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S T U D I A UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI MUSICA

Special Issue 2

Music Stylistics & Music Analyses

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THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON TECHNIQUE AND EXPRESSIVITY IN THE FOUR-VOICE MASSES OF CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI

APOLKA FÁBIÁN¹ 

SUMMARY. This work focuses on two of Monteverdi's four-voice Masses. One was published in 1640/41 in the collection *Selva morale e spirituale*, and the other appeared posthumously in 1650. Both Masses demonstrate Monteverdi's distinctive compositional techniques. While the works are mainly grounded in the traditional *prima prattica*, traces of the *seconda prattica* style are also evident.

Keywords: Renaissance music, Claudio Monteverdi, Mass, sacred music

Introduction

To gain a deeper understanding of Monteverdi's masses, it is essential to examine the development of his musical language and compositional techniques. Among his sacred works, three major collections can be mentioned. The first is *Vespro della Beata Vergine* and *Missa in illo tempore*, both published in 1610. The second important collection is *Selva morale e spirituale*, published in 1641, which includes a four-voice Mass, psalms arranged for four to eight voices, hymns, and two versions of the *Magnificat*. The third collection was published posthumously in 1650 and contains a Mass, *Messa a quattro voci da cappella*, written for four voices, as well as arrangements of some psalms.

In Monteverdi's oeuvre, there are only three Masses, which is very few compared to his predecessors, such as Palestrina, who composed around 104 Masses. However, from Monteverdi's letters, we know that he composed several other Masses, which are presumed lost. During his entire stay in

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Venice, lasting 29 years, Monteverdi probably wrote at least one service per year, as indicated in several letters.²

This work analyzes two of Claudio Monteverdi's Masses: The *Missa da cappella*, included in the volume *Selva morale e spirituale*, and the *Messa a quattro voci da cappella*, published in the 1650 edition. Both works are written for four voices (SATB), a criterion that guided their selection, thus facilitating comparative analysis.

**The table below includes the masses whose existence and context are documented through the letters of Claudio Monteverdi, thus providing a solid historical basis for the subsequent analysis of the works.*

Table 1

Mass / Mention in Letters	Date of Letter/Documented Date
Mass (Christmas Eve Liturgy)	29 December 1616
Concertato Mass	21 April 1618
Solemn Mass and Vespers	21 April 1618
Funeral Service	17 April 1621
Solemn Mass	27 November 1621
Vespers and Service	1 May 1627
Sacred Music	23 February 1630

**Summary of Monteverdi's masses documented
in letters and archival sources**

Messa a 4 da cappella from Selva Morale e Spirituale (1641)

Monteverdi's Mass written in the F Ionian mode was titled *Messa a 4 da cappella* in the volume *Selva morale e spirituale* published in 1641. Some musicologists are convinced that this Mass was composed of the Feast of Presentation of the Virgin Mary, specifically for the Thanksgiving service of 21 November 1631, which celebrated the end of the devastating Venetian plague.³

² Tim Carter mentions a service from 1625, written in honor of the visit to Venice of the Polish heir to the throne, Sigismund Władysław. However, no information is available as to whether this Mass is identical to the compositions mentioned above.

Carter, Tim. *Monteverdi and His Contemporaries*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2000, p. 83.

³ Kurtzman, Jeffery. Preface to the *Messa a 4 da cappella* from *Selva Morale e Spirituale*, Carus Verlag, Stuttgart, 1992.

Claudio Monteverdi's *Missa* in F consists of the movements of the *Ordinarium Missae*: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus–Benedictus and Agnus Dei. These sections are written in the manner of the *prima prattica* style with *basso continuo*. The latter functions largely as a true *basso seguente*⁴, except for a few short passages.

Denis Stevens, in his work *Monteverdi: Sacred, Secular, and Occasional Music*, described this composition as “sober and uneventful”⁵. However, he was also the first to observe that the short recurring theme present in each movement of the Mass is related to one of Monteverdi's own madrigals from his First Book of Madrigals, *La vaga pastorella*.

On this basis, Monteverdi's second Mass may be interpreted as a parody Mass, in which the source of the parody is not a work by another composer but Monteverdi's own composition. In the technique of the parody Mass⁶, the composer reuses existing musical material - either a melodic line, an opening thematic idea, or a principal thematic element - which is then developed and transformed into a new musical structure.

E.g. 1



**Claudio Monteverdi - Messa a 4 da cappella from
Selva Morale e Spirituale (1641), Kyrie (m. 1-5)**

⁴ A bass line that follows the lowest vocal part, supporting and adapting to the movement of the choral texture.

⁵ Stevens, Denis. *Monteverdi: Sacred, Secular, and Occasional Music*, Associated University Press, Cranbury, New Jersey, 1978, p. 71.

⁶ The composer uses either his own melody or that of another composer, which is then expanded and developed in various ways. The compositional technique of the parody Mass may include the following procedures:

- The borrowing of a vocal line or melody from an existing piece, to which an additional, transposed voice is added.
- The borrowing of an opening theme or introductory material from a composition, which is then continued through the composer's own musical invention.
- The borrowing of a principal thematic element, which is subsequently transformed and integrated into a new musical context.

E.g. 2

50

La vaga pastorella

(Allegretto)

Canto

Quinto

Alto

Tenore

Basso

Sen

Claudio Monteverdi - La vaga pastorella (m. 1-4)**Kyrie**

In Monteverdi's Mass, the Kyrie opens the work with a distinctly prayerful character, articulated through a tripartite (ABA) structure. The movement is written for four voices (SATB) in duple meter. Each section introduces new musical material, which unfolds within a polyphonic texture, being successively presented and developed across the individual vocal parts.

E.g. 3

Messa a 4 da Cappella.

Kyrie elei

Claudio Monteverdi - Messa a 4 da cappella from Selva Morale e Spirituale (1641). Original manuscript, Kyrie

A noteworthy feature of this Mass is that each movement concludes with an authentic cadence (V–I), characterized by sustained long note values. This emphasizes the significant role of tonal-functional organization within the structure of the work.

Section A consists of two fragments, each introduced by polyphonic imitative entries corresponding to the thematic exposition. In the first fragment, the theme is first presented in the Bass, then in the Alto, followed by a fifth-related answer in the Tenor, and finally in the Soprano in C. The cadence is realized on an F chord with the third omitted.

Section B begins with the thematic statement in the Soprano and Tenor voices, followed by responses in the Alto and Bass. A notable feature occurs at the end of this section: the cadence resolves in C major with a complete chord, while the dominant degree is presented with a natural *B*, reinforcing the tonal-functional orientation of the musical discourse.

Section C returns to the home key of F Ionian. The new theme is successively treated in all voices, and the final cadence is an authentic F cadence with the third omitted.

Gloria

The Gloria is structured into five sections, delineated according to thematic material and the organization of the musical discourse. The movement opens with a variant of the Kyrie theme, which also appears in the *Agnus Dei*, thereby consolidating the work's cyclical unity.

Within this movement, a single metric alternation occurs: the transition from duple to triple meter in the *Gratias agimus tibi* section, which imparts an expansive and festive character.

In the *Domine Deus* section, the discourse is built on imitative interplay between the Tenor + Bass and Soprano + Alto groups. The sections *Qui tollis peccata mundi* and *Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris* introduce new thematic material, whose progressive development leads to a delayed V–I cadence; immediately before this cadence, the theme from the Kyrie reappears, reinforcing the motivic coherence of the movement.

In *Quoniam*, the succession of broad, sustained chords highlights the close relationship between text and music. Tonally, the passage tends toward D Aeolian/Dorian, marked by the appearance of its dominant, before returning at the cadence to the dominant of F Ionian.

The final section, *Cum Sancto Spiritu*, through its solemn character and energetic thematic material, provides a festive conclusion, closing with a IV–I cadence. The theme of this section is later treated in the *Hosanna*, using similar developmental procedures, thereby consolidating the thematic unity of the entire composition.

Credo

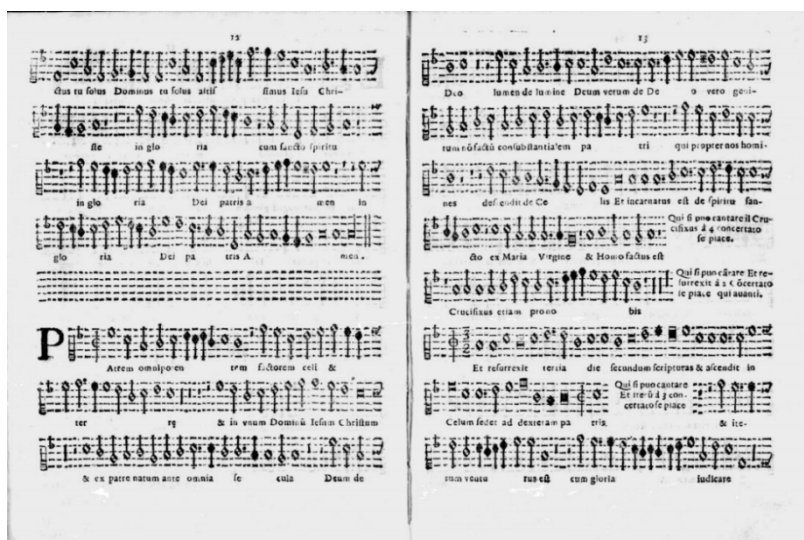
One of the distinctive features of this Mass is that certain sections have alternative concertato versions, which can be inserted in place of the original sections if desired (*Crucifixus*, *Et Resurrexit*, *Et iterum venturus est*). These movements appear separately in the printed edition, and their use raises several issues.

Firstly, the vocal distribution and orchestration differ from the sections they might replace. For example, *Et Resurrexit* requires two violins and solo vocal parts, while *Et iterum venturus est* is conceived as a trio for two alto voices and one bass, which do not appear elsewhere in the four-voice Mass.

Secondly, these concertato sections introduce a strong stylistic contrast within an otherwise *stile antico* composition.

Thirdly, in terms of sonic material, they deviate from the tonal logic of the original Mass, which consistently remains in F Ionian.⁷

E.g. 4



Claudio Monteverdi - Messa a 4 da cappella from Selva Morale e Spirituale (1641). Original manuscript, Credo

Vaughn Roste, in his study *The Three Extant Masses of Claudio Monteverdi*, notes that some scholars have suggested these sections might form part of a complete Credo in concertato style, although no evidence

⁷ These characteristics suggest that Monteverdi maintained a flexible approach to the Mass's structure and was open to stylistic experimentation, even within a work framed by traditional conventions. At the same time, the use of these alternative sections allows performers to shape the character and sonority of the Mass according to the available voices and instruments.

supports this hypothesis. It is more likely that they were conceived solely as substitute sections. Hans Ferdinand Redlich argues that in making this choice, Monteverdi revised his own principles of the *prima prattica*, whereas other specialists believe that these sections were composed later for specific occasions⁸.

Interestingly, these sections reflect Monteverdi's understanding of the evolution of styles, suggesting that *prima* and *seconda prattica* can coexist not only historically but also within a single composition.

Moreover, the thematic material of these sections exhibits clear motivic connections with the themes of the Sanctus and Agnus Dei, thereby reinforcing the structural unity of the cycle. The sections are articulated in close correlation with the Latin text, as observed in Et incarnatus and Et *resurrexit*, where the musical discourse is shaped according to the theological meaning of the text, faithfully reflecting its content.

Sanctus – Benedictus

The Sanctus–Benedictus is structured in an ABCDC form, with each section articulated in binary phrasing.

Section A opens with a two-measure slow introduction, after which the theme continues with shorter note values, imparting a more animated pulse and ornamented character. The theme unfolds imitatively across all voices throughout the section. In the *Dominus Deus* passage, the Kyrie motif is identifiable, albeit in the form of a melodic inversion variation.

Section B, *Pleni sunt caeli et terra*, also unfolds imitatively. The theme begins in the Bass, then gradually proceeds through all voices. Notably, there is no clear cadential closure between the two sections: the Bass enters before the previous section ends, creating a fluid sense of continuity. Additionally, the theme opens with three repeated notes, which, interpretively, produces a gradual intensification and subtle *crescendo*.

Section C, *Hosanna*, begins in a similar continuous manner, overlapping with the preceding section. The theme is stated in the Alto, using low notes adapted to the timbral qualities of the voice. It incorporates the previously mentioned quotation from the madrigal *La vaga pastorella*. The musical material relies on alternating vocal pairings (S+A and T+B).

The cadence concludes on a sustained F major chord with the third omitted, a characteristic feature of this Mass.

Benedictus, Section D, treats the theme from *Pleni sunt caeli et terra* in a varied form. Sequences play a prominent role in thematic development. The vocal pairings are inverted relative to the previous section: T+B and A+S.

⁸ Redlich, Hans Ferdinand. *Claudio Monteverdi: Life and Works*, trans. Kathleen Dale. Oxford University Press, New York, 1952, p. 122.

The final *Hosanna* (Section C) returns identically to conclude the Sanctus–Benedictus section.

Agnus Dei

The Agnus Dei integrates the principal motif of the Mass organically into the musical discourse. Its compositional structure demonstrates the same imitative conception observed in previous movements, confirming the stylistic coherence of the cycle.

In the *Miserere nobis* and *Dona nobis pacem* sections, the predominant compositional technique is descending sequencing, which enhances the expressive intensity and amplifies the internal tension of the musical phrases. Unlike other *Agnus Dei* sections, there is no tripartite segmentation; the musical discourse unfolds in a continuous, fluid manner without clear structural delimitations. The triple invocation is realized through repetition of the same musical structure on the text *Dona nobis pacem*, ensuring both formal coherence and expressive unity across the movement.

The final cadence employs a VI–V–I progression, providing a stable and conclusive closure to the movement.

Messa a quattro voci da cappella (1650)

The *Messa a quattro voci da cappella*, published in the 1650 collection titled *Messa a quattro voci et Salmi a 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & voci e Parte da Cappella et con le Litanie della Beata Vergine* by Alessandro Vincenti, was originally composed in G dorian.⁹ The work is characterized by rich, imitative counterpoint and expansive melodic lines, exploring the same thematic idea in multiple ways. In this Mass, Monteverdi demonstrates a retrospective approach to the *prima prattica*, employing a learned musical language that was already considered somewhat archaic in his time.

However, the modal sonorities are enriched by the alternation of major and minor tonalities, the expressive use of dissonance in a madrigal style, and sudden changes of rhythm and meter, all hallmarks of the *seconda prattica* style.

Phrases are relatively short, often with one syllable per note, ensuring textual clarity. Monteverdi's Mass thus combines the rich contrapuntal texture

⁹ The score used for this analysis is taken from the Carus Verlag edition. In the preface, editor Rudolf Walter notes that the Heidelberg version of 1967 represents a transposition to F, motivated by the demands of modern choral practice. To facilitate reading and performance, the note values were shortened, a practical adaptation that does not affect the essential musical structure of the work but solely enhances graphical clarity and interpretive accessibility.

of the Renaissance with the purity and expressive power of the new musical language. From this fusion of styles emerges a composition in which the characteristics of both traditions are distinct yet balanced, producing a coherent and profound synthesis.

Kyrie¹⁰

Kyrie expresses the opening prayer of the Mass through a three-part strophic (ABA) structure. The Kyrie is scored for four voices (SATB) in duple meter.

The main theme consists of a descending tetrachord, which recurs in Kyrie, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. Monteverdi employs a minor tetrachord, with the response formed as a Phrygian tetrachord at the upper fifth.

In section A, in addition to the initial tetrachord, two further essential thematic elements can be identified. These do not introduce new musical material but are variations derived from the original tetrachord, contributing to the coherence of the musical discourse, reinforcing motivic unity, and highlighting the generative role of the foundational tetrachord within the section's overall structure.

E.g. 5

The image shows a musical score for the Kyrie (m. 1-6) by Claudio Monteverdi. The score is for four voices (Canto, Alto, Tenore, Basso) and Basso continuo. The key signature is one flat (F Dorian) and the time signature is duple. The lyrics are: Ky - ri(e) e - le - - - - i - son, Ky - . Red boxes highlight the initial tetrachord in the Canto and Tenore parts.

Claudio Monteverdi - Messa a quattro voci da cappella (1650), Kyrie (m. 1-6)

Section B begins and cadences with a homophonic passage featuring a single virtuosic imitative theme. The imitative vocal groups are S+A and T+B,

¹⁰ For the purpose of this analysis, the Carus Verlag edition, transposed to F Dorian, has been used. This ensures coherence between the studied material and the analytical approach.

alternating to create a polyphonic imitation, with entries at perfect fifths between the vocal groups.

In Section A1, the text returns with new musical material, yet the principal compositional idea remains intact. Following the introduction, the descending tetrachord appears in Soprano, Tenor, and Bass, contrapuntally paired with a descending, syncopated rhythm that defines the section. This section represents the most complex segment thematically, rhythmically, and contrapuntally, with imitative entries occurring at perfect fifths between voices.

The originality of Monteverdi's compositional style is reflected in the final theme of this section. The foundation remains the descending tetrachord but now embellished with sequential descending ornamentation.¹¹

From a tonal perspective, the three sections are treated differently. The first section cadences on an incomplete F chord (without the third), the second section concludes on an incomplete C chord, and the final section returns to a complete F chord with a Picardy third. The dominant - tonic relationship is present throughout all three sections, achieved either through melodic notes or the use of suspensions.

Gloria

The Gloria opens with a Gregorian invocation, derived from *Missa XI* and transmitted through liturgical sources compiled in the *Liber Usualis*.¹² The musical material is constructed in close alignment with the Latin text. Alternating homophonic and polyphonic passages create clarity, expressive definition, and dynamic momentum. Homophonic segments delimit and separate polyphonic episodes, providing structural stability while highlighting textual meaning.

The first segment sets the text from the *Ordinary: Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis* homophonically, with an anacrusis in the tenor on *Et in*. The introduction of the raised fourth (sensible) and the

¹¹ Based on analytical experience, this compositional technique can also be identified in Josquin des Prez's *Missa Beata Virgine*. This observation suggests that Monteverdi was not only familiar with and applied the new compositional techniques of his time, but also drew on the technical traditions of the Franco-Flemish masters.

¹² The Roman Catholic Church maintains an official liturgical corpus encompassing the essential repertoire of Gregorian chant. One of the most important reference sources is the *Liber Usualis*, edited by the Benedictine monks of Solesmes Abbey, which contains the Gregorian melodies used regularly in the Mass and Divine Office. Based on authentic medieval sources, this collection played a fundamental role in standardizing and transmitting the Gregorian tradition in modern liturgical practice.

use of the minor IV degree produce a V–IV⁶–V harmonic progression, leading to a Picardy third cadence.

The second segment develops the original *Christe* theme up to *Gratias agimus tibi*, with a cadence identical to the first segment. The text, expressing praise and thanksgiving, is set as follows: *Laudamus te, Benedicimus te, Adoramus te, Glorificamus te* – polyphonic; *Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam* – homophonic; *gloriam tuam* – polyphonic. *Domine Deus, Rex cœlestis, Deus Pater omnipotens* predominates in polyphonic imitation, with vocal groupings B+T and S+A, cadencing on the same degrees as in previous segments.

The third segment is fully imitative, with B+T and S+A groups converging into a tutti imitation toward the end.

The fourth segment mirrors the initial invocation. The first two phrases are homophonic, distributed as SAT + ATB, before evolving into polyphonic imitation leading to the section's climax. The text *Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris* is treated homophonically, whereas *miserere nobis* is set with longer note values and suspensions, producing an agogic *ritardando*. This section stabilizes on a V chord without the third, creating an open and tensioned ending.

The final segment, corresponding to glorification, begins with a slow introduction. For *Tu solus Sanctus, Tu solus Dominus, Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe*, the texture is imitative, with identical entries across the SATB ensemble. The text *Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris* reintroduces the fundamental descending tetrachord, serving a unifying structural role. The *Amen* section is composed in a polyphonic-imitative manner, with successive vocal entries and complex rhythm, emphasizing the conclusive character of the movement.

The constant presence of D^b and E^h throughout the work contributes to tonal-modal instability, suggesting an intentional ambiguity between functional tonality and modal organization.

Credo

The Credo opens with a Gregorian invocation, derived from *Missa I*¹³, and is structured into eight distinct segments¹⁴.

¹³ *Liber Usualis*

¹⁴ For the analysis of the Credo, both the Latin liturgical text and essential musical parameters were considered, including thematic material, cadence types, the development of imitative-polyphonic processes, and their modal resolutions. Based on these analytical criteria, a coherent segmentation of the movement was established, reflecting both the internal organization of the musical discourse and its relationship to the textual content.

The segments are constructed through the alternation of homophonic and polyphonic textures, a device that articulates the musical discourse and highlights the expressive contours of the composition.

The first segment begins with a homophonic setting in the SAT voices, followed by BTA, which develops a concise imitative passage. This segment functions as a formal introduction, establishing the opening of the Credo.

The second segment exhibits a tristrophic structure, alternating homophonic and polyphonic textures (homophony–polyphony–homophony). Within this segment, the thematic head corresponding to the *Christe* section is introduced, built on a descending sequence that can be regarded as the fundamental tetrachord, providing structural cohesion for the entire Mass.

The next segment, *Et incarnatus est*, is presented in homophonic texture, emphasizing the mystery of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. A clear melodic line and vocal uniformity underscore the solemnity and theological significance of the passage. The segment concludes with a Picardy third, offering tonal resolution and highlighting the gravitas and sacred character of the moment.

Fourth Fragment, *Crucifixus*, opens with an imitative texture, marked by rhythmic and melodic agitation, which develops up to the *et sepultus est* passage. Here, the S+A voices and tenor convey the sorrow through sustained notes and rhythmic suspensions, concluding with a Picardy cadence.

This section, *Et Resurrexit*, introduces a ternary rhythmic character, giving the passage a contrasting energy compared to the previous material. By the end, the pulse returns to duple meter, and the imitative lines and melismas reflect the close relationship between text and music. Cadences are built on triadless harmonies, creating tonal ambiguity and a distinctive resolution.

The sixth fragment begins with a theme similar to the fundamental tetrachord, with polyphonic imitation predominating and defining the musical discourse throughout. The following fragment opens with a homophonic texture and presents a bistrophic structure; both strophes maintain the duple pulse and conclude with a Picardy cadence.

Seventh Fragment, beginning with a homophonic texture, this fragment follows a bistrophic structure, with both strophes adhering to duple meter and concluding with a Picardy cadence.

The final fragment features complex rhythmic writing, with interleaved imitative entries that create a dynamic and expressive character. The theme recalls that of the Sanctus, *Pleni sunt caeli et terra*, retaining its main features while introducing subtle variations that give the fragment originality. The last four measures function as a coda, ending with a IVb - I progression and a Picardy third, emphasizing the solemn resolution of the entire passage.

Sanctus-Benedictus

The overall form is ABCDC, with alternating ternary and duple articulations. Section C is repeated both textually and compositionally: the first at the end of *Sanctus* and the second at the end of *Benedictus* (*Hosanna*, as above). In section A, the musical material is drawn from section A of the *Kyrie*. The theme begins in the bass with a descending minor tetrachord, followed by a virtuosic passage in counterpoint appearing in the tenor line. The vocal groups performing the identical tetrachords are B+A and T+S.

Section B, *Pleni sunt caeli et terra*, introduces a new theme in the alto and soprano voices. The descending tetrachord first appears in the tenor in major form, while in the bass it is presented with a Phrygian tetrachord, creating a gradually descending line that supports and anchors the harmonic pillars up to the cadence, following the movements in the soprano and alto.

Section C, *Hosanna*, presents the motivic cell from *Christe*, distributed across the vocal groups B+T and S+A. At the end of this section, the shift from duple to ternary meter introduces rhythmic instability, producing a quasi-polyrhythmic effect. The cadence returns to duple meter with a delayed V4-3-I progression, forming a Picardy cadence.

The *Benedictus*, corresponding to section D, is written in homophonic texture and structured in three phrases (6+6+6 measures). In the first two phrases, only three voices are active (A+T+S), followed by B+T+A. The third phrase is presented in four voices, *tutti*. A new ornamental rhythmic formula appears at the cadence of the second phrase in the alto and at the beginning of the third phrase in the tenor.

E.g. 6

12

Be - ne - di - ctus qui ve - nit in no - mi - ne

ni. Be - ne - di - ctus qui ve - nit in no - mi - ne

ni. Be - ne - di - ctus qui ve - nit in no - mi - ne

ni. Be - ne - di - ctus qui ve - nit in no - mi - ne

Claudio Monteverdi - *Messa a quattro voci da cappella* (1650),
Benedictus, (m. 12-16)

Section C, *Hosanna*, returns identically at the end of the *Sanctus-Benedictus* section.

Agnus Dei

In this section, the musical material is built around two themes: the first theme is the descending minor tetrachord, taken and augmented from the *Kyrie*, presented first in the tenor, then in the alto, bass, and soprano.

The second theme, derived from *Christe*, passes through all voices and converges homophonically at a climactic point. The text *Agnus Dei* is centered on the descending tetrachord, while *qui tollis peccata mundi* is set to the second theme, which exhibits virtuosic figurations. Polyphonic imitation permeates the entire section, and a change in character begins at *miserere nobis* with a descending sequence.

Two primary textures can be identified in this section: homophonic and polyphonic (imitative), whose alternation drives the movement toward the conclusion of the mass. In the coda, a shift occurs in the tenor voice, which enters with a half-note delay, counterpointing the other voices. The final cadence features an E, producing a IVb–V₄–I progression.

In conclusion, Monteverdi's two four-voice masses exhibit his innovative compositional approaches, while their structures remain largely grounded in the principles of the *prima prattica*. Among the notable features are the concertato style in the Credo, the application of tonal procedures, and the subtle ornamentation appearing in the Benedictus. These elements demonstrate a conscious balance between tradition and innovation, characteristic of Monteverdi's individual style.

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ACADEMIC JAZZ IN THE POSTMODERN ERA: *NU-JAZZ* IN CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITIONAL PRACTICE

TEODOR AMARANDEI¹ 

SUMMARY. The impact of technology on jazz has been profound, provocative, and far-reaching since the genre's inception. Combining the musical qualities of jazz with those of electronic music requires a high degree of imaginative subtlety, as musicians approach this synthesis from a foundation of deep experience in jazz practice. In the late 1990s, a new subgenre emerged, *nu-jazz*, combining jazz with dance-music elements, particularly funk and electronica, alongside free improvisation. Its sonic approaches range from extensive use of electronic devices to purely live instrumentation, with numerous hybrid configurations of acoustic instruments and electronic processing in between. What remains constant is jazz-specific phrasing and harmonic conception.

