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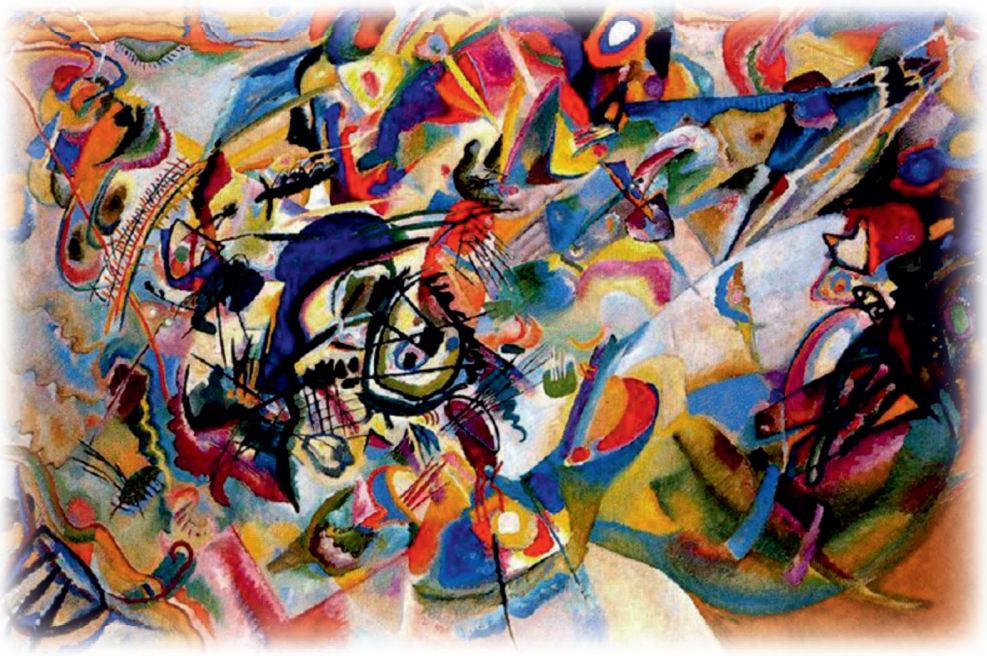

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Vassily Kandinsky, 1913 - Composition 7 (Public Domain)
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S T U D I A
UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI
MUSICA

Special Issue 3

ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG & LUIGI NONO
The 150th Anniversary of Arnold Schönberg's Birth
Centenary of the Birth of Luigi Nono

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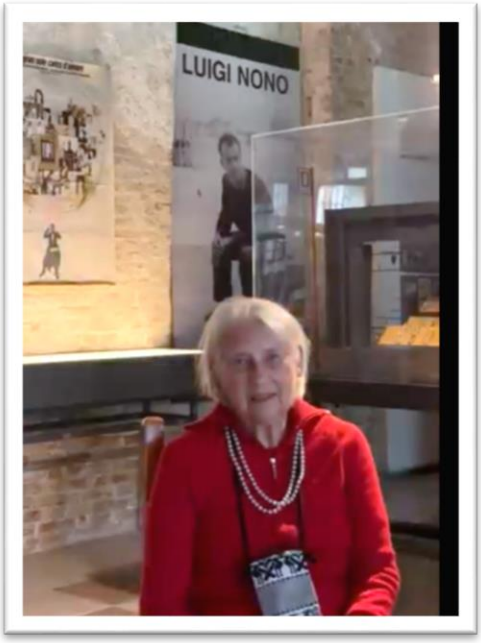
STUDIA UBB MUSICA, LXX, Special Issue 3, 2025 (p. 7)
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG'S BIRTH
CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF LUIGI NONO



"Dear friends,
It's a great pleasure for me to send you a message of thanks and of good wishes for your undertaking.
Luigi Nono would, surely, be very glad that you still are so interested in him and his work.
I am sorry I cannot be with you, but I'll be thinking of you.
All the best!"

Nuria Schönberg Nono
Honorary President
The 3rd International Conference on Contemporary Music
International Festival „Fabbrica Illuminata", 2024.

Venezia, Italy
October 17th, 2024

STUDIA UBB MUSICA, LXX, Special Issue 3, 2025 (p. 9 – 10)
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

IN MEMORIAM DAN BUCIU

On each occasion the composer and professor Dan Buciu from the National University of Music in Bucharest came back to our panel with new ideas and musicological approaches, stimulating the most engaging discussions. The scientific component of the debates dedicated to the avant-garde music of the 20th century meant for Dan Buciu the impulse to direct the attention of the *Romanian Educational Academy* towards modern theoretical and musicological research and creation, emphasizing their relevance for the carefully informed receiver: composer or theorist, PhD candidate or student.

Professor Buciu always turned his attention to the big themes of music theory (as a rule), less discussed in Romanian universities. So, only a year after we set up the suite of the *International Conferences on Contemporary Music / Radical Avant-Garde* - also correlated with *musical festivals* - with the aim of honoring major composers on the centenary of their birth (Schönberg, Xenakis, Ligeti, Nono), composer Dan Buciu took an open and inquiring interest in their scientific and artistic projects.

In November 2023, when on the centenary of György Ligeti (1923-2023) we dedicated a day of lectures with an international musicological presence at the National University of Music in Bucharest to the immense composer, Dan Buciu opened the event. He was the theoretician representing our Educational Academy in the *Ligeti* event, discussing the friendship between the Hungarian composer and Ștefan Niculescu.

In October 2024 we continued the narrative of the Avant-Garde with the *Fabbrica Illuminata* International Conference and Festival celebrating the 150th anniversary of Arnold Schönberg's birth and the 100th anniversary of Luigi Nono's birth. Dan Buciu prepared for this meeting - which gathered in the "Constantin Silvestri" hall of the National University of Music in Bucharest top academic personalities from Europe and Harvard (being honorary patronized by Nuria Schönberg-Nono) - the theme of applied theory *entitled Á la recherche de confluences. The dodecaphonic system (twelve-tones technique) mirrored in the use of modes with movable functions.* Professor Buciu explained how in his composition *Á la recherche de confluences* (2024[1]) he enlisted (in a theme with variations) the broad basis of modal vocabulary, carefully meandering into the atonal and the dodecaphonic music.

[1] Written expressly for the International Conference on Contemporary Music and Radical Avant-Garde Festival *Fabbrica Illuminata* 2024.

The work was presented in the evening, in concert (G. Enescu Hall), to support artistically, musically what was demonstrated theoretically in the morning. (Protagonist: *KlanFar-Kommentar Ensemble - conductor Iulian Rusu*). We could not have thought - and even now we cannot believe (!) - that that fall day, October 17, 2024, was the last time we would hear and see the distinguished PROFESSOR Dan Buciu in an event of this kind.

Bucharest, 17 oct. 2024
Professor Dan Buciu's presentation

Dan Buciu left us on March 23, 2025, leaving a huge void in Romanian composition and musicology. He was a long way mentor to his students, a model of professionalism and academic discipline. His Lordship wanted to pass on the content of the lecture presented in *Fabbrica Illuminata* 2024. I had spoken with him just on March 10 about finalizing and sending the material to Studia UBB Musica. I express my regret that Maestro Buciu's contribution will not be able to be next to the other studies contained in the volume.

LAURENȚIU BELDEAN
Organizer of the International Conference of Contemporary Music
and the International Festival "Fabbrica Illuminata" 2024

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SCHOENBERG AND NONO. COMPOSITION IN CONFLICT WITH IDEOLOGY AND WAR

CHRISTOPH VON BLUMRÖDER[1]

SUMMARY. In the bloody twentieth century, both Arnold Schoenberg and Luigi Nono were faced with various political, sometimes quite toxic ideologies; during their lifetimes, both composers had to experience the devastating impact of wars, with Schoenberg additionally becoming a victim of anti-Semitic Nazism. The central question of this article will be how these circumstances influenced their personal lives and were reflected in their musical works, thematically covering a period from the beginning of the First World War to the various revolutionary ideologies of the late 1960s.

Keywords: Arnold Schoenberg, *Drei Lieder* op. 48, *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* op. 41, *A Survivor from Warsaw* op. 46, Luigi Nono, *La victoire de Guernica*, *Il canto sospeso*, composition and ideology, engaged music, war

Considering the work of Arnold Schoenberg as well as that of Luigi Nono within a broader historical context (a detailed study on special musical relations was published by Joachim Junker[2]), one can identify certain resembling aspects. And such parallels stem from the fact that both had to experience the bloody twentieth century, which was governed by ideological manipulation, political fanaticism, revolution, dictatorship, barbaric terror, and war. Inevitably bound to this – often dangerously culminating – historical context, Schoenberg and Nono came in touch with various ideologies which influenced – and at worst destroyed – the societies they were living in, disrupted their personal lives and sometimes also conflicted with their musical composition; of course, each experienced these situations within unique and historically distinct dimensions, as it applies to all of the particular moments to be discussed further in this article.

[1] *Institute for Musicology of the University of Cologne, Germany, alm20@uni-koeln.de*
[2] Junker, Joachim. "Arnold Schönberg und Luigi Nono. Spuren einer außergewöhnlichen Beziehung zweier Komponisten". In *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center*, vol. 12, 2015, pp. 251–263.

More than that, Schoenberg even had to suffer two horrific World Wars, anti-Semitic persecution, and exile. And over time, these events taught him a harsh personal lesson. As at the onset of the First World War, Schoenberg initially embraced the widespread Austrian-German chauvinistic ideology, probably not least motivated by his Jewish heritage and a desire to prove his unquestionable German character. A letter to Alma Mahler, dated August 28, 1914, may serve as a paradigm of this attitude: Schoenberg expressed extreme hostility towards so-called 'foreign music', pretending he always had felt that it was 'insipid, void, disgusting, mawkish, mendacious, and imperfect'; and he therefore suggested that all the French, English, Russian or American 'mediocre trash producers' should be thrown back into 'slavery' by the glorious German army, learn to adore 'the German genius', and worship 'the German God'.[3] Reading these most disturbing insults, credit must be given to Schoenberg's daughter Nuria Nono-Schoenberg, for not yielding to the temptation to conceal – or even destroy – this dubious letter in order to supposedly protect her father's moral integrity; instead, she followed the principles of true and honest research by including it in a book documenting significant encounters, events, and specific personal relationships in Schoenberg's life. This letter underscores the tragedy that, unfortunately, highly educated individuals like Schoenberg and many of his contemporaries were not immune to the nationalistic hysteria which was responsible for the outbreak of the First World War.

However, disillusionment quickly followed when Schoenberg began his military service in the Austrian army on October 20, 1915. Already less than one month later, on November 14, 1915, he wrote a desperate letter to Karl Kraus lamenting 'the time of unbearable depression, since the beginning of war'[4]. This veritable change of heart highlights the human tendency to perceive and judge reality differently depending on whether one is personally involved or observing from a distance; even though it may seem like a platitude to point out: discussing conflicts from a safe distance or experiencing them directly are, so to speak, two sides of the same coin. Some further peculiar situations, evaluated later in this article, will show similar problems of implication, which, while not ethically excusing, may rationally explain any comparable strange behaviors or awkward opinions, occasionally exhibited by Nono too.

Despite having lived through the First World War, the concept of nationality with the idea that the German tradition from Johann Sebastian Bach through Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner had been the driving

[3] See *Arnold Schönberg 1874-1951. Lebensgeschichte in Begegnungen*, ed. by Nuria Nono-Schoenberg, Ritter, Klagenfurt 1992, pp. 132–33.

[4] See ibid., p. 148.

force behind the historical development of music, continued to govern Schoenberg's thinking. A manuscript from February 1931 provides evidence for this: entitled *National Music*, Schoenberg emphasizes the past "hegemony" of German music "for 200 years"[5]. The significance of this statement becomes even clearer when considered alongside an earlier comment Schoenberg had made in the summer of 1921. During an evening walk with his pupil Josef Rufer while spending his holidays in the Austrian village of Traunkirchen at lake Traunsee, Schoenberg proudly claimed that his invention of the so-called "*Method of Composing with Twelve Tones Which are Related Only with One Another*"[6] had just 'ensured the predominance of the German music for the next one hundred years'[7]. However, Schoenberg's safe existence as a quite respected upright citizen and well-known professor at the prestigious Prussian Academy of the Arts in Berlin, where he taught a masterclass in composition, was abruptly overturned with the rise of Hitler's anti-Semitic dictatorship. Schoenberg's status was immediately transformed into that of a political victim who had to emigrate for the sake of saving his life and that of his family, losing his home and those relatives who remained in Europe and were later murdered by the Nazi regime.

The last composition that Schoenberg was able to finish in Berlin, just within the short time span of the first two tumultuous months of the year 1933, can be considered an impressive musical document of this pivotal moment in his life: *Drei Lieder* op. 48, for low voice and piano, based on some selected poems by the Austrian Jakob Haringer, written in 1915 under the dire conditions of the First World War. The choice of these poems was obviously influenced by their primarily dark themes, reflecting Schoenberg's own state of mind amidst the uncertainty of daily life in Germany. The first song, *Sommermüd*, composed on January 14 and 15, 1933, is characterized by melancholic existential weariness, nevertheless expressing an explicit Christian hope to survive the dark night. But after the political power had been handed over to Hitler with his proclamation as Germany's chancellor on January 30, the second song, *Tot*, dating from February 17 and 18, conveys the deep pessimism of someone who has lost all joy in life. Both songs, concise and transparent in form, display a laconic quality with a musical duration of less than two minutes each: depressed metaphors of an insecure and cruel reality, in which not much was left to say – or sing. Whereas

[5] Schoenberg, Arnold. "National Music (1)" (1931). In *Style and Idea*, ed. by Leonard Stein, Faber & Faber, London 1975, p. 170.

[6] Schoenberg, Arnold. "Composition with twelve Tones (1)" (1941), ibid., p. 218.

[7] See Rufer, Josef. "Hommage à Schönberg". In Arnold Schönberg, *Berliner Tagebuch*, ed. by Josef Rufer, Propyläen, Frankfurt a. M. 1974, p. 48.

the third song, *Mädchenlied*, written between February 18 and 23, 1933, eventually could have been intended as an ironic cabaret performance with which Schoenberg pretended to have the sovereignty to keep the precarious contemporary situation under control; but in such a hopeless position of personal powerlessness, where it was no longer adequate to continue composing in a normal manner or to laugh out loud freely, the humorously designed topical song tends to decline into an aesthetical failure.

The profound unhappiness that dominates the whole composition is indirectly underlined by the relatively high opus number 48, which was assigned to *Drei Lieder*. Because it resulted from the odd circumstance that Schoenberg, after fleeing Berlin, completely forgot about these songs, and only when they were rediscovered in his Californian exile more than a decade later around 1950, he finally decided to include them in his catalogue of works with the next available number after his last composition *Phantasy for violin with piano accompaniment* op. 47, finished in 1949, and this was just: opus number 48. From a psychological perspective, Schoenberg's loss of memory suggests a clear repression of the sad and painful farewell to his European home: After the president of the Prussian Academy, Max von Schillings, during a session on March 18, 1933, had declared, similar to other ongoing oppressive arbitrary acts in many cultural institutions of Germany, that the so-called Jewish influence now should be eliminated from the Academy too, Schoenberg had left the room and requested suspension with a letter to the Academy dated March 20, 1933. As the Nazis continuously intensified their anti-Semitic threats in the following weeks, Schoenberg was forced to flee Berlin on May 16, first to Paris, where he officially reconfirmed his Judaism on July 24, and later emigrated by ship from Le Havre to New York on October 26, 1933.

Unlike *Drei Lieder*, which reflect Schoenberg's expulsion from Berlin and present him as a more or less passive victim of Hitler's regime, the increasing Second World War marked a shift to a more active position against the aggressive Nazism. This change is exemplified by his work *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte (Lord Byron) for String Quartet, Piano, and a Reciter* op. 41, realized between March 12 and June 12, 1942, in fulfilment of a commission by the American League of Composers to contribute a piece of chamber music for their concert season. In a later manuscript from 1943, Schoenberg explained that the composition originated for a very special reason: "I had at once the idea that this piece must not ignore the agitation aroused in mankind against the crimes that provoke this war. I rememberd Mozart's Mariage of Figaro, supporting repeal of the jus prime noctis, Schiller's Wilhelm Tell, Goethe's Egmont, Beethoven's Eroica and Wellington's Victory and I knew it

was the moral duty of *intelligencia* to take a stand against tyranny"[8]. With this typical orientation towards a very notable Austrian-German cultural heritage, Schoenberg's composition manifests a significant political attitude: a sharp polemic alluding to Hitler arose via a contemporary parody of Lord Byron's pamphlet against Napoleon Bonaparte, woven into a brilliant musical substance full of symbolic allusions and historical citations. The explicit political statement that premiered at two concerts at Carnegie Hall in New York on November 23 and 24, 1944, received a quite positive resonance and was followed by a nationwide radio broadcast on November 26. And this marked a rare historical moment in which Schoenberg's condemnation of Hitler's barbaric dictatorship, culminating in a final plea for democracy and freedom, was distributed to a wide audience.

So, looking back at Schoenberg's life during the period from the beginning of the First World War to the end of the Second, one can see a highly changeable chronicle of a person who initially embraced German chauvinism, then became a Jewish victim of just the same toxic ideology, but finally emerged as an artist who actively resisted Nazism through his music. And in this context another composition should be highlighted, which seems almost like a kind of climax. It was elaborated by Schoenberg in the summer of 1947 after he had read the first reports about the Nazi pogroms. By combining the suffering of the Jews in the ghettos and in the concentration camps into an imaginary report of a man who narrowly escaped a massacre when German soldiers thought he was laying dead on the ground, *A Survivor from Warsaw for Narrator, Men's Chorus, and Orchestra* op. 46 transcends all previous musical experiences, established genres, and human imagination. Hardly any other musicologist than Alexander L. Ringer, himself a survivor of the holocaust, could have been destined to summarize this extraordinary work better with appropriate empathy: "Schoenberg poured all his sorrow and the full measure of his Jewish pride into a unique mini-drama, a relentless crescendo from beginning to end of unmitigated horror defeated by unyielding faith"[9]. The 'heart-rending musical document of its time'[10], which erected 'for millions of methodically murdered people an unexpected as well as overwhelming monument'[11], serves up to this very day as one of the most outstanding, emotionally touching compositions of commemoration in the entire history of music.

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[8] Schoenberg, Arnold. "How I came to compose the *Ode to Napoleon*" (1943). In Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, vol. 2, no. 1, October 1977, p. 55.

[9] Ringer, Alexander L. *Arnold Schoenberg*. *The Composer as Jew*, paperback edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York 1993, p. 203.

[10] See Ringer, Alexander L. *Arnold Schönberg*. *Das Leben im Werk*, J. B. Metzler and Bärenreiter, Stuttgart and Kassel 2002, p. 285.

[11] Ibid, p. 291.

Less than a decade later, Luigi Nono also intended to honor the anti-fascist resistance in Europe between 1933 and 1945 with his work as a composer, but unlike Schoenberg, he was not at the end but only at the beginning of his life and musical career. Having experienced political and cultural oppression during his youth under Italian Fascism, Nono had developed a deep sympathy for socialism and the ideals of the resistance, and he had joined the Italian communist party in 1952. With this historical background in mind, one can choose two of Nono's earlier compositions as ideological paradigms for analyzing the unique way in which he tried to link a determined political commitment with his music. So, on one hand, inspired by Pablo Picasso's iconic painting *Guernica*, related to the brutal German air raid against the Basque city during the Spanish Civil War in April 1937, and in combination with the poem *La victoire de Guernica* by Paul Éluard, who had been also a member of the French communist party and the resistance, Nono created a work of the same title for chorus and orchestra in 1954. It is significant – as emphasized by the lyrics – that the subject of *La victoire de Guernica* is not only the pain and the suffering of all the innocent civilian victims but also the eventual triumph of international solidarity over the fascist murderers; and with an approach quite similar to Schoenberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, Nono included in his music, preponderantly dominated by harsh metallic sounds and sections of military drums, a hidden semantical symbolism, as its interval structure is derived from *The Internationale*, the hymn of the socialistic workers movement. On the other hand, the second composition *Il canto sospeso* for soprano, alto, and tenor soloists, chorus, and orchestra, dating from 1955–56, is perhaps one of Nono's most renowned works. Based on fragments of farewell letters that European resistance fighters sentenced to death had written to their families before their execution, *Il canto sospeso* represents a very sensitive reflection of the sacrifice of these heroes. The music, containing soft and desolate as well as loud and shrill passages, certainly conveys impressive emotional effects to any listener, particularly through the intense vocal qualities Nono was able to realize in the composition. Once again, invincible hope and the belief in 'a beautiful future' – according to one of the cited documents – are articulated versus the horror of fascist inhumanity.

It is a well-known fact that Nono embraced an optimistic communist ideology, bound to the dogma that political progress could be achieved by fighting for the liberation of mankind worldwide; in fact, communism, given the fundamental faith it demands of its followers, in principle touches on religious dimensions. And it is not very hard to find various remarks which reveal Nono's conviction that the former anti-fascist resistance had to be continued in the form of a socialist revolution in the present; connected with

the idea of the composer taking part in this historical movement[12], this challenge determined his musical activities and motivated his engaged compositions. In the same context, Nono's international journeys, beginning with his first visit to East Germany in 1958, can be understood as acts of practical solidarity, followed by his participation in the Warsaw Autumn festival of contemporary music in 1958. While his subsequent orchestral work *Diario polacco'58* (1959) – reflecting reminiscences of Polish friends, the country, and the devastating past history of war – exemplifies the special kind of relationship between Nono's personal experiences and his compositions, which quite often might be characterized as a kind of musical diary. In 1962, Nono travelled to the USSR for the first time, and in 1967 and 1968 he undertook two journeys to South America, including Cuba. During this period, his compositions often included programmatic allusions to current political events and issues; such as the atomic warning sign of Hiroshima, the Nazi-crimes in Auschwitz, the fight of the communist liberation army in the Vietnam War, or the student revolt in Paris in May 1968. And, not to forget, exemplified by his composition for soprano and tape *La fabbrica illuminata* (1964), Nono was actively engaged in fostering vibrant cultural and political dialogue with workers and students by presenting many concerts, including discussions, in factories and social unions all over Italy.

However, as Nono's political engagement became more explicit, increasingly precarious and questionable aspects began to emerge. For instance, his work for orchestra and tape *Per Bastiana – Tai-Yang Cheng* (1967), derived from a Chinese folk song meaning 'the east is red', provoked dubious sympathies for the mass murderer Mao Zedong when its original meaning of daybreak was transformed with flaming pathos into a political metaphor for a new era of mankind under the Marxist-Maoist communist ideology. In another case, it seemed as if Nono's personal fascination with and influence of the eloquent dictator Fidel Castro led him in 1969 to seriously refer to Cuba as 'the first free land of America'[13]. Or at the same time, while he indeed acknowledged the 'huge cultural bureaucracy' in the German Democratic Republic, Nono quite uncritically praised the 'good results in economy and education'[14] completely ignorant of the hardships faced by those citizens, who lived in political opposition to the governing Socialist Unitary Party and therefore had to endure constant surveillance by the Stasi – the state security service and secret police – and the danger of being killed if they attempted to escape across the heavily fortified borders of the state.

[12] See Nono, Luigi. "Musik und Resistenza" (1963). In *Texte*. *Studien zu seiner Musik*, ed. by Jürg Stenzl, Atlantis, Zürich and Freiburg i. Br. 1975, pp. 101–103.
[13] Nono, Luigi. "Musik und Revolution", ibid., p. 115.
[14] Ibid., p. 109.

It seems neither necessary nor possible to arrive at a single, completely convincing answer to the question of why Nono sometimes held such awkward opinions. The reason may lie in a combination of naivety, opportunism, and ideological blindness, traits common to individuals who identify too exclusively and unconditionally with a particular belief; whatever the spiritual implications may be, such convictions often lead to a selective disregard for aspects of reality that do not align with one's perspective. Of course, Nono was not at all the only one who gravitated towards radical positions and extreme solutions during the increasing political struggles of the late 1960s. And when this turbulent period with all the competing different ideologies historically came to an end, Nono appeared to distance himself from his earlier habit of composing music with explicit political functions, orientating instead towards lighter textures, subtle sounds and dynamics; according to a common musicological interpretation, his string quartet *Fragmente – Stille. An Diotima* (1979–80) marked a paradigmatic turning point.[15]

But again, it would be pure speculation – and seems unnecessary – to decide definitely whether this obvious change in behaviour was driven by political disillusionment, or personal resignation, or self-critical judgement, or even the so-called mellowness of age. Later in his life, when looking back at his emblematic political work *Il canto sospeso*, Nono lamented the 'superficial effect' caused by the prevailing 'typical ideological reading'[16], which now he felt prevented an adequate perception of its musical qualities. This sheds significant light on the dilemma that engagement may overshadow aesthetics. And generally speaking, the comparison between critical phases in the lives and creative activities of Schoenberg and Nono, which was unfolded here, brings to consciousness the great danger that ideology, regardless of its origin or aim, can pose not only to individuals, but also to music. More than that, honorable engagement can turn out to be quite naive and does not make a person immune to errors and faults. However, it's hardly possible to assert definitively whether the best option to avoid any ideological missteps is, consequently, to refrain from engagement altogether and remain silent, especially when you are talking about composers who feel genuine responsibility for the development of a human, free society.

[15] See the extensive monograph by Junker, Joachim. *„Die zarten Töne des innersten Lebens". Zur Analyse von Luigi Nonos Streichquartett ‚Fragmente – Stille. An Diotima'*, Pfau-Verlag, Büdingen 2015.

[16] Nono, Luigi. "Eine Autobiographie des Komponisten. Enzo Restagno mitgeteilt, Berlin, März 1987". In *Dokumente*, *Materialien*, ed. by Andreas Wagner, Pfau-Verlag, Saarbrücken 2003, p. 76.

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PRAISING THE SOUNDS - LUIGI NONO "OMAGGIO A GYÖRGY KURTÁG"

FULVIA ANCA CONSTANTIN[1]

SUMMARY. Luigi Nono's cultural creative ideas are recognized in the modern history of music. His works and thoughts on art and sound, his composing implies vision, a connection between science (electronic technology and spatial environment) and art (sound and performance). One of his latest works from 1983, reviewed in 1986, *Omaggio a György Kurtág* was composed in a period when Nono got a different, unique approach to composition regarding not only the attitude towards performance but also due to his continuous acoustic research.

Keywords: Luigi Nono, electronic music, Omaggio a György Kurtág, sound

Introduction

Luigi Nono was born in an artistic environment considering music an *art with no limits*. As a performer, he was first familiarized to classicism having a very narrow experience of the avant-garde music, later on discovering the works of Arnold Schönberg, Anton Webern, and so on. His mentor in achieving and extending his education was the Italian composer and conductor, great figure of the avant-garde - Bruno Maderna.[2] Interested in world's progress and the social and political events within his time, Nono developed a personal psychological perspective on things and became involved in diverse militant movements: he belonged to the communist party in Italy. This active life was not

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[2] Bruno Maderna was professor to many composers such as Luigi Nono, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez or Luciano Berio.

an impediment from constantly searching of new sounds and transforming art in an avant-gardist way. Composing, making and publishing music represented for Nono a necessity to accomplish "full self-realization."[3]

As a composer, Nono was equally involved in serial, aleatoric and electronic music. He wrote music pieces in a dramatic scenic way, for example *Intolleranza '60* (1961) dedicated to Arnold Schönberg and *Al gran sole carico d'amore* (1975) based on the fragments from Bertold Brecht' plays and texts of Marx, Lenin, Guevara or Fidel Castro. Also, he used instruments and voices (chorus) on an emotional subject for *Il canto sospeso* named by Elliott Carter "one of the best works... that has been written since the war by a European."[4] Nono introduced recorded improvisations and anti-capitalist texts in a cantata for soprano and tape *La fabbrica illuminata* (1964), expressed his own political experiences and struggles in *A floresta è jovem e cheja de vida* (1966) and induced auditive experience of the music sound and silence fusion searching metaphysical, contemplative resonances in the extraordinary *Prometheus* - 'tragedia dell'ascolto' (1984).

The composer was undoubtedly fascinated by the sounds, his endless study scores of old and new schools' composers helped him to reinterpret tradition and to create an innovative sound and musical language that fulfilled his visionary ideas. For example, his creativity did manifest development regarding the flow of music: *turning points* that appear as abrupt ruptures. In 1987, Nono himself summarized his attitude towards composing: *"My works proceed at irregular intervals, that they group themselves in threes or fours. This discontinuity, this change, is even more evident after a theatrical composition… I could say, as Schoenberg did, that at the conclusion of each work I wish more than ever to breathe the air of other planets. When people ask me if I have changed my mind, changed direction, and so on, I say yes. I hope to change every morning when I wake up, to continually seek something different. Concepts such as continuity and consistency are to me incredibly banal; you have continuity in spite of yourself, with it often working against you."*[5]

Each one of Nono's works is a manifestation of not solely inspiration but intuition as well, and a perfect union between experienced and innovative techniques and compositional structures that he called *"*new routes" in order to find the meaning of sound.[6] His music addressed social and political

[3] Luigi Nono, *Nostalgia for the Future - Luigi Nono's Selected Writings and Interviews*, volume edited by Angela Ida De Benedictis and Veniero Rizzardi, University of California Press, 2018, pp.9-10.

[4] Laura Emmery, "Workshop Minnesota": Elliott Carter's Analysis of Luigi Nono's *Il canto sospeso volume 3 2018 after Guberman, Daniel A. Elliott Carter as (Anti-) Serial Composer."* American Music 33(1). 2015. p.78. Retrieved 20.03 2025.

[5] Idem, p.2.

[6] Ibidem, pp.2-3.

messages to the public,[7] but there was so much more than this.[8] His legacy involved a reflection on the *act of listening* considered a place to be heard oneself and its connection with the rest of the world, and a *musical fullness* of his compositions characterized by being truthful to his beliefs and accepting the uncertainty.

In 1970s a shift in sound exploration could be seen that involved electronics, a mixture of instruments and individual voices, new methods to exploit imagination and to alternate rhythm and music-silence passages. The relationships between sounds extend beyond discursive music, and there are no boundaries for Nono’s writing, just a whole spectrum of possibilities.[9] His compositional approach is based on technology – innovative devices and techniques that reflects a syncretical thinking, elaborate, theatrical, sound – space interests and a revelation of music as a *pragmatic tool* not as an *abstract language.*[10] Moreover, Nono’s music appears as a structural complex concept of *rising and falling* strata of sound mixed together apparently with no effort, while the speediness fluctuation creates waves of sound often indistinctive. From the start Nono defined his idea of “how the image of inner torment was to become music, and different timbres or sound qualities to be used.”[11]

Although, inspired by Webern ‘s final works, the composer wanted to reintroduce in his pieces the core of the single tone,[12] the perception of it was of little to no importance to Nono. He considered more important the diverse dimensions of complex structures and the rhythmic streams of simple proportional correlation between the duration values[13] which denote a “transposed concept of the former polyphonic *line* or *voice* and they can be shaped to serve many compositional requirements.”[14]

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[7] See for example *Intolleranza* (1960), Al gran sole carico d’amore (1975), Il canto sospeso (1956) La fabbrica illuminata(1964), A floresta è jovem e cheja de vida (1966).

[8] Luis Velasco-Pufleau. *On Luigi Nono’s Political Thought: Emancipation Struggles, Socialist Hegemony and the Ethic Behind the Composition of Für Paul Dessau*. University of Michigan, 2018.

[9] Carola Nielinger-Vakil. *Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima: World of Greater Compositional Secrets*. (2010). Acta Musicologica 82(1) pp. 116.

[10] Andrea Santini. *Multiplicity — Fragmentation — Simultaneity: Sound-Space as a Conveyor of Meaning and Theatrical Roots in Luigi Nono’s Early Spatial Practice*. Journal of the Royal Musical Association. 2012.137(1), p. 73.

[11] Gundaris Poné. *Webern and Luigi Nono: The Genesis of a New Compositional Morphology and Syntax. Perspectives* of New Music. (1972). 10 (2) p. 116.

[12] The single tone four prime dimensions are: pitch, duration, dynamics, and timbre.

[13] Sometimes Nono uses Fibonacci numbers (1,2, 3,5, 8, 13, etc.) as a series of factors whose basic duration values are multiplied to obtain durations that are statistically controlled. (G. Poné, op cit., p.117)

[14] Gundaris Poné, *Webern and Luigi Nono: The Genesis of a New Compositional Morphology and Syntax.* Perspectives of New Music. (1972). 10 (2) p. 117.

Some of the works of Luigi Nono are considered *experimenta*l, mostly the live electronics which basically use electronics to combine vocal and instrumental sounds to achieve expressive music. The composer showed his interest in finding new ways of making people listen to his music and to perceive his music by taking into account the spatial dimension and also the performer's perspective which includes: studying the score, a thorough dissemination of archival materials and the integration of electronics into the musical realization. [15]

In performing Nono's works of importance are the performer's knowledge and his vision on the score[16] that will help the performer to find his voice. Helmut Lachenmann, one of Nono's few students, explained that *the tradition* should not be taken as granted, thus, should be stripped of all assumption and questioned, this being the condition for the musician to evolve and be free of "intellectual paralysis."[17]

Nono's musical language is shaped by the distinguished use of electronics embedded in his progressive-constructive thought. The steps include (i) from the choice of sound material to be used to (ii) testing and discussing the chosen sound presented in a catalog. Moreover, there were studies of the scores of the performances and computer sketches (real-time synthesis). If the source analysis is not enough to make known the compositional/research project, musical assistants clarify through memory the electroacoustic technological developments, the problems that came across and the found solutions. Also, the outputs of harmonizers or delay lines as well as motion of sound in space might be represented by special software tools for analysis and visually determination of how sound is distributed in time.

Luigi Nono's *"Omaggio a György Kurtág* for contralto, flute, clarinet in B♭, tuba, and live electronics"

Nono considered György Kurtág[18] a great musical personality, a reflection of many cultures, a model for those who considered themselves "exiles in their own homeland...,"[19] He perceived Kurtág's music as innovative,

[15] Warnaby, John. Only Travelling Itself': Reflections on Luigi Nono (1924-1990). (1991), Tempo - New Series, Cambridge University Press 176. pp. 2-5.

[16] Bill Hopkins. *The Individuation of Power and Light*. (1978) The Musical Times, 119 (1623). pp. 408.

[17] Presentation of Nono, Iannotta and Lachenmann's concerts in *Festival d'Automne à Paris, 2014.*

[18] Measuring the greatness of a composer by the number of works dedicated to him, György Kurtág is without a doubt an important composer.

[19] Carola Nielinger-Vakil. *Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima: World of Greater Compositional Secrets*. Acta Musicologica. 2010. 82(1) pp. 116.

looking for *the unknown*, considering that “it is not the sounds that are special, but rather the way they are invented, used, told, made to vibrate.“[20]

From their first meet, in 1978, Luigi Nono and György Kurtág showed closeness, respect and admiration towards each other, both creating a work in the other’s name: György Kurtág composed “*Omaggio a Luigi Nono per coro a cappella (mixed voices) op. 16*“between 1979 – 1981, and Luigi Nono wrote “*Omaggio a György Kurtág for contralto, flute, clarinet, tuba and live electronics*“ in 1983, completed by a revised final version in 1986.[21][22]

In Nono’s “*Omaggio a György Kurtág*” the central role is attributed to the *continuous sound* derived from unnoticeable sources resounded *electronic* into *noise* to only melt into hefty *silence*. The composer admitted having learned through Kurtág’s music ‘‘to not produce sounds for its own sake but to explore new ways to invent sounds and to make them come alive.’’[23]

In Nono’s compositions after 1980, mainly for instruments and live electronics, the electronic sound processes are written as depiction of the process with charts (separate from the score) and additions of inputs and outputs which makes the score valuable in the act of performing. It is in contrast with traditional instrumental scores and “it does not allow one to build a complete mental representation of what actually happens in sound, since the score has to give an exact prescription of what the performer has to do rather than what the heard sound has to be.”[24]

The listener’s view is subjective according to the complexity of the sounds. For example, in the case of contrabass instruments, conscious listening is influenced by the *pitch, timbre and rhythm* produced by various methods. Voices are transformed by their characteristic spectral peaks (timbres) showing numerous opportunities of change by live electronics. Thus, there is “a continuum between compositional technique and electroacoustic transformation.”[25]

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[20] Luigi Nono, *Nostalgia for the Future - Luigi Nono’s Selected Writings and Interviews*, volume edited by Angela Ida De Benedictis and Veniero Rizzardi, University of California Press, 2018, pp.344-345.

[21] https://www.newfocusrecordings.com/catalogue/hommage-a-kurtag/

[22] There were other young composers from the “Hungarian Studio for New Music” who composed an *Omaggio a Kurtag* to only name a few: Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Jürgen Ruck, Movses Pogossian.

[23] Retrieved from the site of *Festival d’Automne à Paris, 2014* in 25.05.2025.

[24] Anne C. Shreffler, Joseph Auner. *Utopian Listening: The Late Electroacoustic Music of Luigi Nono*. 2016, p.20.

[25] Jonathan Impett. *Routledge Handbook to Luigi Nono and Musical Thought*, Routledge Publishing, New York, 2019, p.440.

Nono characterized *Omaggio a György Kurtág* it as "infinite breaths–feelings–thoughts–tragedies"[26] continuing by saying that includes prolonged techniques, timbres, and a structure that appoint the parts of noise or silence.[27] The score clarifies the idea of collective work, both technical and artistic. The composer identifies not only the "wave-like components of vocal or instrumental sound (with the help of the *sonoscope*,) but also the role of noise in timbre and articulation, that of the overtone in timbres blending and the fine modulation of intonation"[28] to which he refers as '*suono mobile*'. Moreover, instructions about performing (e.g. breath noise, or pitch) and indications of 'microintervalli' or 'aperiodico' are noted on the score.

Omaggio a György Kurtag is a work of two-part counterpoint. The 1986 version contains fourteen sections (149 bars) with duration of approximate 18 minutes. One third of the composition is silent, the longest parts of silence last for more than a minute – a 9 bars passage of continuous sound. At its finale the alto outlines a fifth G# - C# - G#. It emphasizes the sonic palindrome of the text: Gy-ö-rgy with vowels that provide phonetic material for the contralto, but the diverse ways of producing sound with air by the instruments is vague, not distinguished as they move gradually from pure sounds through the noise of breath to silence.[29] So, the music is given life by the smallest modulation of pitch or dynamic.

On the other hand, the performers explore the full range of techniques and live electronics with which they had been experimenting in the studio.[30] The phrase finishes sharply looking like an interruption or suspension of the music reverberation.

The pitch range is notated in the low mid register, only tuba slopes lower from time to time. Sounds mostly have an independent move between the edges of the *physical acoustic space.* There are rhythmic reappearances and changes of intonation and rare melodic passages, often of merely two notes.[31]

Regarding the intensity there is indication of a single forte (*f*) moment (in bar 21) the rest of the nuances are mostly moving between *p/ mp* and *ppppppp*, with few *mf*. These nuances are leading the focus of the performers and listeners towards the corporeal actions, so, they get real and reduced

[26] See Nono's notes - Conversation Nono-Boulez.

[27] Luigi Pizzaleo, *A Three-Dimensional Representation of Sound and Space: The Case of Omaggio a György Kurtág*, 2016, p.22.

[28] Jonathan Impett. *Routledge Handbook to Luigi Nono and Musical Thought*, Routledge Publishing, New York, 2019, p.345.

[29] Idem p.346.

[30] As examples we note: *shadow* sounds, *Aeolian* sounds (whistle-tones), *Tibe*t sounds (filtering by changing mouth-shape), pitched breath, whistling, so on.

[31] Jonathan Impett. *Routledge Handbook to Luigi Nono and Musical Thought*, Routledge Publishing, New York, 2019.

