lightness. His agogic is less expressed, allowing him to focus on the smooth development of the melodic line and the internal balance of the form.

Another key aspect of the comparison is the dynamic range. In Bernstein's case, it is extremely wide: from almost inaudible pianissimo to dramatic climaxes. This creates the effect of a gradual build-up of emotional tension, reaching its climax in the most expressive moments and gradually dissolving into silence. Long Yu, on the other hand, offers a more balanced dynamic model: his orchestra sounds with less sharp contrasts, making the sound more chamber-like and transparent. In his performance, the emphasis shifts to plastic phrasing and structural logic rather than extreme emotionality.

The difference between the interpretations is especially noticeable in the interpretation of the strings. Bernstein uses this instrumental group as the main carrier of expression, giving it a rich, flexible sound with broad, vocal-like phrases, which adds sentimentality to the performance, emphasizing the personal dimension of the music. Meanwhile, Long Yu's sound is clearer, focused more on classical clarity of phrasing. In his performance, the strings sound lighter with less vibrato, making the overall image of the composition closer to academic than to freely romantic.

The context of understanding this composition is also important. While for Bernstein Adagietto is primarily a symbol of inner worry, pain, and existential search, for Long Yu its interpretation tends to be about the idea of harmonious sound that maintains a balance between emotionality and restraint. This is the difference between the Western romantic tradition and the modern Eastern approach to the European symphonic heritage.

In Bernstein's interpretation, the melodic line acquires special expressiveness and sensuality. The conductor emphasizes the smoothness and continuity of the melody, which creates a sense of calm and meditation. The harmonic development in his performance is marked by a gradual increase in tension, which reaches a climax and smoothly dissolves, returning to the original theme. One of the key features of his interpretation is the multilevel differentiation of the polyphonic fabric: Bernstein clearly articulates each voice, creating an effect of depth and volume.

Long Yu, known for his ability to combine Western musical traditions with Asian aesthetics, offers a different vision of Adagietto. In his interpretation, the melodic line is characterized by restraint and elegance, which may reflect the Eastern philosophy of contemplation and inner peace. Long Yu emphasizes the transparency of the texture and the purity of the sound, which gives the composition some special lightness. The harmonic development in his performance is less dramatic, with an emphasis on uniformity and stability, which creates a sense of continuous flow. The polyphonic structure in the performance of the Chinese conductor becomes particularly clear: he strives to maintain a balance between the voices, emphasizing the horizontal movements of the timbre layers, which contributes to the creation of the effect of balance. The dynamics remain mostly within soft shades, avoiding sharp contrasts, which emphasizes the meditative nature of the work.

Thus, the comparison of these two performances demonstrates two conceptually similar but different approaches to the interpretation of Adagietto. Bernstein offers a deeply personal performance full of emotional contrasts, tending to the Romantic tradition, while Long Yu adheres to a more restrained and analytical approach, emphasizing the purity of form and the balance of the orchestral sound. Both versions reveal different facets of this masterpiece, which confirms the versatility of Mahler's music and its ability to adapt to different performance traditions and cultural contexts.

## Conclusions

Consequently, Gustav Mahler's symphonies play an important role in shaping the contemporary Chinese conducting school, strengthening the foundation of its repertoire policy. The active involvement of the Austrian composer's works in the concert practice of Chinese orchestras not only expands their performance palette but also facilitates their integration into the global musical space. A comparative analysis of Bernstein's and Long Yu's interpretations of Adagietto from the Fifth Symphony reveals a certain difference between Western and Eastern approaches to the interpretation of Mahler's music. While Bernstein builds his interpretation on the principles of emotional extraversion, using extended agogic, great timbre contrasts and intense dynamics, Long Yu tends to be more balanced, focusing on the purity of lines, structural transparency and meditative sound. Thus, Chinese conductors, in particular Long Yu, are actively expanding the boundaries of the interpretation of Western European symphonic music, adapting it to the specifics of the local musical space, and Mahler's symphonism in the performance practice

of Chinese conductors appears not only as a repertoire tribute to the European tradition, but also as a field for the development of new interpretative strategies. In further research, it is advisable to broaden the comparative analysis of Mahler's symphonies performed by Chinese, European and American conductors, which will enable a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of the global reception of Mahler's music in the contemporary musical space.

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## RENATO BRUSON: THE ART OF SINGING, AUTHENTICITY AND DISCIPLINE. CONNECTIONS BETWEEN OPERA AND CHAMBER MUSIC

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**SUMMARY.** This article explores the artistry of the renowned baritone Renato Bruson, emphasizing the interpretative authenticity and discipline that have ensured his long-lasting career. Based on a direct interview conducted with the maestro in Parma during a vocal interpretation masterclass organized through the Renato Bruson Foundation, the research highlights essential themes such as the evolution of the baritone voice, the significance of chamber music in vocal development, and the role of textual interpretation in opera. Additionally, it examines the impact of this approach on the training of future performers and his perspective on vocal discipline and artistic authenticity. By integrating historical and musicological perspectives, the study establishes connections between operatic and chamber music practices, emphasizing their reciprocal impact on the evolution of a lyrical artist. The conclusions underline the necessity of balancing natural vocal talent with rigorous study while maintaining fidelity to the composer's intentions, simultaneously developing a unique interpretative style.

**Keywords:** Renato Bruson, baritone voice, opera singing, vocal technique, artistic authenticity, chamber music, opera interpretation, musical discipline.

**Baritone (i)** (from Gk. Barytonos; Fr. baryton; Ger. Bariton; It. baritono)<sup>2</sup>  
(βαρύτονος), meaning "deep sound"  
(bary- = low, deep; tonos = tone).

The interview with the great baritone Renato Bruson, conducted in Parma at the maestro's museum-house, took place during a masterclass he was offering. On this occasion, the maestro agreed to answer questions related

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<sup>2</sup> O. Jander, J. B. Steane, E. Forbes, E. T. Harris, and G. Waldman, "Baritone (i)," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (accessed from a local PDF file on January 2, 2025).





to the doctoral research titled *“The Variability of the Baritone Voice Throughout the Stylistic Evolution of the Opera Genre.”* The interview provided deep insight into essential themes for lyrical singing: vocal technique, authentic interpretation, the importance of the word, and the longevity of a successful career.

The baritone Ion Budoiu<sup>3</sup> states that, the baritone voice, now a well-defined category in the opera world, emerged as a distinct classification only at the beginning of the 19th century. Previously, it was alternatively associated with tenors or basses, depending on the *tessitura* of the role.<sup>4</sup> However, the first uses of the term *baritonans* date back to the 15th century: *“the term ‘baritonans’ was first used in Western music towards the end of the 15th century, principally in French sacred polyphony, where it may signify a voice lower in pitch than the bassus.”*<sup>5</sup> In the 17th century, *“in 17th-century Italy, the term ‘baritono’ takes up its modern position between the tenor and bass parts”*, with its use becoming more frequent in both sacred music and opera.<sup>6</sup>

In the 19th century, baritone was solidified as a distinct vocal category with the introduction of prominent characters in the operas of Romantic composers. Verdi created roles that *“demonstrated the dramatic flexibility and power of this voice,”* such as Germont (*La Traviata*, 1853) and Macbeth (*Macbeth*, 1847).<sup>7</sup> In the 20th century, Italian baritones continued to define excellence in the Verdian repertoire: *“Piero Cappuccilli was regarded as the leading Italian Verdi baritone; other Italians eminent in the Verdi and Donizetti repertoires have included Giuseppe Taddei and Renato Bruson.”*<sup>8</sup> These transformations contributed to the diversification of the repertoire and directly influenced the evolution of the careers of great opera artists.

Renato Bruson (b. Granze, Padua, January 13, 1936) is one of the most remarkable baritones of the 20th century, renowned for his exceptional interpretations of Verdi and Donizetti operas. His impressive career, spanning over five decades, is the result of rigorous training and outstanding vocal development.

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<sup>3</sup> Ion Budoiu (1930–1992) was an exceptional baritone, performing major roles from the universal classical repertoire, ranging from Mozart and Rossini to Verdi, Wagner, and Puccini. He also distinguished himself in Romanian opera, taking the lead role in *Pană Lesnea Rusalin* by Paul Constantinescu and performing Enescu's lieder in Berlin under the baton of Kurt Masur. See “95 de ani de la nașterea solistului de operă Ion Budoiu,” *Cotidianul HD*, January 3, 2025, <https://hd.cotidianul.ro/95-de-ani-de-la-nasterea-solistului-de-opera-ion-budoiu/>. Accessed February 7, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> I. Budoiu, “The Baritone in Opera,” in *Musicology Studies* (Vol. 17-18, p. 190; Cluj-Napoca, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> O. Jander, J. B. Steane, E. Forbes, E. T. Harris, and G. Waldman, “Baritone (i),” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (accessed from a local PDF file on January 2, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

Renato Bruson began his vocal studies at the *C. Pollini* Conservatory in Padua under the guidance of Professor Elena Fava Ceriati, considered “one of the most respected voice teachers in Italy.”<sup>9</sup> His official debut took place in 1961 in Spoleto, in Giuseppe Verdi’s *Il trovatore*, where he performed the role of Count di Luna.<sup>10</sup> This achievement came as a result of winning the *Concorso Nazionale Giovani Cantanti Lirici in Spoleto* that same year.<sup>11</sup> From that moment on, he embarked on an increasingly acclaimed and recognized career. One of the most significant events that propelled him to international fame was his debut in *La forza del destino* at the Teatro Regio di Parma in 1967. This success opened the doors of the Metropolitan Opera in New York and marked the beginning of an exceptional series of debuts on the stages of the world’s most prestigious theaters.<sup>12</sup>

In the book by Maestro Bruson’s wife, Tita Tegano<sup>13</sup>, published on the occasion of his 25th career anniversary, numerous posters and reviews of his performances were compiled. Among them is a 1986 review from Rome, in which conductor Giuseppe Sinopoli stated that, for him, Renato Bruson represented the ideal realization of musical sensitivity and intelligence. Even then, it was foreseen that Bruson would remain in the history of Italian opera as a benchmark baritone, thanks to his elegance and refined interpretative style.<sup>14</sup> Today, 39 years later, the maestro’s career remains

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<sup>9</sup> GBOpera, “Album of Memories: Renato Bruson (b. 1936),” accessed on January 1, 2025, from <https://www.gbopera.it/2022/01/album-dei-ricordi-renato-bruson-n-1936>.

<sup>10</sup> Teatro Lirico Sperimentale di Spoleto “A. Belli,” “Docenti del Corso di Canto,” accessed on January 1, 2025, from <https://www.tls-belli.it/docenti-del-corso-di-canto>.

<sup>11</sup> Claudio Del Monte and Vincenzo Raffaele Segreto, *Stagione Lirica (1991-1992). Renato Bruson. Trent’anni di carriera*, p. 9 (Parma: Teatro Regio, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Tita Tegano was a set designer, costume designer, and author of books, many of which were published by Grafiche Step in Parma, dedicated to the art and career of her husband, baritone Renato Bruson. She collaborated with Teatro Regio di Parma, designing the set for *I due Foscari* (1984–1985, directed by Anna Proclemer) and contributing to numerous opera productions. In 2014, together with Bruson, she donated an important art collection to the Cariparma Foundation, including 70 works by renowned artists such as Giovanni Boldini and Giovanni Segantini. See “Addio a Tita Tegano, scenografa, costumista e moglie di Renato Bruson,” *Gazzetta di Parma*, March 10, 2022, <https://www.gazzettadiparma.it/spettacoli/2022/03/10/news/addio-a-tita-tegano-scenografa-costumista-e-moglie-di-renato-bruson-632027/>, accessed February 7, 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Tita Tegano, ed., *Renato Bruson: 25 anni di teatro in musica*, with testimonies and critical notes by Carlo Belli, Maurizio Arena, Gianandrea Gavazzeni, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Carlo Maria Giulini, Giuseppe Morelli, Franco Mannino, Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Alberto Antignani, Giocchino Lanza Tomasi, Giuseppe Negri, Roman Vlad, Piero Rattalino, Sylvano Bussotti, Rodolfo Celletti, Giuseppe Puglisi, Giorgio Gualerzi, Bruno Cernaz, Presto Moli, Bruno Cagli, Francesco Canessa, Sergio Segalini, Daniele Rubboli, Christian Springer, Angelo Foletto, Maurizio Modugno, Marcello Conati, Michelangelo Zurletti, and Elvio Giudici, p. 21 (Bologna: Edizioni Bongiovanni, 1986).

a compelling example of continuity and the preservation of essential qualities for an opera singer. Moreover, these traits have not only been maintained but also cultivated and passed on to future generations through non-formal education, making him a model of perseverance and excellence in the field.

Among the most important theaters where Maestro Bruson has performed are Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Wiener Staatsoper, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in London, the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, and many others, including the Romanian National Opera in Cluj, where he performed the title role in *Rigoletto* in 1970.<sup>15</sup>

In 1970, he collaborated for the first time with conductor Riccardo Muti in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* at the Teatro Comunale in Florence, marking the beginning of a long-lasting artistic relationship. In 1972, he made his debut at Teatro alla Scala in Milan in Gaetano Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix*. In 1986, in Ravenna, Maestro Riccardo Muti described Renato Bruson as an authentic, expressive, and refined artist, emphasizing that any conductor would wish to have him as a collaborative partner in the demanding preparation and realization of an opera production. This recognition is also mentioned in Tita Tegano's book, dedicated to the maestro's career.<sup>16</sup> Among his numerous distinctions, one of the most notable is the honorary title of *Kammersänger*, awarded by the Vienna State Opera.<sup>17</sup>

This stands as both a testament to Maestro Bruson's professional excellence and a reflection on the complexity of the operatic profession. It is a continuous process of exploration, preparation, and construction—an endless formation. Despite this, it is an imperfection that becomes perfect through the lived experience of the performance. An emotion can never be repeated with absolute precision; it is a feeling that can be relieved, but always through the lens of new preparation.

Renato Bruson began his responses in the interview by emphasizing that his artistic development was profoundly influenced by a teacher for whom he holds deep respect and gratitude. As mentioned in the maestro's biography, this refers to Professor Elena Fava Ceriati. *"I learned from my teacher, who had been a chamber music singer. From her, I acquired taste and sensitivity. And I must thank her even today because she taught me how to interpret and sing."*

This approach, rooted in chamber music, helped him develop a solid vocal technique and a deep awareness of the semiotics of artistic interpretation.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>17</sup> Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, founded by Giovanni Treccani, "Renato Bruson," accessed on January 1, 2025, from <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/renato-bruson/>.

Chamber music is a highly exposed environment without the support of an orchestra, every detail becomes fragile and delicate, and even the beating of the heart seems to take on a perceptible presence. Accompaniment in chamber music represents an essential relationship, a collaboration and synchronization between the performer and the accompanist because the accompaniment does not merely provide support but complements the interpretation through specific musical motifs and phrases. This further underscores the necessity of thorough education and rigorous preparation.

Another essential aspect mentioned by the maestro was the importance of discipline. Renato Bruson emphasized: *“For a long career, you must know how to choose what to do and stay within your repertoire,”* warning about the risks singers take when exploring a repertoire that exceeds the natural limits and possibilities of their voice. *“You don’t have to do everything today; many take on anything just to make money. No, if you want a long career, there must be humility, seriousness, and complete dedication.”* In his view, the ability to maintain a proper balance in repertoire selection is a quality that sustains the longevity of an opera singer.

This idea of discipline and balance resonates with Professor Paul Popovici’s<sup>18</sup> statement that *“passion must meet vocation and natural gifts,”*<sup>19</sup> emphasizing that success in a career cannot exist without an alignment between inner desire and natural abilities. Moreover, the concept of discipline extends to daily practice, which is regarded as *“moral hygiene”* for those who approach their profession with such commitment.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to these observations, the maestro emphasized the importance of understanding the stages of vocal maturation. *“Just as the body matures, so does the voice,”* he said, highlighting that each stage of a singer’s life must be approached naturally and appropriately.

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Popovici is an associate professor and a specialist in law, actively engaged in legal education and intellectual property. He served as vice dean (2020–2022) at the Faculty of Law, Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University in Bucharest (Faculty of Law in Cluj-Napoca) and as a master's program director (2013–2015). Since 2023, he has been an associate professor at Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad. In addition to his academic work, he is a judicial technical expert, arbitrator, and mediator in the field of intellectual property. See *Curriculum Vitae – Paul Popovici*, Vasile Goldiș Western University, [https://www.uvvg.ro/docs/Facultati/cv\\_profesori/facultate\\_juridice/POPOVICI\\_PAUL.pdf](https://www.uvvg.ro/docs/Facultati/cv_profesori/facultate_juridice/POPOVICI_PAUL.pdf), accessed February 7, 2025.

<sup>19</sup> P. Popovici, *“The Ethics of Scientific Research and Academic Integrity,”* online course held at the Gheorghe Dima National Academy of Music, Sigismund Toduță Doctoral School, Cluj-Napoca, December 2, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> P. Popovici, *“The Ethics of Scientific Research and Academic Integrity,”* online course held at the Gheorghe Dima National Academy of Music, Sigismund Toduță Doctoral School, Cluj-Napoca, November 25, 2024.

An excerpt from an academic paper presented at the Academy of Sciences in Paris, Manuel García Jr.<sup>21</sup> supports the following idea: “*L’insieme della voce umana va soggetta ad innumerevoli modificazioni sotto l’influenza dell’età, dei sessi, delle costituzioni.*” (“*The human voice, as a whole, is subject to an infinite number of modifications influenced by age, sex, and physical constitution.*”).<sup>22</sup>

As Robert Thayer Sataloff<sup>23</sup> and Karen M. Kost<sup>24</sup> emphasize in their article “*The Effects of Age on the Voice, Part 1,*” published in the *Journal of Singing*, the official journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, a U.S.-based organization, voice teachers “*should be familiar with many of the more important, clinically relevant age-related changes that occur in the human voice.*”<sup>25</sup> This approach helps singers adapt their repertoire and technique according to the specific characteristics of each stage of vocal development.

This perspective is supported by specialized literature. In the book *This is a Voice*, authors Jeremy Fisher<sup>26</sup> and Gillyanne Kayes<sup>27</sup> explain that:

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<sup>21</sup> Manuel García Jr. (1805–1906) was a singer, pedagogue, and researcher of the human voice, renowned for his revolutionary contributions to the study of vocal mechanisms. In 1840, he presented his paper *Mémoire sur la voix humaine* at the Academy of Sciences in Paris, demonstrating a profound understanding of the physiological phenomena of the voice. In 1854, he became the first to use the laryngoscope, which allowed him to confirm his theories on vocal production. His singing method had a significant impact on vocal education, and his observations on vocal registers and timbre remain fundamental in modern vocal pedagogy. See Michèle Castellengo, “Manuel Garcia Jr: A Clear-Sighted Observer of Human Voice Production,” *Logopedics Phoniatrics Vocology*, DOI: 10.1080/14015430500298131, PMID: 16287657.

<sup>22</sup> M. Garcia Jr., *Scuola di Garcia. Trattato completo dell’arte del canto* (Part 1, p. 14; Milan: Ricordi, 1970).

<sup>23</sup> Robert T. Sataloff is a specialist in otolaryngology, professor, and chairman of the Department of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery at Drexel University College of Medicine. He is also a professional singer, holding a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree in vocal performance. He has published approximately 1,000 works, including 62 books, and serves as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Voice and the Ear, Nose and Throat Journal*.

<sup>24</sup> Karen M. Kost is a professor of otolaryngology at McGill University and the director of the Voice and Dysphagia Laboratory at the same institution. A specialist in ENT oncology, airway disorders, and voice, she served as president of the *Canadian Society of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery* (2013) and the American Society of Geriatric Otolaryngology (2012–2014). She has delivered over 400 international presentations and has published extensively on topics related to voice and tracheostomy. See [https://www.nats.org/\\_Library/JOS\\_On\\_Point/JOS-077-01-2020-63.pdf](https://www.nats.org/_Library/JOS_On_Point/JOS-077-01-2020-63.pdf), accessed February 7, 2025.

<sup>25</sup> R. T. Sataloff and K. M. Kost, “*The Effects of Age on the Voice, Part 1,*” *Journal of Singing* 77, no. 1 (2020): 63.

<sup>26</sup> Jeremy Fisher is an award-winning musician and performance coach with over 30 years of experience working with actors and singers. He is a multimedia vocal educator, having developed numerous training DVDs and professional development tools for Vocal Process and the Science Museum. He has co-authored four books and written approximately 300 articles on classical and commercial singing.

*“Your voice is a biomechanism that changes with the rest of the body, growing and maturing – along with your lung capacity and the ability to control breath – as part of the life cycle from child to adult. The positioning and size of the larynx are important factors, as well as the relative firmness of the cartilages.”*<sup>28</sup>

This description highlights the importance of selecting the appropriate repertoire while respecting the body’s natural development, allowing the voice to grow and mature alongside it in a balanced manner.

The maestro also described the decisive role of constant study, emphasizing that only through sustained effort and discipline can one achieve remarkable results. *“Otherwise, you remain mediocre.”* This insistence on study reflects a deep perspective on discipline, seen as the foundation of continuous development. In this regard, it is perfectly complemented by the observation of Manuel Garcia Jr., who highlights that natural predispositions are not enough: *“Le più belle disposizioni hanno d’uopo d’essere nella loro applicazione coltivate e dirette da uno studio lento e ragionato.”* (*“The most beautiful predispositions need to be cultivated and directed in their application through slow and rational study.”*)<sup>29</sup> These perspectives emphasize that in singing, success depends on the combination of natural talent and rigorous study. Vocal technique cannot be left to chance, and every detail from body posture to breath control must be consciously practiced transforming innate gifts into a balanced vocal expression. At the same time, text interpretation, whether in opera, chamber music, or other genres and the understanding of a character’s psychological portrait are fundamental. These elements provide the emotional depth and authenticity necessary to move and inspire the audience.