This study examines the author's composition *Summit* as a case study of compositional strategies derived from the *Third-Stream* movement within a heterogeneous contemporary stylistic context. This approach represents one possible means of maintaining the relevance of jazz composition for younger, contemporary audiences.

Keywords: nu-jazz, hybridity, electronic sound, third stream

1. Introduction

The relationship between jazz and technological innovation has become a defining concern of contemporary musicological discourse, as scholars increasingly recognize that the development of jazz is inseparable from the sonic, social, and technological environments in which it emerges. Early research on recording technologies demonstrates that the advent of disc

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recording and, later, multitrack production fundamentally reshaped jazz performance and improvisation by introducing concepts of repeatability, layered construction, and the analytical scrutiny of multiple recorded takes. More recent scholarship extends this trajectory into the digital sphere, showing how electronic processing, virtual instrumentation, and hybrid performance practices have transformed jazz aesthetics at the turn of the twenty-first century and facilitated the rise of subgenres rooted in electronically mediated sound.

Within this broader historical continuum, *nu-jazz* stands out as one of the most significant stylistic developments of the past three decades. Building on earlier experiments by artists such as Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, and Brian Eno, *nu-jazz* merges electronic timbres, digital effects, ambient textures, and dance-derived rhythmic structures with the improvisational ethos of jazz. Its evolution has been shaped equally by European electronic music cultures, by hip-hop and downtempo aesthetics, and by studio-based compositional techniques that blur the boundary between live performance and constructed sound. The resulting repertoire is defined by a dynamic interplay between jazz-derived harmonic language and phrasing on one hand, and electronically generated textures, looping procedures, and minimalist repetition on the other.

Although this hybrid sound world has been examined from historical, sociological, and technological perspectives, its implications for contemporary compositional practice remain comparatively underexplored, particularly within academically grounded creative work. This article addresses that gap by examining how *nu-jazz* principles can be integrated into original composition. Through analyses of two of the author's works, the study investigates how stylistic synthesis and sound design interact with traditional formal structures. By situating these compositional strategies within the broader lineage of jazz / technology interaction, the article aims to illuminate both the continuity and the innovative potential inherent in contemporary hybrid jazz composition.

2. The context

Researchers concerned with the fluidity of stylistic boundaries – an inherent consequence of hybridity – have identified early intersections between genres as far back as the Renaissance, through the blending of sacred music with secular texts and *vice versa*. Later, during the Baroque era, this tendency became evident first in the works of Johann Sebastian Bach and subsequently in those of Georg Philipp Telemann. Even when stylistic unity characterized a given historical period, it nonetheless inspired composers to experiment with cross-genre mixtures. The twentieth century, defined by an

unprecedented diversity of creative expression, provided fertile ground for some of the most heterogeneous and unexpected combinations of styles and genres, ranging from highly valuable artistic syntheses to others of more modest compositional impact.

The evolution of jazz across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has continually stimulated the creativity of performers and composers alike, generating new genres and styles that, at each stage, introduced innovative modes of expression. In recent decades, these developments have accelerated dramatically, branching into an array of subgenres so numerous that any systematic classification has become nearly impossible. The multitude of combinations, mixtures, and fusions among diverse musical elements has imparted a distinct sonic imprint to each emerging subgenre.

3. Jazz and digital sonorities

The impact of technology on jazz has been profound, provocative, and multifaceted since the very beginning of the genre. Early audio recordings on disc represented one of the first technological tools adopted by jazz musicians, decisively contributing to the popularization and wider accessibility of the music during the 1920s and 1930s. As musicians adapted to recording techniques and began transferring live performances onto discs, jazz gradually became a medium suited for remote listening. The introduction of recording technology fundamentally changed the conception of performance in jazz by providing the genre with a sense of repeatability previously unknown, while also allowing the close study of multiple recorded versions of the same piece.

Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many of the genre's leading artists experimented with *multi-tracking* in their album productions – like Miles Davis (*Miles Ahead*, 1957); Lambert, Hendricks & Ross (*Sing a Song of Basie*, 1958); and Bill Evans (*Conversations with Myself*, 1963).

Initially, the absence of improvisation in early electronic music, particularly that produced using magnetic tape, justified the reluctance of many jazz musicians to embrace it, given that improvisation was central to jazz and its stylistic developments of the time (such as *bebop*). Despite these impediments, a significant number of jazz artists began working with tape-recorded materials and eventually with electronic instruments, seeking ways to combine electronic music with jazz.

The paths followed by jazz musicians in their explorations of the electronic realm during the 1960s included:

- Incorporating pre-recorded electronic music on tape into *live* or studio performances (1960–1970);
- Using electronic devices (other than synthesizers) to modify or accompany acoustic instruments in *live* contexts, through amplification, distortion, echo effects, or *octave splitting* (1965–1970);
- Employing synthesizers (1965–1970).²

From 1963 onward, experimental projects involving the fusion of jazz – especially *free jazz*, with its heightened expressive freedom – and pre-recorded electronic music resulted in a series of innovative works. These opened new pathways not only for processing electronic sonorities but also for generating them through novel means.

The revolution in instrumentation made possible by the computer left a significant imprint on improvisation from the early decades of the century. The adoption of new sonic resources developed along two parallel trajectories: on one hand, by musicians active within the *free jazz* tradition, and on the other, by proponents of digital improvisation associated with the avant-garde.

4. *Nu-jazz* - a new type of fusion

Dave Douglas³, one of today's leading contemporary jazz artists, emphasizes the importance of aligning jazz with the plurality of today's sonic environment, in which electronic media and rhythm play a central role in the genre's ongoing process of emancipation. As he states: "In this period, what happens inside and outside us is reflected in the thousands of ways in which music transforms and evolves. These technologies, more than anything else, are an essential part of what human development represents."⁴

In the late 1990s, a new subcategory of musical style emerged, known as *nu-jazz*, combining jazz with elements of dance music, particularly funk

² Holmes, Thom. "The Roots of Electronic Jazz, 1950–1970", in *Jazz Perspectives*, volume 10, 2-3, 2018, pp. 207-242.

³ An American trumpeter, composer, educator, and entrepreneur, he is the founder of numerous projects and instrumental ensembles. His body of work encompasses a vast stylistic diversity and a notable contribution to the field of improvisation, recognized and honored with prestigious awards such as the Doris Duke Artist Award, the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Aaron Copland Award, and two Grammy Award nominations.

⁴ Nichols, Stuart. *Jazztronica: A Brief History of the Future of Jazz*, <https://www.jazztimes.com/features/jazztronica-a-brief-history-of-the-future-of-jazz/?v=3605c251087b> (date of access 18.02.2026)

and Electronica⁵, alongside free improvisation. The result of this seemingly heterogeneous mixture was a fresh and innovative form that continues to expand the boundaries established by its predecessors.

As suggested by its alternative labels, *nu-jazz* is distinguished above all by its strong electronic imprint, which penetrates much more deeply into this territory than acid jazz, a style that remains more closely aligned with soul and rhythm and blues. In terms of instrumental choices, especially percussion and rhythm-section sonorities, such as the use of acoustic bass, *nu-jazz* draws inspiration from cool jazz, swing, bebop, and bossa nova.

Paradoxically, although its roots lie in the United States, *nu-jazz* was initially popularized primarily in Europe, particularly in Norway and the Netherlands, and has since achieved global circulation. Because of the stylistic diversity and the highly individualized artistic approaches within *nu-jazz*, it is difficult to define the genre in terms of fixed forms, structures, harmonic language, theoretical frameworks, or instrumentation.

Traditional jazz has always been characterized by the fusion of diverse stylistic elements, and *nu-jazz* continues this tradition through the integration of digital technology. Approaches range from the exclusive use of electronic devices to purely live performance, with many hybrid combinations of acoustic instruments and electronic effects in between. What remains constant is jazz-specific phrasing and harmonic conception. Tempi can vary from slow, ballad-like grooves to fast, house-influenced beats. From purely instrumental tracks to politically engaged vocal works, *nu-jazz* has broadened jazz's audience while preserving key stylistic traits of the genre.

Among the stylistic predecessors of *nu-jazz* are Terry Riley, whose ambient-inflected textures influenced albums such as *Soft Machine*; Brian Eno, particularly through his late-1970s experiments with funk and fusion, including his work with Brand X; and Miles Davis's track *He Loved Him Madly* from the album *Get Up with It*.

The emergence of *nu-jazz* can be traced back to the 1970s, when musicians such as Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, and Ornette Coleman began integrating electronic instruments into jazz. In the early 1980s, Bill Laswell and Herbie Hancock announced a distinctive hybrid direction with the album *Future Shock*, incorporating hip-hop rhythms and electronic elements. From the late 1980s onward, hip-hop musicians such as Gang

⁵ The term holds a dual significance. The first refers to a broad category of styles based on electronic music intended for listening, while simultaneously maintaining a dance-oriented direction. The second significance designates a particular typology of stage music that emerged in the early 1990s in the United Kingdom.

Starr, The Roots, A Tribe Called Quest, and Nas explored jazz-rap, while house producers drew inspiration from post-bop and jazz-funk.

Over time, *nu-jazz* absorbed additional influences: post-rock electric guitar textures; minimalist repetition in phrasing, as heard in Portico Quartet, inspired by Steve Reich and Philip Glass; and the lush orchestration of arrangers such as Henry Mancini and Les Baxter, rediscovered by groups like Jaga Jazzist and Snarky Puppy. Ambient music also plays a significant role, especially in the early work of Nils Petter Molvær. Nik Bärtsch is known for combining minimalist repetition with dub-influenced ambience. Throughout its evolution, *nu-jazz* has retained a relaxed, accessible aesthetic, marked by electronic textures that often carry retro or ironic kitsch associations.

In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, the diversification of electronic music further accelerated *nu-jazz*'s development. Downtempo⁶ artists such as Jazztronik, St Germain, Trüby Trio, DJ Takemura, Perry Hemus, and Jazzanova cultivated the hybrid style. Dance-music producers working with artists such as Squarepusher and Spring Heel Jack, and later London Elektricity and Landslide, were drawn to jazz-influenced complexity. Techno artists such as Carl Craig and his project *Innerzone Orchestra* demonstrated sustained interest in *nu-jazz*, while *hardcore* and *breakcore*⁷ figures such as Alec Empire, Nic Endo, and Venetian Snares explored more aggressive variants. A decade later, dubstep producers such as Boxcutter engaged with electronic jazz. Meanwhile, Bugge Wesseltoft and Nils Petter Molvær became known for *nu-jazz* improvisation within traditional jazz forms. *The Cinematic Orchestra*⁸ is recognized for integrating a traditional jazz ensemble with electronic production.

Since 2009, the *Electro Jazz Festival de Megève* (Haute-Savoie, France) has been entirely dedicated to *nu-jazz* (electro-jazz). Held annually in August, the festival gathers both leading established groups and emerging artists working within this musical direction.

5. Nu-jazz within the Author's Compositional Output

RO RO (2019, original composition) takes as its point of departure the concept of stylistic hybridity operating on multiple levels. Rooted in the

⁶ A combination of hip-hop and electronic styles, which can incorporate a wide diversity of genres, including funk, dub, psychedelia, R&B, and house, as well as other forms of electronic music.

⁷ Subgenres of electronic dance music.

⁸ The *Cinematic Orchestra* is a British Nu jazz and electronic music group, founded in 1999 by Jason Swinscoe. The sound employed in both live performances and studio recordings utilizes an instrumental ensemble with an improvisational role, alongside electronic music equipment operated by a DJ.

Third-Stream tradition, which combines academically grounded compositional language with the jazz idiom, the work's three movements integrate classical formal archetypes – sonata, rondo, and strophic form – within a sound world dominated by jazz sonorities. These layers intersect through harmony, rhythm, timbre, and notation. The final movement, *RO Rondo*, brings these two stylistic coordinates into dialogue with *nu-jazz* aesthetics: although its electronic components and expanded rhythmic and timbral palette may initially appear incompatible with academic formal structures, they ultimately function as a means of positioning contemporary jazz composition within a current cultural context.

The formal design of *RO Rondo* is based on alternation, articulated through a refrain and three contrasting couplets, within which two solos are embedded: drums and electric guitar. The refrain maintains traditional phrase symmetry and motivic coherence, yet each return situates it in a new instrumental and structural context. The influence of *nu-jazz* is evident in the prominence of digitally generated sounds produced through computer-based software. These are complemented by acoustic instruments, including drum set (doubled by electronic drums), electric guitar, and analogue electric piano. The sonic material was developed through sound-design processes in which original tones for both lead and accompaniment were processed, layered, and transformed.

The opening presentation of the refrain is stated twice by a synthesized voice, accompanied by digital timbres (oscillators and synthesizer) and acoustic elements – drums and bass guitar. The lower staff of the score is devoted to special effects, notated through a graphic system adapted from academic composition in order to represent the processing and manipulation of sound and oscillators with maximum precision.

7 **Bbm7** **F7b9(#5)** **Bbm7(9)**

7 GTR. Fill **7fr.**

E.Gtr.

Lead

SYN 2

D. S.

Bass

SFX

9 **E7sus** **G7(9) sus** **G7m7(b5)**

9 **10fr.**

E.Gtr.

Lead

SYN 2

D. S.

Bass

SFX

RO Rondo (author's composition), first phrase, mm. 7-10

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The second couplet (mm. 72–111) constitutes a section devoted entirely to *nu-jazz*. Here, the electric guitar solo occupies the core of the melodic discourse, while the accompaniment is constructed from electronically generated material using arpeggiators and sound modulators.

E.g. 2

105

E. Gtr. Bbm11

Lead

Pno. 1

SYN 2

Vox.

D. S.

Bass

W. Bl.

SFX

RO Rondo (author's composition), mm. 105-106

In the final return of the refrain, rhythmic variation is introduced through triplet-based writing, and the diffused timbre of the lead voice anticipates the psychedelic ending, which, together with the visual component, creates a contemplative, meditative atmosphere.

E.g. 3

**RO Rondo (author's composition), mm. 144-146, the last variation of the refrain**

The second work examined in this study, *Summit* (2020), was composed in the context of the global crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, a period marked not only by severe restrictions on personal and artistic freedom but also by profound psychological strain within the artistic community. *Summit* is a single-movement chamber work structured according to a principle of multiple strophic variation, into which free sections of differing function are inserted, combining stylistic elements characteristic of *Third-Stream* aesthetics. Its formal organization is closely linked to methods of sonic construction, particularly orchestration, timbral treatment, thematic development, and expressive shaping. The electronic section functions as an autonomous, improvisatory episode, acting both as a moment of colour within the sequence of academically notated passages and as a precursor to later developments in instrumentation and sound design.

Figure 1

INTRODUCTION A transition ELECTRONIC SECTION B transition C transition A1

Beyond providing a synthetic accompaniment layer, the electronic section features a synthesized timbre created through digital software, with its color shaped by controlled oscillator modulation. The texture includes both tones derived from a single waveform and digitally processed audio effects. The principal solo is performed on a digital instrument referred to in the score as “digital piano”, although in practice it consists of a fully customized synthesizer. This section also incorporates vocal samples that are transformed through software-based manipulation and reinterpretation.

Additional digital processing techniques include reverse sound, applied to instruments such as the analogue electric piano using delay, panning, and reverb. One of the most distinctive sound-design elements is the vinyl-crack timbre, which introduces the electronic section's sequence of effects. This is followed by processed electronic drum patterns and a digitally generated brass-like sound labelled swell brass in the score.

Digital timbres also appear within the predominantly academic passages, where they enrich the resonance of traditional instruments. In the final solo, for example, the acoustic piano remains in the foreground but is doubled by a synthesized layer created through sound-design techniques.

Formally, the electronic solo adheres to classical principles through a fixed number of measures and a recurring harmonic progression. Its musical language is dominated by modal ambiguity, articulated both vertically and horizontally through polymodal procedures. The upper line – the improvisatory solo – only intermittently aligns with the harmonic framework of the bass, unfolding instead as a horizontally polymodal melody that gravitates toward shifting modal centers. Harmonically, multiple pedal points in the accompaniment suggest a D-based mode with an elided third, creating sustained tension. This pedal is articulated through stacked fifths, reinforcing the modal sonority of the passage.

In the second segment, the harmonic discourse shifts toward a new modal center on F#, again treated with an elided third, an idea anticipated earlier without yet resolving the ambiguity of the underlying D-mode. The third harmonic plane combines modal structures, such as quartal sonorities (m. 84), with harmonic parallelism. One example is a descending progression superimposed both over a D pedal and over a broader field of parallel fifths (mm. 78–85).

E.g. 4

The musical score for 'Summit' (author's composition), mm. 78-82, consists of six staves. The top staff is for Piano, showing a circled 'E' at the beginning and a 'D pedal point' label. The second staff is for Small Brass. The third staff is for Pn. digital mT. The fourth staff is for Synth Brass, with a 'parallel 5ths' label. The fifth staff is for Trumpet, and the sixth staff is for Marimba. The Piano and Synth Brass parts play a descending progression of notes, while the Trumpet and Marimba parts play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Summit (author's composition), mm. 78-82

6. Conclusions

The present study demonstrates that the contemporary sonic landscape is no longer a neutral backdrop but an active participant in the creative process. The digital ecosystem in which we reside fundamentally alters the reception, recording, and transmission of acoustic music. In this context, the influence of electronic music performers and producers on the jazz idiom and the art of improvisation is not merely anecdotal; it is transformative. However, as this research has argued, the preservation of an original, personal artistic signature must remain the central axis of the creative act in contemporary jazz.

Regarding the contemporary compositional phenomenon, the study analyses yield several conclusions formulated from the standpoint of the creator, beyond that of the analytical observer. Hybrid works benefit from treating orchestration and sound design as structural parameters rather than as post-production adornment. From another perspective, graphic strategies adapted from academic composition can productively capture the specificity of electronic processing and signal flow, enabling score-level reproducibility of timbral procedures. Furthermore, regarding the aesthetic dimension, *nu-jazz's* relaxed but intricately textured surfaces may function as an entry point for broader audiences, provided that electronic resources amplify the idiomatic phrasing and harmonic imagination that mark jazz as such.

Despite the pervasive presence of electronic media, jazz remains fundamentally an art of individual and collective expression. The increasingly sophisticated palette of digital sounds can only acquire artistic meaning through musicians who are able to use these resources creatively, critically, and with stylistic awareness. Modern jazz styles, including *nu-jazz*, thus play a crucial role in the contemporary revitalization of the genre.

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FUGUE FORM AND JAZZ MUSIC. CITATIONS, CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES, AND REINTERPRETATIONS

GABRIELA VLAHOPOL¹ 

SUMMARY. The present study examines the ways in which the Baroque fugue - a paradigmatic model of contrapuntal thinking - has been incorporated, reinterpreted, and hybridized within jazz and hybrid academic/jazz composition from the mid-twentieth century to the present. While numerous studies have addressed the general interaction between traditional academic music and jazz, the specific connection between fugue and jazz remains only partially explored, with the most consistent research concentrated in Russian musicology. This article synthesizes the principal modalities through which the fugue has been accessed by jazz and crossover composers: (1) through structural adoption, (2) through exclusive use of imitative polyphonic procedures, and (3) through combined approaches. By analyzing major scholarly contributions and representative musical works, the study proposes a conceptual clarification of the phenomenon and situates it within the broader polystylistic context characteristic of contemporary musical creation.

Keywords: jazz, fugue, counterpoint, hybrid music, polystylism, post-tonality

1. Introduction

By virtue of its inherent flexibility and its historical ties to improvisatory genres—toccata, fantasia—counterpoint constitutes a fertile terrain for allusion, recomposition, and innovation. As Sterrs (2013) observes, “counterpoint has always served as a pretext for allusion, recomposition, and innovation”², a remark that anticipates its openness to stylistic inflections within the aesthetics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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² Sterrs, Tamika Sakayi. *Toward a compositional paradigm based on post-tonality, jazz, and counterpoint*, PhD Thesis, Athens, Georgia, 2013.



According to the literature, the connections between Western art music and jazz are both manifold and historically grounded, far surpassing the level of superficial borrowing and rising to the status of autonomous compositional paradigms (Schuller's "third stream"; Friar, 2017). The expansion of polystylism in the latter half of the twentieth century laid the groundwork for deep interactions among musical languages that had previously been regarded as aesthetically incompatible.

Despite an extensive bibliography on the relationship between art music and jazz, the specific association of the fugue with jazz idioms has rarely been treated systematically. Major exceptions are found in Russian musicology, especially in the work of Chuvilkin (*About the essence of the concept of «jazz fugue»*; *Jazz Fugue in the Context of Interaction Between Academic and Jazz Music of the 20th – Early 21st Century*), where the very concept of the "jazz fugue" is proposed and theorized.

1. Theoretical Context: Fusion, Polystylism, and the Academic–Jazz Intersection

The convergence of three musical worlds—post-tonality, jazz, and Bachian counterpoint—emerged during a period shaped by several essential forces that influenced the evolution of artistic currents across the twentieth century. Among the most transformative of these was the rapid development of technology and scientific progress. For the first time in history, twentieth-century technologies enabled both academic composers and jazz musicians to access, study, and interact with works created by artists from earlier eras, from distant geographical regions, and from diverse social and cultural environments.

From the early decades of the twentieth century, modernist composers and jazz artists shared a mutual admiration, manifested in a continuous exchange of musical ideas. During the formative years of jazz, its melodic and especially rhythmic distinctiveness was subtly absorbed and stylistically reshaped within works that soon became emblematic for major European and American composers. Gunther Schuller³ notes that "it was Charles Ives

³ The phenomenon proved to be far more extensive than initially assumed; to Ives's name we may add, among others, John Alden Carpenter (*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*; *Krazy Kat*), Paul Hindemith (*Suite 1922*; *Ragtime Wohltemperiert*), Erik Satie (*Ragtime du Paquebot* in the suite *Parade*), Darius Milhaud (*La Création du Monde*; *Le Bœuf sur le toit*; *Three Rag-Caprices*), Georges Auric (*Adieu New York*), Arthur Honegger (*Concertino*; the oratorio *Le Roi David*; *Prelude and Blues for Quartet of Chromatic Harps*; *Trois Blues*), Jean Wiener (*Sonata syncopé for piano*; *Suite for violin and piano*), Kurt Weill (*The Threepenny Opera*;

(although rarely acknowledged, even today) who deserves credit as the first composer to incorporate elements of Black music into his symphonic works, chamber pieces, and vocal miniatures. (...) For him, ragtime was simply a natural addition to an already rich and ever-expanding set of popular musical models.”⁴

Conversely, scholars examining the intersection between Western art music and jazz have also highlighted the reverse phenomenon: the penetration of traditional academic writing techniques and compositional procedures into the works of jazz musicians. In her study on the fusion of twentieth-century idioms, jazz language, and counterpoint, Tamika Sakayi Sterrs offers only a succinct mention of a few representative works—an indication of a far broader and still underexplored field.

In 1950, Gunther Schuller clarified the concept of *Third Stream*, addressing the misconceptions that risked limiting its broader recognition: “The idea embodied in the basic philosophy of *Third Stream* is the concept of descent – born from the union of two principal musical streams of equal stature, and I emphasize the word equal. These two *musics* may also be allowed to continue developing organically, without further fusion, should they wish to do so; that is, they may remain discrete and distinct. Today, Third Stream is simply one way in which the two directions may discover and meet on common ground.”⁵

2. Research dedicated to the “jazz fugue” phenomenon

The adoption of the fugue by jazz composers and by those working within hybrid academic/jazz frameworks occurs through several approaches: by employing the formal structure of the fugue, by using solely the polyphonic procedure characteristic of the genre (the imitative entrance of the theme in successive voices), or through combinations of these two dimensions. Tamika Sakayi Sterrs identifies three principal modalities through which the fugue becomes associated with the language of jazz: content integration, recomposition, and formal dissolution.

Mahagonny), Ernst Krenek (*Jonny spielt auf*), Dmitri Shostakovich (*Jazz Suites*), Aaron Copland (“Jazzy” from *Three Moods for piano*; *Music for the Theatre*; *Piano Concerto*), Maurice Ravel (the “Blues” movement from the *Sonata for Violin and Piano*), and Igor Stravinsky (*Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*; *Piano Rag Music*).

⁴ Schuller, Gunther. “Jazz and Musical Exoticism”. In *The Exotic In Western Music*, Jonathan Bellman ed., Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1998, p. 283.

⁵ Idem.

The most extensive analytical work on the integration of fugue into jazz has emerged from Russian scholarship, particularly in the writings of Chuvilkin⁶. He proposes three variants of the concept, all of which maintain the structural principles of the Baroque fugue while adapting them to a jazz idiom. The essential distinctions are the following:

- *fugue with jazz elements* – works by academic composers that combine post-tonal language, jazz idioms, and Baroque contrapuntal techniques;
- *jazz fugue* – compositions written in a distinctly jazz vocabulary while observing the structural principles of the fugue;
- *jazzing-fugue* – jazz-style arrangements or reinterpretations of classical fugues.

This conceptual triad enables us to understand the phenomenon not merely as a technique but as an aesthetic continuum, ranging from citation to genuine synthesis.

3. Relating the Concept of the Fugue to Jazz

Within the theoretical tradition of the fugue, the term simultaneously denotes a compositional procedure (imitation), a formal structure, and the interaction between form and technique.

In relation to jazz, Chuvilkin and Sterrs identify three principal modalities through which the fugue is employed:

- the use of the fugue structure – preserving its formal architecture;
- the adoption of the imitative thematic procedure alone – focusing on the polyphonic technique independently of the full form;
- the combination of structural design with polyphonic procedures.

These modalities can be observed in representative examples from both academic-jazz repertoire and the work of jazz musicians.