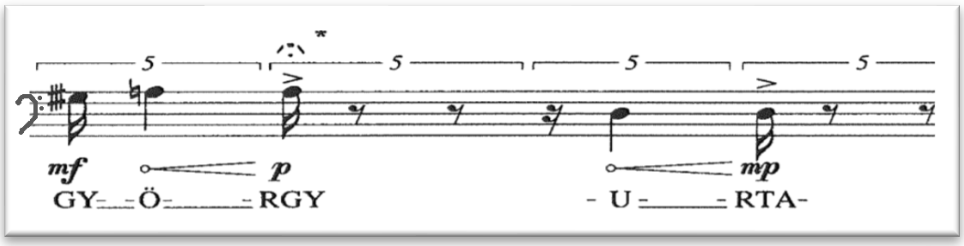
perception, the act of listening coming before it connects with emotion and memory. The extreme dynamic levels are perceived sometimes as silence making the listener unclear, confusing regarding the distinction between timbres. When the listener begins understanding the music, he engages in « écoute ententive »[32] that implies attention and focus and a sense of belonging.

In *Omaggio a György Kurtág*, as Impett says “the flute and clarinet become real-time, acoustic filters, working through the harmonic potential of an underlying series of low fundamentals.”[33] The flute and the clarinet are in a spectrally harmonic relation. For example, the contrabass clarinet role is vivacious, it moves from C in bar 31 (anticipated in bar 30) to its lowest in bars 49–51. Also, the clarinet appears as a high harmonic suggested on the B♭ sounding length. (e.g. bars 24–25)

Omaggio a György Kurtág is presented by the composer as a chance to show his longtime research, his improvisations and musical experiments in the studio. The musical fragments inhabit their own acoustic space, translated in manipulation of interchangeable instrumentation, consistency and electronic processing.

At means of emission this work requires an ordinary tone, a mixture of tone and breath proportioned according to the proximity to emission and a prevalence of breath noise with or without pitch. The composer indicates the transition from breath (air) to tone and vice versa. The sounds alternate with silence. For **contralto**, the sonic palindrome provides phonetic material. There are indications of *molto soffio* or *molto fiato* (only breath noise colored by the emitted vowel, *aria intonata* (less percentage of breath more percentage of pitch), *suono* (singing with ordinary emission. The vowels are attacked differentially, for example the transition from the vowel U to A is done in crescendo.

E.g. 1



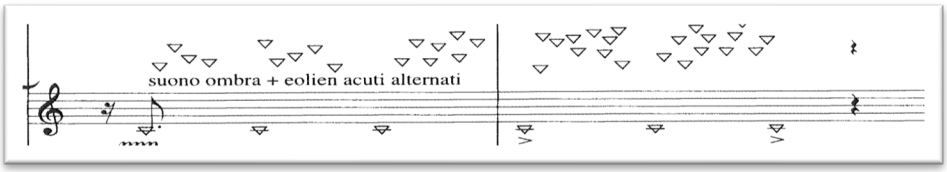
b. 32 Isolated phonemes of: Gy-ö-rgy (*Omaggio a György Kurtág,* Casa Ricordi, 1996)

[32] https://brahms.ircam.fr/en/composer/luigi-nono, retrieved 25.05.2025.

[33] Jonathan Impett. *The tragedy of listening: Nono, Cacciari, critical thought and compositional practice*, Radical Philosophy 125, 2004.

Regarding the **flute**, the *eolien* (whistle tones) are upper partials isolated and intensified within a given sound spectrum with high pitches, the fundamental note (C) appears and disappears occasionally like a shadow (*suono - ombra*).

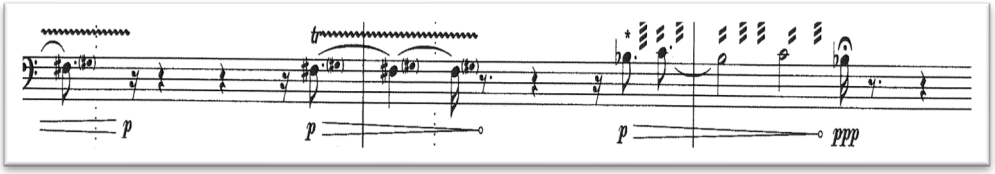
E.g. 2



bb. 1-2 (*Omaggio a György Kurtág,* Casa Ricordi, 1996)

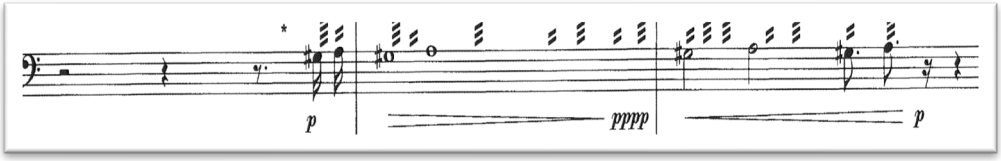
The **clarinet** is written in B♭ and presents trills with slight, high, random partials harmonics resulting from the fingerings used as seen in examples below.

E.g. 3



bb. 95-97 (*Omaggio a György Kurtág,* Casa Ricordi, 1996)

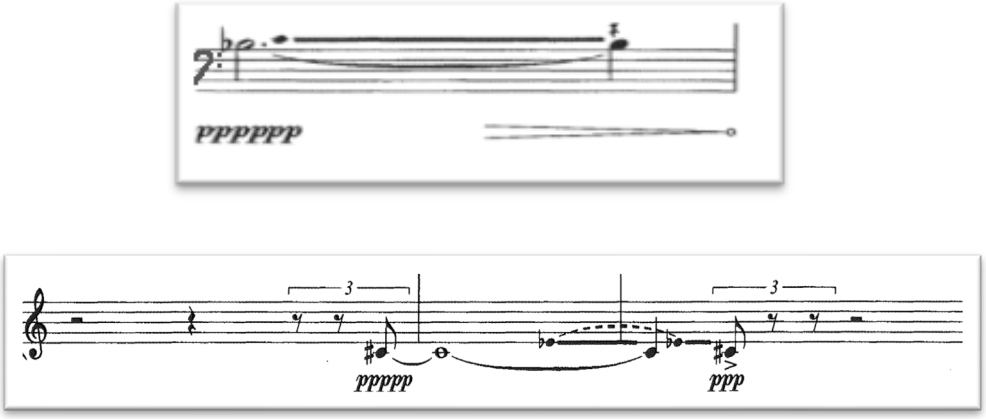
E.g. 4



bb. 130-132 (*Omaggio a György Kurtág,* Casa Ricordi, 1996)

Tuba requires a change in timbre obtained by continuously varying during the emission of the sound, the shape of the oral cavity as if articulating different vowels - *iaouiin* (method called +Tibet). The notes therefore must be sung in a throat voice at the same time as the note played.

E.g. 5



b. 22 and bb. 50-52 (*Omaggio a György Kurtág,* Casa Ricordi, 1996

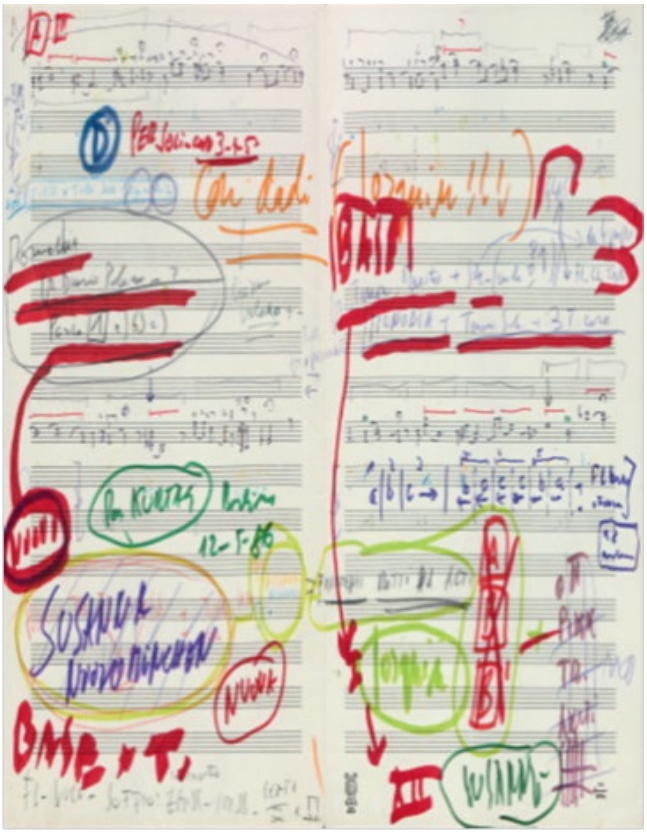
The **conductor** (often the composer and/or the sound director) **has** to pay attention to the dynamics, the duration of notes and pauses, the sounds of the voice and each instrument, the beating of each bar (in strict time or not), relating to the live electronics. The electro-acoustic sound is controlled by the interpreter. The outputs of the electronic sound merge with the volume of the original sound of the ensemble. Furthermore, the performers explore what they had been experimenting in the studio.

Parts of live amplification (noted as ad libitum) should be weak in order to correspond to the general dynamic of the work (*ppppp – ppp*) Other indications include *accelerando, rallentando, subito, rapidissimo, crescendo, so on.*

The accessed score (1996, Casa Ricordi) presents other indications about the Halaphon (digital specializer), reverb, harmonizer, delays, and so on. Although Nono leaves to the performer ‘s preference and appreciation *the scheme of an implementation of the live electronics* (often being the composer – performer- conductor,) he continuously added indications on the scores. Every creative impulse, sudden or studio experimentation was carefully expressive noted and explained.

Omaggio a György Kurtág is a composition that burdens the performers asking for creative roles, both, individual control and exercise in ensemble and a profound focus to the act of music making.

E.g. 7



A working page with the composer's notes *(Omaggio a György Kurtág*, Casa Ricordi) - *Retrieved from Routledge Handbook to Luigi Nono and Musical Thought*, Routledge New York, 2019 – Pitch material

Conclusion

Nono's compositional approach is characterized by a deep fascination with the sound, a musical instinctiveness and expressiveness, a profound knowledge abundant creativity, and revealing his own truth, his believes. In *Omaggio a György Kurtág* movement of sound and spatiality are architectural and could be understood on numerous levels. It is another example of balancing the time of human experience, sensibility, culture and art.

Considered an avant-garde leading composer, Nono offered interesting subtle music to his audience and asked for nothing more than careful, attentive listening. Thus, the listener is invited to observe the influence of space on the prolonged silences, to distinguish microtonal intervals, to differentiate refined textures, to understand the variable, yet unpredictable harmony and the ‘color’ of the various timbres. For Luigi Nono “sound is never a note” […] though inner lives of sounds become compositional material.”[34] He also said:

‘‘A musical thought that transforms the thought of the musicians, rather than offering them a new profession of making so-called contemporary music [. . .] the work of research is infinite, in fact. Finality, realization, is another mentality. […] Often conflicts break out during the research process or rehearsals. But these are very emotional moments. Then there is the ritual of the concert. Perhaps it is possible to change this ritual. Perhaps it is possible to reawaken the ear. To reawaken the ear, the eyes, human intelligence, the maximum of externalized interiority. That is what is needed today.“[35]

His works, mainly the instrumentals with live electronics ones, are acknowledged for turning steady technical equipment into musical instruments, been recognized as challenging to those who want them performed in a musically rewarding way which implies authentic acts of music, professionalism, interaction between musicians and choosing “strategies for time synchronization, fader mapping, audible feedback and examples of microphone technique.”[36]

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[34] Jonathan Impett. *Routledge Handbook to Luigi Nono and Musical Thought*, Routledge Publishing, New York, 2019, p. 390.

[35] Idem pp. 389-390.

[36] Carola Nielinger-Vakill. *Luigi Nono: A Composer in Context, Research Gate*, 2016, no page.

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DODECAPHONY IN THE ROMANIAN MUSIC OF THE 20th CENTURY: MUSICOLOGICAL NOTES

PETRUȚA-MARIA COROIU[1]

SUMMARY. Romanian music has a substantial compositional typology. The second half of the 20th century has modern vision and is preoccupied with spectral music, meditation music and original sounds, using Romanian folklore as basic compositional principle and defining assured archetypes, in order to integrate randomness regarding control, minimalism, instruments spectrum and electroacoustic music. Well-known composers such as Dan Constantinescu, Aurel Stroe, Wilhelm Berger, Ştefan Niculescu, Anatol Vieru, Myriam Marbé and so many others used dodecaphonic technique as a demonstration of cultural integrity, a system searching the balance between the traditional music and modern concepts such as that all of the music should arise from a single compositional element: the 12-tone row.

Keywords: dodecaphony, Romanian music

1. Introduction

The first decade of the 20th century is most likely "the most revolutionary decade in the recorded history"[2] (our translation): it is the decade marked by deep transformations of perspective within many domains of art and science. At the beginning of the century, Freud published one of its volumes which would propose a new perspective on the human mind; Max Planck published his quantum theory, questioning Euclidian geometry and Newtonian physics, while Albert Einstein – in 1905 – put forth his special theory of relativity. A short time before, the Wright brothers had shown that it is possible for an object heavier than the air to fly, while Arnold Schonberg, in 1908, published the first ideas which would dynamite the inside of the tonal system. In painting, at the end

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[2] Schonberg, Harold, *Viețile marilor compozitori (The Lives of the Great Composers)*, Ed. Lider, București, 2008, p. 578.

of the first decade Vassily Kandinsky experimented with non-representative painting, so it is no wonder that during the second decade the great reverberations of these concepts would influence even music. Reaching maturity, his style was equaled in *Ulysses* by J. Joyce and in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* by Picasso.

"The 20th century represents a crossroads of ***several essentially non-tonal concepts (atonalism, serialism dodecaphonic, micro-tonality), concerning the exploitation of popular modes*** (the combination between tonal and modal, attempts to functionalize the modal harmony, using partial modes, mobile scales, complementary, with octaves or non-octaves, all of these techniques are framed within the organic modes resulting in a complex synthesis language – as featured in the compositions by Bartók, Enescu, etc)"[3] (our translation). The tension of these impossible meetings gave rise to a new type of music, beginning with one of the most controversial moments, i.e. the dodecaphonic music.

After debuting in freer atonal composition (A. Schoberg: 1908–1923), also reflected in certain compositions by A. Skriabin, I. Stravinski or Béla Bartók (Bagatelle no. 3), in 1923, A. Schoenberg perfected for the musical world a new system of melodic organization, called "Method of Composing with Twelve Tones Related Only with One Another" (or dodecaphonic, which supposes equality among all the sounds and their non-repeatability), producing a system that "corresponds to the principle of the absolute and unitary perception of musical space"[4]. Thus, the music grows farther from the harmony specific to Romanticism, and closer to the mainly melodic music (which characterizes the second Vienna School). The 1950s would impose this technique (so significant at the semantic level also – which gave it its true value) in the European and American area, as well as in Romania: Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, Luigi Dallapiccola, Igor Stravinsky are just a few composers who joined this movement, expanding it at the level of its durations, ways of attack and dynamics.

2. Discussion: Serialism/ Dodecaphony in the Romanian Music in the Second Half of the 20th Century

The musicologist Valentina Sandu-Dediu describes the ways in which the Romanian music survived during the communist dictatorship **in the period 1965-1989** as follows: "the changes within the Romanian Communist Party, which occurred in 1965 after the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and the

[3] Sandu-Dediu, Valentina, *Muzica românească între 1944-2000 (Romanian Music between 1944 and 2000)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2002, p. 57.

[4] Schonberg, Harold, *Viețile marilor compozitori (The Lives of the Great Composers)*, Ed. Lider, București, 2008, p. 588-589.

ascent to power of Nicolae Ceauşescu, naturally led to changes in the Romanian lifestyle. (...) In fact, certain liberalization was felt around 1965 (...). The illusion lasted only a few years, because, after his visits to North Korea and China, in 1971, Ceauşescu was "inspired" to imitate the Asian model of the Communist regime, adapted to a specific model (...). This is the beginning of a continuous degradation of the social, material, cultural life, which would acquire tragic accents in the ninth decade"[5] (our translation).

"If at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the artists' visits abroad, their access to cultural information seemed to be signs of liberalization, which in the subsequent years would become increasingly difficult, closely controlled, openly or not, by the *Securitate.* Many composers chose the path of the exile, forming a Romanian diaspora whose works would be recovered and become known after 1990. Others found ways to survive artistically within the country, depending on their own moral and aesthetical decisions (...). Anyway, it is clear that art, culture were not completely under the control of the official politics and ideology, finding ways to evade them"[6] (our translation).

The period 1965-1977 was characterized by the political system opening and closing successively, while coagulating its destructive resources which it would demonstrate in a short while: "to the generation mentioned previously, which started at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, new series of young composers, born between 1935 and 1945, many of whom proposed, in the seventh and eighth decades, orientations: towards the spectral music, with a focus on an original sound, towards the meditation incantation music, towards extracting certain compositional principles from the morphology of the Romanian folklore, defining certain archetypes, towards various methods of integrating randomness (more or less controlled, minimalism, the instrumental theater or the electroacoustic music. (...) The opposition between traditionalists and avant-gardists remains a source of debate even at the end of the 1960s"[7] (our translation). Among these major directions, the serial one (and the dodecaphonic one) have ample consequences in the Romanian musical culture.

Valentina Sandu-Dediu (the author of the most ample synthetic work dedicated to the Romanian music of the 20th century) also highlights "a certain feature which unifies the music from the former communist countries: the implicit protest – manifested through postmodern attitudes – against the official ideology"[8]

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[5] Sandu-Dediu, Valentina*, Muzica românească între 1944-2000 (Romanian Music between 1944 and 2000)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2002, p. 30.

[6] Idem, p. 31.

[7] Sandu-Dediu, Valentina, *Muzica românească între 1944-2000 (Romanian Music between 1944 and 2000)*, Ed. Muzicală, Bucharest, 2002, p. 35.

[8] Idem, p. 206.

(our translation). The Romanian modern school of composition emphasized the connection between the dodecaphonic technique and the modal one. Starting from the fact that the sum of the partitions of the module with the cardinal 12 (chromatic total) can give the following result:

- either a sum of (sub)modes (with a cardinal lower than 12) included in the broadest mode (the dodecaphonic series)
- applying the 12 series to itself (involving the intensive use of the maximum amount of 12 sounds)

2.1. Practical, Compositional Elements

The dodecaphonic compositional technique can be subtly integrated in the proletarian culture of the time, being used in disguise in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s in the Romanian cultural space. The dodecaphonic language in Romania was borne as a reaction to the mass culture (Jdanov's regime). Many composers viewed the use of the dodecaphonic technique as a way to protest against social, political and especially cultural realities which limited artists' work.

2.1.1. Main Dodecaphonists

Dan Dediu describes the direction based on serialism, mentioning the following composers: "Ludovic Feldman, Zeno Vancea, Dan Constantinescu, Adrian Rațiu, Mircea Istrate, Doru Popovici, Carmen Cârneci, Cristian Misievici"[9].

Dan Constantinescu promoted a serial concept in almost all of his compositions, treating it as a fundamental creation concept: in his Sextet for strings, the composer proposes a random melodic modal behavior. The *Concerto for piano and string orchestra* reveals a classical architectonic perspective (the three constant movements, the form of sonata, lied or theme with variations as construction landmarks), "a modal serial thinking and composition and a harmonic palette mostly polytonal"[10] (our translation).

Aurel Stroe took advantage of the opening offered by Mihail Andricu's composition class: "there were musicians who supported the opening of the young towards the avant-garde, like Mihail Andricu, in whose house we could

[9] Dediu, Dan, "Contribuții componistice românești după 1960" (Romanian Compositional Contributions after 1960), in *Noi istorii ale muzicilor românești (New Histories of Romanian Music's)*, vol. II, Editura Muzicală, București, 2020, p. 385.

[10] Bughici, Dumitru, *Repere arhitectonice în creația muzicală românească contemporană (Architectural Landmarks in Contemporary Romanian Musical Creation)*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1982, p. 181.

listen to the “decadent” and “formalist” music from the west of Europe, which was not included in the official courses at the Conservatory”[11] (our translation).

“For several years, their names, along with those of Ştefan Niculescu, Myriam Marbe, Dan Constantinescu, Aurel Stroe, Doru Popovici, Adrian Raţiu, Mircea Istrate, Cornel Ţăranu from Cluj, will form a compact, unitary group, animated by the same interest for the new music. Most of them claimed to continue George Enescu’s modernity from his last compositions: the chamber symphony, seen by some more conservative composers as a departure from the national music (because of its chromatic side), as a way which should not be taken as a model by the young generation. (...) In 1958 some important modern compositions began to be heard, authored by Berg, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and there are experiments with serialism in new formulae (...). It is interesting to place the type of serialism they implemented in the international context: it can be compared to what Milton Babbitt was working on in the USA rather than to the integral serialism of Boulez or Stockhausen in the European music”[12] (our translation).

In ***Sonata no. 1 for piano***, Aurel Stroe chose to work with the first of the solutions previously mentioned (a) starting from the chromatic whole (apparently a series), but distributing its partitions (the subsets of the whole) in several groups of sounds (modes) in a sonorous structure, he managed to ‘hide’ the series (string of the total set) by fragmentation. In his themes in Sonata 1 (1955) he distributed a (sub)mode for the plan of the melody and another for that of the accompaniment: these 2 complementary modes (whose sum gives the chromatic total) managed, through a theme of folkloric origin, to use the series (from the perspective of the total involved set) and, at the same time, not to use it: the technique of the operations with (sub)sets of elements is a modal composition technique. See the *Book of modes*, top of the series and chromatic total, which discusses the differences in the treatment of the total mode (12 sounds):

- as a SERIES (dodecaphonic string): techniques from polyphony (reversal, recurrence, recurrence reversal) are used.

- as a MODE: operations with sets of sounds (see the theory of sets: sums, intersections, symmetrical difference, inclusion, Cartesian product) are used.

In this case, “Aurel Stroe approaches serialism, starting from modalism (...). Aurel Stroe freely uses both modes, so that sounds of mode 2 are present in the first theme of part I - in the second theme. In this way, he maintains a balance, smoothing out the modal contrast within the formal contrast”[13].

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[11] Sandu-Dediu, Valentina, *Muzica românească între 1944-2000 (Romanian Music between 1944 and 2000)*, Ed. Muzicală, Bucharest, 2002, p. 23-24.

[12] Idem, p. 25.

[13] Szilagyi, Ana, *Incomensurabilitatea în opera-trilogie Orestia de Aurel Stroe (Incommensurability in Aurel Stroe’s Oresteia Trilogy)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2014, p. 31.

Wilhelm Berger. The Completely Chromatic Choral, Wilhelm Georg Berger and Pascal Bentoiu free serialism especially in symphonies. Symphony no. 6 *Armonia* applies the theory of proportional modes in synthesis with the serial technique, in Symphony no. 7 *Energia*, the composer resorts to mathematical principles at the architectural and thematic level. In Symphony no. 14 *BACH* there is a tension resulting from the antithesis between the old and the new[14]. Here, the modern compositional procedures – heterophony, the modal resources or the dodecaphonic series – combine with Bach's polyphony in praise of the German composer[15]. Within the Concerto for violin and orchestra by W. Berger, "the composer's merit consists in the personal way in which he shapes the sound matter through the well-defined expressive themes, combining modal elements (the general use of the chromatic complex), by combining the homophonous and polyphonic principles for entire areas and, at the microstructural level, through the presence and overlap of several tonal centers, through the metro-rhythmical variety"[16] (our translation).

Anatol Vieru. "His diverse and rich compositional creation fascinates through its originality, high level, innovations, and sound fantasy. As a representative of modalism, of a new modal technique that benefits from serial experiences, Vieru prefers to use subtle mathematical procedures"[17]. The Concerto for flute and orchestra (1958?) is the only dodecaphonic work by the composer; received with hostility by UCMR [the Romanian Union of Composers and Musicologists], it presents an interesting dichotomy between the dodecaphonic technique which describes a certain way of creating music (see the Schonberg's twisted melody) and the soft melody of A. Vieru (who uses the series in a melodic way).

"The systematization of octave modal scales according to the model of the algebraic group represents an amazing theoretical performance by Anatol Vieru, comparable with that of Allen Forte, who, in the United States of America, had created the theory of the pitch-class set. However, Vieru's thinking is

[14] Sandu-Dediu, Valentina, "Înainte și după neoclasicism: Max Reger și Wilhelm Georg Berger" (Before and After Neoclassicism: Max Reger and Wilhelm Georg Berger), in *În căutarea consonanțelor (In Search of Consonants)*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2017, p. 52.

[15] "Rațiu, Adrian, în interviul semnat de Despina Petecel" (Rațiu, Adrian, in an Interview by Despina Petecel), In *Revista Muzica*, 2/1991. p. 2.

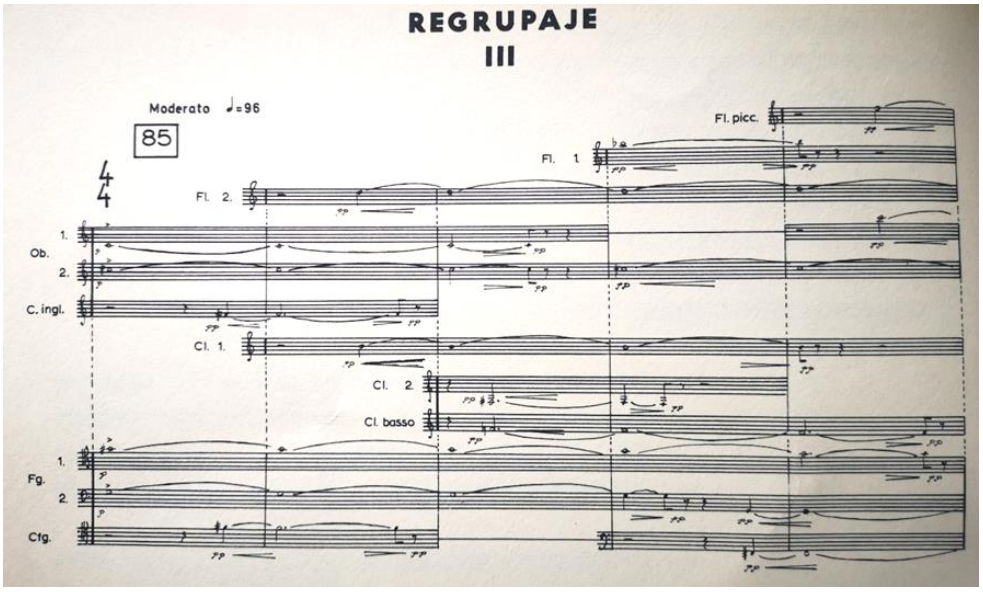
[16] Bughici, D., *Repere arhitectonice în creația muzicală românească contemporană (Architectural Landmarks in Contemporary Romanian Musical Creation)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1982, p. 149.

[17] Sandu-Dediu, Valentina. "Rectorul Universității din Viena la decernarea premiului Herder" (The Rector of the University of Vienna at the Herder Prize Award Ceremony), 1986, in Sandu-Dediu, Valentina, *Muzica românească între 1944-2000 (Romanian Music between 1944 and 2000)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2002, p. 259.

intervallic, the set of what remains from modulo 12 being reported to musical intervals (0=first, 1=minor second, 2=major second, 3=minor third), while for Forte the thinking is connected to heights. Mathematical and musical arguments are used to demonstrate the algebraic group structure of the tempered system, its characteristics (...) and to treat modal scales"[18] (our translation). Between the emancipation of dissonance (1910) and that of consonance (1970), Anatol Vieru discusses postmodernism as a "period following the exhaustion of the avant-gardes, after the great languages of the past had lost their predominance, and after serialism – sovereign in the 1950s – had remained more of a manner"[19].

Liviu Glodeanu - ***Studies for orchestra*** contain serial elements: especially in the third section (*Regroupings*), where the musical discourse is spaced over broader temporal areas, allowing for a kind of musical pointillism by assigning a prolonged sound to a different timbre each time.

E.g. 1



Liviu Glodeanu, Studies for orchestra, part 3, Regrupaje (Regroupings)

[18] Dediu, Dan, "Cu Anatol Vieru prin meandrele timpului lung" (With Anatol Vieru through the Twists and Turns of Time), in *Siluete în mișcare. Eseuri despre compozitori români (Silhouettes in Motion. Essays on Romanian Composers)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2021, p. 55.

[19] Sandu-Dediu, Valentina, *Muzica românească între 1944-2000 (Romanian Music between 1944 and 2000)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2002, p. 206.

Excellent representative works on the subject are those signed by ȘTEFAN NICULESCU (“Synchrony 4” for clarinet, percussion and piano - 1987) and TIBERIU OLAH (The time of the deer). We mention too Wilhelm GEORG BERGER’s and PASCAL BENTOIU’s free serialism, especially in some symphonies. LUDOVIC FELDMAN composed dodecaphonic music his entire career, especially in the 1970s; THEODOR GRIGORIU could enter in the same area of interest.

2.1.2. Secondary dodecaphonists: The serialism elements are found in the musical expression of composers such as Zeno Vancea and Adrian Rațiu[20].

Carmen Maria Cârneci, *The work Trojtza for 15 Players* (1989-1990), published by Pfau Verlag in 1995, was well received at its premiere at the Musik des XX. Jahrhunderts Festival in Saarbrucken (Germany). The piece (which had its world premiere in 1993) was analyzed by Wolf Frobenius in the work "Carmen Maria Cârneci’s Trojtza für 15 Spieler (1989/90): Zur Genese des Stückes (fragmen: Beiträge, Meinungen und Analysen zur neuen Musik)".

Dan Buciu, in the ***Sonnet for choir, flute and organ,*** using lyrics by R. M. Rilke, lists in the introduction a dodecaphonic melodic string, and the composer immediately abandoned its treatment using dodecaphonic principles, and subsequently developed other musical material. Only at the end of the piece he returns to the series he introduced initially, without treating it according to the technique this time either. In this composition, the dodecaphonic technique is only illustrative: it occurs, but it does not have a generative function. The series (the first 12 sounds) occurs first for the flute, then for the organ; when the voices come in, the dodecaphonic string disappears. Then the composer only uses fragments from it (thus adopting a modal approach), with the aim of generating modal harmonies. Dan Buciu does not actually use the procedures for treating the series, he only gives hints to the serial idea.

Tiberiu Olah: “his stylistic path starts from post-serialism and leads to a new diatonic style, initiated under the influence of Webern’s extremely detailed analyses...”[21] (our translation). **Doru Popovici** could be enrolled in the same analytical framework.

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[20] Dediu, Dan, “Contribuții componistice românești după 1960” (Romanian Compositional Contributions after 1960), in *Noi istorii ale muzicilor românești (New Histories of Romanian Music’s)*, vol. II, Editura Muzicală, București, 2020, p. 376.

[21] Dediu, Dan, “Cu Anatol Vieru prin meandrele timpului lung” (With Anatol Vieru through the Twists and Turns of Time), in *Siluete în mișcare. Eseuri despre compozitori români (Silhouettes in Motion. Essays on Romanian Composers)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2021, p. 32.

2.2. The Theoretical Elements

2.2.1. **Anatol Vieru** theorized the series (as strings of sounds, not related to O. Messiaen's integral serialism); the **Book of Modes**. "**Anatol Vieru** believed in the untapped resources of the modal domain, applying them equally to composition and to exegesis. Anatol Vieru's theoretical interest was marked by his training as a composer. His theoretical contribution (...) is the result of the superior need to explore and define the field of composition, and an investigation of the virtual possibilities of expression. The Book of modes (1980) uses as a working method the logical-mathematical modeling (...) as an efficient tool of organizing and explaining a theoretical demonstration"[22].

At the intersection with the American concept "pitch class set"[23], A. Vieru adapts everything to the modal world, and the "tempered system becomes isomorphic with the set of integer numbers, within which each element belongs to a class of rests. The sounds and intervals of the tempered system are representatives of the classes of modulo 12 rests (...). In the new context, the mode is represented as a set of classes of rests which stands operations such as intersection, reunion, states such as inclusion, complementarity of two modes"[24] (our translation). "Since 1967, I have been working on fundamental research on modal musical thinking (...); the work has crystallized as a model (logical-mathematical) that aims to encompass as many features of modal musical thinking as possible".

2.2.2. **Gheorghe Firca.** His complex theoretical system requires a separate chapter for musicological analysis, but we mention it on this occasion for the sake of accuracy.

2.2.3. **Wilhelm G. Berger:** The Completely Chromatic Choral Music of 12 sounds.

After 1957 new stylistic orientations were visible in the domain of composition in Romania. Wilhelm Berger was among those composers, including Pascal Bentoiu, Nicolae Beloiu, Dumitru Capoianu or Theodor Grigoriu, who approached an aesthetic close to that of Enescu, from the direction of the 'moderate modernism', searching from the balance between the old and the new, between the Romanian folkloric principles and the universal symphonic tradition (especially from the French tradition)"[25] (our translation).

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[22] Sandu-Dediu, Valentina, *Muzica românească între 1944-2000 (Romanian Music between 1944 and 2000)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2002, p. 60.

[23] Vieru, Anatol, "Teoria modernă a modurilor şi atonalismul" (Modern Theory of Modes and Atonality), in *Review Muzica*, oct.1986, p. 4.

[24] Sandu-Dediu,Valentina, *Muzica românească între 1944-2000 (Romanian Music between 1944 and 2000)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2002, p. 61.

[25] Idem, p. 25.

"Berger is part of the original theoretic tradition, which started in 1960, and which gives increased importance to systematizing compositional procedures and means. The increased preoccupation for the modal system places Berger (with the volume *Dimensiuni modale* [Modal Dimensions], 1979) next to his colleagues such as Anatol Vieru, Ștefan Niculescu, Myriam Marbé, Dan Constantinescu, Doru Popovici, Cornel Țăranu, Tiberiu Olah, Theodor Grigoriu, Adrian Rațiu"[26] (our translation). Based on solid and logical arguments, Berger transposes Fibonacci's string to music, generating species and modes, but also a theory of the completely chromatic choral music. (...).

In an early study, W. G. Berger proposes a model for the analysis and systematization of possible modal structures conceived based on the golden ratio (sectio aurea), taking into account various units of measurement that give organization to these structures by species: "the semitone as a unit of measurement (species I), the tone as a unit of measurement (species II), up to 6 tones as a unit of measurement (species XII). The results affirm a unique interval. The uniqueness of this interval ensures the cohesion of the entire sound material (...). These modes do not represent sequences in the manner of the serial dodecaphonic concept, but modes based on the recognition of a sound center (the tone) to which all sounds are related"[27].

3. Conclusions

The Romanian compositional typology is today extremely rich and varied: "the approach to large instrumental-symphonic genres, based on the principle of developing melodies with national character, presented composers with the challenge of finding appropriate harmonic and polyphonic solutions for a specific rhythmic-modal structure"[28]. "In the 20th century, music began to realize its potential as the most universal medium of communication. Music is a way of transmitting and reflecting emotion"[29]; twelve-tone music seemed to contradict this general ideal of sound art, and that was precisely the challenge it had to face as a musical style.

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[26] Idem, p. 57

[27] Berger, W. G., „Moduri și proporții, studiu monografic" (Modes and Proportions, Monographic Study), in *Studii de muzicologie (Musicology Studies),* vol. 1, Editura Muzicală, București, 1965, p. 337-338.

[28] Tomescu, Vasile, "Specificul concepției și diversitatea de stiluri în muzica românească" (The Specificity of Conception and Diversity of Styles in Romanian Music), in *Studii de muzicologie (Musicology Studies)*, vol. I, Editura Muzicală, București, 1965, p. 218.

[29] *Encyclopedia of Music in the 20th Century*, ed. Lee Stacy and L. Henderson, Routledge, London, 1999, p. 5.

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ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG'S *PIEROT LUNAIRE* AND THE AFTERMATH: FROM JIKKEN KŌBŌ TO BRUCE LABRUCE

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SUMMARY. The history of Pierrot and his reception in various artistic genres covers more than 400 years. From his minor role as a commedia dell'arte figure, Pierrot emancipated himself to become the eccentric main character, asserting himself in the visual arts, in nineteenth-century pantomimes, in musical settings, in film, in ballet and in various genres of popular culture such as manga and anime. To evaluate the two adaptations of Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* that are in focus here—the Japanese stage version by Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop, 1955) and the film version by Bruce LaBruce, *Pierrot lunaire: Butch Dandy* (2014)—it is helpful to take a look at the history of their reception. Cultural-historical interdependencies and genre transgressions constantly give rise to new facets of Schönberg's key work composed in 1912, while the question remains as to how far these adaptations serve the work or merely use it for their own purposes.

Keywords: Pierrot lunaire, Schönberg, Jikken Kōbō, Bruce LaBruce, reception

When Schönberg composed and premiered *Pierrot lunaire* in 1912, the figure of Pierrot already had more than 300 years of history behind him. Pierrot's "biography" can be traced in theater, pantomime, poetry, the visual arts, photography and music. In the more than 100 years following the premiere, the medium of film and various genres of popular culture were added, including rock, pop, manga and anime. The subject of Pierrot has been, and continues to be, artistically revisited regularly, with the transgression of geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries leading to creative redesigns.

The two adaptations of Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* mentioned in the title, firstly the production by the Japanese art collective Jikken Kōbō under director Tetsuji Takechi in 1955 and secondly the film version by Bruce LaBruce, entitled *Pierrot lunaire: Butch Dandy*, in 2014, are part of this rich artistic and

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receptive history. Knowledge of some of the most important milestones in Pierrot's reception can be helpful for understanding and evaluating the degree of novelty of these productions. Pierrot's figure can be described as chameleon-like. His origins as "Pedrolino" in the Italian commedia dell'arte were followed by a series of transformations, which were also attributable to various cultural customs in the countries in which the Italian impromptu theater would establish itself. This molding of Pierrot's character at cultural interfaces continued in the later Japanese (and global) reception of Pierrot.

A journey through the history of painting shows how Pierrot changed his face, sometimes within the *oeuvre* of the same artist. While Antoine Watteau portrays Pierrot in *Les Comédiens Italiens* (ca. 1720) as active and surrounded by his fellow actors, in *Pierrot, dit autrefois Le Gilles* (ca. 1718/19) he presents him with slumped shoulders and a depressed expression. Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *Enfant en Pierrot* (ca. 1785) is significant with regard to the social suitability of the Pierrot costume. A boy, probably from a wealthy family, poses in a Pierrot costume. Pierrot is "infantilized," so to speak, made suitable for children and young people, a transformation that we encounter again in pop cultures as well as in the manga and anime genres of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The images by Adolphe Willette in *Pauvre Pierrot*, which are accompanied by explanatory texts, are closely related to the comic strip and Japanese manga. Willette features a Pierrot in a black tailcoat, whom we encounter again in Otto Erich Hartleben's poems and, in a modified form, in Takechi's Jikken Kōbō production and in LaBruce's film.

A brief digression into the history of manga illustrates the cultural ties between Japan and Europe from the opening of the Meiji period onwards. Japanese manga was inspired by caricaturists working in Japan in the nineteenth century. Alongside Charles Wirgman (founder of the satirical newspaper *The Japan Punch* in 1861), Georges Bigot, who made a career in Japan as a young artist and, together with Wirgman, heralded the birth of modern Japanese manga, played a key role (Polak and Cortazzi 3). Despite this, there was also a tradition of illustrated narrations dating back to the Nara period, and the term "manga" in turn goes back to Katsushika Hokusai, who first used the word in 1814 for sketch-like illustrations. The history of Japanese manga up to the Pierrot manga of the twenty-first century, including the science fiction-like *Satsujin piero no shitsumon* (questions about the killer clown), is therefore multifaceted. It is hardly surprising, and interesting in the context of this essay, that the figure of Pierrot can also be found in Bigot's drawings, even together with Mr. Punch in the farewell cartoon for the aforementioned satirical newspaper (Bigot). Another example of cross-cultural inspiration is Aubrey Beardsley's *Pierrot with Mandolin* (1894), a faceless back view of Pierrot that

is stylistically based on Japanese ink drawings. In Ethel Wright's painting entitled *Bonjour, Pierrot!* (1893), the protagonist, sitting on a bench next to his dog, is assigned to a bourgeois or working-class environment. The setting of the Pierrot subject in a bourgeois or working-class milieu, which we find in the successful first silent film adaptations from 1907 onwards (e.g., *L'Enfant prodigue*), but also in LaBruce's film, is already present here.