Regarding the negative influences affecting new generations, Renato Bruson observed: *“Because nowadays, what ruins young singers even though the voices exist is the influence of radio, television, and the recording industry.”* Lack of patience, along with these influences, is another major issue: *“Young people want everything here and now. That’s not how opera singing works.”* For the maestro, patience and seriousness remain the keys to long-term success.

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<sup>27</sup> Dr. Gillyanne Kayes is a voice expert and vocal pedagogue with 35 years of experience inspiring singers and teachers. She holds a PhD in voice research and has authored seven books, including *Singing and the Actor*. Recognized as a pedagogue and presenter at international conferences, she has also contributed as a curriculum advisor for institutions such as CSSD, RCS, and DMusics Barcelona.

<sup>28</sup> J. Fisher and G. Kayes, *This is a Voice: 99 Exercises to Train, Project and Harness the Power of Your Voice* (p. 40; London: Wellcome Collection, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> M. Garcia Jr., *Scuola di Garcia. Trattato completo dell’arte del canto* (Part 1, p. 21; Milan: Ricordi, 1970).

This idea reminds me of my professor, Greta Benini<sup>30</sup>, who taught me at the Musik und Kunst Privat Universität der Stadt Wien. In her classes, there was a clear condition: we were not allowed to listen to recordings, especially when preparing a role or facing the risk of “*plagiarizing*” an interpretative dramaturgy practices that strip us of our individuality. This approach aligns with what my professor, Iulia Augusta Suciu<sup>31</sup>, from the Gheorghe Dima National Academy of Music in Cluj-Napoca, used to tell me. I have always valued her guidance and support.

I believe that art involves a long process of creation and continuous research, a delicate intimacy with the score that requires a well-defined plan and a deep understanding of musical expression.

On the other hand, one of my voice teachers, Michail Lanskoï<sup>32</sup>, who sang alongside Renato Bruson 30 years ago at the Ludwigsburg Festival in Verdi's operas *I masnadieri* and *Giovanna d'Arco*, told me that it is important to listen to reference baritones.<sup>33</sup> Some studies conducted by R. Harris and B. M. de Jong<sup>34</sup> suggest that this process, known in science as “*mirror neurons*”, has a clear impact on auditory-motor transformations. As the authors emphasize: “*Passive listening to music evoked auditory-parietal-premotor*

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<sup>30</sup> Greta Benini is an Italian pianist specializing in vocal and opera accompaniment. She studied in Ravenna, Florence, and Bologna and has been a laureate of several international competitions. She has worked as a répétiteur at Wiener Kammeroper and Volksoper Wien, collaborating with renowned artists and performing on major stages across Europe and the United States. Currently, she is a professor of opera repetition at Musik und Kunst Privat Universität der Stadt Wien. See <https://muk.ac.at/studienangebot/lehrende/details/greta-benini.html>, accessed February 2025.

<sup>31</sup> Univ. Prof. Dr. Habil. Iulia Augusta Suciu is the Vice-Rector responsible for academic activities and a répétiteur at the Gheorghe Dima National Academy of Music in Cluj-Napoca. Throughout her career, she has performed numerous recitals and concerts, participating in national and international festivals. Due to her pedagogical work, many of her graduates now perform on some of the world's most prestigious stages, including the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Munich Opera, Royal Opera House, and others.

<sup>32</sup> Michail Lanskoï was born in Moscow and studied at the Bolshoi Theatre Singing School and the Gnessin Institute. He earned a doctorate in musicology from the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow (1990). A laureate of vocal competitions in Russia, Spain, and Austria, he has performed leading roles in operas by Mozart, Verdi, Puccini, Rossini, and Tchaikovsky on major stages in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, England, and Russia. He has collaborated with renowned conductors such as Helmuth Rilling, Valery Gergiev, and Gianandrea Bramall. See <https://muk.ac.at/veranstaltung/meisterklasse-gesang-mit-michail-lanskoi.html>, accessed 7 February 2025.

<sup>33</sup> M. Lanskoï, voice teacher at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin and MUK in Vienna, personal correspondence, October 20, 2024.

<sup>34</sup> R. Harris and B. M. de Jong are researchers in the Department of Neurology at the University Medical Center Groningen and the University of Groningen, Netherlands. They are also affiliated with the BCN Neuroimaging Center, where they specialize in neuroimaging and neurology.

*activations when subjects had attentively listened to this music before, while the premotor activation even further increased when such music pieces had actually been practiced.”*<sup>35</sup>

This listening of musical literature helps to raise awareness of the technical and stylistic aspects and to understand the diversity within the subcategory of the baritone voice a true culture of variability. Recordings of great baritones can serve as a “passive school” that inspires and provides new perspectives, but they do not absolve us from the search for our own path. However, in interpretative and dramaturgical terms, it is crucial to pay special attention to the composer, respecting the semiotics of the score. Authenticity and personal development remain essential, and inspiration should be used as a starting point, not as a substitute for individual work.

Vocal technique was a central theme in the interview. Renato Bruson explained: *“Singing is always singing; only the style changes – Italian style, German style, American style, etc., but singing always remains singing.”* Chamber music taught him to breathe correctly and develop artistic taste: *“Because I first sang chamber music and learned to sing with style and sensitivity.”* This reflects a constant concern for details and artistic authenticity, where every performance must be faithful to both the text and the emotion it conveys.

In this context, the maestro also highlighted the importance of the word in lyrical singing: *“You must capture the audience’s attention; otherwise, you won’t have a career, it’s over. That’s why the word is very important, and I care deeply about the word.”* This observation emphasizes that the text and its interpretation are fundamental in creating an authentic connection with the audience. As Paul Higgins notes in an article about the importance of the word, interpretation is not merely an imitative rendering of the text on a musical platform; it is a profound analysis of the text, which is essential and must address the *“poetic, formal, semantic, and aesthetic complexities of a song.”*<sup>36</sup>

This relationship between music and the word is also highlighted by the idea that *“music is a syncretic whole and addresses the eye, the ears, and the senses.”*<sup>37</sup> In this whole, the word is not just a means of communication, but an element that gives depth and meaning to the artistic act. Gestures,

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<sup>35</sup> R. Harris and B. M. de Jong, “Cerebral Activations Related to Audition-Driven Performance Imagery in Professional Musicians,” *PLOS ONE* 9, no. 4 (2014): <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0093681>.

<sup>36</sup> P. Higgins, “Benjamin Britten: Art Song, a Synthesis of Words and Music – Issues and Approaches to Text-Setting,” *Maynooth Musicology*, Maynooth University, Maynooth, Ireland, January 1, 2009, cited in Rosenwald, “*Theory, Text-Setting, and Performance*,” p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> L. Olărașu, “Music in Antiquity,” personal blog, October 27, 2011, accessed on January 9, 2025, from <https://olarasuloredana.wordpress.com/2011/10/27/muzica-in-antichitate>.



movement, and other visual elements contribute to this unity, creating a synthesis that leads to the “*attainment of moral perfection*” and to harmony with the Cosmos through ethos.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the word plays an essential role, as it is the one that facilitates catharsis – the purification of the soul through art.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, B. V. Asafiev<sup>40</sup> emphasizes the importance of emotional expressiveness in music: “*One must be able to sing anger, compassion, pain, jest, mockery, tenderness, kiss, cunning, bravery-in a word, the entire range of emotions.*”<sup>41</sup> This idea reflects the fact that interpretation is not merely a reproduction of sound, but a complex process of transposing emotions, where every detail contributes to the authenticity of the interpretative act.

From Renato Bruson’s perspective, the variability of the baritone voice is a natural phenomenon, determined by the gifts received from God. “*It is what God or nature has given you, there’s nothing you can do about it. After that, you just have to study, study, and study.*”

Timbre is “*a distinct and unmistakable vocal fingerprint,*” which makes the opera singer authentic. Manuel Garcia Jr., who was a Spanish opera singer (baritone), voice teacher, and music pedagogue, also known as the inventor of laryngoscopy,<sup>42</sup> defines timbre as: “*quel carattere proprio e variabile all’infinito*” (“*that unique and infinitely variable characteristic*”).<sup>43</sup>

Maestro Bruson made an interesting comparison between opera and chamber music, explaining the fundamental differences in the relationship with the audience: “*In chamber music, you are exposed; the audience is focused solely on you.*” This observation highlights the need for an authentic connection, an essential element for success on stage: “*Otherwise, you won’t have a career, it’s over.*”

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Boris Vladimirovich Asafiev (July 29 [O.S. July 17], 1884 – January 27, 1949) was a Russian and Soviet composer, musicologist, music critic, and writer, recognized as one of the founders of Soviet musicology. He was the dedicatee of Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 1. He was born in Saint Petersburg. See <https://www.discogs.com/artist/2905491-Boris-Asafiev>, accessed February 2025.

<sup>41</sup> B. V. Asafiev, cited in V. P. Morozov, *Искусство резонансного пения. Основы резонансной теории и техники* (The Art of Resonant Singing. Fundamentals of Resonance Theory and Technique) (p. 247; Moscow: IP RAN, P. I. Tchaikovsky State Conservatory, “Art and Science” Center, 2002). Original quote: “*Надо уметь петь гнев, сострадание, боль, шутку, насмешку, ласку, поцелуй, лукавство, смелость – словом, всю гамму чувствований.*”

<sup>42</sup> “*Inventos españoles: el laringoscopio,*” HC Energía (Summer Edition, 2011), accessed on January 9, 2025, from <http://web.archive.org/web/20150222042346/http://www.hcenergia.com/boletinhc/verano2011/cultural.htm>.

<sup>43</sup> M. Garcia Jr., Scuola di Garcia. *Trattato completo dell’arte del canto* (Part 1, p. 17; Milan: Ricordi, 1970).

In conclusion, baritone Renato Bruson offers a clear vision of lyrical singing, based on authenticity, discipline, and respect for the word. His response “No.” to the question about the need “*to learn from a Maestro to become a Maestro*” reflects his belief that learning is a personal process of discovery and assimilation, not merely imitation.

The relationship between opera and chamber music, as reflected in the maestro’s artistic journey, emphasizes an essential idea: music is not just about the difficulty of the repertoire, but about how we succeed in moving the audience through authenticity and emotion.

The variability of the baritone voice transcends nationality, tradition, or origins; it consists in the broad realization of the same essential idea, which is the sharing and co-involvement in a great encounter with the Creator of creation, manifested through the diversity of the subcategories of the baritone voice throughout the entire opera genre repertoire.

The predominant common factor (vocal authenticity) lies in the difference of timbral individuality, with each vocal instrument adapted according to the parameters that the individual naturally possesses.

The problem of the present is that each opera artist, in one way or another, tries to imitate someone based on the success that individual has had. However, the reality is that this represents an illusory image that tends to reach a form of *bovarism*—the desire to live a foreign identity that is disconnected from one’s own authenticity. True virtue lies in discovering one’s “*own heart*,” through which you can give value to the “*word*” and, with intelligence, overall, know how to use your voice.

Therefore, authenticity is essential; accepting the voice that the opera artist possesses, the body, the color, and the timbre is the most beautiful thing, because it makes you unique.

Furthermore, the connection between chamber music and opera highlights the complementarity of these genres. While opera allows for an expansive development of vocal and dramatic storytelling, chamber music brings intimacy and special attention to detail. This complementarity was essential in the artistic development of baritone Renato Bruson, who learned to combine the sensitivity and technical precision of chamber music with the dramatic emotion specific to opera. Together, these genres enrich the interpretation, placing a common and essential element at their core: the word.

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## COGNITIVE, EMOTIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MUSICIAN-PERFORMER'S THINKING

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**SUMMARY.** The way of thinking of a performing musician is a complex and multifaceted process that combines rational, intuitive, and emotional aspects. It not only ensures the effectiveness of performing activities, but also determines the artistic depth and individuality of the interpretation of a musical work. Understanding the specifics of performing thinking is important for the formation of a musician's professional skills as it is carried out through mental processes, interaction with musical material, interpretation of the composer's idea and emotional and aesthetic connection with the listening audience. The relevance of the study is based on the need for a comprehensive understanding of these aspects in the context of modern performing practice, which allows not only to deepen the theoretical understanding of the specifics of performing thinking, but also to develop practical recommendations for improving the professional skills of musicians.

**Keywords:** thinking, cognitive processes, methodology, psychology of creativity

### Introduction

It is advisable to reveal the essence of the thinking of a performing musician through the analysis of cognitive processes that underlie his/her mental activity and have a multispectral nature due to the specifics of musical and performing art. The multispectrality of music as a holistic phenomenon covers

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an interrelated complex of components, in particular: the author's intention; musical notation of musical material; psychological aspects of composers' intentions; the personality of the performer as an interpreter and co-creator of the composer's concept; disclosure of the content of a musical work through the prism of individual performing style, experience and professional competencies; real acoustic embodiment of the music piece and feedback from the audience.

Undoubtedly, the key role in the implementation of these factors belongs to the specific professional technological thinking, which covers the conscious intellectual and emotional activity of the performer, as well as his/her mastery of the optimal complex of means of instrumental expression that serve as the foundation for the implementation of creative ideas.

The unique multidimensionality of musical and performing thinking, which functions in conditions of increased psychophysiological capacity during a concert performance in a clearly defined time frame, necessitates the analysis of the integrated interaction of its key components.

A detailed consideration of these parameters, as well as their organic interinfluences, interconnections and interdependencies in the process of artistically expedient functioning, shows that in the hierarchy of professional activities, the performing art of a musician can be attributed to the most difficult professions that require a high level of concentration, adaptability and instant decision-making.

## **Literature Review**

The relevance of the study is based on the fact that music as a multidimensional semantic phenomenon not only reflects reality, but also serves as a means of its comprehension and creative transformation. In the context of modern sociocultural changes, it acquires the importance of a powerful cognitive tool that contributes both to the knowledge of the world and to the self-disclosure of the individual, which emphasizes its fundamental role in human existence. Therefore, the problem of thinking of a musician-performer is the subject of research by many scientists who consider it through the prism of different approaches – musicology as well as psychological, philosophical and pedagogical aspects.

The study of thinking, in particular interpretive thinking in musical performance, is based on an interdisciplinary approach which includes the analysis of a wide range of aspects of this problem. Such studies go beyond musicology, involving methodologies of psychology, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy, which contributes to a deeper understanding of the specifics of performing thinking and its impact on the creative process. A significant contribution to the development of this direction was made by such researchers as M.

Davydov<sup>5</sup>, D. Johnson<sup>6</sup>, V. Samitov<sup>7</sup>, M. Krausz<sup>8</sup>, V. Moskalenko<sup>9</sup>, I. Pyaskovsky<sup>10</sup>, V. Zaiets<sup>11</sup>, O. Markova<sup>12</sup> and others.

Despite the significant scientific interest in this topic, a number of issues remain insufficiently disclosed. In particular, the methodological foundations of performing thinking, the peculiarities of its emotional and intellectual balance, as well as the influence of socio-cultural transformations on the mechanisms of the creative process require further study.

## Discussion

The thinking of a musician-performer can be considered in two aspects: as universal thinking and as technological thinking which is realized through specific performing means of expression. Both processes are inseparable from each other because the goal of the performer is to reveal the meaning of the musical work embedded in the composer's means of musical expression. However, in order to realize their unity, a separate analysis of each one is necessary.

The thinking of a musician-performer, like any person, is closely related to the situational environment, but it goes to a deeper level due to the need to operate with specific categories. This thinking is aimed at solving problems related to the means of composer's and performing speech. A musician analyzes, interprets, and embodies an artistic idea through the prism of musical language, which requires from him/her not only technical skills, but also creative, associative thinking. In this way, the artist's mindset combines emotional receptivity, intuition, and a rational approach to understanding a musical text, making it a unique and multifaceted process.

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<sup>5</sup> Davydov, Mykola. *Theoretical foundations of formation of performance skills of an accordionist*. Kyiv, Musical Ukraine, 2004, 240 p.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, Daniel C. *Holistic musical thinking: a pedagogical model for hands-on and heart - felt musical engagement*. Series: Routledge new directions in music education series. New York, NY: Routledge, 2024, 118 p.

<sup>7</sup> Samitov, Viktor. *Theoretical foundations of professional thinking of a performing musician as a criterion of professional skill*. Lutsk, Volyn regional printing house, 2011, 272 p.

<sup>8</sup> Krausz, Michael (ed.). *The Interpretation of music: philosophical essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 288 p.

<sup>9</sup> Moskalenko, Viktor. *The creative aspect of musical interpretation (to the problem of analysis)*. Kyiv, Muzinform, 1994, 157 p.

<sup>10</sup> Pyaskovskiy, Igor. *The logic of musical thinking*. Kyiv, Musical Ukraine, 1986, 180 p.

<sup>11</sup> Zaiets, Vitalii. *Performance style as comprehensive artistic method in the field of music*. Studia UBB Musica, LXVIII, 2, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, p. 287-295.

<sup>12</sup> Markova, Olena. *Questions of the theory of performance: materials for the theory of performance theory for master and graduate students*. Odessa: Astroprint, 2002, 128 p.

Thinking as a general concept is the ability of a person to carry out mental operations aimed at evaluating and comprehending various phenomena. This applies to both the outside world – perception and analysis of the environment, as well as the internal – reflection, introspection of one’s own feelings and emotions. Thinking allows a person not only to observe reality, but also to interpret it, find connections between phenomena, form ideas and draw conclusions. Thus, it is a key tool for knowing oneself and the world, which makes it a fundamental component of human existence. At the same time, mental processes acquire specific features depending on the field of human activity. In musical and performing arts, they have a special sensual and intellectual character. Here “... the combination of the composer’s and performer’s aspects of musical thinking with the realization of a specific sound constitutes the specificity of performing thinking, unlike, for example, the formal analytical approach, which differentiates and synthesizes various means of musical expression only in the mind”<sup>13</sup>.

Since social changes are constantly making adjustments and directly affecting a person’s mental activity, the problems associated with the thinking of a musician-performer never lose their relevance. This is not limited to technical aspects such as solving problems of sound perspective or navigating the complex structures of a musical text. At higher levels of development, music turns into a semantic phenomenon that becomes adequate to other manifestations of human consciousness. “It becomes a reflection and realization of reality, which a person not only cognizes, but also creatively embodies and transforms”<sup>14</sup>.

Thus, music appears as a powerful tool of the world cognition and oneself, which makes it an integral part of human existence.

Thinking processes are reflected and recorded in various signs and conceptual systems, each of which has its own specifics. Among them, we can conditionally distinguish:

1. Musical notation graphic systems (symbols), which provide information transmission and implementation through sound and visual representation.
2. Visual systems: painting, architecture, graphics, etc., which embody ideas and emotions through visual images, shape, color, and composition.
3. Intonation and sound systems: the logic of the deployment of melodic structures, functional harmony, texture, timbre, and other elements of musical language that convey feelings and ideas through sound.
4. Visual and sound systems: conducting, ballet, opera, where visual and sound elements are combined to create a holistic artistic impression.

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<sup>13</sup> Davydov, Mykola. *Theoretical foundations of formation of performance skills of an accordionist*. Kyiv, Musical Ukraine, 2004, p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> Asafiev, Boris. *Selected Works: 5 v.* Moscow: SSSR Academy of Sciences, (Vols. 5), 1957, p. 181.

Each of these systems is unique in the embodiment of intellectual and emotional information aimed at perceiving a person through his/her receptors. They allow complex ideas, emotions, and feelings to be conveyed using different languages of art, making them indispensable means of communication and creativity.

The object of thinking is formed under the influence of two key sources:

1. External – this is everything that surrounds a person and attracts his/her attention, namely, external motivation that stimulates mental activity.
2. Internal – physiological and psychological needs of the individual, which determines the individual vector of thinking.

The unity of these two factors – intellectual-emotional (mental) and emotional-intellectual (sensual) – creates an integral complex of human mental activity. This interaction allows not only to perceive and analyze the world around us, but also to form a personal position, which is the basis of creativity, self-realization, and development.

Depending on the type of mental composition of a person, his/her thinking can be mainly rational or emotional. In some cases, character dominates, in others temperament. Balancing between these two components reflects the personal qualities of the individual, which, in turn, shape his/her thought processes and determine the nature of the creative thinking of the musician-performer. Motivation of thinking determined a complex of factors, among which aesthetic (artistic ideals and tastes), moral and psychological (values, beliefs, emotional state) and physiological (physical condition, vitality of the body) aspects play a key role.

It is known that in the daily activities of a person, motivations and needs can change spontaneously, regardless of their conscious intentions or decisions. This phenomenon is associated with the deep features of the psyche, which constantly reacts to internal and external factors. Such changes make us pay attention to the importance of the triune relationship between **Present**, **Past** and **Future**, which forms the basis of our experiences, shapes our decisions, influences aspirations and determines the emotional state.

*Past* influences our motivations today through accumulated experiences, habits and experiences. *Present* becomes a field for the realization of these motivations, and *future* as source of new goals and expectations can change our priorities. This dynamic process highlights the complexity of the human psyche and its ability to adapt to new conditions while remaining influenced by the past and focusing on the future.

The creative vocation of a musician-performer is always manifested through a positive emotional tone. The origin of emotions can be traced on two main levels: **perception and reflection of the existing reality** and **effective transformative (creative) activity**. In addition, there is a third source of



emotions – **physiological**, when sensations arise as a result of changes in the body, such as pain or a feeling of “muscular joy” (*pleasant sensations*) during physical activity and development. However, attention should be focused on the first two levels as they form the emotional world of the individual under normal physiological conditions.

The process of cognition of reality is carried out with the help of two interconnected systems: **sensory** and **conceptual**. The sensory system provides the primary perception of information through the senses, while the conceptual system transforms the received data into abstract concepts using language and logical operations. Thanks to analytical and synthetic processes of thinking, there is a transition from specific sensory images to generalized concepts, which allows for deeper comprehension and structuring of information.

The specificity of each type of activity is determined by the dominance of certain perceptual receptors. For example, for an artist, sight is the main thing, for a sculptor – tactile sensations, and for a composer – intraauditory representations. It is worth noting that each of these receptors has unique emotionogenic characteristics and their various sensory and semantic manifestations become active elements of the emotional spectrum in the musician’s performing activity.