4. Representative typologies in the fugue/ jazz relationship

4.1. The integration of the fugue into academic / jazz fusion compositions

This category includes compositions that incorporate within the fugue form a musical content grounded in another stylistic idiom and/or in diverse

⁶ Chuvilkin, Vsevolod Stanislavovich. "About the essence of the concept of «jazz fugue»". In *South-Russian Musical Anthology*. 2019, N 4, pp. 85-91.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24411/2076-4766-2019-14012>

musical languages. Complex examples – such as Milhaud's *La Création du monde* or George Gershwin's *Crab Canon Fugue* – stand out through their high degree of experimentation in the fusion of disparate idioms with the structural rigor of the fugue.

Case Study: Leonard Bernstein – Prelude, Fugue and Riffs

Bernstein's interest in jazz is evident throughout his life and works, beginning with his undergraduate thesis on the absorption of racial musical elements into American music⁷. The early use of jazz by Gershwin and Copland exerted a decisive influence on Bernstein's distinctly American compositional voice, which frequently interweaves symphonic writing with jazz idioms. *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*, composed in 1949 for Woody Herman's jazz band, was revised in late 1952 with reduced instrumentation and received its premiere only in 1955. As Bernstein himself suggests, "the title proclaims the intersection between concert music and jazz, the Baroque forms of Prelude and Fugue being complemented by a series of riffs (in jazz parlance, a riff is a concentrated and repeated melodic figure)."⁸

Over time, the work has occupied a highly debated and often contested position, due to its inherent blend of styles and the tension it generates between cliché and complexity. It is embraced neither by jazz performers nor by classical ensembles and consequently enjoys relatively few performances. Moreover, the piece does not easily fit into the *Third-Stream* category: although *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* is undeniably shaped by Bernstein's deep familiarity with jazz, it does not appear to require improvisation. This apparent absence of improvisatory practice is one of the primary reasons the score is not readily accepted within the conventional jazz repertory, where spontaneous creation is considered essential.

The *Fugue* follows the *Prelude* without interruption and is written exclusively for the saxophone section, punctuated by rhythmic gestures in the percussion and supported by the double bass. Although the metric organization is indicated with precision, the alternation of symmetrical and asymmetrical measures imparts a sense of freedom to the musical flow, highlighting the play of contrapuntal lines and the circulation of thematic material across layers. While Bernstein's writing at times approaches a pointillistic technique, the fugue form nonetheless imposes a cohesive structure built around a central thematic nucleus.

⁷ *The Absorption of Race Elements into American Music*, Harvard thesis, 10 April 1939.

⁸ Parsonage, Catherine. "Approaching jazz-influenced wind music". In *Journal of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles*, 10, 2003, pp. 79-94.

Bernstein constructs a fugue with two subjects, treated in separate sections, followed by a synthesis and a final recapitulation that reunites both themes. The expository articulations are conceived with distinct contrapuntal strategies: the first subject is presented in a traditional manner, with successive entries and the progressive accumulation of voices.

E.g. 1

Exactly the same beat $J = 160$

The musical score for E.g. 1 features three staves: Eb Alto Saxophone (top), Eb Tenor Saxophone (middle), and Eb Baritone Saxophone (bottom). The tempo is marked as $J = 160$. The first theme is introduced by the Alto Saxophone, with the Tenor and Baritone parts providing a rhythmic accompaniment. The response is then given by the Tenor Saxophone, with the Alto and Baritone parts continuing the accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *mp*, *f*, and *mp (natural)*, as well as articulation like *stacc.* and *slap tongue*.

Leonard Bernstein, *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs, Fugue*, ms. 1-10

The second fugue introduces a contrasting thematic idea – *cantabile*, fluid, and quasi-isochronous – yet treated differently from the perspective of imitation. The texture is articulated into two distinct layers: a polyphonic one, in which the subject continually circulates among the various contrapuntal voices, and a rhythmic accompaniment.

E.g. 2

The musical score for E.g. 2 features four staves: Eb A. Sax. (top), Eb T. Sax. (second), Eb Bar. Sax. (third), and Eb Bar. Sax. (bottom). The score is divided into two main sections: the 2nd theme and the response. The 2nd theme is introduced by the Alto Saxophone, with the other parts providing a rhythmic accompaniment. The response is then given by the Tenor Saxophone, with the Alto and Baritone parts continuing the accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff*, *p*, *mp*, and *f*, as well as articulation like *stacc.* and *slap tongue*. The measure number 110 is indicated at the end of the response section.

Leonard Bernstein, *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs, Fugue*, ms. 26-31

Other less complex examples – such as the fugue from *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 1* by Villa-Lobos and David Van Kriedt's *Fugue on Bop Themes* – although proceed from the strict formal prototype, remain faithful to the traditional fugal paradigm.

In contemporary music, Miho Hazama and Trevor Coleman propose striking, multimodal approaches in which the fugue becomes a vehicle for articulating extra-musical concepts. In 2015, Miho Hazama composed *Fugue* for a mixed ensemble she describes as a “chamber jazz orchestra,” a hybrid instrumental formula combining the instruments of a big band with a traditional chamber ensemble. The work is constructed on the basis of a non-musical concept: a numerical grid built on numbers 1 through 8, a principle closely related to algorithmic thinking.

Fig. 1

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2	4	6	8	1	3	5	7
3	6	1	3	6	1	3	6
4	8	3	7	2	6	1	5
5	1	6	2	7	3	8	4
6	3	1	6	3	1	6	3
7	5	3	1	8	6	4	2
8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

On the other hand, in his 2016-piece *Polyfugue* (part of the larger *Polycycle* project), Trevor Coleman introduces two proprietary musical concepts: *comprovisation* - a single operational principle that reconciles a historically entrenched dichotomy between composition and improvisation - and *polycycle*, an extension of polymeter to multiple musical parameters organized as interlocking cyclical strata. Both concepts are theorized in depth in Coleman's doctoral research and embodied in an extensive compositional portfolio.

E.g. 3

♩ = 106 MC1

Oboe

Cello

Piano

mf

Chords: Gm⁷, A^{ø7}, A/C, Cm⁷, B^{ø7}, E⁷(♯⁹), F[♯]ø⁷, Fm⁶, B[♭]ø⁷, E[♭]maj⁷(♯⁵)

Chords: Em⁷, F[♯]ø⁷, F[♯]/A[♯], Am⁷, A[♭]ø⁷, D[♭]7(♯⁹), E[♭]ø⁷, Dm⁶

Trevor Coleman, *Polyfuge*, ms. 1-12**4.2. Recompositions and reinterpretations of existing fugues**

The second typology comprises recompositions of a pre-existing fugue, achievable through quotation and commentary, juxtaposition and synthesis, or compositional experiment. An illustrative case of quotation/commentary is Jacques Loussier's re-writted *Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor*, in which direct quotations are followed by free-jazz improvisations.

E.g. 4

T⁹ 144 = ♩

Piano

Chords: Em⁷, F[♯]ø⁷, F[♯]/A[♯], Am⁷, A[♭]ø⁷, D[♭]7(♯⁹), E[♭]ø⁷, Dm⁶

Jazz.



Loussier-Bach Toccata and Fugue in D minor, ms. 1-8

Experimental compositional ventures, such as David Brubeck's *Chromatic Fantasy Sonata*, differ from the other typologies by blurring the boundary between rigorous *fugato* style and jazz. References to Baroque music are articulated more subtly, conveyed "in the manner of" rather than through direct quotation.

4.3. Formal disintegration / deformalization

The final category, exemplified by Bud Powell's *Tempus Fugue-It*, has been described by analysts of the phenomenon as a case of formal dissolution. Here, the essence of the fugue form has been reduced to the title and a thematic line. Although the formal rules and conventions are undermined to the point of near-complete elimination, the melodic line, endowed with thematic function, continues to undergo development within a different stylistic framework.

E.g. 5



HA1 G-7 A7 D- A7 D-

G-7 A7 D- /C B $\flat$ 7 A7 $\flat$ 5 D-

Bud Powell, *Tempus Fugue It*, ms. 1-16

5. Aesthetic perspectives and implications for contemporary composition

The integration of the fugue into jazz reveals three aesthetic traits shared by the composers involved:

- adherence to a modernist aesthetic;
- a preference for mutual borrowing;
- a sustained concern with the reinterpretation of Baroque counterpoint.

In current practice, stylistic mixing goes beyond surface treatment and presupposes a deep understanding of both cultural and technical contexts. As Friar (2017) argues, genuinely authentic results emerge only in the work of composers who “organically internalize multiple musical languages”, rather than pursuing hybridization as an aesthetic end in itself.

6. Conclusions

The analysis of how the fugue is integrated into jazz highlights the complexity of a process that goes well beyond mere stylistic echoes and entails a profound restructuring of musical parameters. The three principal modes of association – structural, procedural, and combined – converge to demonstrate that, by virtue of its universally applicable polyphonic mechanisms, the fugue remains a fertile model for exploration within contemporary stylistic contexts. Although this classification foregrounds formal considerations, each

subcategory represents an infusion of the traditional template with the challenges posed by the sonic language of jazz (most often in fusion with various manifestations of post-tonality), to varying degrees and up to the most radical transformations.

At the same time, Chuvilkin's studies and Sterrs's observations point to the need for a shared compositional paradigm in which post-tonality, jazz, and Baroque counterpoint are no longer treated as discrete domains, but as constituent elements of a hybrid language in continuous transformation.

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THE PIANO AS A STRUCTURAL AND EXPRESSIVE AGENT IN BÉLA BARTÓK'S MUSICAL LANGUAGE

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SUMMARY. The piano occupies a central position in Béla Bartók's compositional output, functioning not merely as a melodic or harmonic medium, but as a structural and expressive agent capable of shaping musical form, rhythm, and texture. Bartók's pianistic writing reflects a radical rethinking of the instrument's traditional role, integrating percussive articulation, modal organization, and folkloric rhythmic principles into a modernist aesthetic framework. The present study investigates the role of the piano in Bartók's music from an analytical perspective, focusing on its structural, rhythmic, and expressive functions. Through selected case studies drawn from his piano works, the article aims to demonstrate how pianistic texture and gesture contribute decisively to the construction of musical discourse, form, and dramaturgy. Particular attention is given to the relationship between pianistic writing and Bartók's broader aesthetic principles, including his engagement with folk music, rhythmic asymmetry, and timbral experimentation.

Keywords: Béla Bartók, piano writing, musical structure, rhythm, modernism, performance practice

Introduction

The piano occupies a central position in the evolution of twentieth-century musical language, serving not only as a primary instrument of composition and performance but also as a medium for the articulation of new structural and rhythmic paradigms. Among the composers who reshaped the pianistic idiom, Béla Bartók stands out for the coherence of his approach. His piano works reflect a reconfiguration of the instrument's traditional role, grounded in modernist aesthetics, folk-derived principles, and a precise awareness of instrumental mechanics.

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Bartók's engagement with the piano is inseparable from his identity as pianist, pedagogue, and ethnomusicologist. His intimate knowledge of the instrument's technical and acoustic properties informed a compositional language in which rhythmic and modal characteristics of Eastern European folk music were integrated into a rigorously organized structural framework. Gesture, rhythm, and form thus become inseparable elements of pianistic thought.

In contrast to the late Romantic conception of the piano as a vehicle for melodic expansion and harmonic richness, Bartók foregrounds articulation, rhythmic precision, and textural organization. The instrument is treated less as a singing medium than as a source of kinetic and structural articulation, reflecting broader modernist priorities of clarity, economy, and formal control.²

Although Bartók's music has been extensively studied, the piano is often approached as a neutral vehicle for thematic material rather than as a formative structural force. This study therefore foregrounds pianistic writing as a central organizing principle, arguing that texture, articulation, and registral design shape musical form at both local and global levels. Through a close reading of selected works, the article demonstrates how the piano actively generates structural coherence and expressive trajectory.³

The Piano within Bartók's Aesthetic and Compositional Framework

The function of the piano in the music of Béla Bartók must be understood within the broader context of his aesthetic principles and compositional methodology. Bartók's modernism is characterized not by radical negation of tradition, but by a systematic reconfiguration of inherited musical elements. Formal archetypes, instrumental conventions, and expressive paradigms are subjected to a process of abstraction and reorganization, resulting in a musical language that is simultaneously rooted in tradition and decisively forward-looking. Within this framework, the piano emerges as a central instrument through which Bartók articulates his most fundamental compositional concerns.⁴

A defining feature of Bartók's aesthetic orientation is his commitment to structural clarity and functional coherence. In opposition to the late Romantic emphasis on continuous melodic expansion and harmonic saturation, Bartók

² Suchoff, Benjamin. *Béla Bartók: Life and Work*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2001, p. 113.

³ Gillies, Malcolm. *Bartók Remembered*. London: Faber & Faber, 1990, p. 46.

⁴ Antokoletz, Elliott. *The Music of Béla Bartók: A Study of Tonality and Progression in Twentieth-Century Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p. 21.

favors a compositional economy based on concentrated motivic material and clearly articulated formal processes. The piano, with its inherent capacity for precision and immediacy, provides an ideal medium for the realization of these objectives. Its mechanical responsiveness allows for exact control over rhythm and articulation, facilitating the projection of complex structural relationships with exceptional clarity.

Bartók's conception of the piano is further shaped by his engagement with folk music, particularly the rhythmic and modal characteristics of Eastern European traditions. However, the influence of folk music in his piano works extends beyond the level of surface material. Rather than incorporating folk melodies as thematic quotations⁵, Bartók abstracts their structural principles and integrates them into a highly controlled compositional system. The piano thus becomes a site of synthesis, where vernacular rhythmic impulses are transformed into elements of modernist formal design. From a compositional perspective, Bartók's pianistic writing reflects a decisive shift away from linear, melody-centered discourse toward a conception of music grounded in gesture, texture, and rhythmic energy.

The piano's role within this process is not merely supportive but generative. Pianistic texture often functions as the primary determinant of formal articulation, delineating sections through contrasts of density, register, and articulation. Dense chordal passages may establish zones of heightened tension, while transparent textures or registral dispersal signal moments of transition or release. In this sense, the piano participates directly in the construction of musical architecture, shaping the listener's perception of form through its physical and acoustic properties.

Bartók's emphasis on the piano's percussive potential further reinforces its structural function. The instrument's hammer mechanism is exploited to foreground attack and articulation, transforming sound production into a form of rhythmic gesture. The piano becomes an extension of bodily movement, translating kinetic energy into organized sound.

In this context, the piano assumes a dual function within Bartók's compositional framework. On the one hand, it acts as a laboratory for the exploration of new rhythmic and textural possibilities. On the other, it provides a concrete means of articulating abstract formal principles. The convergence of these functions underscores the instrument's centrality to Bartók's musical thought, positioning the piano not merely as an instrument among others, but as a primary vehicle for the realization of his aesthetic vision.

⁵ Kodály, Zoltán. *Folk Music of Hungary*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971, p. 24.

Percussive Conception and Rhythmic Organization in Bartók's Piano Writing

The percussive conception of the piano constitutes one of the most defining characteristics of the pianistic language developed by Béla Bartók. This approach reflects not merely a technical preference, but a fundamental reorientation of compositional priorities, in which rhythm and gesture assume a central role in the organization of musical form. In Bartók's piano works, percussive articulation is elevated from a secondary expressive device to a primary structural principle.⁶ Bartók's emphasis on percussiveness is closely linked to his understanding of rhythm as an autonomous musical parameter. Rather than functioning as a supportive framework for melodic or harmonic processes, rhythm often serves as the generative core of musical discourse. Repetitive rhythmic cells, ostinato figures, and sharply articulated accents form the basis of musical construction, shaping both local gestures and large-scale formal trajectories. The piano's mechanical precision allows these rhythmic structures to be articulated with clarity and consistency, reinforcing their structural significance.⁷

A salient feature of Bartók's rhythmic language is the frequent use of asymmetrical and additive rhythmic patterns. Drawing inspiration from folk traditions characterized by irregular metric groupings, Bartók constructs phrases through the accumulation of unequal rhythmic units. This technique disrupts the predictability of symmetrical meter and generates a sense of continuous forward motion. In pianistic terms, such rhythmic organization demands a heightened degree of physical coordination, as the performer must negotiate shifting accent patterns and dynamic stresses without reliance on stable metric grounding.⁸

The percussive treatment of the piano also manifests in Bartók's approach to articulation and attack. Accents are often employed not merely to highlight individual notes, but to delineate gestural units and articulate structural boundaries. Short, forceful attacks create a sense of immediacy and physical presence, transforming sound production into an event rather than a sustained process. These gestures function as building blocks of form, their repetition and transformation contributing to the coherence of the musical structure.⁹

⁶ Somfai, László. *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, p. 56.

⁷ Cooper, David. *Béla Bartók*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015, p. 87.

⁸ Nettl, Bruno. *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005, p. 171.

⁹ Kárpáti, János. *Bartók's Chamber Music*. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1976, p. 64.

Textural organization plays a crucial role in reinforcing the piano's percussive function. Bartók frequently juxtaposes dense, chordal textures with passages of linear or fragmented figuration, creating contrasts that are both expressive and structural. Chordal blocks articulated with pronounced accents often establish zones of heightened tension, while lighter textures serve to dissipate accumulated energy. The alternation of these textural states contributes to the articulation of formal divisions, allowing the piano to function as a spatial organizer of musical material.

Registral deployment further enhances the percussive and structural impact of Bartók's piano writing. The frequent use of extreme registers intensifies the sense of physicality, as low-register sonorities evoke weight and groundedness, while high-register articulations introduce sharpness and brilliance. These registral contrasts are rarely arbitrary; rather, they serve to articulate structural polarity, reinforcing the dynamic interplay between tension and release across the musical form.

At a macro-structural level, rhythmic organization often provides the principal means of formal integration. The recurrence of rhythmic patterns across different sections of a work creates a network of internal relationships that compensates for the absence of traditional tonal hierarchy. Through processes of rhythmic variation, displacement, and intensification, Bartók achieves a sense of coherence that is perceptible even in the absence of conventional thematic development. The piano, as the primary medium for the articulation of these processes, becomes instrumental in shaping the listener's perception of musical continuity.

In summary, the percussive and rhythmic organization of Bartók's piano writing represents a fundamental redefinition of the instrument's role within musical structure¹⁰. By foregrounding rhythm, gesture, and physicality, Bartók transforms the piano into a primary agent of formal construction. This conception not only underpins the internal coherence of his piano works but also exemplifies a broader modernist approach to instrumental thinking, in which sound, motion, and structure are inextricably intertwined.

Analytical Perspectives on Pianistic Structure: Extended Case Studies

The analytical examination of selected piano works by Béla Bartók provides concrete insight into the ways in which pianistic writing operates as a primary structural determinant within his compositional language. Rather

¹⁰ Lesznai, Lajos. *Bartók*. London: Aldine Press, 1973, p. 84.

than treating the piano as a neutral medium for the realization of abstract musical ideas, Bartók conceives the instrument as an active agent in the generation of form, rhythm, and expressive tension. The following case studies illustrate how pianistic gesture, texture, and registral organization interact to produce coherent large-scale structures.¹¹

Allegro barbaro occupies a pivotal position in Bartók's early pianistic output, not only as a work emblematic of his engagement with folk-derived materials, but more fundamentally as a manifesto of a new conception of the piano as a structural and kinetic instrument. While the piece is frequently discussed in relation to its "barbaric" ethos or its folkloric resonance, such readings risk obscuring its deeper significance: the emergence of pianistic gesture as the primary determinant of musical form. From the outset, *Allegro barbaro* is constructed not through thematic exposition in the traditional sense, but through the deployment of short, rhythmically concentrated gestural cells.

E.g. 1



Béla Bartók: *Allegro barbaro*. Excerpt, bars 1-13

The piano, in this context, is not a neutral carrier of musical ideas but the very mechanism through which structural energy is produced. The opening measures establish a dense and compressed textural field dominated by repeated chordal attacks in a restricted registral space (E.g.1).

This registral confinement intensifies the physical impact of the gestures, producing a sense of accumulated pressure rather than linear progression. Harmonic function is deliberately subordinated to rhythmic insistence and

¹¹ Cooper, David. 2015. *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

registral weight, reinforcing the perception of music unfolding as a succession of energetic impulses rather than as a goal-directed tonal process.¹²

At the level of form, stability in *Allegro barbaro* is achieved not through thematic return but through gestural persistence. The reiteration of similar rhythmic profiles creates a sense of coherence, while subtle modifications in accentuation, density, and registral placement introduce directional change. Formal progression thus emerges from the controlled intensification and redistribution of kinetic energy. Bartók's compositional strategy here privileges accumulation over development, favoring the gradual saturation of texture as a means of generating tension.

The contrasting middle section introduces a perceptible reconfiguration of pianistic parameters. The expansion of register and the relative thinning of texture do not function as a conventional secondary theme, but rather as a recalibration of gestural energy. The return of the opening material is marked by increased dynamic force and enhanced registral reinforcement. Gestures previously confined to narrower ranges are amplified, intensifying their physical impact and reinforcing their structural role.

Crucially, the treatment of the piano in *Allegro barbaro* anticipates Bartók's later conception of the instrument as an extension of bodily movement. Pianistic gesture is inseparable from physical action.

In this sense, *Allegro barbaro* exemplifies a mode of musical thinking in which pianistic gesture functions simultaneously as material, process, and form. The piano is neither an accompanimental nor a purely expressive medium, but a generator of structural energy. This conception establishes a foundational model for his later pianistic works, in which the instrument continues to function as a primary agent of formal construction¹³.

In the *Suite*, Op. 14, Bartók's treatment of the piano undergoes a notable transformation, characterized by a move toward restraint, precision, and formal regulation. While the instrument continues to play a central role in shaping musical discourse, its function is no longer defined by overt percussive force, but by the disciplined organization of rhythm, texture, and register. Pianistic writing becomes increasingly economical, prioritizing clarity of structure over immediacy of gesture.

The opening movement illustrates this shift through a deliberately controlled textural environment. As evidenced by the initial measures (E.g. 2), the piano establishes a stable temporal framework through the repetition of low-register sonorities and a consistent rhythmic pattern.

¹² Kárpáti, János. 1976. *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

¹³ Weissmann, John. *Bartók's Piano Music in Tempo*, Vol. 13-14, 1949-50, p. 23.



Béla Bartók: *Suite, Op. 14*

Initial measures (1-12) of the first movement, highlighting rhythmic regularity and textural restraint in the piano writing

Rather than projecting melodic prominence, the instrument articulates continuity and balance, allowing musical motion to unfold within clearly defined limits. The emphasis on regularity and containment contrasts sharply with earlier works, where repetition serves primarily as a vehicle for intensification. Formal articulation in this movement is achieved through the juxtaposition of contrasting textural configurations. Distinct pianistic layers, differentiated by rhythmic profile and registral placement, are positioned in opposition rather than subjected to continuous transformation. The piano's ability to delineate these contrasts with immediacy enables Bartók to articulate formal divisions through texture itself, reducing reliance on thematic differentiation or harmonic progression.

In the second movement, rhythmic persistence becomes the dominant organizing principle. Reiterated figurations sustain momentum across extended spans, creating a sense of continuity grounded in mechanical regularity. Variations in articulation and dynamic nuance function locally, introducing subtle inflections without disturbing the underlying rhythmic stability. Here, the piano operates as a regulating mechanism, maintaining coherence through controlled repetition rather than developmental expansion.

In the final movement of the *Suite, Op. 14*, Bartók returns to a type of pianistic writing that recalls the restrained, process-oriented texture of the opening, though in a more dynamically charged and registally expanded form. As illustrated by the recurring figuration patterns (E.g. 3), the piano articulates continuity through repetitive motion and consistent rhythmic profiles, while shifts in dynamics and register introduce heightened intensity without altering the underlying structural logic.



Béla Bartók: *Suite*, Op. 14. The opening of the final movement (measures 1-9) establish continuity through repetitive

The persistence of similar gestural configurations across movements reinforces the piano's role as a unifying formal medium, allowing coherence to emerge from controlled reiteration and transformation rather than thematic recall. Taken as a whole, the *Suite*, Op. 14 reveals a pianistic language oriented toward moderation and structural discipline. Gesture is subordinated to organization, and expressive intensity is generated through calibrated contrasts rather than accumulation of force.

In the *Piano Sonata* of 1926, Bartók's approach to pianistic writing reaches a stage of structural integration in which the instrument itself becomes the principal medium of large-scale formal organization.¹⁴

The first movement foregrounds the piano's capacity to generate sustained structural tension through rhythmic insistence and registral extremity. Sharply articulated figures, frequently marked by non-legato attack and pronounced accentuation, transform the instrument into a source of persistent kinetic pressure. Dense chordal formations and rapid figuration are distributed across widely separated registers, producing a vertical polarity that interacts with continuous forward motion. Formal progression arises from the accumulation, displacement, and redistribution of pianistic energy, while harmonic procedures remain subordinated to rhythmic and registral organization.¹⁵

¹⁴ Somfai, László. 1996. *Op. cit.*, p. 138.

¹⁵ Antokoletz, Elliott. 1984. *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

The slow movement introduces a radical reconfiguration of pianistic function. In contrast to the kinetic intensity of the opening movement, Bartók exploits the piano's capacity for resonance, decay, and spatial projection. Isolated attacks, widely spaced sonorities, and restrained dynamic levels create a sparse sonic environment in which silence and duration acquire structural significance. The piano articulates form through the shaping of musical time itself, allowing continuity to emerge from gradual textural transformation rather than from rhythmic propulsion.¹⁶

The final movement restores rhythmic vitality while maintaining the high degree of structural control established earlier. Rapid figurations and persistent ostinati activate the piano's motoric potential, yet these elements are subjected to strict organizational discipline. Recurring pianistic patterns and regulated registral motion ensure coherence across extended spans, allowing energetic propulsion to coexist with formal clarity.

Across the sonata, pianistic writing functions as an integrative structural system. Through the disciplined interaction of percussive attack, resonant decay, rhythmic motion, and registral organization, Bartók constructs a conception of musical architecture rooted entirely in pianistic thinking.

Interpretative Implications and Performance Considerations

The analytical observations outlined in the preceding sections carry significant implications for the performance practice of Béla Bartók's piano music. Given the central role of pianistic writing as a generator of structure and expression, interpretation cannot be conceived merely as the realization of notated dynamics and articulations. Instead, the performer is required to engage with the music as a complex system of structural forces, in which gesture, rhythm, and texture interact to shape musical form.¹⁷

The percussive conception of the piano further necessitates a redefinition of touch and attack. In this context, the pianist's physical engagement with the instrument assumes structural significance. Bartók's pianistic gestures are often conceived in terms of bodily motion, translating kinetic impulse into organized sound.¹⁸

Registral awareness constitutes another crucial interpretative factor. Bartók's systematic exploitation of the piano's full range is frequently tied to

¹⁶ Somfai, László. 1996. *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

¹⁷ Rink, John. *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 34.