In 1918, Pablo Picasso painted a sensitive and vulnerable Pierrot. With the emblematic book on the desk and the contrast between light and dark, his Pierrot looks like the portrait of a melancholy poet or scholar, quite unlike his *Pierrot assis* from 1961, a self-satisfied, cheerful Pierrot. The cubist *Pierrot à la guitare* (1919) by Juan Gris appears shadowy, almost like a doppelganger. The cross-fades in the picture can be found again as an artistic device in different *Pierrot lunaire*-films, naturally also in LaBruce's film. Inspired by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, which fascinated the surrealist painters, the focus is increasingly directed towards Pierrot's inner life and repressed parts of his personality. This new, psychoanalytically oriented perspective was also adopted in the Jikken Kōbō performance in 1955. Notwithstanding all their colorfulness, Yasuo Kuniyoshi's expressionist paintings *Tired Clown* (1946) and *The Clown* (1948) appear melancholy, even somber, in stark contrast to Mira Fujita's pleasing, superficial pop art series of Pierrots (e.g., *Pierrot the Clown*, 1980f.). With the heavily overweight *Pierrot* (2007) by the Colombian Fernando Botero, a social outsider or a victim of a capitalist consumer society is once again brought into the picture.

Pierrot's chameleon-like nature is reflected even more clearly and subtly in the genres of literature, pantomime, silent film and sound film. As in the history of painting referred to above, just a few examples will be picked out, which in turn establish a connection to the aftermath of Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire*. In Molière's comedy *Dom Juan ou le Festin de Pierre* (1665), Pierrot still leads an existence in a supporting role, which will soon change. Without touching on the milestones in between, we jump to the nineteenth century, which brings a victorious rise in the French pantomime and an eccentric type of Pierrot, embodied by stars such as Jean-Gaspard Deburau and Paul Legrand. Their performances are captured for posterity in the legendary photographs by Nadar, and in addition, the modern appearance that is still associated with Pierrot today was created. In *Pierrot au Sérail. L'Apothéose de Pierrot dans le Paradis de Mahomet* (1855), Gustave Flaubert and Louis Bouilhet take Pierrot on a trip to a seraglio and, after his death, even to Mohammed's paradise. This blending of cultural and religious spheres is a loose anticipation of later adaptations of the Pierrot subject in other cultures.

The pantomime *Pierrot sceptique* (Joris-Karl Huysmans and Léon Hennique, 1881) depicts an arsonist and murderous Pierrot, comparable to Paul Margueritte's *Pierrot assassin de sa femme* (1882) and Jean Richepin's *Pierrot assassin* (1883). The latter pantomime featured Sarah Bernhardt in the leading role as an androgynous Pierrot—a role model for many Pierrots to come. To put it pointedly, the Pierrot texts, especially those of the late nineteenth century in France, are a cabinet of horrors of the human psyche; (almost) every conceivable anomaly and perversion is put on paper or on stage.

In 1890, Pierrot became—similarly to the above-mentioned painting by Ethel Wright—bourgeois, so to speak. The pantomime *L'Enfant Prodigue* (Michel Carré fils, 1890, followed by an adaptation for silent film in 1907) shows the family life of Monsieur and Madame Pierrot and the challenges they face with their wayward son. Pierrot's character becomes more harmless, sunnier, less "lunaire" and more "solaire"—more "normal" at least. The sunny or "solaire" Pierrot characters, who can be found in the later twentieth century and up to the present day not only, but above all, in pop culture (such as the above-mentioned paintings by Mira Fujita), could be considered descendants of the married couple, of Mr. and Mrs. Pierrot.[2] In 1919 we meet Horiguchi Daigaku and his *Gekkō to Pierrot* (*Moonlight and Pierrot*). The Japanese poet and translator was influenced by French symbolism, with this reference closing the circle to the aforementioned significance of intercultural interfaces, and in particular the influence of France on Japanese culture at this time. The leap to the year 2003 is not intended to conceal the extremely intensive reception of Pierrot that took place in between but is due to the necessary limitation in the context of this publication. The 2003 novella *Jūryoku piero (A Pierrot a.k.a. Gravity Clown*) by Kōtaro Isaka was made into a film in 2009 and became very well known. Both the theme and the style of the film make use of a popular aesthetic.

For obvious reasons, this journey through the history of paintings, literature, pantomime, silent film and film, both in European and Japanese cultures, could only show a few selected examples here. If one includes these and other examples that are not mentioned here, Pierrot's many facets become apparent: unhappy lover, unsuccessful actor or poet, *fin de siècle* dandy, bourgeois figure, eccentric, obsessed with the moon, obsessed with eroticism, outcast from society, psychopath, murderer, victim of Columbine's narcissism, tormented by feelings of guilt, suffering from fear of death, among others.

[2] For example, Dan Dediu, Jan Järvlepp and Giorgio Gaslini set a monument to a *Pierrot solaire* in their compositions.

In 1954, Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* had its Japanese premiere, with Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop), founded in 1951, as its producer. The art collective was made up of well-known personalities from the fields of painting, composition, poetry, criticism, musical performance, photography and music, including the composer Tōru Takemitsu. In 1955, a stage version of *Pierrot lunaire* was performed, created by a collaboration between Jikken Kōbō and the director Tetsuji Takechi. The performance was in Japanese, and the full title of this stage version was *Pierrot lunaire (tsuki ni tsukareta peiro)*, which means "Pierrot, tired / exhausted of the moon." Takechi stages a psychologically charged love triangle, which is certainly encouraged by the text by Giraud and Hartleben. More idiosyncratic is the focus on Pierrot's repressed sexuality, which can be understood as a reaction to Sigmund Freud's works becoming known in Japan. The playbill let the audience know about the content: "Pierrot suppresses his desire and love for Columbine. Soon, Harlequin appears and tricks Pierrot; being in his element, Harlequin betrays Columbine. Taunted by Harlequin, Pierrot knifes her to death. Yet, Columbine remains alive for eternity within Pierrot himself…." (Tezuka 186).

In Takechi's staging, a Kyōgen performer took on the role of Pierrot, the soprano singer slipped into the role of Columbine and simultaneously took on the speaking voice, and a Nō performer played Harlequin. In contrast to the usual, Columbine took on the main musical role in this production, and the roles of Pierrot and Harlequin were purely pantomime. This extravagant constellation of characters may well remind us of Pierrot's beginnings in the theater, where he was assigned only a supporting role. Conversely, we also encounter the idea of an "upgrading" of Columbine elsewhere, for example in Paul Ernst's *Komödianten- und Spitzbubengeschichten* (1928) and in Michel Tournier's *Pierrot ou les secrets de la nuit* (1989), where Pierrot is named as the main character in the title, but Columbine, in her narcissistic ego addiction, becomes the pivot of the action. Of course, this is not intended to claim any direct influence but merely to give an indication of the different ways in which the Pierrot story can be interpreted.

In connection with the introductory historical outline of the reception of the figure of Pierrot, it should be noted that the idea of theatricalizing Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* was not new at the time when Tackechi staged it, nor is it a characteristic of a receptive avant-garde. Immediately after the 1912 premiere there were already a number of scenic performances (including ballet, dance, actors, etc.), which in turn were nothing more than continuations of a tradition associated with the Pierrot subject as early as the nineteenth century. The innovation in Jikken Kōbō's production was therefore not in the

choice of means itself—in fact, the performance was described as "an avant-garde work of dance, or more like a sort of mime-like act choreographed by Takechi Tetsuji" (Tezuka 201)—but in the synthesis with the Nō theater. At first glance, this seems culturally logical. However, it is even more than that: The explicit connection with the Nō theater is artistically logical. If we look at the theatrical art forms of Japan as a whole, the Pierrot subject is closest to the Nō and the associated Kyōgen. There are two striking connections between Nō and Kyōgen and commedia dell'arte. Firstly, Kyōgen means "mad words" or "wild speech"; as a comedic theater form for the entertainment of the audience it is related to commedia dell'arte. Secondly, the use of masks, which also distinguishes a Nō play or Nō-kyōgen from Kabuki, has to be mentioned. Obviously, in its comedic mixture of song, dance and pantomime, Kabuki also has parallels with commedia dell'arte but dispenses with the masks.

Besides the relationship between Nō-Kyōgen and commedia dell'arte there is another, perhaps even more surprising relationship: Miwako Tezuka refers to the similarities between Schönberg's speaking voice and the use of the singing voice in a Nō play (cf. Tezuka 198). Furthermore, in addition to the interconnections established so far, all roles in Nō theater are played by male actors. The linguistic alienation effect and androgyny thus create a further link between Nō and Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire*. If we look for additional links between *Pierrot lunaire* and the Nō theater, the color white, which is historically linked to Pierrot's makeup and dress, offers itself as a connotative bridge. However, this connotation only works from a European or Western cultural perspective. Not all masks in Nō theater are white by any means. In Europe, however, at least since Japan opened up during the Meiji period, a white face has been associated with Japanese culture. A connection was made on the one hand with the partially white masks of the Japanese theater, and on the other hand with the strongly contrasting makeup of the geisha. In passing, it should be mentioned that the Jikken Kōbō performance did not use the traditional Nō masks stylized over centuries, but modernized ones tailored to the Pierrot subject.

This "Gesamtkunstwerk" by Jikken Kōbō was groundbreaking for the reception of Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* in Japan; it was followed by a series of *Pierrot lunaire* performances, whereby theatrical versions, often in conjunction with the Nō play, have become something of a tradition. It is worth mentioning here only *pars pro toto* the Nō version directed by Akiko Nakajima, entitled *Mugen Noh—Pierrot lunaire* ("mugen" means limitless, infinite) from the anniversary year 2012.

With the following discussion on Bruce LaBruce's *Pierrot lunaire: Butch Dandy*, we leave Japanese culture with its special aesthetics and turn to the genre of film. In 2011, Canadian filmmaker Bruce LaBruce staged a theatrical adaptation of *Pierrot lunaire* in Berlin, and three years later, in 2014, his film based on this stage version was presented at the Berlin International Film Festival and honored with the Teddy Award. LaBruce is regarded as a specialist in queer and transgender themes, as an "Ikone des schwulen Underground-Pornos und des Queercores" (Buss), as an icon of gay underground art porn and queercore. He not only transferred Schönberg's work into a contemporary context but also reenacted a real murder that took place in Toronto's transgender milieu in 1978. A brief summary of the plot reads as follows: Pierrot is a woman dressed as a man who pretends to be a man to Columbine. Columbine's father, unlike his daughter, sees through the masquerade and rejects Pierrot's connection to his daughter. Pierrot must then prove his masculinity to Columbine's father (and to his lover Columbine as well). The means chosen are drastic: He murders and castrates a taxi driver and adorns himself with the man's male attributes. This scene in the film is combined with a Shakesperean quote: "A cock, a cock, my kingdom for a cock!" (LaBruce 36:49-36:53).

The film *Pierrot lunaire: Butch Dandy* is a combination of excerpts from the theatrical adaptation of Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* and newly shot scenes in a realistic setting (e.g., a nightclub setting). Schönberg's composition is accompanied by techno sounds underlaid with verbal explanations of the murderous story, faded in like explanatory remarks in a silent film. Aesthetically, LaBruce's film refers to silent film, black-and-white film, surrealism and video clips, aesthetic means familiar from the 1988 *Pierrot lunaire* film version by Eric de Kuyper and the 1999 film version by Oliver Herrmann (*Eine Nacht. Ein Leben* / *A Night. A Life*; with Pierre Boulez and Christine Schäfer). What is actually new in LaBruce's film adaptation, however, is the realistic way in which his Pierrot story is brought into the picture and the crossing of the line between eroticism or erotic obsession and pornography.

From a musicological perspective, two considerations were initially of interest: firstly, how LaBruce adapted Schönberg's relatively complex work for the film, and secondly, how this film fits into the previous history of Pierrot's reception. The following observations are based on the film itself and on LaBruce's own statements and interviews.

Pierrot is portrayed by LaBruce as a murderer who is driven to commit this crime by discrimination in a working-class environment. A key role is played by Columbine's father, who is described as conservative and as a "fat capitalist pig father" (LaBruce 12:13-12:16). According to LaBruce's statements

in an interview with Philipp Schmidt, these focal points of the film are a direct reference to Schönberg, who wanted to make theater "for the masses" (Schmidt 7:24-7:28). Pierrot's violent and spectacular behavior was chosen by Schönberg for the same reason, and in La Bruce's opinion, Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* is a harbinger of the future "slasher genre" (Schmidt 8:06-8:11). Some doubt might arise as to whether a profound reception has taken place here. It seems quite audacious to make Schönberg the father of the slasher genre, as we had already encountered a kind of horror cabinet of the human imagination in nineteenth-century literature (e.g., *Pierrot Sceptique* and *Pierrot assassin*).

In the course of the conversation, Philipp Schmidt points out that Schönberg's music was a kind of "high class," "elite music" (Schmidt 9:11-9:19) that was only comprehensible to an educated audience. In the interviewer's opinion there is a strong contrast between the filmic subject and Schönberg's underlying music, which is "not really popular music" (Schmidt 9:21-9:23). LaBruce contradicts this and replies that Schönberg's music was popular in his time, stating as proof that Schönberg used popular elements such as "certain waltzes of the time" (Schmidt 9:44-9:47). Presumably in response to Philipp Schmidt's questioning looks, he repeats his thesis that Schönberg wanted to create "a very popular kind of theatrical form" (Schmidt 9:54) with *Pierrot lunaire*. The interviewer gives up trying to convince LaBruce and simply asks whether it was the popular aesthetic of Schönberg's music that inspired LaBruce to integrate club music into the film. LaBruce confirms this vividly, referring to a musicologist who had advised him and who had pointed out the parallel between "Berlin techno and Schönberg's music at the time" (Schmidt 10:30-10:37). (Note: The name of the musicologist is not revealed in the interview.) To add a touch of humor: Perhaps one day we can expect a presentation on relations between Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* and Berlin techno music at a Schönberg conference. In addition, the question arises as to whether Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* is already too subtle and multilayered both on a textual level and in regard to the music to be useful as "background music" (Schmidt 2:46-2:49) for a straightforward story like that told in LaBruce's film.

As the above historical outline of the history of Pierrot has shown, neither the demonization of Pierrot nor the placement of his character in a working-class milieu or a society shaped by capitalism is new. Staged Pierrot performances and adaptations for film have a long history, with directors or choreographers interweaving contemporary or political themes with Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire*. Cultural boundaries are not always crossed, as in the Jikken Kōbō performance, but genres are often (more or less) fruitfully intermingled.

Examples include Reinhild Hoffmann's ballet version (Steirischer Herbst 1983) and the performance choreographed by Marlene Monteiro Freitas (Wiener Festwochen 2021). The numerous and successful Japanese *Pierrot lunaire* performances also prove that staged versions do have an appeal for audiences. Nevertheless, there is a small "but" to this statement: Schönberg's music is practically always pushed into the background by the actions onstage, and if the audience is not presented with specific intellectual challenges, as is the case in the Jikken Kōbō performance, for example, staged performances can have the taint of a mere "prettification" of music that is still demanding today. For this brief outline of the reception history of Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, the following applies in any case: to be continued.

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ANALYSING SCHOENBERG'S *PIANO PIECES* OP. 19: HISTORY AND METHODOLOGY

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SUMMARY. Schoenberg's Op. 19 has become a classic in musical analysis. There are hardly any analytical approaches to twentieth-century music that have not been demonstrated using this cycle. Consequently, the body of research on Op. 19 also provides a good overview of analytical methods that were developed for, or have at least been applied to, atonal music.

Keywords: Schoenberg, *Six Little Piano Pieces* op. 19, musical analysis

Introduction

Musical analysis aims to qualitative describe the structure and effects of musical pieces. At the same time, every analysis—whether intentionally or not—serves a second purpose: demonstrating the effectiveness and power of the chosen analytical method. With *established* methodological approaches tested on new pieces, this second purpose is often easily overlooked. Nevertheless, this aspect of "proof by example" is most relevant for *new and unconventional* methodological approaches.

Viewed in this way, Arnold Schoenberg's *Six Little Piano Pieces*, Op. 19, are ideal objects for analysis. On one hand, they hold an important position in the history of composition: they were written after Schoenberg had left tonality behind; the composer wrote the first five on 19 February 1911. They ideally represent the aspect of compression: it is music of the moment, born from the moment, and present as a sonic event for only an instant. Their brevity is also convenient in analysis; the pieces are easy to survey and rarely occupy more than a single page of notation. For these reasons, we say that Schoenberg's Op. 19 has become a classic in musical analysis.

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In the following, I will present various approaches using specific examples, primarily from the second piano piece of the cycle (including some remarks on No. 1).

Methodological approaches 1: Obscuring tonal functions (Leichtentritt)

An analysis from 1933 documents the early strategy of relating Schoenberg's atonal music to tonal structures. Hugo Leichtentritt was a contemporary of Schoenberg, born in the same year, 1874, and passing away in 1951, just a few months after Schoenberg. Leichtentritt had close ties to the United States: he attended high school there and studied alternately in Berlin and at Harvard University, where he later held a professorship after emigrating from Germany. Leichtentritt wrote essays in both English and German. Before his article on Arnold Schoenberg's Opus 19 appeared in the year of his emigration, he had already published on the same topic in 1928 in the American journal *Modern Music*.[2] His 1933 analysis serves as the starting point for the following reflections and observations—a starting point to which I will repeatedly return, as Leichentritt's text already contains, in embryonic form, many aspects that later analyses would bring to light.

Like Schoenberg himself, Leichtentritt opposed the concept of atonality. He argued that the "supposed atonality can very well still be understood from the boundaries of tonality", and by tonality, he meant not only major-minor tonality but also pentatonic scales, whole-tone scales, the ancient modes, exotic tonal systems, and so forth. In terms of a broadly understood concept of tonality, Schoenberg's music, too, would be tonal. The task, he suggested, was to recognise the "firm order of sound material", which is "absolutely indispensable" to any musical artwork, and to "explore the laws of the new tonality".[3]

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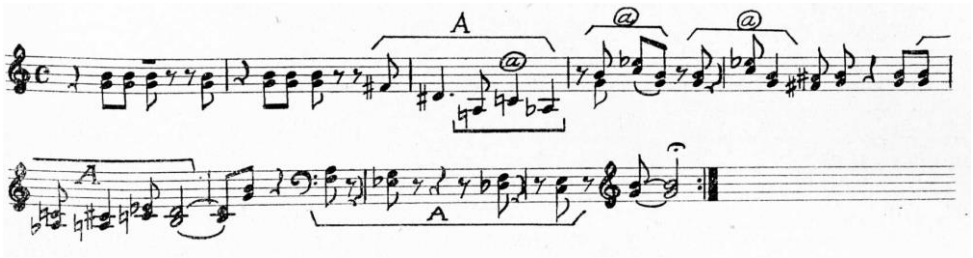
[2] Hugo Leichtentritt: Schönberg and tonality, in *Modern Music* 5/4 (1928), 3–10; idem, Arnold Schönbergs Op. 19, in *Die Musik* 25 (1933), 405–413.

[3] "Insbesondere ist es mir um Klärung des reichlich vagen Begriffs der sogenannten Atonalität zu tun und um den anschaulichen Nachweis, daß die vermeintliche Atonalität dieser Stücke aus Schönbergs mittlerer Schaffenszeit sich sehr wohl noch von den Grenzen der Tonalität her begreifen lasse. Tonalität ist dabei natürlich im weitesten Sinne zu verstehen […]. Je mehr das Ohr, das Auge, die Kombinationsgabe sich schärfen im Verständnis der verwickelten, so seltsam erscheinenden modernen harmonischen Gebilde, desto wahrscheinlicher wird die Annahme, daß eine wirkliche Atonalität keinen Platz hat im musikalischen Kunstwerk, dem eine feste Ordnung des Klangmaterials völlig unentbehrlich ist. […] Man würde am besten daran tun, das mißverständliche, schädliche und überflüssige Schlagwort ‚Atonalität' überhaupt abzuschaffen. Viel gewinnbringender wäre es, die Gesetze der neuen Tonalität zu ergründen, die zweifellos einen großen Teil der neuen Musik beherrscht." Leichtentritt 1933, 405–406.

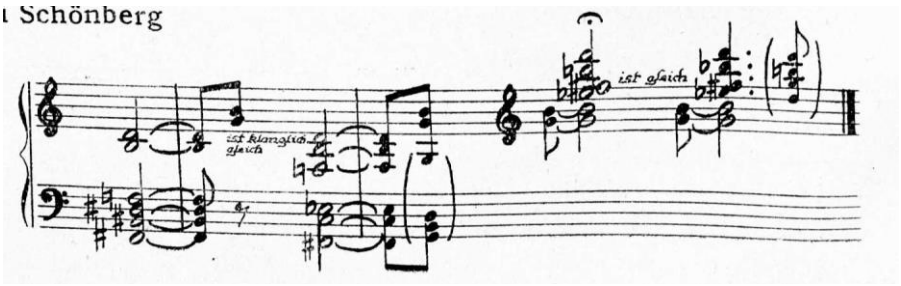
Leichentritt identifies unique rules governing each piece of the cycle; for the second piece, he provides a simplified summary in a musical example (Example 1) and interprets the composition as a juxtaposition of an ostinato voice in thirds with a melody. In his view, the piece is based on a G tonality; he traces its tonal material back to a G major scale, in which the second degree (A/A♭) and the sixth degree (E/E♭) are doubly represented. Additionally, he notes "chromatic passing tones and neighbour notes, as frequently seen in Chopin, Schumann, and Wagner".[4] A third element consists of three "peculiar chord formations" that appear at certain points alongside the melodic voice; Leichtentritt calls these "dissonant counter-voices", explaining them as auxiliary-note chords that Schoenberg left unresolved (Example 2).[5]

E.g. 1



Leichentritt 1933, 408

E.g. 2



Leichentritt 1933, 408

[4] "[…] eine G-Tonalität […] mit etlichen chromatischen Durchgangstönen und Wechselnoten, wie sie schon bei Chopin, Schumann, Wagner oft vorkommen […]." Leichentritt 1933, 408.

[5] "Akkorde typisch Schönbergscher Prägung (…) als dissonierende Gegenstimmen. (…) Das folgende Notenbeispiel [see Example 2] zeigt die seltsamen Akkordgebilde in Takt 6 und 9 zu ganz legitimer tonaler Wirkung gebracht durch enharmonische Verwechslung und die bei Schönberg fehlenden, hier in Klammern hinzugefügten Auflösungen nach dem G-dur-Akkord." Ibid.

What Leichtentritt calls “neighbour note formations” (“Wechselnotengebilde”) are, in fact, dominant chords, even though he does not state this explicitly. In his *Studies on Harmony and Sound Techniques in Modern Music*, published in 1927, Hermann Erpf took a similar yet more advanced approach. As a student of Hugo Riemann, he analysed the chords functionally. In measure 3 with an upbeat (A in Example 1), he saw a “melodic figuration of the chord A–C–E♭–F♯, or A♭–C–E♭–F♯”, suggesting a dominant orientation toward C major/minor or G major. “The tone A is a neighbour note to A♭, while F♯ and A♭ are leading tones to G.”[6]

Erpf is fully aware that Schoenberg’s piano piece is not set in a key; it does not “intentionally establish functional key relationships in the way a classical piece would. However, it is inconceivable without the underlying fact of functional relationships. By attempting to evade this relationship in a particular way, it acknowledges it as a given and ultimately appears dependent on it: this represents a case of tonal obscuring” (“Tonartsverschleierung”).[7]

Reading this text nearly a hundred years after it was written evokes a sense of unease. Today, most theorists would hesitate to interpret the piano pieces Opus 19 in a tonal sense and to hear a kind of tonic in G or C in the second piece, as Leichtentritt and Erpf suggest. Nevertheless, some authors take up the thread laid by the two. Wolfgang Grandjean, for instance, wrote in 1977 of a G major area, particularly where the cantabile melody begins and ends with same third B–D (measures 2 and 6, see Example 3). Together with the ostinato third, this results in a G major triad. Although Grandjean does not adhere to a tonal interpretation of the complete piece, he finds a “harmonically tonal interpretation […] not so far-fetched”, considering “the tonal listening habits of the European listener as a standard, which he has internalised and from which it is difficult for him to free himself”.[8]

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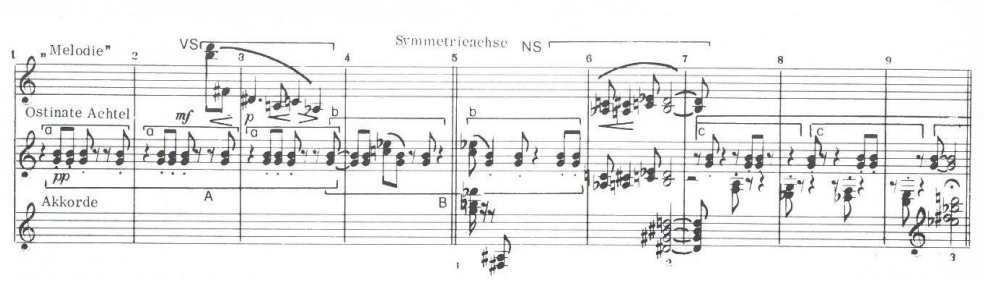
[6] “Der Ton a ist Wechselnote zu as, fis und as sind Leittöne zu g.” Hermann Erpf, *Studien zur Harmonie- und Klangtechnik der neueren Musik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel 1927), 187.

[7] Klavierstück Op. 19, no. 2 “bringt den funktionellen Tonartszusammenhang nicht mit Absicht zur Darstellung, wie das bei einem klassischen Stück der Fall ist. Es ist aber nicht denkbar ohne die Tatsache, die Gegebenheit funktioneller Beziehung. Indem es dieser in einer bestimmten Weise auszuweichen versucht, erkennt es sie als Gegebenheit an und erscheint in einem letzten Sinn davon abhängig: es liegt hier der Typus der Tonartsverschleierung vor.” Erpf 1927, 187.

[8] Grandjean, Wolfgang: Form in Schoenberg’s Op. 19, no. 2, in *Zeitschrift für Musiktheorie* 8/1 (1977), 15–18, at p. 18: “Nimmt man die tonalen Hörgewohnheiten des europäischen Hörers zum Maßstab, die er verinnerlicht hat und von denen er sich nur schwer freimachen kann, dann ist die harmonisch-tonale Interpretation wohl gar nicht so abwegig.”

E.g. 3



Grandjean 1977, 17

Kenneth Hicken, who understands Schoenberg's atonal music in Opus 19 in a similar manner, speaks in 1986 of a "frequent obscuration or veiling of traditional tonal functions".[9]

Methodological approaches 2: Structural formalism (Allen Forte)

Highlighting tonal connections has fallen out of fashion today, if one surveys the entire panorama of analyses of Op. 19. One pioneer of a perspective that views the pitch material of atonal music as a neutral set of pitches free from all tonal ties was the American music theorist Allen Forte. In an early analysis, published before the establishment of his classical pitch-class set theory, Forte engaged with Schoenberg's Op. 19.[10] In this analysis, he develops a system of various pitch sets that he identifies within the pieces. The pitch sets bear specific labels, giving the system a scientific surface; in contrast to "traditional parlance", Forte prefers a "numerical language".[11] However, he does not explain why the system looks exactly as he has designed it, and why the musical shapes differentiate themselves in this specific manner from others.

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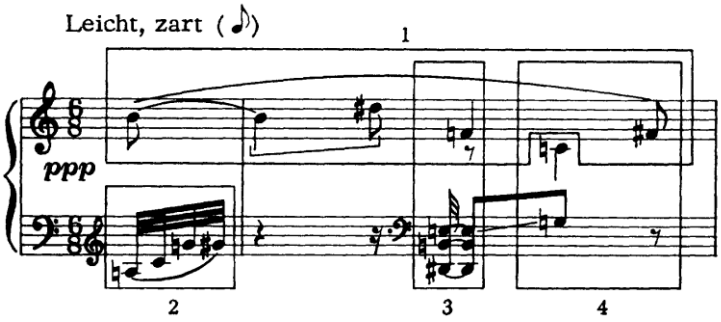
9 Hicken, Kenneth L.: Aspects of Schoenberg's music in the evolution of harmony suggested by the harmonic organisation of Op. 19, in *Die Wiener Schule in der Musikgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Lafite, 1986), 99–107, on p. 99.

10 Forte, Allen: Context and continuity in an atonal work: A set-theoretic approach, in *Perspectives of new music* 1/2 (1963), 72–82. See also Forte, Allen: *The structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

11 Forte 1963, 73.

E.g. 4



Forte 1963, ex. 5, p. 78.

Forte dissects the beginning of the first piano piece into four "compositional sets", which include the melody and three accompanying chords. However, it remains unclear why the last two chords each encompass a tone from the melodic voice while the first chord does not. It is noteworthy that Forte establishes few connections between the sets themselves and their sequence; his focus lies primarily on linking the shapes to the system he developed in advance. If one does not take the effort to understand Forte's statements using his labels, but instead expresses them in generally comprehensible music-theoretical language, the observations concerning the piece or the entire cycle can be summarised quickly: the whole-tone scale plays an important role in this style (Ex. 4, set 1, tone 1–3); the melodic half-step (set 1, tone 3–4) appears prominently in similar pairs two more times in the first piece; and the chord structure is often symmetrical in relation to central tones or intervals.[12]

The pitch-class set theory clearly opposes a tonal interpretation. Nevertheless, the examples from Leichtentritt and Forte show significant similarities:

1. Both focus solely on the pitch content, concentrating only on the pitch classes.
2. They disregard the rhythmic context.
3. They ignore the placement of pitches in the tonal space, meaning the registers in which the notes appear and the intervals in which they relate to their neighbours.

[12] Talking about symmetry, Forte refers to G and B as the interval of reference. In compositional set 2, G# and C are each a semitone away from G and B, while A lies exactly in between. Thus, Forte addresses the relationship between the pitch classes rather than the specific distribution of tones in pitch space.

In a sense, Leichtentritt also works with pitch-class sets. By deriving the elements as neighbour notes from the triadic tones of the tonic, he proceeds similarly to Forte, who chooses G and B as the intervallic reference points for the entire cycle, relating the remaining elements of each set to these two tones. The central difference lies in the fact that Forte's sets are self-contained and do not carry tendencies or driving forces within them, while Leichtentritt, through the traditional designation of neighbour note ("Wechselnote") and the resolution chord indicated in parentheses, establishes a connection to the tonic. Even though this chord does not sound, Leichtentritt implies that the composer deliberately avoided such a resolution, while in listening, one would expect or at least imply the resolution.

Hearing tonal relations

Today, we have long moved away from the notion that there is a "correct" way to listen to or interpret a piece. What would our standard be for answering such a question? If Leichtentritt, as a benevolent and open-minded contemporary of Schoenberg, proposes a tonal interpretation, it is a legitimate standpoint. In his *Harmonielehre* of 1911, Schoenberg introduced new chord forms immediately following tonal chords without clearly marking a boundary. He likely saw nothing fundamentally different in this, but rather something potentially more complex. However, he explicitly denied that dissonances necessarily strive for resolution. He understood dissonances, famously, as overtones that lie farther from the fundamental tone. Thus, for him, the aspect of timbre—modulated through the addition of dissonances—takes much greater importance than the dynamics or driving forces of intervals that push in a particular direction in tonal music.

As mentioned, Hugo Leichtentritt distinguished in Op. 19, no. 2 between the melody, the ostinato voice in thirds, and the dissonant counter-voices, which appear, he argues, at three points as "strange chord formations" that join the melody.[13] Hermann Erpf's explanation in 1927 is much closer to Schoenberg's conception. For him, the chords are not counter-voices but rather ways of shaping timbre. The tones that join the third interval, which belongs to a different compositional layer, give the chord a certain sharpness and timbral coloration", which he thus calls a "clang sound" ("Klirrklang") in the sense of natural sounds with an irregular overtone

[13] Leichtentritt 1933, 408. Grandjean (1977, 16) vividly speaks of "thickenings" ("Verdickungen") in the texture.

series.[14] These are sonic additions that alter and shape timbre, but they do not stand alongside each other as chord chains, as say with Debussy or Strauss; instead, they embellish a single tone or sonority. It goes without saying that for these sounds, which one might also call “single-tone mixtures”, the register and distribution of tones in the tonal space play a central role. This is not about pitch classes but about specific pitches, not about sets but about concrete chords. A single-tone mixture would not only be the two high chords in measures 5 and 9 but also the low sound in measure 6, which adds a dark colour to this melodic focal point (see Ex. 3).

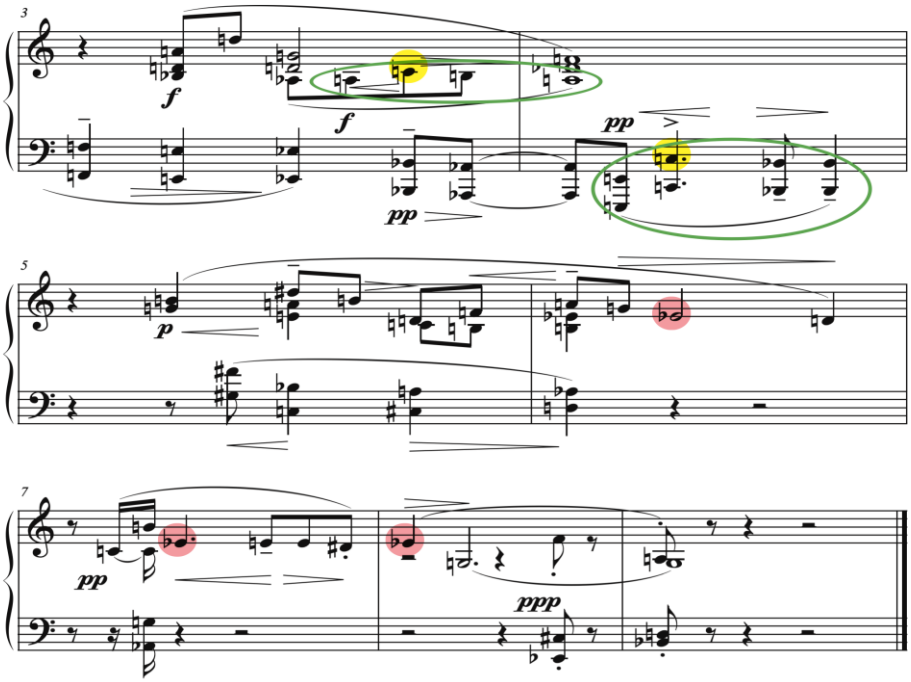
Methodological approaches 3: Prolongation and register

Let us return to the starting point, but shift the observations of Leichtentritt, Erpf, and Grandjean in another direction. Instead of asking whether Schoenberg incorporated tonal allusions into his atonal pieces, we should ask how he managed to avoid such allusions despite using material that looks like a tonal dominant. In measure 3 of the second piano piece (Ex. 1, motives A), the first four tones form a diminished seventh chord. In tonal music, we are accustomed to relating these melodic tones to one another, understanding them as a kind of chord arpeggiation. In a Schenkerian approach, we call this the prolongation of a chord; it presupposes that the individual tones remain present beyond their actual sound, and that we carry them in our memory. Here, we relate the A♭ to the A, so that the diminished seventh chord, through lowering (in Schoenberg’s notation), becomes an augmented sixth chord.

Schoenberg sometimes strikingly repeats certain tones in the same register, suggesting a kind of prolongation of tones and sounds. I am not referring to the ostinatos he uses in the second and sixth pieces, but rather to notable repetitions and connections in the third piece (Ex. 5). In measures 3–4, the last tones of the tenor are imitated in the bass. This marks the first interaction between the two sharply distinguished levels exposed at the beginning of this piece. A similar melodic gesture with an upbeat of a quaver leads in both cases to C. The repetition of the same pitch class serves as a strong tie, even though the intervals and rhythms are altered. A similar repetition of the same note can be found in measures 6–8, where the melody insists on E♭ over a relatively wide span of the piece.

[14] Additional tones add to the sound “eine bestimmte Schärfe und Lagenfärbung, ohne seine Zusammenhangsbedeutung zu beeinflussen; derartige Zusatztöne sind als ‚Klirrtöne‘ zu bezeichnen, der betreffende Klang wird durch sie zu einem ‚Klirrklang‘ im Sinn der Naturklänge mit unregelmäßiger Obertonreihe.” Erpf 1927, 188.

E.g. 5



Op. 19, no. 3, mm. 3–9 (music engraving: Wilhelm Spuller)

There are some analyses of the first piano piece from a Schenkerian perspective that describe a similar insistence on a particular pitch.[15] In the opening piece, for instance, a B♭ is insistently held in measures 3, 5, and 7, always in the same register (B♭1), always on the accented beat, and always played solo, thus occurring over the rests of all other voices.[16] It likely requires specific analytical perspectives for such surprising connections to come to light.

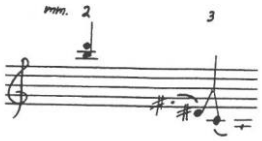
[15] Boge, Claire Louise: *The dyad as voice in Schoenberg's Opus 19: Pitch and interval prolongations, voice-leading, and relational systems*, PhD, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor 1985; Jonathan Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988), 170–183, chapter 7: "Analytic Interlude: Linearity and Non-Linearity in Schoenberg's Op. 19, no. 1 and Webern's Opus 29, First Movement;" Baker, James M.: Voice-leading in post-tonal music: Suggestions for extending Schenker's theory, in *Music analysis*, 9/2 (1990), 177–200.

[16] Baker 1990, 180.

Methodological approaches 4: Contextual reading

Thomas DeLio, in his analysis of Op. 19, no. 2, pursued a perspective that avoided systematic foundations such as tonality, chord prolongation, or pitch-class sets. Instead, he aimed to derive the form and language of this piece from the very nature of the music itself.[17] He explains the first melodic phrase purely in terms of interval relationships, without recourse to scales or chords (Example 6, compare Example 7). The phrase contrasts the ostinato major third G–B with a sequence of minor thirds: B–D sounding together in a high register, followed by thirds in a short-long rhythmic pattern (eighth note, quarter note), F♯–D♯ and A–C; the long notes D♯ and C, when combined and enharmonically altered, also yield a minor third.[18] Even though this contradicts his approach, DeLio seems to tacitly adopt certain historically conditioned premises: (1) the model of upbeat motivic formations (which Riemann established as the norm), although DeLio condensed short-long into a single unit, without considering other pairings that are theoretically conceivable as well; (2) the organizing power of meter, which DeLio simply does not address; (3) an idea of prolongation, relating one tone (C) to another, which has already been replaced in the melody by a different tone (D♯/E♭). When one claims to analyse without prerequisites, so to speak, and solely from the context, one should not tacitly assume prolongation, a core principle of tonal music.