The presence of certain receptors, for example, visual, is inherent in all types of art. However, the emotional content of these receptors manifests itself in different ways. For the artist, vision is a determining factor in the process of creating content, form, colorfulness, volume, as well as in the analysis and synthesis of images. For a musician, the visual factor performs an associative and figurative function or serves as an intermediary for translating musical notation into the sensory-emotional sphere, and also provides visual contact with the listener. For the sculptor, the visual component plays a leading role, but it is closely combined with muscular-tactile sensations where vision acts as the center of perception and touch complements it by performing a peripheral function. For the composer, vision becomes a means for the most complete embodiment of sound ideas and the concept of a musical work in a musical text. The visual component plays a similar role in poetic creativity, where it helps to embody verbal images. In ballet, sight and hearing act in synthesis, but the main part falls on visual perception.

Thus, the specifics of emotional thinking in various artistic fields depend on the participation of certain combinations of receptors of the first signaling system. This is what determines the uniqueness of each type of activity. Visual, auditory, tactile, and other receptors form the emotional spectrum which is the basis of the creative process. This emphasizes the importance of an individual approach to the study of each type of art and awareness of the key role of emotions in the formation of artistic experience.

Therefore, it can be argued that the peculiarity of a particular type of activity is determined by the specifics of emotional thinking, which, in turn, depends on the participation of certain combinations of receptors of the first human signaling system.

It is known that the methodology of performing musical thinking cannot be considered in isolation from the specifics of the subject of activity that it provides. Musical and performing art depends not only on the direct musical and performing action, but also on a whole complex of essential artistic factors: the psychology of composer's creativity, knowledge of the historical heritage of art, the culture of listening perception, the psychology of self-regulation (needs, motivations), etc. Thus, the optimal mental and emotional broad spectrum of human thinking finds its brightest concentration in musical and performing activities, which require adequate and multifaceted methodological support.

This problem is complex because as in any scientific field, it manifests itself through methodological trends that significantly influence the further development of research. In this context, the structural and functional analysis of musical and performing art acquires a new meaning: a) as a methodological approach to the theoretical understanding of the processes of understanding artistic phenomena, which is important not only in the field of music, but also in general scientific research; b) as a tool for disclosing the basic provisions of the methodology of executive activity; (c) as a synthesis of the sensual-emotional and mental-intellectual aspects of thinking, where the first one is dominant as it is naturally primary one.

The thinking of a person, in particular of an artist, is always aimed at specific phenomena that cause emotional or intellectual resonance. This means that thought processes concentrate on needs that arise at different levels: physiological, emotional, aesthetic and artistic-figurative. As these needs are closely related to the psyche, their solution requires appropriate methodological approaches that consider both individual and universal aspects.

One of the key problems is the combination of the limitless variability of human manifestations with stable methodological principles. Universal methodological principles that could meet the needs of any creative subject are important, but their implementation must be flexible to take into account the individuality of the artist. The creative process is inherently dynamic and therefore, the methodology cannot be too static. At the same time, if the performer adheres to traditional canons, methodological approaches may remain relatively stable.

Creative activity is always associated with thinking, even in states that may seem passive (for example, through associative and figurative processes). Logical operations, intuition and emotional intelligence are integral components

of creativity. Therefore, the methodology of musical-performing thinking should be comprehensive and integrate scientific, philosophical and psychological aspects to ensure the harmonious development of the artist as a creative person.

Thus, the methodology of music and performing arts should be a dynamic system that combines stable principles with individual approaches, providing depth, awareness, and efficiency of the creative process.

Creative activity is multifaceted, and each aspect of it affects the formation of the thinking of a musician-performer. All specific activities are realized through the personality of the artist. It is in the interaction of “personality – activity” and “activity – personality” that the search for creative solutions takes place. Thus, the methodological understanding of performing art is not only a theoretical task, but also a practical necessity for each performer.

The process of cognition, which underlies creative activity, includes stages such as hypothesis, probabilistic forecasting, mental operations, and the formation of conclusions. The effectiveness of this process depends on several factors, including giftedness, education, professional skills, ability to analyze and purposefulness. The versatility of mental activity is closely related to the peculiarities of the human nervous system as it is the ratio of the basic qualities of the nervous system and social interaction that form the phenomenon of a logically thinking personality. This constitutes the physiological and psychological aspect of mental activity.

Considering the process of forming the logical thinking of the performer, it is necessary to take into account the age (and not only) features of perception, awareness, reproduction and productivity of mental actions. The formation of a musician-performer is a long process: by mastering the first skills of the performance on the instrument, the personality forms a special attitude to art, which manifests itself both in new emotional experiences and in their awareness. This awareness can occur both intuitively and inertially as well as through analytical comprehension, which depends on the level of development of intelligence.

The thinking of a musician-performer is unique and depends on his/her talent, education, practical experience, moral, ethical, and aesthetic views, temperament and character. The authors of the studies may have different views on this issue, but it is this contradiction that stimulates the further development of the topic by contributing to a deeper understanding of the nature of creative thinking.

## Conclusions

Thus, the methodological approach to the study of performing arts is a multifaceted and complex process that covers not only the empirical understanding of creative practices, but also the conceptual study of the patterns of interpretive activity. Taking into account the complex nature of musical and performing art, the specificity of the thinking of a performing musician is formed at the intersection of theoretical analysis, practical experience and cognitive and operational mechanisms, which necessitates the expansion of methodological tools in this area.

Performing thinking is not a static category; it changes dynamically under the influence of the cultural and historical context, personal qualities of the performer and the characteristics of the creative process. Its structure includes a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and psychophysical factors that determine the specifics of the interpretive process. An important aspect is that performing activity combines predictable and unpredictable actions in which artistic logic is built in accordance with the author's concept of the music work, as well as the individual reading of the musical text by the performer.

Methodological support of performing thinking requires the integration of both general patterns of the creative process and a deep understanding of the individual characteristics of the musician. The analysis of this phenomenon should be based on a multidimensional approach including a synthesis of humanities, psychological and art studies. Consideration of these factors contributes to the expansion of traditional ideas about musical performance and opens up new prospects for the development of performing skills.

The effectiveness of performing thinking is determined largely by the ability of the musician not only to deeply comprehend the musical material, but also to actively use innovative approaches to its interpretation. At the center of such thinking is the ability to combine an analytical approach with creative experimentation, which allows one to feel and realize the potential of each piece of music. Modern trends in the development of media culture and digital technologies significantly affect the nature of music and performing arts, which poses new challenges for performers and requires constant adaptation of methodological foundations for the analysis of this process. In this context, an interdisciplinary approach becomes particularly important as it allows for the integration of knowledge from different fields of science by providing a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the nature of performing thinking and art.

Therefore, the scientific understanding of the phenomenon of performing thinking is not only relevant, but also necessary for the further development of both performance practice and music science in general. Awareness of

the relationship between theoretical analysis, creative searches and practical embodiment of a musical text allows one to expand the boundaries of the interpretive capabilities of the performer, contributes to the improvement of his/her professional skills and stimulates the development of new methodological approaches in musical performance.

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## INFANCY: PRIMORDIAL TRUST VERSUS PRIMORDIAL MISTRUST – RECOMMENDING PERSONALIZED MUSIC DURING THE PRENATAL AND INFANT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

LAJOS KIRÁLY<sup>1</sup> 

**SUMMARY.** This paper explores the underlying conflict between primordial trust and primordial mistrust, focusing on the role of early attachment in the development of mental health. It combines psychological, developmental and theological perspectives to show how the relationship between infant and caregiver influences later emotional and social functioning. Harlow's monkey experiments and Bowlby's attachment theory support the importance of secure attachment. The paper also discusses the role of music and religious rituals, especially baptism, in reinforcing emotional security. Analyzing the effects of prenatal and infant musical stimulation, it concludes that musical experiences and touch can jointly contribute to the development of primordial trust, which can form the basis of psychological resilience in later stages.

**Keywords:** infant development, primordial trust, attachment theory, music therapy, early childhood, maternal attachment, baptismal rites, emotional security

### 1. Finding balance in the underlying conflict

The following story is described by Seymour Boorstein, psychoanalyst and clinical assistant professor:<sup>2</sup> “A thirty-year-old engineer presented for treatment for severe depression, manifested in a suicide attempt shortly before therapy. His background included the fact that his mother, who herself suffered from depression and regularly tried to alleviate it by drug and alcohol abuse,

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<sup>2</sup> Boorstein, Seymour, professor at the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California School of Medicine. He is a member of the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Psychoanalysis.



had rejected him from birth. Our work initially focused on the need to detach from his spiraling thoughts. During a regressive period within his treatment, he was able to connect with his anger at the lack of care received and his current need to compensate for it. The exploration of feelings of transference about his mother triggered his anger at not being loved, and he felt that his mother at the time may have wished he had never been born. While he was undergoing therapy, he began to engage in transcendental meditation.”<sup>3</sup> Transpersonal therapy helped to uncover the underlying causes of his fears and suicide attempts due to the lack of care he received in his infancy.

This story also shows how important it is for the newborn and the infant to have the mother meet their needs in a „reliable manner”.<sup>4</sup> Since we didn't include this above, the therapist's aim is to balance this basic conflict, as the infant has not learned and experienced the trust that later fuelled his impulses. The bond and attachment between infant and mother is more than just satisfying nutritional needs, as has been shown in various monkey experiments.<sup>5</sup> Harlow, an American researcher and experimental psychologist, famously experimented by isolating baby monkeys from their mothers and confining them in a room where they placed two “surrogate mothers”<sup>6</sup> : one with its body bare (*wire mother*) and the other wrapped in various types of terry cloth (*cloth mother*). The experiment proved that the little monkeys preferred the company of the cloth monkey on which they could cling, despite the fact that the other artificial mother also provided food. Physical contact and touch were therefore more important to them than food. A similar finding on attachment was made by the English psychiatrist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby<sup>7</sup>, who studied infants who were separated from their mothers. He found that babies who were not able to bond early in life were not able to have lasting relationships later in life.<sup>8</sup> The fact that ten per cent of one-year-old children in Hungary live in single-parent families, where the impossibility of dual attachment can create a sense of inadequacy, may be a difficulty thing to face.

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<sup>3</sup> Boorstein, Seymour: *Düh és halálfélelem [Anger and Fear of Death]*, in *Transperszonális pszichológia és pszichoterápia [Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy]* (eds. Emőke Bagdy, Zsuzsanna Mirnics, Erika Nyitrai), Budapest 2011, Kulcslyuk Kiadó, p. 425.

<sup>4</sup> Gábor Hézser: *Pasztorálpszichológiai szempontok az istentisztelet útkereséséhez. Elméleti és gyakorlati lehetőségek. [Pastoral psychological aspects of the search for the path to worship. Theoretical and practical perspectives.* Budapest 2007, Kálvin János Publishers, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> Harlow, Harry F. - Harlow, Margaret K.: *Effects of various mother-infant relationships on rhesus monkey behaviors.* In B. M. Foss (Ed.): *Determinants of infant behaviour IV*, London: Methuen 1969, pp. 15-36.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrNBEhzjg8I> (accessed on February 17, 2025).

<sup>7</sup> Edward John Mostyn Bowlby (1907-1990), the originator of the basic concept of attachment theory.

<sup>8</sup> Bowlby, John: *Attachment and Loss: Separation, Anxiety and Anger.* Vol. 2, London 1973, Basic Books, 211-237.

Thus, experiments show that the presence of trust in later life depends on the child's experience of secure attachment in infancy, in the months after birth,<sup>9</sup> and attachment in later life, because parents who have been securely attached are more likely to have children who are securely attached.<sup>10</sup> According to Csaba Böjte, in infancy, it is the task of parents, godparents and the environment to "introduce the child to Christian life, which is truly effective when the adult conveys his or her faith by the example of the life they lead, and not just by their words".<sup>11</sup> Today, one of the main norms is perfectionism, which is also reflected in the "gritty example" attitude of parents, but at the same time, according to Peter Popper, a lot of psychological and depth psychological literature has made parents feel insecure.

From a pastoral-psychological point of view, the basic conflict with the child is not only the experience of being gifted and given, but also the dangers and hidden fears that "should not be spoken of". Will the baby cause problems in the marriage, and will I be able to cope with the responsibilities of raising it?<sup>12</sup> Baptismal hymns that articulate and give space to our ambivalent feelings can play an important role in creating balance and speaking out on the topic.

## **2. The rite of baptism as a rite of support for those experiencing a crisis in ambivalence**

Therefore, the birth of a child is both a gift and a burden. In the ninth part of the Book of Zechariah, the noun MASSA' (Zech 9:1) is usually translated as a *statement*, which is found in the introduction to many books by prophets (Isa 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 30:6; Nah 1:1; Mal 1:1; Zech 12:1). However, the noun can also be translated as a *burden* (Ex 23:5; 2Kir 5:17) and as a *gift* (Hos 8:10; 2Chr 17:11). The word of God is thus both a burden and a gift to the prophet.<sup>13</sup> This sense of ambivalence is also evident at the birth of the child. It is interesting that this duality is also reflected in our

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<sup>9</sup> Mihály Bálint sees the cause of certain illnesses in the "mother-child relationship", which "did not develop healthily because the mother, in her anxious insecurity, strained this relationship." In Mihály Bálint. Budapest 1990, Animula Publishers, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Ijzendoorn, Marius H. van: *Adult attachment representations, parental responsiveness, and infant attachment: A meta-analysis on the predictive validity of the Adult Attachment Interview*. In Psychological Bulletin, vol. 117, 1995, no. 3, pp. 387-403.

<sup>11</sup> Csaba Böjte: *Út a végtelenbe. Csaba testvér gondolatai Isten ajándékairól. Böjte Csaba válaszol Karikó Éva kérdéseire. [Road to Infinity. Brother Csaba's reflections on God's gifts. Csaba Böjte in a dialogue with Éva Karikó]*. Budapest 2013, Helikon Publishers, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Gábor Hézszer: *Pasztorálszichológiai... [Pastoral Psychology...]* op. cit. pp. 102-103.

<sup>13</sup> János Molnár: *Zakariás próféta könyvének magyarázata [Commentary on the Book of Zechariah]*. Cluj-Napoca 1998, The Transylvanian Reformed Church District Publication, p. 115.



theological and dogmatic doctrines: according to István Tőkés, baptism is the seal of conversion, the *beginning of new life* and the washing away of sins. Calvin, on the other hand, calls it the symbol and testimony of purification, so that baptism is not God's response to the believer's action, but God's promise, gift and testimony, to which the Christian man responds through his life, death and resurrection in Christ.<sup>14</sup> In both places there is also a contrast: sin and its washing away, death and resurrection. The Greek βαπτίζω *baptize, initiate* with the meaning "to perform a Jewish ritual cleansing ceremony" occurs in New Testament references in Mk 7,4 or Lk 11,38.<sup>15</sup>

Miklós Földvári refers to the old liturgical source texts and fragments, to the elevation of Wednesday and Friday from the ordinary days of the week, and to the service of baptism on Easter night. At the same time, as early as the sixth century, the liturgy includes an essential feature such as the order of baptism.<sup>16</sup> *The Didache*, written between 100 and 130 AD, is one of the oldest early Christian documents outside the New Testament and the oldest surviving ecclesiastical rite. It reveals more about how Christians saw themselves and lived their daily lives than any book in Scripture<sup>17</sup>. In the seventh paragraph of the text, the rite of baptism is described, but there is no mention of singing. The rite of baptism begins with an introduction to the two paths. Later, Hippolytus<sup>18</sup> introduces us to the rite of baptism, when he writes that the bishop breathes on the faces of those to be baptised and marks their chests and foreheads, ears and mouth with the sign of the cross, but there is no reference to singing. The New Testament records the baptism of 'their whole household' (Acts 10,14, Acts 16,34, 1 Cor 1,16), the order of which is therefore: first to baptise, and thus to make disciples, then to teach them, and then to confirm them in the faith. István Tőkés wrote in 1954 that the question of voluntary membership of the Church was increasingly on the agenda<sup>19</sup>, the essence of which is that we do not become members of the Church by baptism of children, but by voluntary decision. Pedagogically accepted, but theologically not, since God's actions are cognitively incomprehensible, since baptism is the sign of "forgiveness of sins, of regeneration, of admission into

<sup>14</sup> János Kálvin: *Institutio*. (Trans. János Viktor) Budapest 1995, Kossuth Nyomda, pp. 137-139.

<sup>15</sup> Varga Zsigmond J. (ed.): *Görög-magyar szótár az Újszövetség irataihoz [Greek-Hungarian Dictionary of the New Testament Documents]*. Budapest 1996, Kálvin János Publishers, pp. 131-132.

<sup>16</sup> Miklós István Földvári: Az ókeresztény liturgia – avagy hogyan ne írjunk liturgiátörténetet? [The liturgy of the early Christians - or how not to write a liturgical history?] In: Magyar Egyházzene, Vol. 20, 2012/2013, No. 4, p. 368.

<sup>17</sup> Milavec, Aaron: *The Didache. Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary*. Collegeville - Minnesota 2003, Liturgical Press, IX.

<sup>18</sup> St Hippolytus of Rome, c. 170-235.

<sup>19</sup> István Tőkés: *Szemponatok a gyermek-kereszttség kérdéséhez [Points of View on the Question of Child Baptism]*. Református Szemle, Vol. 47, 1954, No. 6, p. 162.

the community of Christ and the fellowship of the church”.<sup>20</sup>

The rite of baptism also found its place in the National Socialist-Fascist rite, where pagan elements of the Germanic past were combined with Roman Catholic traditions. Baptisms were marked by the presence of baptismal objects: on the altar, for example, instead of a crucifix, there is a picture of Hitler, thus initiating the infants into the Germanic nation.<sup>21</sup> Thomas Mann, in his novel *The Magic Mountain*, writes that the rite of baptism and the vessels of baptism link generations: ‘the bowl and the plate were not originally related, but for a hundred years they have been used together. The bowl was beautifully shaped, noble and simple, showing that it had been shaped by the austere taste of the beginning of the last century. As for the plate, it was engraved with the names of the heads of the family in variable dots on the back... there was the name of Hans Castorp’s father, then the grandfather - who pointed - his great-grandfather, his great-great-grandfather, and then the *great-grandfather’s* name was doubled, tripled.”<sup>22</sup>

The content and the essence of the baptismal rite and ceremony are therefore not cognitive messages or intellectual (dogmatic) doctrine, but sacramental symbols,<sup>23</sup> in which the gift and fear, fear and its overcoming, the individual and community,<sup>24</sup> anxiety and blessing are supported and helped by the verbal and non-verbal symbols of the “direct and personal work of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>25</sup> It can also have a symbolic effect through the singing, which expresses the congregation’s acceptance of the child and its responsibility for him or her and for his or her religious education. At the same time, it can also help to overcome fear through hymns expressing the verbal symbolism of “I am with you”, concrete examples of which will be provided later.

### 3. Infancy: the music of primordial trust versus primordial mistrust

According to the literature, before we learn to speak, we engage in musical activity because the right brain differentiates and develops faster<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Zsolt Kozma: *Liturgika [Liturgy]*. Cluj-Napoca 2000, Kis Miklós Reformed Press Centre of Misztótfalú, p. 66.

<sup>21</sup> Atkinson, Tracy and Baran, Joan: *Nazis: The Occult Conspiracy*. Documentary film, USA 1998.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Mann: *A varázshegy [The Magic Mountain]*. Volume I (trans. Klára Szöllősy), Budapest 1981, Európa Könyvkiadó, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> Gábor Hézser: *Pasztorálpszichológiai... [Pastoral Psychology...]* p. 105.

<sup>24</sup> István Benkő: *A gyermekkereszttség. Bibliái tanulmány [The baptism of children. A Biblical study]*. Tahitótfalu 1923, Sylveszter Publishing, pp. 34-37.

<sup>25</sup> László Ravasz: *Kis dogmatika [A little dogmatics]*. Budapest 1996, Calvin János Publishers, p. 140.

<sup>26</sup> József Hámori: *Az emberi agy és a zene. [The human brain and music]*. In András Falus (Ed.): *Zene és egészség [Music and health]*. Budapest 2016, Kossuth Publishing House, p. 23.

Yehudi Menuhin and Ray Jackendorff hypothesise that singing preceded speech at the dawn of mankind. The babble of an infant is the precursor of speech, which has a musical melody. Research by Robin Panneton Cooper and Richard N. Aslin<sup>27</sup> has demonstrated that after birth, infants much prefer the melodic nursery rhymes or cooing of adults to crooning speech.<sup>28</sup> The experiment was carried out on two-day-old infants who were told different sentences: first using adult speech, then using „baby talk”. It was found that the infants preferred the „baby talk”. Further research on the topic was carried out by Janet Werker and Peter McLeod, who, looking at four- and eight-month-old infants, showed that they preferred „baby talk” and cooing.<sup>29</sup> Anne Fernald and Patricia Kuhl used a computer to simulate artificially generated human speech and „baby talk” language for four-month-old infants. The infants much preferred vocal material that resembled cooing.<sup>30</sup> However, not only cooing but also crying is a means of communication for infants. Some argue that infant’s experiment with vocal inflections when crying, which include screams and shrieks, with a total of eight types of crying, according to the author Claudia and David Arp.<sup>31</sup>

Musical skills can be developed in the same way as speaking skills. As we are surrounded by people who talk, we need to be involved in this form of communication. If we live in a microcosm (Mérei), musicality can be developed. If a child hears music and smiles, we should not conclude that this is due to the song, as the German anthropologist Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt defined this to be an innate gesture in children born blind or deaf. This view is supported by the research of Paul Ekman,<sup>32</sup> Wallace V. Friesen, and E. Richard Sorenson.<sup>33</sup> Shaking the head to signal “no” is also an acquired gesture in infancy as a sign of satiety and rejection of the mother’s milk.