¹⁸ Godøy, Rolf Inge; Leman, Marc (eds.). *Musical Gestures: Sound, Movement, and Meaning*. New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 57.

formal articulation, with extreme registers functioning as markers of tension, climax, or transition. The performer must therefore shape registral contrasts with a view toward large-scale form, ensuring that shifts in register contribute meaningfully to the perception of structural progression rather than serving merely as coloristic effects.¹⁹

Pedaling, in particular, demands careful consideration in Bartók's repertoire. Excessive resonance can blur rhythmic articulation and obscure textural clarity, while overly dry execution may compromise sonorous richness.²⁰ From a broader perspective, Bartók's pianistic language challenges traditional interpretative paradigms rooted in nineteenth-century pianism.

Pedagogically, engagement with Bartók's piano works fosters the development of a comprehensive interpretative skill set. Pianists are compelled to integrate analytical insight with physical control, cultivating an approach that prioritizes coherence, clarity, and structural integrity.²¹

Ultimately, the interpretative demands of Bartók's piano music reflect the broader modernist redefinition of the relationship between composer, performer, and instrument. The performer can therefore not be understood as a neutral intermediary, but as an interpreter who actively shapes the structural clarity of the work through decisions of articulation, timing, touch, and dynamic control. An awareness of the piano's generative role within Bartók's compositional thinking encourages a performance approach grounded in structural perception, where expressive impact arises from the precise realization of rhythmic and textural relationships rather than from external sentiment.

Conclusions

The present study has sought to demonstrate that the piano occupies a central and formative position within Béla Bartók's musical language, functioning not merely as a vehicle for compositional ideas, but as an active structural and expressive force. Through the analytical examination of selected piano works, it has become evident that pianistic writing itself plays a decisive role in shaping musical form, rhythmic organization, and expressive trajectory. Rather than serving as a neutral medium, the piano emerges as a primary agent in the generation of musical discourse.

¹⁹ Rosen, Charles. *Piano Notes: The World of the Pianist*. New York: Free Press, 2002, p. 96.

²⁰ Banowetz, Joseph. *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, p. 63.

²¹ Neuhaus, Heinrich. *The Art of Piano Playing*. London: Kahn & Averill, 1993, p. 18.

Bartók's treatment of the piano reflects a fundamental reconfiguration of instrumental priorities characteristic of twentieth-century modernism. By foregrounding rhythm, gesture, register, and textural organization, he establishes a compositional paradigm in which the physical and acoustic properties of the instrument actively inform structural design. The piano's percussive mechanism, its wide registral compass, and its capacity for precise articulation allow Bartók to articulate form through kinetic energy, spatial polarity, and temporal control. In this context, pianistic writing becomes inseparable from compositional thinking itself.

The analyses presented in this article underscore the close interdependence of structure and expression in Bartók's piano music. Musical form does not arise primarily from thematic development or harmonic progression in the traditional sense, but from the controlled interaction of rhythmic cells, gestural repetition, textural stratification, and registral contrast. Expressive intensity is generated through structural tension and release, rather than through melodic expansiveness or harmonic coloration. The piano thus functions simultaneously as the site where musical processes unfold and as the mechanism through which those processes are articulated. The findings of this study contribute to an understanding of Bartók's place within twentieth-century musical modernism. His pianistic writing exemplifies a mode of instrumental thinking in which sound production, bodily gesture, and formal organization are closely intertwined.

In conclusion, the piano in Bartók's oeuvre embodies a compositional logic in which instrumental mechanism and formal design are inseparable. The instrument does not merely host stylistic synthesis; it actively shapes the articulation of modernist and folk-derived principles. Future studies may consider how this pianistic model extends into Bartók's broader instrumental writing and how it contributed to redefinitions of the piano in twentieth-century music.

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THE PIANO AS A STRUCTURAL AND EXPRESSIVE AGENT
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BALINESE MUSIC: FROM SHEER EXOTICISM TO ESSENTIAL INSTRUMENT OF DRAMATIC AND ARTISTIC REFLECTION IN THE WORKS OF BENJAMIN BRITTEN

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SUMMARY. The works of Benjamin Britten, one of the leading figures in 20th century British composition, reflect a subtle yet sustained engagement with the musical traditions of the Far East. Although Benjamin Britten cannot be considered an ethnomusicologist in the strict sense, he nonetheless adopted a receptive and intellectually engaged attitude toward Asian cultural traditions, particularly those of Indonesia. The present study investigates the impact of Balinese musical structures on the compositional syntax of Benjamin Britten, examining the ways in which these structures move beyond the framework of Western exoticism to become elements of a genuine transcultural syntax. Through detailed analysis of the technical and expressive mechanisms employed by the composer, this research seeks to demonstrate how such influences are integrated at both structural and aesthetic levels. Particular attention is devoted to the ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas*, a composition in which the influence of Balinese music in general – and of the gamelan in particular – is among the most explicit and readily discernible. These musical influences contribute to the construction of a ritualized dramaturgy in which time is perceived cyclically, and emotional expression is mediated through a symbolic, almost liturgical distance. The semantic and hermeneutic dimensions of the work reveal distinctive features, demonstrating that in *The Prince of the Pagodas* Benjamin Britten transforms his experience of Balinese music into a Western orchestral idiom. He employs repetitiveness, stratified texture, and rhythmic vitality of the gamelan not as mere imitation, but as a means of innovating and reshaping his own compositional language.

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Thus, music, conceived as a complex symbolic idiom, may function as a meditation on the human condition, on intercultural interaction, and on the transformative potential of artistic creation.

Keywords: Benjamin Britten, Balinese music, gamelan, musical syntax, exoticism, cultural hybridity, transculturality

1. Introduction

Music composition in the 20th century represented, on the one hand, a natural evolution toward modernism and the avant-garde, while on the other hand it constituted an opportune moment for the rearticulation of the fundamental principles of classical musical composition. Music became increasingly focused on timbre, texture, and temporal structure, breaking free from the traditional constraints of classical tonality and formal organization. The entire period was characterized by stylistic pluralism and radical experimentation, as composers explored new idioms, harmonic and rhythmic systems, often drawing inspiration from non-European musical traditions as significant sources of aesthetic renewal.

The influence of exoticism manifested in numerous works, such as *Lakmé* (1883) by Léo Delibes or *Le roi de Lahore* (1877) by Jules Massenet, both operas being set in India. In contrast, *Le Cid* (1885) by Jules Massenet evokes a different type of exoticism, the composer drawing on historical and legendary material associated with medieval Spain. The encounter of Claude Debussy, a central figure of musical Impressionism, with the Javanese gamelan at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, had a significant influence on his compositional idiom. For example, in *Pagodes* (1903), Debussy developed a distinctive compositional style through the creative fusion of Impressionist harmonic language with pentatonic modal structures, the orchestral treatment of timbre aimed at evoking Asian instrumental sonorities, and the polyrhythmic superpositions suggestive of the gamelan ensemble.

An equally important figure of the French compositional school, Olivier Messiaen proposed an original conception of the musical language, reflecting the influence of Christian spirituality, the study of non-European rhythmic systems, and the composer's exploration of sonic color. Olivier Messiaen's interest in the Indian *tāla*, a cyclical rhythmic system, led him to employ complex rhythmic configurations frequently characterized by asymmetry and irregularity, including additive rhythmic patterns, non-retrogradable rhythms, and rhythmic augmentation. Through these procedures, musical time is conceived not as a linear succession, but as a suspended, eternal reality. For

example, in the composition *Quatour pour la fin du Temps* (1941), Messiaen devices a spiritual conception regarding time, in which music becomes a vehicle for transcending conventional temporal perception, reflecting the theological idea of Divine eternity.

In contrast, in the oeuvre of the stylistically protean Igor Stravinsky, one encounters an exceptional diversity of sources of inspiration, reflected in the radical stylistic transformations that characterize his career, ranging from the archaic and ritualistic influences of Eastern European folklore to Western musical traditions and the modern compositional techniques of the 20th century. Each of these stylistic orientations is reinterpreted within a highly personal musical idiom, marked by objectivity, formal clarity, and rhythmic innovation. In *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913), Igor Stravinsky elevates rhythm to the level of primary structural principle, while the musical discourse acquires an archaic, almost primordial dimension, evoking the concept of *ritual* found in many non-Western cultural traditions. Although the compositional sources are not directly Asian, the extra-European principles of cyclical temporality and collective sonic construction are clearly present.⁴

In this context also stands Benjamin Britten, a controversial musical personality who cultivated a renewed approach to traditional music composition, revitalizing classical forms while demonstrating remarkable inventiveness in the treatment of thematic material, rhythm, and orchestral color, as well as exceptional skill in the relationship between text and melody.⁵

The present study investigates the impact of Balinese musical structures on the compositional syntax of Benjamin Britten, examining the manner in which these structures transcend the confines of Western exoticism and evolve into a genuine transcultural musical syntax. The originality of this research lies in the observation that, in most musicological studies, Balinese influence is primarily approached through the lens of exoticism, often being interpreted as a source of timbral color and sonic atmosphere intended to evoke cultural otherness. In this context, elements associated with the gamelan – such as metallic sonorities, modal configurations, or repetitive rhythmic patterns – are frequently regarded as decorative surface features of the musical discourse, without fundamentally altering the internal logic of the composition. However, such an approach risks underestimating the profound impact of Balinese musical thought on Western composition in the case of Benjamin Britten. In Britten's works, Balinese influences should be understood beyond the category

⁴ Iliuț, Vasile. *De la Wagner la Contemporani (From Wagner to Contemporary Composers)*, vol. IV. București: Ed. Muzicală, 1998.

⁵ Constantinescu, Grigore; Boga, Irina. *O călătorie în istoria muzicii (A Journey Through the History of Music)*. Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, R.A. București, 2008.

of exoticism, functioning instead as an alternative syntactic framework that shapes the organization of musical temporality, the interaction between sound layers, and the structural role of repetition.

Analytical and comparative methods have been employed to support the argument that Balinese musical elements are transformed from external models into constitutive components of a new formal and temporal conception, integrated within a personal compositional system. The case study focuses on the ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas*, in which Balinese musical influences contribute to the construction of a ritualized dramaturgy characterized by cyclical temporality and by the mediation of emotional expression through a symbolic, almost liturgical distance.

2. Edward Benjamin Britten - Musical Oeuvre

Edward Benjamin Britten was not just a composer, but also conductor, performer (piano and viola), and singer. In the first part of his life, he had a rich activity as composer of chamber music, symphonic works, and film music, while the last three decades of his life were dominated by the genre of opera. Britten's symphonic output is remarkable for the diversity of genres explored by the composer, ranging from symphonic variations to instrumental concertos for violin and piano, as well as his symphonic works. This generic versatility represents a defining feature of his overall compositional activity.

A large part of his chamber compositional output belongs to his early creative period: *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946), *Albert Herring* (1947), *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), *Curlew River* (1964). Other works, composed during later stages of his career, such as the three *String Quartets* (Op. 25, Op. 36, Op. 96), the *Sonata for cello and piano* Op. 65, or the three *Suites for cello* (Op. 72, Op. 80, Op. 87) are distinguished by their stylistic refinement and represent significant stages in the evolution of the composer's musical language.

The *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Op. 65, composed in 1961, was dedicated to the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and incorporates, alongside varied musical textures, subtle exotic sonorities that evoke the gamelan style associated with Indonesian musical traditions. Benjamin Britten also dedicated three *Suites for solo cello* (1964) and the *Symphony for Cello* (1963) to the same performer, the latter often regarded as illustrating the concept of absolute or "pure" music, in the sense discussed by Hanslick in his aesthetic writings.⁶

⁶ Arved, Ashby. *Britten as Symphonist* in: Mervyn, Cooke, *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, chapter 11. Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 263.

Benjamin Britten's creativity and compositional complexity reach culmination in *War Requiem*, Op. 66, one of the most sensitive, impressive, and eloquent musical evocations of the funerary ritual.

The *Piano Concerto*, Op. 13 (1938), structured in four movements briefly evokes the late Romantic sonorities of nineteenth-century musical language. However, this stylistic correspondence gradually dissolves with the development of the first thematic group, whose metamorphosis unfolds through agile, subdivided rhythmic patterns embedded within an intensely chromatic melodic line.

In the following year, Britten composed the *Violin Concerto*, Op. 15 (1939), regarded as a stylistic landmark based on the exploration of dissonance within diatonic contexts and on the exploitation of diverse timbral colors.⁷

In 1940 he composed *Diversions for Piano Left Hand and Orchestra*, Op. 21, written for Austrian pianist Paul Wittgenstein who had lost his right hand during the First World War, and the *Scottish Ballad for Two Pianos and Orchestra*, Op. 26.⁸

The materialization of orchestral emancipation becomes much more evident in the *Sinfonia da Requiem*, Op. 20, a work that Eric Roseberry described as a "*concerto without title for orchestra*."⁹

Highly valued from an interpretative perspective is *Les Illuminations*, Op. 18 (1939), a cycle for voice and string orchestra on texts by Arthur Rimbaud, in which Benjamin Britten translates poetic visionary imagery into an expressive musical language characterized by tension, dramatic intensity, and a modal–chromatic harmonic framework. A similarly subtle treatment of the relationship between text and music is found in *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*, Op. 22 (1940), written for tenor and piano, a work of confessional character that explores the inner emotional and introspective dimension through expansive vocal writing and dense chromatic harmony.

Structured in four movements, *Spring Symphony*, Op. 44 (1949) does not adhere to the traditional symphonic model, particularly through the secondary role assigned to the orchestral ensemble. The work was composed for three solo voices (soprano, alto, and tenor), mixed chorus, boys' chorus, and symphony orchestra, thereby redefining the conventional hierarchy between orchestral and vocal forces.

⁷ Evans, Peter. *The Music of Benjamin Britten*. Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 47.

⁸ Evans, Peter. *Britten (Edward) Benjamin*, in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Macmillan Publishers Limited, London, vol. 3, 1992, pp. 293-208.

⁹ Roseberry, Eric. *The Concertos and Early Orchestral Scores: Aspects of Style and Aesthetic* in: Cooke, Mervyn. *The Cambridge Companion to Britten*, Cambridge University Press, U.K., 1999, p. 269.

Dramatic genre holds a central position in Benjamin Britten's compositional output. After an initial attempt with the opera *Paul Bunyan*, Op. 17 – a work later withdrawn – the composer achieved international recognition with *Peter Grimes* (1945), an opera that definitively established his position within the musical landscape of the period following his return to England after a period of self-imposed exile in the United States.

Subsequently, Benjamin Britten explored the chamber opera genre, characterized by greater intimacy and heightened interpretative refinement. Representative works include *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946), *Albert Herring* (1947), and *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), as well as a series of English operatic parables inspired by biblical narratives, including *Curlew River* (1964), *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (1966), and *The Prodigal Son* (1968).

In 1946, *English Opera Group* was established, a project in which Benjamin Britten served simultaneously as conductor, composer, and artistic director. The aim of the initiative was to provide a performance platform both for his own works, and for compositions by younger colleagues. Representative examples include the opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1960), based on texts adapted together with Peter Pears after William Shakespeare, as well as a series of biblical parables, namely *Curlew River* (1964), *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (1966), and *The Prodigal Son* (1968).

The encounter between Japanese theatrical aesthetics and Balinese gamelan sonorities is reflected in the ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas*, in which intercultural musical elements are integrated into the composer's stylistic language.¹⁰

3. The Contact with Asian Music

In order to understand the originality of Benjamin Britten's engagement with Asian musical influences, it is essential to examine the context in which he first became acquainted with these cultures. The composer's interest in Far Eastern musical traditions developed gradually and was nurtured through various sources, the most significant of which was his friendship with the Canadian composer and ethnomusicologist Colin McPhee during the Second World War, a period when Britten was living in the United States.

Settled in Bali in the 1930s, Colin McPhee was among the first Western musicians to undertake an in-depth study of Balinese gamelan music, documenting and transcribing its repertoire while also seeking to understand its internal structural principles and ritual significance.

¹⁰ Elliot, Graham. *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension*. Oxford University Press Inc., New York, 2006.

According to McPhee, Balinese gamelan music does not pursue thematic development or a progressive, goal-oriented direction, as is characteristic of European musical culture. Rather, it is grounded in repetition, the superposition of sonic layers, and cyclical structural organization, within which each instrument fulfills a specific function in the collective ensemble texture.¹¹ The collaboration between Benjamin Britten and Colin McPhee led, in 1941, to a recording of works for two pianos entitled *Balinese Ceremonial Music*, clearly inspired by gamelan structures and sonorities.

Another significant encounter with Asian musical traditions occurred during the tour that began in November 1955, undertaken by Benjamin Britten, the tenor Peter Pears, and several close collaborators. The ensemble gave concerts in a number of countries, including Austria, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Through this extended journey, the artists were able to engage directly with a wide range of non-European musical cultures, encountering diverse performance practices and aesthetic conceptions of musical time, texture, and ritual function.¹²

During his stay in Bali, Benjamin Britten was deeply fascinated by local musical practices. He visited temples, studied specific musical styles and instrumental ensembles, and attended numerous ceremonies, dances, and ritual theatrical performances, drafting sketches and transcriptions. These cultural encounters had a direct impact on the composition of the ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas* (1956). The musical idiom of this work is characterized by the frequent use of pentatonic scales and complex, distinctive textures incorporating multiple tonalities. The orchestration prominently features percussion instruments associated with Asian musical traditions – such as gongs, xylophone, and vibraphone – integrated into a refined Western symphonic framework.

The experience in Bali was followed by a two-week stay in Japan, where Benjamin Britten gave concerts and enthusiastically immersed himself in the study of Japanese culture. He was profoundly impressed by the aesthetics of *Noh* theatre¹³ and by the sonorities of Gagaku, elements

¹¹ McPhee, Colin. *Music in Bali: A study in form and instrumental organization in Balinese orchestral music*. In: *Ethnomusicology*, 11(3), Yale University Press, 1966, p. 412.

¹² Mervyn, Cooke. *Britten and The Far East: Asian Influences in the music of Benjamin Britten*. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 1998, pp. 45-50.

¹³ *Noh* is an ancient Japanese performing art that combines singing, music, dance, acting, as well as the use of masks and costumes. The playwright and actor Zeami Motokiyo refined this art form, creating a unique synthesis of dramatic action, dance, and poetic expression.

that he would later incorporate into his first church parable, *Curlew River* (1964).

Musicologist Mervyn Cooke argues that Benjamin Britten's contact with Bali between 1955 and 1956 did not mark the beginning of his interest in Asian music but rather represented a stage in the development of latent tendencies already present in his compositional language. According to this interpretation, Britten's travels did not generate a new aesthetic orientation; instead, they functioned as confirmation and practical stimulation of previously formed intellectual and artistic curiosities.¹⁴

The works composed between 1939 and 1956 contain numerous melodic configurations which coincide with two Balinese pentatonic scales – *pelog* and *selisir*. A suitable example appears in *Les Illuminations*, more precisely in the song *Beling Beauteous*, which exhibits a series of traits that anticipate the aesthetic of the Balinese gamelan (See: E.g. 1).

The accompaniment is constructed on a hemitonic pentatonic scale in the fifth mode, favouring descending fourth and seventh parallelisms that evoke the homophonic and directional texture of metallophones within the gamelan ensemble, as employed by Benjamin Britten in his intercultural stylistic synthesis. Despite the fact that Balinese musical scales are generally anhemitonic, the sonic material in the presented example may be associated with such scalar structures due to the evocative manner in which Benjamin Britten suggests the specific sonic atmosphere, adapting intercultural allusions to a Western harmonic idiom characteristic of his compositional period. Furthermore, a stratified rhythmic distribution may be observed: the solo instrument follows a binary rhythmic pattern, while the accompaniment is organized in ternary rhythm, creating a polyrhythmic configuration that recalls the *Kotekan*.¹⁵ This timbral and structural prefiguration becomes significant in the context of the works composed after 1956, in which these rules are developed at a large scale.

¹⁴ Mervyn, Cooke. *Op. cit.*, 1998.

¹⁵ Vitale, Wayne. *Kotekan. The technique of interlocking parts in Balinese music*, in: *Balungan*, Volume IV, No.2, a Publication of the American Gamelan Institute, Hanover, 1990, p. 2-14.

E.g. 1

The solo instrument uses a binary rhythm, while the rest of the instruments are based on a ternary rhythm.

Pentatonic scale – position 5

A tendency toward parallel fourths and sevenths in descending motion

Benjamin Britten: *Les Illuminations*, op.18
Beling Beauteous (excerpt)

4. Case Study: The Ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas*

In September 1954 Britten met choreographer John Cranko to discuss a new project initially called *The Green Serpent*. For this project, the choreographer had devised a preliminary scenario based on a combination of elements taken from *King Lear*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and an Oriental tale published by Madame d'Aulnoy under the title *Serpentin Vert*. The subject appealed to the composer, but at the same time it gave him some trouble, since he had to musically illustrate the story of the princess Belle Rose from China, the Middle Kingdom. After her father, the emperor, decides to leave his kingdom to her malevolent sister, Belle Épine, Belle

Rose is carried away by a quartet of magical flying frogs to the distant Land of the Pagodas, where she falls in love with the Prince of the Pagodas (who first appears as a massive salamander).

Britten postponed the deadline for submitting his score twice, during which time he was away on a concert tour around the world and came into contact with Balinese music and the sound of the gamelan. Intrigued by the sonic possibilities offered by the variety of percussion instruments – such as mallet instruments, gongs, and drums – used in the gamelan, Britten captured the sounds from the performances he attended in numerous sketches, which were later put to use. Without imitating the traditional instruments, the sounds and rhythms of the gamelan were reinterpreted and integrated into an ensemble of Western instruments that included gong, xylophone, vibraphone, bells, flute, and string instruments, in order to reproduce the layered textures and complementary rhythmic alternation (“interlocking”) characteristic of Balinese music.

The collaboration with John Cranko, the choreographer of the ballet, was a successful one. The two worked closely together and agreed on everything related to movement, form, and meaning. Nevertheless, the ballet was not greeted with unanimous enthusiasm at its premiere, which took place in 1957 at the Royal Opera House.¹⁶ Many critics at the time were puzzled by the lack of a clear narrative thread and by the fact that the music did not follow the typical European model based on thematic development and dramatic progression. However, what many failed to understand then was that Britten had deliberately proposed a different type of musical logic, one inspired by music from Bali, where time is not linear but circular, and transformation does not occur through abrupt evolution but through repetition, gradual accumulation, and subtle variations.

The score brings together numerous elements already encountered in Britten's earlier works. One of its defining features is polyphonic layering: it appears already in the *Prelude*, where the theme of the Prince-Salamander is superimposed in varied rhythmic formulas. Another recurring element is the use of pentatonic scales (see E.g. 2), present both in the motifs representing the Emperor and in the trumpet fanfares, constructed in a carefully elaborated manner that evokes the interlocking techniques characteristic of Balinese music. Added to these, are independent themes built on pentatonic structures. From a timbral point of view, techniques already established in Britten's early works are revisited, more precisely the use of percussion instruments – gongs, cymbals, and bells – the role of which is to articulate the sonic discourse based on rhythmic layering and repetition.

¹⁶ Cooke, Mervyn. *Op. cit.*, 1998, pp. 97-99.

a) **Pentatonic scale**

Contrary motion

The tenuto-staccato alternation between the two trumpets

b)

E anhemitonic major pentatonic scale

Confirmation of the tonic

The use of modern rhythmic-melodic development techniques (repetition, inversion, insertion of rests, complementary rhythm)

The complementarity of accents on beats 1 and 2 creates the impression of a continuous, well-defined flow, referencing the kotekan technique.

Benjamin Britten: *The Prince of Pagodas* Pentatonic structures in the Third Act

Other fundamental principles of gamelan music adopted by the composer include rhythmic ostinato, cyclic structure, and the technique of fragmenting and alternately distributing a melodic line among several voices (similar to Western *hocket*) – which he reinterpreted in a personal musical style adapted for the Western orchestra.

Drawing a parallel with *Tabuh-Tabuhan* by Colin McPhee, which had already been an attempt to transpose gamelan sonorities into a Western context, we observe that Britten proves to be more inventive, managing to create similar effects without resorting to authentic Balinese instruments. For example, the colotomic gongs are suggested through orchestral gongs and low string notes; instruments such as the kempli or gangsa are substituted with combinations of percussion, harp, xylophone, piccolo, and vibraphone; and the cengceng are replaced by small clashing cymbals.¹⁷

Even when a gamelan sonority is not immediately recognizable, certain chords and pentatonic constructions reveal the composer's intention to incorporate the *selisir scale*. The Balinese scale (*selisir*), identical to the one the composer had also encountered in recordings of the Peliatan ensemble that he listened to carefully after his journey to Bali, can also be found in *the Concerto for Two Pianos* composed by Francis Poulenc, which Britten performed together with him in 1945 and again in 1955 in London.

Another fitting example of the Balinese contribution appears in the *third act*, where musical elements inspired by Balinese gamelan are revisited but used in a unique way, through a succession of quartal chords –

¹⁷ Mervyn, Cooke. Op. cit., 1998, pp. 104-105.

a type of writing that does not create tonal tension but gives the music a distinctly Asian sonority. The repetition of these structures does not lead to stagnation; rather, it suspends the directional perception of time, creating the impression of a continuous present, characteristic of ritual music.

At the same time, through gradual accumulation, timbral densification, and rhythmic intensification, the atmosphere progressively becomes more charged, generating a latent tension that is not resolved through thematic development but through subtle transformations of the repetitive material.

In the low register, the bass ostinato line appears in a *crescendo* each time, responding to the indication written above it, “*The salamander comes to her rescue.*” The dual nature of the Prince is also symbolically suggested through the polyvalence created by the imitative use of the notes C–C# (see E.g. 3). Furthermore, throughout the work, Britten uses for the first time two differently tuned gongs, which create an ostinato pattern that clearly recalls the *wadon* and *lanang* gongs from Bali.¹⁸ In the same section, other gamelan-inspired elements can also be found: vibraphone and xylophone solos, dense chords, and rapid passages in the percussion.