E.g. 6



DeLio 1994, 23

Methodological approaches 5: Hermeneutic reading

Even here, Leichtentritt offers a good point of departure: he begins his analysis with the bold assertion that the second piece from Op. 19 is “a descendant of Chopin’s famous Raindrop Prelude. The third G–B, in the

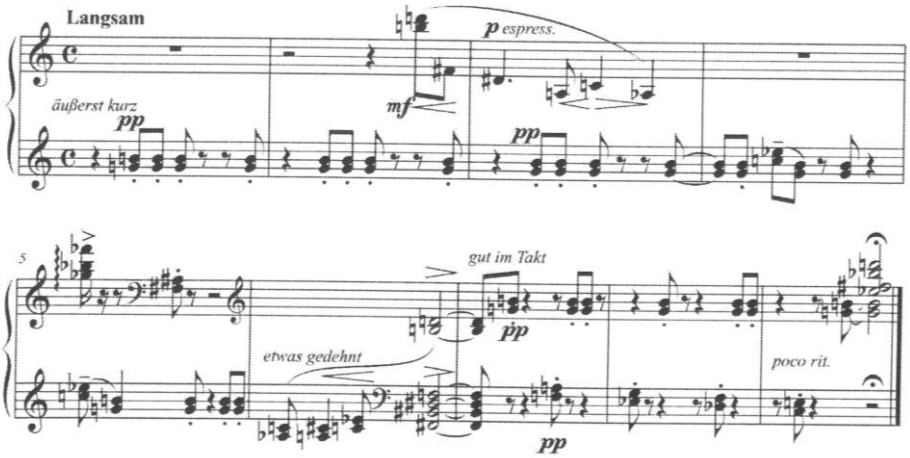
[17] DeLio, Thomas: Language and form in an early atonal composition: Schoenberg’s Op. 19, no. 2, in *Indiana theory review*, 15/2 (1994), 17–40; again in idem, *Analytical studies of the music of Ashley, Cage, Carter, Dallapiccola, Feldman, Lucier, Reich, Satie, Schoenberg, Wolff, and Xenakis: Essays in contemporary music* (Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2017).

[18] DeLio 1994, 23.

manner of an ostinato voice, gently but incessantly drips through the nine measures of the short piece."[19] The cheerfulness of the scenery is surprising, especially when considering that many people not familiar with this music associate it with the horror genre.

Hubert Moßburger, who selected this piece as an example of a contemporary hermeneutic analysis, also casts it in a positive light.[20] He outlines the process of reconciling opposing elements (Ex. 7). He describes the ostinato thirds as rigid, even unyieldingly dry, and at times phlegmatic, while the melody, in contrast, is soothing and even humble. After presenting these contrasting characters, he then describes a "process of mutual influence".[21]

E.g. 7



Moßburger 2014, 209, Abb. 2

The stepwise ascending melody in measure 6 is a turning point in the form of the piece. Grandjean (like Erpf in 1927) attributes this passage of the melody as the second part and symmetrical counterpart (see Example 3).

[19] "ein Abkömmling von Chopins berühmtem Regentropfen-Prélude. Die Terz G–B, nach Art einer ostinaten Stimme, tropft leise, aber unablässig durch die neun Takte des kleinen Stückes", Leichtentritt 1933, 408.

[20] Moßburger, Hubert: Hermeneutische Analyse: Arnold Schönberg: Klavierstück Op. 19 Nr. 2, in *Musikalische Analyse: Begriffe, Geschichten, Methoden (Grundlagen der Musik)* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2014), 185–217.

[21] Moßburger 2014, 208–209. Thomas DeLio (1994), incidentally, tells a similar story; however, in his account, the opposing characters are more abstract—namely, the major and minor third. This story also culminates in a synthesis, that is, a happy ending.

Moßburger follows this path when he argues that the melodic goal of the phrase, B–D, clearly belongs to the right hand and therefore the entire phrase should be understood as a melody. The pitch material and register, which relate to measures 3 and 5, support this view. However, Schoenberg wrote the first three elements of the phrase into the lower system; Moßburger interprets this as an illustration of the "fusion of both contrasting motives" and as a "preliminary endpoint of the development of both sides' rapprochement."[22]

Grandjean describes the piece exaggeratedly as a "song without words", and Moßburger interprets the contrasting elements as a conflict between a rigid, conservative society and an individual. Both are aware that overly concrete ideas can restrict the realm of our imagination as listeners. Regarding measure 6, Moßburger writes: "In the first phase (measures 1–3), the two parties appear to face each other as seemingly irreconcilably foreign. [...] However, since both parties in a well-functioning society must arrange themselves and move towards each other, a musical confrontation takes place in the second phase (measures 4–6), during which both the society becomes 'individualised' and the individual becomes 'socialised,' until there is a preliminary agreement in sound (the chord in measure 6)."[23] From Schoenberg's viewpoint, such an interpretation, condensed in a simple narrative, is undoubtedly not in line with his thinking.

Consequences and suggestions

Even though several other approaches—such as rhythmic analysis (even in the sense of serial composition), automated analysis, and numerical symbolic decoding, must remain unconsidered here—the analyses of Schoenberg's Op. 19 examined in this paper leave open questions that make further analytical engagement with these pieces seem worthwhile. In conclusion, I will summarise some areas that I believe merit further exploration.

Firstly, in the field of harmony: Schoenberg repeatedly invented wonderful chords. A systematic examination of their structure would be an attempt to distinguish types of chords and their different characters, based on the

[22] Moßburger 2014, 210.

[23] "In der ersten Phase (Takt 1–3) stehen sich die beiden Parteien als scheinbar unvereinbar fremd gegenüber […]. Da sich aber in einer gut funktionierenden Gesellschaft beide Parteien arrangieren, aufeinander zu gehen müssen, findet in der zweiten Phase (Takt 4–6) eine musikalische Auseinandersetzung statt, bei der sowohl die Gesellschaft 'individualisiert' als auch das Individuum 'sozialisiert' wird, bis es vorläufig zu einer klanglichen Einigung kommt (Akkord in Takt 6)." Moßburger 2014, 211.

position of the chord tones in the tonal space. Chords should not be understood merely as an abstract constellation of pitch classes, but rather as a specific distribution of tones within the tonal space. In his textbook on harmony, Schoenberg emphasises this point: "Even the spacing is obligatory; as soon as a tone is misplaced the meaning changes, the logic and utility is lost, coherence seems destroyed."[24]

A second field is the systematic investigation of motivic coherence, whether in the form of imitation, the adoption and continuation of a melodic shape, or a recurring return at a later point. Closely related are the aspects of variation, gesture, and heightening, which is a characteristic trait of Schoenberg's compositional style. To illustrate this kind of heightening, take again Op. 19, no. 2 where in measure 4, after the syncopated third, a new motif disrupts the sequence of pounding thirds: starting from and returning to the third G–B, the melody bursts upward (to C-Eb, see Example 7). It follows the gesture of the motif that concludes the cantabile melody in measure 3, though here the motion is more intense and faster. The motif from measure 3 has an echo in the following measure—albeit one that, in terms of register, articulation, and rhythm, sharpens the gesture. To highlight the similarity, Leichtentritt assigns both motifs the designation "a" (see Example 1). The next time, the motif is further intensified: in measure 5, the upbeat is omitted, the upper third is brightened with a kind of sonic crown, and the fall back to the lower third is reinforced by a deep sound.

Thirdly, one could systematically examine the structure of the phrases. I believe that Hugo Riemann's rhythmics and metrics would be a good starting point for studying the decidedly traditional phrasing in Schoenberg's work. We can consistently trace Riemann's model of a rhythmic motive, comprising in its simplest form just upbeat and downbeat, on different levels throughout the melodic lines in Op. 19 and thus explain the grouping of measures.

Fourthly, it is worthwhile to consider relinquishing the principle of continuity that often guides our formal analyses. If Schoenberg's step into atonality represented a liberation of the moment,[25] then we should not force the dreamlike, wild succession of individual moments into a unified progression with analytical logic. We should allow things to stand on their own; not everything needs to be explained.

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[24] Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 421. "Auch die Lage ist bindend; sowie ein Ton versetzt wird, wechselt die Bedeutung, hört die Logik und Brauchbarkeit auf, scheint der Zusammenhang zerrissen." Arnold Schönberg, *Harmonielehre* (1911), 3rd ed. (Vienna: Universal-Edition 1922), 505.

[25] See Martin Eybl, *Die Befreiung des Augenblicks: Schönbergs Skandalkonzerte von 1907 und 1908. Eine Dokumentation* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2004).

Finally, elements of ornamentation and performance practice could also pique our interest, such as neighbour-note motion, gestures of an appoggiatura, and the various ways of producing a chord: arpeggiation, tremolo, anticipation, etc. It is worth studying how Schoenberg manages to integrate these traditional elements into his advanced musical language. All of this can be found, for instance, in the first two measures of Op. 19, no. 1 (see Example 4) where we have the gesture of an appoggiatura and its resolution in tone 3 and 4 of the melody, followed by a semitone neighbour-note motion in measure 2 (not present in Example 4). The accompaniment in the left hand starts with an extra dry arpeggiation and continues with a more complex arpeggiation of a five-tone harmony, a part of it anticipated offbeat, and as a whole fading out soon. Although Schoenberg's musical language is radically avant-garde, it still carries on many traditional elements making it easier for listeners to follow.

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Grandjean, Wolfgang. „Form in Schoenberg's Op. 19, no. 2", in *Zeitschrift für Musiktheorie* 8/1 (1977), 15–18, at p. 18: "Nimmt man die tonalen Hörgewohnheiten des europäischen Hörers zum Maßstab, die er verinnerlicht hat und von denen er sich nur schwer freimachen kann, dann ist die harmonisch-tonale Interpretation wohl gar nicht so abwegig."

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"WHEN I COMPOSE, I TRY TO FORGET ALL THEORIES...". THOUGHTS ON PRESENTING ARNOLD SCHOENBERG'S TWELVE-TONE METHOD TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

EIKE FEß[1]

SUMMARY. This article describes the process of creating an exhibition and publication on Arnold Schönberg's twelve-tone method and discusses the challenges of presenting Schönberg's complex compositional techniques to a wide audience, balancing biographical information with musical analysis. The exhibition at the Arnold Schönberg Center featured a chronological narrative of the method's development, showcasing manuscripts, tools like Schönberg's twelve-tone discs, and multimedia content. The accompanying book aimed to be accessible to various readers, including a simplified introduction to the method, a historical overview, a glossary, Schönberg's lecture on the method, and a catalogue of 50 related objects. The author reflects on the difficulties of explaining complex musical concepts to diverse audiences, acknowledging the ongoing challenge of accessible music education.

Keywords: Arnold Schönberg, Twelve-tone method, Exhibition, Composition, Music history

Anniversaries are an excellent way of attracting attention to a topic. While 2024 was the year to celebrate Arnold Schönberg's 150th birthday, 2021 offered the opportunity to honor the 100th anniversary of the twelve-tone method. In July 1921, Schönberg composed a piece, in which a twelve-tone series is used for the first time as the foundation for all the tone constellations of an approximately one-minute composition. Schönberg's famous dictum that he had found something that would ensure the dominance of German music for the next 100 years dates from this period. In late 2019, the Arnold Schönberg Center, at that time under its director Angelika Möser, decided for an exhibition and a publication on the topic, to be realized by the

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author of this article. Aiming for the opening in March 2021, I had to start work on the accompanying publication immediately and began writing a kind of Schönberg biography along the lines of the twelve-tone method. Although the twelve-tone method may well be considered a focal point in Schönberg's development, this broad approach lacked a clear frame of reference. While parts of the evolution of dodecaphony can be told along a continuous storyline that shows correlations between live events, ideology and music, in later times, compositional practice and personal history become more and more independent. Writing about music in connection with biography developed more and more towards writing a biography with special attention to selected musical works. Besides questions of meaningfulness, this task was far too big to fulfil in the time available. The project might have ended in disaster.

In March 2020, the first Austrian lockdown due to the pandemic occurred, followed by two more. It was to be feared that a comprehensive publication, including the complex requirements of an exhibition, would hardly be feasible this year – even the opening of the show in 2021 seemed uncertain. At the Arnold Schönberg Center, the decision was therefore made to postpone the entire project until 2023. In addition to the considerably longer planning time, there were also substantive reasons for this date. While 2021 was celebrated in some social media posts, concerts and scholarly projects as the year of the twelve-tone method, this dating is legitimate as well problematic. From a compositional point of view, the piece created in Traunkirchen is a twelve-tone composition with a limited number of row variants. At the time, Schönberg explicitly saw it as an "attempt at a formal principle for composing with twelve tones" and emphasized its experimental nature.[2] It was only after an experimental period of almost two years that the twelve-tone method was finally formulated in a valid compositional way in the Wind Quintet, op. 26, with the use of all eleven possible transpositions of the basic form. Although the further development of the method did not come to a standstill afterwards, the foundations for a viable system for the future were laid in 1923. In this respect, the year of publication, as well as the opening date of the exhibition in 2023, was already a statement, one aspect of the message.

April saw the publication of the book *Arnold Schönberg and Composition with Twelve Tones* (Vienna 2023) as well as the opening of the exhibition *Composition with Twelve Tones. Schönberg's Reorganization of Music* (March

[2] Eybl, Martin: "Frühe Dokumente zur Entstehung der Zwölftonkomposition aus dem Nachlass Alban Bergs: philologische Beobachtungen." (*Early documents on the genesis of the twelve-tone composition from Alban Berg's estate: philological observations*) In *Arbeit an Musik: Reinhard Kapp zum 70. Geburtstag* (2017) (*Working on music: Reinhard Kapp on his 70th birthday*), pp. 239–267, here p. 253 The composer was aware of the significance of his discovery but had no idea what systematic consequences it would have.

15 – December 29, 2023). The aim of both was, on the one hand, to show that the twelve-tone method was not a spontaneous invention, but a lengthy development in which numerous factors, biographical, aesthetical, ideological, as well as genuinely music-related, came together; on the other hand, to show the many possibilities that Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method offers beyond the prejudice of celebreality. And finally, not to overestimate the relevance of the method, to relegate its significance to the sidelines, true to the spirit of its inventor, who simply regarded it “as a tool of composition.”[3]

Figure 1

Arnold Schönberg Center, exhibition space.
Photograph © Hertha Hurnaus

The exhibition space of the Arnold Schönberg Center is centered around a table that takes up almost the whole room and on which there are boxes of three different sizes that can be filled in different ways. The idea of the architect Jochen Koppensteiner was to create a situation comparable to visiting an archive. As with an archive table, visitors should be able to get close to the objects, and also sit if they wish, while an accompanying brochure provides detailed information. Four stations are fixed by permanently installed iPads, on which multimedia content can be shown that usually corresponds to the objects.

[3] Schönberg, Arnold: “Schoenberg’s Tone-Rows.” In: *Style and Idea*, ed. by Leonard Stein. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1984, pp. 213–214, here p. 213.

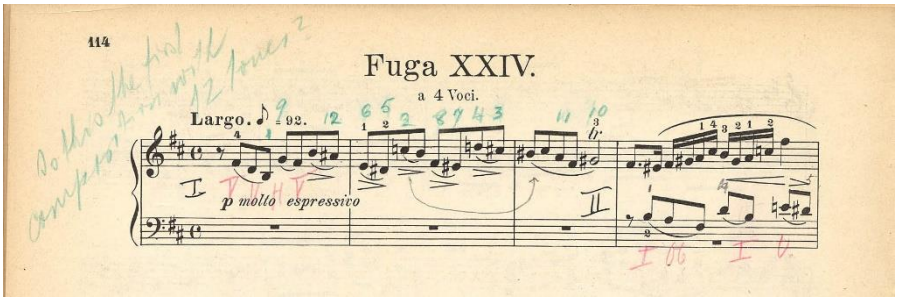
The drawings on the wall are self-portraits that chronologically accompany the development of the twelve-tone method. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the colorful drawings in the middle were done in 1922, a rather challenging period in the development of the method.

Figure 2

Selfportraits CR28, 29, 27. Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien.
Photograph © Hertha Hurnaus (excerpt)

The table situation with two opposite sides suggests a division of the exhibition into two parts. Taking this into account, the first part unfolded as a linear narrative of the genesis of Schönberg's twelve-tone method up to 1923, while the second part presented selected twelve-tone works chronologically, but in a selection that was more in the manner of an anthology. The narrative of the first part is based on Schönberg's own idea of the emergence of the twelve-tone method in the sense of an organic development from the gradual expansion of major/minor tonality via free atonality to the search for a new order of the chromatic scale. In parallel, Schönberg's idea of the supremacy of German music was the common thread running through the selection of objects and their presentation. In support of both approaches, the very first object, however, departed from the chronological narrative: Schönberg's copy of Johann Sebastian Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, opened at the last fugue from Part 1 with entries by Schönberg dating back to 1950.

Figure 3



Johann Sebastian Bach: The Well-Tempered Clavier Book 1. Fugue No. 24 in B minor, BWV 869. Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien (Book B21)

“Is this the first composition with 12 tones?” is written in green crayon at the top left. At first. the answer is a simple “no”; the major/minor tonal structure of the piece clearly identifies the chromaticism as harmonic tension, which adds more or less by chance to the twelve-tone total. What is much more interesting is why Schönberg poses this question to a work by Johann Sebastian Bach of all composers. Because after all, twelve-tone constellations can easily be found in Mozart, Liszt, Richard Strauss and probably also Gesualdo. Besides purely musical aspects, the reason lies probably in Bach being considered since his early biographer Johann Nikolaus Forkel in 1802 as “the very first of all German and foreign composers”,[4] being such substantial for a forthcoming idea of dominance of German music. While walking along the right-hand side of the table, visitors repeatedly encountered fragments of an explanation: newspaper clippings and notes from wartime that reveal Schönberg’s cultural German nationalism;[5] a letter to Alma Mahler from July 1921 that contains the famous quote about dominance of German music, but also reflects on his situation as a Jew, threatened by aggressive anti-Semitism;[6] finally, the Suite for Piano op. 25, which makes references to Bach’s piano works with movement titles such as Gavotte, Musette or Gigue, and realizes their structural properties by means of the new compositional method; and the Wind Quintet op. 26, which implicitly transfers Ludwig van Beethoven’s compositional practice, an archetype of the German musical tradition in the 19th century, into the modern age.

[4] Forkel, Johann Nikolaus. *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke*, Hoffmeister & Kühnel, Leipzig 1802, p. vii.

[5] Schönberg, Arnold. Meine Kriegspsychose und die der anderen (1914) (ASSV 5.3.5.1.)

[6] Arnold Schönberg to Alma Mahler, 26 July 1921 (https://repo.schoenberg.at/urn:nbn:at:at-asc-B060799).

Figure 4

Twelve-Tonde Discs (Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [MS26])

For this piece, in addition to an early manuscript, a small tool was shown which is both appealing to look at and instructive in understanding how dodecaphony works. It is a set of discs, handmade by Schönberg, labelled with the notes of the chromatic scale and numbers indicating the position of the respective note within the twelve-tone row. By turning the middle disc, the order numbers are shifted in relation to the pitches: A transposition is made in this way. In the quintet, these different transpositions ultimately serve to replace the formal function of the key change, i.e. the tonic/dominant tension that characterizes the sonata movement.

In the course of this story, quite demanding musical concepts are discussed. The Arnold Schönberg Center has a wide range of visitors, most of whom are culturally educated but lack more in-depth musical knowledge. Efforts have been undertaken to make aspects of composition visually comprehensible through animated scores. Two rather simple videos, for example, were related to the prehistory of the twelve-tone method, namely Liszt's Faust Symphony and Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony, op. 9. In the opening theme of the Faust Symphony, all twelve tones of the chromatic scale come together in a very small space, as they do in the Bach example. The example from the *Chamber Symphony* op. 9 refers to the famous chords of fourths, which characterize

the work. It's a common fact that the layering of fourths automatically touches on all twelve tones of the chromatic scale.[7]

The aim here was not to assert early precursors to the twelve-tone method in these works, but to show that twelve-tone constellations already existed in music for various reasons – in other words that the idea of full chromaticism was already present. Such phenomena probably played little role in the development of the method. More important for Schönberg in particular was the exploration of contrapuntal compositional techniques, canons and the intellectual examination of these aspects at the time the twelve-tone method was created – and, of course, the study of Johann Sebastian Bach's œuvre. How the formal characteristics of a stylized Baroque dance can be rethought with a contemporary compositional technique beyond tonality is shown particularly clearly in the Musette from the English Suite No. 6. The uninterrupted repetition of the tonic, which is characteristic of this dance form, cannot be realized in the twelve-tone method due to the lack of a tonic reference. Schönberg therefore decides to use the 3rd note of the original form of the row g as the root note and let it wander through the voices like an unsteady organ point.[8]

The second part of the exhibition was eclectic in nature and was intended to demonstrate the variety of genres with which Schönberg dealt in the context of twelve-tone composition and the consequences that the method had for the traditional forms. The visual effect was not least at the forefront of the choice of objects. The decision to show Schönberg's self-made twelve-tone dice was ambivalent. While they are surprising and attractive as an object, they all too easily give the impression that twelve-tone rows are designed at random. However, the experimental nature of such objects becomes apparent in the context of various equally self-made booklets in which the consequences of different combinations of chromatic scales are explored. In this way, the right context may even dispel some myths. The same is true for an object that can easily mislead the educated observer in particular. It belongs to Schönberg's late, tonal Variations on a Recitative for Organ, op. 40. Anyone who is a little familiar with twelve-tone method will initially identify this sheet as a kind of row table without knowing the context. In fact, it is a sketch for Variation No. 8, which shows how Schönberg's tonal thinking changed under the premises of the twelve-tone method - namely with regard to a new system for exploring tonal possibilities.[9]

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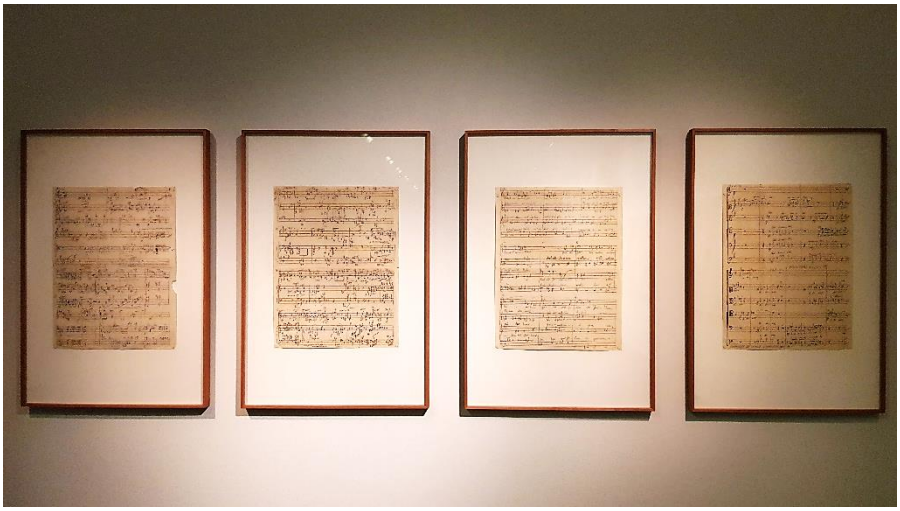
[7] Full video: https://youtu.be/yfeTC34IzS0?si=K7hIiMYwEoi6bgQk (accessed 10.01.2025); many examples are part of the online exhibition, which is still available on the website of the Arnold Schönberg Center (https://www.schoenberg.at/index.php/en/composition-with-12tones-online, accessed 10.01.2025).

[8] Full video: https://youtu.be/Ss2wcpNCEPs?si=GlWvuCqqXD9ruj5U (accessed 10.01.2025).

[9] Forr illustrations see Feß, Eike. *Arnold Schönberg and Composition with Twelve Tones*, edition text + kritik, Wien, 2023, pp. 172f., 190f.

Figure 5



Autograph Scores of Phantasy op. 47, String Trio op. 45, Dreimal tausend Jahre op. 50A, Psalm 130 op. 50B (Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien)

Visitors were almost magically drawn to Schönberg's late scores, not least from a visual point of view. Due to a nervous eye condition, the composer had to resort to large-format paper from around 1944 onwards, which significantly altered his writing. These sheets had to be mounted on the wall like pictures, as they did not fit into the boxes due to their format. The corresponding works, such as the String Trio or the late Psalms op. 50, could hardly be neglected within the exhibition. Due to the way they were hung, these musical notations had an unexpected effect that was more akin to graphics than musical scores.

As far as the accompanying videos for this part of the exhibition are concerned, an attempt was made to make different compositional processes in the twelve-tone method visually tangible. While the numbers from one to twelve were occasionally used in the first part, this approach now seemed pointless in view of the complex compositional constellations: Nobody actually hears the progression of the row in a twelve-tone work. What can perhaps still be perceived, however, is the alternation between row derivations, the disposition of which fulfills an essential structural function in the works. Colors were used to illustrate the distribution of the rows in the musical space and thus perhaps also demonstrate how versatile Schönberg's approach actually was. In the fourth piece from Four Pieces for Mixed Choir op. 274,

the row derivations used are first introduced in an instrumental prelude. This gives the listener an introduction to the sound world, which is exposed by the choir in the following bars. This alternation of row forms can hardly be followed in passages from Moses and Aron. The visualization using colors here makes it clear how flexibly Schönberg arranged different row derivations in order to achieve the desired tonal result. At the beginning of the Dance around the Golden Calf, this even results in a melody and accompaniment that oscillate between pentatonic and church modes.[10]

The book accompanying the exhibition[11] was conceived less as a catalogue than as a guide to the twelve-tone method for different audiences. It starts with an introduction to the basic technical characteristics of the method, condensed into three pages. It had to be accepted that the musical examples alone might put off some potential readers who are more interested in cultural history. The systematic labeling with colored numbers, which not only indicates the position of the respective notes within the row, but also visually demonstrates the principle of working with different row derivations, was intended to compensate for this. In contrast to the often-common designation of note heads with numbers, the graphically uniform distribution corresponding to different parts can at least convey an idea of the musical structure.

The historical chapter tells the story of the genesis of the twelve-tone method, analogous to the exhibition, with a focus on the following aspects: Expansion of chromaticism, the search for organizing criteria for the free atonal space and Schönberg’s identification with the German musical tradition. In discussions with colleagues, there was justified criticism of the overly linear presentation, a kind of teleology in Schönberg’s sense. This includes the suggestive presentation of rather random twelve-tone constellations at the beginning of the last movement of the 2nd String Quartet op. 10 or the adoption of arguments that originate from Schönberg himself or his circle, for example the three-tone motif from the Passacaglia in Pierrot lunaire op. 21, as an early form of composition with a basic shape, the Grundgestalt. Purely academic work would undoubtedly have required more differentiation and critical scrutiny here. However, it should not be forgotten that this is a kind of reader for the purpose of conveying Schönberg’s music. The reason why Schönberg’s pupil Erwin Stein used the Pierrot example in his well-known essay “New formal principles”, published in 1924 in *Musikblätter des Anbruch*,[12] is of course due to the fact that it is catchy and plausible.

[10] Full videos: https://youtu.be/blFeNe4AXp4?si=mLlkwFjt3lEdXKFk (op. 27/4); https://youtu.be/7hi73pnaDFk (Moses and Aron) (accessed 10.01.2025).
[11] Feß: *Arnold Schönberg and Composition with Twelve Tones*, see fn. 8.
[12] Stein, Erwin. “Neue Formprinzipien.” (*New Formal Priniples*) In *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 6/7–8 (08.1924), pp. 286–303.

The idea for the glossary grew out of the author's own wishes in the early days of research on the twelve-tone method. In the English-speaking world, Ethan Haimo's *Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey*[13] provides a valuable introduction to technical issues, even for beginners, and was an indispensable source for this book. However, in German, there are many detailed observations from a scholarly perspective, but introductions often only touch the surface of compositional procedures. An accessible explanation of basic terms such as Grundgestalt, Complementarity or the twelve-tone matrix, as well as a concise overview of basic compositional practices seemed to be a desideratum. It goes without saying that a process such as isomorphic partitioning can hardly be adequately presented to a lay audience. This chapter is therefore expressly aimed at students or scholars.

In order to give Schönberg himself a chance to speak, his first comprehensive lecture on the twelve-tone method, held in Princeton in 1934, has been reproduced in full. This is an early version of the much better-known, later text from the collection *Style and Idea*.[14] In this version, Schönberg is closer to compositional practice and largely dispenses with a philosophical-aesthetic classification of his method. The text is characterized by an immediacy that the later version lacks. Schönberg, who had emigrated to the USA in 1933, initially formulated the lecture in German in view of his rudimentary knowledge of English, but switched directly to the foreign language from around the last third. While the English version was already published in 2016 by Daniel Jenkins[15] in his collection "Schoenberg's Program Notes and Musical Analyses", the German text, including a translation of the English-language sections, was published here for the first time.[16] The music examples are based on Schoenberg's sketches, which were photographed for the lecture and projected onto glass plates. These plates are preserved in the Center's archive and were digitized and published for the first time.

At 100 pages, the chapter "Twelvetone method in 50 objects" is the most extensive part of the book. One could speak of a catalog section here: 50 pictures that are directly or indirectly related to the twelve-tone method are described on the opposite page. These are not only music manuscripts. The connections between illustration and twelve-tone-context can also be

[13] Haimo, Ethan. *Schoenberg's serial odyssey: the evolution of his twelve-tone method, 1914-1928*, Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1990.

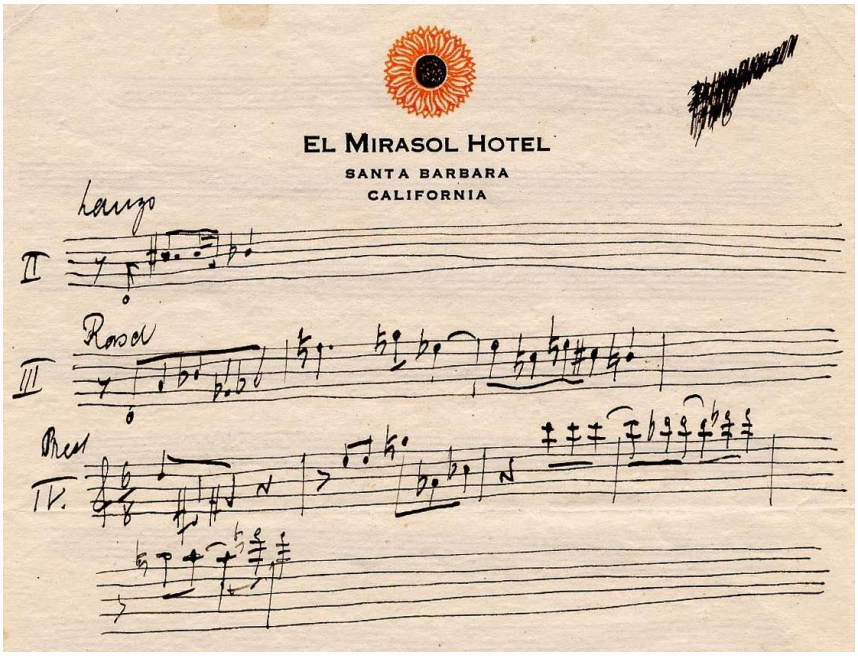
[14] Schönberg, Arnold. "Composition with Twelve Tones (1) (1941)." In: *Style and Idea*, see fn. 2, pp. 214–249.

[15] Schönberg, Arnold. "Method of Composing with Twelve Tones Only Related to One Another, 1935," In: *Schoenberg's program notes and musical analyses*, ed. by Daniel J. Jenkins, Oxford University Press, New York 2016, pp. 248–278 (Schoenberg in Words 5).

[16] There is still an early edition by Claudio Spies, however, for unclear reasons this one only covers the handwritten part; Spies, Claudio. "Vortrag / 12 T K / Princeton." In *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 13/1 (1974), pp. 58–136.

associative, as in a photograph of Schönberg with his grandson Arnold, to whom the Wind Quintet op. 26 is dedicated; or as in a record cover for the so-called Genesis Suite, a joint composition by seven American based composers, in which Schönberg participated with his Prelude op. 44. By explaining music manuscripts, detailed analyses were avoided. Musical issues had to be derived from other aspects. Sketches for the String Quartet op. 37 on hotel stationery, for example, clearly show how Schönberg proceeded when creating a twelve-tone work: at the beginning were melodic ideas, which were spontaneously put on paper, even before the twelve-tone row was formulated.

Figure 6



String Quartet No. 4, op. 37 Thematic Table
(Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [MS41, 1032a)

The more complex the contexts, the more difficult a description becomes, of course, which cannot go into depth analytically. Within certain limits, however, the musical notation of Schönberg's manuscripts certainly lends itself to a visual explanation.

Especially for a project that is educational in the broadest sense, the measure of success is how it is perceived by a wider audience. While guided tours of the exhibition met with a very positive response overall, it was also

a considerable learning process for me as the guide to deal with the visitors' different levels of prior knowledge. A very interested and educated group of historians, for example, were completely overwhelmed by the term "chromatic scale" and the contrast to the major/minor scale, which made at least some of my explanations incomprehensible. Apart from reviews in musicological journals, which were mostly positive, the book even received 3 stars, including a review on amazon. Reader Mike had difficulties with the music examples and technical terms. In fact, the first introductory section on the technical characteristics of the method is probably difficult to digest for a musically illiterate reader – an alternative approach could have been sought here, maybe with the support of music educators. Apart from that, of course, no author can rely on readers taking notes of the preface, where the addressing of the different chapters to different groups is made very clear. However, limiting the publication to just 50 objects, somewhat like a slim exhibition catalog, might have been less open to irritations and the feeling of inaccessibility. In any case, the last word has not yet been spoken on the problem of conveying challenging musical content in an accessible way without compromising too much substance.

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ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG'S RECORD COLLECTION AT THE ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG CENTER, WIEN

EIKE FEß[1]

SUMMARY. This paper examines Arnold Schönberg's record collection, held at the archives of the Arnold Schönberg Center. Transferred by the Austrian Media Library, it is now successively made available through the audio database of the Arnold Schönberg Center. Several examples from the collection are discussed, among them a personal message from the Schönberg Family. Music examples included Schönberg's own recording of *Transfigured Night* op. 4 and the Kolisch Quartet performances of his String Quartets. These acoustic documents illuminate Schönberg's performance aesthetics and compositional intentions. The paper emphasizes the archival approach to digitizing these records and preserving their authentic sonic qualities. Ultimately, it highlights the importance of meticulous archival work in uncovering Schönberg's multifaceted legacy.

Keywords: Arnold Schönberg, record collection, digitization, cataloguing, performance practice, historical recordings, audio preservation

The processing of historical estates always requires prioritization.[2] At the beginning of the cataloguing process, there are usually documents that are of primary importance for gaining knowledge about the person or subject at the center. Arnold Schönberg's estate was first catalogued by his wife Gertrud Schönberg. Together with his former assistants Leonard Stein and Richard Hoffmann, she inventoried his music manuscripts. Ten years after Gertrud Schönberg's death, in February 1977, the estate found its first permanent home in the newly established Arnold Schoenberg Institute at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. There, the materials were comprehensively catalogued and made accessible to researchers. In the 1980s, however, disagreements arose between the university and the Schönberg family regarding

[1] *Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien, Austria, fess@schoenberg.at*
[2] This article is an extended version of a blog post that appeared online in German in the daily newspaper *Der Standard* on 4 March 2022.

the focus of the institution, which ultimately led to a legal dispute, prompting Schönberg's children Nuria, Ronald and Lawrence to look for a new home for the complete collection. The decision was made in favor of the city of Vienna, where the Arnold Schönberg Center Vienna has been open since 1998.[3] Thanks to the comprehensive computerized inventory cataloguing that had already been carried out from the outset, the Arnold Schönberg Center was able to focus on digitizing the objects from the very beginning. Life and creative documents such as music autographs, writings, letters, calendars, but also paintings, photographs and everyday objects have already been inventoried as far as possible and are also accessible as scans on a large scale.

At best, there are surprises in a collection of this kind with items that have long been ignored. These include the waltzes for string orchestra from 1897, which were only performed again in 2004 after more than 100 years and whose melodiousness only reveals the personality of the later exponent of modernism on second hearing; or all the negatives from Schönberg's private photo collection, which were digitized in 2015 as part of an exhibition project and allow unexpectedly vivid insights into the composer's life.

Figure 1

Arnold Schönberg's Record Collection
Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien

[3] The history of the estate is comprehensively described Therese Muxeneder, "The Arnold Schoenberg Estate." In *Bulgarian Musicology* 35/3-4 (2011), p. 152-165.

A more recent discovery concerns acoustic evidence from the estate: a collection of over 400 shellac records that cannot be made audible with conventional playback devices without changing the sound or even endangering the object itself. A cooperation between the Arnold Schönberg Center and Österreichische Mediathek [Austrian Media Library] for the professional digitization of the collection, which took place in 2019/2020, not only uncovered some unheard music, but sometimes came close to opening one of Andy Warhol's famous "Time Capsules" – albeit in acoustic form.

In contrast to his friend and former pupil Alban Berg, Schönberg was not a passionate record listener. In 1930, he flatly declared the gramophone to be an "enemy that is advancing inexorably [...]. The worst damage it causes consists [in] acclimatizing the ear to an unspeakably raw sound and to the pulpy, unclear composition of the sound body, which excludes any fine distinction."[4]

Viewed from a technical standpoint, Schönberg was right: low frequencies are cut off due to the limited size of the sound funnel, high frequencies fail due to the interaction between needle and diaphragm. Added to this are distortions that arise from the excessive demands placed on the technology by the broad spectrum of some recordings. Nevertheless, the gramophone sound was perceived as a miracle of "purity and faithful reproduction" – at least by inhabitants of the sanatorium society that was entertained by shellac discs in Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain* [Der Zauberberg].[5] Obviously, even a technically mediocre recording conveys more than an acoustic analysis can bring to light.

Perfection in the transmission can become a minor matter if the acoustic message only remains perceptible in some way. This is particularly evident in the case of a small-diameter disc from Schönberg's estate, which was originally intended for shipping. The object, according to the label an "RCA Victor Home Recording Record", is light, almost fragile. Every time it is played, the porous material wears away – similar to flexidiscs, which are still occasionally found in music magazines today.

The inscription is difficult to interpret: "ARTRUNUR | Arnold, Trude, Nuria Schoenberg | 20. I. 35" – it refers to father Schönberg, his wife and their daughter. All three had been in exile in the United States since October 1933, after Schönberg was dismissed from his professorship at the Berlin Academy of Arts following the Nazi takeover. Among the family members who initially remained in Vienna was Gertrud Schönberg's mother, Henriette Kolisch.

[4] Arnold Schönbeg: Antwort auf eine Rundfrage (1930) (ASSV 5.2.3.7.)

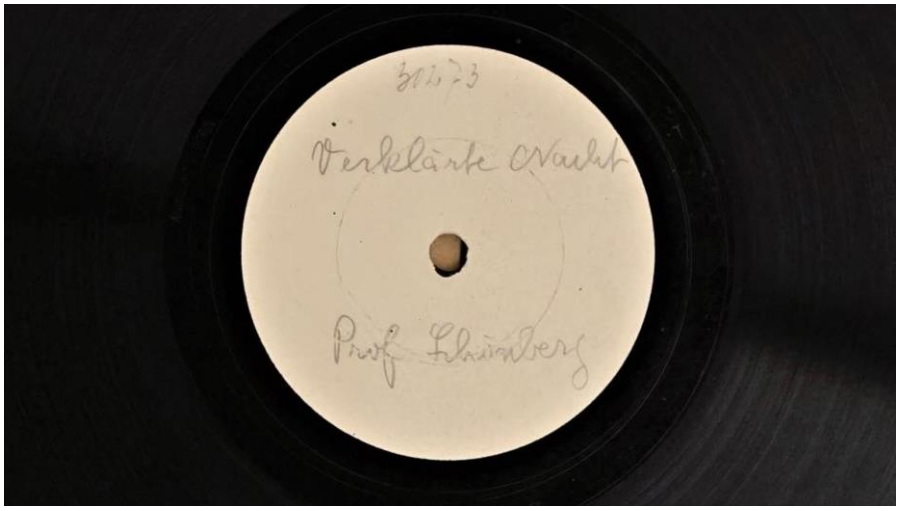
[5] Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain,* Vintage Books, New York, 1955, p. 637

The disc contains a greeting message to “Grandma”, which was recorded with a device distributed by RCA Victor and was to be sent to Austria.[6]

The parents talk about the guest room in warm California, the cold in Vienna and Henriette’s homemade jam. Important, however, is the final message from three-year-old Nuria, which, behind the whimsical nature of the recording, can also be heard as an urgent appeal: “Dear Grandma! Happy birthday to you! Come here very quickly!“

Arnold Schönberg’s string sextet *Transfigured Night* [Verklärte Nacht] op. 4, composed in 1899 during his summer holiday in Payerbach, was released exactly 25 years later as the first recording of his work by the National Gramophonic Society. The society, based in England, offered subscriptions for recordings of classical works, which were always recorded without cuts – not a matter of course in the early days of recording history. The expanded Spencer Dyke Quartet plays in a sober and sonorous manner and must have offered listeners of the time a welcome opportunity to familiarise themselves with Schönberg’s music.[7]

Figure 2



Test-Pressing Transfigured Night op. 4, Ultraphon Berlin
Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien

6 Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien (REC 424-426); an edited version of the recording is available at https://youtu.be/zZ0GK7yDqZA?si=7qMx4DMjX7bBQX1J.