We discussed earlier that the embryo hears before its heart starts beating, so it is very important that the mother talks to it, sings to it, i.e.

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<sup>27</sup> Richard N. Aslin, psychologist. University of Rochester.

<sup>28</sup> Cooper, Robin Panneton - Aslin, Richard N.: *Preference for Infant-Directed Speech in the First Month after Birth*. In *Child Development*, Vol. 61, No. 5, 1990, pp. 1584-1595.

<sup>29</sup> Werker, Janet F., & McLeod, Peter J.: *Infant preference for both male and female infant-directed talk: A developmental study of attentional and affective responsiveness*. In *Canadian Journal of Psychology/Revue canadienne de psychologie*, vol. 43, 1989, no. 2, pp. 230-246.

<sup>30</sup> Fernald, Anne - Kuhl, Patricia: *Acoustic determinants of infant preference for maternal speech*. In: *Infant Behavior and Development*, Vol. 10, 1987. no. 3, pp. 279-293.

<sup>31</sup> Arp, Claudia and David: *Answering the 8 Cries of the Spirited Child*. Louisiana 2003, Howard Publishing Co., Inc., p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Ekman, Paul: *Strong evidence for universals in facial expressions: A reply to Russell's mistaken critique*. In *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 115, 1994, no. 2, pp. 268-287.

<sup>33</sup> Ekman, Paul - Wallace V. Friesen: *Constants across Cultures in the Face and Emotion*. In *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 17, 1971, no. 2, pp. 124-129.

communicates with the embryo/foetus,<sup>34</sup> as the stress hormones activated in the mother are also released into the bloodstream of the foetus. After birth, the mother's words may mean nothing to the baby, but the mother's cooing, prosody and manner of expression mean a lot. The melody, rhythm, inflections and phrasing of the sentence carry a positive message.<sup>35</sup>

According to biologist Charles B. Davenport, the relationship between mother and fetus is established through intuitive, biological and behavioural channels.<sup>36</sup> The biological channel includes the mother's smoking, nourishment, relaxation and all the activities that bring qualitative and quantitative nutrition to the fetus through the bloodstream. It is interesting that metabolic products also come from the foetus to the mother, which underlines the duality of the relationship. The behavioural channel is mainly related to the mother's lifestyle: the rhythmic changes of day and night that regulate the fetal circadian rhythm, the daily biological clock.<sup>37</sup> The intuitive channel is the most difficult area for science to explore and is a form of communication related to psychological attunement. It is through this channel that music can create the connection through which the fetus responds positively to the songs played after birth.

We have previously mentioned how musical activity releases oxytocin.<sup>38</sup> Oxytocin is also produced in the mother during labour and later on, during breastfeeding, which helps her to bond with the baby. In the father, ADH (vasopressin) is linked to an antidiuretic hormone that helps him become a father.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4. Infancy: melodies that reinforce primordial trust

According to Péter Popper, the cradle reminds the newborn of the warmth of the amniotic fluid and the rocking in it. If the mother sings, holds the baby in her arms and rocks it, the soothing effect is even greater.

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<sup>34</sup> Andrea Andrek: *A magzat üzenete - Kommunikáció és kapcsolat. [The message of the fetus - Communication and connection]*. <https://mipszi.hu/cikk/a-magzat-uzenete-kommunikacio-es-kapcsolat-> (Accessed on February 17, 2025).

<sup>35</sup> Intra-uterine interactions also occur between twins, as shown by the ultrasound scans of child psychotherapist Alessandra Piontelli, and are repeated between babies after birth. Piontelli, Alessandra: *From Fetus to Child*. London and New York 2002, Routledge, 22-23.

<sup>36</sup> Berkowitz, Ari quoting Davenport: *Our gens, ourselves?* In *BioScience*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1996, p. 42.

<sup>37</sup> Serón-Ferré, Maria - Mendez, Natalia - Abarzua-Catalan, Lorena - Vilches, Nelson - Valenzuela, Francisco J. - Reynolds, Henry E. - Llanos, Aníbal J. - Rojas, Auristela - Valenzuela, Guillermo J. - Torres-Farfan, C laudia: *Circadian rhythms in the fetus*. In: *National Library of Medicine Nat. Institutes of Health*, Vol. 349, No. 1, 2012, pp. 68-75.

<sup>38</sup> Oxytocin: a Greek word meaning *rapid delivery*.

<sup>39</sup> Ferenc Pál: *A magánytól az összetartozásig [From loneliness to belonging]*. Budapest 2014, Kulcslyuk Publishers, p. 340.

However, too much noise, according to Japanese researchers, is harmful not only to the development of the newborn baby, but also to the fetus. According to a study by a developmental research institute, pregnant mothers living near Osaka airport had babies with lower birth weight and a high proportion of premature babies.<sup>40</sup> American psychologist Jeffrey E. Young, in his schema therapy,<sup>41</sup> describes the attributes of infancy and childhood as: secure attachment (security, stability, care, acceptance), the need for autonomy (strengthening of competence), freedom to express emotions and needs, the need for play and spontaneity, the need to practice realistic boundaries, and self-control.<sup>42</sup>

Lullabies are universal, as mothers in all societies and cultures sing lullabies, which are a universal language across cultures,<sup>43</sup> and which play an important role not only in lulling and soothing, but also in bonding.<sup>44</sup> This form of communication will continue until it is replaced by speech. Márai writes of the act of birth that “when the child begins to cry, the spectator slips out of the room and feels that Michelangelo was a tinker, and Newton, with all his calculations, is a dilettante”.<sup>45</sup> Singing can therefore be associated with movement, rocking, swaying, which provide a safe musical space for the child.

## 5. Infancy and prenatal age: classical and modern music recommendations

Since several studies have shown that listening to music during the prenatal period induces neural imagery and affects the developing brain over several months,<sup>46</sup> we recommend listening to music that is close to the rhythm of the human heartbeat and therefore ensures its synchronization. Medium tempo music of 60 to 70 beats per minute metronome marking markings

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<sup>40</sup> Schell, Lawrence M.: *Auxological Epidemiology and the Determination of the Effects of Noise and Health*, in Susanne, C. (Ed.): *Genetic and Environmental Factors during the Growth Period*, New York and London 1984, Plenum Press, pp. 214-215.

<sup>41</sup> Schema therapy is based on the premise that certain basic schemas exist to meet basic psychological needs and thus guide human behaviour.

<sup>42</sup> Young, Jeffrey E.: *Schema-focused therapy for personality disorders*. In: Gregoris Simos (Ed.): *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. A Guide for the Practising Clinician*. Vol. 1st, London 2002, Routledge, pp. 201-222.

<sup>43</sup> Fee, Christopher R. and Webb, Jeffrey B (Ed.): *American Myths, Legends, and Tales, An Encyclopedia of American Folklore*. Vol. I. A-F. Santa Barbara, California 2016, ABC-CLIO, LLC, p. 629.

<sup>44</sup> Cochrane, Fiona: *Music of the Brain*. Documentary film, USA, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Sándor Márai: *Ég és föld. [Heaven and Earth]*. Budapest 2001, Helikon Publishers, p. 18.

<sup>46</sup> Partanen, Eino - Kujala, Teija - Tervaniemi, Mari - Huotilainen, Minna: *Prenatal Music Exposure Induces Long-Term Neural Effects*. US Nat. Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, Published online on October 30, 2013. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0078946> (Accessed on February 5, 2025.).

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PERSONALIZED MUSIC DURING THE PRENATAL AND INFANT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

are closest to the resting heartbeat, so the following songs are recommended for listening during pregnancy:

Artist	Title	Year of release	Metronome beat	Genre
Yolanda Adams	<i>Victory</i>	2005	61	R&B <sup>47</sup> /soul <sup>48</sup>
Green Light	<i>All of Me</i>	2013	62	R&B/soul
Cee Lo Green	<i>“Love Gun (feat. Lauren Bennett)”</i>	2010	59	R&B/soul
Natalie Cole	<i>This Will Be (An Everlasting Love)</i>	1975	62	R&B/soul
Johnny Ace	<i>Pledging My Love</i>	1954	61	R&B/soul
Sam Cooke	<i>Get Yourself Another Fool</i>	1963	72	R&B/soul
Andrew Aleman	<i>Along the Rivers of Time</i>	2008	72	R&B/soul
Ana Olgica	<i>Atoms</i>	2017	69	Christian & Gospel
Building 429	<i>Always</i>	2008	72	Christian & Gospel
Michael W. Smith	<i>Draw Me Close</i>	2001	72	Christian & Gospel
Eddie Kirkland	<i>Lift High</i>	2015	71	Christian & Gospel
Amy Grant	<i>“I’ll Be Home for Christmas”</i>	1992	62	Christian/pop music
David Phelps	<i>Ain’t No Grave</i>	2015	72	Christian & Gospel
Andrew Strong	<i>Mustang Sally</i>	1991	58	R&B/soundtrack <sup>49</sup>
The Tokens	<i>“The Lion Sleeps Tonight (Wimoweh)”</i>	1961	61	R&B/pop
Britney Spears	<i>Inside Out</i>	2011	60	pop
The Flaming Lips	<i>“Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots, Pt. 1”</i>	2002	62	Alternative <sup>50</sup>
Stanley Turrentine	<i>Journey Into Melody</i>	1960	59	Jazz
The Rolling Stones	<i>Blue and Lonesome</i>	2016	60	Blues
Tracy Lawrence	<i>Texas Tornado</i>	1994	61	Country
The Urban Underground Society	<i>The Whole World</i>	2006	61	Hip Hop/Rap
Paul McCartney	<i>Lonely Road</i>	2001	59	Rock
Monty Python	<i>Galaxy Song</i>	1983	61	Comedy
Brian Eno	<i>Weightless</i>	1983	69	Film music/Electronic

<sup>47</sup> R&B: rhythm and blues, a genre born in the USA in the 1940s. Several decades later, a modern branch combining elements of funk, soul, hip hop and pop music emerged.

<sup>48</sup> Soul music originated in the United States in the 1950s and has its roots in R&B and gospel.

<sup>49</sup> Soundtrack: film music, which originally meant the musical score of a motion picture. In its inception it included not only music but also sound effects and dialogue.

<sup>50</sup> Alternative music (alternative rock or alt rock) is a musical movement that emerged in the 1980s and has the characteristics of the underground movement.

## Classical music

Composer/ Artist	Title	Year of creation	Metronome beat	Type
Chopin, Frédéric	<i>Nocturne in E flat major</i> <sup>51</sup> (Op.9, No.2)	1830-1832	61	piano music
Christmas Piano Band	O Come, O Come Emmanuel	1999	62	piano music
Tchaikovsky, Pyotr	<i>Serenade for Strings in C major</i> Op. 48: II Valse. Moderato. Tempo di Valse	1880	68	String Serenade
Dvořák, Antonín Leopold	<i>Czech Suite</i> , Op. 39, B. 93 : IV. Romanza	1879	69	Orchestral work
Debussy, Claude	<i>Préludes</i> – Book 1, L. 117 : 1. Danseuses de Delphes	1910-1913	70	piano music
Beethoven, Ludwig van	<i>“For Elise, (A minor) Woo 59”</i>	1810	70	piano music
Chopin, Frédéric	<i>24 Preludes</i> , Op. 28, No. 15 in D flat major: Sostenuto (“Raindrop Prelude”)	1838	70	piano music

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<sup>51</sup> Noktürn or *notturno* in Italian: night music. The genre, written for piano, emerged during the Romantic period.

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## “MUSIC THERAPY MOMENTS”. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES ON THE PATH TO A MUSIC THERAPY PROFESSION.<sup>1</sup> SCIENTIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

MAGDOLNA SZABADI<sup>2</sup>

**SUMMARY.** Becoming a music therapist is shaped by family experiences, group experiences, music learning experiences. In music therapy, the experience is processed analytically, in contrast to music education, where the music is professionally performed and received. Music therapy can be an alternative solution to technical and emotional problems in music education. As an interdisciplinary field, music therapy research is extremely difficult. Changes in a targeted area or skill in the core activity are assessed using the measurement tools used in the core activity. In music education, this can be a developmental experiment. We can use self-developed measurement tools (test, questionnaire) to assess changes along the targeted skills. In teacher training, Scientific Student Association, Erasmus mobility programmes, new courses offers the opportunity to learn music therapy methods and conduct research at international level.

**Keywords:** music therapy, musical experience, musical tools, alternative musical methods.

**First, I will collect my own experience of how I became a music therapist.**

Growing up in a musical family, as a child, the musical experience was determined by aesthetic considerations, that is, the subject matter and aesthetic characteristics of the musical work. Specifically, the performance or

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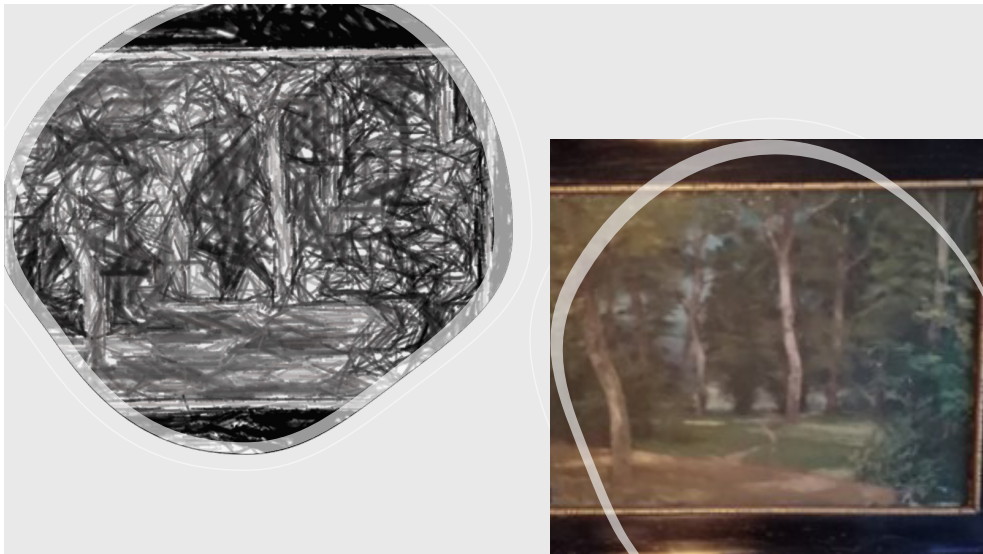
<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on my presentation at the Music Therapy Club (Budapest, 16. 09. 2024. Budapest Music Center) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObxDFi\\_bS6l&t=1427s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObxDFi_bS6l&t=1427s)

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listening to a piece of music was dictated by musical aesthetic, methodological, and author-prescribed principles. From the point of view of music therapy, several music therapy group visits to a psychiatric rehabilitation institute as a high school student were fundamental experiences. There, the musical experience was determined by the fact that music was a direct catalyst for personal memories. I noticed how one of the completely non-communicative group members first drew a black, empty, shapeless picture to the music that the teacher played, and then the next time he came up with a colorful, figurative drawing and spoke clearly about his picture and his experiences (1. picture).

**Picture 1**



**Illustration: mental state changes during music therapy (source: own ed.)**

At that time, I theoretically developed the confusion that the feedback I receive, for example in a pedagogical situation, in a piano lesson “the volume was not appropriate, your arm position was this or that”... is confusing, “harmful”, because I did not experience all of this in accordance with the feedback, and I did not have much opportunity to receive an explanation or understand it. In contrast to the way in which we could deal with our experiences on the safest ground in the music therapy group session, and we received realistic feedback on ourselves and even our performance.

Experiencing and understanding all of this led me first to mental health training, then to music therapy, then to graduate school and cognitive studies. It was during my training and practice as a therapist that I first experienced the difference between merging with the subject matter of the work, as opposed to bringing personal inner conflicts to the surface and working through them in a therapy session. Our group leader played Mussorgsky: The Great Gate of Kiev from An Exhibition of Pictures, with the instruction, "lie or sit comfortably so that your muscles are relaxed and paint a picture in your imagination while we listen to the music". I participated in the group after a traumatic loss, and to the music I saw the person I had lost sinking in an endless sea. Unbeknownst to me, my unrestrained sobs were channelled and quieted by the guiding instructions of our therapist, and I was able to talk about my image. Those trainings taught me how to help effectively, how to listen with understanding. And as a music educator, I have been able to unlock technical and interpretive barriers by combining my own experience with methodological tools. For example, when teaching piano (2. picture), if my student's arm is tight, I dare to stand up from the instrument and make a circular dance movement to loosen it and consciously talk to him/her about the barriers. But, even more that, I began to be motivated to research the therapeutic effects of music and to collect different methods to pass on to future educators.

## Picture 2



Perception of a music pedagogical situation (source: own ed.)

## Music therapy research

Researching music therapy in a doctoral school is a very difficult journey. Health/medical science, humanities, education, musicology, psychology? All of them, and none of them. A therapist brings from his background knowledge in these fields the element relevant to the purpose of therapy according to his original qualification. This is how a therapist becomes competent in my opinion. As an interdisciplinary field, it is almost impossible to be accepted as a discipline. Finding a framework where appropriate methodology, measurement and acceptance can be created is the challenge. That's how I ended up in graduate school in education, where my research framework became a way to influence social behaviour along the lines of developing emotional skills in teacher trainees. This required finding a skill-level model of our behaviour and specifically addressing the musical elements of self-care. Because from a research methodology point of view, the musical element is almost indefinable, or at least not exclusive, in the mechanism of action of music therapy. If you look at the studies, they always stop at the point where they add elements of music therapy to the tried and tested method used in the basic activity. Changes in the core activity are assessed along the lines of a targeted area or skill in the core activity, using the measurement tools used in the core activity. Thus, my research method became a pedagogical development experiment, and the measurement tool was a test I developed myself. The specific aim is to develop the emotional factors of social competence by using music therapy tools with teacher trainees and to indirectly influence the music therapy music relationship system. The theoretical models chosen were Affective Social Competence (ASC) and Music Therapy Music Relationship (MTMR). The ASC describes effective social behaviour around the *sending, receiving and experiencing of emotional messages*, i.e. the appropriate functioning of emotion expression, understanding and regulation. The model is illustrated by a wind turbine, because just as a game is kept in motion by the wind, a conversation is kept in motion by the right flow of emotions. I have defined and invented myself MTMR, talking to professionals and coding definitions from studies that do not use music professionally. In this way, a system of relationships with music emerged, which can characterise the musical side of a music therapy session. Musical intensity, which can be defined as the degree of heat of the relationship with music. It can be expressed in terms of need, awareness, degree of absence and quantity. How much we feel the need to connect with music on a daily basis plays a role in this. Is our engagement with different sounds, tones, acoustic stimuli an accident or a conscious choice? Do we experience a lack of it if we do not consciously engage with music?

*Musical activity* in therapy can range from interpretations of musical pieces to any kind of sound production (vocalizations, noise and murmurs), listening to sounds. Its components are the love, habit, gift, way and occasion of different sounds and voices. To put this into practice, therapy offers active (improvisational) and receptive (analytical listening) forms. And the experience of music therapy is also explored in its physiological and cognitive effects, as therapy is concerned with the subjective meaning of musical experience. Sounds of the environment: musical sounds, noises, sounds of nature are a constant part of our daily lives. The way we perceive, interpret and select among them can trigger different psychological responses. For example, a siren can trigger fear, irritation, crying or even empathy. Or a familiar song on the radio that evokes positive memories can evoke feelings of joy and security. The definition of skills and components reveals their individuality and their unique developmental scale.

Therefore, their progress can be characterised by the participants indicators against themselves. In other words, “Pisti’s performance” in the experimental music therapy group is not measured against “Karcsi’s performance” in the control group, who did not receive therapy, at the end of the sessions, but rather against how Pisti and Karcsi progressed individually from the status before the start of therapy to the status at the end of therapy. The difference is that one of them experienced the mechanism of action of the therapy first hand, while the other did not. For our measurement to be accurate, they must start from the same baseline, which is set during pre-testing. The chart shows the spontaneous effect size for the control group in blue and the direct development effect size for the experimental group in orange, based on the summary indicators, musically above and emotionally below (3. picture).

**Picture 3**



**Emotional and musical skills development in my experiment in percentage values**

*The ASC Test* is a hypothetical story that captures a moment in time. It becomes a story through the dynamics of the response. The participant is presented with a well-defined library environment, where he sees his/her classmates working on the same task for which he wants help. The task is to send emotional signals on behalf of the protagonist about his/her intention to join, to interpret the signals they received appropriately and to regulate himself/herself well. The classmates are in different emotional states, which must be considered when interpreting the emotional signals. Responses will be graded by prepared judges into developmental categories according to a set of given scoring criteria.

- **Example of a test question:**

- Situation 1. Stephen sees three of his classmates sitting at a computer in the library, with the ETR interface on the screen. He would like to join them, as he has a number of questions about it. Stephen stops in the doorway and sees the others talking to each other, all looking at the screen.
- Question 1. What step do you think Istvan should take to open up and get closer to them?

*The MTMR Questionnaire*, through 20 closed questions, explores the participants relationship to music by asking them to mark the most appropriate one along the predetermined response options. E.g. "Do you miss it when your day goes by without music?" And the point is that the music therapy characteristics of the musical elements are communicated to the participants beforehand. E.g. "...music is not only musical sound, but any acoustic stimulus". With this in mind, here are some examples of exercises (4. picture).

**Picture 4**



**Music therapy instruments (source: Szabadi, 2021, p. 63)**

- **Example of music questions:**

- Do you feel the need to listen to music every day and be in touch with music?

- *Exercise to develop the emotional skills:*

- We sit in a circle. A group member stands in the middle of the circle, expresses an emotion with his/her posture and makes a sound. For example, a hunched posture and a sigh to express sadness. Then a group member joins in, as if in response to what they have seen. For example, to cheer up a group member, he or she may straighten his or her posture and raise his or her hand.