E.g. 3

BIPOLAR CHORDS (THE DUALITY OF THE CHARACTER) The Salamander comes to her rescue.
ppp, wv.

OSTINATO BASS REPETITION

CHORDS ON THE STRUCTURE OF SELISIR SCALE

Benjamin Britten: *The Prince of Pagodas* Pentatonic structures in the Third Act

¹⁸ Sudirana, I. Wayan. *Improvisation in Balinese Music: An Analytical Study of Three Different Types of Drumming in the Balinese Gamelan Gong Kebyar*. In: *Journal of Music Science, Technology, and Industry*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.31091/jomsti.v1i1.502>

5. Semantic and Hermeneutic Dimensions in *The Prince of the Pagodas*

The semantic dimension is organized around certain reference points that Britten transforms into sound signals with a precise function. One of the first elements is *cyclicity*, suggested by ostinato constructions and the insistent repetition of motifs that return periodically. These do not seem to follow a progressive or culminating logic, moving away from the classical or Romantic phrase. Repetition leads to a stabilization of the texture, where the listener's attention shifts from formal development to timbral details and subtle variations between iterations. Instead of creating the expectation of a climax, these ostinatos give rise to a sonic space that functions almost like a ritual framework, where what matters is not the outcome but the maintenance of a continuous presence.

Another representative pattern is the indirect presence of the phenomenon *ombak*, that “arises in a paired tuning system in which corresponding unisons of two instruments (or instrumental groups) are tuned to slightly different frequencies, one higher and one lower, to produce beats...”¹⁹

The composer musically transposes the idea of a wave, undulating movement, and trembling through timbral layering and rapid tempo in the percussion instruments, as well as through the use of pentatonic scales in the other instruments. From a semantic perspective, this becomes an expression of fragile identity, fluidity, and perpetual transformation. This symbolic value is particularly relevant when considered in relation to the composer's interest in the idea of otherness and the condition of the different. Despite this approach, the characters are constructed around easily recognizable sonic timbres. The Emperor is characterized by solemn fanfares, in which the pentatonic motifs are taken up by the brass with expressive grandeur, becoming emblems of authority. The Prince-Salamander, on the other hand, is accompanied by unstable, slippery melodic lines. For this reason, the character acquires the outline of a meaningful identity, even though it is changeable and ambiguous.

Looking at the work as a whole, silence takes on a special significance. For example, orchestral pauses do not serve merely a formal role; they can refer to the sacred function of silence specific to the region, where the absence of sound signifies fullness and a space for energy accumulation. Through such details, a universe rich in meaning is carefully constructed, and each sonic element points to one of the principles of time, identity, and sacredness.

¹⁹ Sethares, W. A., & Vitale, W. *Ombak and Octave Stretching in Balinese Gamelan*. In: *Journal of Mathematics and Music*, 16(1), 1–17, 2022.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17459737.2020.1812128>

From a dramaturgical perspective, the work clearly differs from Western models in the way musical and stage material is organized. In this case, the orchestra surpasses its classical role as accompaniment and becomes a collective actor, directly participating in stage action. A striking example is the scene of the King of the South. The massive orchestration and dance support each other, existing in perfect concord, where the choreographic gesture and the sonic gesture reflect one another. The rhythmic ostinatos in the orchestra transform into a backdrop for the expansive movements of the dancers, and the resulting effect is that of collective energy. In contrast, episodes associated with the Prince-Salamander follow a completely different dramaturgy: they do not lead to resolution but suspend the action through calm, introspective fragments with reduced sonority. This alternation between grandeur and contemplation represents nothing less than the central mechanism of the construction of the entire narrative discourse. Building on the idea mentioned earlier, musical and stage dramaturgy become inseparable, and the work acquires the character of a complete theatrical opera, in which the audience no longer merely witnesses a story.²⁰

A hermeneutic reading of the ballet reveals possibilities for reflection regarding the cultural encounter between the two continents. Britten uses Balinese elements as principles of sonic organization that, in turn, transform the very structure of Western music. Thus, the work can be interpreted as a meditation on the dialogue between civilizations. Musical elements overlap, producing a result that belongs neither exclusively to the West nor to the East.

Another central idea is the rhetoric of otherness as a foundation and as a new, hybrid language, with ambiguity being regarded as a positive value. Using the characters as reference points, the music suggests that identity is defined through the awareness and valorization of differences. Hermeneutically, this process reflects a modern conception that identity requires time to take shape, remaining in constant evolution.

At the same time, the work can be read as a reflection on power. More concretely, the Old Emperor loses his stability through rhythmic and harmonic distortions, suggesting that absolute authority is vulnerable. In contrast, the Prince-Salamander becomes a pole of meaning, embodying the capacity for metamorphosis and the real strength of fragility. The inversion of roles functions hermeneutically as a commentary on traditional hierarchies and as an argument for another form of power based on adaptability. Music and stage action become the means through which a dynamic flow of meanings is generated within the opera.

²⁰ Mervyn, Cooke. Op. cit., 1998.

On an intertextual level, a parallel can be drawn with another work typical of French Impressionism, namely Debussy's *Pagodes*, a solo piano piece from the *Estampes* cycle. The title refers to Asian pagodas, suggesting the scenic image and aesthetic contour of the music, without indicating a direct influence. On the contrary, in *The Prince of the Pagodas* the composer surpasses mere imitation by using gamelan-inspired sonic elements as principles of rhythmic and structural organization, giving the work its own coherent form.

Thus, *The Prince of the Pagodas* represents not only the first authentic success in combining Western and Balinese musical language but also serves as a starting point for the refinement that would bring this synthesis to maturity in Britten's late works. Through openness to another culture, Benjamin Britten positions himself within a horizon of thought in which art becomes a shared territory of humanity. His work remains a landmark of British modernism, as well as an exemplary model of aesthetic and spiritual dialogue between East and West.

Conclusions

For Britten, as for other composers of the twentieth century, contact with extra-European musical cultures did not lead to imitation, but to a personal synthesis in which structural principles are adapted to a modern Western language. Thus, interest in extra-European music functioned in the twentieth century as a catalyst for musical modernity. By confronting other sound systems and different conceptions of time and form, Western composers were able to transcend the limits of the Romantic tradition and create a plural, open, and innovative artistic language.

The compositional trajectory of Benjamin Britten, as exemplified in the ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas*, represents the most fitting example of a Western composer's capacity to interact creatively with extra-European cultural heritage, transforming Asian influences into his own foundations. As previously stated, the work marks a turning point in the British composer's output, being the first in which Asian influences no longer appear merely as latent reminiscences but as structural, dramaturgical, and symbolic norms.

Through analytical and comparative methods, research has highlighted how these principles are transformed from external models into elements creatively integrated into Britten's own musical language, becoming constitutive parts of a new formal and temporal thinking.

Britten was particularly drawn to the layered organization of texture, ostinato rhythm, the cyclical conception of time, and the resonant metallic sonority of the gamelan – elements that revealed natural affinities with his own

style. Unlike the superficial exoticism practiced by other Western composers, Britten integrated these principles into a personal language, adapting them to the European orchestra without resorting to authentic instruments.

The use of cyclical rhythmic structures, polyrhythms, and pentatonic scales constitutes frameworks that generate and shape the architecture of the entire ballet and the psychological evolution of the characters. This musical example shows how the composer succeeds in combining his experience in Bali with the expressive power of music, using accumulations of tension, controlled dissonances, and timbral contrasts to create emotionally compelling moments. Thus, choreography and music exist in a relationship of interdependence, making it evident that music can convey complex ideas and emotions without words.

From a semiotic perspective, a dense network of musical, visual, and choreographic signs is evident. From the introduction of the kingdom and the initial dramatic tension to the denouement, which symbolizes narrative balance, each musical element acts as a sign, a meaningful code within the choreography and scenography. Moreover, by integrating Asian elements into European musical thought, new timbral and rhythmic resources are explored, creating a space in which art becomes a universal model.

The composition stands out within British modernism, but at the same time it is an example of openness to global cultural influences, resulting in a musical, dramatic, and clearly meaningful structure. Music, viewed as a complex symbolic language, can reflect on the human condition, cultural interaction, and the transformative potential of art. It is safe to affirm that the ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas* transcends the conventional boundaries of ballet and constitutes an ongoing dialogue – between music and philosophy, between tradition and innovation.

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LUCIA RONCHETTI'S *RIVALE* AS AN EXAMPLE OF GÉRARD GENETTE'S HYPERTEXTUALITY PRACTICE

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SUMMARY. The subject of this article will be the 2017 opera *Rivale* by Roman composer Lucia Ronchetti. This exceptionally interesting work is a direct reference to André Campra's opera *Tancredi* and Claudio Monteverdi's madrigal *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*. *Rivale*'s libretto presents the story known from Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata*, this time told from Clorinda's perspective. The analysis concerns the composer's conscious references not only to Campra and Monteverdi's works, as her most important source of inspiration, but above all to selected musical styles and operatic genres, which become a starting point for her creative dialogue with musical tradition, conducted through practices characteristic of hypertextuality. The research method we adopted is Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality. The aim of the article is to demonstrate that the most important goal of opera, which is to arouse emotions, is preserved in Ronchetti's work, but above all – that it can still be achieved by resorting to traditional means of musical rhetoric.

Keywords: Lucia Ronchetti, Gérard Genette, *Rivale*, opera, hypertextuality

Introduction remarks

Lucia Ronchetti is a composer from Rome, born on February 3, 1963. The list of institutions where she trained is endless, from the Conservatorio Santa Cecilia, through the Sorbonne, IRCAM, to Columbia in New York. Her compositional career is flourishing. The list of her projects, awards, scholarships, and various collaborations is also long – we won't list them all here, but all information about Ronchetti is available on her professionally prepared website³.

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³ Lucia Ronchetti Official Website, <http://www.luciaronchetti.com/> [09.03.2026].



Rivale, the subject of this article, is a chamber opera for solo female voice, solo viola, brass, and metal percussion, and, from the very first listening, it seems incredibly fascinating. What we find particularly captivating about this work is its focus on affect as the primary impulse motivating the creation of opera, but also the particular kind of vivisection to which the composer subjects affect as an operatic theme, returning, as it were, to the origins of opera itself and a time when thematizing affect made it, in a sense, a metatext. Obvious allusions to Claudio Monteverdi and his 1638 *Il combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda* and to André Campra's 1701 opera, based on a libretto by Antoine Danchet, *Tancrède*, further attract attention. The composer herself admits to this last reference, as in the description of the opera (or rather the film based on the opera) we can read:

The Enchanted Forest, where she is lost during the middle part of the pièce, is a magic place where thoughts, emotions and inner tensions emerge, with plausible psychological intuitions. The Forest is animated by plants and animals conveying terror and delusion. It seems to be like a metamorphic reality, fitting in with the fear and doubts of people penetrating it. [...]

In the elaboration of Danchet, Clorinde enters the forest searching for Tancrede, wanting to save him from the powerful magician Ismenor. Nonetheless, she finds herself even more caught in her stressful duel between ideology and emotivity. The forest is the place of the obsessive return of her problem, mirroring it endlessly. Her inability to find a solution becomes unsustainable. [...]

The forest is a vast web; it catches her mind and pushes her to a final duel with the man she is in love with. She offers herself as the needed victim while fighting as a killer. The announced catastrophe seems to be the only solution, a liberation from the overexertion of her feelings⁴.

***Rivale* and its relations with Danchet and Campra's opera**

Ronchetti's *Rivale* is based solely on Danchet's text, with excerpts from his libretto. The composer specifically points to the beginning of Act II, Scene 5 (i.e. the first scene) of Campra's opera. However, this reference isn't entirely accurate, because comparing libretto of *Rivale* with Danchet's text makes it clear that the former is a free-form juxtaposition of various fragments

⁴ *Rivale*, <http://www.luciaronchetti.com/en/works-by-lucia-ronchetti/music-theatre/rivale/p5-25-1710> [09.03.2026].

from the original libretto, drawn from the parts of different characters. We'll illustrate this approach using the opera's first scene, titled *Suis-je Clorinde?*... and featuring Clorinde's monologue, as an example:

Ronchetti⁵

Le sort a trompé ma valeur;
 Tancrede a du combat remporté
 l'avantage,
 Vous voyez ma rage et ma douleur,
 Prête à tomber dans l'esclavage.
 Ah! que ce jour m'inspire une frayeur
 mortelle!
 Je sçais trop, pour mon malheur,
 Combien ce Guerrier est à craindre!
 Suis-je Clorinde? Quel trouble me dévore!
 Puis je me reconnaitre encore!
 Mon cœur contre l'Amour fut toujours
 révolté;
 Dans l'horreur des forêts exerçant mon
 courage,
 J'ay long tems de Diane imité la fierté.
 J'ay fait plus: j'ay cherché la guerre et le
 carnage!
 Vains projets! Un seul jour détruit tous
 mes exploits,
 Tancrede me tient sous ses loix,
 Je l'ay vû tout brillant de gloire,
 Sortir de ce dernier combat!
 L'horreur, l'épouvante, les cris,
 La mort, dont je voyois régner par tout
 l'image,
 Dans un desordre affreux jettèrent mes
 esprits;

Danchet⁶

Act I, sc. 1, Argant to Herminia (p. 9)

 Act II, sc. 2, Tancred to Clorinde (p. 18)
 Act I, sc. 1, Argant to Herminia (p. 9)

 Act I, sc. 1, Herminia to Argant (p. 9)
 Act II, sc. 1, Clorinde alone (p. 16)

 Act I, sc. 1, Herminia (p. 10)

⁵ Ronchetti, Lucia. *Rivale. Chamber opera for female voice, solo viola, brass ensemble and metal percussion ensemble*. Roma: Edizioni Musicali RAI COM, 2017.

⁶ Danchet, Antoine. *Tancrede: tragédie représentée par l'Académie Royale de Musique*. Lyon: Thomas Amaulry, 1703.

For the record, it should be noted that Danchet's text has been transcribed incorrectly in places, and these are not arbitrary changes to the libretto, but rather typical transcription errors. We believe this is significant, as we assume the composer used the French text, perhaps lacking sufficient knowledge of the language to understand it fluently and relying on translations from another language (the stage directions in *Rivale* are in English after all).

On me chargea de fers: dans mon triste
esclavage, Tancrede vint s'offrir à mes
regards surpris;

Helas! en le voyant, ma colère fut vaine!
Heureuse, si sa main m'eût arraché le
jour!

Contre lui, dans mon cœur, je cherchai Act I, sc. 1, Tancred (p. 11)
de la haine,
Je n'y trouvai que de l'amour.

Hâtez-vous, ma Raison, bannissez de Act II, sc. 1, Clorinde alone (p. 17)
mon cœur,

D'un cruel Enemy l'image trop charmante;
Ranime ma fierté mourante,
Et combattez l'Amour qui se rend mon
vainqueur.

Il vient... ne lui montrons qu'une noble
fureur.

Je n'e veux pour témoin, que le trouble Act I, sc. 4, Tancred alone (p. 23)
fatal,

Que fon nom excite en mon ame;
Rival de mes exploits, je sens, pour luy,
croître ma haine:

Barbare, aux dépens de tes jours,
J'iray te disputer une si belle chaîne:
Tu n'as encor senti les coups
D'un bras qui cherchoit à servir mon
courage.

Tremble, c'est un Amant jaloux

Qui va t'immoler à sa rage...

Malgré votre victoire,

Je sçauray, dans mes fers, conserver Act II, sc. 2, Clorinde to Tancred (p. 17)
ma fierté;

Vous ne m'offrez la liberté,

Que pour augmenter votre gloire!

Quel dessein?

Qu'entends-je?

Act V, sc. 2, Tancred alone (p. 45)

Puis je trop m'en plaindre?

Act I, sc. 4, Tancred alone (p. 23)

Quand je doit vous haïr, vous me parlez Act II, sc. 2, Clorinde to Tancred (p. 18)
d'amour!

Ah! De tous les malheurs que j'éprouve en
ce jour, C'étoit pour moy le plus à craindre.
Tout me doit, contre vous, inspirer de la
haïne,

Ma gloire y mes malheurs y ma Patrie et Act II, sc. 2, Clorinde to Tancred (p. 19)
mes Dieux,
Mes soldats immolez, ou captifs en ces
lieux.
Aux yeux de vos Captifs songez à vous
contraindre, Cachez un trouble si honteux!
Je ne veux point devoir ma délivrance

A l'amour, dont vous vous sentez toucher; Act II, sc. 3, Clorinde to Tancred
Si je suis en votre puissance, (pp. 22–23)
Argant sçaura m'en arracher.
Malgré tous mes malheurs, mon cœur Act III, sc. 1, Herminia (p. 26)
en est charmé;
Eteignons dans son sang sa flâme et ma Act III, sc. 1, Argant (p. 26)
fureur,
Qu'en un jour l'Univers apprenne avec
horreur
Et son audace ma vengeance.

As can be seen, Clorinda's monologue is woven from freely juxtaposed fragments, not only from the beginning of the second act but also from Clorinda's words to Tancred in the original opera, as well as those Tancred addresses to Clorinda, those from his own monologues, and even from the lines of the supporting characters in Campra's work, namely Herminia and Argant. This sheds an interesting light on what we might call a certain dynamic of affective tension within this monologue. In Danchet and Campra's original, Herminia, who is in love with Tancred, and Argant, who is in love with Clorinda, together lure Tancred to the enchanted forest of the sorcerer Ismenore, where Argant challenges Tancred to a mortal duel. Tancred fights a masked knight whom he believes to be Argant, but it turns out he kills Clorinda in the battle.

In *Tancredi*, as it is a French *tragédie lyrique*, we have a series of leading, or dominant, affects assigned to specific characters. If we analyze the libretto and score from this perspective, we see that these affects are quite clearly distributed: anger, caused by rejection, for Argant; the pain of unhappy love, for Herminia; confusion, caused by contradictory feelings, for Clorinde; love/desire, for Tancred. Baroque opera, French as well as Italian, is based on the structure of the relationships between these affects, which are embodied by the onstage characters – the paradigms of the libretto (in the case of the *tragédie lyrique*, the paradigm established by Philippe Quinault). By reshaping the libretto to give voice to a single protagonist, Clorinde, Ronchetti focuses all these passions within her, as if through a lens.

Rivale* as a hypertext of *Tancredi

We observe here a phenomenon that, following Gérard Genette, we could call hypertextuality, defined by him as the relationship between text B, i.e. the hypertext, and text A, i.e. the hypotext from which the hypertext is derived. The relationship between both texts is based on the principle of imitation, but also transformation, without the need to directly mention the source: “[...] text B not speaking of text A at all but being unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through a process I shall provisionally call *transformation*, and which it consequently evokes more or less perceptibly without necessarily speaking of it or citing it.”⁷

In this case, Ronchetti’s *Rivale* will constitute a hypertext for Danchet’s libretto of *Tancredi*. The composer’s intention is neither ludic nor satirical; she doesn’t distort the hypotext, although – in our opinion – she doesn’t avoid the camp attitude inherent in opera. Genette, writing about pastiche, returns to its eighteenth-century and French provenance, points to the literal etymology of the term, which literally means “copying” and “pasting” and emphasizes the most essential feature of this genre: the skillful adoption of the idiolect (individual, personal style) of the hypotext⁸. However, it seems that the idiolect at issue is not Danchet’s, but it belongs rather to the *tragédie lyrique* libretto, written in elegant, classicist verse – the model which Quinault himself established, and whose text *Tancredi* faithfully implements. Nevertheless, the idiolectal properties imitated by hypertext are limited here to the structure of the poem and its mode of imagery: what we might call the layer of rhetorical figures, typical phrases, metaphors, means of expression – in other words, the outermost, superficial layer of the libretto’s language. Its structure, based on a specific dynamic of mutually directed, clashing affects (represented by a set of characters), has, after all, been fragmented. The opera’s goal is neither an attempt at a hauntological “resurrection” of this type of affect, nor a pastiche of distance from it through hyperbole/caricature. This goal, in our opinion, is generally different: it is to reveal the complex ambivalence of the opera’s female protagonist’s feelings. Whether this goal can be achieved is completely another matter.

Another hypertextual issue in *Rivale* is the enchanted forest, in which Ronchetti sets the action of her opera. This space will also be significant for

⁷ Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman, Claude Doubinsky (transl.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, p. 5. See also de Castro, Paulo F. *Transculturality According to Gérard Genette – and beyond in Intertextuality in Music: Dialogic Composition*. P. F. de Castro, Violetta Kostka, William A. Everett (eds.). New York: Taylor & Francis, 2021 (pp. 131–144).

⁸ Genette, G. 1997. Op. cit., p. 95.

Campra, and Michele Cabrini points out that *Tancrède* is not the only work by Campra where he uses a dark and subdued woodwind setting⁹ and the key of E-minor, in which the prelude that opens the third act stabilizes¹⁰. In French opera music, the association of *traversi* and transverse flutes with this kind of magical and mysterious space has a well-established tradition¹¹. Cabrini also refers to the later *La dispute de l'Amour et de l'Hymen* (1714), written by Campra also with Danchet – however, this work is not an opera, but a cantata. As the scholar claims,

Unable to rely on the visual stimuli of the stage, the listener perceives the scenario equally but through the interaction between the instruments and the singer [...]. Campra affects the audience's awareness of the action by gradually shifting the focus of the attention away from the singer in favour of the instrumental music itself.¹²

Cabrini's entire text demonstrates Campra's particular and growing awareness of the orchestra's role in creating space in stage work.

Rivale, due to its cast and function, falls somewhere between a chamber opera and a large, dramatized cantata with an extensive, though decidedly monochromatic, orchestral ensemble. Campra's overall approach to the work, whose stage status is strongly linked to the orchestra's involvement in building the scenic space, is certainly close to Ronchetti's¹³. However, it could be difficult to call this any textual reference.

***Rivale* and its musical hypotexts**

As is well known, Genette's original reflection, contained in his *Palimpsests*, is limited to literary texts, that are practically entirely derived from other literary or paraliterary texts¹⁴. At the level of the libretto, as we

⁹ Cabrini, Michele. *Upstaging the Voice: Diegetic Sound and Instrumental Interventions in the French Baroque Cantata in Early Music*, no 1(38), 2010 (pp. 73–90), p. 74.

¹⁰ See Banducci, Antonia. *Staging a tragédie en musique: A 1748 Promptbook of Campra's "Tancrède"* in *Early Music*, no 2(21), 1993 (pp. 180–190), p. 185.

¹¹ Por. Buch, David J. *Magic Flutes and Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 50.

¹² Cabrini, M. 2010. Op. cit., pp. 74–75. See also ibidem, p. 81.

¹³ Ronchetti, L. 2012. Op. cit., p. 86, 193.

¹⁴ Zob. Castonguay, Roger. *Genettean Hypertextuality as Applied to the Music of Genesis: Intertextual and Intratextual Approaches in The Pop Palimpsest: Intertextuality in Recorded Popular Music*. Lori Burns, Serge Lacasse (eds.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018 (pp. 61–82), p. 62.

have just proved, *Rivale* fulfills this condition. However, the situation is different with music, which Genette writes about as susceptible to hypertextual practices, but he doesn't conduct any analyses to confirm this thesis¹⁵. Many scholars, such as Paolo Ferreira de Castro, Roger Castonguay, and Michael Riffaterre (to name just a few), are extremely optimistic about translating the category of hypertextuality into music, but in this case the matter is not clear-cut, even though Genette himself outlines a particularly broad and loosely understood framework for musical pastiche, the genesis of which he traces, incidentally, to music studies¹⁶. Genette writes:

In music, the range of transformational possibilities is probably broader than in painting, broader than in literature certainly, given the complexity of musical discourse, which, unlike the literary text, is unhampered by the strict "linearity" of the verbal signifier. Even a single and isolated sound is defined by four parameters at least (pitch, intensity, duration, timbre), each of which can be modified separately by means of transposition, dynamic reinforcement or weakening, a lengthening or abridgment of the sound production, a change of timbre. [...] This mind-boggling transformational capacity is the very soul of musical composition, and not merely in its "classical" state, since the same principles are known to operate in jazz, for instance, or in serial music. What in literature still passes for a somewhat marginal diversion is almost universally considered as the basic principle of the musical "development": i.e., of musical discourse¹⁷.

Leaving aside Genette's obvious simplifications in his considerations, concerning, for example, the compositional techniques of the 20th century or jazz, the researcher's fundamental idea is that most compositional techniques are based on the creation of palimpsests, i.e. the practices of hypertextuality, intertextuality, intratextuality: "Studying the operative modes of transformation in music would thus be tantamount to describing exhaustively the forms of that discourse."¹⁸

Hypertextuality understood in this loose way is in no way useful for analysis and doesn't provide us with any tools, but in Ronchetti's opera it can be interpreted in a rather precise way or rather, as we believe, in two ways.

The first is indicated by the composer herself – the score of *Rivale* contains a number of references to various works by different composers.

¹⁵ Genette, G. 1997. Op. cit., pp. 84, 123–124, 163–164, 174–176, 228–229, 259, 353, 385–391.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 385–386.

¹⁷ Ibidem, pp. 386–387.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 387.

Significantly, these references, although mostly obvious, are noted in the margins of the score, in case they are misinterpreted by the performer. This may suggest a method of interpretation, although Ronchetti retains only the most superficial and easily recognizable elements of the original texts: characteristic motifs and themes, distinctive rhythmic structures and intervallic leaps, and features of the period's musical conventions. The composer's preferences don't suggest any coherent strategy; at first glance, it appears to be a postmodernist patchwork arrangement of fragments deprived of their original context. These references appear as follows:

Bar in the score / minute of performance ¹⁹	Music quotation	Libretto's text – incipit
1 / 2,20	Pérotin, <i>Viderunt omnes</i>	-
70 / 8,00	Britten, <i>War Requiem</i>	<i>Suis-je Clorinde?...</i>
99 / 9,30	Strauss, <i>Metamorphosen</i>	<i>Je l'ay vû, je l'ay vû...</i>
128 / 11,30	Monteverdi, <i>Lamento della Ninfa</i>	<i>Hâtez-vous, ma raison...</i>
180 / 13,30	Janequin, <i>La batail[l]e de Marignan</i>	<i>Il vient!...</i>
312 / 16,45	Strauss, <i>Metamorphosen</i>	<i>Malgré tous mes malheurs...</i>
356 / 19,10	Purcell, <i>King Arthur</i>	<i>Ah!...</i>
364 / 19,25	Strawiński, <i>Petrushka</i>	-
414 / 22,18	Verdi, <i>Requiem</i>	<i>Ismenor, par son art...</i>
426 / 22,55	Janequin, <i>Le chant des oyseaux</i> [sic]	<i>Ranissons les indignes craintes...</i>
499 / 24,45	Verdi, <i>Requiem</i>	<i>Il faut le sour monter...</i>
584 / 28,15	Mahler, II symphony (<i>Sehr langsam und gedehnet</i>)	<i>Ciel! Qu'est-le que je vas?...</i>
647 / 29,48	Led Zeppelin, <i>Whole Lotta Love</i>	<i>Perfide, arreste!...</i>
723 / 31,54	Mahler, II symphony (1 pt)	-

¹⁹ It should be noted that the official recording of the performance we got from composer doesn't strictly follow the score, it contains *tagli* that eliminate several references.