7 Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien (REC 041-044).

The recording of the orchestral version of Opus 4, conducted by the composer himself four years later by Deutsche Ultraphon AG, which collaborated with renowned artists such as Marlene Dietrich and Erich Kleiber, opens up completely different dimensions. The recording of Transfigured Night with the Staatskapelle Berlin was made in the dance hall of the Victoria-Garten restaurant in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, which was known for its excellent acoustics. After the first session, legal problems on the part of the orchestra prevented the production from being finalized, which is why Schönberg only received three rehearsal discs of bars 1-200. No further copies of the recording have survived.[8]

Transfigured Night begins with a *d* repeated four times in the low strings. Schönberg chooses a slow tempo in order to articulate each note according to his musical conception – accentuated at the beginning, once almost aggressively and twice played out somewhat more broadly. The melody, which soon begins, develops with subtle tempo modulations. This creates emotional intensity, but above all emphasizes the structural characteristics of the music, melodic phrases and formal sections. Behind this is Schönberg's conviction that „dynamics, tempo, timbre [...] are really no more than the performer's resources, serving to make the idea comprehensible and admitting of variations."[9] Freedom in relation to the score is not only permitted here, but necessary in order to make the content of the music comprehensible to listeners. According to this understanding, the performance is a communicative means of presenting the musical idea – in the case of the records from Berlin by the composer himself.

Among the most impressive documents in which the "performance theory of the Viennese School" becomes audible are private recordings of all of Schönberg's string quartets made by the Kolisch Quartet at the United Artists Film Studios in Los Angeles between 29 December 1936 and 8 January 1937. Selected individuals, including Jascha Heifetz and George Gershwin, were invited to purchase one of 25 sets of 23 discs at cost price. The project was initiated by Schönberg's student Alfred Newman, a successful film music composer in Hollywood. Technically speaking, the conditions were ideal, but in view of the expensive studio time, only a few hours of recording were available. The four musicians were familiar with Schönberg's oeuvre and had already performed his works many times in Europe – with the exception of String Quartet No. 4 op. 37, which was to receive its world premiere the evening after the recording.

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[8] Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien (REC 150-152)

[9] Schönberg, Arnold. "Mechanical Musical Instruments." In *Style and Idea. Selected Writings by Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. by Leonard Stein. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1984, pp. 326-329, here p. 326.

The recording of the third movement seems unaffected by this difficult situation. The complete twelve-tone row of the work is heard in the form of an expansive, declamatory theme in unison with the four strings. The very first note undergoes subtle dynamic changes over almost eight seconds, supported by a well-measured vibrato. As in Schoenberg's recording of Transfigured Night, the repeated notes *d flat* and *g flat* are not played identically, but are emphasized differently depending on their position within the theme. After all twelve notes have been played, the phrase is concluded with a descending cello figure, which is reminiscent of a tonal cadence with the tone sequence *a flat*/*d flat* – the beginning of a retrograde inversion of the row. Correspondingly greater emphasis is placed on the note *d flat*, which also marks the beginning of a new section in a subdued, melancholy mood.[10]

Figure 3

Kolisch Quartett and Arnold Schönberg, United Artists Studio, 1937. Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien

[10] The recording can be heard in a visualization with the original manuscript: https://www.youtube.com/live/q1Pw1kqmbDI?si=hk1-BlJnCuHq0Y-H&t=1009

Schönberg's record collection, as preserved in the estate of the Arnold Schönberg Center, invites comprehensive examination and is currently fully accessible via the catalogue of Österreichische Mediathek.[11] The recordings will be successively added to the database of the Arnold Schönberg Center.[12] The cataloguing does not aim at a continuous reproduction of entire works or movements, as is common with commercial transfers. Each record side is linked to an audio file in order to ensure the most authentic possible representation of the analogue object on a digital level. For highlights such as the first recording of *Gurre-Lieder* under Leopold Stokowski, you have to change the (virtual) disc 25 times – the effort is worth it. Other recordings bear witness to the technical limitations of the medium, as well as to the high demands that early performers faced. Schönberg is not always at the center of attention: occasionally the composer also received recordings of works by his pupils, among whom he valued the young Dika Newlin, who sent him a *Sinfonia for piano* in 1949, as a special talent. After the war, records became an important means of communication with the Old World. The composer received several audio documents from Europe, which gave him hope that his work would live on regardless of his direct influence. He was particularly pleased with a recording of the Concerto for Violin op. 36 with Tibor Varga and his former composition student Winfried Zillig as conductor of the Hessischer Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra.[13] In a letter of thanks to the violinist, he expressed his enthusiasm: "I can fully and completely understand why everyone talks of you and your playing with such enthusiasm. It really sounds as if you had known the piece for 25 years, your rendering is so mature, so expressive, so beautifully shaped. I must say that I have never yet come across such a good performance without having myself helped with every detail. The fact that you discovered all this for yourself is not only evidence of your outstanding talent; it gratifies me, besides, in that it shows me how distinctly my music can speak to a true musician: he can know and understand me without explanations, simply through the medium of the written notes."[14]

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ELECTRONICS AND INDERMINACY IN THE MUSIC OF LUIGI NONO

GIUSEPPE GIULIANO[1]

SUMMARY. Rather than having a specific discussion on the electronics used by Nono in the general span of his production, I prefer to refer to the latest works of the 80s, to focus on his poetics, his way of thinking and my personal vision relating to that period, in relation to the current moment.

Keywords: Luigi Nono, electronics

Luigi Nono made extensive use of electronics in his compositions, first in works for solo magnetic tape, such as “Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz”, and in many works with magnetic tape as an integral part, including orchestral compositions, such as “Per Bastiana - Tai Yang Chen”, or solo vocal and instrumental works, for example “La lontananza nostalgica, utopica, futura”. Only in the last works did his use of electronics include the transformation of sound in real time, involving a separate performer in charge of the electronics, acting as a complementary ‘instrument’ of equal importance compared to instrumental performance. The reason for this late choice is easily explained by the fact that the technology for live electronics was only developed from the end of the 70s onwards.

We can say that electronics for Nono were an essential component of many of his works, a means used for an expressive and, I believe, emotional function. The works with magnetic tape include both synthesized sounds and “musique concrète” - today we would say sampling - to give space to sound elements that cannot be represented with traditional instruments, but often combined with the latter, thus creating a composite fabric of different and multiple sounds that contribute to a result rich in expressiveness and meaning.

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Regarding the word meaning, I add that in Nono's case it can be specified as "political", certainly also dynamic and stimulating, perhaps less in an "aesthetic" sense although in my opinion this last attribute is certainly not foreign to Gigi's music. The use of electronics in all cases was an essential component for his work and for the communicative force that pervades the sound of his music.

So, we are talking about an expansion of the sound world, capable of representing innovative situations on a sonic and formal level, equipped with a complexity which, by expanding the musical parameters, also adds an important one: space. Among the considerations that I listened to and discussed with Nono when I attended his seminars, held at the Experimental Studio in Freiburg, one of the many concerned the space and diffusion of sound through amplification and transformation, in environments suited to the needs of a particular listening situation and designed for a type of music, which involved the movement and non-unique direction of sounds.

Among the technical possibilities envisaged in the early 1980s in the Freiburg Studio, the Halaphone was the instrument for diffusing sound in movement. At the time, the programming of this instrument could act on the sound by moving it only in a circular direction at a constant speed, and not with differentiated geometries as would later be possible, but already with this possibility, aided by a particular arrangement of the speakers, significant results could be achieved. Nono often cited the use of "cori battenti", practised in the Basilica of San Marco in Venice by Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli in the 16th century – a stereophony ante litteram, which gave dimensions and listening different from the normal practice of that time. From here, he reiterated the importance of the place in which to perform music that includes sound in movement, both in terms of dimensions that allow this, and in terms of a sound environment capable of accommodating this type of diffusion in a satisfactory manner. From these ideas, but not only, the architectural idea created by Renzo Piano for the diffusion of sound in "*Prometeo*" was born.

It should be noted that Nono's artistic career is a differentiated one, in the sense that it differed from the way of doing things of many composers who wrote and still write uniformly today. This uniformity leads to continuous replication of style and craftsmanship, to always achieve more or less the same result, conventional and repetitive; perhaps due to lack of ideas or confidence in routine. Gigi has always been a committed researcher, and his style has undergone considerable changes, from his initial compositions, of a serial and systematic nature such as "Il canto sospeso", up to his latest works, some of which are random and partly improvisational. All this was part

of continuous research on sound, through attentive listening to the sound phenomenon as such, moving further and further away from a structural and constructivist mentality, to enter a dimension of formal freedom all aimed towards sound: see “Risonanze erranti”.

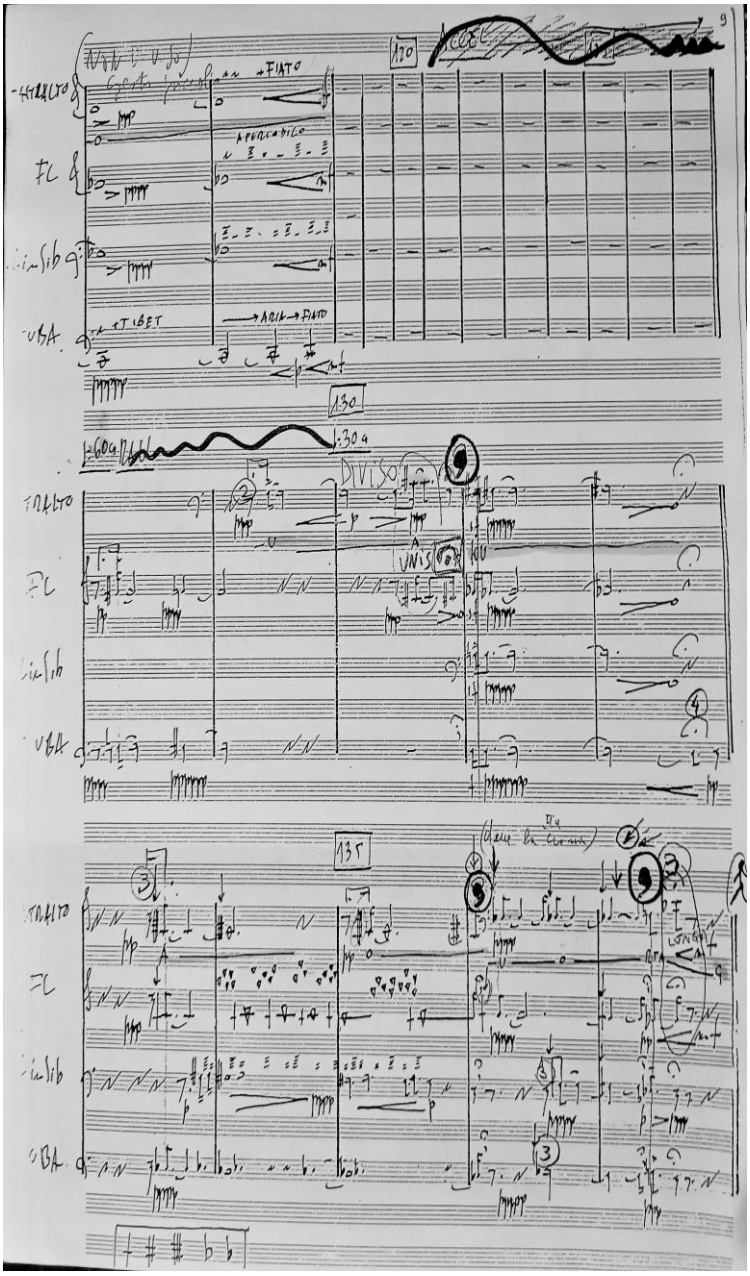
Electronics, and in particular live electronics, have constituted an indispensable element in the sound and formal research that Gigi has carried out in his latest works. I personally witnessed Gigi’s work in Freiburg to create “Das Atmende Klarsein”. The continuous rehearsals with the instrumentalists, supported by Hans Peter Haller and his assistants in the Studio, were always sound experiences in progress, continually rethought and refined, to find the desired dimension of sound. Never a search for beauty, but certainly a commitment to the desired sound.

I also find it singular how sound research led Nono to find himself in ideal harmony (certainly on a subliminal level) with another Italian composer, who like him distanced himself from artisanal routine to dedicate himself to pure sound, namely Giacinto Scelsi. I have always thought I was faced with two contiguous phenomena, even if unknown to each other, in terms of the way of thinking and conceiving music; even if in Scelsi’s case there was a rejection and ferocious hostility in Italy, which Nono has never known and from which he has always been exempt.

The freedom and fluidity achieved in Gigi’s compositions in recent years is characterized by the minimal and essential use of the sound material in the score. A few indispensable notes, combined with live electronics and the fundamental use of space, contribute to the creation of suspended sound worlds. Broken by silences and breaths, the sound waves of these compositions unfold without creating boundaries and without suggesting a priori dimensions. It is an Atman that mutably pervades the sound space, enveloping the listener and involving him in an almost metaphysical listening. The refinement of the sound and the electronics, calibrated to the maximum so as not to invade the musical expression with excessive artifices, enhance the transparency of the sound volumes, very evident compared to Gigi’s previous works. I am referring not only to “Das Atmende Klarsein”, but also to “Omaggio a Kurtàg”.

Of this last score, I attach to this report a photocopy of a page of the manuscript, which gives the idea of the sound fluidity conceived by Nono much better than the printed edition. (E.g. 1)

E.g. 1



Luigi Nono: “Omaggio a Kurtàg” – manuscript, extract

In the original writing of “Omaggio a Kurtàg” and even more so in “Post-Prae-Ludium per Donau” for tuba and electronics, one notices a rarefaction of graphic signals, together with a musical breath entrusted to the performers, often also due to the type of emission requested, controllable up to a certain point and with more or fewer margins of variability within it.

Returning to “Post-Prae-Ludium per Donau”, this piece, composed in close collaboration with Giancarlo Schiaffini and created with many of his suggestions, provided for some timbral paths, which the performer could choose as he pleased through a “controlled improvisation” as it was defined by Dieter Schnebel. Even the live electronics in the manuscript do not appear in an organized way, but some effects are indicated only on a general and approximate level. Only in the final edition does a precise indication of the live electronics appear, corresponding to the instrumental sounds, which in reality was never written in this way by Nono. Electronics, in the first performances, were managed by the performers of the Freiburg Studio in a fairly fluid way, and only, as already mentioned, did they appear systematized in the final edition. Nono indicated separately the electronic instrumentation to be used, together with the type and regulation of the effects, without indicating a rigid and fixed application in the score to be combined with the instruments.

These types of freedom, entrusted to the instrumentalists, are highlighted even more in pieces such as “La lontananza nostalgica, utopica, futura” where the magnetic tape was created from free improvisations by Gidon Kremer, sometimes in gypsy style, which were later chosen, partly electronically modified and superimposed, to create the definitive six-channel tape. The length of the tape was about 60 minutes, then later shortened by about 15 minutes. To this type of work on tape, Nono added a precise instrumental score, where the interpreter had six entries, spaced out in time, which were added from time to time to the continuous sound of the tape, and were managed freely by the instrumentalist, who was moving within the room in turn. I performed this piece on electronics together with Irvine Arditti on violin, in Milan in 1991, in the full version, as a tribute to Nono following his death the previous year. Personally, I prefer the full 60 min version where immersion in sound is less dynamic and more ecstatic. Perhaps - again as a personal observation - this type of composition could also be compared, due to the type of continuous envelopment of sound, to the last great works of Morton Feldman.

All Nono’s latest works are characterized by a continuous search for sound, explored both at the level of individual instruments and of the voice, as well as electronics. The choice then of electronics in direct transformation of the sound, and no longer fixed on a tape - or audio file as we want to define it - indicates a need for fluidity of sound and form, which through the mutability of the various performances and the space in which it is diffused, acquires meaning in the moment of each performance, no longer rigid, but adaptable

to the needs of the place and the versatility of the performers, especially with regard to the particular types of sound emission required.

The adaptation of sound diffusion in spaces different in shape, size and reverberation problems of the place has always been present in performances with electronics. The problem occurs very often that some indications for live electronics are nullified by the place of performance. For example, in a particularly reverberant location, the indications in the score of this parameter are inevitably subject to change, as is the spatialization system, which must be verified from time to time, to be implemented effectively in different places, hence the need for general indications in the score with the necessary principle of variations during the work. In the case of Nono's works, the established typologies were adapted according to needs by Hans Peter Haller.

How have Gigi's compositions influenced younger generations of composers? Have chance and guided improvisation, together with electronics, had an impact on the education of the younger generations? Obviously, I am not talking about my generation, but that of my numerous students, who followed one another during my time as a teacher of composition and at the same time also of live electronics techniques at the Milan Conservatory and on other occasions, such as seminars and masterclasses held by me over time in Italy and abroad. The answer to these two questions is unfortunately negative. From their considerations, resulting from listening to and analyzing Nono's music, I summarize some concepts, which made me understand how musical events follow one another quickly and appear differently depending on the generations. These are some of the most common and shared observations among young people. How have Gigi's compositions influenced younger generations of composers? Have chance and guided improvisation, together with electronics, had an impact on the education of the younger generations? Obviously, I am not talking about my generation, but that of my numerous students, who followed one another during my time as a teacher of composition and at the same time also of live electronics techniques at the Milan Conservatory and on other occasions, such as seminars and masterclasses held by me over time in Italy and abroad. The answer to these two questions is unfortunately negative. From their considerations, resulting from listening to and analyzing Nono's music, I summarize some concepts, which made me understand how musical events follow one another quickly and appear differently depending on the generations. These are some of the most common and shared observations among young people:

- Nono's music is too intellectual and does not communicate emotions.
- Working with live electronics in a large studio, reserved almost exclusively for his own production, is snobbish and self-referential.

- No colors are perceived in his music, on the contrary a leaden black and white prevails, with rare exceptions.
- His work is praised by intellectuals, but this is a far from common perception.
- His music, always performed in important contexts and even in specially constructed spaces for the occasion (see: “Prometeo”), make him almost a “State composer” with obvious political support.
- His musical perspectives are perhaps worth studying, but they are not viable.

I find it important to mention the most frequent observations and criticisms that I have encountered among young students because, whether true or not - and I won’t go into the merits - they represent reason for reflection on Nono’s persona and his artistic career, which coincided with a moment of great change in musical thought, not only in Italy but also in much of the Western world.

After the Second World War of the last century, we witnessed a change in mentality in conceiving music. On the one hand, the production of chamber music was proposed, with an exclusively artisanal and not very artistic mentality, with clear references to “historical” ways of doing things. And this way of doing things was pursued by many in Italy until today. But on the other hand, there were composers who did not like conventionality, and were inclined towards a different type of musical art. Among the most suitable innovations for composers aimed at research and new forms of musical expression were: the influence of jazz or better still of free jazz with the rediscovery of improvisation, a practice that had become obsolete until the early 1900s, but was indeed recovered by musical practices that did not rely on writing, the advent of Aleatoric music - as an open work and not only - of electronics and mixed genres.

In Italy, beyond Luigi Nono, who immediately knew how to sense the different and new air brought by innovative techniques for creating and realizing music, we find Franco Evangelisti, pioneer of new improvisation practices, and Giacinto Scelsi, among the first composers in Italy to put aside structural and constructivist conceptions, to orient themselves on the value and meaning of the single sound, as a sound world complete in itself. From this perspective, especially the last decade of Gigi’s production, certainly makes its own the ability to perceive sound as a world to be explored, without organizational forcing, which could excessively compress it into predefined forms, but allowing the sound, very often slowed down and perceived analytically as a complete “monad”, to be assimilated through listening freed from common formalisms and conventions.

Certainly, the advent of live electronics has made a great contribution to this timbral and formal research, to which Nono dedicated his last years, and with which he created many of his latest works. But more than technology, I would like to underline the new thinking and the personalized and innovative sound and expressive concept that his type of research has led to. Not the medium - technological or otherwise - but the idea of a new and different musical concept pervades the latest works that Gigi left us. The electronic medium has in fact evolved enormously compared to almost fifty years ago. These are the ideas that remain and testify to the exceptional nature of his works.

Today, many years after those compositions, some of which I listened to while being worked on in Freiburg, I can affirm that they do not suffer from the phenomenon of aging, which is common to many works by other authors from the same period. A freshness of intent and imagination that can be perceived when listening remains intact.

I would add one more consideration:

Nono's musical phenomenon constitutes an exception, together with very few other composers that I have already partly mentioned, in the Italian panorama. Most Italian composers, both in the period in which Gigi was alive and in the present day, have been and still are characterized by artisanal and replicative ways of composing, which have little to do with artistic creativity and inventive freedom. A vital and innovative creativity like that achieved by Gigi in his works cannot be replicated by imitators and followers, precisely because of his research peculiarities. Furthermore, his latest works can be analyzed for study purposes only up to a certain point, especially those with live electronics, given that the musical form and the sound fabric escape a structural analysis, where there is no structure. We can only find a sparse and extremely essential representation of the sounds, which will only be brought to life by a creative and committed performance. To paraphrase a statement by John Cage: this type of music cannot be represented on paper for how it will feel running. There is a decidedly perceptible gap between sign and sound, and no longer an exact correspondence, as in his previous works. The representation of sound is not exasperatingly distant and total from the sound result, as in some works by Cage, Cardew, Schnebel, Bussotti, to name a few; who within their production also offer totally graphic scores to the performers. However, his scores possess an interpretative force that needs to be unraveled and understood, in order to then be able to perform them at the level of the sound world that Nono has imagined.

Therefore, Nono's latest works, in addition to approaching freer and more fluid ways of thinking, have given stimuli and authoritative impulses to the composers of subsequent generations, for a creativity different from the academic one, still widely practiced in Italy. It opened new horizons for

composers focused on researching and listening to sound phenomena. We can always discuss the quality of the results, with different and motivated opinions, but we can hardly deny the importance and musical value that these compositions, together with the artistic figure of Nono, represent for all of us.

For reasons of synthesis I have not delved into the philosophical motivations that drive the latest works, especially “Prometeo”, of which Gigi’s illustrious son-in-law - Massimo Cacciari - was the inspiration and suggester of lyrics and meanings. Furthermore, some explanatory considerations in this regard would deserve separate space, which here would be too limited and not in keeping with the subject matter discussed.

However, some reflections must be made, not only about “Prometeo” but also on Nono’s way of conceiving and realising musical art, and like him by other important composers of his time: for example, Stockhausen and Boulez, who, although in different ways, present similar character characteristics and peculiarities.

Currently it can be said that the era of “leading” composers has (fortunately) passed, not because there is a lack of strong and significant personalities, but because the indispensable supports for the affirmation of similar phenomena are missing. Nono’s connection with the Italian Communist Party, not as a simple member, but also as a member of the Central Committee, was certainly a strong commitment of a political nature, but also combined with a strong network of supports and knowledge that allowed him to build solid foundations to carry out his work.

“Prometeo” was a sort of synthesis of Nono’s thoughts: the lonely man, the hero who brings light to his peers. I don’t know if Nono had a psychological symbiosis with the mythological character, but I perceive it on an unconscious level, as a sort of personality cult that hides behind this intellectual construction, presented with quite evident mystical implications. It will be said that like all Nono’s works it is an ideological work, strongly imbued with more or less symbolic meanings, but from today’s perspective, it seems to possess something more than simple ideology, now relegated to a historical and anachronistic level.

The implementation of such work was assisted by the construction of a sound arch, which could contain instrumentalists and the public, structured on several floors and designed by the architect Renzo Piano. The cost at the time was very considerable; in addition, there was the participation of the entire Freiburg electronic studio with its equipment and full staff, not to mention the orchestra and soloists. In short, a pharaonic operation which, in addition to Venice, was subsequently transferred to Milan, to be carried out with the same installation methods (including dismantling and reconstruction of the sound ark) in one of the pavilions of the Spazio Ansaldo.

After the performances in Venice and Milan, the sound structure was abandoned for a few years - the author of this article was able to revive it for a short time, organizing two series of electronic music concerts within it, in the years 1990 and '91 with the collaboration of the Teatro alla Scala - subsequently the structure was demolished, to make room for an exhibition of vintage cars in the same pavilion of the Spazio Ansaldo. Of course, in life the ephemeral is always lurking, especially when we convince ourselves of the opposite. After all, Nono's was a generation of European composers who cared a lot about ideology, the cultural mission embodied by themselves, the posthumous legacy of their undertakings (see Boulez and IRCAM, Stockhausen and the "Licht" cycle of seven operas), visions shared by many other composers of that period, although in the latter case, these ambitions corresponded to means and possibilities not comparable with the three characters just mentioned. It was an era of affirmation of one's personality, with large doses of vanity and exhibitionist narcissism in constant competition, and only a few composers were exempt from it. On the other hand, however, taking oneself very seriously and considering one's music an important message entails risks, certainly not foreseen even by the authors we are talking about, because in their music and in their character, the slightest sense of humor was totally or almost missing, being also devoid of a graceful irony, which often serves to better focus on the sense of proportion.

The subtitle of "Prometeo" reads "tragedia dell'ascolto" (tragedy of listening). In addition to the sudden ironies that may come to mind with such subtitles, it seems clear that with this caption the intention is to underline the dramatic and committed aspect towards a conception and spirit of struggle, in which literary texts play an equally significant part in relation to music. However, I am convinced that the passage of time can put works of this type in a different light.

In Federico Fellini's entourage the opinion circulated that: Ogni film drammatico si avvia lentamente a diventare comico (E. Flaiano) (Every dramatic film starts slowly to become comic) and this phrase can certainly also apply to serious opera with some exceptions. The listener, and perhaps the public in general, distinguishes in his heart when a work contains an absolutely convincing spontaneity and purity, which binds the listener to the work and the author in a clear and direct way, because it is devoid of artifice, but in the specific case of "Prometeo", the listener is burdened through a political, ideological rhetoric, pre-established by stereotypes that are as old and vague as they are conventional, in their attempt not to be so and to appear new.

I recognize that I have expressed a merciless opinion, and I dedicate a few lines of clarification in this regard:

I have already written previously how important and significant Nono's presence was in the unfortunately excessively academic, Italian panorama. Listening to sound – in strong relationship with the thought of Giacinto Scelsi; the refined use of live electronics, supported by the wisdom of Hans Peter Haller, but certainly original; instrumental research with performers capable and available to new sound needs make him a pioneer in many ways, as does his relationship with musical form, fluid even if controlled by rigid boundaries. In my opinion, "Prometeo" despite containing these peculiarities, takes on a completely different aspect.

The Promethean myth has messianic implications, albeit secular, but which refer to the hero man, perhaps also definable as "superman" – a pagan mythological character, who spreads neo-paganism in his various perspectives, highlighted by Nono's work. I find no ideal in such a representation, but only a faith in man, the bearer of an asphyxiated and self-destructive knowledge to his peers: the desert is his destiny. A message that happily combines with Nietzsche's theories and which has already had previous pseudo-messianic musical creations in Europe; by Wagner with the Tetralogy, who however ultimately destroyed his gods, separating himself intellectually and spiritually from Nietzsche. And also, by Stockhausen, with the Licht cycle of seven works, in which he abundantly mixes myth, religion, superman and personality cult, and where a pagan world is represented, devoid of logical sense, invaded by self-satisfaction, narcissism, presumption.

The musical qualities of an author and the awareness of possessing them do not automatically imply for him the right to be able to arbitrarily extend his thoughts to universalistic themes and present them as if they were pearls of wisdom. We can certainly appreciate or not appreciate the musical work, according to our personal judgment as musicians, but not adhere to a thought if we believe that it is distorted, misleading and superbly self-referential. It would be like believing in television preachers and their personal visions of the world, artfully constructed to captivate the simplest minds. It is strange how often the so-called culture, cloaked in intellectualistic and refined texts and ways of doing things, can hide pitfalls and dangerous ideological assumptions, and at the same time, acquire high regard among cultured and perceptive people, who instead could easily attribute the appropriate proportions to the nature of the phenomenon.

On an ideological level I find a lot of difference between "Al gran sole carico d'amore" and "Prometeo". Personally, I see it as a journey from Marx to Nietzsche, and I don't agree with the final destination at all.

In conclusion, certainly every strong personality is made up of lights and shadows. Criticism is often greeted with annoyance, and we tend to belittle it as much as possible. However, let us consider that the vision of subsequent generations does not and cannot have the same perspective as previous ones; what is considered important before may not be important afterwards; culture as it appeared fifty years ago no longer has the same value today. Ideologies have collapsed, politics today has very different connotations from then; the myth only concerns pop/rock singers and footballers; Western society is aimed at consumption and drugs of various kinds, but not at thought; faith is then placed in GDP and not in religion; the shows, now mass, have an increasingly circus character - all that is missing is the free distribution of food, as in ancient Rome; the past is no longer teaching, today we look at AI. Isn't the Western world in an era of low-imperial decadence? More than rereading the Greek myths, perhaps there is a need for an awakening of the spirit, which enlightens our minds and allows us to avoid immanent catastrophes of an epochal nature.

With the new millennium the mentality of the young generations has changed radically. With the advent of social media, of virtual sensations, of loneliness artificially filled by the media, of the hikikomori phenomenon, of incommunicability. We are in a society where we talk much less and communicate more and more through chat lines. Where in trains and subways the vast majority of people isolate themselves, dedicating themselves full time to the screen of their smartphone. We are witnessing not so much a change in mentality, but a biological mutation of the individual and society, where there is no space for reflection and a certain type of culture is not perceived, both at the level of mentality and because it is offered by almost obsolete means. Furthermore, the speed of change is much greater than in the past. No wonder therefore if culture (a term used in a historical sense) is affected by these mutations and can no longer represent certainties, but perhaps only represents illusions, relative and limited to the moment.

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This is an original research study with no references.

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MUSIC THEATRE AS A PLACE OF INSIGHT. REFERENCES TO FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN (AND TO ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG) IN LUIGI NONO'S PROMETEO

JÖRN PETER HIEKEL[1]

SUMMARY. Luigi Nono's music theater work *Prometeo*, which is often referred to as Nono's key work of the 1980s, dispenses with a consistently developed narrative dimension. However, it draws all the more comprehensively on the potential of several musical, literary and philosophical approaches from earlier times as well as from Nono's own time.

Keywords: Luigi Nono, Prometeo

The starting point of my lecture is an important but (it seems to me) often overlooked characteristic of Luigi Nono's music theater work *Prometeo*.

Prometeo realizes this with extremely finely nuanced mixtures of familiar and unfamiliar moments, which are often only hinted at. For us as listeners, the task is to decipher these traces. After all, the impressive magical aspect of this piece, which takes a lot of time to unfold all the sound situations, does not mean that details and shades of sound and semantics should remain undiscovered. For this very reason the piece is not merely a music of devotion, but a composition that (to put it somewhat pointedly) aims at an alert mind. And it is precisely this quality, as I would like to outline, that shows some far more than superficial references to the composing of Arnold Schönberg, also and especially to Moses and Aron (a piece who's premiere Nono himself experienced in Hamburg in 1954).

It is therefore about the interaction of the tonal side and the communicative side. The extent to which Nono considered the two to be inextricably linked and the way in which he focused on them is shown by his turn to familiar musical approaches of earlier times. For in them he discovered many different ways of being able to say something with certain arrangements.

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Nono often let it be known how much he was inspired by earlier approaches in this respect. For example, he enthusiastically emphasized the art of fragmentation that emerged in Robert Schumann's instrumental music. Nono was concerned with the renunciation of "thematic development", i.e. an aspect of shaping form and time, as it comes to the fore in the piece *Der Dichter spricht*, which is characterized by a quite big number of fermatas. And Nono combined his reference to Schumann with reflections on two poets important to his own composing: on the one hand Friedrich Hölderlin (a contemporary of Schumann's), but on the other Edmond Jabès (a contemporary of his own time with whom he had an intensive exchange in the 1980s and for whom he wrote a homage piece entitled *Decouvrir la subversion* in 1987.[2]

Nono's preference for particular poetological premises of poetry, which appears here, is a crucial element of my paper. Because this is always related to the question of how art can serve to create alertness of the mind. And it always leads beyond immediately evident moments of meaning. And for all that, his own compositional approach to poetry is never merely passionate or diffuse, but almost always precise at its core, borne by a truly intensive preoccupation with the structural ideas of poetry (in this respect he can perhaps best be compared with composers such as Pierre Boulez or Bernd Alois Zimmermann). And time and again, he endeavors to link the tonal and structural ideas of composing with world-related and communicative elements in a meaningful way.

His work *Prometeo*, for which this is particularly true, takes up approaches from his own earlier pieces at this point. But these are continued with unmistakably new creative moments. And they include resonances of a compositional, literary and philosophical nature.

Accordingly, not only the thematic side, i.e. the treatment of the Prometheus material is an essential part of the "statement" of this music theatre work. Rather, its magical and highly emphatic side and its differentiation in relation to some of the resonances of literature and philosophy it contains can also be considered. With sounds, structures and communicative elements[3], Nono operates far beyond a preachy pathos: *Prometeo* is filled with fragile moments that establish a gesture of exploration that is unusual in the music

[2] Cf. "Eine Autobiografie des Komponisten. Enzo Restagno mitgeteilt", in: *Luigi Nono. Dokumente – Materialien,* hrsg. von Andreas Wagner, Saarbrücken 2003, p. 23-128, here, p. 52; we will return to this reference to Jabès and Hölderlin later.

[3] On the aspect of communicability, which always has to do with questions of the attribution of meaning or the determinability of meaning, cf. the helpful considerations in: Nanni, *Politik des Hörens, Zur Lesbarkeit Luigi Nonos,* Hofheim 2022, esp. p. 142f; and cf. fundamentally: Jörn Peter Hiekel / Wolfgang Mende (eds.), *Klang und Semantik in der Musik des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts,* Bielefeld 2018.

theatre of recent decades. And it is precisely this gesture of exploration that, it seems to me, deserves special attention. It aims, I would argue, at a reception that can best be described as "observational listening". *Prometeo* thus distances itself from a devotional attitude - and from the fulfilment of "sacred longings"[4], which was sometimes associated with Nono's music of the 1980s. The fact that Nono himself very pointedly criticizes the "ritual self-abandonment to worn-out mythology"[5] with regard to interpretations of Richard Wagner's music fits in with this. *Prometeo* moves far away from this.

This point seems particularly important to me and it has to do with our conference and the comparison with Arnold Schönberg. For it seems that the experience of Schönberg's text-related music was an essential impulse. If we take *Moses and Aron* as a point of references, this means three aspects in particular, all of which were taken up by Nono (with different means in each case): Firstly, a preference for world-related texts; secondly, the search for forms of articulation of language that change within a piece and even produce completely new shades; thirdly, the attempt to use these shades to move away from the clear or even striking side of texts and create a multi-faceted expressivity.

In view of the special significance of the poet Friedrich Hölderlin that has just been mentioned, it makes sense to reflect on these three aspects by looking at some of the special features of the central section of *Prometeo* that bears the title "Hölderlin".

The typical of this section of the work is that it combines varied vocal and instrumental sounds with worldly accents focused on the fate of mankind. The latter are much less drastic than the textual level of Nono's three decades older work *Il Canto sospeso*, for example. However, they are also extremely important for the conception and content of *Prometeo*.

The third verse of *Hyperion's Song of Destiny* can be heard in this work. And this is done in a way that is as comprehensive as it is differentiated. The wealth of facets on the expressive side is already very great in Hölderlin's poem. For in Hölderlin's epistolary novel *Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece,* Hyperion's *Song of Fate* is an "expression of a momentary low point of grief"[6], but at the same time a reference point for overcoming tragedy.

Nono (presumably consciously) builds on this. *Prometeo* offers this poem by Hölderlin in a way that suggests a comparison with *Il Canto sospeso* in one respect in particular: In both works, the pathetic side is counterpointed

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[4] Peter Niklas Wilson, "Sakrale Sehnsüchte. Über den 'unstillbaren ontologischen Durst' in der Musik der Gegenwart", in: *Musik und Religion*, ed. by Helga de la Motte, Laaber,[2] 2003, pp. 323-338.

[5] Cf. "Eine Autobiographie" (note 1), p. 105, referring to an alienation idea of Alexander Kluge.

[6] Lawrence Ryan, *Hölderlin oder Der Eremit in Griechenland,* in: Johann Kreuzer (ed.), *Hölderlin-Handbuch. Leben Werk Wirkung,* Stuttgart 2002, pp.176-197, here p. 191.

by a particular form of nuanced composition and provided with unusual expressive shadings. This way of fanning out the text prevents it from being too simple or boldly tangible. This reinforces the impulse to experience it as something that is to be explored, as it were, and is intended to stimulate thought. And in the vocal part, this also means a physical, creaturely side.

In an illuminating description of *Il Canto sospeso*, Helmut Lachenmann emphasized the use of "human sounds" and accentuated this as a counterforce to serial composition. And although *Prometeo* is not serialized, one can also speak of a "counterforce" here: directed at all the homogeneous tendencies of the work.

All of this does not apply to the Hölderlin *section* alone. But it is particularly emphasized here by the richly differentiated interplay of instruments and voices, intensified by electronic means. Sound is not something static, but something inwardly moving and animated that draws the listener's attention into the unfamiliar.

Three exemplary strategies and sound situations relating to vocal, instrumental and electronic arrangements of the *Hölderlin section* in particular are mentioned here as examples: The first is the idea, explicitly noted in the score, of using microphones "to expand and refine the sound possibilities of the voices."[7] A second piece of evidence that is particularly close to Lachenmann's own strategies of composing with breathing moments is provided by a change in the wind part: From m. 86 onwards, "half of the breath is to be blown onto the mouthpiece and the other half scattered onto the microphone."[8] A third piece of evidence can be found later on: the instruction "Aria intonata" for both wind instruments as well as the instruction to the clarinet to remove the mouthpiece when playing. [9]

Such moments of amplification of breath accents result in situations in which the differences between the vocal and instrumental parts become blurred. The expressive possibilities of the voice are integrated into an overall structure of fanned-out sounds. And in doing so, it is part of the quasi-creatural tonality to accentuate the human sound in the instrumental part as well. As in *Il Canto sospeso*, the focus here is also on the finest shades of the vocal, which conceivably go far beyond all expressive clichés and topoi. And in each case, what Paul Valèry so beautifully called the "threshold between sound

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[7] Supplement to the score, new edition: Milano 2019, p. 229.

[8] Cf. score, new edition: Milano 2019, p. 128, and cf. supplement to the score, p. 238, the comment quoted here is supplemented by the words "The distance between the mouthpiece and the microphone must be flexibly adjusted according to the volume."

[9] Cf. supplement to the score, p. 244 (German: intonierte Luft), and score, p. 131. The playing of wind instruments without mouthpieces is a technique that has long been familiar in Lachenmann's music.

and meaning"[10] appears to be simultaneously clear, as it is characterized by existential texts, but at the same time unstable or wavering.[11]

This interplay and the resulting process of intensification are reinforced by the other sound factors. On the one hand, there are the electronic design elements that are essential for the sound of the entire piece, namely halaphones, delays and vocoders, which create forcing and very unusual colorations. [12]

On the other hand, it is precisely here that two speaking voices enter the sound event. They offer the same excerpt from *Hyperion's Song of Destiny* and articulate it in an equally unusual way, far removed from all the usual forms of compositional treatment of world-related texts.