- *Exercise to develop the musical relationship:*

- We sit in a circle and listen to relaxing music. The music can be played digitally or listened to live. The therapist names an imaginary location, such as the beach. Then, while listening to the music, the group members collect who and what appeared there in the imaginary place. After listening to the music, the group discusses verbally who experienced what, who and what they met and what they experienced. Finally, we reflect on what we have shared with each other.



We can feel that we can add a musical element or instrument to a pre-designed developmental exercise. They offer a way of communication that works at a preverbal level and can be used by anyone. Although the musical elements affect the whole person, I can “fit” the musical instrument to the current skill level. If, for example, Aniko is stressed I obviously can’t listen to strong, fast, dynamic or slow, soft, very soft music with her, although I have prepared it, but it just makes her more excited. Instead, I listen to Aniko’s anger, and choose allegretto, forte music, for example, in proportion to the degree of anger. It’s banal, but we can all experience that effect. The instruments and musical elements are not only a tool for the session, but also a framework and a reinforcement of the given information. If an event or a reaction can be associated with sound, it can be transformed into music, it can be translated into behaviour, which gives us the opportunity to develop our social and emotional skills through music. For example, “I see Aniko”, it is better not to approach her now, she raises her eyebrows, I can turn away. Hmm. So, musical instruments open up channels of communication that precede, complement or accompany speech and behaviour, and thus make the transmission of information more authentic<sup>3</sup>.

*How is music therapy experience integrated into my workplace (into teacher training)?*

In teacher training, it appears as an extension of the methodological toolbox and palette. For example, unblocking technical, mental/psychic barriers through targeted drawing, movement, discussion. It also serves to strengthen personal and professional integrity by building confidence and clarifying competence boundaries. This can only be truly achieved through first-hand experience/supervision. Students gain self-awareness, awareness and background knowledge and experience the suitability of their personality for development. Participation is essential for this. They experience these effects first hand: “.e.g. Aniko is tense. Should I let her bang on the piano? How angry is she? Does she get hurt? I have to assess. Then slap my hand or give me a high five...”. Knowledge of rules (they need to know the principles, structures, expectations, e.g. ethical principles, stages of a group process), creating a sense of safety by clarifying ethical principles (e.g. confidentiality/no visual or audio recording of a group process, or the circle

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<sup>3</sup> Szabadi, M. *The possibility of developing social competence with music therapy tools in teacher education*. ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education, 2021. And: Szabadi, M. *To play music, but in a different way - The developmental impact of music therapy tools on the effective behaviour of teacher candidates*. Eötvös Publishers, 2024.

itself in the form or individual situation of sitting at a closed angle). And the method is the improvisation. Music therapy improvisation is in fact an intense, spontaneous, improvised, inventive game. It is a process that can be done by anyone and that results in sound. In this way there is no difference between musician and non-musician. A music-therapeutic improvisation sounds like this, no musical theme, no defined musical structure, instinctive vocalization with memories and emotions. Aesthetically, it is the same as folk songs, tribal drumming, because they are unique and atypical, and thus distinct from the opus that defines classical music. Through personal experience, the limits of the therapist's and teacher's competence are experienced. Therapy involves the conscious psychological guidance of musical experiences and transfer effects by a professional, while pedagogy involves the provision of musical instructions for the correct interpretation of a given work. The former is dominated by empathy and reciprocity, the latter by evaluation and accountability. Another important issue is the challenges of dual and group relationships. In the former, group synchronisation (adaptation, listening to each other) predominates, in the latter, person-centredness predominates (unconditional positive acceptance, empathy, congruence). Awareness of therapeutic risks is very important. Examples include misinterpreted psychological events (e.g. turning to lethargy), lack of reflection, monotony, overprotective behaviour, lack of cooperation, unrespected professional frameworks.

### **Further plans, reception**

From this academic year (*Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education, 2024/2025*), an *optional subject* will be introduced, which can also be taken as part of teacher training. There you can experience the above theme through first-hand experience. Or, in the field of scientific research, a number of students have for several years been choosing the topic of the emotional and behavioural impact of music therapy instruments as a subject for their *thesis or dissertation*. And in the context of the preparation, methods of sample selection and instrument design are in the foreground. And the programmes of *Scientific Student Association* provide opportunities to conduct experiments and to try out the exercises with students (5. picture). I personally have access to this as *Vice President* of the *Scientific Student Association at the Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education*. And the *Erasmus+ Mobility Programmes* provide opportunities to conduct international studies and learn new approaches to music therapy, designing digital measurement tools while working as a visiting lecturer. For example, for my latest research, I adapted and digitised a test in an international

collaboration. This process was introduced to students in the programmes of student club. In this way, students can try musical practices on a theoretical and practical level and learn about the methodological principles for impact assessment.

**Picture 5**



**Demonstrating the scientific potential (source: own ed.)**

### **My motto on music therapy**

“... a music therapy session involves working through our own inhibited life history, which contributes to positive conversations and relationships at the level of our social behaviour, even in situations and with people we find unpleasant. In this way, unexpected experiences, such as an unconscious memory of a buried sense of shame, are less of a barrier to expressing your intentions in an anxiety situation and being able to interpret the reactions you receive appropriately. This is because you have already faced it in a safe therapeutic circle and have practised coping with it. And playing with instruments

and music, following the natural dynamics of the music, provides a safe ground to warm up and then quiet the experience that has arisen and been named, in a way that you can bear. All it takes is courage. As you grapple with more and more memories like this, your relationships will become more understandable, manageable and functional.”<sup>4</sup>

“Music therapy cannot be considered in isolation because it is not a stand-alone process, it is a method and a system of tools that is integrated into the basic activity (clinical, social care, educational development...). Its theoretical background, its tools, its methodology are always linked to the activity in which music therapy is used. Therefore, it is only used experimentally, and methodology like in the core activity.”<sup>5</sup>

The experiential music therapy exercises, in addition to broadening the range of methodologies, will help the teacher to develop their personal and professional integrity. The tools of music therapy are accessible to anyone, no musical expertise is required to use them, their application are enjoyable, and their effects are equally detectable at the level of neural networks in both musical and non-musical individuals.

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<sup>4</sup> Szabadi, M. *The possibility of developing social competence with music therapy tools in teacher education*. ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education, 2021, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, p. 55.



## THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION AS A PRINCIPLE OF MUSICAL CREATION: BETWEEN DATA AND MEANING (I)

SEBASTIAN ANDRONE-NAKANISHI<sup>1</sup> 

**SUMMARY.** This study explores how information transfer shapes contemporary musical creation. It examines the dynamic relationship between composer, performer, and audience, emphasizing that music is not merely a technical process but a continuous exchange of meaning. The study highlights Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 1 and Rautavaara's *Cantus Arcticus* as examples of reinterpretation and contextual transformation. It introduces the Informational Transfer Device (ITD) concept, illustrating how musical ideas evolve through multiple agents. The paper also addresses the ontological role of information in music, drawing on Aristotelian causality and modern information theory. Furthermore, it explores perception, interpretation, and cultural context in musical reception, comparing these mechanisms to the Kuleshov Effect in cinematography. Finally, the study offers practical applications for composers and performers, demonstrating how informational transfer principles can enhance expressivity, audience engagement, and interdisciplinary artistic collaborations.

**Keywords:** Informational Transfer, Musical Communication, Composer - Performer - Audience Relationship, Interpretation and Meaning, Informational Transfer Device (ITD), Contextual Recontextualization

### Introduction

The transfer of information represents a fundamental component in contemporary musical creation, serving as a process that mediates the relationship between the composer, performer, and audience. This phenomenon

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explains how music is created and perceived, emphasizing the flow of data and its transformation into a meaningful artistic act.

In an interconnected world where informational flows dominate all fields, music is at a critical point of reevaluation. The transfer of information is no longer merely a technical process but rather a foundation for emotional and intellectual communication between the creator and the recipient. This concept extends beyond the technological sphere, addressing not only how information is conveyed through musical notes but also how it is perceived, interpreted, and contextualized by the audience.

A key aspect of informational transfer in music is its intrinsic complexity: it does not involve merely a unidirectional flow from sender to receiver but also a feedback process, in which the audience itself influences musical creation. Consequently, the relationship between composer, performer, and audience becomes dynamic, based on continuous exchanges of ideas and emotions.

For example, the works of Gustav Mahler, though conceived within a specific cultural framework, are reinterpreted differently depending on historical context and contemporary audience sensitivities. A notable example is the third movement of *Symphony No. 1 in D major*, where Mahler reimagines the children's song *Frère Jacques* within the structure of a funeral march. Jeremy Barham describes the structural and thematic significance of the third movement of Mahler's *First Symphony*, emphasizing its relationship to the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* cycle:

The so-called 'funeral march,' the virtual slow movement, is also in a tripartite form. Mahler's symbolically pregnant, much-discussed use of the *Brüder Jakob* canon in the outer sections notwithstanding, the musico-poetic masterstroke of the movement (if not of the entire *First Symphony*) is the very literal derivation of the middle section from the second part of *Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz*, the closing song of the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*.

Unlike in the case of the first movement, here the borrowed musical material is not 'rested' from its context in the song cycle. Rather, the 'song without words' character of this episode and its structural placement explicate and resolve the ambiguity that was created at the end of the song cycle. There, the implied finality of the protagonist's escape from reality through sleep (or 'is this,' as Eichendorff/Strauss mused in *Im Abendrot* some sixty years later, 'perhaps, death?') seemed to have been contradicted by the cadential six-four chords.

Now, in the third movement of the *First Symphony*, the return of the 'funeral march' unambiguously signals a return to a painful but concrete reality.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Barham, Jeremy. *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler*. Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 87.

THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION AS A PRINCIPLE OF MUSICAL CREATION:  
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Mahler's compositional and dramaturgical choices transform this familiar melody into an entirely new expression, which can be perceived as ironic, tragic, or absurd, depending on the listener's perspective. The audience of Mahler's time might have interpreted this work as a subtle form of social critique, whereas contemporary listeners may resonate with its universal dimension, reflecting on themes of alienation or melancholy.

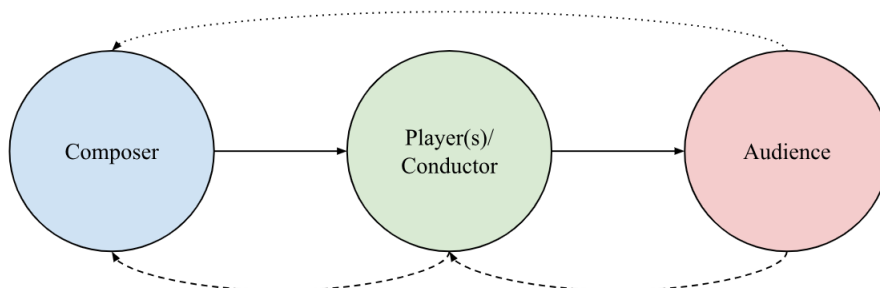
E. g. 1

1  
Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen \*)  
Pauken  
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SOLO  
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Contrabass  
1

Gustav Mahler, Symphony No. 1, third movement, m. 1-8

This interdependence highlights the significance of meaning as an essential dimension of informational transfer. While raw data can be transmitted with precision, a fundamental quality of music lies in the meaning attributed by listeners, who bring their own experiences and cultural backgrounds to the act of reception. Thus, although information can be defined in terms of quantifiable data, the meaning derived from this information involves interpretation, "contamination," experience, and contextualization, making informational transfer a central theme for contemporary musicians.

Figure 1



**The bidirectional flow of musical information between the composer, performer/conductor, and audience. Solid arrows show the primary transmission of music, while dotted arrows represent feedback loops, emphasizing the interactive nature of musical communication.**



Music is not merely an act of transmitting information from the composer to the performer and, subsequently, to the audience, but rather a dynamic process in which meaning is continuously constructed, modified, and recontextualized, as illustrated in the diagram above. The transfer of information in music involves a **complex relationship** between the composer, performer (or conductor), and audience, with each of these factors actively contributing to the shaping of the musical experience.

Thus, the composer initiates the flow of information through notation, content, expressive intent, and the formal construction of the work. The performer receives this information and transforms it—not only through technical execution but also through expressive choices that influence the audience's perception. In turn, the audience, with its own cultural and emotional background, becomes an active agent in defining the significance of the music. Moreover, this process generates a **feedback loop**, in which the performer and composer are influenced by the audience's reactions, and successive reinterpretations of a musical work may lead to new understandings and even modifications of the original score, particularly in the case of contemporary music.

This phenomenon can also be observed in *Cantus Arcticus* by Rautavaara, where the process of recontextualization is not limited to the mere inclusion of recorded bird songs but extends into a complex dialogue between these recordings and the orchestra. The composer not only integrates raw sonic material from nature but also reinterprets it through orchestration and the use of extended techniques, thereby endowing it with a new expressive dimension. Furthermore, the act of interpretation adds an additional layer of variability, influencing the final perception of the work through choices in tempo, articulation, and nuance made by the conductor and instrumentalists.

This interaction between sender, receiver, and musical communication media highlights the fact that music is not a fixed message but rather a **continuous construction of meanings**, in which information is inevitably “contaminated” throughout the processes of **interpretation** and **reception**. This perspective transforms the transfer of information into a fundamental principle of contemporary musical creation.

It can be asserted that the processes of musical creation and reception give rise to a phenomenon of **emergent meaning**—a quality that may distinguish music from non-music. This emergence results from a complex interaction between sender, receiver, and environment, generating something greater than the sum of its parts. However, the phenomenon largely remains a “black box,” a mystery whose full understanding could lead to extraordinary technological advancements, as well as unsettling implications.

In this context, one may recall the device used by The Mule in Asimov's *Foundation*, specifically his instrument, the **Visi-Sonor**, which is capable of

manipulating human emotions and perceptions through a combination of sound and holographic images. This device amplifies the power of emotional influence, transforming simple sensory data into overwhelming experiences for the receiver. Similarly, the exhaustive understanding of emergent meaning in music may be compared to the way in which the Visi-Sonor transcends the technical nature of sound and image, generating a **total, awe-inspiring, and infinitely personalized reaction**.

Deciphering the mechanisms through which emergent meaning arises in music could pave the way for new forms of artistic interaction, radically transforming the way we understand and experience art.

### **Information: The Ontological Basis of Musical Creation**

Etymologically, the term “information” derives from the Latin *informare*, meaning “to give form” or “to shape.” This notion has implied, since antiquity, a dynamic interaction between content and form, suggesting that any act of transmitting information involves a process of organization and transformation. Thus, information is not merely a set of raw data but an entity shaped by the environment and context in which it is generated.

The role of information in music can be related to classical philosophical frameworks, such as those developed by Aristotle, which describe four fundamental causes — **material, formal, operative, and final** — that are also applicable to musical art. According to this model, a musical work can be analyzed as follows:

**Material Cause:** The fundamental elements of a musical work include sound, timbre, rhythm, and any recordings or sonic objects used. For instance, in *Cantus Arcticus* by Einojuhani Rautavaara, the composer integrates recordings of Arctic birds as a unique raw material, blending them with the orchestra to create an unprecedented sonic atmosphere.

**Formal Cause:** Structure and form provide coherence to music. A classic example is the sonata form, with its exposition, development, and recapitulation sections, which organize thematic ideas into logical progression. In contrast, John Cage employs aleatory techniques, abandoning traditional formalism and exploring new ways of generating and perceiving form.

**Operative Cause:** The performer or composer serves as the driving force that brings music to life through the processes of creation and re-creation. In jazz performance, for instance, the artist improvises in real time, generating an

original musical discourse, whereas in the case of Stravinsky, meticulous control and orchestral precision reflect an approach that is both intentional and highly structured.

**Final Cause:** The purpose of music can be aesthetic, emotional, or intellectual. While Beethoven's symphonies aim to move and elevate the listener's spirit, the avant-garde works of Pierre Boulez often focus on the conceptual exploration of sound and the internal relationships within musical discourse. This dimension of the final cause is essential to understanding music not merely as a static object but as an active process that influences and transforms the listener's perception. As Boris Hennig emphasizes, "Formal causes are causes of things, final causes are causes of things insofar as they act and change. [...] Therefore, Aristotle often simply attributes final causes to things, where he could also speak of final causes of processes in which such things are typically involved."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, music becomes a vehicle for the transfer of information in various forms—from the composer to the performer and then to the audience. This perspective is essential for understanding how artistic ideas are transmitted and reinterpreted. For instance, Aristotle attributed an intrinsic nature to sounds, suggesting that their arrangement could reveal universal truths.

On the other hand, the modern perspective expands this view, emphasizing that information is a fundamental element of reality—a binding force that connects the artist and the audience through a continuous flow of emotions and ideas. As Christoph Adami explains, "Simply put, information is that which allows you (who is in possession of that information) to make predictions with accuracy better than chance. (...) Entropy (...) is just a word (...) to quantify how much is not known"<sup>4</sup>

In this sense, information is no longer perceived merely as a collection of data but as an active process of meaning-making that evolves over time.

Contemporary music, in particular, explores more diverse forms of informational transfer, such as the use of technology, multimedia interactions, or the incorporation of extramusical elements. These approaches not only expand the scope of music but also enhance its experiential dimension, creating new possibilities for artistic expression.

Therefore, music functions as a means of organizing and interpreting information, serving not only as a vehicle for emotions but also as a platform for the creation and exploration of fundamental meanings.

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<sup>3</sup> Hennig, Boris. *Aristotle's Four Causes*. Peter Lang, 2019, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Adami, Christoph. "What Is Information?" *The Royal Society Publishing, Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A*, vol. 374, no. 2063, 2017, <http://rsta.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/374/2063/20150230>. [Accessed 22 May 2017.]

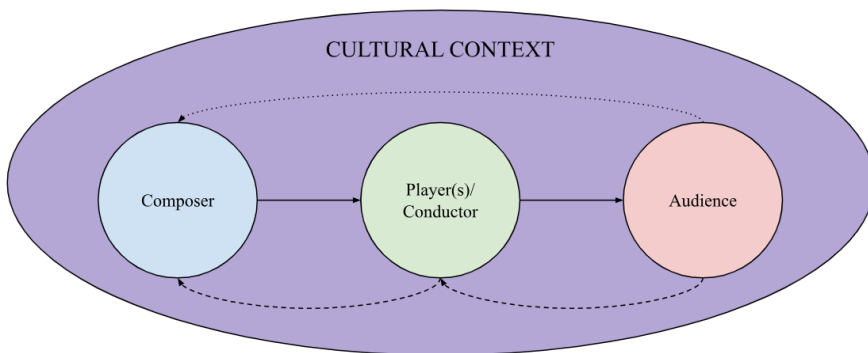
## Characteristics of Informational Transfer in Music

Informational transfer in music is a complex process that relies on the interaction between the **transmitter** (composer or performer), the **receiver** (audience), and the **communication medium** (score, sound, or cultural context). This process does not follow a strictly linear trajectory but is instead shaped by a multitude of factors, including cultural influences, perceptual variations, and emotional responses. These elements actively contribute to the reinterpretation and recontextualization of musical meaning, ensuring that each performance and listening experience is unique.

Furthermore, the transfer of information in music is not a passive exchange but a dynamic interaction in which meaning is continuously constructed, modified, and adapted. Performers introduce their own expressive nuances, audiences bring their personal and cultural perspectives, and historical and technological developments further influence musical perception. As a result, the final meaning of a musical work is never fixed but remains open to transformation, making music a living and evolving form of communication.

## Context and Its Influence on Musical Perception

Figure 2



**The figure illustrates the bidirectional flow of musical information between the composer, performer/conductor, and audience, all operating within a cultural context. This context influences the creation, interpretation, and reception of music, shaping its meaning and impact.**

An essential element of informational transfer in music is **context**, which determines how a musical work is perceived and interpreted. For example, *The Pines of Rome* by Ottorino Respighi evokes different imagery for an Italian listener, who is familiar with its cultural references, compared to a foreign audience, which may perceive it merely as an abstract sonic description.

This phenomenon is comparable to the **Kuleshov Effect** in cinematography, which demonstrates that the interpretation of an image depends on the context in which it is placed. Similarly, a musical fragment is not perceived in isolation but in relation to what precedes or follows it. For instance, a film scene accompanied by lyrical music may suggest romance, whereas the same scene, set against tense and dissonant sounds, can evoke a sense of danger.

**Figure 3**



**The figure represents the first stage of the Kuleshov effect experiment, illustrating how the same neutral facial expression (right) can be interpreted differently based on the accompanying image (left). In this case, the image of food suggests that the man is experiencing hunger or anticipation, demonstrating how context influences perception and emotional attribution.**

And if placed alongside the image of a withered leaf falling from a tree, the same expression may appear overwhelmed by melancholy, evoking the fragility of the passage of time and the inevitability of endings:

Figure 4



The figure represents the second stage of the Kuleshov effect experiment, where the same neutral facial expression is now paired with the image of a withered leaf falling from a tree. In this context, the expression may convey melancholy or contemplation, emphasizing themes of impermanence, nostalgia, and the passage of time. This shift in perception highlights how meaning is shaped by association, reinforcing the subjective nature of emotional interpretation.

This principle also applies to music, where sound is not interpreted in absolute terms but in relation to its surrounding context. A musical fragment may evoke a sense of calm or tension depending on what precedes it. In cinematography, the **editor's effect** is frequently employed by manipulating the soundtrack to alter the perception of a scene.

For instance, consider a scene in which a man walks down a dark street toward a woman's house. If this sequence is accompanied by **elegant and relaxed swing music**, viewers may interpret the action as a romantic prelude. In contrast, if the same scene is set against the **tense chords from *Psycho* by Bernard Herrmann**, it may instead signal the anticipation of a criminal act.

### The Listener's Role in Constructing Meaning

The audience is not a passive receiver but actively contributes to the interpretation of music through the lens of personal experiences. A relevant example is the experiment conducted by Gene Weingarten in 2007, in which violinist Joshua Bell performed incognito in a subway station, and the majority of passersby failed to recognize him. This experiment demonstrates that the perception of music is influenced not only by the quality of performance but also by factors such as audience expectations, the environment, and the performer's status.