788 / -	Mahler, II symphony (1 pt)	Oh!...
799 / 35,30	Cavalli, [II] <i>Giasone, Speranze fuggite...</i>	<i>Je romps mon esclavage...</i>
854 / 39,30	Debussy, <i>Des pas sur la neige</i>	<i>Je, je bannis...</i>
906 / 43,10	Scheidt, <i>Galliard battaglia à 5 voci</i>	-
1010 / 45,45	Strawiński, <i>Petrushka</i>	<i>Oh! assemblez nos Guerriers...</i>
1036 / -	Mahler, II symphony	-
1042 / -	Padovano, <i>Aria dalla battaglia</i>	
1160 / -	Monteverdi, <i>Vespro della beata Vergine</i>	-
1402 / 58,48	Handel, <i>Jephtha, How dark...</i>	Oh!...

They encompass vocal-instrumental and instrumental music from the Middle Ages to the second half of the 20th century. Pérotin opens the collection. There are illustrative works by Janequin, Scheidt, and Padovano, but Led Zeppelin differs only a little bit from their arrangement. Monteverdi's madrigals and religious music are juxtaposed with Italian and English opera of the middle and late Baroque, and Mahler's Second Symphony (the most frequently cited work) recurs several times. Strauss' *Metamorphoses* and Stravinsky's *Petrushka* also recur, and there are references to Impressionism (Debussy) and funeral music of the 19th and 20th centuries (Verdi and Britten's *Requiems*). Overall, Baroque music and works of the first and second avant-garde dominate. A more thorough examination might reveal connections between the libretto and the cited hypotexts, but without thorough investigation, these connections seem rather coincidental.

As we mentioned, these hypotexts – with a few exceptions, including the use of battle motifs like Janequin's *La Bataille* – aren't treated by the composer as a source of musical language, nor do they seem to contain any significant symbolic references. However, there are two others musical hypotexts that, in our opinion, are important for *Rivale*, one of which Ronchetti cites. The first is, of course, Campra's opera *Tancrède*. We mentioned a certain affinity between *Rivale* and the French tradition of Baroque opera, but we will

emphasize these connections more clearly: the vocal part in many places displays similarities to the French *récit*; the role of the orchestra, including the brass, is very significant and illustrative, leaving room for the onstage action; the instrumentalists sometimes take over the function of the choir (even though these choral parts are used as additional instrumentation); the essentially dark and cool sound of the orchestra directly alludes to Campra's style.

The second hypotext, which Ronchetti interestingly doesn't mention at all, but which seems to be very important, is Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda*. There have at least three common points. First, Monteverdi's work focuses much more on the character of Clorinda and the ambivalent relationship between Tancredi and Clorinda than Campra's opera does, which introduces other characters typical of opera and thus distributes the affective dynamics differently (as we have already discussed). Second, *Il combattimento...* is a work at the intersection of a secular solo cantata, a dramatized madrigal, and a stage work (which, of course, we cannot yet call a chamber opera, as Ronchetti does). And, last but not least, Monteverdi's piece is a work in which the entire narrative, the construction of the conflict, and its development rest on a single character. We use this word "narrative" not without reason, in a sense connected to epic, because *Il combattimento...* implements the principles of epic narrative through description and storytelling. *Rivale*, composed of lyrical texts of arias and recitatives, is more functional as a stage work, though not devoid of epic and lyrical characteristics.

Conclusions

Undoubtedly, the two most important hypotexts of *Rivale* are the pieces of Monteverdi and Campra. Both works display significant conceptual similarities with Ronchetti's opera.

Compared to Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, these similarities include primarily the focus on the character of Clorinda and the ambivalent relationship between Tancred and Clorinda (which means that the construction and resolution of the conflict rests mostly with one character) and the genre (the positioning of musical piece at the intersection of a secular solo cantata, a dramatized madrigal, and a stage work – that is, at the intersection of epic, lyric, and drama).

As for Campra's *Tancredi*, *Rivale* shows connections with this hypotext mainly through its sound coloristic and ensemble cast: the vocal part in many places shows similarity to the French *récit*, the significant role of the orchestra is visible throughout the whole opera (especially the wind instruments and choir

parts), and the music as a whole shows high illustrative properties, while its overall sound palette is dark and cold, which seems particularly symptomatic of Campra.

We believe that further research that would establish also the precise relationship between the libretto and Danchet's hypotext, as well as the cross-relationships between different types of hypotexts on the musical level, would yield interesting findings, as there is a wealth of material and almost no scholarly discourse surrounding Lucia Ronchetti. In Romania, her work is still basically unknown.

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SAXOPHONE, THE NEW ARTISTIC MINDSET IN MÉTA DUO CONTEXT

BOGDAN CONSTANTIN¹, LIOARA POPA²

SUMMARY. While creativity in music continued to progress, the saxophone was still often seen as a jazz instrument only by senior generations of composers. A new form of virtuosity emerges with the development of Electronics, where sonorities undergo extremely complex transformations, sometimes resulting in particularly original sound combinations. In this article, the highlight is placed on the concept of “Méta-duo” – an innovative sound venture where the saxophone, an instrument with an expressive and malleable tone, interweaves with the richness and profusion of the acousmatic space. This nonconformist chamber structure is an exploration of the boundaries between acoustic and electronic sound, between live human expression and digitally processed sound textures. The saxophone becomes a bridge between the real and imaginary, in a dialogue of acousmatic sound projections that amplifies, antagonizes, or contains the musical gesture. Starting from the acousmatic tradition described by Pierre Schaeffer and developed by François Bayle, the analysis is focused on how these projects go beyond simple sound experiments and turn into models of interdisciplinary collaboration and the redefinition of auditory perception.

Keywords: Saxophone, Daniel Kientzy, Enneaphony, diffusor, Méta-duo, acousmatic

1. Introduction

Through contemporary pieces and original compositions, Méta-duo crafts an auditory experience that transcends the conventional limits of chamber music, highlighting an ethic of co-interpretation, where the instrumentalist

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and the sound engineer share their artistic responsibilities, resulting in an open and unexpected creative process. Enneaphony raises the issue of sound spatialization through an octophonic system, transforming the concert space into an active participant in the *auditory act*. *Phonostück, through fixed media formulas, challenges the audience to listen to the sound itself, without any visual reference, thus becoming a part of the acousmatic aesthetic*. The central element is the use of extended techniques for the saxophone (slap tongue, multiphonics, microtones, glissando, frullato, key sounds), which generate complex sound materials, ideal for real-time digital processing (delay, dynamic filters, reverberations, granularization).

The situation of the saxophone continues to change due to the talent and the free and unprejudiced thinking of some new interpreters, and starting in the '80s, the instrument started becoming appealing to the public of "classical" music. In this instance, the composer becomes the closest partner of the interpreter, and so contemporary music and the interpretative technique together cause an evolution in both the instrument and the instrumentalist.

Owing to interpreters such as Rudy Wiedoeft, known for his techniques of slap tongue and double-détaché, Sigurd Raschèr, with his extreme registers, and, as might be expected, Daniel Kientzy, the saxophone would expand its traditional limitations and define a particular language, turning into a genuinely modern instrument indeed. Accordingly, the extended techniques are: slaps, Flatterzunge (flutter-tonguing), growl, multiple sound double-détaché (double cross-beat), flattements, bisbigliando, Aeolian sounds, tambourine sounds, micro intervals, natural harmonics, glissandi, key noises, and blowing/air noises. To the above can certainly be added those which are the trademark of the saxophone player Daniel Kientzy: tongue-ram-beck (tongue-ram-beak), arraché (plucked), jeté (slap), inversion (reverted sound), baiser-beck (kiss-beak), trumpeting, slap-ouvert (open slap), harmonico-tuilage (harmonic and subtones), pizz-beck (bass pizz), libranche (free reed), inharmonico-diffraction (approx.: inharmonic, diffracted sound), étouffer (muting), timbrologie (tone colors or timbres), saxalpin (alpenhorn, natural horn), trump-specter-fluctuation, tukusonies, flutage, vox-trump, baisers-bocal (kiss-beak), barrissement (the bellowing technique), saxnay (the Sax-Ney technique) and so on.

1.1. Meta Duo

Méta-duo is an innovative interpretative and technological concept developed by Daniel Kientzy in collaboration with sound engineer Reina Portuondo, an unusual duet. More than just a simple duet, Méta-duo represents a true fusion between the human performer and the acousmatic - the sound technician. The technician goes beyond merely amplifying the instrument; instead, they process, transform, and project the sound in real-time.

The term “acousmatic” refers to a method of listening to sound without seeing the source that produces it. However, not all music played through speakers qualifies as acousmatic. It only falls under this category if it was specifically created for that mode of listening—meaning it was composed to be experienced exclusively through speakers, without any live instrumentalists performing.

This partnership leads to the appearance of meta-instrumental music, where sound evolves into a fluid entity, constantly moving and transforming, and the soundstage emerges as a three-dimensional realm, reshaping the interpretation of contemporary music. To be more precise, every sound emitted by the saxophonist is altered, projected, or amplified by the digital co-author. The saxophone’s sound is not simply transmitted as such to the audience; instead, it undergoes continuous transformation, evolving into raw material for the emerging acousmatic structures³. The sound technician is no longer just an operator; they have transformed into a true performer, working with an open score that allows their intentions to be directly reflected in the structure of the musical piece. Unlike electroacoustic music, where sound distribution and processing occur after the composition is finished, in Méta-duo all of this takes place in real time, in front of the listening audience⁴.

The live nature of electronic intervention enables prompt rhetoric, enabling the technician to respond creatively and often unpredictably. This dynamic creates a system in which the relationship between saxophonist and technician is at once interpretative, reactive, and compositional, generating a unique interpretive experience at each performance⁵.

1.2. Enneaphony system

The Méta-duo ensemble stands out in the contemporary music landscape using Enneaphony. This is a spatial sound-projection system that allows the audience to participate in a three-dimensional sound experience.

Designed specifically for Daniel Kientzy’s performances, this system consists of eight loudspeakers, which are positioned in a circular pattern around the concert hall, with a ninth loudspeaker at the center, intended to balance the acoustic source⁶.

Unlike other sound systems, Enneaphony allows for a compositional vision of space. The sound is not felt only at a fixed point but is multiplied or

³ Kientzy, Daniel. *Le Saxophone en France : Histoire et Répertoire*, Paris : L’Harmattan, 1996, pp.112-114.

⁴ Emmerson, Simon. (ed.), *Music, Electronic Media and Culture*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, pp. 23-26.

⁵ Emmerson, Simon. *Living Electronic Music*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 67-69.

⁶ Bayle, François. *Musique Acousmatique : Propositions... Positions*, Paris : Buchet-Chastel / INA-GRM, 1993, pp.14-17.

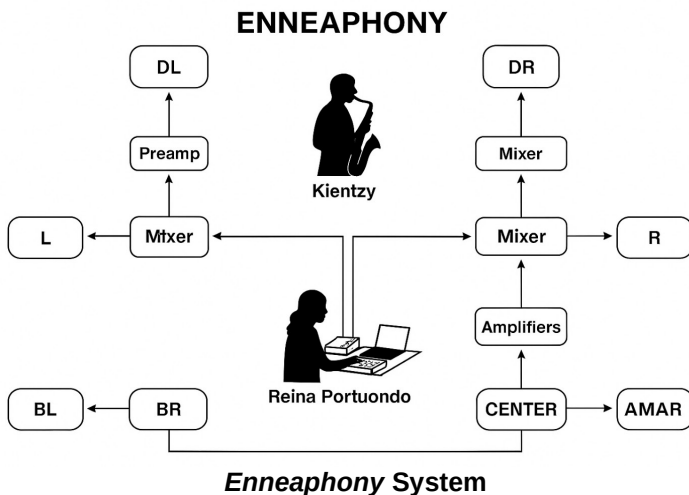
modulated in real time. Within the Méta-duo, the technician can be considered a real interpreter, able to influence the sound trajectories according to the artistic intention of that moment⁷.

The Enneaphony system retains the acoustic music as a basic principle, which it takes to another level. By adding the live interpretative side, the sound processing is not predetermined but reacts in real time to each instrumental sound. We can practically say that, at the moment of interpretation, the saxophonist is disseminated in space and reconstructed in several forms, which generates a different perception of sound. As a result, the perception of sound can be dynamic, or layered, at times⁸.

Once the sound multiplication effect given by this particular spatial dynamic is created, the live-listening audience perceives an amalgam of virtual sounds rather than a single instrument. This effect causes one to think about the audio systems in which position and movement in space modify the auditory experience. Therefore, the audience at a Méta-duo concert will have a different sound perception, depending on the seat occupied in the hall⁹.

In addition, the circular placement of Enneaphony outlines a non-linear musical form, in which the performing intentions are shaped both in time and especially in space. Thus, musical structures will become diffuse, radial, or spiraling. An explanatory diagram of the Enneaphony system will be shown below.

Figure 1



⁷ Dufour, Denis. *Espace, Temps et Perception dans la Musique Électroacoustique*, Paris : INA-GRM, 2000, pp.47-48.

⁸ Kientzy, Daniel. *L'Art du Saxophone*, Paris : Éditions Henri Lemoine, 1982, pp.58-59.

⁹ Landy, Leigh. *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007, pp.43-45.

Table 1

DL, DR	front speakers, LEFT / RIGHT, in front of the audience.
Preamp.	preamplifier, which has the role of increasing the level of the audio signal from the saxophone microphone.
Mixer	consoles that modulate and direct the audio signal to the speakers. Amplifiers = amplifiers that increase the volume of the signal for the speakers.
L, R	Side speakers, placed on the left and right.
BL, BR	Speakers behind the audience, left and right.
CENTER	The central speaker, positioned under the audience or sometimes above, in the middle of the space.
AMAR	is an auxiliary speaker, which creates additional spatial effects (reverberant).
Kientzy	the saxophonist
Reina Portuondo	the sound engineer

Explanation of the diagram

Taking into account the details presented above, we can say that the circuit of this system commences with the saxophonist and travels through the microphone to the preamplifier, reaching the mixer. The sound engineer processes the sound signal, which he sends through the mixer and amplifiers, projecting it afterwards through the eight speakers. Each broadcast station is capable of conveying different materials, including processed multiphonics, filtered fragments, and delays.

Among the advantages that electronic music carries in this case, as Lucian Ghișă details in his article on electronic technologies, can be listed: “precision in execution and detailed control of all the elements of sound, regardless of their complexity”¹⁰. Practically, in live performance, the musical piece benefits from real-time sound modulations, even during the performance, with the spatialization of the sound as the defining feature.

¹⁰ Ghisa, Lucian. *Tehnologii electronice utilizate în „Voix” de Ciprian Gabriel Pop (Electronic technologies in “Voix” by Ciprian Pop)*, ICTMF, vol. 2, No. 1, 2011, pp.98-99.

If the stereophonic tradition only sees “balancing” as an effect, in Enneaphony, space becomes a structural parameter. The composer or the performer decides on sound paths, circular migrations, and spatial overlapping. In this sense, Dufour (2000, pp.47-48) ¹¹ sees spatialization as “a third layer of composition, after time and frequency”. The impact on the listener is radical: each seat in the hall offers a unique mix. Two people, seated at different distances, do not hear the same music. The idea of a “relative work” is created, where the identity depends on the physical position of the receiver. It is a music of plurality of perceptions.

One can conclude that Enneaphony is not simple technical equipment. It is an analogous part of the interpretative act, incorporated within the artistic entity. It is a fusion between sound and space which redefines contemporary music (Emmerson, 2007, pp. 67-69) ¹².

1.3. Phonostück

In the absence of a live instrumental presence, Phonostück is a work intended strictly for listening through loudspeakers. It is a musical form in which the only protagonist is the sound, without the presence of the performer on stage.

The word is of German origin and could be translated as a recorded sound piece. As the name suggests, a Phonostück is constructed with sounds that are processed, reverberated, multiplied, and filtered until they acquire a new identity, most often originating in Daniel Kientzy’s saxophone emission. He conceives his Phonostück as an auditory introspection, in which the speakers, the ear, and the space become the main exhibits, but in the absence of a classical score. Thus, the sound line is composed in the studio, which clearly represents the opposite of traditionalist interpretation.

Listening to this type of performance can be almost hypnotic; it brings the space to life, creating the illusion of a presence that is ultimately absent.

Some examples of Phonostück from Daniel Kientzy’s repertoire include “Le voix du saxophone,” “Meta – animos,” and “Nocturne pour Luigi Nono.” In all of these works, the sound of the saxophone is processed and reverberated to create a spatial unfolding of sound.

1.4. Connections with the acousmatic theory

Pierre Schaeffer¹³ believed that listening without seeing the source produces what he called “reduced listening”, shifting the focus entirely to the

¹¹ Dufour, Denis. *Espace, Temps et Perception dans la Musique Électroacoustique*, Paris : INA-GRM, 2000, pp.47-48.

¹² Emmerson, Simon. *Living Electronic Music*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 67-69.

¹³ Schaeffer, Pierre. *Traité des Objets Musicaux*, Paris : Le Seuil, 1966, pp.84-86.

sound material itself. Kientzy transposes the principle: the saxophone disappears from the visual field, allowing only its sonic traces to exist in an abstract space. Unlike Schaeffer's approach, Kientzy begins his experiment with an eclectic instrumental register, which differs from everyday sounds. However, through extreme processing, the saxophone becomes unrecognizable: the sound spans from granulations, reminding of the noise of metal, to immense drones. Thus, the saxophone is revived only as an "acoustic ghost".

2. Extended techniques for saxophone

The use of complex language for both the saxophone and the sound technician is one of the defining features of the Méta-duo project. The combination of intricate saxophone techniques and real-time digital processing creates a wholesome experience, where this blend of acoustic expression transforms each performance into a unique artistic act with its own unrepeatable identity.

Daniel Kientzy, known for his ability to play all seven types of saxophones – sopranino, soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, bass, and contrabass – documented in his work *L'Art du Saxophone*, a variety of modern interpretation techniques, procedures that often exceed the classical parameters of the instrument¹⁴. Among these, the most widely used are:

"Slap Tongue" - an extended technique used on the saxophone that produces a percussive sound resembling a "snap." It adds a unique element to the interpretive performance. In *Meta Duo*, the "slap" sound of the "slap tongue" effect becomes a primary sound material, used for complex electronic constructions. The effect, described by Kientzy as "one of the first sonic extensions of the saxophone capable of generating percussive variations"¹⁵, is captured through contact microphones and introduced into the digital audio workstation (DAW), where it is processed with reverberations and delays. In this way, Reina Portuondo articulates an aesthetic of immediate transition from acoustic to digital¹⁶.

"Multiphonics" - a technique involves the simultaneous production of multiple sounds using specific, unconventional fingerings, supported by a flexible embouchure. The result is a timbral cluster that offers a distinctive experience for the listener. The sound engineer can exploit this effect with the help of software, which decomposes sound frequencies. Most often, he uses spectral analysis,

¹⁴ Kientzy, Daniel. *L'Art du Saxophone*, Paris: Éditions Henri Lemoine, 1982, pp.58-59.

¹⁵ Kientzy, Daniel. *Saxologie*. Nova Musica, 1991, pp.52.

¹⁶ Jiang, Zhaoxiang and Pruksavanich, Wisuwat. "Non-Polarization on the Alto Saxophone: Daniel Kientzy's Reforms in Music for the Saxophone Family." *Música Hódie*, vol. 25, 2025, e81517.

which helps reconstruct digital clusters in real time. Multiphonics constitute a fundamental part of the contemporary saxophone vocabulary. In his manual, Kientzy describes them as “unstable results, but essential for expanding the sound spectrum”.¹⁷ In digital practice, these effects are spectrally analyzed and transformed into electronic “clusters”, delivering unique textures. Recent studies confirm the relevance of multiphonics for the automatic recognition of instrumental techniques and artificial intelligence applied to sound analysis.¹⁸

“Microtones” - these sounds fall between two semitones and are utilized to create unique sound colors that go beyond conventional limits. Microtones, which cannot be accurately reproduced on classical instruments, are explored as an intensely valuable sound resource. Kientzy demonstrates that the saxophone allows for precise variations through special fingering techniques and subtle adjustments of the embouchure.¹⁹ In Meta Duo, these micro-shifts are recorded and then digitally multiplied or amplified, resulting in interval sequences that would be impossible to achieve otherwise.

“Glissando” - this technique is achieved by adjusting the consistency of the lip muscles while simultaneously moving the fingers gradually. The glissando, described as “the sliding movement that demonstrates the natural flexibility of the air column through the reed”²⁰, is transformed in the Meta Duo experiment into a continuous sound line. Not only does the acoustic sound slide, but the software also creates extensions and deviations, synchronized with “automation curves”. In this way, the performers blend the physical gesture of the breath with the digital manipulation of the musical material.

“Frullato” - in this technique, the performer directs the air column into the instrument while rapidly vibrating the tongue, typically using the syllable “FRU.” This creates a trill effect, produced lingually, through pronounced vibrato. This effect is the ideal material for granular synthesis. Thus, the sound particles formed most often through its decomposition, multiplying the energy initially created. The “frullato” technique, by the rapid vibration of the tongue on the reed, generates an intense and loud effect, appreciated by Kientzy for its textural qualities.²¹ In Meta Duo, this effect is ideal for digital granular synthesis processes, where the sound stream is broken into particles and recomposed into new sound architectures. This type of process has been identified as

¹⁷ Kientzy, Daniel. *Les sons multiples aux saxophones*. Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1981, pp.37.

¹⁸ Lostanlen, Vincent; Andén, Joakim; Lagrange, Mathieu. “*Extended playing techniques: The next milestone in musical instrument recognition.*” arXiv preprint, arXiv:1808.09730, 2018, pp.5.

¹⁹ Kientzy, Daniel. *Saxologie*. Nova Musica, 1991, pp.110.

²⁰ Jiang, Zhaoxiang and Pruksavanich, Wisuwat. “*Non-Polarization on the Alto Saxophone: Daniel Kientzy's Reforms in Music for the Saxophone Family.*” *Música Hodie*, vol. 25, 2025, e81517, pp.8.

²¹ Kientzy, Daniel. *Les sons multiples aux saxophones*. Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1981, pp.72.

favorable for automatic performance recognition and the exploitation of gestures in electronic music²².

“Key sounds” – without blowing air into the instrument, the performer presses the keys, producing a mechanical noise; this generates a percussive, dry sound, which brings a notable contribution to the expressive palette. The mechanical sounds of the saxophone keys, often seen as residual sounds, are revalued through electroacoustic aesthetics. In Meta Duo, they are captured with omnidirectional microphones and treated as digital percussion materials: their compression and sequencing generate unusual rhythmic structures. Thus, even the mechanical elements of the instrument become an integral part of the music.

These effects, in the context of the Méta-duo, are taken over by the sound engineer and processed in real time. Variable delays, dynamic filters, as well as reverberations and spatial transpositions are used²³. This approach generates a flowing sound entity with artificial intelligence applied to sound analysis continuous evolution, but without a clear outline. We can say that the sound engineer sketches in real time, through digital filtering, each sound or gesture of the saxophonist performer.

Another decisive component in Méta-duo is the spatialization of these sounds. What matters a lot is where it is heard, not just what it is heard. For example, a Frullato effect can begin in a speaker behind the audience, propagate in a circular pattern, pass through the front, and then gradually dissipate and fade out again to the rear of the hall. This creates a sensation of movement within the space²⁴.

Apart from the expressive side, this type of approach to interpretation has an ethic of shared coordination. In this sense, Daniel Kientzy relinquishes total control over his sound and includes Reina Portuondo to have the freedom to express her creativity. This fusion reflects a characteristic of postmodernism, which is expressed through an aesthetic of interpretative plurality. The resulting sounds are both familiar and foreign, transforming the saxophone into an augmented entity with the ability to transcend its traditional boundaries, particularly through the use of technology²⁵.

²² Lostanlen, Vincent; Andén, Joakim; Lagrange, Mathieu. “*Extended playing techniques: The next milestone in musical instrument recognition.*” arX preprint, arXiv:1808.09730, 2018, pp.11.

²³ Miranda, R. Eduardo. *Computer Sound Design: Synthesis Techniques and Programming*, Oxford: Focal Press, 2002, pp.34-35.

²⁴ Dufour, Denis. *Espace, Temps et Perception dans la Musique Électroacoustique*, Paris: INA-GRM, 2000, pp.47-48.

²⁵ Butler, J., Mark. *Playing with Something That Runs: Technology, Improvisation, and Composition in DJ and Laptop Performance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp.76-77.

3. The theoretical and post digital dimension

While Schaeffer²⁶ theorized sound as an abstract object, Bayle²⁷ shifted the emphasis to acousmatic perception and subjective experience. Kientzy belongs here but goes further: he interprets space and the relationship with technology as part of the sound object. Emmerson²⁸ introduces the concept of “electronic sound ecology”: electronic music does not exist in a vacuum, but in relation to the acoustic architectural context. Dufour develops the idea of spatial perception as an element with semiotic value. Kientzy applies these ideas by means of multiple loudspeakers and the saxophone–processor relationship.

The concept of “post-digital”²⁹ defines an art form that no longer treats technology as an end in itself, but as an integrated part of the human experience. In this context, Méta-duo and Enneaphony become emblematic examples: it is not about technological spectacularity, but about generating a collective and fluid experience, where the instrument, the software, and the audience coexist.