And what Nono created here shows him to be a descendant of Arnold Schoenberg.[13] For it seems both stylized and pronounced in a peculiar way, and at the same time as a distant echo of the tradition of the speaking chorus also taken up in *Moses and Aron*. This seems all the more noteworthy, however, as the final section of *Prometeo* contains echoes of this very work by Schoenberg on a textual level.

At the same time, the tendency to expand the tonality (for which Schönberg is also a kind of forefather since his extensive use of Sprechgesang in *Pierrot lunaire*) is once again noticeable. In the Hölderlin section of *Prometeo*, for example, this is shown by the special articulation described with the words "mormorato *sul* microfono, molto articulato"[14].

And the same applies to the explicitly required emphasis of consonants through both explosive sounds and certain elongations. The score characterizes this rather matter-of-factly as an "interesting combination of speaking and whispering".[15] But it is important for the expressive design of the piece. Such accentuations and the overlapping of different layers - vocal, spoken, electronic and instrumental parts - condense and nuance the declaimed text. It is a wave-like structure that features both word repetitions and consonant constellations with a strong pull. At the same time, it operates far away from expressive clichés or schematic synchronicity.

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[10] Paul Valéry, *Windstriche. Aufzeichnungen und Aphorismen*, Frankfurt /M. Comparable obscurations also characterise Lachenmann's work *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*.

[11] Cf. the description in: Lydia Jeschke, *Prometeo. Geschichtskonzeptionen in Luigi Nonos Hörtragödie,* Stuttgart 1997, p. 213. For an accentuation of the concept associated with the thought of Martin Heidegger, see Carola Nielinger-Vakil, *Musik als Gedanke,* in: Beiheft zur Partitur von *Prometeo*, pp. 170-192, here 178.

[12] Cf. Jeschke, *Prometeo,* pp. 226f. and p. 213.

[13] On Nono's interest in Schönberg's handling of voices, see "Eine Autobiographie" (note 1), p. 63.

[14] Score, p. 130, supplemented by the instruction "consonanti articolatissime: explosive - dentali - labiali - gutturali *durissime".* (Emphasis in original)

[15] Cf. supplement to the score, p. 230.

The latter also has to do with the fact that the *Hölderlin section* combines very different tendencies: phases of quite clear text presentation are juxtaposed with a tendency towards reduction and fragmentation as well as the type of stylization just outlined. Such and similar changes of perspective deepen something very important for the work as a whole: composing with different degrees of comprehensibility. They can be seen in correspondence with the passages from Walter Benjamin's historical theses contained in the libretto. But they also allow a comparison with Benjamin's idea of an active exploration of thoughts. [16]

The distance from the usual text settings achieved with all this is great. It equips the experience of this work, which is largely filled with magical tones, with an additional situation of observation. And this is focused both on the special design of the textual level and on its richness of associations, i.e. on the dimension of content. And in this link lies a form of exploration of the threshold between sound and meaning that is typical of Nono. In this piece, this threshold is not static and immovable, but unstable. It thus appears as a visualization of the searching attitude that also fills the textual level in many places.

The *Hölderlin section*, which lasts more than eight minutes, stands out clearly within the overall architecture: in contrast to the often-fragmentary passages, which are hardly characterized by speech intelligibility, it acts as a crystallization point formed by special moments of significance, which no interpretation of the piece should ignore. How explicitly the essential function of the *song of destiny* in Hölderlin's *Hyperion novel* as a situation of reflective pause is continued here is made clear right at the beginning of the section with the adversative "Doch" (m. 7-8), which opens the third verse of Hölderlin's poem.

Nono formulated remarkable thoughts with regard to the basic ideas of his composition *Il Canto Sospeso*: he spoke of „sound qualities which, in differentiated layering, also shaped by pauses, break up the banal consistency"[17]. At the same time, however, he hinted at the extent to which the realization and expansion of this idea required further creative means and experiences. "Beyond the original provocation of the level of meaning, the text functions as a special acoustic-phonetic material. Only later, in the Studio di Fonologia of the RAI in Milan and even more so with the Freiburg live electronics, did I realize what I hoped to achieve with some of the choral parts of the *Canto sospeso*."

[16] On Nono's understanding of active attention, see ibid. p. 105. And on the idea of listening-learning that appears in Benjamin's writings, see the helpful reflections in: Nanni, *Politik des Hörens,* p. 218.

[17] "An Autobiography"), p. 76, the following quotation ibid.

These are remarkable words, especially as they by no means negate the intended “provocation” on a semantic level. They are based on the idea of linking this “provocation” comprehensively with other elements and thus shading it in different ways. This is always (as in *Canto sospeso)* related to the communicative dimension of language. But Nono’s words just quoted also draw attention to what is different about his later works. With this in mind, Nono himself spoke of “choral parts reminiscent of distant choirs, echoes, inspirations”.

In a remarkable way, Nono proposed the term “‘cancelled’ choirs” with regard to some of his late works (including *Prometeo*).[18] He associated the idea of cancellation, which even appears in the title of *Il Canto sospeso*, with his vocal works of the 1980s, each of which was characterised by electronic differentiation. But he was also aware of the diversity of the choral parts in Schönberg’s opera *Moses und Aron*.

The *Hölderlin* passage in *Prometeo* bears particularly clear witness to all the experiences mentioned here. And the understanding of texts realized in this work as an expression of “provocation” and simultaneously “illumination”[19] is reminiscent of what Nono formulated in a text about Lachenmann with reference to Ludwig Wittgenstein. Specifically, it recalls the idea of always aiming for “other ways of looking at things”[20] when composing. These considerations can be related not least to Wittgenstein’s reflections on language play. And Nono, who (as some sources in the Archivio Luigi Nono in Venice show) was explicitly concerned with the similarities between Wittgenstein and Schönberg, realizes these “other ways of looking at things” in *Prometeo* in a truly comprehensive sense. The starting point here is the courage to make doubts about common traditions productive when dealing with poetry as well as with representations of magical. [21]

Within the multifaceted reception of Hölderlin in more recent compositions, not only does the string quartet *Fragmente. Stille - An Diotima* (1979/80) is an important milestone, but *Prometeo* also offers a remarkable accentuation. The preference for the fragmentary developed in the string quartet also comes to the fore here. However, there is now something that

[18] Ibid, p. 77.

[19] Cf. ibid., p. 79: “You know that the texts have great significance for me, I use them as provocation, as illumination”.

[20] Cf. Nono's reflection in: Helmut Lachenmann, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995,* Wiesbaden 1996, p. XIII.

[21] As his library preserved in the Archivio Luigi Nono shows, Nono was intensively involved with various writings by and about Wittgenstein; numerous entries can be found in one book in particular, in which a new view of the magical aspect plays an essential role: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Note sul “Ramo d'oro” di Frazer,* ital. Edition Milano 1975.

clearly goes beyond this: There is an interplay of fragmentary, often suddenly interrupting design elements as well as tangible moments of meaning. The *Hölderlin* passage used plays a significant part in this.

And the compositional result of *Prometeo* comes even closer to Hölderlin's poetry, which is inconceivable without expressive moments, than the idea of dispensing with sounding words, which is favored in the string quartet *Fragmente. Stille - An Diotima.* This is because the music theatre work combines the expression of the persuasive power of silence and moments of pause even more significantly with the idea of concealing meaning.

Nono thus corresponds to the basic attitude of some of Hölderlin's poetry, which the philosopher George Steiner compared not only with the work of Webern and Cage, but also with that of Beckett.[22] Nono was probably familiar with this possible interpretation from the extensive quotation of this consideration in Pierre Bertaux's Hölderlin book (a copy of this book can be found in Nono's library in the Nono Archive). And by directly incorporating Hölderlin's words, he goes one step further than in the quartet.

However, *Prometeo* also reacts to a further tendency in the more recent reception of Hölderlin. This consists in the linking of times and horizons of experience which, in addition to the reference to antiquity, also means reference to one's own present. This can be seen above all in the choice of text. But it is also perpetuated by two other important factors: on the one hand by the multilingualism that Nono also associated with Hölderlin's thinking,[23] and on the other by the linking of 20th century compositional devices with individual elements pointing to earlier times. As for other composers, the linking of horizons of experience that emerges so boldly in Hölderlin's work was obviously a factor that encouraged him to create contrasting, sometimes even montage-like compositions. And his own reference to the "elaboration of Hölderlin's poetic thought" can be related to this.

But how can what is unfolded in *Prometeo* be related to Hölderlin's poetry in a way that not only reflects its form but also its content and even specifically includes *Hyperion's Schicksalslied*? An answer to this question can be orientated towards the constellations of dealing with the text that I have outlined, especially as these also determine the style of the work in

[22] See Pierre Bertaux, *Friedrich Hölderlin und die Französische Revolution,* Frankfurt am Main 1969, p. 416; and George Steiner, *Sprache und Schweigen,* Frankfurt /M. 1969, pp. 87f. Bertaux is often criticised for the one-sidedness with which he understands Hölderlin as a political author. But other aspects of his book have sometimes been overlooked, which are more important for Hölderlin's interest in composers' circles.

[23] Cf. his reference to "the elaboration of Hölderlin's poetic thinking" in: "Eine Autobiographie" (note 1), p. 119.

other ways. In *Prometeo*, Nono takes up the situation of permanent restlessness reflected by Hölderlin and recognizes it as a basic state in the *Hölderlin section*. At the same time, however, he is wary of a one-dimensional tragic or dramatic accentuation (very similar to that of the title figure).

Accordingly, the situation depicted in the selected text passage appears to be an expression of permanent vigilance or openness. This brings to mind an interpretation proposed by Lawrence Ryan with regard to the significance of the *Schicksalslied* for this novel and Hölderlin's entire conception of poetry. According to Ryan, the core of both lies in the "'mightiness' of the spirit", which comes to the fore in "the 'calm' of the narrator Hyperion"[24] and even recalls Hyperion's path to a brighter future, as described by Hölderlin. Hölderlin's idea of the "spirit that cheers"[25] and his understanding of an "alternation of tones" also come into focus here. This is echoed in the phrase "in still eternal clarity" in *Hyperion's Schicksalslied*. Nono clearly emphasized it in his Hölderlin edition[26] although it was omitted in *Prometeo* in the final instance.

In the 1980s, the composer read Klaus Heinrich's work *Parmenides and Jonah. On the relationship between philosophy and mythology.* And a characteristic consideration of this book in particular, which Nono gave to Lachenmann in 1987 and provided with an emphatic dedication, can also be linked to the reflection on fatefulness developed in *Prometeo*: "Only the alternative remains: submission to the power of fate or meditatively rising above fate."[27] This is precisely what one might think of when listening to this piece.

The fact that the extensive Hölderlin passage is almost imperceptibly transformed into an excerpt from Pindar's *6th Nemean Ode* in Italian (mm. 126-180) supports the possibility of such sideways glances. And these show how emphatically Nono's sense for the illuminating and, as it were, provocative aspects of poetry were developed. As a composer, he was always keen to move away from the overly unambiguous and thus to call up new, possibly speculative interpretations. His linking of Hölderlin's and Pindar's poetry seems all the more striking as his preoccupation with this ancient author in particular fed into Hölderlin's fundamental idea of interweaving different periods. Moreover, the excerpt from Pindar's ode chosen for *Prometeo* links the level of the human and the divine in a way that corresponds to Hölderlin's own thinking.

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[24] Ryan, *Hyperion,* p. 196.
[25] Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*. Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe, vol. II/1, Stuttgart 1951, p. 220.
[26] Archivio Luigi Nono Venezia.
[27] Klaus Heinrich, *Parmenides und Jona. Zum Verhältnis von Philosophie und Mythologie,* Frankfurt/M. 1985, here p. 19, Lachenmann clearly marked this passage in his own copy.

Nono has reflected this in a significant way. It is precisely at this point in the vocal part that he brings microtonal fluctuations into play. This reinforces the expression of uncertainty first emphasized in the recourse to Hölderlin. And it is characteristic of what is particularly important to me in my performance: the way in which this piece reflects and, as it were, rethinks textual content.[28] If we think of the way in which the question of the lawful is reflected in *Moses und Aron*, both on the level of content and on the structural level, it becomes clear here too how much Nono acts as Schönberg's descendant in *Prometeo*.

In the sketches for *Prometeo* preserved in the Archivio Luigi Nono, the name Brahms persistently appears in connection with *Hyperion's Schicksalslied*. In addition, there are even occasional musical references to the setting of this poem by Johannes Brahms.[29] One motive for both may lie in the individuality with which Brahms already responds to Hölderlin. And Nono was also aware of Brahms' significance when he reflected on this reference.

Nono's documented interest in the history of Hölderlin's reception, and its perspective suggests that we should return to his aforementioned reflection on the significance of the fragmentary in Schumann, which leads to comments on the poetry of Edmond Jabès and Hölderlin, underpinned by links between the two poets. "Think of Hölderlin, of the relationship between yesterday, today and tomorrow"[30], Nono formulated here, imagining "an authentic past that lives buried within us and suddenly springs forth." Statements such as these clearly indicate the important and multifaceted significance of Hölderlin's thinking for the conception of this work.

However, this also refers to the special characteristics of Hölderlin's poetry as well as its content. And last but not least, it probably refers to the reflection of Western traditions of thought that Hölderlin's poems realize with the help of fragmentation and surprising fields of signification. The composer Hans Zender, who opened a cycle entitled *Hölderlin lesen* a few years before Nono's work, expressed the thesis that Hölderlin had deliberately "shaken the fundamental premises of the European tradition of thought" with some bold connections in his poetry[31]. This idea deserves consideration. For the obvious question of the influence of Hölderlin's work on Nono's *Prometeo* can begin precisely here. This means the possibility of linking the non-linear

[28] Cf. Jeschke, *Prometeo*, pp. 221f. and "Eine Autobiographie" (note 1), pp. 108f. And on Pindar's conceptual significance for the political dimension of the entire work in a broader sense, see Nielinger-Vakil, *Musik als Gedanke*, p. 170.

[29] Cf. Jeschke, *Prometeo*, pp. 220f.

[30] "Eine Autobiographie", p. 52; the following ibid., on the link between Jabès and Hölderlin cf. ibid., p. 119.

[31] Zender in a letter of 25 January 2008 to Karin Dahlke.

representation with the particular world of thought of this piece - which seems all the more obvious as it has always been part of Nono's composing to reflect on the specific world-related contexts of the texts used (and thereby differ from classical setting to music). One can also think here of those literary interpretations that are based on Hölderlin's particularly pronounced awareness of the connections between Greek antiquity and Christianity as well as his own time. This is precisely what *Prometeo* seems to react to. And the play is far removed from Hölderlin's understanding of history in any form of coherence or harmonization.

Friedrich Nietzsche also comes to mind here, especially as Nono cited his writings in connection with *Prometeo* as well as those of Walter Benjamin as an intellectual starting point and source of inspiration for the "search for new 'laws' "[32] and, moreover, both authors referred to Hölderlin. In view of the many magical and suggestive moments on a textual and tonal level, Nietzsche's poem *Der Wandrer* is particularly suitable as a point of reference, which was important for Nono and appears in many places in the sketches for *Prometeo*.[33]

One interpretation of this reference can be directed towards the courage to enter into danger accentuated in this poem. In *Prometeo*, this accentuation can be related in a special way to the dimension of the magic. In addition to the content, however, this also refers to the musical level, such as the use of barely audible moments or suggestive consonant sounds or the unusual use of time. All of this is, to put it pointedly and in the spirit of Nietzsche's *Wanderer*, as risky as it is indispensable.[34] The same applies to the danger reflected in the poem, which is associated with deviating from familiar paths, with looking into the abyss and at the same time with temptations. And it is precisely in this respect that it is close to Hölderlin's often quoted *Patmos* Hymn. I mention this here also because the sketches for *Prometeo* contain a clear indication that Nono obviously had this line of thought associated with Nietzsche and Hölderlin in mind and also sought to link it with Benjamin: "Augenblick --- Jetztzeit --- Gefahr (Hölderlin)", it says here. [35]

[32] Cf. Matteo Nanni / Rainer Schmusch (eds.), *Incontri. Luigi Nono im Gespräch mit Enzo Restagno*, Hofheim 2004, p. 110. Nono's library contains numerous books by and about Nietzsche.

[33] Cf. for example the sketches for the work, which can be found in the Archivio Luigi Nono under the number 51.05.04/01-04.

[34] Cf. its significant beginning directed towards the will to knowledge "'No more path! Abyss to the left and deathly silence!' So, would you have it! From the path thy will departed!"

[35] Cf. Archivio Luigi Nono, collection "Prometeo".

As is well known, Nono reflected on the thinking of Hölderlin and Nietzsche, and the same applies to Nietzsche and probably also Wittgenstein, in an extensive dialogue with the philosopher and writer Massimo Cacciari. But it should not be forgotten, he always did this with his own musical means. And above all, they ensure that the often-emphasized archipelago structure and the magical and sometimes enigmatic space of experience it contains are not to be misunderstood as a diffuse mix or a murmuring, nebulous devotional work. On a musical level, there are significant counterpoints to the tendency towards the magical and contemplative on all levels, as well as to the almost indulgent abundance of lyricism and allusions in the libretto. Nono avoids broad brushstrokes as well as common strategies of spiritual or even religious composition.[36] It should also be mentioned at this point that in the 1980s Nono set out in search of alternatives to spiritual music that was simply faith-based. During this period, in which he also intensively studied some of Franz Rosenzweig's writings, he expressed an explicit interest in the Hebrew chant tradition and its microtonality; Nono even spoke pointedly of a "culture of listening", which was opposed to a "culture of faith"[37].

From here, it is not difficult to establish a link to the idea of the "tragedy of hearing" realized with *Prometeo*. And this applies to all levels of this piece. Particularly characteristic and at the same time probably one of the reasons for the long compositional process, characterized by revisions and changes of plan, is the way in which the texts and sounds operate with very different degrees of presence. The piece proves itself here (as on all levels) to be a strategy of the finest settings, veils, ambivalences and refractions. It is precisely in these ways that it realizes Nono's idea of understanding texts as a means of illumination or even provocation. And it offers not only evocative and suggestive moments, but also calm, simple, open, highly fragile and at the same time illuminating and insightful ones. I would like to conclude with two quotations: The first of the two is by Nono himself (and dates from 1987): "I could say with Arnold Schönberg that at the end of every work I want more than ever to breathe the air of other planets."[38] And just three years later Helmut Lachenmann wrote in his obituary of Luigi Nono, to describe the special nature of the aspect of inwardness that emerges:

"His later works conjure up, more consciously than his earlier ones and yet at the same time clarifying their messages, that inwardness from which the realities that characterise our existence, the inner and outer ones,

[36] Cf. also the thoughts on the spiritual or even theological aspect of listening in: Nanni, *Politik des Hörens*, p. 215

[37] Cf. "An Autobiography", pp. 108f.

[38] „Eine Autobiographie", p. 86.

are ultimately determined. Hölderlin, Nietzsche, but also the great philosophers of religion characterised his thinking - basically from the very beginning, but even more decisively since the late seventies."[39]

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SCHÖNBERG AS A FILM MUSIC COMPOSER: *MOSES UND ARON* (1975) BY JEAN-MARIE STRAUB AND DANIÈLE HUILLET

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SUMMARY. The article discusses the issue of using Arnold Schoenberg's music as film music in the adaptation of his opera *Moses und Aron* by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. The article examines the film soundtrack, by using audiovisual analysis tools, trying to answer the question whether the attempt to adapt avant-garde music to the language of cinema was successful or not. In the further part of the article, the authors relate the results of this analysis to Schoenberg's musical philosophy and musical aesthetics.

Keywords: Schoenberg, opera, *Moses und Aron*, film, film music

Introductory remarks

The subject of our paper will be music film *Moses und Aron* (or *Aron und Moses*, since that's the version of the title one can meet in some reviews), a piece of two French directors, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. It's worth noting that there is not the only production of this type made by the eccentric pair of directors, known for their radically leftist views and a rather unusual in Western cinema approach to the music. Just before the piece in question they made also short movie entitled *Einleitung zu Arnold Schoenbergs "Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielscene"*, and two years after *Moses und Aron* an adaptation of Schoenberg's one-act comic opera *Von Heute auf Morgen* was also produced. Of this entire "Schoenberg trilogy", as we may call it, *Moses und Aron* is the most extensive (107 minutes) and probably the most remarkable work. The film aroused some interest and was even shown at the Cannes Film Festival in 1975 but wasn't entered into main competition[3].

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[3] Feisst, Sabine M. „Arnold Schoenberg and the Cinematic Art" in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 83(1), 1999 (pp. 93–113), p. 107.

Film music and its interpreting: basic notions

Treating Schoenberg's music as film music is of course for many reasons problematic, if only because the composer himself had an ambivalent attitude to cinema, although he made several attempts to collaborate with some film studios. Theodor W. Adorno called these attempts "brief flirtations"[4] and he even mentions kind of humiliation that Schoenberg suffered from film producers and directors who obviously couldn't accept the fact that composer demanded full control over the actors and that he wanted to make sure they would follow the score's detailed instructions[5], The issue of Schoenberg's attitude towards film is described in quite detail by, among others, Sabine Feisst[6]. For Schoenberg, however, unlike for Adorno himself, who was influenced by the radical leftist environment of the Frankfurt School, film probably wasn't especially important: because he wasn't so much interested in the potential possibilities of influencing a mass audience. It's even more intriguing that the pair of directors decided to reach for Schoenberg's pieces, which is full of almost mystical reflection – so it doesn't really suit radical leftist ideology[7].

First, however, we need to establish in what sense we will speak of Schoenberg's music as film music. We can understand this term – film music – in two ways: first, as music composed specifically for cinema (and in this case, this music is subject to some set of regulations, the most important of which probably are conventions associated with specific movie genres); second, simply as a music – whatever music – which has been used in a movie.

In this second sense, of course, absolutely any music can become film music under certain conditions. Contemporary Western cinema is not limited in this respect by any restrictions, apart from those resulting from the conventions of different film genres themselves and the music typical of them, but these conventions are nowadays treated freely.

Moreover, avant-garde or, more general, non-tonal music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries used to be also part of the cinema repertoire. But in the case of the movie in question the situation is quite unusual, because it's an extremely faithful adaptation – in terms of both score and libretto – of Schoenberg's opera piece. Paradoxically, this seems to be the biggest analytical and interpretative problem of this movie. As far as we

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4 McCann, Graham. "New Introduction" in Theodor W. Adorno, Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films*. New York: Continuum, 2005 (pp. XVII–XLIX), p. XVIII.

5 Ibidem, p. XX.

6 Feisst, S. M. 1999. Op. cit., pp. 93–113.

7 The subject of mysticism of original *Moses und Aron* has been well described by Mark Berry. See Berry, Mark. "Arnold Schoenberg's "Biblical Way": From "Die Jakobsleiter" to "Moses und Aron"" in *Music & Letters*, Vol. 89(1), 2008 (pp. 84–108).

know, only its first scene with the motto**,** taken from the Old Testament, Book of Exodus, doesn't come from Schoenberg – the short citation referring to the story told in Schoenberg's libretto.

We want, however, to return to the problematic nature of this adaptation: opera is, in general, very difficult to be adapted to the shape of the movie. Unlike the musical, where the transfer from the theatre stage to the screen resulted in maintaining the status of this genre as a popular and mass art, which was the very reason for the musical's existence from the very beginning, the situation of opera is way more complicated. During hundreds of years of its evolution into various subgenres, its status changed and evaluated into something what we call nowadays "classical music" or "art music" – although these terms are quite general and superficial. There is no doubt that this change in the status of opera began to occur in the 19th century, in Germany – it was then that, in a sense, "art music" was "invented" since Beethoven's times – and this process came to an end with the rise of the modernist avant-garde.

That is why, in the case of transferring an opera to the screen as a film adaptation, we must reckon with the fact that all of its essential aesthetic and conceptual assumptions, such as the relationship between words and music (because it used to be the main subject of interest in the theoretical discourse surrounding opera through the centuries) will be from then on subordinated to the overriding principle of cinema – which is visuality. Seldom happens in cinema such a situation when the image is secondary to the sound. Such cases exist, e.g. Oskar Fischinger's films or Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, but even in these rare cases, viewers usually have an illusory sense of the secondary nature of the musical element to the image. This is how cinema works: the visual element always has a stronger impact than audial element.

Of course, we must distinguish between simple recording a theatre performance and giving it an audiovisual form from a film adaptation of an opera, such as *Moses und Aron*. The difference is outlined at the very level of concept: the aim of the former text is most often the simple popularisation and redistributing the opera, using some simple cinema tools to make opera more attractive and more readable for the contemporary recipient. The latter type of text is no longer, in a sense, the property of the composer, because the director is responsible for the final conceptual shape of the work. This is a very interesting situation because the composer of the piece thus becomes, willingly or unwillingly, the composer of film music, which means that from then on, the researcher will be asking completely different kinds of questions about Schoenberg's work.

Our task is to look how the accents are distributed between image and music in Straub and Huillet's movie. Later we will try to apply to this analysis some concepts used by musicologists in Schonberg's context. For better clarity, we will do it separately, in two steps.

Moses und Aron (1975) – movie analysis

In the first shot, we see a half-close-up of the silhouette of Moses**.** He is turned away from the viewer, talking to his God, whose voice – as we know – takes the form of a choir. Only along with the words "Meine Zunge ist ungelenk: ich kann denken, aber nicht reden" ("My tongue is clumsy: I can think, but not speak"[8]) does the camera turn away from Moses (who is still filmed partly from behind, in half-profile) and slowly moves to the stairs and further, to the desert landscape, trees, rocks and a serene sky.

The camera moves in a semicircle (which is very characteristic of this whole movie and is also very important), along the horizon line, and on the last words of the first scene it stops on a longer shot of a double hill (while Aaron's name is mentioned for the first time in the libretto). Only when camera moves, the viewer gets the impression that the music somehow predominates the film image. Previously, this impression was partially eliminated, because the static image, frozen on the figure of Moses, gave the strong feeling that we were watching a filmed opera theatre, not a music film. From this point on, Schoenberg's music will start to be somewhat problematic.

The movie is clearly divided into acts and scenes, according to Schoenberg's piece. Among other things, there are dark brown or lilac panels marking the transitions between almost all parts. These panels look quite anachronistic, like those in the early years of early cinema development. They also serve as a lowered curtain during the instrumental parts of the opera [e.g. 0,10,50–0,11,45][9], or during a two minutes long choir interlude between acts [0,47,20–0,49,20], or even in the middle of the scene [0,57,27–0,59,54], completely out of blue, which makes a particularly strange impression. Sometimes they are absurdly extended, but sometimes they are shortened to the little snapshots, inserted with the clear intention of remaining, again, according to Schoenberg's original concept.

In general, the whole movie shots are very long and very static: half close ups on the faces of both characters, and usually in the same way and from the same perspective: for example, in the first act, Aaron is captured

[8] All translations from German to English – M.L.

[9] All movie examples timing according to the version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS1RS8biUsg [access: 27.02.2025].

primarily from a half-profile**,** and Moses from the front**.** So, the directors' task is doubly difficult, firstly because of the "regular" difficulties resulting from the very fact of filming the opera, and secondly, because original Schoenberg's piece is also extremely static[10]. We can therefore say that the directors adapt to this slow development of the action and don't try to make it more dynamic. For example, the first scene of the second act, apart from the last verse of the choir, consists almost entirely of one long shot, lasting three and a half minutes and showing a half close up of Aaron standing in front of the geometrical entrance to the cave**.** The last scenes of the movie are constructed in a very similar way: the dialogue between Moses and Aaron in the finale of the second act and in the whole third act – unfinished, as we know, by Schoenberg, so consistently it contains only text. Scenes in question show only and exclusively the faces of both interlocutors in very long shots, and the last act consists only of two static shots: one horizontal (with Aaron lying on the ground and tied up) and one vertical (with Moses standing, leaning on his rod).

Starting with the ending of the first act, the strategy of the directors becomes clear: it consists in the most static and monotonous filming as possible, with strong focus on details, in portrait-like half close ups, with an extremely minimalistic, even ascetic movie space, which makes the entire movement of the film rest on the dense and rich in references and meanings Schoenberg's music – even if potential of this music for obvious reasons can't be fully exploited.

And we could assume that much more appropriate and intuitive directing technique would be to try to liven up the image to the maximum, through for example frequent changes of perspective, angle of screening, zooming in and out. In this way, the point of reference also changes, and we can look at the cinematic reality from the perspective of different characters. Instead, here, the outside viewer's perspective is preserved for most of the time, and the camera rotates primarily in a semicircle (parts of a circle), which is essentially a metaphorical recreation of the opera theatre stage semicircle (e.g. 0,38,45–0,39,30). So, individual characters are also captured in such a way as if many different viewers were looking at them from different places in the traditionally constructed auditorium of an opera theatre.

The other problem are stage directions of libretto. Schoenberg provided his libretto with detailed stage directions, and one could say that Schoenberg in a sense almost transferred fragments of the stage directions to the vocal parts (for example, when choir describes approaching Moses and Aaron,

[10] It was first projected as an oratorio, and sometimes is called an opera sacra, see Berry, M. 2008. Op. cit., p. 85; Kurth, Richard. "Immanence and Transcendence in "Moses und Aron"" in Jennifer Shaw, Joseph Auner (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Schoenberg*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010 (pp. 177–190), p. 177.

how they look, how they move and so on), but do the directors use this libretto's device in a cinematic way? Absolutely not. Nothing like this happens, the shots are, again, long and static**.** Straub and Huillet in general renounce – and consistently so – the implementation of Schoenberg's detailed stage directions. Particularly extensive ones appear in the multi-part third scene of the second act – to such a degree of detail that in the scene of the sacrifice of four naked girls, the composer made the following remark: "nackt, insoweit es die Gesetze und Notwendigkeiten der Bühne erlauben und erfordern" ("naked, as far as the laws and necessities of the stage allow and require"). It's true that this third scene is a slightly more dynamic part of the movie, in general, but still Schoenberg's stage directions weren't considered. And, of course, we can say these are directions intended for stage work, not for the movie, but the problem is that the text of the libretto, although extensive and deep, can't provide much other inspiration in terms of building the cinematic space. Mark Berry says even that the location of the opera is abstract[11].

But, the geometric, sparse camerawork, extracting the circles, the rectangles and rhombuses from the film space, seems to serve Schoenberg's aesthetic well. Not only the elements of the diegetic space, but even the arrangement of the characters within it is subordinated to the principles of absolute regularity and even kind of architectural rhythm**.** Of course, this is only a symbolic reference, but Schoenberg himself referred to geometry rather superficially, as Mitchell Ash points out[12].

The characters of the movie are usually shown isolated, distance from each other, even settled in the group, set in an empty and vast space**,** yet, this empty and vast space is also consistently limited, creating something like an amphitheater stage, fenced with some kind of wall. Though this wall is not entirely captured within the diegesis, so in principle the elements of the enclosure are partially hidden from the viewer. As we said, it looks more like an amphitheater stage than a desert, reminding us again of the movie's theatrical connotations. Very rarely do directors take the characters beyond this limited space.

We will discuss now the main screening technique, which, as was told above, is based on very long shots. Some examples are truly astonishing: almost two-minute shot of the snake into which Moses' rod has turned**,** over half-minute shot of Moses' left hand covered with leprosy. In the third scene of the second act, instead of the expected dance scene, we see just such a

[11] Berry, M. 2008. Op. cit., p. 92.

[12] Ash, Mitchell G. "Multiple Modernisms in Concert: The Sciences, Technology and Culture in Vienna around 1900" in Robert Bud, Paul Greenhalgh, Frank James, and Morag Shiach (eds.), *Being Modern: The Cultural Impact of Science in the Early Twentieth Century*. London: UCL Press, 2018 (pp. 23–39), p. 33.

long shot of a slaughtered ox lying on the altar. There are other examples: the altar steps, the golden calf**,** the fire burning in the darkness**,** a hill looming in the darkness**,** a man waiting on a guard**.** These shots, lasting usually about twenty seconds/half a minute, but sometimes even more than two minutes, are focused on details, which are drawn out in quite an incomprehensible way, and they significantly affect the convention of the entire movie, because at times it oscillates towards something like dreamlike psychedelia. Close ups on details are, however, a very important element, because they remind us of the cinematic nature of the movie – a nature that can be forgotten at times.

The same can be said about the worm's eye perspective and the bird's eye perspective shots – the latter especially in the second scene of the second act. The choir is most often filmed from a bird's eye view, which most likely has a specific meaning**.** Like Schoenberg, directors use *turba* as in traditional passion – as a symbolic exponent of collective opportunistic views, unstable and changeable, but at the same time easy to predict because they are conservative. Of course, looking from above also allows for the isolation or loneliness of the framed figure to be more strongly emphasized (because there is more empty space visible than in the case of a straight shot). And this is probably the reason why in the second scene of the second act, Aaron, who persuades the Israelites to construct a golden calf, is filmed in this very way, since he feels confused and terrified by Moses' prolonged absence.

Very characteristic is the almost complete lack of sounds from the world presented in the movie, from diegesis. As is known, the film's soundtrack is normally divided into three parts: aforementioned sounds of diegesis; dialogues; and music. In this case, music occupies the film exclusively. There are only three moments when we can hear diegesis, and the first one is the sound of Moses' rod hitting the ground. The next one will appear only in the third scene of the second act, when the directors eliminate the music for long twenty seconds so that the sound of blood being poured into a vessel on the altar can be heard [1,23,15–1,23,45].

Very rarely does something happen here that normally is standard in contemporary cinema, that is, combining different elements of the soundtrack – for example, treating the sounds of diegesis as if they were elements of the musical accompaniment. Here, directors don't choose to interfere with Schoenberg's score. An exception is a fragment of the third scene of the second act, where the sound of pebbles and some objects rolling and falling from a rock, refers to the current musical accompaniment [1,24,00–1,24,30]. In general, directors remain completely indifferent to the elements of musical visualization contained in the score. As if in contrast to its complexity and density, the image is very austere, simple, and the only clear sign for the viewer are the geometric forms and some legible details (a snake, a hand, a bottle of water turned into blood, an ox, altar steps).

Only the first act of the opera brings a complete change of perspective: the camera's eye moves beyond the closed circle along which it has been constantly circulating until now and takes in a wide general shot, with the intense colors of blue water and yellow sand – while the chorus sings of the hope of freedom**.** The same colors – gold and blue – will dominate in the scene of the sacrifice to the golden calf, but also the ending of the second act. In turn, part of the third scene of the second act takes place in almost complete darkness, from which only the illuminated, static silhouettes of the characters emerge. Basically, this contrast of bright light and deep darkness, together with the geometrical shapes, are the most characteristic features of this ascetically arranged world of the movie.

References to Schoenberg's musical aesthetics and philosophy

Such a strategy of screening leads us in a sense to question about understanding Schoenberg's ideas. During Aaron's last discussion with Moses, the latter can be heard off-screen, but the viewer can see Aaron's face almost all the time. The procedure is then reversed: we look at Moses' face when Aaron is speaking. We can understand it as a kind of reminder of Berry's interesting thesis that Moses and Aaron are in fact two activities of the same character[13]. Perhaps Berry thinks so because Moses calls Aaron "sein Mund" ("his mouth") in the final monologue of the second act (Aaron also calls himself "Moses' mouth").

If we agree that Schoenberg's aesthetic vision has been radicalized since the 1930s, along with his political views, starting precisely with *Moses und Aron*, as Leon Botstein says[14], we can assume that for equally radical directors Moses is, in a sense, the incarnation of Schoenberg himself, when he obsessively speaks of fidelity to the idea (*Gedanken*) and of faith in abstraction without the need to appeal to sensuality. This is an opinion that Edward Latham would probably agree with, since he suggests something similar in his analysis of *Moses und Aron*, but at the same time writes that in some aspects Schoenberg could identify also with Aron[15]. Lantham goes even further, writing that while Moses embodies a pure idea, Aron – the very

[13] Berry, M. 2008. Op. cit., p. 92.

[14] Botstein, Leon. "Schoenberg and the Audience: Modernism, Music, and Politics in the Twentieth Century" in Walter Frisch (ed.), *Schoenberg and His World*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999 (pp. 19–54), p. 45.

[15] Latham, Edward D. "The Prophet and the Pitchman: Dramatic Action and Its Musical Elucidation in "Moses und Aron", Act I, Scene 2" in Russell Berman, Charlotte M. Cross (eds.), *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*. Taylor & Francis, New York, 2013 (pp. 131–158), pp. 132–134.

possibility of expressing this idea, translating it into a language, which is legible to the recipient[16]. In the libretto text we read precisely that Moses represents the word, while Aaron translates it into an image (Aaron: "So musste ich ihm ein Bild zu schauen geben" / Moses: "Dein Bild verblich vor meinem Wort!" [Aaron: "So I had to show him an image" / Moses: "Your image faded before my word!"].

However, does Schoenberg not fail in this second function, function of translating an idea into readable language, as Adorno claimed, criticizing him for his hermeticism and opacity in *Philosophy of New Music*? As we remember, in the last words of the completed second act, Moses cries out in despair "O Wort, du Wort, das mir fehlt!" ("O word, you word that I lack!"). In any case, the film undoubtedly captures this relationship between the two characters, hence the technique we mentioned – when the voice of one character is superimposed on the image of the other and vice versa, and this is a technique used very consistently and repetitively by directors.

On the other hand, the film eliminates quite effectively all the most "operatic" or "dramaturgic" elements of Schoenberg's work. Bluma Goldstein considers the group scenes of the second act to be such[17]. In the movie they are not so dramaturgical or operatic. Once again: Schoenberg left very precise stage directions, which in the second act focus primarily on the collective hero. Probably all researchers of Schoenberg's opera notice that the concept of nation, i.e. Israel, is extremely important to the composer. This element was also eliminated from the movie. Because, yes, there is a choir group, and even at one point two choirs, but in the second act they sing primarily from off-screen, and we see only some individual characters, often situated in relation to each other at regular geometrical distances**.**

We will return to the principle of geometry. The geometric figure is one of the axes of the movie's construction, or at least it determines the work of the camera, which is in fact the essence of the film. The camera moves along the parts/arcs of a circle, the characters are situated linearly relative to each other or arranged in figures**,** the presented world includes a semicircular amphitheatrical or temple stage (we are not sure), the altar, the altar steps and the doorway to the cave are rectangular in shape. As Ash claims, this geometric order is specific to the entire concept of Schoenberg's music. He studied the works of Ernst Mach and was certainly influenced by Mach's students, namely Guido Adler and David Joseph Bach[18]. Ash suggests

[16] Ibidem, p. 134.

[17] Goldstein, Bluma. "Schoenberg's "Moses und Aron": A Vanishing Biblical Nation" in Russell Berman, Charlotte M. Cross (eds.), *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*. Taylor & Francis, New York, 2013 (pp. 159–192), pp. 178–180.

[18] Ash, M. G. 2018. Op. cit., pp. 33–35.

similarities between Mach's pure and tempered tuning diagram and Schoenberg's twelve-ton disk[19]. Without a doubt, this figure of the circle is important to Schoenberg, and this has been preserved in the movie and is one of the most important construction principles of it.

The fragmentation of the action also serves Schoenberg's idea, who, as Berry notes, in his way of treating myth is much more romantic than enlightened. Berry means here the way of telling this myth. He refers to Walter Benjamin's well-known idea, according to which a quasi-historical, realistic and coherent story in fact "kills" the essence of myth – which is not served at all by verbal interpretation, extensive and detailed explanation. It needs to be obscure, in a way[20].