Another key aspect of informational transfer is the influence of a work's title. For example, if listeners are informed about the significance of Mahler's Symphony No. 1, which includes a minor-key variation of *Frère Jacques*, they may interpret the passage as tragic irony. Without this context, the same sonorities may be perceived as purely abstract.

### Informational Transfer as a Dialectical Process

Informational transfer is not unidirectional but rather a dialectical process in which the composer creates the work based on their intentions (thesis), while the audience interprets it through the lens of their own experiences (antithesis), ultimately generating a unique final meaning for each listener (synthesis).

This dynamic is particularly evident in works such as *Black Angels* by George Crumb, where music functions not merely as a sonic vehicle but also as a commentary on the historical events that inspired it.

This interaction becomes even more complex when music intersects with other forms of art, such as film. A film's soundtrack is not merely an accompaniment but profoundly shapes the perception of the visual narrative. For example, the sharp, dissonant sounds in *Psycho* by Bernard Herrmann intensify the terror of a suspenseful scene, transforming the viewer's experience.

A relevant example of the interdependence between music and visual elements is *Cantus Arcticus* by Einojuhani Rautavaara. This work demonstrates that informational transfer goes beyond the mere technical reproduction of data, evolving into a deeply creative and meaning-generating process. By combining natural sounds with orchestral language, Rautavaara creates a bridge between nature and culture, offering the listener a syncretic experience.

As seen in the following example, Rautavaara uses every available resource, employing quasi-relative notation and extended techniques to faithfully replicate birdsong through orchestral instruments. The work begins with a fascinating interplay between two flutes, seemingly interweaving the hexatonic mode (Messiaen Mode I), creating the impression of a single, continuous instrument, devoid of breath.

This airy texture is accompanied by a written instruction from the composer: "*Think of autumn and of Tchaikovsky.*" This suggestion amplifies the importance of informational contamination, as the composer believed that such notation would influence musical interpretation, forming a chain of meaning construction: composer (notation) → performer (following that notation) → audience (perceiving the interpreted music through the filter added by the composer).

I  $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 88$  Einojuhani Rautavaara, op. 61

Fl. 1. *p* Think of autumn and of Tchaikovsky

Fl. 2. *p*

**Einojuhani Rautavaara, *Cantus Arcticus*, m. 1-11.**

After this initial section, oboes and trumpets are introduced, performing a musical signal that incorporates microtones, adding an extremely organic nuance to the orchestral passage (e.g. 3). The muted trombone appears to mimic the “quacking” of another type of bird, evoking an authentic sonic landscape. At the same time, the clarinet picks up a motif from the opening pages of the work, this time in the octatonic mode (Messiaen Mode II), establishing a strong thematic connection.

This approach, in which orchestral instruments become extensions of natural sounds, perfectly exemplifies how *Cantus Arcticus* blends nature and culture. Rautavaara moves beyond mere imitation of birdsong, transforming the orchestra into a medium that amplifies and poeticizes these sounds. The result is an immersive artistic experience that invites the audience to reflect and creates the sensation of being transported into a sublime natural landscape.



\*) ♭ = lowered by 3/4-step.

### Einojuhani Rautavaara, *Cantus Arcticus*, page 5, rehearsal mark 3.

This work demonstrates that informational transfer transcends the mere technical transmission of data, evolving into a deeply creative and meaning-generating process. It involves careful selection, reinterpretation through the lens of artistic sensitivity, and integration into a new context capable of transforming raw elements into complex aesthetic experiences. By combining natural sounds with orchestral language, Rautavaara creates a bridge between nature and culture, offering the listener a syncretic experience. Furthermore, this fusion can also be understood as a cultural response to the aesthetic trends of the 1960s and 1970s, a period dominated by avant-garde movements often characterized by abstraction and a lack of connection to nature. In this context, *Cantus Arcticus* challenges prevailing norms and opens the way for dialogue between musical styles and extramusical influences.

Informational transfer in music is a dynamic process, shaped by context, listener perception, and the relationship between various artistic elements. The meaning of a musical work is not fixed but rather the result of a complex

interaction in which the composer, performer, and audience collectively contribute to its final interpretation. This interdependence demonstrates that music is not merely an informational flow but a living phenomenon, continuously evolving through reception and reinterpretation.

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## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND VOICE MODELING: CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY IN MUSIC PRODUCTION

ADRIAN BORZA<sup>1</sup> 

**SUMMARY.** This article reports on some of the benefits that Artificial Intelligence has brought during the renaissance of AI science. It also reveals a few of the shortcomings surrounding it from 2010 until the beginning of 2025. The examples provided reflect our approaches regarding AI, motivating us to present them here briefly. The article reinforces that responsible development and integration of Artificial Intelligence in music is a priority.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Text-to-Speech, AI Voice, AI Singing

### A Motivated Introduction

Asked by University Professor Ph. D. Habil. Mirela Mercean-Țârc, during an interview<sup>2</sup> in 2022, what will be “the future of new technologies in artistic creation?”, I said then in a few words that “the answer is inevitable: Artificial Intelligence”. Without any doubt, it was not a prophecy but, rightly, the acceptance of a possible and not-distant future in which AI will be present in the lives of musicians and will stir their feelings.

Interestingly, in December of the same year, significant progress was noted in Narrow Artificial Intelligence, a type of AI excelling in performing precise tasks, accelerating its popularity.

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<sup>1</sup> University Professor Ph.D. Habil., “Gheorghe Dima” National Academy of Music, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Email: [adrian.borza@amgd.ro](mailto:adrian.borza@amgd.ro). Website: [www.adrianborza.ro](http://www.adrianborza.ro).

<sup>2</sup> Mercean-Țârc, Mirela. „Aici și acum” un spectacol *New Media Art* – Interviu cu compozitorul Adrian Borza” (“*Here and Now*” A New Media Spectacle – Interview with composer Adrian Borza). In *Colloquia Artium*, 2, 2022, pp. 34 (20–35).



The OpenAI<sup>3</sup> company, backed by Microsoft, was offering the general public for free a sophisticated means of written conversation, generically called a chatbot, namely ChatGPT (abv. for Chat Generative Pretrained Transformer), which would attract immense attention: over 1 million users opened online accounts in just 5 days<sup>4</sup>, and the same web application recorded an impressive 100 million unique visitors only 2 months after its launch<sup>5</sup>.

In early 2023, Narrow AI became mainstream after more than 70 years of research in computer science, psychology, and cognitive science. ChatGPT was viewed with exuberance and, at the same time, with justified concern: back to school, “teenagers were already asking the chatbot – released in late 2022 – to compose essays and answer take-home tests.”<sup>6</sup>

However, the “brilliant and weird” ChatGPT was not a sensational news story for the public familiar with Artificial Intelligence. Years ago, more precisely in September 2016, spoken voice synthesis based on generative AI, known as WaveNet<sup>7</sup>, was sensational. This high-end technology has been implemented in the Google Cloud Text-to-Speech<sup>8</sup> service and Google Android operating system for smartphones.

We used this technology to create the promotional video for the 2018 edition of the “Elektro Arts” Digital Arts Festival<sup>9</sup>.

The WaveNet model was described as being “a deep neural network for generating raw audio waveforms. The model is fully probabilistic and autoregressive, with the predictive distribution for each audio sample conditioned on all previous ones; nonetheless we show that it can be efficiently trained on

<sup>3</sup> OpenAI OpCo, LLC is a private Artificial Intelligence research and implementation company. <https://openai.com/> (21.12.2024).

<sup>4</sup> Roose Kevin. “The Brilliance and Weirdness of ChatGPT”. In *The New York Times*, Dec. 5, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230118134332/https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/05/technology/chatgpt-ai-twitter.html> (21.12.2024).

<sup>5</sup> Milmo Dan. “ChatGPT reaches 100 million users two months after launch”. In *The Guardian*, Feb. 2, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/feb/02/chatgpt-100-million-users-open-ai-fastest-growing-app> (21.12.2024).

<sup>6</sup> Associated Press. “2023 was the year AI went mainstream. It was also the year we started to panic about it”. In *Euronews*, Dec. 27, 2023. <https://www.euronews.com/next/2023/12/27/2023-was-the-year-ai-went-mainstream-it-was-also-the-year-we-started-to-panic-about-it> (21.12.2024).

<sup>7</sup> Google DeepMind is a private research laboratory with an interdisciplinary approach to building general AI systems. <https://deepmind.google/> (21.12.2024).

<sup>8</sup> Google Cloud Text-to-Speech is a service created to transform text into artificial speech using AI technologies from the private company Google, renamed Alphabet in 2015. <https://cloud.google.com/text-to-speech> (21.12.2024).

<sup>9</sup> The official social media page of the “Elektro Arts” Digital Arts Festival. *Promotional video*. <https://www.facebook.com/elektroarts/videos/elektro-arts-2018/1513863638735815> (21.12.2024).

data with tens of thousands of samples per second of audio. When applied to text-to-speech, it yields state-of-the-art performance, with human listeners rating it as significantly more natural sounding than the best parametric and concatenative systems for both English and Mandarin. A single WaveNet can capture the characteristics of many different speakers with equal fidelity and can switch between them by conditioning on the speaker's identity. When trained to model music, we find that it generates novel and often highly realistic musical fragments."<sup>10</sup>

## The Impact of Artificial Intelligence

The dawn of Artificial Intelligence was observed towards the end of 1950 (year) when mathematician Alan Turing<sup>11</sup> proposed the problem of The Imitation Game<sup>12</sup> (or Turing Test) and launched a provocative question: "Can machines think?"

On the other hand, Professor Emeritus John McCarthy<sup>13</sup> has been credited<sup>14</sup> by Stanford University in the U.S. with the invention of "Artificial Intelligence" syntagma. Professor McCarthy's 1955 definition was as follows: "it is the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs. It is related to the similar task of using computers to understand human intelligence, but AI does not have to confine itself to methods that are biologically observable."<sup>15</sup>

After a period of anonymity for the general public, AI science entered a renaissance in the 2010s decade.

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<sup>10</sup> Oord, Aaron van den & Co. (Sander Dieleman, Heiga Zen, Karen Simonyan, Oriol Vinyals, Alex Graves, Nal Kalchbrenner, Andrew Senior, Koray Kavukcuoglu). "WaveNet: A Generative Model for Raw Audio". In *ArXiv: Computer Science > Sound*, Cornell University, Sep. 2016, pp. 1 (1–15). <https://arxiv.org/abs/1609.03499v2> (21.12.2024).

<sup>11</sup> Alan Turing (1912–1954) was a British mathematician and logician. He brought "major contributions to mathematics, cryptanalysis, logic, philosophy, and mathematical biology and also to the new areas later named computer science, cognitive science, artificial intelligence, and artificial life." <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alan-Turing> (21.12.2024).

<sup>12</sup> Turing, Alan M. "Computing Machinery and Intelligence". In *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 59, No. 236, Oct. 1950, Oxford University Press on behalf of the Mind Association, pp. 443 (443–460).

<sup>13</sup> John McCarthy (1927–2011), an American mathematician and computer scientist, "was a pioneer in the field of artificial intelligence (AI); his main research in the field involved the formalization of commonsense knowledge." <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-McCarthy> (21.12.2024).

<sup>14</sup> Manning, Christopher. *Artificial Intelligence Definitions*, Stanford University, HAI Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, Sep. 2020. <https://hai.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/2020-09/AI-Definitions-HAI.pdf> (21.12.2024).

<sup>15</sup> McCarthy, John. *What is Artificial Intelligence?*, Computer Science Department, Stanford University, 2007, pp. 2 (1–15). <http://jmc.stanford.edu/articles/whatisai/whatisai.pdf> (21.12.2024).

In medical sciences, for example, disease diagnosis, intensive care medicine, and the pharmaceutical industry, the advance of AI has been possible “thanks to the widespread health data digitalization, which made it possible to create big data systems capable of providing a solid basis for intelligent algorithms.”<sup>16</sup>

The privately funded commercial sector has brought a fulminating expansion of AI technology during companies’ fights to gain market shares. Information Technology (IT) corporations have continued to convince their consumers of the benefit of virtual assistants created for conversation. They implemented concatenative or, as the case may be, neural speech synthesis, in Apple Siri (2010), Amazon Alexa (2013), Microsoft Cortana (2014–2021), Google Assistant (2016), Google Gemini (2023), and so on.

Likewise, the projects Apple Project Titan (2014–2024) and Google Waymo One (2010), associated with the automotive industry, seemed to be trying to transform the illusion of science fiction film productions into reality, in fact producing prototypes of fully automated vehicles that drive themselves without human intervention.

Other large industries, such as transportation, commerce, and marketing have further expanded the already massive impact of digital technology on people’s lives in almost every aspect through car navigation digital applications known as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and intelligent algorithms used in social media applications, mainly WhatsApp and Facebook, the latter luring consumers with persuasive advertisements.

In this regard, additional examples are the global consumer markets, smart lighting, smart home appliances controlled by mobile phones, and, last but not least, smart TVs. All smart by definition, equipped with sensors (light, proximity, etc.), miniature optical and audio devices, and Text-to-Speech technology have flooded a futuristic quotidian life, while some manufacturers competed in claiming that their products use Artificial Intelligence.

## **The Sophia Robot and AIVA Software**

The innovations in Artificial General Intelligence and Generative Artificial Intelligence, Sophia and AIVA remain spectacular for some people and controversial for others.

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<sup>16</sup> Bellini, Valentina & Co. (Marco Cascella, Franco Cutugno, Michele Russo, Roberto Lanza, Christian Compagnone, Elena Bignami). “Understanding basic principles of artificial intelligence: a practical guide for intensivists”. In *Acta Biomed*, Vol. 93, No. 5: e2022297, 2022, pp. 2 (1–15).

Sophia, a humanoid robot developed by Hanson Robotics<sup>17</sup>, which was granted citizenship in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 1 year after its activation in 2016, was the outcome of a combination of state-of-the-art technologies, through which the robot was able to interact and communicate with humans<sup>18</sup>. Among them, we mention Computer Vision (recognition and interpretation of facial and gestural expression input), Natural Language Processing (understanding and generating human-like speech), Machine Learning (automatic learning algorithms), and Robotics (physical control of movements).

The AIVA (abv. for Artificial Intelligence Virtual Artist) model of Aiva Technologies<sup>19</sup>, a company specializing in the application of generative AI in film and game music composition, was considered by the press to have gained the status of composer member of SACEM (Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Éditeurs de Musique) in France and Luxembourg, in 2017<sup>20</sup>.

It was a speculation. It can be noted that there are 1908, and the number is growing, of musical works registered<sup>21</sup> with SACEM under the pseudonym AIVA. The SACEM statute stipulates that to be protected at the national and international levels, candidate composers must declare their nationality and prove their identity with a (legal) document<sup>22</sup>.

A first conclusion. It is easy to understand that Artificial Intelligence has progressed rapidly and significantly in the last 15 years, and its influence on human society has never been more pronounced than today. AI brings possible advantages, but it also introduces potential risks. These reflect nothing more than the tip of the iceberg.

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<sup>17</sup> Hanson Robotics, Limited is a privately held AI and robotics technology company in Hong Kong, dedicated to creating socially intelligent machines. <https://www.hansonrobotics.com/> (21.12.2024).

<sup>18</sup> Brad, Stelian. *Technologies Behind Sophia Humanoid Robot*, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Robotics, Feb. 12, 2023. <https://utcn-robotica.ro/technologies-behind-sophia-humanoid-robot/> (21.12.2024).

<sup>19</sup> Aiva Technologies SARL is a private Luxembourg company, established in 2016. <https://www.aiva.ai/> (21.12.2024)

<sup>20</sup> Lauder, Ed. "Aiva is the first AI to Officially be Recognised as a Composer". In *AI Business*, Mar. 10, 2017. <https://aibusiness.com/verticals/aiva-is-the-first-ai-to-officially-be-recognised-as-a-composer> (21.12.2024)

<sup>21</sup> SACEM. *The SACEM Repertoire*. <https://repertoire.sacem.fr/en/results?filters=parties&query=AIVA#searchBtn> (21.12.2024).

<sup>22</sup> SACEM. "Special Conditions of Admission". In *Statutes 2024 and General Regulations 2024*, Art. 8, pp. 25 (1–68). [https://societe.sacem.fr/docs/Statuts\\_UK\\_2024.pdf](https://societe.sacem.fr/docs/Statuts_UK_2024.pdf) (21.12.2024).



## The AI Index 2024 Report

A worthy of consideration perspective on the influence of Artificial Intelligence in research, science, economics, education, legislation, and its public perception is offered by Stanford University.

The Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HAI) systematically produces The AI Index Report, “recognized globally as one of the most credible and authoritative sources for data and insights on artificial intelligence.”<sup>23</sup> The 2024 Report provides 502 pages of “unbiased, rigorously vetted, broadly sourced data”. We quote 10 conclusions<sup>24</sup> for our readers:

1. *AI beats humans on some tasks, but not on all.*
2. *Industry continues to dominate frontier AI research.*
3. *Frontier models get way more expensive.*
4. *The United States leads China, the EU, and the U.K. as the leading source of top AI models.*
5. *Robust and standardized evaluations for LLM responsibility are seriously lacking.*
6. *Generative AI investment skyrockets.*
7. *The data is in: AI makes workers more productive and leads to higher quality work.*
8. *Scientific progress accelerates even further, thanks to AI.*
9. *The number of AI regulations in the United States sharply increases*
10. *People across the globe are more cognizant of AI’s potential impact—and more nervous.*

## Responsible Development of LLM(s) — A Real Concern

One of the problems created by the development of AI and which has taken almost the entire society by surprise is the legislative one: the lack of clarity regarding intellectual property rights, identified at the end of 2024.

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<sup>23</sup> Maslej, Nestor & Co. (Loredana Fattorini, Raymond Perrault, Vanessa Parli, Anka Reuel, Erik Brynjolfsson, John Etchemendy, Katrina Ligett, Terah Lyons, James Manyika, Juan Carlos Niebles, Yoav Shoham, Russell Wald, and Jack Clark). *The AI Index 2024 Report*, AI Index Steering Committee, Institute for Human-Centered AI, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, April 2024, pp. 2 (1–502).

[https://aiindex.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/HAI\\_AI-Index-Report-2024.pdf](https://aiindex.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/HAI_AI-Index-Report-2024.pdf)  
(21.12.2024)

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 5–6.

Widely discussed is the implementation of LLM(s) and ML, also the potential to plagiarize protected materials<sup>25</sup>.

Before developing this topic, we believe that some terminological clarifications are necessary:

- LLM(s), Large Language Model(s), “are deep learning algorithms that can recognize, summarize, translate, predict, and generate content using very large datasets.”<sup>26</sup>
- ML, Machine Learning, is an algorithm that is “more dependent on human intervention to learn”.<sup>27</sup>
- Deep Learning is a type of ML that uses artificial neural networks for learning. “The deep learning process can ingest unstructured data in its raw form (e.g., text or images), and it can automatically determine the set of features which distinguish different categories of data from one another. This eliminates some of the human intervention required and enables the use of large amounts of data.”<sup>28</sup>

Returning to the main issue, some studies have shown that large-scale linguistic models:

1. Can extract not only ideas and facts from texts but can also memorize word for word (verbatim) large fragments of texts under the protection of the law, during training. Therefore, the redistribution of such texts raises ethical and legal issues in terms of copyright<sup>29</sup>;
2. Due to their superior performance, they can produce very similar content to the original. Thus, if the original is protected, some models may infringe intellectual property rights<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Liu, Xiaoze & Co. (Ting Sun, Tianyang Xu, Feijie Wu, Cunxiang Wang, Xiaoqian Wang, Jing Gao). “SHIELD: Evaluation and Defense Strategies for Copyright Compliance in LLM Text Generation”, Purdue University – United States, Westlake University – China, pp. 2 (1–31). In *ArXiv: Computer Science > Computation and Language*, Cornell University, Jun. 18, 2024. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2406.12975v1> (21.12.2024).

<sup>26</sup> NVIDIA Inc. *Large Language Models Explained*. <https://www.nvidia.com/en-us/glossary/large-language-models/> (21.12.2024).

<sup>27</sup> IBM Inc. *What is machine learning?* <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/machine-learning> (21.12.2024).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> Karamolegkou, Antonia & Co. (Jiaang Li, Li Zhou, Anders Sogaard). “Copyright Violations and Large Language Models”. In *ArXiv: Computer Science > Computation and Language*, Cornell University, 20.10.2023, pp. 1 (1–10). <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2310.13771> (21.12.2024).

<sup>30</sup> Zhao, Weijie & Co. (Huajie Shao, Zhaozhuo Xu, SuzhenDuan, and Denghui Zhang). “Measuring Copyright Risks of Large Language Model via Partial Information Probing”. In *Proceedings of the 21st International Conference on Distributed Computing and Artificial Intelligence (DCAI24)*, New York, Oct. 21–25, 2024, pp. 2 (1–8). <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2409.13831v1> (21.12.2024).

On the legality and professional ethics debate front, the regulation of AI is at an early stage. The European Union introduced, in June 2024, a new legislation on AI, “Artificial Intelligence Act, Regulation (EU) 2024/1689”, which will continue to be applied in stages in the member states.

Article 53, Obligations for Providers of General-Purpose AI Models<sup>31</sup>, would enter into force on August 2, 2025. The AI supplier needs to conform with point 1, letters (c) and (d) as follows:

*(c) put in place a policy to comply with Union law on copyright and related rights, and in particular to identify and comply with, including through state-of-the-art technologies, a reservation of rights expressed pursuant to Article 4(3) of Directive (EU) 2019/790;*

*(d) draw up and make publicly available a sufficiently detailed summary about the content used for training of the general-purpose AI model, according to a template provided by the AI Office.*<sup>32</sup>

### **Accountable AI Music — Another Real Problem**

As expected in the absence of clear regulations, music generated with AI technology has aggressively invaded, through competitive sites<sup>33</sup>, not only the consumer market of entertainment music but also the marketplace managed by enthusiastic producers of audio and audiovisual content for various streaming platforms<sup>34</sup>.