4. Conclusions

The most interesting effect of the Méta-duo project is the way it alters the audience’s auditory perception. While traditional music typically assumes a stable relationship between space, sound, and source, Méta-duo breaks this connection, generating an unstable, acousmatic perception.

In the theory proposed by Pierre Schaeffer and further developed by François Bayle, acousmatic refers to the situation in which the audience only perceives the sound itself, without any visual reference.³⁰ Méta-duo takes this practice a step further, as it involves real-time transformation of sound sources, both in terms of timbre and spatial arrangement. The result is special, a truly unique auditory experience. For instance, a short timbral effect from the saxophone can generate processed echoes, disseminated in the space around the listener. Sounds that may be coming simultaneously

²⁶ Schaeffer, Pierre. *Traité des Objets Musicaux*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1966.

²⁷ Bayle, François. *Musique Acousmatique: Propositions... Positions*, Paris: Buchet-Chastel / INA-GRM, 1993.

²⁸ Emmerson, Simon. (ed.), *Music, Electronic Media and Culture*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, pp. 57-58.

²⁹ Cascone, Kim. “The Aesthetics of Failure: ‘Post-Digital’ Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music.” *Computer Music Journal*, 24, nr. 4 (2000), pp.12-18.

³⁰ Schaeffer, Pierre. *Traité des Objets Musicaux*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1966.

from different directions overlap, move away, then approach again, all without the audience being able to identify the initial sound origin³¹.

In conclusion, the relationship between the interpretive act, the audience, and the space in Méta-duo is not a fundamental one. The space becomes an active participant, rather than just the medium for unfolding events, where the performers create unique collective and immersive experience.

This synthesis presents a model in which technology plays a decisive part in the musical act, where instead of a traditional score we encounter a complex network of perceptions and gestures, and the stage is replaced by a sensory space - this is what music could represent in the post-digital era.

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INNER EMIGRATION IN LIGETI GYÖRGY'S *MUSICA RICERCATA*

BOGLÁRKA ESZTER OLÁH¹ 

SUMMARY. In 1951, behind the Iron Curtain, in a horrible dictatorship when almost everything was forbidden, Ligeti György began to compose *Musica ricercata* for himself, or as he called it, “for the desk”. This inner emigration was a *sine qua non* at this point to find his “voice” and his own compositional language. He began experimenting with simple, elementary sound and rhythmic structures, to build up something new from nothing. First with a single note, then with one single interval, two intervals, until he reached all twelve tones in his own particular way. Several small pieces were created in this manner, mainly for piano, later called *Musica ricercata*.

Keywords: Ligeti György, *Musica ricercata*, Inner emigration

“Would I compose music on a desert island? If the island were comfortable enough and I had sheet music, then I would probably compose, even if I knew that no one would ever hear it... But I would compose differently in complete isolation... The innovative works I composed in the 1950s were completely made for my desk. Probably I would develop in a different way and significantly faster, if they would be interpreted immediately.”² - says Ligeti György in an interview given to Varga Bálint András in 1970, when he visited Budapest as a jury member of an international composition competition.

The idea of emigration, whether in terms of space, time or even thought, was nothing new to Ligeti. In his early years he creates a whole imaginary world, which he called *Kilwiria*. He recalls this memory in an interview conducted by Michel Follin in 1993: „It was an impossible, surrealistic land. The paradise itself, a paradise out of order.”³

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² Varga, Bálint András. *Zenészekkel – zenéről: Beszélgetések világhírű muzsikusokkal* (*Musicians on music: Conversations with world-famous musicians*). MRT Minerva, Budapest, 1972, pp 55-68.

³ Bebeșelea, Gabriel. *Musica Ricercata sau 11 povestiri muzicale surprinzătoare* (*Musica Ricercata or 11 surprising musical stories*). Ed. Humanitas, București, 2024.



He crossed the border illegally in September 1945, to study with his idol, Bartók Béla at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. When he arrives at the Music Academy all of the flags were flown at half-mast: on 26 September Bartók died in New York after a long period of illness.

Ligeti met another young musician arrived from Transylvania for the same reason, named Kurtág György. The two became friends for a lifetime. Kurtág György, in his *Mementos of a Friendship*, recalls Ligeti György this way: „We met and became friends 62 years ago. In September 1945 we took the entrance exam together for the composition class at the Budapest Music Academy. We waited to be called, at the same time I flipped through his scores, and saw how far above me his knowledge, maturity and musical fantasy put him. Until 1956 we were bound by a close friendship. I had the privilege of witnessing the creation of his works and participating in his life. I was there when he met Vera, and best man at their wedding in 1952.⁴

In the following years Ligeti and Kurtág studied composition with Veress Sándor, later with Farkas Ferenc – both of them emigrated and moved to Budapest from Cluj, Transylvania. After his studies he applies for a scholarship to research folk music in Romania as Bartók and Kodály. During this period, he is deeply influenced by Bartók, Stravinsky and Alban Berg, however his choral works from that period are influenced by the folk-idioms of Kodály Zoltán.

After the appearance of the cultural doctrine in 1946, developed by the Central Committee secretary Andrei Zhdanov, Ligeti could appear on stage only as a composer of folk arrangements. Shortly after Zhdanov's doctrine, it became official pressure to promote and support folk music. The primordial goal of a composer became arranging folk melodies, the only accepted style was the folk style. Shortly after this categorization, Ligeti began to work against the system and to compose for himself. He called his folk-inspired works alibi-compositions, written as a compromise with the regime. At the same time he began to rebuild and create his own art for his "desk" – a radically dissonant and chromatic music – as he called it in his reports.

This inner emigration represents a way out of dictatorship he already experienced in his earlier years: he was refused to study physics due to his Jewish origins and he escaped the Holocaust in a miraculous way (his father and brother, Gábor were murdered in Auschwitz and Mauthausen). All of this made him immune to danger or death, however this tragedy marked him for the rest of his life. "If I hear continuous rhythmic applause at the end of a

⁴ Varga, Bálint András. *György Kurtág. Three interviews and Ligeti homages*. University of Rochester Press, New York, 2009.

concert, it reminds me of terrorism, not at success. Basically, I have a hatred, a gloomy, black aggressiveness in me. Maybe this is a reaction to what I experienced.”⁵

The Hungarian revolution in 1956 burned Budapest again. Thousands of citizens were killed and around 200,000 were compelled to seek political refuge abroad. Ligeti, together with his ex-wife, Vera Spitz, left Hungary. They took a train to Sárvár on 10 December 1956. During the night they walked through a minefield until they observed a small light: the Christmas tree of the first Austrian township. They escaped and got married again in 1957, now for a lifetime.

After his emigration Ligeti composed almost nothing based on folk melodies. This orientation was probably his reaction to the dictatorship left behind, but also a different direction in composing new music, something more personal and unique. On the other hand he never rejected the folk music as a source of inspiration. He cannot deny his origins: even Transylvanian folk music has no direct but surely an indirect influence on his works.

Ligeti's oeuvre, like his personal life, is very complex: "I was born in Transylvania in 1923 as a Romanian citizen. As a child, however, I spoke neither Romanian, nor German. My mother tongue is Hungarian, but I am not a true Hungarian because I am Jewish. However, I do not belong to a Jewish community, so I am an assimilated Jew. But I am not fully assimilated, because I am not baptized. Today, as an adult, I live in Austria and Germany, for a long time I have been an Austrian citizen. But I am not a true Austrian either, just an immigrant, and my German will always have a Hungarian accent.”⁶ – said Ligeti. Some of the musicologists consider this phenomenon a „*Transylvanian attitude*”⁷. Some of them call - even Ligeti himself - a true *Synesthete*: all his senses are blended and melted together, like the interculturalism of Transylvania, to which he belongs. His compositions synaesthetically relate a rich musical vocabulary to literary impressions, visual sensations and psychic states. He had a great interest in culture and arts, literature, architecture, science, mathematics, physics, and fractal geometry. Illusory, imaginary and fantastic play a large role and are reflected in his music. He considered well-tempered tuning worn out, chromaticism used up. He left both tonality and atonality. He found a new way between microtonality and equal temperament, developed a new kind of twelve-tone method, while trying to move away from it.

⁵ Follin, Michel. *György Ligeti documentaire (György Ligeti documentary)*, Artline films, CNC, Communauté de l'Audiovisuel de Belgique, Direction de la Musique et la Danse, Eurimages, FAVI, 1993.

⁶ Schultz, Hans Jürgen. *Mein Judentum (My Jewishness)*. Kreutz-Verlag, Stuttgart&Berlin, 1978. Original text in German

⁷ Stankevičiūtė, Gintarė. *Transylvania Lecures: Kurtág 100*. Cluj-Napoca, 2026.

He considers himself outside any ideologies, opposed to all nationalist movements; however, he feels a strong tie to his native language and culture. He considers his music non-puristic: "My music is not puristic. It is contaminated by incredibly many associations, because I think highly synaesthetically...it is never programmatic music, but is very strongly charged with associations."⁸ He never repeats himself: "To produce something that already exists is of no interest to me... it is not worth making the same experiment again"⁹. Each work may be understood as the solution to yet another technical problem. His music is subject to a slow, constant transformation, an impression of continuity and at the same time a constant innovation.

In 1951, behind the Iron Curtain, in a horrible period, when almost everything was forbidden, Ligeti began to compose *Musica ricercata* for himself, or as he called it, "for the desk". This inner emigration was a *sine qua non* at this point to find himself and his own compositional language. "I began experimenting with simple, elementary sound and rhythmic structures, to build up something new from nothing. I did this in a Cartesian manner, considering invalid all kinds of music I knew or I loved before. I gave myself tasks such as composing something from one single note, its octave transpositions, creating something new from one interval, two intervals, certain rhythmic relationships that could serve as the basic elements of a rhythm-interval formation. Several small pieces were created in this manner, mainly for piano...The title is Italian because – I don't know – sounds better. But it has nothing to do with the ancient form."¹⁰

These eleven miniatures, however, at first sight, look like an ascending path from one tone to twelve, it is much more. Each piece develops from its starting point: from one tone to two, from two to three and so on until the twelfth tone of the final piece. Regarding the use of the tones, Ligeti speaks about an unconscious connection between his concept and serialism: "Certain features of these problems and their solutions have something in common with the principles of serial composition. This is surprising, as I had approached them from totally different premises and a totally different route."¹¹ Some of the pieces use the chromatic scale (IX, X, XI), the others use the diatonic tonal system (I, VI, VII, VIII) and two of the movements use

⁸ Floros, Constantin. *György Ligeti, Beyond Avant-garde and Postmodernism*. Peter Lang GmbH Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, Frankfurt am Main, 2014.

⁹ idem

¹⁰ Varga, Bálint András. *Zenészekkel – zenéről: Beszélgetések világhírű muzikusokkal (Musicians on music: Conversations with world-famous musicians)*. MRT Minerva, Budapest, 1972, pp. 63-64.

¹¹ Kerékfy, Márton. "A 'new music from nothing': György Ligeti's *Musica ricercata*" in *Studia Musicologica* 49/3-4, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2008, p. 209.

both (II and IV). It is an interesting, but totally different approach to the twelve-tone system. The order of the pieces is premeditated as well. Even though they are individual studies, the manner of using the tones presumes a specific order. "I wrote the pieces one by one and finished each of them for its own sake. Thus, the first two or three pieces were composed in 1951, the last two in 1953 (the last one as an organ piece first), and the remaining middle ones in 1952."¹²

The first piece is not only a rhythmical exercise on one note, but a complex articulation arsenal: there can be found different types of accents, sforzandos, tenutos and staccatos, use of the overtones at the beginning and at the end of the piece by pressing the keys with a silent attack. The art of a composed accelerando, realized by shortening the values, creates a spectacular rhythmic compression. The constant ostinato in the bass - a continuous acoustic background evokes the sound of a metronome: "When I was a small kid, I read a lot because I had plenty of books. My favourite was Krúdy's shorts stories – One of my first readings was about a widow who lived in an old house filled with constantly ticking clocks, barometers and hydrometers. Her husband was a meteorologist. This early literary memory inspired the origins of the *meccanico* style."¹³ - says the composer. He considers that time is clearly divided, yet a static dimension: „One of my compositional intentions is the creation of an illusory musical space, in which what was originally motion and time is presented as something immovable and timeless".¹⁴

After 81 measures of one single *A* tone, a highly emphasized *D* appears with *sfff* on both hands: everything takes on a new perspective, the perspective of an overloaded dominant, resolved to the tonic. László Ferenc considers this paradigm shift a sarcastic gesture, getting rid of the conventional relation between the dominant and the tonic. Even this short piece, where the compositional tools are limited, is full of inventive solutions. The first musical motif contains three tones, the second and the third contain five, the fourth has six, after that the motif comes to life, moving between a distance of one octave, containing six tones in the first half, six in the second half of the motif. Later the motif decreases from six to four, then to three and two. The bars do not represent any hierarchy; they create only a frame within

¹² Idem. Letter from Ligeti to Ove Nordwal, 2 January 1975, p. 210.

¹³ Follin, Michel. *György Ligeti documentaire (György Ligeti documentary)*, Artline films, CNC, Communauté de l'Audiovisuel de Belgique, Direction de la Musique et la Danse, Eurimages, FAVI, 1993.

¹⁴ Floros, Constantin. *György Ligeti, Beyond Avant-garde and Postmodernism*. Peter Lang GmbH Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, Frankfurt am Main, 2014, p. 44.

which the music can move freely. Ligeti speaks several times in his interviews about the difficulties in writing down his works in his early years, this may be a way to obtain metrical freedom.

The second piece seems to be a simple arrangement of a folksong; however, it has no real folk origin. The technique of creating “imaginary folk” extends back to Bartók and Kodály, who used frequently folk-like materials with a „Hungarian intonation”. The melody has 6-6-8-6 syllables in the form of ABA'B. Its tonality (*F-sharp - E-sharp* bichord) is totally atypical for a folksong. The main theme is presented four times in four different orchestrations. Imaginary spatial perspectives, proximity and distance, depth and height, width and narrowness are created by volume, massiveness of the sound, simultaneity of very high and very low notes (evokes the sense of vacuum), octave-doubled notes played in unison in several registers (evokes the illusion of spatial expanse), dynamic degrees (where loud means close, soft means far).¹⁵ Suddenly, *tutta la forza*, the third tone appears, a stentorian G, first in the spotlight, later as an accompaniment under the main motif, but present until the end of the movement.

The third piece is rooted in an earlier composition: Ligeti transcribes the first movement of the Sonatina, composed for four hands in 1950 (finished on 30 December 1950).¹⁶ The reshaped Sonatina movement is in C, however the original was in *B-flat* major. The Sonatina contains all twelve tones, however the third piece of *Musica ricercata* has limited pitch content. The *C - E-flat - G* trichord used from the beginning is completed already in the sixth bar with an *E*, the fourth tone of this movement. This major-minor triad creates a constant tension-release relation, a tonal ambiguity during this movement. The main motif is built on the contrast between the *C-E-flat* and *E-G* minor thirds. The middle section keeps this tendency, using the two thirds simultaneously: the *C-E* ostinato in the lower section accompanies the C minor melody. László Ferenc draws our attention to the tonal relations of the bridge between the middle section and reprise. The three tones *E-flat – E - G* transforms into *D-sharp – E - G* in our perception, to prepare a quasi-tonal solution. This idea comes from the chamber woodwind quintet, transcribed by the composer himself in 1953, entitled *Six Bagatelles*, where the intonation of the wind instruments allows this tonal play.¹⁷

¹⁵ Idem. p. 44.

¹⁶ Kerékfy, Márton. “A ‘new music from nothing’: György Ligeti’s *Musica ricercata*” in *Studia Musicologica* 49/3-4, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2008, p. 210.

¹⁷ László, Ferenc. *Ligeti a hidon. A Musica ricercata és a Hat bagatell: az exodus zenéi*” (*Ligeti on the Bridge. Musica ricercata and Six Bagatelles: Music of the Exodus*) in *Magyar Zene* 41/4, Budapest, 2003.

Kerékfy considers it highly important the manner in which Ligeti uses timing, silence and musical space. Comparing the Sonatina movement and the third part of the *Musica ricercata*, these aspects are wisely used not only in time but also in registers.¹⁸ The use of great contrasts in dynamics and timbre makes this part even more multidimensional.

The fourth is an unmistakable piano masterpiece, where the world of the waltzes of Frédéric Chopin (*Minute Waltz* op. 64/1) and Igor Stravinsky (*Waltz* from *Three Easy Pieces* for piano four hands) meet each other in a sarcastic way. On the one hand the indication “à l'orgue de Barbarie” refers to the barrel organ or street organ – a primitive way to play music. On the other hand, the two harmonies of the accompaniment alternate independently of the melody. This harmonic discrepancy makes the music even more static. The main $\frac{3}{4}$ beat is interrupted several times with small $\frac{2}{4}$ fragments. This rhythmic instability refreshes the whole concept. The thirds in the middle section and at the end recall Claude Debussy's *Clair de lune*. The diminished tetrachord of *B-flat – A – G – F-sharp* is completed only in the middle section with the fifth note (*G-sharp/A-flat*).

The fifth movement – a strongly expressive lament in Mixolydian mode built on a *minor third-minor second-major second* sequence¹⁹ – recalls the pulse of an ancient Hungarian poem-structure (each line containing 6+6 syllables).²⁰ First only two tones appear (*C-sharp* and *D*), in the second bar already three (*C-sharp*, *D* and *B*), in the fourth bar *G-sharp/A-flat* is added, the sixth bar brings the fifth (*F*) and the eighth bar brings the sixth note (*G*). The whole movement is based on diminished and augmented intervals. The middle section is a two-voiced canon built up first on a dynamic growth, later underlined by an indicated and composed *stretto*. The coda section in the last seven bars repeatedly uses the reverberations of the overtones.

The sixth part is a Hungarian folksong-like piece, a real imaginary folk melody. The six tones are completed with the missing seventh at the climax of the movement - a masterful example of the golden ratio, however, Ligeti refuses every premeditated theory in his music.

¹⁸ Kerékfy, Márton. “A ‘new music from nothing’: György Ligeti's *Musica ricercata*” in *Studia Musicologica* 49/3-4, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2008, p. 211.

¹⁹ László, Ferenc. *Ligeti a hidon. A Musica ricercata és a Hat bagatell: az exodus zenéi* (Ligeti on the Bridge. *Musica ricercata* and Six Bagatelles: Music of the Exodus) in *Magyar Zene* 41/4, Budapest, 2003, p. 367.

²⁰ Idem. p. 365.

The seventh movement is based on another imaginary folk melody borrowed from the second movement of the Sonatina mentioned before. In the period, when the Sonatina was composed, Ligeti was deeply influenced by the works and idioms of Bartók and Kodály. Ligeti himself declares a Banat-Romanian and Serbian melodic influence.²¹ The original F-mixolydian mode of the movement ends constantly on the 2nd degree. This aspect underlines the South-Slavic influence. The melody appears for the first time as a single voice line, accompanied by a pentatonic ostinato in the bass. The melody appears three more times: the second appearance is doubled, the third is already a two-voiced – the last apparition is a three-voiced polyphony. The melody and the accompaniment have different time indications, they are totally independent of each other. If we take a look at the version composed in 1950, we see a coherent relation between the motif, harmony and rhythm. This connection fades away in the *Musica ricercata*, making this version more authentic, declamatory and free.

The eighth piece is a dance-like melody from the Balkans. László draws our attention to the specific rhythm of 7/8. He convincingly affirms that this is not the “Bulgarian rhythm” named *aksak* by Constantin Brăiloiu, but rather a *syllabic giusto*.²² The *D-C-sharp-B-A-G-sharp* pentachord is accompanied by the imitation of open strings (*E-A-D-G-C*). Ligeti, fascinated by Transylvanian folk music, uses certain harmonic and melodic folk-like materials in the 1950s. He considers simply amazing the way the traditional folk bands use odd dissonances by harmonizing the melody. This kind of harmonization comes from Covăsiu, Arad county, where he spent the last days of the year 1949, listening to an authentic folk ensemble. After the eight notes of this combination (E and A being common tones) the ninth appears only at the last thematic entrance, in the imitation part of the middle voice. The movement is in a constant decomposition: the eight-bar length theme slowly becomes shorter and shorter (6 bars, 5 bars, 4 bars, 3 bars, 2 bars in the final two bars).

The ninth piece is dedicated to Bartók Béla. The imitation of the funeral bells, the precise Lombard rhythm first with sixteenth –, later with thirty-second notes, the subtle descending change of the final chord definitely represents a worthy homage to Bartók. Using minor thirds refers to the Bartókian model scales too. Ligeti in one of his essays affirms that the role of the minor third in Bartók’s music is already a familiar commonplace.²³

²¹ Idem. p. 368.

²² Idem. p. 369.

²³ Kerékfy, Márton. “A ‘new music from nothing’: György Ligeti’s *Musica ricercata*” in *Studia Musicologica* 49/3-4, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2008, p. 215.

The first seven notes above the C-sharp pedal point appear in minor third steps. The next two come together with the *subito fortissimo* – a cathartic moment of this small miniature. The tenth note appears two bars later, similar to the first ones, as part of a minor third.

The tenth part's theme takes us to an old Hungarian melody (Legyen a Horváth-kertben Budán - *See you in the Horváth-Garden, Buda*) from the operetta *Régi nyár (Old Summer)* written by Békeffi István and Lajtai Lajos. The structure of the stanza follows the model of the new Hungarian folk melodies. The whole piece is built on two different tonalities. This parallel bitonality (D major used by the melody, C-sharp mixolydian by the accompaniment) omits the use of the C tone, thus ensuring the use of only eleven notes instead of twelve. The constant avoidance of the C modifies the accompaniment several times, making this mechanical parallelism more "human". The last two movements of the *Musica ricercata* represent the result of Ligeti's tendency of chromaticism. His new style was built up note by note and the chromatic steps in both movements result from this concept.

The last, eleventh movement, perhaps the most famous of all, finally uses the whole twelve-tone scale. The appearance of the sophisticated form of the baroque fugue, together with the theme borrowed from the *Ricercar cromatico* of Girolamo Frescobaldi (1635), makes this *finale* even more monumental. Little modifications are made by Ligeti, to make it work in his twelve-tone system, but the main subject follows the original tendency to be constructed symmetrically, expanding from a single note to an octave like a fan. The countersubject always moves chromatically descending. Later this masterpiece becomes even more spectacular: Ligeti uses six themes in stretto (bars 36-40), then he brings at the same time the theme with its diminution and augmentation (bars 42-52). From bar 53 Ligeti creates a densely chromatic structure, the theme becomes note by note shorter, until it fades away in the deepest and highest registers.

The high diversity of the pieces makes the whole set a brilliant showcase; however, it is kept together mostly by the main structure and the idea of building up the suite from one tone to twelve. During the whole work we can meet the world of Frescobaldi in a rigorous fugue, the fame of the Hungarian operetta, the homage of Bartók Béla, the wild rhythmic dance of the Balkans, the melancholic melodies of the Romanian Banat, the beauty of the Hungarian folksongs, the tradition of the lamentos and the world of Chopin and Stravinsky in a waltz-burlesque. All of these hints are meant to be contradicted at the right moment, highlighting Ligeti's tendency to be

skeptical and to put aside everything he knew up to that point and start over to create his own musical world. From this perspective the whole *Musica ricercata* captures a brand-new sense. The fugue (no. 11), even if it follows the main principles of the original form, contains several hidden “mistakes” like parallel octaves, shifted thematic entries. The final phrase of the tenth piece begins in D major, ends in D minor – all along the movement is missing the “new”, eleventh note. The seventh piece uses the polyphonic lines freely, however, at the end of each phrase all the lines are catching up. The folk-inspired pieces are arranged with a deep humor, imitating the original performers: we can find incomplete phrases with their characteristic missing first beat in no. 5, inadequate harmonization of an amateur band in no. 6 and no. 8. This critical attitude towards tradition transports Ligeti’s music in a new context, creating new meanings of the tradition in his further works.

The use of each octave range of the piano together with the large contrasts of dynamics and timbre makes not only this piece but Ligeti’s music generally unique. His interest in contrapuntal techniques is even more highlighted with these compositional tools. Even if he still uses conventional metrical patterns, he tries to dissolve the metrical frames. We can meet accents on the weak part of the bars, sudden changes of meters, different density of the notes, different tempo of the melody and accompaniment, ostinatos in different time sections. This makes the *Musica ricercata* an epoch-making masterpiece, where Ligeti breaks with his earlier boundaries and his whole *oeuvre* can be found in its infancy.

Ligeti’s works in general have great success. The quality of his music is so high: its coherence and sonority, imagination, power and its structural logic, charged with associations from many areas.²⁴ *Musica ricercata* is not exempt from this either. The Jenei quintet asks for a transcription, presented on the first modern music festival at Budapest, in the beginning of October 1956. (*Six Bagatelles for wind quintet*) Stanley Kubrick uses in his famous film *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). One thing is clear: Ligeti, through the *Musica ricercata* metamorphoses or “emigrates” the music of the 20th century without any premeditated will.²⁵

²⁴ Floros, Constantin. *György Ligeti, Beyond Avant-garde and Postmodernism*. Peter Lang GmbH Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, Frankfurt am Main, 2014.

²⁵ Bebeșelea, Gabriel. *Musica Ricercata sau 11 povestiri muzicale surprinzătoare (Musica Ricercata or 11 surprising musical stories)*. Ed. Humanitas, București, 2024.

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ETA BOERIU BETWEEN THE MUSIC OF POETRY AND POETRY OF MUSIC. TRANSLATION, INTERMEDIALITY, AND MELOPHRASIS

CRISTINA ELEONORA PASCU¹ 

SUMMARY. This article explores an often-overlooked aspect of Eta Boeriu's intellectual and artistic profile, namely the relationship between poetry, music, and translation in her work. Although her work as a translator of Italian literature, particularly Dante's works, has been widely recognized, her longstanding connection to the musical milieu of the "Gheorghe Dima" Conservatory and the influence of music on her poetic sensibility have received little attention from scholars. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach that integrates concepts like cultural agency, medial transfer, melophrasis, the study explores three aspects of her work. First, it analyzes her role as a cultural mediator between Italian and Romanian culture through translation; second, it discusses her interpretation of Dante's "Divine Comedy" from the perspective of the poetry of sounds, highlighting the acoustic dimension of Dante's poetic imagination. Finally, the study explores the intermedial dialogue between poetry and music in the author's own poetic work, particularly in the poem "*Piesă de Alban Berg*" (*Piece by Alban Berg*) inspired by the composer's music.²

Keywords: Eta Boeriu, Dante, translation, cultural transfer, melophrasis.