From this perspective, Schoenberg's opera appears in two ways: on the one hand, it is an incredibly "talkative" piece, it abounds in the ideas, it is burdened with reflection that the listener is unable to assimilate. On the other – it explains nothing or almost nothing, presents us with an unsolved riddle.

The problem the directors faced was not even the difficulty of filming the opera itself, but it's rather something more like Federico Fellini's problem with film adaptation of *Satyricon* by Petronius – the enormous difficulty of transferring a heavy philosophical charge to the screen. Hence the enormous load of symbolism in the movie, even where Schoenberg himself hadn't anticipated it, noting instead in the stage directions plenty of detailed visual references and stage images. As we said before, the directors mostly ignore them.

Because Schoenberg's music, every bar, every note, as Berry writes, "is derived from the initial note-row, just as everything ultimately must come from the Eternal One"[21], the image adapts to this construction principle by searching for individual details that return in subsequent scenes. These details, on which the viewer stops his/her gaze, have the nature of leitmotifs. Usually, however, it is film music that adapts the rule of leitmotifs (this is one of the most useful techniques of composing film music, in general), and here it has been transferred to the image. In a sense the image and music exchange places and functions in this movie, and, quite counterintuitively to the natural relationship between image and music, the film structure imitates the musical structure. As Michael Cherlin explains,

> Symmetrical pitch arrays, conceived of as forming "inversional balances" about intervallic centers, have long been recognized as a fundamental and pervasive component of Schonberg's compositional language. Pitch mirrors

[19] Ibidem, pp. 34–35.
[20] Berry, M. 2008. Op. cit., p. 93.
[21] Ibidem, p. 95.

> are conspicuous and fairly ubiquitous among the musical structures found in *Moses und Aron*, and they function […] to express or to help to express specific dramatic events. Thus, the correlation of musical structure and dramatic function for pitch mirrors is particularly important[22].

Cherlin thus analyses and classifies different types of such mirror interval structures. What Cherlin calls "mirror imagery"[23] can be also translated into the language of movie, based on parallel, symmetrical shots**.** "Mirror imagery is the means for expressing self-knowledge bound up, through reflection, with knowledge of the »other«"[24]. The principle of symmetry and the dialectical distribution of forces is also connected with this idea of mirroring. As we know, Schoenberg called it *Grundgestalt*. In another text, Cherlin writes:

> In Schoenberg's context, centrifugal forces are those that require expansion; […] they constitute the potential for development within a musical idea. Centripetal forces are those that lead to coherence; they hold the idea together and make us perceive it as a unity. […] In Schoenberg's conception, it is the dialectical opposition of the forces – successfully realized by the composer who brings them to their full potential – that results in the musical work[25].

Since this principle of mirroring also transfers to the level of action and the relations between characters, it becomes relatively easy to transfer it to the screen. The situation is different with movie space. It's also difficult to say whether the directors delved into Schoenberg's philosophy of music, or they acted instinctively, based on the shape of the libretto, but anyway we observe consistent actions in favour of making this world rigorously coherent. Like, the central location of the camera in the movie picture – it moves most often, as we have already said, from the centre of the circle along the fragments of arcs and rarely goes beyond what is determined by the radius of this circle. The world presented in the movie is strictly integrated, thanks to, among other things, its asceticism, and it's extremely rare for us to escape from its limited space. Such exceptions occur in sequences dominated by darkness – as we mentioned, these are only fragments of the central, third scene of the second act, presenting an erotic-thanatoid orgy. Darkness is the

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[22] Cherlin, Michael. "Dramaturgy and Mirror Imagery in Schönberg's "Moses und Aron": Two Paradigmatic Interval Palindromes" in *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 29(2), 1991 (pp. 50–71), p. 50.
[23] Ibidem.
[24] Ibidem, p. 51.
[25] Cherlin, M. "Dialectical Opposition in Schoenberg's Music and Thought" in *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 22(2), 2000 (pp. 157–176), p. 170.

easiest way to lead the viewer beyond this rigorous space, although it's also an escapist method. Even the horizon line is limited, as the action appears to take place in some valley framed by forested hills.

Conclusions

As we remember, in the last words of the completed second act, Moses cries out in despair "O Wort, du Wort, das mir fehlt!". These could be the words of Schoenberg himself. If we return to our earlier thought that Aaron is to be the interpreter for Moses of his deep, complex and essentially inexpressible idea into an image, then it is in this very role of interpreter that the directors of the movie *Moses und Aron* put themselves (they tried to be "Aaron" for "Moses" – Schoenberg). They undertook a battle, lost from the outset, to translate into a clear and simple, yet moving image, what is truly profound and moving in Schoenberg's music.

But it cannot be done. The problem is that the film doesn't have the tools to conduct such a discourse. Rather, it constructs a completely new reality, to which Schoenberg's music doesn't fit. And this is not because the directors didn't try to implement the composer's ideas into their image – because we know they did. Nor is it because Schoenberg's music, being too hermetic, is not suitable for cinema. After all, we have examples of very efficient use for the cinema, and with excellent effect, of the music of even avant-garde composers of the 20th and the 21st centuries. The main problem is that – probably guided by the idea of performing a kind of tribute to Schoenberg – the directors didn't decide to treat his music as film music in the slightest. Moreover, they even eliminated almost all elements of the soundtrack that could disturb Schoenberg's composition. They managed to create a conceptually coherent whole, with an image underpinning the musical narrative, but this image in no way updates the original message of this composition, and it doesn't activate the mythical story about the dual nature of human, human's identity and human's relationship to the mystery of metaphysics. The only impression the viewer gets is that in response to Schoenberg's formal and over-intellectualized music the directors were able to respond with an equally dry, precise and enigmatic image.

In this context, it's very meaningful that in the last scene of the second act, when in Schoenberg's piece Moses and Aron perceive the presence of God in the pillar of fire, in Straub and Huillet's movie this moment passes unnoticed. The camera moves indifferently over the monotonous landscape. For a moment, a ray of sunlight illuminates the forested mountainsides. God doesn't appear.

"Unvorstellbarer Gott! / Unaussprechlicher, vieldeutiger Gedanke! / Lässt du diese Auslegung zu? / Darf Aron, mein Mund, dieses Bild machen?" ["Unconceivable God! / Inexpressible, many-sided idea, / will you let it be so explained? / Shall Aaron, my mouth, fashion this image?"].

It seems that the answer to Schoenberg's question is negative.

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LUIGI NONO'S *IL CANTO SOSPESO* – A MODERN REPRESENTATION OF SACRIFICE

ȘTEFAN MILUTINOVICI[1], ALEXANDRA BELIBOU[2]

SUMMARY. In this article, we will explore Luigi Nono's *Il Canto Sospeso* as a modern representation of sacrifice, structured within the framework of total serialism. The piece highlights its textual foundation, which plays a central role in conveying the ideological message of the composition. The text is taken from *Lettere di condannati a morte della Resistenza europea* (1954), a collection of letters written by those sentenced to death during the European Resistance. The work is divided into four literary sections, each representing a transformation of the concepts of death and sacrifice: literary, realist, transitional, and compassionate. Through its serialist technique, Nono adapts the thematic elements of the text to the rigid and fearful context of the 20th century. The music not only enhances the text's meaning but also provides a modern and emotional interpretation of sacrifice, focusing on its psychological and personal impact rather than a historical narrative.

Keywords: Luigi Nono, Il Canto Sospeso, total serialism, sacrifice

1. Introduction

Considered one of the greatest Italian composers of the 20th century, Luigi Nono is one of the quintessential figures that shaped music in the post-war era. His masterful blending of complex compositional techniques and strong socio-political messages makes his music, though multilayered and abstract, a very powerful tool for the transmission of ideology.

Luigi Nono had a very political personality all his life and career. In his university days, during the Second World War, due to his sympathy towards left-wing socialist ideas, Nono joined the Italian antifascist resistance. After the war, he continued with his strong political positions and activism, his ideology

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turning towards radical left-wing political philosophy after joining the Italian Communist Party in 1952. Most of Nono's compositions carry a left-wing political message, focusing on themes such as class struggle and anti-imperialism. Nono saw no difference between art and politics, going as far as to perceive music as only a means to an end for the transmission of his revolutionary messages[3]. However, some of Nono's works go beyond the level of strict political messages and can provide the listener with powerful insights into philosophy and culture, as perceived by Nono[4].

The work discussed in this paper, "Il canto sospeso", is a perfect example of such a piece that carries meaning on multiple levels. Although it can be viewed as simply an anti-war "song", or just a serialist composition, in reality "Il canto sospeso" tells the story of how society in the post-war era would come to view the motifs of classical literature, especially the motifs of *death* and most of all *sacrifice*.

2. Overview of the Work

"Il canto sospeso" is a vocal-symphonic composition written by Luigi Nono between 1954 and 1956, which premiered on October 24, 1956, in Cologne, under the baton of composer and conductor Hermann Scherchen. The piece is scored for symphony orchestra, choir and three soloists: soprano, alto and tenor. The title of the piece, which can be translated into English as "song suspended" or "song interrupted", is inspired by the Italian translation of the poem "If we die" by the American communist activist Ethel Rosenberg, where the phrase "song unsung" was translated into Italian as "canto sospeso". The text of the work is based on a series of last letters of anti-fascist partisans in Europe during the Second World War[5].

Luigi Nono and other musicologists who have analyzed the work have referred to it as a "modern cantata". Although in terms of sound material and compositional style the work is by no means neoclassical, its form is nevertheless reminiscent of a cantata of the Baroque period. The work consists of 9 movements each with a different orchestral texture. There are pure instrumental movements such as 1, 4 and 8, pure chorale movements such as 2, accompanied choir movements such as 6 and 9, and accompanied solo voice movements such as 3, 5 and seven.

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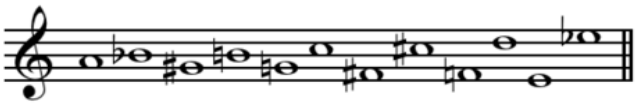
[3] Velasco-Pufleau, Luis. *On Luigi Nono's Political Thought: Emancipation Struggles, Socialist Hegemony and the Ethic Behind the Composition of Für Paul Dessau*. University of Michigan, 2018.

[4] Impett, Jonathan. *Routledge Handbook to Luigi Nono and Musical Thought*. Routledge, 2019.

[5] MacCallum, Emily. *The Impact of Listening to Luigi Nono's Il Canto Sospeso*. University of Toronto, 2019.

The piece is composed in the integral serialist style. For this, Nono uses a symmetrical series (tone row) containing iterations of all-interval series, also called a wedge series. This is made up of the sounds A, Bb, G#, B, G, C, F#, C#, F, D, E, Eb. This series forms a mode with the elements: {9, 10, 10, 8, 11, 7, 0, 6, 1, 5, 2, 4, 3} and with the structure: [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11].

E.g. 1



Tone row in "Il canto sospeso"

Being a symmetrical series, it can be divided into two chromatic hexachords, one ascending and one descending, both based on the first sound. Throughout the work, Nono employs all the variation procedures of the series, such as inversion, retrograde, retrograde-inversion, or fragmentation of the series into tetrachords, pentachords, or hexachords. The series is rarely deployed in its original complete form, with most sections of the work using permutations of the series as a basis[6].

The dynamics are also serial, each section utilizing permutations of the dynamic series:

E.g. 2

ppp	*p*	*mp*	*mf*	*f*	*ppp*	*ppp<f*	*f>ppp*	*ppp<mf*	*mf>ppp*	*p<f*	*f>p*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Dynamics series in "Il canto sospeso"

The note values are also serialized, but the form of the series of durations changes from section to section, with some sections dividing the instrumental vocal ensemble into several groups, each with its own series of durations. Luigi Nono also employs the technique of klangfarbenmelodie, or timbral serialism, in this composition, the melodic series being divided among several instruments, often resulting in a very airy orchestral texture. This serialization is also affected by the division of the ensemble into several voices, creating dense orchestral textures in the middle of the work, but still keeping the timbral series in each orchestral group.

[6] Bailey, Kathryn. "'Work in Progress': Analyzing Nono's 'Il Canto Sospeso." *Music Analysis*, vol. 11, no. 2/3, 1992, pp. 279–334. doi: 10.2307/854029.

Although Nono enjoyed great success following the publication of the work, and was praised by the publications of the time, his critics were in particular Theodor Adorno and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Both judged negatively the association of the text with the serial style of composition, Adorno likening the structural strictness of integral serialism to that of totalitarian ideologies, and Stockhausen believing that the writing of the work did not enhance the text and thus did not valorize the legacy of those cited either. Also, he argued further that Nono treats the text as a series of sounds rather than a libretto.

At first glance, "Il canto sospeso" may appear to be a highly fragmented work, a kind of 'suite of songs' with little connection between them, signifying a simple homage to the fighters of the anti-fascist resistance in Europe. But such a view risks losing sight of the subtext of the work. In order to reveal its subtext, the work must be seen as a whole, because it is not just a series of last words from one end to the other, but the very transfiguration of the motif of sacrifice in modern art.

3. Text Analysis and the Formation of Narrative Sections

As with most programmatic music, the text represents the main point of emphasis and in the case of "Il canto sospeso", the text is the main element responsible for carrying the ideological message of the piece. The text of "Il canto sospeso" is based upon a book published by the italian author and publisher Giulio Einaudi in 1954 called "*Lettere di condannati a morte della Resistenza europea*"[7]. The book was originally published in Italian and the text used by Nono in the piece was originally also in Italian, however in the piece's premiere in Cologne, the texts were translated in German.

To serve as the piece's libretto, Nono selected fragments from ten letters, written by one member of the Bulgarian anti-fascist resistance, named Anton Popov; three members of the Greek anti-fascist resistance, named: Andreas Likourinous, Elefthèrios Kiossès, and Konstantinos Sirbas; two members of the Ukrainian resistance, named: Ljubka Schewtzowa and Irina Malozon; one member of the Italian resistance, named: Eusebio Giambone; and three Jewish Holocaust victims named: Esther Srul; Elli Voigt and Chaim. At first glance, Nono's usage of these fragments of text might seem inconsistent, as some movements of the piece use the text of only one letter, such is the case of the second movement, while other movements use the text of multiple letters, such as the case of the 9th, where three letters are used. However, this

[7] Einaudi, Giulio, *Letters from Those Condemned to Death of the European Resistance*, Einaudi, 2017.

strange usage is clearly intentional, because the fragments of text are grouped according to their themes and meanings, not necessarily according to their authors. The amount of text used from every letter might also appear inconsistent, because while none of the letters are fully presented, Nono uses more lines from some of the letters than he does from others, but the amount of text that is used from every letter is chosen according to its meaning as well. Nono tries to create a uniform libretto, a universal letter based upon all the letters written, a letter, not necessarily about death, but more about the meaning of sacrifice.

Nono manages to achieve this uniformity by treating the different letters as paragraphs and phrases of an overarching text which can be viewed as a multifaceted presentation of the narrative trope of a personal sacrifice. Also, the fragments of text that Nono chooses to have a stronger poetic lyrical content, rather than a narrative one. All the lines of text have as a central element the death of the narrator, but they present different views of *death* and *sacrifice* as concepts, borrowing from different philosophical and literary views of these subjects. Thus, the text can be divided into 4 narrative sections, superimposed over the piece's musical movements.

The first lines of text appear in the second movement, where the choir sings the words from the letter of the Bulgarian Anton Popov that say: "*I die for a world that will shine with light of such strength and beauty that my sacrifice is nothing. For that world millions of men have died on the barricades and in war. I die for justice. Our ideas will triumph*". Then, in the third movement, we are presented with the words of the three Greek fighters, sang by a trio of voices: soprano, alto and tenor. Their words are as follows: "*...they are taking me to Kesariani for execution together with seven others. I die for liberty and country…*"; "*...today they will shoot us. We die as men for our country. Be worthy of us…*" and "*...they will hang me in the square because I am a patriot. Your son goes without hearing the bells of freedom…*". These two movements can be seen as a narrative chapter, in all three fragments of text chosen so far, the motif of *sacrifice* is represented as heroic, as being a necessary evil for a greater good, a death for an idea that is bigger than the person being sacrificed, an idea such as freedom, country, beauty, etc. In this section, the motive of sacrifice is still in its original form that can be found in classical literature, a sacrifice of the hero. This section can be referred to as the **literary section**.

The second narrative section begins with the 5th movement, after an orchestral intermezzo. It is in this section that the libretto takes a darker turn in the form of a tenor aria that uses the text from a letter of a young Jewish boy of only 14 years of age named Chaim, who was killed in the Pustkow concentration camp. His words are: "*...If the heavens were paper and all the seas of the world were ink, I could not describe my sufferings and all that I see around me. I say goodbye to all and weep…*". This harrowing narration continues into the next movement, movement 6a, where the choir sings the words of a Jewish woman

named Esther Srul, murdered in a synagogue in the Ukrainian town of Kowel. Her words, found on a letter under the floorboards of the synagogue are as follows: "*... the doors open. There are our murderers. Dressed in black. They chase us from the synagogue*". These texts represent a second narrative chapter, where death is no longer presented as a heroic sacrifice, but as an intense wave of pain and suffering, of fear and horror. Death is inescapable and it is in no way heroic, all the great ideals of the first narrative section are gone and all that is left is terror and agony. This section represents the narrative apex of the piece, where death and sacrifice, as narrative tropes, complete a process of rationalization and are stripped of all their previous historical, philosophical and cultural symbolism and thus *sacrifice* becomes only *death*. This section can be referred to as the **realist section**.

The third narrative section that begins in the second half of the 6th movement, movement 6b, comes as a strong thematic contrast to the second section. The female voices of the choir sing another phrase of the same letter as the one used in movement 6a, but the new phrase comes with a complete shift in tone and character. The words say: "*How hard it is to say goodbye for ever to such a good life!*". Unlike the previous sections, there is no break between the movements 6b and 7 and so the text seems continuous as well. Movement 7 represents a soprano aria that sings the words of the Ukrainian resistance fighter Ljubka Schewtzowa. Her words are as follows: "*...goodbye, Mother, your daughter Ljubka goes into the damp earth*". This narrative section is one of transition, where *death* and *sacrifice* begin their transfiguration, from the rationalist view of pain and suffering presented in the second section, to a more profound personal drama, that resonates at a human level. This section can be referred to as the **transitional section**.

The fourth and final narrative section is the one that coincides with the 9th and final movement of the piece. This is another a cappella choir movement, just like the second and it presents the words of the Italian resistance fighter Eusebio Giambone and of the Jewish German resistance fighter Elli Voigt. Their words are as follows: "*... I have no fear of death (…) I shall be calm and collected in front of the firing squad. Are they as tranquil as those whom they have condemned?*" and "*... I go with faith in a better life for you …*". This fourth narrative section represents the completion of the transfiguration of the previous narrative motifs. With this section, *death* becomes *sacrifice* again, by gaining a new meaning, a human meaning. It is no longer a death for grandiose ideals, but a death for someone else to have a better life. This section can be referred to as the **compassion section**.

The transformational perspective on the concepts of *death* and *sacrifice* is particularly fascinating, especially in how these two notions intertwine to shape the atmosphere following World War II. This fusion of death and sacrifice became central to the rebuilding of identities and cultures in post-war Europe.

These two concepts have been explored throughout the history of art, reflecting the evolving understanding of human suffering, devotion, and the pursuit of a better world[8].

4. The Connection Between the Text and the Music

Although serialist compositions can very rarely be described as descriptive, preferring abstract constructs to clear musical images, in the case of "Il canto sospeso" the music manages to work together with the narrative, striking the perfect balance between abstract and descriptive while also providing a new perspective on the message. Each of the piece's movements treat the connection between music and text in a different manner.

Movement 1 represents an instrumental introduction into the piece's atmosphere. In this section, Nono uses a very light orchestral texture, an orchestral lontano of sorts with long musical breaks in between the iterations of the series.

For the orchestration, Nono uses the technique of klangfarbenmelodie; instruments never play at the same time, their timbre being one of the serialized parameters. However, due to the short note durations and due to how quickly instruments follow one another, it creates an illusion of polyphony. This technique is used in multiple movements within the piece. This helps to create a sense of aimlessness, of a lack of clear musical direction. Musical time slows down and the listeners are left in a state of wandering, as they are about to witness the unfolding narrative.

Movement 2 is the first movement with text, reading from the letter of the Bulgarian Anton Popov. It is a purely vocal movement as the choir sings without any orchestral accompaniment. The mixed choir, composed of four voices: soprano, alto, tenor and bass, has each voice divided into two or three, thus creating a choir of 8, or even 10 voices. The klangfarbenmelodie returns in vocal form, as the timbre of the voices is serialized, however this section presents a very strong heterophonic aspect as well, sometimes multiple voices beginning a phrase on the same beat but singing with a slightly different rhythm.

Movement 3 features three solo voices (soprano, alto and tenor), integrated into the orchestra and used more as instruments than soloists, orchestration technique reminiscent of Gustav Mahler's later symphonies; however, in this piece the serialist technique is still preserved. The section maintains the same orchestral texture as the previous two, and the three voices sing fragments from the letters of the three members of the Greek resistance.

[8] Hughes, Derek, *Culture and Sacrifice,* Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Movement 4 represents the second purely instrumental movement, and it is similar in its sound and texture to the first, with only the addition of percussion instruments, such as the xylophone.

Movement 5 represents the beginning of the second narrative section and can be considered an emotional apex of the piece. The section represents an aria of the tenor soloist, who sings words from the letter of the young Holocaust victim Chaim. The orchestral part maintains the timbral serialism and texture of the previous section, but it is much quieter from a dynamic point of view, amplifying the tragic character.

Movement 6 is usually divided in two sections, due to its contrast of character. Movement 6a, beginning directly after movement 5, is in complete dynamic and textural contrast to the previous movements, the choir sings in fortissimo, accompanied by orchestral blasts of brass and timpani. In this movement the motif of death is reduced to its most visceral expression, as the choir sings the words of the holocaust victim Esther Srul.

In contrast, movement 6b almost seems as if it brings the piece to a standstill, through a subito piano of both the voices and orchestra. Almost like an echo, the voices sing a phrase from the same letter as before, the phrase: "*How hard it is to say goodbye for ever to such a good life!*", with which the third narrative section begins.

Movement 7 represents a continuation of movement 6b, the orchestral texture and dynamics remain the same, as they do for the female voices of the choir. They all accompany a solo soprano that sings the words of the Ukrainian resistance fighter Ljubka Schewtzowa. As it was the case with the tenor aria in movement 5, the soloist uses a classical bel canto vocal technique, rather than the more modern sprechstimme.

Movement 8 is the third and final instrumental movement that brings back the dense texture and militaristic character of the 6th movement, to represent in a way a new wave of fear, brought by death, as the motif of sacrifice has not reached its transfigured form yet.

Movement 9, the finale of the piece is an a cappella choral movement, similar to the second, with only a slight instrumental accompaniment from the timpani. This provides a rather subdued symphonic conclusion, especially following a much louder section 8, thus harkening back in a certain way to Tchaikovski and his 6th symphony, where the subdued finale brings a human element to the tragic theme. It is in this section that the motif of sacrifice gains its transfigured meaning, its human meaning, with the phrase: "*... I go with faith in a better life for you …*". By using just, the sound of the human voice, Nono amplifies the element of human connection, and thus the piece ends in a quiet diminuendo.

5. The meaning of "Il canto sospeso"

At first glance, the music might appear somewhat disconnected from the text, as its precise serialist structures seem to diminish the raw emotion of the words. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that the serialist technique serves to highlight the limitations imposed by fear and the phenomena surrounding death and sacrifice. The use of dynamics, timbres, shifting simultaneities, sound rarefactions, and their accumulation effectively gives voice to the thematic transformation of the text, allowing it to gain a musical meaning. Nono does not aim to provide an introspective musical portrayal of the minds of those who wrote the letters, but rather one of the minds of the witnesses. The emotions conveyed through the piece—restlessness, fear, and even anger—reflect those of the observer, not the executed, who seem to come to terms with their impending death. The suspended song is sung not by the ones who die, but by the ones who remain.

This work does not aim to present a programmatic portrayal; however, it does feature musical elements that can be interpreted as descriptive, adapted to the musical language of the 20th century. As an example, the heterophony of the voices evokes the sound of a funeral lament, in which all mourners grieve the same death, yet express their sorrow in distinct and individual ways. The timpani in the final section reinforces the slow, solemn rhythm of a funeral procession, further immersing the listener in the ceremonial atmosphere. As we bear witness to this funeral, we are invited to engage with the concept of sacrifice on a deeply personal, human level. By shifting away from a grand historical perspective, we can connect emotionally with the theme, ultimately respecting the significance of sacrifice. In line with Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran's assertion about modern music—that it represents "the secularization of the transcendent in a human drama"[9]—this piece can be understood as a reflection of this idea. Consequently, its overarching theme becomes the transfiguration of sacrifice within the framework of our own psychology.

6. Conclusion

In his essay *"Culture, Critique, and Society"*[10], the German philosopher Theodor Adorno asserted that "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbarism," arguing that such an immense crime against humanity leaves no space for art in the traditional sense. From this perspective, any cultural archetype might

[9] Cioran, Aurel. *Cioran și muzica* (*Cioran and Music*). Humanitas Press, 2016.
[10] Adorno, Theodor, *Prisms*. The MIT Press, 1983, p. 34.

appear obsolete in the modern era. However, Luigi Nono succeeds in *"writing poetry after Auschwitz"* by transfiguring the meaning of a poetic motif and aligning it with a modern musical language. His adoption of serial techniques contrasts with both classical and romantic musical traditions, and it stands in direct opposition to the music used by totalitarian regimes of the 20th century for propaganda purposes. The use of serialism serves to underscore the themes of death and sacrifice, as these concepts are brought to life through the composer's innovative approach, presenting a modern representation of sacrifice. A post-Romantic or neoclassical composition centered on the same subject would likely have struggled to convey the message as powerfully as it would have been limited by the inherent sentimentality of those styles.

As this analysis has demonstrated, Nono's work can be interpreted on multiple levels, with its central theme offering a profound exploration of human psychology. This theme remains strikingly relevant today, as many cultural archetypes are either undergoing transformation or are in the process of being redefined. Understanding the transfiguration of these archetypes is crucial for comprehending humanity's trajectory moving forward, from a literary perspective to a compassion one, learning from reality and suffering.

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MUSIC AS SILENCE: SCHÖNBERG, NONO, AND THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE

PETER NELSON[1]

SUMMARY. Arnold Schönberg and Luigi Nono stand as emblems for a certain sort of difficulty in music, a difficulty charted by Schönberg himself in his essay, "How One Becomes Lonely."[2] But this "difficulty" may have a purpose for us, at this time, either intended or unintended. Here I approach the "difficult" music of these two composers through the concept of *experience*, as described and discussed by Giorgio Agamben. Agamben's thesis concerning the formation of human subjects through a process of *infancy* is outlined, and related to the work of these two specific composers, in order to think about the place and function of music in a noisy world: what possibilities does this particular, "difficult" music hold for us, now, in the middle of multiple and ongoing, existential and planetary crises?

Keywords: Schönberg, Nono, Agamben, Anthropocene, experience, silence

The title of this paper, *Music as Silence*, is a sort of inversion of the formulation made by John Cage in the 1940s, when he pointed out that– perceptually speaking– "there is no such thing as silence,"[3] as he tried to demonstrate with his work *4'33"* in which "silence" turns out to be *music*. How could music turn out to be silence? Particularly the music of Arnold Schönberg, whose work is most often discussed under the banner of "expressionism", even when Theodor Adorno describes his works as "case studies".[4] Luigi Nono has a more considered approach to silence as a component

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[2] Schönberg, Arnold. "How One Becomes Lonely (1937)." In *Style and Idea*, ed. by Leonard Stein, trans. by Leo Black, Faber and Faber, London, 1975, pp. 30-52.

[3] Cage, John. "45' For a Speaker." In *Silence*. Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, NH, 1961, p. 191.

[4] Adorno, Theodor W. "Expressionism as Objectivity." In *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster, Sheed and Ward, London, 1973, p. 49.

of a musical work, for example in the structure of *Prometeo* (1984), and in the string quartet *Fragmente–Stille, An Diotima* (1980), in which silence, or near silence–in the colloquial sense of breaks in the flow of the musical sound–plays a considerable ethical and poetic role. My inversion of Cage certainly takes a cue from Nono's use of silence as a sort of ethical frame; a way of making musical sound speak more authentically by disrupting its normative flow and questioning its threshold of audibility. However, what I want to think about here is the place and function of music–particularly certain musics: in this case the works of Arnold Schönberg and Luigi Nono–in a noisy world. What possibilities does music hold for us, now, in the middle of multiple and ongoing, noisy, existential crises in the history of the planet?

The phrase, "the history of the planet" might seem a little grandiose, but our era–the era of the Anthropocene,[5] in which the impact of human life on earth has resulted in changes to its constitution equivalent to the geological transformations of previous eras–our era is one in which the "history of the planet" has become our single most pressing concern.[6] As Claude Levi-Strauss points out, "history is … never history, but history-for …"[7] and it is the "for" that I want to think about here. What could a historical consideration of the figures and the music of Arnold Schönberg and Luigi Nono be *for* in the era of the Anthropocene?

I do not think that this is a question that would seem strange to either Schönberg or Nono. So far as we can see in their own writings, they both had a strong sense of historical situation, and of the consequence of the mutual impact of historical circumstance and sound, figured as music. For Schönberg, in his notes for a treatise on what he termed *The Musical Idea*, the result is a notion of "unrest": in a note from June 13, 1934, he writes:

> The explanation of the musical idea as unrest also illuminates why the development of music has taken the route of always inventing new kinds of "unrest" …[8]

And later, on September 26, 1936, he contextualises this with a further, more historicised thought:

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5 See Lewis, Simon L., Maslin, Mark A. "Defining the Anthropocene." *Nature* 519 (2015), pp. 171–180. https://doi.org/10.1038/nature14258

6 Cf. Tsing, Anna, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena, and Feifei Zhou. *Field Guide to the Patchy Anthropocene: The New Nature*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 2024

7 Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1966. p. 257.

8 Schoenberg, Arnold. *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of its Presentation*. Ed. and trans. by Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2006, p. 98.

> We experience something similar today in our society and political life. Through mechanisation many relationships have been uprooted from their former order and shifted into unrest.[9]

For Nono, the question was addressed much more directly by his invocation, in the essay *Text-Music-Song* of 1960, of the work by Jean-Paul Sartre entitled, "Why write?" which begins:

> And if I am given this world with its injustices, it is not that I might contemplate them coldly, but that I might animate them with my indignation …[10]

In the terms of my opening remarks, the notions of "unrest" and "indignation" might stand as emblems of the era of the Anthropocene, even if this era raises matters of concern that were unknown to either Schönberg or Nono: the one experiencing the collapse and disintegration of a single empire, that of Austria-Hungary, that marked the end of an era of empires; the other experiencing the divisions and political tensions of the Cold War that characterised the aftermath of 1945. The historical focus of this discussion moves outwards, from the city of Vienna in the early years of the twentieth century, through the international clash of political forces that characterised the end of that century, to our own, millennial awareness of the fragility of the planet itself upon which these political dramas have unfolded. How can this account of the music of these two composers figure as a "history-for", and who and what would it be for?

In his essay, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience* Giorgio Agamben considers the possibility and political nature of "experience", particularly in relation to a contemporary world in which, Agamben claims, experience has been expropriated by the conditions of late-Capitalism.[11] Echoing Walter Benjamin's account of those returning home after experiencing the 1914-18 war, Agamben writes, "modern man's average day contains nothing that can still be translated into experience."[12] Against this existential chasm, brought on by the domination of power and property relations, Agamben proposes a possibility for an authentic experience which he presents as a specific moment of subject formation: in particular, he associates experience with infancy, that period in the existence of a living being before and during the acquisition of language. He writes:

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Nono, Luigi. *Nostalgia for the Future: Luigi Nono's Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. by Angela Ida De Benedictis and Veniero Rizzardi, University of California Press, Oakland, CA, 2018, p. 161.

[11] Agamben, Giorgio. *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*. Trans. by Liz Heron, Verso: Radical Thinkers, London, 2007.

[12] Ibid. p. 15.

> … from the point where there is experience, where there is infancy, whose expropriation is the subject of language, when language appears as the place where experience must become truth.[13]

In this sense, experience is the history of a coming to awareness; a history that is actually materialised in the living practice of language. This seems to me to be an interesting image around which we might start to gather a sense of what the music of Schönberg and Nono could be, for us in the twenty-first century, the era of the Anthropocene. A time when we ourselves have to come to a new awareness–when we must experience, if you like, a new childhood in a radically changing environment. Agamben associates the formation of the human subject with the acquisition of language, but there is no language without music. Indeed, as the developmental psychologist Colwyn Trevarthen has shown so convincingly, human infancy–and the linguistic formation that accompanies it–is constituted not simply as the formation of a subject, but as the development of inter-subjectivity in the presence of a singing other, a *mother*, a pre-linguistic voice.[14] And so "experience" must constitute us not just through emergent language, as both potential and actual discourse, but upon a foundation and practice of musicality, where that musicality figures as a sonic intra-action between the infant–and let us suppose for the purposes of this discussion that we are all infants–and their living, buzzing, material, animal, and social surroundings. Intra-action is the term coined by Karen Barad to indicate that in any encounter between entities, *both* entities are mutually instantiated and affected by the encounter.[15] This proposes musicality as a shaping and a being shaped by sound in time. In Agamben's account of linguistic acquisition in infancy, this would mean that, just as the child is changed by language, so too language is changed by the child; Gilles Deleuze discusses this in *The Logic of Sense*, and we know from our common experience that it is indeed the case.[16]

So, now I want to think a little more about what we could understand by the term "experience", then I will try to account for what I take to be the experiential possibilities, for us, of the music of Schönberg and Nono, using a couple of examples. Lastly, I will briefly consider the political implications of

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[13] Ibid. p. 58.

[14] Cf. Trevarthen, Colwyn. "Communication and cooperation in early infancy: a description of primary intersubjectivity." In *Before Speech: The beginning of interpersonal communication*, ed. Margaret Bullowa, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979, pp. 321-395.

[15] Cf. Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2007, p. 33.

[16] Cf. Deleuze, Gilles. "Seventh Series of Esoteric Words." In *The Logic of Sense,* trans. by Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. by Constantin V. Boundas, Continuum, London, 2004, pp. 51-57.

this discussion, where I take politics to be the rearrangement or consolidation of regimes of dominance within a particular situation that is articulated rather than holistic, in this case music understood as a cultural phenomenon in the era of the Anthropocene. Finally, perhaps a little ironically, I will attempt to revise John Cage's characterisation of *Silence* as music, by proposing *Music* as a sort of silence.

What is Experience?

Experience seems to be a term that pulls together different elements of what it is to live in the world as a subject: elements such as self-consciousness, sense perception, understanding, emotion, empathy, and so on. An idea of a specifically *aesthetic experience* has been present in philosophical discussion since the eighteenth century, and the term is the ground of the pragmatist philosophy of the American John Dewey, who, in his book *Art as Experience* attempts to wrest aesthetics away from its transcendental preoccupations, rooted in Kant's assertion of the essentially disinterested nature of aesthetic perception, and to ground that perception instead in the everyday, situated and material realities of human existence.[17] And yet, Agamben begins his essay "Infancy and History" with this definite and characteristically pessimistic statement:

> The question of experience can be approached nowadays only with an acknowledgment that it is no longer accessible to us. … This does not mean that today there are no more experiences, but they are enacted outside the individual. And it is interesting that the individual merely observes them …[18]

Agamben is concerned here to account for those ruptures in the fabric of life that are consequent on the developments of late capitalism; developments which have led us deeper into the Anthropocene. He is concerned with the impact on human consciousness of the "humdrum daily life in any city;"[19] of the addictions of an era who's digitally enabled social connections are dedicated to click-bait disinformation and data theft. Agamben, however, is interested in changing things, through a reconnection with experience as the engine, the defining creative energy that allows us to grow up. As he writes, "The individual as not already speaking, as having been and still being an infant - this is experience."[20]

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[17] Dewey, John. *Art As Experience*. Minton, New York, NY, 1934.
[18] Agamben, Giorgio, op. cit. p. 15/17.
[19] Ibid. p. 15.
[20] Ibid. p. 58.

If the Anthropocene is the moment when we have to acknowledge a new infancy–when we have to learn to grow up again, to open ourselves once more to an experience that will force from us a new understanding couched in a new language, a language appropriate to the continued existence of a living planet–then we need some mother tongue: some exemplar of how this new language might go. And if music is the protolinguistic phenomenon, the spur to an activity of listening that seeks connections and correspondences, that finds in sound the clues to the development of an emotional, material, empathetic, productive relationship with our surroundings, then only certain musics will turn out to be equal to the task. This is when we notice what Adorno calls "the ancient fissure between people and their culture."[21]

Both Arnold Schönberg and Luigi Nono were people who chose to encounter this fissure head-on. As a consequence, their music seems to me to provide–in an exemplary fashion–the mother tongue for a new sort of "infancy": the infancy that Agamben explores as the radical and necessary formation of a subject. More than that, infancy as the "place where experience music become truth"[22] is always undergone in a specific time and at a specific place. This particularity makes it hard to theorise, particularly in the context of a practice of music history that still has imperial tendencies: always trying to find the overview, the conceptual thread, the theory that accounts for everything. But is the idea of the Anthropocene itself not a theory that accounts for the "everything" that is planet earth?

In her recent book, *Field Guide to the Patchy Anthropocene*, Anna Tsing, with her colleagues, asks us to treat the Anthropocene as "patchy": that is, not as some sort of unified whole but as a pile of particularities that focus our attention at the same time as they add up.[23] To experience the productive opportunities of Agamben's notion of infancy is to engage with specificities of time and place that resonate in what Agamben calls "the transcendental experience of the difference between language and speech, which first opens up the space of history."[24] That is, our located experience of here and now resonates with already existing material productions that themselves bear their own "here and now". Thus, Schönberg's music, in his *String Trio* op. 45 from 1946 for example, pursues for us, now, the possibilities of tonal, structural, instrumental, and sonic *ideas* with a rigour that abandons the need for repetition, and which is indelibly connected to the cultural history of Vienna. It is staged as a unique encounter between tradition and modernity,

[21] Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. Trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, Verso, London, 2020, p. 156.
[22] Agamben, Giorgio, op. cit. p. 58.
[23] Tsing et al, op.cit.
[24] Agamben, op. cit. p. 60.

carried out with a pragmatism and an irony that reference the particularities of a culture to which we, each of us, bears a specific relation. Just as Luigi Nono, in his work for piano from 1976, *…Sofferte onde serene…* abandons all the strategies of musical material *except* for the repetition of individual sounds, a sonic concept perhaps only possible in Venice, a city whose campaniles and open waterways provide a unique ecology of bells. This is not an attempt in any way to account for the meaning or purpose of these works, but simply to identify location as a sort of patch that can be marked out; a patch that locates the possibility of experience that these works offer to us.

The characterisation of the music of these two composers as *patches* in our cultural history is an attempt to remove them from the generalising concepts of *new music*, *serialism*, *avant garde-ism* or any of the other attempts to fit them into a narrative that already somehow accounts for experience–and which thus allows the music no longer to be experienced. The resistance that the work of both of these composers has encountered–a resistance registered painfully in Schönberg's essay "How One Becomes Lonely" [25]–seems to me to stem from our unwillingness to–in a sense–regress into the sort of innocence that would allow us to *experience*, in Agamben's terms, the new, productive, and necessary energies for subject formation that this music offers.

Music as Existential Experience

In an interview published with the title, "Music as Existential Experience" (*Musik als existentielle Erfahrung*), the composer Helmut Lachenmann, himself a pupil and an enthusiastic supporter of Nono, speaks about what he calls "music as a natural event".[26] In relation to the music of Nono, he says, "You have to change yourself. You can't just listen politely, you have to open yourself up inside …"[27] And he is clear that this is not the cultured person's response to something "new": it is a real moment of infancy–a moment in which the subject experiences "a radically expanded sensorium and a conscious relationship to his history"[28]–that is, as I read it, a conscious relationship to a specific place

[25] Schoenberg, Arnold. "How One Becomes Lonely (1937)." In *Style and Idea*, ed. by Leonard Stein, trans, by Leo Black, Faber and Faber, London, 1975, pp. 30-52.