As a result, the balance between genuine art and artificial creation has deteriorated, despite the latter’s undisputed superior qualities.

Nicolas Dauban, DSP (Digital Signal Processing) engineer at IRCAM Amplify, a commercial branch of the prestigious “Institut de recherches et coordination acoustique/musique” in Paris, stated that “the models of music generation achieved by AI have progressed to such a level that **it will soon be impossible to discern them from real artists**, using only our ears.”<sup>35</sup>

IRCAM Amplify has become, through its role as a catalyst for industry and research, a fearsome actor in identifying musical productions raised from Artificial Intelligence.

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<sup>31</sup> European Union. “Artificial Intelligence Act, Regulation (EU) 2024/1689”. In *Official Journal*, Jun. 13, 2024. <https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/article/53/> (21.12.2024).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> Aimi, Inc. <https://www.aimi.fm/>; Skywork AI PTE. LTD. <https://www.melodio.ai/>; Delaware Mubert, Inc. <https://mubert.com/>; Kunlun Tech Mureka <https://www.mureka.ai/>; Musixy. <https://musixy.ai/>, Supermusic. <https://supermusic.ai/>, etc. (21.12.2024).

<sup>34</sup> SoundCloud. <https://soundcloud.com/a-i-music>; Google YouTube [https://www.youtube.com/@ai\\_music\\_official](https://www.youtube.com/@ai_music_official) etc. (21.12.2024).

<sup>35</sup> Dauban, Nicolas. *Our AI-Generated Music Identification journey*, IRCAM Amplify, 22 May 2024. <https://www.ircamamplify.io/blog/ai-generated-music-identification-journey> (21.12.2024).

Second interim conclusion. We consider that a proper, responsible use of Artificial Intelligence must be considered by the policymakers, the AI technology providers, and the end-users. However, in these troubled times, one can stray from ethical conduct.

## Artificial Intelligence and Singing Voice

As for us, we use Artificial Intelligence with the aim of studying up-to-date AI singing voice generators and, above all, without abusing it.

For informational purposes, we will briefly present a selection of the features of a generative AI voice synthesis software, while leaving the artistic implications of the model in music production to the readers' discretion.

Licensed to use intellectual property, the AI model was trained on the voices of professional pop-rock vocalists. It is able to generate sounds with text in English and Spanish, for example.

The common feature with the Virtual Studio Technology Instrument (VSTi) is that it reacts to MIDI messages, via a keyboard or through a piano roll-type graphical interface. Thus, the music that will potentially be created will be attributed to the composer or producer, by right.

A notable difference between the vocal model and virtual instruments lies in creatively and intuitively controlling the modeling parameters. The representation of physical and synthesis properties of sound is replaced with a package of perceptual descriptors, which immediately attract attention, such as *Soft, Soulful, Steady, Bold, Warm, Delicate, Tender, Lucid, Firm, Powerful, and Resonant*.

As an illustration in a *sui generis* demo vocal performance of the one-line poem *După tsunami*<sup>36</sup>, a miniature lasting only 22 seconds, we have used the following descriptors: *Bold* for soprano I and alto voices, *Powerful* for soprano II, and *Steady* for male baritone voice.

The poem, *A Ship in Drift through the Disappeared Harbor*<sup>37</sup>, was transferred to the model in a way similar to editing scores containing poetic text, and then automatically converted into phonetic symbols, thus preparing for the synthesis of the artificial voice. The phonetic transformation was grounded on the standard called ARPAbet<sup>38</sup>, "a phonetic alphabet designed for American

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<sup>36</sup> *După tsunami* is part of our vocal suite *Fuioare de fum – Poeme mignone pentru cvartet vocal*, composed in 2023.

<sup>37</sup> Letiția Lucia Iubu. *Inscripții pe un bob de grâu* volume, MJM Edition, Craiova, 2018, pp. 69 (1–112). The poem *După tsunami* has a single line: *O navă în derivă prin portul dispărut*. The English translation belongs to the poem's author.

<sup>38</sup> Developed by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA).

English that uses ASCII<sup>39</sup> symbols; it can be thought of as a convenient ASCII representation of an American - English subset of the IPA.<sup>40 41</sup>

From a computational perspective, the phonetic transcription looks like this:

**Table 1**

<b>English</b>	<i>A ship in drift through the disappeared harbor</i>
<b>ARPAbet</b>	ax / sh ih p / ih n / dr ih f t / th r uw / dh ax / d ih s ax p ih r d / hh aa r b er

## Phonetic transcription with ASCII characters

### *Voice Processing in Music Production*

In the current music production process, the stages of audio mixing and mastering are indispensable. In this sense, the 4 voices produced by the generative AI model were processed, as they were generated in real-time, using a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software, including specialized software components VST plugins.

According to the practice, we considered the processing of the audio signal in terms of sound strength (gain, volume, compression, maximizer), spatial localization (panning, reverberation), and, last but not least, harmonic distortion (transient, saturation). The plugins used are in fact digital emulations of physical analog equipment.

The musical result of this endeavor<sup>42</sup> of generating and processing singing voice with text in English through a cutting-edge AI synthesis model, can be found on the author's channel on the social media and YouTube streaming platform.

<sup>39</sup> American Standard Code for Information Interchange.

<sup>40</sup> Jurafsky, Daniel & Martin, James H. *Speech and Language Processing: An Introduction to Natural Language Processing, Computational Linguistics, and Speech Recognition with Language Models*, Third Edition draft, Stanford University, 2024, pp. 2 (1–29).

<sup>41</sup> International Phonetic Alphabet.

<sup>42</sup> Borza, Adrian. *AI Voices*, YouTube channel. <https://youtu.be/LegOnHdfs6Q> (10.1.2025).

## Highlighting Conclusions

Some of our readers probably raised their eyebrows in amazement when we assigned vocal clones from the consumer music industry to the soprano I and II, alto, and baritone voices of our score.

The intention is to draw attention to the fact that at the beginning of 2025, the pecuniary interest of suppliers of artificial vocal models remains targeted toward producers of entertainment music since this popular genre with its myriad ramifications is accessible to its extremely tremendous audience.

We conclude by reiterating that the @evolution of Artificial Intelligence is on a path of no return, which entails advantages, as well as risks. Best practices in the development and integration of AI technology in music and other fields are dependent on the authority of the lawmaker, the responsibility of the provider, and the ethics of the beneficiary.

*Are we prepared for the AI Revolution?*

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## MIXING TECHNIQUES: BETWEEN TECHNICAL PRECISION AND ARTISTIC INTENT

MARC ALEXANDRU TINT<sup>1</sup>, STELA DRĂGULIN<sup>2</sup>

**SUMMARY.** Mixing is a critical phase in music production, defining a track's sonic character and commercial appeal. Engineers employ EQ, compression, saturation, reverb, and automation to shape the final sound, adapting techniques to each genre's distinct requirements. Pop music prioritizes vocal clarity, autotune, and harmonic layering, while rock relies on dynamic contrast, distortion, and analogue warmth. Jazz and folk emphasize natural acoustics with minimal processing, whereas electronic and dance music demand precise bass control and rhythmic cohesion. Industry leaders like Dave Pensado, known for innovative digital processing, and Stuart White, recognized for his efficiency and depth, exemplify the diverse approaches to mixing. Michael Brauer's multi-bus compression technique highlights the blend of technical precision and artistic intuition. As genres evolve, mixing continues to adapt, ensuring music remains both commercially competitive and emotionally compelling.

**Keywords:** music production, mixing techniques, commercial appeal, emotional impact, genre, sonic identity

### 1. Introduction

The process of mixing, a crucial phase in music production, involves integrating individual tracks into a cohesive, polished final product. This stage is of paramount significance, particularly within the realm of chart music, where the quality of the mix directly influences the commercial appeal and success of a song.

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Mixing techniques involve a combination of tools and processes designed to enhance the clarity, balance, and emotional impact of a song. These techniques typically include equalization (EQ) to shape the tonal balance of individual tracks, compression to control dynamics and ensure consistency, reverb and delay to create depth and space, panning to position sounds within the stereo field, and automation to introduce movement and variation throughout the mix. Additionally, saturation and distortion can add warmth and character, while creative effects – such as modulation, pitch shifting, and filtering – help achieve unique sonic textures.

While these tools follow industry standards and often reference professional reference tracks to maintain competitive sound quality, their application is highly context dependent. The choice and intensity of these techniques vary based on factors such as genre, where electronic music may favor heavy compression and intricate reverb effects, whereas acoustic or jazz recordings might prioritize a more natural, dynamic sound. Additionally, the target audience influences the mix – radio-friendly pop tracks often emphasize loudness and clarity, whereas cinematic or experimental music may focus more on atmospheric depth and complexity. Ultimately, the art of mixing lies in striking the right balance between technical precision and artistic intent.

## 2. Relevance of genres

Pop or popular music, a constantly evolving genre, broadly encompasses any music designed for mainstream appeal, with the term “pop” often used to describe anything that can be heard on popular radio stations. In this genre, the use of autotune has become particularly prevalent, with artists such as Billie Eilish and Travis Scott utilizing it to achieve distinctive vocal tones that contribute to the genre’s unique sound<sup>3</sup>.

Additionally, surgical EQ is frequently employed to eliminate unwanted frequencies and create a balanced mix where every individual element occupies its own sonic space. Harmonic layers, often subtle in their presence, are a cornerstone of pop music production, enhancing the richness and lushness of the final mix without overshadowing the primary elements<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Music Gateway Team. “What are the Different Genres of Music?”. *Music Gateway*, 2023, <https://www.musicgateway.com/blog/spotify/what-are-the-different-genres-of-music> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Bradbury, Will. “Recording and Mixing Techniques for Different Music Genres”. *Pirate.com*, 2024, <https://pirate.com/en/blog/recording-mixing-techniques-different-genres/> (accessed 14 March 2025).

In contrast, rock music, with its raw energy and prominent instrumental emphasis, requires mixing engineers to focus on crafting a well-balanced representation of the various instruments while maintaining the prominence of drums and guitars. The dynamic shifts between soft and loud sections are also a critical concern, ensuring smooth transitions without sacrificing the emotional intensity that defines rock music<sup>5</sup>.

For instance, The Strokes famously utilized distortion on Julian Casablancas' vocal microphone during the recording of their debut album "Is This It", which contributed to the gritty, lo-fi sound that characterizes the record. Additionally, the use of layered guitars is a common technique in rock production to create a fuller, more textured sound<sup>6</sup>.

Parallel compression, blending a heavily compressed signal with a dry signal, is often employed to maintain the energy and punch of a track without compromising its dynamic range. Many engineers also prefer analog mixing equipment for its warmth and character, with iconic tools like the Neve 1073 preamp and Universal Audio 1176 compressor widely revered for their sonic qualities<sup>7</sup>.

In the case of jazz, the focus shifts from sheer energy to the subtlety and nuance of individual instruments and the acoustic space in which they are recorded<sup>8</sup>. The capturing of room acoustics and careful microphone placement are paramount in jazz mixing, with engineers like Al Schmitt dedicating significant time to ensure the natural timbre of each instrument is preserved. The goal is to capture the organic sound of the ensemble while maintaining the integrity of the performance<sup>9</sup>.

Blues, traditionally structured around the 12-bar blues form, has evolved from a solo performance style—typically featuring voice and guitar or banjo—to a more ensemble-oriented genre incorporating instruments such as bass, drums, and electric guitars. While the genre retains its

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<sup>5</sup> Hamp, Ed. "Mixing for Different Music Genres: Approaches and Factors to Consider". *Beat*, 2023, <https://vocal.media/beat/mixing-for-different-music-genres-approaches-and-factors-to-consider> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>6</sup> Bradbury, Will. "Recording and Mixing Techniques for Different Music Genres". *Pirate.com*, 2024, <https://pirate.com/en/blog/recording-mixing-techniques-different-genres/> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>7</sup> Idem.

<sup>8</sup> Hamp, Ed. "Mixing for Different Music Genres: Approaches and Factors to Consider". *Beat*, 2023, <https://vocal.media/beat/mixing-for-different-music-genres-approaches-and-factors-to-consider> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>9</sup> Bradbury, Will. "Recording and Mixing Techniques for Different Music Genres". *Pirate.com*, 2024, <https://pirate.com/en/blog/recording-mixing-techniques-different-genres/> (accessed 14 March 2025).

foundation in simple chord progressions, the modern blues mix often requires an emphasis on preserving the raw, emotional quality of the performance, ensuring the instruments and vocals come through with clarity and depth<sup>10</sup>.

In folk music, the priority is to emphasize the purity of the singer's voice and the authenticity of the songwriter's performance. Mixing in this genre is typically minimal, with an emphasis on preserving the natural feel of the recording. The vocal is often kept front and center, with minimal interference from post-production effects.

The approach to mixing in electronic genres, especially in dance-oriented subgenres such as house music, is distinct from traditional methods. Producers focus on creating a mix that delivers both punch and clarity while energizing the dance floor. A key focus is sculpting the low-end frequencies, particularly in ensuring a powerful and distinct bass presence<sup>11</sup>.

House music, which emerged in the late 1970s in Chicago<sup>12</sup>, is typified by its repetitive four-on-the-floor beat and a tempo typically ranging from 120 to 130 beats per minute. In electronic music, achieving a tight, punchy bass is essential, and producers often split the bass into sub-bass and mid-bass components to prevent muddiness and ensure the elements complement one another. Furthermore, the mix must be engineered to sound cohesive and powerful, even on club sound systems, which are often mono<sup>13</sup>.

Genres such as K-Pop, a relatively recent genre that blends elements from pop, electronic music, rap, R&B, and classical music, require a highly polished and energetic mix that appeals to a diverse global audience. Similarly, Latin music, which has roots in Spanish and African musical traditions, requires careful attention to its rhythm-driven elements, with an emphasis on polyrhythms, percussion, and the passionate energy that defines the genre. Both genres demand a mix that captures their cultural vibrancy and rhythmic intricacy<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Music Gateway Team. "What are the Different Genres of Music?". *Music Gateway*, 2023, <https://www.musicgateway.com/blog/spotify/what-are-the-different-genres-of-music> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>11</sup> Hamp, Ed. "Mixing for Different Music Genres: Approaches and Factors to Consider". *Beat*, 2023, <https://vocal.media/beat/mixing-for-different-music-genres-approaches-and-factors-to-consider> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>12</sup> Music Gateway Team. "What Are the Different Genres of Music?". *Music Gateway*, 2023, <https://www.musicgateway.com/blog/spotify/what-are-the-different-genres-of-music> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>13</sup> Bradbury, Will. "Recording and Mixing Techniques for Different Music Genres". *Pirate.com*, 2024, <https://pirate.com/en/blog/recording-mixing-techniques-different-genres/> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>14</sup> Music Gateway Team. "What Are the Different Genres of Music?". *Music Gateway*, 2023, <https://www.musicgateway.com/blog/spotify/what-are-the-different-genres-of-music> (accessed 14 March 2025).

Originating in Jamaica in the 1960s, reggae is a fusion of traditional Jamaican folk music with jazz and R&B. The genre is known for its offbeat rhythms and staccato chord progressions. In reggae production, the mix needs to emphasize the groove and rhythm section, with the drums and bass typically forming the backbone of the track<sup>15</sup>.

In conclusion, mixing techniques in chart music are not only an essential component of music production but also serve as a reflection of the unique demands and characteristics of each genre. From the electronic precision of pop music to the organic, live sound of jazz and folk, the role of the mixing engineer is to ensure that each element of the track supports the artistic vision while enhancing the song's appeal to its intended audience. As genres continue to evolve and merge, mixing techniques will also adapt, maintaining their crucial role in shaping the sonic identity of contemporary music.

### 3. Case studies

#### 3.1. *Dave Pensado's Innovative Mixing Techniques*

David Pensado, an acclaimed mix engineer, reached a significant career milestone by mixing three US number-one hits in a single month: "Be Without You" by Mary J. Blige, "Check on It" by Beyoncé, and "Love" by Keyshia Cole. Renowned for his collaborations with top artists such as Christina Aguilera, Justin Timberlake, and the Black-Eyed Peas, Pensado prioritizes creativity over reliance on equipment. He emphasizes that mixing engineers cannot market their technical skills alone; they must sell their creative expertise<sup>16</sup>.

Pensado's workflow begins with listening to a rough mix of the track to identify its strengths and weaknesses. He notes his first impressions to use as a guide throughout the mixing process. A proponent of digital tools, Pensado argues that advancements in plug-ins have democratized music production. He states, "Digital has revolutionized music. Affordable technology enables more artists to create, increasing the potential for exceptional work"<sup>17</sup>.

An example of his innovative approach is evident in his work on "Beep" by The Pussycat Dolls. Pensado combined a Linear Phase EQ for broad tonal adjustments with McDSP EQ to add color, crafting an aggressive and commanding vocal tone. He believes even the cheapest equipment can have a purpose and evaluates gear based on its uniqueness rather than its cost<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Idem.

<sup>16</sup> Tingen, Paul. "Secrets of the Mix Engineers: David Pensado". *Sound On Sound*, 2007, <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/secrets-mix-engineers-david-pensado> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>17</sup> Idem.

<sup>18</sup> Idem.

On Sean Garrett’s “Buttons,” Pensado focused on enhancing the song’s rhythmic feel using the Trans-X Multi plug-in. This tool allowed him to manipulate transients in different frequency bands, restoring punch and brightness in the low-mid and high frequencies. Pensado also used the Trans-X to add high-end harmonics to vocals, compensating for natural limitations in frequency response. By employing subtle distortion effects, he imbued Nicole Scherzinger’s vocals with authority, aligning with the assertive and sensual tone of the song. Additionally, he incorporated creative delays and reverb effects, such as a 16th-note delay and a long reverb he dubbed the “Enya Reverb,” which added an ethereal quality reminiscent of Middle Eastern music<sup>19</sup>.

### **3.2. Stuart White’s Evolving Mixing Philosophy: Balancing Precision, Energy, and Emotion**

Stuart White, a seasoned mix engineer and producer, began his career at Quad Studios. His portfolio includes collaborations with Alicia Keys, Nicki Minaj, Sia, Jay-Z, Nas, FKA Twigs, Megan Thee Stallion, and Solange. He is a two-time Grammy Award winner with seven nominations<sup>20</sup>.

Earlier in his career, White was meticulous about session organization, including elaborate setups, proper track naming, and extensive color coding. However, his priorities have since shifted to speed and focus. During the recording of “Pure/Honey” on Beyoncé’s album *Renaissance*, a malfunctioning tube in a 251-microphone introduced noise, which White leveraged to enhance the track’s character<sup>21</sup>.

White’s mixing style involves broad strokes early in the process, as he believes this approach benefits from his unfamiliarity with the track. For instance, while recording vocals, he EQs the drums and bass, and sculpts reverbs and delays using compression, distortion, and modulation. His mixing style has become more aggressive in recent years, aiming for a crisp, exciting sound with a touch of sizzle for depth and contrast<sup>22</sup>.

White emphasizes that achieving loudness begins with balance. He avoids relying on limiters early in the process, using them sparingly only once the mix is balanced and dynamic. This approach preserves transient and maintains the integrity of the mix. White warns against over-mixing, highlighting the importance of retaining emotion and dynamics<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Idem.

<sup>20</sup> Tingen, Paul. “Stuart White: Recording & Mixing Beyoncé”. *Sound On Sound*, 2022, <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/stuart-white-recording-mixing-beyonce> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>21</sup> Idem.

<sup>22</sup> Idem.

<sup>23</sup> Idem.

### **3.3. Michael H. Brauer: Mixing as an Intuitive Performance**

Michael H. Brauer, another highly acclaimed mix engineer, is celebrated for his versatility across genres and innovative mixing methods. Based in New York, Brauer has worked with artists ranging from The Rolling Stones, James Brown, and Bob Dylan to Coldplay and KT Tunstall<sup>24</sup>.

Despite the extensive outboard gear in his studio, Brauer emphasizes the emotional and performance aspects of mixing over technology and states: “mixing is like a performance. I used to play drums; now I play an SSL console. The desk is an instrument, and I treat mixing as an intuitive process, constantly riding the faders to bring the mix to life”<sup>25</sup>.

Brauer simplifies his sessions by limiting track counts to a maximum of 44, even when the original session contains hundreds of tracks. His assistant compiles stems to ensure only essential elements remain, allowing Brauer to focus on the creative aspects of mixing<sup>26</sup>.

Brauer’s work on Coldplay’s “Violet Hill” demonstrates his ability to balance technical precision with emotional storytelling. He ensured the guitars reflected the song’s anger without harshness and complemented the arrangement’s shifts from powerful choruses to intimate moments. His techniques included creative compression for drums and bass, where complex compressors enhanced aggression, while parallel processing added fullness and punch. These methods maintained the band’s signature sound while enhancing the track’s dynamics<sup>27</sup>.

### **3.4. Bob Clearmountain: Pioneering the Art of Specialist Mixing**

Bob Clearmountain, who started as an assistant engineer, became the record industry’s first acknowledged specialist mixing engineer. His portfolio includes work with The Rolling Stones, Christina Aguilera, and Buddy Guy<sup>28</sup>.

Clearmountain’s mix of “Shine a Light” relied heavily on outboard processing, using equipment such as Urei 1178 and Empirical Labs Distressor compressors, and Pultec EQP 1A3 equalizers. Mixing the Rolling Stones posed

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<sup>24</sup> Tingen, Paul. “Secrets of the Mix Engineers: Michael Brauer”. *Sound On Sound*, 2008, <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/secrets-mix-engineers-michael-brauer> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>25</sup> Idem.

<sup>26</sup> Idem.

<sup>27</sup> Idem.

<sup>28</sup> Lockwood, Dave. “Bob Clearmountain: Master Mixer”. *Sound On Sound*, 1999, <https://www.soundonsound.com/people/bob-clearmountain-master-mixer> (accessed 14 March 2025).



challenges due to the concentration of instruments in the upper mid-range frequencies. However, Mick Jagger's distinctive voice naturally cut through the mix, requiring minimal adjustment<sup>29</sup>.