[26] *... man Musik begriffe als eine besondere Form von unberechenbarem Naturereignis*. Lachenmann, Helmut. "Musik als Existentielle Erfahrung (Gespräch mit Ulrich Mosch)." In *Music als existentielle Erfahrung: Schriften 1966-1995*, ed. by Josef Häusler. Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden, 1996, p. 225.

[27] *Man muß sich selbst ja ändern. Du kannst nicht nur höflich zuhören, sondern mußt dich innerlich öffnen ...* Ibid., p. 226.

[28] *... ein radikal erweitertes Sensorium und ein bewußtes Verhältnis zu seiner Geschichte*. Ibid. p. 223.

and time with all of its connections, in a moment of productive, imaginative articulation. Articulation, in this context, is a recognition of the patchiness of experience: the fact that we come to awareness in the simultaneous presence of different things: self, sound, community, empathy, emotion, and so on in what the sociologist Stuart Hall calls "articulation structured in dominance."[29]

This position introduces a political dimension, within which we recognise, situate and question the power that certain elements have over others. If, as Adorno suggests, "the individual is a mere reflection of property relations ... Not only is the self entwined in society; it owes society its existence in the most literal sense",[30] then the *infancy* described by Agamben as a radical coming into being is thwarted at the very outset. Hall's analysis allows for a sort of noise in the system;[31] without denying the constituting power of capitalism–a power which Agamben himself presents at the start as a countering force to experience–Hall shows how different, "patchy" forces can operate even within the dominance of an overarching power structure. Thus, rather than art being " utopic ... as the other of this world, as exempt from the mechanism of the social process of production and reproduction"[32] as Adorno is forced to propose, the "natural event" of music can instead provide the material substance for the sort of intersubjective infancy propose by Agamben as the process by which experience–even within capitalism–produces contingent human selves.

Both Schönberg and Nono, either by design or by compulsion, produced work which refuses to conform with culturally preordained listening practices. In that sense, it remains mysterious; provokes in the listener "a conscious relationship to his history" as Lachenmann describes it. It is this sense of mystery–confusion even–that moves us outside of music, forces us to form ourselves as subjects in relation to its utterance. For Agamben, "the very name 'mystery' derives (from **mu*, which indicates the moaning sound when the mouth is closed)–in other words, silence".[33] This is the boundary between speech and music, in a sense the indication of the impossibility of speaking about music which nevertheless gives us indispensable, psychic experience. In the terms of this discussion, only a music which refuses *fable*, something known and narrated, can plunge us into this mystery.

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[29] Hall, Stuart. "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance." In *Essential Essays, Volume 1: Foundations of Cultural Studies*, ed. by David Morley, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2018, p. 191.

[30] Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund. "Gold Assay." In *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott, Verso, London, 2020, p. 164.

[31] cf. Malaspina, Cecile. *An Epistemology of Noise*. Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2018.

[32] Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund. "Paralipomena." In *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor, Continuum, London, 2004, p. 311.

[33] Agamben, op. cit. p. 69.

Agamben, in his consideration of subjectivity in terms of language, is concerned with what he calls "the world of the *open mouth*, of the Indo-European root **bha* (from which the word fable is derived)," and he contrasts this with "the world of the closed mouth, of the root **mu*."[34] This is the world of infancy, of mystery, of the inarticulateness before language. And although this is probably the root of the word "mute", I want to end by supposing that it is also possible to think of it as the root of the word "music": a sort of silence before the babble of language Iand expropriated experience. This silence is what allows us a renewed access to *experience* as the infancy we need to undergo if we are truly to encounter our planet and ourselves in the era of the Anthropocene.

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[34] Agamben, op. cit. p. 70.

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MEANING AS A SOUND – PARAMETER IN LUIGI NONO'S WORK: A DIALECTICS OF 'PHONETIC – SEMANTIC STRUCTURE'

FABIEN SAN MARTIN[1]

SUMMARY. In their text-music relationship, Luigi Nono's compositions, as early as the late 1950s, integrate words as a full-fledged sound parameter, in their capacity as sounds laden with sense and according to a gradual variety from the pure phoneme to the pure moneme to ambivalent formants. In the light of the theory developed by the Venetian composer in his 1960 lecture 'Text-Music-Singing', and of some writings by Jacques Derrida with which this paper comes in resonance, the present study attempts to demonstrate the particular status of words in Luigi Nono's vocal music, and the precise use of their senses as a sound parameter in itself, through the analysis of the *Cori di Didone* and the *Fabbrica illuminata*.

Keywords: Luigi Nono; Cori di Didone; Fabbrica illuminata

Introduction (Meaning of sound / sound of sense)

Among its many lineaments, one of the (most) outstanding features of Luigi Nono's music is his consideration that sense is a full-fledged sound-parameter.

When in some of his works for magnetic tape Nono summons, for instance, the sounds of a factory (as he did for *Fabbrica illuminata*) or a street protest in the sixties (as he did for *Non consumiamo Marx*) there lies in his work the will or the hope of getting hold of the emotion, the tension, and the meaning contained in these sound-objects which, then, become some material to work with in this specific context : sounds, laden with sense.

What must be understood in Nono's approach, is that it's not about using these sounds for a simple sound illustration that would be the obelus –*de facto* outside the musical material *per se*– of a message, here a political

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one, and would, only *indirectly*, commit his music: it is really a matter of using some full-fledged musical material whose peculiarity lies in the meaning and the emotion it contains (as well as in its poetical potential[2]).

So, in addition to such usual sound parameters as not only pitch and duration, but also, especially for Nono, timbre, dynamics, the acoustic space, later the mobility of sounds, there exists a further sound parameter which the Venetian composer comes to extort from the words, sometimes deriving from the political scene, but mostly from the poetry he uses in his works : this sound parameter is that of sense, or what he calls 'the phonetic-semantic structure of his compositional material'.

The topic I would like to broach in the following pages is the particular conception of the word-music connection in Luigi Nono's vocal work, first by introducing a 1960 text and commenting upon it; in this article the Venetian composer expounds his theoretical view of the *Text-Music-Singing*[3] relationship. I will then briefly put it in perspective with the reflections of Jacques Derrida on the same issue, previous to determining what, in concrete terms, the Nonian conception of the text-singing relationship is all about, by delving more particularly into one of the earliest compositions wherefrom Nono turned his theory into experiments, i.e. the *Cori di Didone* (1958), and a special passage of *La Fabbrica illuminata* (1964).

Text-Music-Singing

A. A presentation and summary of the text

'Text-Music-Singing' is a text in which Luigi Nono restores the stages of the historical evolution of the relation between text and music, from the Renaissance to his own experience, which integrates this history.

The text, which is divided into two great parts, first unfolds the process of this evolution[4], before studying in greater detail the issue of how 'the relationship between the phonetic material and the semantic contents'[5] is integrated *within the composition*. Through the analysis of several of his own

[2] Regarding the two works quoted here, the sense and the emotion are linked to a political context into which Nono seeks to fit, to *commit* his music, guided by his sincere, strong beliefs as a musician-activist; but something else is at stake for him: drawing from these slogans or recorded testimonies a musical as well as poetical substance, which he aims at integrating as a compositional material.

[3] Cf. Nono, Luigi. Écrits. Ed. Bourgois, Paris, 1993, pp. 166-188.

[4] Cf. *Ibid*., pp. 167-173.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 174.

vocal works, Nono intends to demonstrate 'the immediate interaction between the meaning of the text and the musical composition'[6]. By more precisely explaining how he managed to merge for *La terra e la compagna* –a work he had written three years before– two distinct poems by Cesare Pavese (*Terra rossa terra nera* and *Tu sei come una terra*[7]), he shows how, within his composition, the issue, connected to the way of integrating the word to the weave of sounds, is *both* musical *and* literary, each operating in a relationship of mutual synergy.[8]

Nono then embarks on an exercise of re-reading several Renaissance and baroque works[9] in the light of the idea that there has existed, throughout the history of the relationship between text and music, a hunch that a *musical* emancipation of poetry is possible. It is a trend he specifically observes in the way some composers of the past have sought to untie the vowels of the words they make up, so as to contribute to the understanding of the text or even to reinforce it.

This is precisely what, in the last paragraphs, brings him to refer to his *Canto sospeso*, as a reminder that, in this work dated 1956, 'the principle of merging the musical and the semantic contents of the sung word makes us realize the new division in syllables […] as well as the categorization of the sound-units in speech into vowels and consonants'.[10]

The lecture then closes with listening to the *Cori di Didone*, about which Nono explains that, with reference to the new technique he develops therein, 'the principle of composition of the text, such as it is actualized up to the distribution into vowels and consonants, has not removed its meaning from the text, but has musically expressed the latter as a phonetic-semantic structure'.[11]

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6 *Ibid.,* p. 175.

7 'Red earth dark earth' and 'You are like an earth'. In Pavese, Cesare. Travailler fatigue [Hard Labour, 1936], La mort viendra et elle aura tes yeux [Death Will Come and Have your Eyes,1951]. Ed. Gallimard, col. « Poésie », Paris, 1979, pp. 189-191.

8 Cf. Nono, Luigi. *Op. cit*., pp. 175-176.

9 In the following order, Bach's *Mass in B minor*, Mozart's *Requiem*, the motet *O magnum mysterium* by Gabrieli and the *20th Madrigal* in Gesualdo's *Madrigali, Libro V.*

10 This way, he challenges the reductive vision, even the clearly erroneous interpretation given by Stockhausen in one of his analyses. Cf. Stockhausen, Karlheinz. 'Sprache und Musik'. In Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik, 1, 1958, pp. 66-67, from which Nono quotes quite a long passage; in this article Stockhausen blames him for having, in the *Canto sospeso*, 'emptied some precise parts of the text [from letters of partisans sentenced to death] of their diverse meanings.' Cf. Nono, Luigi. *Op. cit*., p. 187.

11 *Ibid*., p. 188.

B. Issues and problems raised by Nono's text

Before analyzing the *Cori di Didone*, let us consider for a moment this complex, densely written text by Nono, the issues and problems it raises. First comes, in the opening paragraph, a long quotation by Schoenberg, in which the Viennese composer sustains the thesis that music could possibly, *by its own medium*, not only 'do justice' to the poem but also express its content more deeply than its words on their own would do –a position that is not accepted by Nono[12]. While praising Schoenberg's decisive contribution in the evolution of the text-music relationship, Nono does not believe it is possible 'when it comes to grasping and understanding some music with text, to do without the intelligibility of the text itself, both from the phonetic and semantic standpoints', for 'speech takes on characteristics and proper features which cannot under any circumstances be discarded and, on the contrary, significantly contribute to enriching the musical structure.'[13]

These characteristics and properties of words lie in their *semantic* nature; therefore, it is by first conveying its *sense* to the composition (in addition to its acoustic peculiarities) that the material derived from the words –what Nono calls the 'phonetic material'– enriches this composition.[14] So much for the first issue.

As for the second issue, which derives from the first, it lies in the decision to regard the word as a component, among others, of the musical grammar, i.e. as a full-fledged element of the composition, and not as an

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[12] Thus, Schoenberg explains, about Schubert's *Lieder* whose accompanying texts he had never read: 'I realized that I was none the wiser after reading them, that they had not suggested the slightest change in the notion I had formed beforehand of the way to interpret them. Much to the contrary, I had the feeling that, without knowing the poem, I had gone deeper and deeper into the true content of the music than if I had stuck to the simple ideas suggested by the words.' Cf. Schoenberg, Arnold. « Das Verhältnis zum Text ». In Der blaue Reiter, edited by Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, Munich, 1912, p. 30 *sqq*.; resumed in Style and Idea, Philosophical Library, New York, 1950, p. 144; translated into French under the title 'Des rapports entre la musique et le texte'. In Le style et l'Idée. Ed. Buchet/Chastel, Paris, 1977, p. 120.

[13] Nono, Luigi. *Op. cit*., p. 171. It is to be specified here that Nono and Stravinsky are not of the same mind either; for the latter, musique is, by its very essence, 'unable to express anything whatsoever: a feeling, an attitude, a state of consciousness, a natural phenomenon, etc. ». Cf. Stravinsky, Igor. *Chroniques de ma vie*. Ed. Denoël, Paris, 1935, pp. 63-64.

[14] As emphasized by Nono in his analysis of Giovanni Gabrieli's motet *O magnum mysterium*, 'The multiple overlays of words and the combinations of syllables, in this example from the *alleluia*, create a kind of phonetic and acoustic field, in which the initial semantic character of the words widens into the musical semantic character all the way through the rich phonetic constellations of the material. The phonetic material composed this way makes an active contribution to the semanticity of the whole composition.' Nono, Luigi. « Texte-Musique-chant ». In Écrits. Ed Contrechamps, Genève, 2007, p. 94.

attachment ; and this, both for what concerns its physical-acoustic structure –the sounds that make up the word (what linguists call the phoneme)– and for what concerns its strictly semantic dimension (the moneme). What distinguishes Nono's standpoint lies above all in the idea of a phonetic-semantic pervasion of the word and the sound (in the context of a musical composition): the only strictly musical part of the work is accordingly unable to carry everything in itself.

Besides, the main thrust of Nono's lecture is his assertion that the semantic element is contained in the very depths of the phonetic structure of the word, and that, as a result, each element in this word, what Nono calls the 'sound units', is sort of *laden* with the sense of the word it contributes to making. This is where we reach the third issue: the possibility for any sound *element* derived from the phonetic structure of a word to contain sense. In other words, for Nono, the link between phōnē (φωνή) and expression exceeds the word taken in its entirety to be deposited in the very depths, i.e. in each of its constituent fibres and in its whole weave, based on the principle that such a phonetic structure, however minute it may be, can still contain sense.

To support his point, Nono, in his lecture, refers to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, arguing with him that, in his words, 'no property or sensation is so bare that it cannot hold any meaning of any sort.' [15]

Such a standpoint has numerous consequences. In the first place, by using words from a poetic text, or *simple elements* from these words, the composer deals with a particular sonic material which is more than a simple sound; it becomes accordingly impossible to integrate the elements of a text as a pure meaningless sound, even though they could be reduced to a few vowels or consonants. Besides, music will not be able to really express the sense in a text without precisely resorting to these words, and this, in a consistent musical relationship, even if it means re-considering the order of these words and re-handling the acoustic structure.

Another outcome of Nono's concept of the text-music-singing relationship is not only of an aesthetic order, but linguistic too. Indeed, if the 'sound units' contained in the words cannot be musically handled without taking into consideration the sense they are laden with, the composer will, however, be in a position to have an impact on the sense of the words, and musically re-compose a poem, not only through the textual editing he engages in, but also through the interaction between the words and the musical work itself. Thus, in the relationship he establishes between his music and the text he has chosen, the composer too builds sense, i.e. literary sense, and, doing so, opens the way to a new kind of expression, a 'multi-dimensional rhetorical, phonetic, and declamatory expression'[16], in other words an unprecedented

[15] Nono, Luigi. *Écrits*. Ed. Bourgois, 1993, p. 171.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

linguistic-literary world. Accordingly, as Nono writes, ‘a whole world made up of new possibilities of combining the phonetic and semantic elements opens up for language, in musical composition.’[17]

‘Semanticity’ as transmitted by voice and by the ‘phonetic structure’ of words: sense and phōnē (φωνή) with Derrida

Before presenting, through the example of the *Cori di Didone*, what effect Nono’s theory had over his compositions, I would like to focus for a short time on the idea of a sense that would be inherent in phoneme itself, or even in only one element of it (in that following the third thrust previously exposed), by mentioning what Jacques Derrida said about it in *La voix et le phénomène* [*Speech and Phenomena*]. In that book dated 1967, the philosopher states there exists, below the word, ‘an essential link between expression and phōnē [φωνή]’.

Here is what he also says:

‘Between the phonic element (*phonic* in the phenomenological sense and not in the sense of intra-mundane resonance) and the expressiveness, i.e. the logical essence of a signifier that is *animated* with, as an end-in-view, the ideal presence of a *Bedeutung* [meaning] (itself referred to an object), the idea is that there is a necessary bond.’[18]

For Derrida, the ‘phōnē (φωνή)’ –in other words, ‘the phonic element of the voice’– is ‘immediately present in the expression of the sense’. Now, this passage from Derrida’s text sounds as an appropriate echo of Nono’s when it seemed to him that, within a word, parting its sonic form from its sense was not an option. [19] Mind you, it’s not for Derrida –and here again the philosopher and the composer are of the same mind– a question of the sole material dimension of the voice, of its merely physical being-in-the-world, in short what Derrida calls ‘the body of the voice’, the question is that of the bond between this acoustic materiality and the sense it accompanies, or rather contains *as a sound entity*. Thus, about the phōnē (φωνή) –as a voice carrying a logos, therefore a voice that expresses itself– Derrida evokes a ‘spiritual flesh’[20].

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[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Derrida, Jacques. *La voix et le phénomène*. Ed. Quadrige/PUF, 1967, repr. 2003, Paris, p. 86.

[19] Cf. Luigi Nono, « Texte-Musique-chant ». In *Écrits*. Ed. Contrechamps, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

[20] ‘Comme chair spirituelle, elle [la phōnē (φωνή)] ne cesse de s'entendre, même en-dehors du monde. [As a spiritual flesh, it (the phōnē [φωνή]) continues to speak and be present to itself *–to hear itself–* in the absence of the world.]’ Derrida, Jacques. *Op. cit*. [Engl. transl. by David B. ALLISON, 1972.]

The 'spiritual flesh' specific to the phōnē (φωνή) is indeed the presence of sense in the voice itself, what Derrida also names the transcendence of the voice, paradoxically contained in its very appearance.[21]

So the voice is everything that, while distinguishing itself from the concept to which speech connects it at the moment it utters it, nevertheless contains sense; its presence in the world, although it is material, then exceeds its sheer materiality. It is what Derrida points to with his notion of 'apparent transcendence' and it is what gives the voice a particular ontological status, as a well as a paradoxical presence in the world whose effect is that it fades away as a 'phenomenological body' with the very moment it produces the sense it expresses.[22]

The words set to music by Nono in his vocal compositions work on the same premise: despite the diffractions that the interplay of musical rhetorics will have imposed on their phonetic-semantic structure, they tend to keep their semantic properties all the better since they are borne by the voices that sing them, *understand* them and strive for their transmission.

Cori di Didone

A. Introducing the work

With the aim of observing the effects of Nono's theory on the compositional level, let us consider now the *Cori di Didone*, one of the first works in which he applied his innovating conception of the text-music-singing relationship.

The *Cori di Didone* are a work for voice and percussions written in 1958, based on poems taken from *La Terra Promessa* [*The Promised Land*] by

[21] **'**Let us try, then, to question the phenomenological value of the voice, its transcendent dignity with regard to every other signifying substance. We think that this transcendence is only apparent. But this "appearance" is the very essence of consciousness and of its history […]. It can therefore not be called "appearance" or be named within the sphere of metaphysical conceptuality. One cannot attempt to deconstruct this transcendence without descending, gropingly across the inherited concepts, toward the unnamable.' *Ibid*.

[22] 'The "apparent transcendence" of the voice thus results from the fact that the signified, which is always ideal by essence, the "expressed" *Bedeutung* [meaning], is immediately present in the act of expression. This immediate presence results from the fact that the phenomenological "body" [of the signifier] seems to fade away at the very moment it is produced; it seems already to belong to the element of ideality. It phenomenologically reduces itself, transforming the worldly opacity of its body into pure diaphaneity. This effacement of the sensible body and of its exteriority is *for consciousness* the very form of the immediate presence of the signified.' *Ibid*.

Giuseppe Ungaretti, within which Nono's favorite poetic *topoi* are concentrated: the sea, water and its echoes, the sky, the stars ('constellation', cf. [4]), silence or anything which comes close to it ('*sussurio*' [whisper] [1] ; '*tutto tace*' [everything is silent] [2] ; '*muta* ' [dumb] [3] ; '*sussura*' [whisper] –cf. Finale).

Regarding the compositional technique, the method is that of twelve-note composition. Right from the first bars, the dodecaphony expands relatively to space: the piece departs from one note, then the chorus densifies by gradually adding the pitches nearby, the intervals getting then wider and wider, somehow in the style of the *Allen Intervallen Reihe* used by Alban Berg in his *Lyric Suite.*[23]

Finally, as far as the orchestration is concerned, the mixed choir (8 altos, 8 tenor voices, 8 basses) is accompanied by six percussionists. It is worth noticing here that Nono often plays on the density of his choir, varying the distribution of the voices of the four groups, over a combinatory play cutting through the whole mass of the voices combined in a variety of ways that sometimes differ from one bar to another. So, with Nono, through such variations of the vertical distribution of voices, an elaboration of the density of the choral fabric adds up to the other parameters, whether they be compositional or serial.

B. What is the musical treatment of the text?

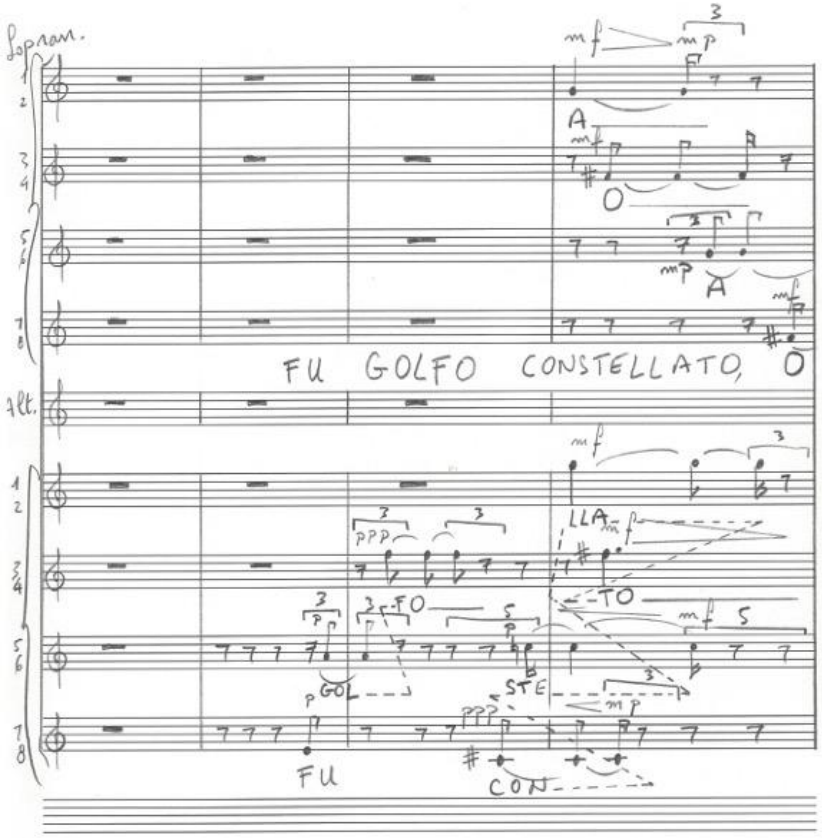
1. Spatialisation

As the work unfolds, an important work in voice-spatialization is noticeable, then, through this work, an entire spatialization of the text.

The words, their syllables and often their vowels only –sometimes even the mere consonants (cf. example 3 hereafter)– are distributed from one voice to another, according to an important ambitus, and outside like inside each vocal group. This is what can be visually followed on the score according to a kind of 'marked route' indicated by dot lines which link the various syllables together and whose technique seems to consist in a kind of *Klangfarbenmelodie* of words and of their formants. (E.g. 1)

[23] To put it simply, the first bars of the piece are organized from the overlay of two opposite chromatic movements: the first being C, C sharp, D, D sharp, [E, F, F sharp], while the second is C, B, B flat, [A, A flat, G] (clustered). Let us specify here that the twelve-tone writing used for *Cori di Didone* is by no means systematic (for instance, p. 20, the serial is made up of eleven notes only, for 'nella tenebra, muta', a verse in which B flat is missing).

E.g. 1

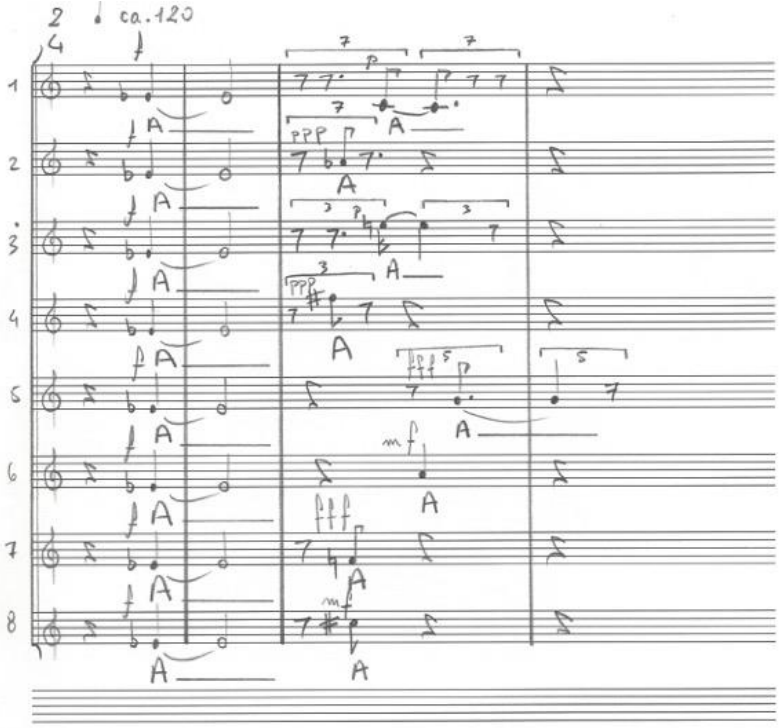


Luigi Nono, *Cori di Didone*, [4] bars 141-144 (a detailed excerpt).[24]

What can also be observed is a spatialization of vowels through the splitting the choir sometimes undergoes. Thus, in the fifth part of the work, with its initial unison on the vowel 'a', the collapse of the sound block following this unison does not only lead to a space-based diffraction-pattern of the same vowel, but to a time-based one too, respectively according to the various heights used and also to the play on the lengths and series of consecutive notes. (E.g. 2)

[24] Nono, Luigi. *Cori di Didone* (1958), for mixed choir and percussions. Ed. Ars Viva AV 54, p. 28.

E.g. 2



Luigi Nono, *Cori di Didone*, [5] bars 168-171 (a detailed excerpt).[25]

2. Sound-densifying and intensifying the text

In addition to his spatialization work, Nono focuses on sonically densifying and intensifying the words and vowels he uses.

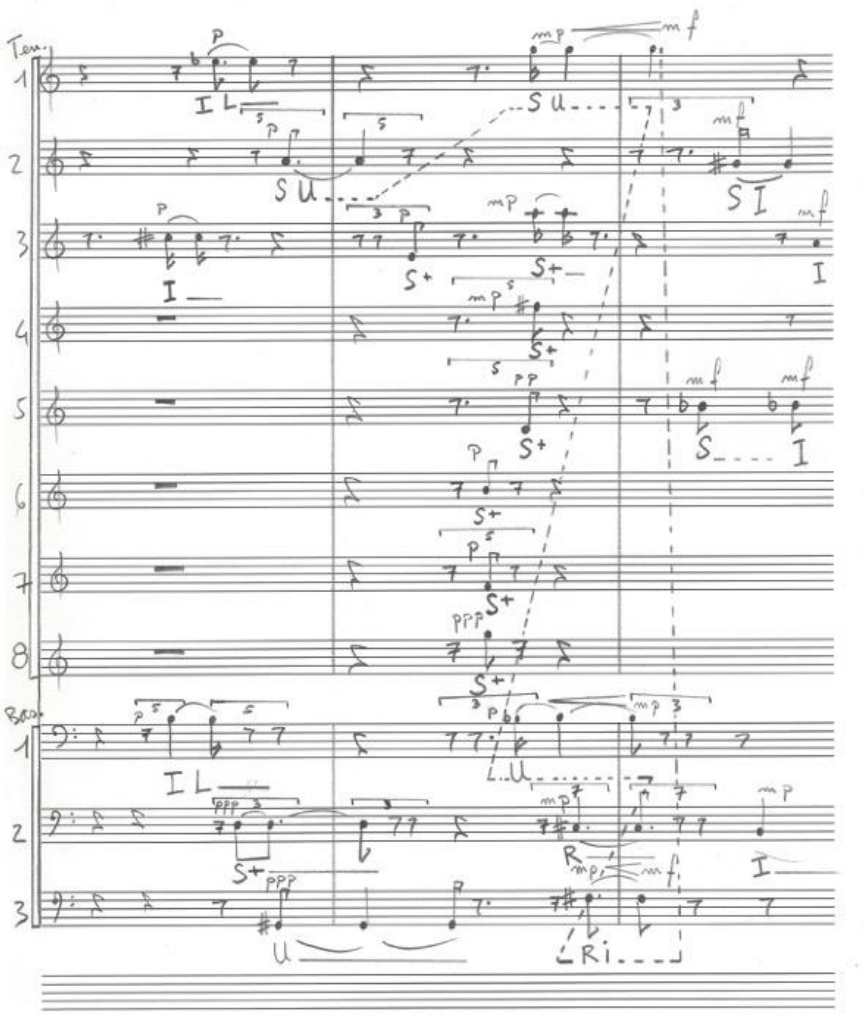
First, as could be seen with the beginning of the 5th part of the work (bars 168 *sqq*.), having the vowel 'a' sung on the same note by the whole choir, he imparts to the vowel immediate thickness.

With the collapse of the sound block that follows, the same vowel assumes a new dimension not only in terms of density, but of intensity too, with not only the change, but also the splitting of the nuances with which it is pronounced. (Indeed Nono uses simultaneously, within his chorus, the *mf, fff, ppp, p* nuances.) (Ex. 2)

[25] *Ibid*., p. 34.

He also plays on the sonic density of one word by having it sung by several non-simultaneous voices that do not pronounce together the whole of the formants of this word, like, for instance, p. 8, with the words '*il sussurio'.* (E.g. 3)

E.g. 3



Luigi Nono, *Cori di Didone*, bars 29-31 (a detailed excerpt).[26]

[26] *Ibid*., p. 8.

3. Interlocking the different constituents of the word (vertical integration of their horizontal order)

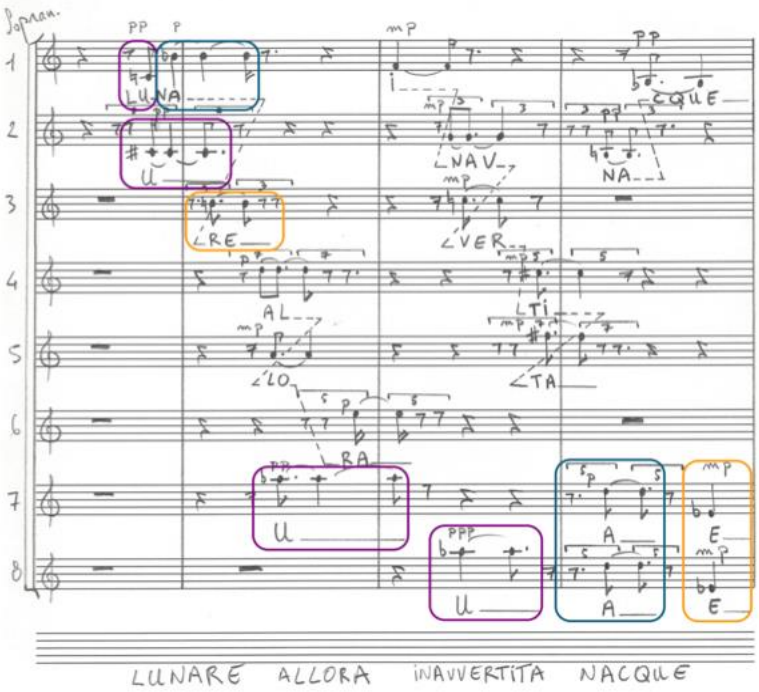
Another characteristic of Nono's technique is an occurrence of various syllables, or simply vowels, from Ungaretti's words that are somehow mutually interlocked, due to being simultaneously sung by the various singers. This happens page 8 (bars 31-32), where the 'o' of '*sussurrio*' is pronounced at the same time as the 'Si' in '*Sino all'ebro'*, by the bass voice; immediately afterwards, the 'e' and the 'o' of the word 'Ebro' are similarly uttered together (by the bass voice again, bar 32).

4. The question of isolated vowels: drawing the line between those laden with sense and those that would be de-semanticized

Finally, I would like to deal with the question of isolated vowels, distinguishing those that are laden with sense from those that are *a priori* not. If for instance one takes the example of bar 20 (p. 5 of the score) and the sentence *Lunare allora inavvertita nacque* [Mooned, then, [Echo] was born unnoticed], what can be seen is the way Nono atomizes the text, not only into syllables but also into isolated vowels ('ER', 'AV', 'i' and 'a' of '*inavvertita'*, then 'u', 'a', 'e' of '*lunare*').

Apart from the new sound relief that focusing on these 'sound units' brings to the acoustics of the word, it is noticeable that –although they are slightly isolated, however connected they are to their word of origin– these syllables and vowels retain a little of their sense. (E.g. 4)

E.g. 4



Luigi Nono, *Cori di Didone*, bars 17-20.[27]

But if some of these 'sound units' are immediately and exclusively connectable to the words they have been detached from, some can be ambiguous. For instance, the 'a' and 'e' from the same passage can equally belong to '*nacque'* and *'(lu)nare'.* Therefore, it can be said that Nono here causes an acoustic and semantic mix-up of the words '*nacque' and '(lu)nare*' [*was born* and *mooned*].

Whether ambiguous or clearly laden with a given sense, these vowels are in any event distinct from those that would apparently be de-semanticised. If we revert to the [letter] 'A' that opens the fifth part of the work (bars 168-169), we are indeed dealing with a vowel deprived of any sense, unlike the other phonemes of the same passage.

So it seems the question is to distinguish the vowels of this kind from those that are used elsewhere in the work, so as to very concretely and without falling into mysticism, understand Nono's theory, by telling the difference between the formants that stem from a word and those that do not.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 5.

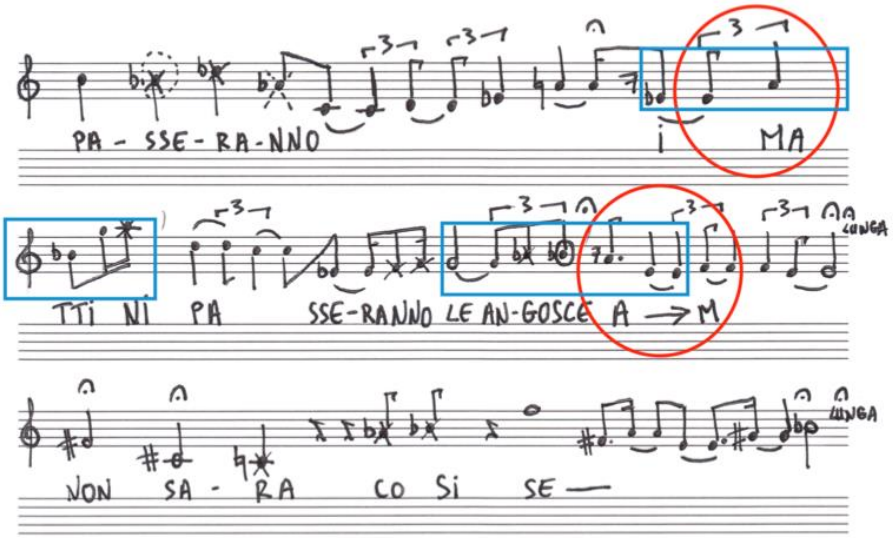
This way the de-semanticized [letter] ‘A’ adds up to the composer’s sonic acoustic-semantic palette that could be presented as follows:

. full-fledged monemes,
. phonemes still laden with sense,
. vowels or consonants in the ambiguous sense,
. vowels or consonants deprived of sense and regarded as sheer sonic phenomena.

But we might as well, to conclude, and to grasp again the subtlety of the sound-sense relationship with Nono, consider a passage from *La Fabbrica illuminata*. (E.g. 5)

Thus, in the finale, one notices in the intermediate staff, an isolated vowel and an isolated consonant, [letters] ‘A’ and ‘M’:

E.g. 5



Luigi Nono, *La Fabbrica illuminata*, Final[28].

If we were to enter them into one of the classes I have just listed, chances are we would be dealing with ‘vowels or consonants devoid of sense and regarded as sheer sonic phenomena’ since they do not seem to belong to any of the words surrounding them.

[28] Cf. Nono, Luigi. *La Fabbrica illuminata* (1964), for soprano and magnetic tape. Ed. Ars viva/Ricordi 131242, p. 8.

But if we take into account an interaction between the melodic line and the words it carries, the matter is clearly more complex than it seems.

In the overall economy of this particular passage of the score, the [letters] 'A' and 'M' visibly rest upon a descending fourth: A E. Now, if we observe the first line in the same excerpt, a fourth-interval has already been used for the same letters, but in the ascending direction. Therefore, Nono has chosen to reverse [letters] 'A' and 'M' as he has done for his fourth-interval, thus creating a chiasmus between [letters] 'MA' ascending fourth, and 'AM' descending fourth —both fourths belonging at the same time to a more extensive mirror game, starting from a four-note motif (E-flat, A, B-flat, F/F, B-flat, A, E-flat), corresponding respectively to the words '*I mattini*' and '*le angosce a-m'*, which this musical symmetry allows Nono to put in resonance with one another, which the poem cannot do.

It is clear here how subtle this writing is, which, rather than being inscribed in a process of de-conceptualization, or even de-semanticisation of the formants of the words set to music, or better, literally musicalized, stands on the watch between the two dimensions of the word (sound and sense) whose constitution it questions and exploits, according to a dialectic apprehension, placing the consonants and isolated vowels on the breach, on the borderline between two territories, between *concept* and *percept*, between sense and sound.

Conclusion

Over the years that followed the composition of the *Cori di Didone*, while maintaining the technique displayed in this choral work, as theorized in *Text-Music-Singing*, Nono prolonged his work on modelizing this diffraction of words, those of street language as well as the more academic poetry that he associated with his music, regarding this 'soon-to-be-born music' as their necessary, inevitable fulfillment. The partial de-conceptualization, coextensive with the operation undergone by the literary text at the time of its musical exploitation, is however not tantamount to a loss in its power of expression.

As for the later compositions, this process will be brought to a climax without the truth dimension of the texts being totally glossed over. This way, even if the text from time to time becomes almost imperceptible to the listener it will remain, in the words of Nathalie Ruget-Langlois, 'a vibrant compendium of meaning' [*une condensation vibrante du sens*][29]. Between the phoneme

[29] Ruget-Langlois, Nathalie. 'Luigi Nono : la résonance sémantique à travers l'électronique, remarques sur *Quando Stanno morendo*' [Semantic resonance through electronics, notes on *Quando Stanno morendo*]. In *Musica Falsa* N°18, Spring/Summer 2003, pp. 68-69.

and the sense that is no longer immediately attached to it, a new relation is established and defined as a 'semantic resonance' by the musicologist –a phrase that brings into play the ambivalence of sound and meaning, and that the technical applications of the research in acoustics will make it possible to actualize.

Though consisting in a sonic reassignment of the words that are integrated into a score and will be resized in space and time by their musical treatment, Nono's compositional approach will however always attempt to contribute to revealing some hidden buried truth, obscured by common sense, and will renew, through this distancing gesture, the very expression of the words either sung or set to music. For it is also through the recovered materiality in music and by music that the word, so far a prisoner of a univocal concept and phrasing, can thrive and open up to the field of the possible.

(Translation of Michel Gouverneur reviewed by the author)

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