In contrast, Christina Aguilera's vocal performance on "Live with Me" required significant adjustments due to excessive stage noise picked up by a sensitive wireless mic. Clearmountain used desk EQ to add treble and Digidesign Pitch for minimal tuning adjustments<sup>30</sup>.

Clearmountain's intuitive mixing approach involved responding to the music in real-time. His methodology highlights a balance between technical expertise and artistic interpretation, ensuring the mix serves the music's emotional core<sup>31</sup>.

### **3.5. Chris Lord-Alge's Meticulous Approach**

Chris Lord-Alge relocated to Los Angeles in 1988, where he expanded his portfolio to include artists such as Prince, Tina Turner, and Green Day. His meticulous approach is exemplified in his work on My Chemical Romance's "Welcome to the Black Parade"<sup>32</sup>.

The session comprised 159 tracks, requiring significant preparation. Lord-Alge began by cleaning up hums, noises, and extraneous elements while maintaining musical integrity. He replaced the original kick drum with a punchier sample and layered additional snare samples, all sourced from the track itself. Vocals were heavily layered, with lead vocals doubled and backing vocals condensed<sup>33</sup>.

Lord-Alge's mixing style emphasizes punch and immediacy. He uses classic compressors, SSL EQs, and unique mixing techniques. Monitoring at low volumes, he makes precise adjustments to ensure the mix remains impactful without fatigue. Automation plays a crucial role, with sections sculpted 15-30 seconds at a time to create a bold and dynamic mix<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Tingen, Paul. "Secrets of the Mix Engineers: Bob Clearmountain". *Sound On Sound*, 2009, <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/secrets-mix-engineers-bob-clearmountain> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>30</sup> Idem.

<sup>31</sup> Idem.

<sup>32</sup> Tingen Paul. "Secrets of the Mix Engineers: Chris Lord-Alge". *Sound On Sound*, 2007, <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/secrets-mix-engineers-chris-lord-alge> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>33</sup> Idem.

<sup>34</sup> Idem.

### 3.6. *Tony Maserati*

Tony Maserati, an Italian American mixer, began his career at Sigma Sound Studios in New York and played a pivotal role in shaping the city's hip-hop and R&B sound. His credits include artists such as David Bowie, Usher, and Beyoncé<sup>35</sup>.

Maserati employs a hybrid workflow, combining digital and analog techniques. For instance, he handles automation in-the-box but sums drum tracks outside the DAW using Neve sidecars and summing boxes. This hybrid approach enhances sound quality while leveraging advancements in digital audio<sup>36</sup>.

In "Save Room" by John Legend, Maserati blended technical mastery with creative precision. He layered multiple kick drums to achieve a balanced sound and applied creative routing techniques for reverb. For vocals, Maserati addressed inconsistencies between takes using a combination of plug-ins and outboard processors, ensuring a cohesive and polished result. His workflow exemplifies the seamless integration of technical skill and artistic vision in modern music production<sup>37</sup>.

### 3.7. *Automation in "Bad Guy" by Billie Eilish*

Billie Eilish's "Bad Guy" provides an excellent example of the creative use of automation. The song's producer, Finneas O'Connell, employs volume automation to dynamically bring different elements in and out of the mix<sup>38</sup>.

For instance, the bassline is subtly dropped out during the verse to allow the vocals to stand out, then brought back in during the chorus to reinforce the track's energetic impact. This use of automation not only creates space for individual elements to shine but also helps maintain the track's dynamic tension, ensuring that the listener remains engaged throughout the song<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Tingen Paul. "Secrets Of The Mix Engineers: Tony Maserati". *Sound On Sound*, 2007, <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/secrets-mix-engineers-tony-maserati> (accessed 14 March 2025).

<sup>36</sup> Idem.

<sup>37</sup> Idem.

<sup>38</sup> Gibson, David. *The Art of Mixing: A Visual Guide to Recording, Engineering, and Production*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Routledge, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Idem.

### **3.8. Reverb and Delay in “Someone Like You” by Adele**

In the case of Adele’s “Someone Like You”, both reverb and delay are used to enhance the intimate yet expansive atmosphere of the song. The subtle yet lush reverb applied to the piano and vocals helps create a sense of warmth and space, allowing the raw emotion of the performance to shine through. The delay, used sparingly, enhances certain vocal phrases, adding depth and dimension without detracting from the song’s simplicity and emotional impact<sup>40</sup>.

### **3.9. Vocal Processing in “Shape of You” by Ed Sheeran**

Ed Sheeran’s “Shape of You” demonstrates the sophisticated use of vocal processing to achieve a polished and engaging sound. In this track, the vocals are processed with EQ, compression, and reverb to create a bright, upfront presence that stands out clearly in the mix. A slight high-end boost is applied to enhance the clarity of the vocals, while de-essing is used to manage sibilance without compromising the vocal’s presence<sup>41</sup>.

Additionally, subtle pitch correction and autotuning ensure the vocals remain perfectly in tune while preserving Sheeran’s natural tone. The combination of these techniques results in a clean, polished vocal that blends seamlessly with the energetic instrumental arrangement, contributing to the track’s commercial appeal<sup>42</sup>.

## **4. Conclusion**

The mixing techniques essential for creating commercially successful chart music—particularly in home studio settings—require a strategic application of EQ, compression, saturation, reverb, delay, and automation. Layering and modulation effects also play an important role in enhancing the texture and depth of the track.

The use of reference tracks provides a crucial benchmark for maintaining industry standards and ensuring that the final product meets competitive commercial expectations. Through a combination of these technical and creative approaches, mixing engineers can produce polished, engaging tracks that stand out in the crowded world of chart music.

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<sup>40</sup> Hepworth-Sawyer, Russ & Hodgson, Jay. *Mixing Music*. Routledge, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> White, Paul. *Basic Mixing Techniques*. Music Sales Limited, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Idem.

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## ACOUSTICS AND MUSICAL PHENOMENOLOGY: A SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND CONSCIOUS PERCEPTION

IULIAN RUSU<sup>1</sup> 

**SUMMARY.** Acoustics and musical phenomenology are like two sides of the same coin. The former analyzes the objective structure of sound, while the latter explores how this structure becomes alive in human consciousness. Together, they help us understand why music is so profound, not only because it is an impressive physical phenomenon but because, through sound, it reaches the deepest levels of our consciousness.

**Keywords:** Acoustics, phenomenology, music, frequency, amplitude, timbre and spatiality, pitch, conductor

Music, this universal language that transcends linguistic, cultural, and temporal barriers, can be explored from multiple perspectives. Two of these—acoustics and musical phenomenology—offer different but complementary approaches to sound.

While acoustics analyzes the physical properties of sound waves, phenomenology focuses on how these sounds are perceived, experienced, and integrated into the listener's consciousness. In this intersection between science and experience, we find the key to a deeper understanding of music.

**ACOUSTICS**<sup>2</sup> s.f. 1. A branch of physics that studies the sounds. ♦ A musical discipline that studies the sounds used in music and the laws governing their perception. 2. The quality of ensuring good sound propagation and perception. [Gen. -cii. / < fr. acoustique]. ACOUSTICS

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<sup>2</sup> <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/acustica> (accessed on 03.03.2025)



Acoustics studies sound as a physical phenomenon, analyzing it in terms of frequency, amplitude, timbre, and spatiality. In music, these fundamental characteristics are organized to create melody, harmony, rhythm, and expression.

- Frequency determines the pitch of the sound, measured in Hertz (Hz). In an orchestra, this frequency gives each instrument its timbral specificity, from the low tones of the double bass to the high notes of the piccolo.
- Amplitude influences sound intensity and musical dynamics, providing contrast between powerful moments and delicate ones.
- Timbre results from harmonics and the way each instrument produces sound. Acoustics explains why a bassoon and an oboe, or a double bass and a violin playing the same note, sound so different.
- Spatiality (reverberation, instrument positioning in the orchestra) adds a three-dimensional dimension to music, influencing how sound is perceived in a concert hall.

Acoustics is essential for understanding musical instrument construction, concert hall design, and the use of technology in music. However, despite its scientific precision, it remains “mute” in the face of the fundamental question: what does all this mean for the listener?

“The continuous enrichment of the field of acoustics and the need for specialization, dictated by the purposes pursued by the demands of life, have led overtime, particularly since the beginning of the last century, to the emergence of several branches:

- Physical acoustics.
- Architectural acoustics.
- Physiological and psychological acoustics.
- Electroacoustics.
- Technical acoustics.
- Musical acoustics, which focuses on the study of sound phenomena that form the foundation of the art of sound, insofar as their analysis, theory, and practice contribute to establishing the objective (and partly subjective) aspects of music, explaining what is possible and contributing to the progress of some of its components. Within this framework, musical acoustics studies:
  - The production of sounds on musical instruments.
  - The characteristics of different instruments.
  - The physical and psycho-physiological properties of musical sounds.
  - The structure of musical intervals (from a physical-mathematical perspective) along with their corresponding psycho-physiological implications.

- The organization of intervals into modes, scales, and chords from an objective perspective, etc.”<sup>3</sup>

## **Musical Phenomenology**

Phenomenology, a philosophical concept created by Edmund Husserl, developed by Roman Ingarden, and deepened in the field of music by conductors Ernest Ansermet and Sergiu Celibidache, shifts the perspective from “what is sound?” to “how is sound experienced?” In this paradigm, music is not just a succession of sound waves but a living phenomenon unfolding in time and space, uniquely experienced by each listener in their consciousness. Musical Phenomenology expresses the subjective experience of sound.

### ***Edmund Husserl and the Phenomenology of Music***

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), the founder of phenomenology, did not develop a systematic theory of music in a dedicated work. However, from his general conception of consciousness and phenomenological analysis of time (especially in *Lectures on the Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, 1905/1917), some relevant ideas for understanding the musical phenomenon can be extracted.

From a Husserlian perspective, music is experienced as a temporal flux that gains unity and meaning through retention, primary impression, and protention, while the listener’s consciousness constructs melody and harmony through successive syntheses. In this sense, Husserl’s concept of music can be summarized as a phenomenological analysis of temporality that gives rise to a unified aesthetic object in consciousness.

Essentially, the performer and the listener are invited to approach music with a state of total openness, to set aside any external desires, and to experience music at a deep level of consciousness. This approach requires discipline, self-knowledge, and a sincere desire to discover music in its purest form, offering an authentic and transcendental experience in every musical act.

#### ***1. Retention and Protention***

- Listening to music involves a constant connection between immediate memory (retention) and the anticipation of what is to come (protention).

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<sup>3</sup> Urmă, Dem. *Acustică și muzică (Acoustics and Music)*, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, pg. 13.



For example, in a *Nocturne* by Chopin or a *Prelude* by Bach, each chord is perceived in the context of the preceding chords but also as an anticipation of what follows.

- Retention and protention, in musical phenomenology, are essential for creating a continuous and meaningful experience of music. They ensure a temporal connection between the past, present, and future, transforming musical interpretation and listening into a unified experience, where each moment is organically linked to the others.
- In musical interpretation, these mechanisms provide meaning and depth, helping the performer create an expressive and coherent arc while allowing the listener to experience music not just as a succession of sounds but as a complex temporal phenomenon, full of significance and continuity.

## ***2. The Meaning of Sound***

- From a phenomenological perspective, music is not just a succession of chords or sounds but an expression of a deeper meaning. A simple sequence of sounds is not neutral; it can evoke joy, nostalgia, or melancholy, depending on the context in which it is experienced.

## ***3. The Perception of Sound***

- Listening to music is not a purely intellectual process. Music is a felt experience within our body; the vibrations of a double bass can be perceived physically, and energetic rhythms can trigger an instinctive desire to move.

## ***4. Temporality***

- Musical phenomenology places special emphasis on time. While acoustics measures time in fixed units, phenomenology reveals how musical time is experienced differently - sometimes perceived as accelerated, other times as expanded by the lyricism of a musical phrase.

Ernest Ansermet<sup>4</sup> (1883–1969) believed that music should be analyzed and experienced in terms of subjective perception. From his perspective, musical phenomenology involves capturing the structures of music as they present themselves to the listener’s consciousness, without imposing external judgments or complex theoretical analyses.

For Ansermet, music is not merely a sum of formal elements or compositional techniques; it is a lived phenomenon, experienced in the moment of listening and having a direct impact on the listener’s subjectivity.

Ansermet’s phenomenological analysis focuses on understanding music from a lived and subjective perspective, without breaking it down into purely technical or formal elements. This phenomenological approach highlights the importance of direct experience and the emotional and intellectual connection between music and the listener, emphasizing that the true understanding of music goes beyond its structural analysis and is found in the phenomenological experience itself.

Sergiu Celibidache saw music as a transcendental experience with the power to connect human consciousness to deep and spiritual essences. In his vision, transcendental consciousness allowed both the performer and the listener to go beyond the limits of reason and ordinary perception, reaching a pure and authentic experience of music. In this state, music becomes more than just a succession of sounds—it transforms into a lived phenomenon, a meditation on existence, and a channel for accessing the fundamental essences of being.

Celibidache’s approach to transcendental consciousness and musical experience remains a point of reference for those interested in the profound and spiritual dimension of musical art.

In the phenomenological context, transcendental consciousness offers a new perspective on the experience of music. By accessing this pure state of consciousness, musical experience becomes an inner journey, a way of exploring the self and the universal essences of sound and existence. Both the performer and the listener can connect to a deeper dimension of being, where music is no longer just a sonic phenomenon but a total experience of existence in its essential unity.

“Phenomenology is not an abstract idea, and if we make music, it is thanks to phenomenology. If the relationship between two chords can serve the text, it is nothing but phenomenology. It may seem like an abstract science of an intellectual nature. On the contrary, we all know that it is not of an intellectual nature.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ansermet, Ernest. 1961. *Les fondements de la musique dans la conscience humaine*. 2 v. Neuchâtel: La Baconnière. New edition, edited by J.-Claude Pigué, Rose-Marie Faller-Fauconnet, et al. Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Sergiu Celibidache. *Phénoménologie de la musique „La fin est dans le commencement”*.

### ***Interaction between Acoustics and Phenomenology***

Though seemingly opposed, acoustics and phenomenology are complementary. Acoustics provides the technical language and physical structure of music, while phenomenology reveals how this structure comes to life in consciousness.

E. g. 1



#### **The C Major Chord**

Acoustics explains that a major chord consists of harmonic frequencies in simple ratios. Phenomenology shows that this chord can evoke sensations of fullness, stability, or joy.

#### ***The Concert Hall***

- Acoustics teaches us how to design a hall with optimal reverberation. Phenomenology explores how the listener perceives sound in such a space—how reverberation creates a sense of spatiality that can amplify emotions.

#### **Practical Applications: The Conductor as Mediator**

The conductor is the “binding agent” that integrates acoustics with phenomenology. They must understand the acoustic structure of a score while also crafting a temporal and emotional experience for both orchestra and audience. Sergiu Celibidache stated that every sound “has its place in time” - an expression that perfectly encapsulates this duality.

The conductor plays a crucial role in creating an interpretative space that allows the audience to perceive music in a state of phenomenological openness. By conveying an authentic interpretation, without artificial embellishments or distractions, the conductor invites the audience to fully immerse themselves in the music, experiencing each moment as part of a unified whole.

Thus, the audience becomes an active part of the phenomenological experience, feeling the continuity between the beginning and the end and perceiving music on a profound level. To achieve these phenomenological objectives in orchestral interpretation, a conductor must combine a deep understanding of musical structure with sensitivity to the temporal experience of music. They must be able to guide the orchestra in a way that respects the natural flow of music, creating a temporal unity where each moment is connected to the whole.

Through intuitive communication, genuine receptivity, and profound preparation, the conductor can transform interpretation into a phenomenological experience of music, where the beginning and the end merge into an experience of deep continuity and meaning.

The phrase “in the beginning is the end” takes on a complex and profound meaning in musical phenomenology, emphasizing the continuity and interdependence of all musical moments. From a phenomenological perspective, the beginning is not merely a starting point but a premise for the entire musical experience, where the end is anticipated and inherently present in every sound. In music, this idea creates a unified and cyclical experience, where the beginning and the end are organically connected, offering both the listener and the performer a deep temporal experience, in which each moment gains meaning in relation to the whole.

I propose an analytical example based on the theme of acoustics and musical phenomenology, through the analysis of the reverberation phenomenon in a concert hall and how it influences the perception of the musical discourse, specifically the choral passage, “Ode to Joy”, from the finale of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*.

Allegro assai

Flauti 1, 2  
 Oboi 1, 2  
 Clarinetti 1, 2 in A  
 Fagotti 1, 2  
 Contrafagotto  
 Corni 1, 2 in D  
 Corni 3, 4 in B $\flat$   
 Trombe 1, 2 in D  
 Timpani in D, A  
 Violino I  
 Violino II  
 Viola  
 Soprano Solo  
 Alto Solo  
 Tenore Solo  
 Baritone Solo  
 Soprano  
 Alto  
 Tenore  
 Basso  
 Violoncello e Contrabbasso

Freu-de, Freu-de, Freu-de, schön-er Göt-ter-kin-ken, Toch-ter aus E-ly - si-um, wa be - tre-ten feu-er-trun-ken, Hainn-lich-er, dem Her - lig-lich-heit! Dei-ne Zau-ber-wei-den, wie-der.

Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125*  
 Part IV, *Allegro assai*, ms 1-14.

This part of the symphony, like the entire work itself, is a complex masterpiece both orchestrally and vocally, with an extremely high acoustic density. I will propose an analysis that highlights how acoustics and phenomenology intertwine and how they influence the perception of this moment.

### **1. Acoustic Analysis**

From an acoustic perspective, the choral passage in *Symphony No. 9* presents a challenge for both performers and listeners:

#### **a) Sound Spectrum**

Full orchestra, vocal soloists, and mixed choir.

- Frequencies covering a wide spectrum, from the low notes of the double basses and timpani to the high notes of the piccolo and sopranos.
- Harmonics: The fundamental frequencies of instruments and voices generate overlapping harmonics, creating an extremely rich sonic mass.

#### **b) Reverberation**

- In a concert hall with high reverberation (e.g., 2.5 seconds), overlapping sounds can create an “acoustic haze”. This enhances the sense of grandeur but may compromise the clarity of melodic lines.
- In a hall with short reverberation, each sound dissipates more quickly, providing a clearer perception of details.

#### **c) Specific Acoustic Challenges**

- Balance between orchestra and choir: If the orchestra is too powerful, the voices may be overshadowed, especially in passages marked forte. The mid-high frequencies of the choir (essential for text intelligibility) risk being covered by stronger low-register sounds.
- Sound projection: The choir, often positioned behind the orchestra, relies on the hall’s acoustics to project the sound forward.

### **2. Phenomenological Analysis**

From a phenomenological perspective, the choral passage is experienced by the listener as an intense emotional event. Acoustics is not merely a technical factor but becomes a medium through which musical meaning is perceived.

### a) Perception of Spatiality

- Reverberation: In a large concert hall, the listener perceives the sound as omnipresent, coming from all directions. This sensation enhances the grandeur and magnificence conveyed by “Ode to Joy”.
- Phenomenologically, the spatial quality of sound creates a feeling of total immersion. The listener feels included in this celebration of humanity.

### b) Musical Temporality

- In slow choral passages, reverberation extends each sound, creating a sense of “expanded time”. The listener experiences each phrase as broader, more intense, and more meaningful.
- In fast passages, such as “*Freude, schöner Götterfunken*”, overlapping sounds create a sensation of “continuous flow”. The listener perceives time as accelerated yet unified.

E.g. 3

The image shows a page of a musical score for Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125, Part IV, Allegro assai, measures 210-217. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The top staves are for woodwinds (Flutes 1-2, Oboes 1-2, Bassoon 1-2) and brass (Cor Anglais 1-2, Trumpets 1-2, Timpani). Below these are the string sections (Violins 1-2, Viola, Cello/Double Bass). At the bottom are the vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) with German lyrics: "Freu - de, schö - ner Göt - ter - fun - ken, Toch - ter". The score includes dynamic markings such as "pp cresc." and "ff".

Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125, Part IV, Allegro assai*, ms. 210-217.

### c) Tension and Resolution

- Harmonic tension: The tonal progressions in this passage create a constant expectation of resolution. Reverberation amplifies this effect, making each harmony “resonate” longer in the listener’s consciousness.

- Resolution: When the final phrases bring harmonic resolution, the listener experiences a profound emotional release. The acoustics of the concert hall further enhance this sensation, giving the resolution an almost transcendent quality.

#### **d) The Meaning of Sound**

- The listener perceives the choral passage not just as a sequence of sounds, but as an expression of a universal idea—human fraternity. The collective timbre of the choir, combined with the grandeur of the orchestra, becomes a sonic metaphor for a united humanity.

### ***3. The Interaction between Acoustics and Phenomenology in Interpretation***

- Adapting interpretation based on acoustics: The conductor, in shaping the musical discourse, must be aware of both acoustics and the listener's perception:
- In a hall with high reverberation, the tempo should be slightly slowed down to ensure text clarity; dynamics must be adjusted so that voices are not overwhelmed by the orchestra; the conductor should use pauses and diminuendos to allow the sound to “breathe”.
- In a hall with short reverberation, the tempo can be faster, as details are perceived more clearly; dynamics can be more expansive, as sounds do not overlap excessively.
- The transition from sound to silence: At the end of the choral passage, as the final chords gradually fade, the listener experiences a phenomenological transition from sound to silence. Long reverberation prolongs this transition, making the silence feel “charged” with the resonance of the preceding sound. This is a moment where consciousness shifts from perception to reflection.

In conclusion, I believe that the analysis of the choral passage from Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* demonstrates how acoustics and musical phenomenology work together to create a unique experience.

Acoustics provide physical context, determining how sound reaches the ear, while phenomenology reveals how that sound becomes expressive and meaningful in the listener's consciousness. Together, they allow us to understand why this moment remains one of the most moving in the entire history of music.



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