Prolegomena

In the collective consciousness, the name Eta Boeriu is synonymous with the Italian culture. As Professor Ștefan Damian noted, "(...) no other Romanian author has woven their name so closely and harmoniously with

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² This article is an expanded version of a paper presented on 7 March 2024 at the International Museum and Library of Music in Bologna, within the event "Una voce in bilico. Omaggio a Eta Boeriu," organized on the occasion of International Women's Day, together with Ioana Badiu, Cristophe Alvarez, and Georgiana Fodor, in partnership with the cultural association *Athena Musica*.



the very destiny of these relations (i.e., Romanian-Italian) and with that of some of the most important authors; and perhaps none has created themselves as an author by creating and recreating those in another culture.”³

Her work as an Italianist and poet is well known. Much less explored has been her work as a professor at the Gheorghe Dima National Academy of Music, her relationship with the musical environment and its artists, as well as the impact that music had on her sensibility and creation. Therefore, in this article, we aim to shed light on some of these aspects through testimonies, reconstructions, and analysis with an interdisciplinary openness. Concepts such as *cultural agency*, *medial transfer* and *melophrasis* will be treated in an integrative approach. The paper is also intended to be a *restitutio in honorem*, which we hope will serve as a pendant to existing writings.

Margarita Caranica—this is her real name—was born in 1923 “in Transylvania, a land of rigorous studies and moral integrity,” as the poet Adrian Popescu writes.⁴ She came from a family of Aromanians, great intellectuals: her father, Ioan Caranica, was an important musician, while her brother, Nicu Caranica, was a poet and university professor, assistant to Ramiro Ortiz at the University of Padua. This intellectual environment, in which music and literature coexisted naturally, undoubtedly contributed to the formation of a certain sensibility for both poetic language and musical expression.

Eta Boeriu studied in Cluj and Sibiu, where the university had been transferred during the war. Her professional career was not easy: she worked as a teacher, librarian and then as an assistant in the Italian department of the University.

In 1956, she took up her university career again with a teaching position in Italian at the Gheorghe Dima Conservatory in Cluj-Napoca, where she taught until 1978.⁵

Eta Boeriu was, in a sense, an aristocrat of the spirit. Her contemporaries belonged to the same intellectual and spiritual elite, including the writers of the famous „Sibiu Circle” (Ion Negoitescu, Cornel Regman, Radu Stanca) deeply attached to the “virtues of the Word,” to quote the great Romanian poet Ștefan Augustin Doinaș.⁶ This environment also fostered an awareness of the expressive power of the word, an aspect that would later resonate with her reflections on the sonorous dimension of the poetry.

³ Damian, Ștefan. “Eta Boeriu și literatura italiană” (“Eta Boeriu and Italian Literature”). In *Steaua*, 49, 2–3, 1998, p. 57.

⁴ Popescu, Adrian. „Amintindu-ne de Eta Boeriu” („Remembering Eta Boeriu”). In *Steaua*, 44, 2, 1993, p. 25.

⁵ Papahagi, Marian, „Fragmente pentru un portret indirect” (“Fragments for an Indirect Portrait”). In *Transilvania*, 91, 1, 1985, p. 36.

⁶ Doinaș, Ștefan Augustin, „Imposibila despărțire” (The Impossible Separation). In *România literară*, 17, 48, 1984, p. 10.

Eta Boeriu: la Signora delle Tre Corone

If we were to define and highlight Boeriu's highlight contribution, it would undoubtedly be that of translator. Eta Boeriu brought classical and modern Italian literature to Romanian readers. Her body of translations begins with the great poetry of the *Trecento* and spans authors from the 20th century. Thanks to her, poets such as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Michelangelo, and Baldassar Castiglione came to life in Romanian, and their fundamental works, such as *Il Canzoniere* and *Decameron*, acquired a profound Romanian expression.

Italian prose, from Giovanni Verga to Cesare Pavese and Alberto Moravia, has also been rendered "in a pure, flavorful, and nuanced language," to quote Adrian Popescu.⁷

Eta Boeriu's main work as a translator remains the Divine Comedy, "her first artistic victory, which crowned her as a young queen," as Ștefan Augustin Doinaș writes.⁸ Dante's comedy that "became divine again in Romanian through her efforts," retransposing it "with the consciousness of the beginning of the world."⁹ In harmonious rivalry with illustrious predecessors, she offered a masterful Romanian version of the masterpiece, demonstrating also the full capacity of our language to become an instrument of universal poetry. Ștefan Augustin Doinaș wonderfully emphasizes that Eta Boeriu's version represents "a true miracle of our language, which now speaks to us familiarly of the shocking thresholds crossed by the great Florentine, and which is on our table every day, like bread and wine."¹⁰ Such translation becomes an act of nourishment for the soul, a constant in spiritual life, keeping alive our connection with the universal values expressed through Dante's masterpiece.

One can easily imagine how difficult it can be to translate Dante: his literary score in tercets of hendecasyllables is extraordinarily complex. In one of his articles, Eta Boeriu reveals some of the secrets of translating Dante's work: "Rhymes must always be in keeping with the style of the work and bear the imprint of the author's personality, because otherwise, however successful they may be, they end up disturbing the text and, as they accumulate, form an entity in their own right, a second personality, which no longer breathes in the shadow of the poet but claims the right to a life of its own alongside him. This is the danger that arises when a great poet translates another great

⁷ Popescu, Adrian. „Amintindu-ne de Eta Boeriu” (Remembering Eta Boeriu). In *Steaua*, 44, 2, 1993, p. 25.

⁸ Doinaș, Ștefan Augustin, „Imposibila despărțire” (The Impossible Separation). In *România literară*, 17, 48, 1984, p. 10.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

poet, and even more so in a work of the magnitude of the Divine Comedy.”¹¹ The complexity of Dante’s poetic architecture required of the translator not only philological precision but also a deep sensitivity to the acoustic dimension of poetic language.

It is, therefore, an immense task, requiring meticulous precision, competence, imagination, creativity, but also rigor, and once again confirming not only Eta Boeriu’s qualities and erudition, but also the fundamental role of translators as intercultural mediators and agents of cultural transfer. How important a talented translator is in creating a deep bond between two countries, how much Eta Boeriu has united Italy and Romania!

Translators are true builders of spiritual bridges; they are ambassadors who bring to light not only the essence of a language, but also the sensibility of a people, creating connections between cultures. Translation can therefore be understood as an art of bringing cultures closer together and uniting them, as suggested by the very title of the article *„Building Bridges Between Cultural Studies and Translation Studies”*.¹² This perspective is further developed through the ideas of the writer Castro Paniagua, who argues that “a translator should be an ethnographer.”¹³ In his view the translator’s responsibility goes beyond the accurate rendering of semantic meaning; it also involves interpreting the cultural codes embedded within the text.¹⁴ In this sense, Eta Boeriu had the merit of acting as a cultural mediator and agent of cultural transfer, not only by rendering the linguistic meaning of Italian works, but also by conveying their cultural and spiritual depth to Romanian readers.

Italy has recognized the value of Eta Boeriu through awards of the highest prestige. In 1970, the poet received the Gold Medal of the City of Florence and the Florentine Union, one of the most prestigious distinctions granted to personalities who have made an outstanding contribution to culture. In 1974, she was awarded the City of Monselice Prize and the Gold Medal of the Giorgio Cini Foundation in Venice. The most important recognition, however, was the title of Officer of the Merit of the Italian Republic, conferred in 1979 for her contribution to the promotion of Italian culture.¹⁵

¹¹ Boeriu, Eta. “Traducând *Divina Comedie*” (Translating the Divine Comedy) in *Steaua*, 16, 5, 1965, pp. 132–136, p. 136.

¹² Martínez-Sierra, Juan José. “Building Bridges Between Cultural Studies and Translation Studies: With Reference to the Audiovisual Field.” In *Journal of Language & Translation*, 11, 1, 2010, pp. 115–136, pp. 120–121.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Papahagi, Marian, „Fragmente pentru un portret indirect” („Fragments for an Indirect Portrait”). In *Transilvania*, year 91, no. 1, 1985, p. 36.

The Poetry of Sound in Dante

In the article “The Poetry of Sounds in the Divine Comedy,”¹⁶ published posthumously in 1984, Eta Boeriu highlights the sonorous dimension of Dante’s poetry, not only in terms of cadence, internal rhythm, or euphonic qualities, but also in terms of the conceptual aspects within the great literary work, or, as the author puts it, “the sound itself, music itself, and the way it is reflected in the Divine Comedy.” A revelatory approach, which builds upon the author’s interests, her teaching work at Conservatory, her interdisciplinary outlook, and her aesthetic understanding.

In her approach, the Divine Comedy is the first literary work in which music is evoked, Dante being an author deeply familiar with the world of music—an aspect explained through the lens of his scholastic education (music was part of the quadrivium, along with arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy).

In the *Convivio*, Dante defines music as the art of beautiful relationships. Eta Boeriu highlights how Dante understands this and introduces into his poem a true cartography of sound—songs, choruses, instruments, and acoustic images that enhance and amplify the symbolic dimension of the text. Eta Boeriu’s reading thus highlights Dante’s acoustic sensibility, the way in which the sonic universe contributes to the evocative power of poetic language. It is a unique approach within the context of Romanian research of that time dedicated to Dante’s work, Eta Boeriu’s study stands out for its focus on the sound dimension of the poetic imagination and on the auditory universe of the poem—an aspect that has been little explored in traditional literary exegesis.

The Musicality of Poetry: Melophrasis and Medial Transfer

Eta Boeriu was also an extraordinary poet, a lesser-known facet of her personality, hidden in the shadow of her work as a translator. Although her poetic activity took shape in her mature years, Eta Boeriu wrote several volumes of dense, saturated, hermetic verses that reveal a particular expressive concentration. As the poet and publicist Alexandru Căprariu states: “An exceptional poet herself, Eta Boeriu’s song resembles her: subtle, without any fuss that might disturb the soul, profound, nostalgic, like a sigh

¹⁶ Boeriu, Eta. “Poezia sunetelor în *Divina Comedie*.” *Lucrări de muzicologie*, 16, 1980, pp. 33-38.

coming from the secret life of the heart, from a lost Eden that only the purest poetry can sometimes find a way to reach without deception.”¹⁷

Some of these poems were influenced by the musical life in which he moved, and I would like to focus on one in particular, which I learned about from pianist Ninuca Oșanu Pop, *Piesă de Alban Berg*, composed under the impression of listening to the work during a recital. I quote her testimony, which also reveals how “new” music was perceived at that time: “During that period, themed evenings were organized at the University Club, led by writer Romulus Guga. The theme of the evening on January 14, 1966, was “Expressionism.” Lecturer Ligia Zoicaș¹⁸ provided well-documented explanations about this musical movement, followed by works by composers who adhered to this musical style (which was new to us in 1966!). Together with clarinetist Ioan Goilă, I performed Alban Berg’s “Four Pieces.” After a while, I received from the poet the volume „Ce vântă crâng” (What a Blue Grove), which included the poem *Piesă de Alban Berg*,” composed under the impression of that music while she listened to us.”¹⁹

Creating under the influence of an artistic stimulus—a process traditionally known to the Greeks as *ekphrasis*—involves transposing the expressive qualities of one artwork into another medium, such as literature²⁰. Creating under the influence of music it is called *melophrasis*, „a linguistic paraphrase of music, elaborated in such a way as to rival in expressive force the very being described.”²¹ In this poem, Alban Berg’s music inspires a lyrical response that reflects structures, rhythms, and emotions specific to his music: dissonant, essentialized, sharp, incisive, lapidary, aphoristic. This is what cultural studies specialists call medial transfer²² or intermedial

¹⁷ Căprariu, Alexandru. “Eta Boeriu.” In *Steaua*, 35, 11, 1984, p. 7.

¹⁸ An internationally renowned musicologist, Ligia Toma Zoicaș (1931-2016) was part of the elite of the Sigismund Toduță music school in Cluj. She was a professor of music history, music theory, music teaching methodology, and score reading at the Cluj Conservatory (1958-1990), published studies, articles, essays, and reviews, and gave specialized conferences, lectures, and radio broadcasts.

¹⁹ Pascu, Cristina. *Ninuca Oșanu Pop. Viața, un mozaic multisonor. Memorii în dialog (Ninuca Oșanu Pop. Life, a Multisonorous Mosaic. Memories in Dialogue)*. Ed. MediaMusica, Cluj-Napoca, 2024, p. 45.

²⁰ James A. W. Heffernan. “Ekphrasis and Representation.” *New Literary History*, 22, 2, 1991, pp. 297–316. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/469040>. Accessed 11 Mar. 2026.

²¹ Francesco Finocchiaro, Paolo Gozza, and Stefano Lombardi Vallauri, eds., *Il discorso musicale. La musica e i suoi generi testuali nella storia*. Torino: Accademia University Press, 2023, p. 7.

²² O. Rajewsky, Irina. “Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality,” In *Intermedialités / Intermediality*, no. 6, Fall 2005, pp. 43–64, p. 51.

transposition²³—a deep essence, a basic content, transferred from one art form to another. This poem offers a remarkable example of intermedial dialogue, illustrating how musical experience could be transformed into poetic expression:

*Noianuri cu țipăt alămii resupt,
De sonuri hiperbolă suplă și geamăt
Abia cutezat, prelung întrerupt
Spre noua gestație acută de freamăt
În spații subțiri curînd retractil,
Diformă de sunet narație sfioasă,
Și tot mai adînc vibratil
La ceas de pământ reculegere joasă.*²⁴

The title itself announces a symbolic equivalence, foreshadowing the idea that the poem itself becomes a piece of music. Although Doina Rad, Eta Boeriu's main biographer, places this poem among the "less successful" texts in the volume, describing it as a "lyrical exercise" (a debatable assessment, of course), she nevertheless captures its musical-aesthetic dimension, characterizing it as a "euphonious arborescent" poem.²⁵ In other words, the sonic qualities of the words themselves generate a form of musicality—through rhythm, repetition, and timbral resonance—but also the semantic meaning. From this perspective, the poem not only evokes Alban Berg's music, but also attempts to translate certain structural and expressive qualities of music into poetic discourse. The text incorporates words with strong auditory connotations—*scream*, *brass*, *sounds*, *moan*—which construct an increasingly dominant acoustic imagery.

²³ Wolf, Werner. "Relations between Literature and Music in the Context of a General Typology of Intermediality," In *Comparative Literature: Sharing Knowledges for Preserving Cultural Diversity*, vol. 1, Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS), p. 7.

²⁴ Boeriu, Eta. *Ce vîntă crîng* (*What a Bluish Grove*). Ed. Dacia, Cluj, 1971, p. 145.

*Waves of the brass's muffled shriek,
Of sounds—a supple hyperbole and a moan
Barely dared, prolonged and interrupted
Toward the new acute gestation of a stir
In thin spaces soon to retract,
A sound-deformed, timid narrative,
And ever more deeply vibrating
At the hour of the earth, low contemplation.*

²⁵ Rad, Doina. *Eta Boeriu*. Ed. Limes, Cluj-Napoca, 2005, p. 145.

Eta Boeriu as professor

Eta Boeriu taught at the Academy of Music from 1956 to 1978, with a five-year break between 1958 and 1963. Her teaching activity at the Conservatory represents another dimension of this cultural mediation, as she transmitted Italian culture within a musical environment, thus creating a dialogue between literature and music.

She was the Italian teacher of the famous soprano Mariana Nicolesco, the renowned traditional music performer Ioan Bocsa, the conductor Cornel Groza, the current rector, cellist Vasile Jucan, and many other great Romanian musicians.

Ioan Bocsa, renowned ethnomusicologist and university professor, told me the following about Eta Boeriu: "I studied Italian with her for two years. She was a distinguished presence, with a unique beauty and a lively sparkle in her eyes. She had an intelligence that challenged you even in casual conversation, let alone in class. Eta Boeriu was more than just a teacher; she was a true mentor, an elite translator, and for her teaching was a way of opening new horizons for her students."²⁶

This testimony reveals the portrait of the ideal teacher, who conveys not only information but also emotions, who offers not only something to think about but also something to experience. The teacher accompanied the informative content with that much-needed emotional aura. Teachers who accompany the informative content with that much-needed emotional aura.

Epilogue

Unfortunately, November 13, 1984, also marks her departure from this world. The great pianist Ninuca Oșanu Pop recalls those moments:

"The tragic event occurred while I was serving as rector, and I took care of organizing the funeral, which I wanted to be solemn. With pain in my heart, I remember the obstacles encountered on the part of the higher authorities, who, despite all my insistence, did not approve the display in the foyer of the University House, allowing it only at the cemetery, due to the arrival of her granddaughter, Michaela Caranica Fulea, who had fled to the West. Many people and many flowers filled the square of the Central Cemetery. Among them were citizens and personalities from all over the country, including the writer Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, whose moving words gave a regal aura to the whole ceremony. At the end, I heard cannon shots, the meaning of

²⁶ Ioan Bocșa, interview with the author, 25 October 2024.

which I only understood later: as a Knight of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, an honor she received in 1979 for her entire career, she was entitled to military honors. With bitterness, we must note, as so many times before, that Romanian values were more appreciated abroad than in their own country!"²⁷

The words of Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, published in the magazine *România Literară*, reflect in their title the void left by Eta Boeriu: *The unbearable separation*.²⁸

However, Eta Boeriu continues to live on through the cultural legacy she left us, that of connecting Cluj to the great Italian culture. Thanks to her, today we can claim a noble filiation, which we celebrate and honor through our constant openness to Italian cultural values and through the lively relations we maintain with Italy.

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²⁷ Pascu, Cristina. *Ninuca Oșanu Pop. Viața, un mozaic multisonor. Memorii în dialog (Ninuca Oșanu Pop. Life, a Multisong Mosaic. Memories in Dialogue)*. Ed. MediaMusica, Cluj-Napoca, 2024, p. 46.

²⁸ Doinaș, Ștefan Augustin, "Imposibila despărțire" (*The Impossible Separation*). *România literară*, nr. 48, 1984, p. 10.

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STYLISTIC STAGES IN THE QUARTET GENRE OF THE COMPOSERS FROM CLUJ-NAPOCA¹. PART 1

MIRELA MERCEAN-ȚÂRC² 

SUMMARY. This study explores the evolution of the string quartet within the prestigious school of composition at the “Gheorghe Dima” National Music Academy in Cluj-Napoca. Spanning nearly a century, the genre’s trajectory moved from sporadic representation in the early 1900s to a period of rapid, “fulminant” development following the 1950s. While the broader catalog includes 58 works, this research focuses specifically on 30 string quartets, setting aside the remaining 28 due to their diverse instrumental configurations. The analysis identifies three distinct evolutionary stages. First stage is represented by the Neoclassicism style, led by figures such as Sigismund Toduță and Cornel Țăranu (1936-1960). This period focused on neoclassical styles is rooted in Romanian folk-inspired diatonic modalism. In the Avant-Garde stage (1968–1980), composers including Vasile Herman, Ede Terényi, Valentin Timaru, and Hans Peter Türk shifted their options toward serial-dodecaphonic languages. This period embraced cutting-edge techniques such as integral serialism, pointillism, aleatoric music, and graphic notation, alongside innovative timbral effects and extended instrumental techniques. The third period of Synthesis (1990–Present) is represented by quartets of the composers Adrian Pop, Dora Cojocaru, Iulia Cibișescu, Ionică Pop, and Adrian Borza. This contemporary stage functions as a stylistic synthesis. It utilizes the full spectrum of predecessor techniques—ranging from pentatonic folk roots to jazz-inspired atonal designs—serving purely aesthetic and semantic goals. The resulting works often feature polystylistic textures, polymorphic structures, and a free approach to musical form.

¹ This study was published for the first time in Romanian language in the volume of the Musicology Symposium entitled *Cvartetul de coarde în cultura muzicală românească (The String Quartet in Romanian Musical Culture)*. Edition 2024, Ed. Muzicală, Bucharest, 2024, pp. 92-127. The purpose of its republishing in English is to increase the international visibility of the String Quartets works signed by contemporary Transylvanian composers.

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Given the depth of the material, the research is presented in three parts: Part I covers the first Neoclassical stage, Part II covers the second stage. Avantgarde (both in the Communist era), and Part II focuses on the third stage (the transition to democracy).

Keywords: Contemporary Quartet, Romanian String Quartet, Romanian Musical Avant-Garde, Transylvanian School of Composition, "Gh. Dima" National Music Academy

Introduction

In the work of composers from Cluj, the quartet occupies an important place, building a significant stylistic evolution over the almost 80 years of its existence. A number of 58 quartets find multiple stylistic hypostases, as well as novel instrumental formulas (see Annex 1). Of these, 30 are string quartets and 28 quartets are designed for various formations, instrumentally homogeneous: percussion quartet (D. Voiculescu, E. Terényi), trombone quartet (V. Timaru), saxophone quartet (I. Pop, D. Cojocar, A. Borza), bassoon quartet, clarinet (D. Cojocar), cello quartet (I. Cibișescu) or in heterogeneous instrumental combinations: flute, cello (viola) double bass (cello) percussion (A. Pop), bassoon, guitar, piano, viola (I. Cibișescu), horn, double bass, percussion, piano (C. Rîpă), flauto dolce, flauto traverso, cello, harpsichord (A. Borza), oboe, violin, viola and cello (D. Cojocar). We have included in the table of chamber works in the quartet genre also those that contain the string quartet with added instruments: string quartet with piano (C. Țăranu and I. Cibișescu), string quartet with clarinet (Cristian Bence-Muk, Șerban Marcu, Ciprian Pop, Răzvan Metea), jazz quartet with piano and double bass (E. Terényi), string quartet with magnetic tape and percussion (V. Timaru). All this wealth of coloristic and timbral hypostases corresponds to extremely diverse thematic options. A statistic of the share of programmatic works shows that of the 58 quartets, 22 are works designed for string quartet without programmatic indications and 36 are works with a program declared in the title.

I have chosen to present in these three papers only a few of the stylistic hypostases of the string quartet in the composition school formed at the "Gh. Dima" National Music Academy from Cluj-Napoca around Sigismund Toduță, a composer whose quartet composed in 1936 must have been modeled on those of his composition master, Marțian Negrea³.

³ He already had in his repertoire the quartet *Noaptea (Night)*, composed in 1916 during his studies in Vienna, *Doi copii (Two Children)*, a piece for string quartet, composed in 1917, during his studies at the Budapest Academy of Music with Zoltan Kodaly, or *Prelude and Fugue op. 3* for string quartet composed in 1920 during his second stage of composition studies with Eusebie Mandicevski in Vienna.

1. The first stage – Introduction

The first stage in which the Cluj string quartets can be classified is the one defined by a neomodal, diatonic language of Romanian folkloric inspiration, a stage that includes both the aforementioned Toduțian quartet and a String Quartet signed by Cornel Țăranu, a schoolwork (he was a student in S. Toduță's class), found in the ANMGD Library, without specifying the year⁴ (the score contains double bass with the author's mention *The doublebass is to be ignored*⁵).

Although probably separated by a period of about 20 years, both are singular "schoolworks"⁶ in the composers' creation and have in common the appeal to the quote and / or melodica of folkloric inspiration, modal harmony, imitative polyphonic treatment, architectures consecrated by tradition treated freely. If S. Toduță's quartet is tripartite, linking the forms of sonatina, *Lied* form with harmonic variations, bithematic rondo, in Cornel Țăranu we encounter a bipartite genre with Epilogue, made up of a sonata form and a pentastrophic form, the epilogue being a thematic synthesis that ensures the cyclicity of the opus.

In both works, the thematic material starts with inspired folk quotes, treated in developed expositions, of great refinement in terms of compositional work. The mastery of conducting voices as well as the deep knowledge of the expressiveness of the quartet ensemble announce them as future symphonists. An interesting observation is that in the Toduțian quartet, many of the compositional gestures will also be present in the creation of the composers who follow them: melody inspired or quoted from folklore regardless of the degree of abstractism generated by the use of the chromatic total and serial laws, short themes with motivic configuration, polyphonic processing especially imitative in stretto, the use of unison or monody to illustrate the vocalicity of the folk song, the suggestion of the song (doina) – dance principles in the created themes, the use of traditional form landmarks having stanzas or

⁴ The work does not appear in the article dedicated to C. Țăranu in Viorel Cosma's *Lexiconul de Muzicieni din România (Lexicon of Romanian Musicians)*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest 2006, pp. 121-128. The quartet's dating to 1955 appears in G.W. Berger's *Ghid pentru muzică instrumental de camera (Guide to Instrumental Chamber Music)*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, p. 388.

⁵ Cornel Țăranu, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, manuscript at ANMGD Library, f.a. p.1, see ex. 5.

⁶ The year 1936, when S. Toduță's string quartet was written, coincides with the beginning of his composition studies with Ildebrando Pizzetti, at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, after completing his composition studies with Marțian Negrea, in 1935, at the Cluj-Napoca School of Music.

thematic sections with development, the use of harmonic variation, or other variational elements in the expository or reprise sections.

2. The analysis of the elements of the musical language

In the first part of the quartet signed by S. Toduță, the sonata form is based on two thematic idioms of folkloric inspiration, with motivic profiles subject to continuous dynamism through transpositions, variations, and imitations in waves.

E.g. 1

Quartet No. 1

Sigismund Toduță
Blaj, 1936

♩ = 84

The musical score is for a string quartet. It consists of four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The time signature is 12/8. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 84. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score shows the first part of the theme, with dynamics p (piano) and mf (mezzo-forte). The Violin I part starts with a melody in the first measure, followed by a rest in the second measure. The Violin II part has a rest in the first measure and enters in the second measure. The Viola and Violoncello parts have rests in the first measure and enter in the second measure. The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line.

S. Toduță, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, first part, theme 1, based on a tetratone with a movable second step, imitated by a hemitonic pentatony

In the bridge (variational stanza of the first theme), compositional gestures appear such as: glissando and stretto moments with a transitional function, descending chromatic passages, a unison that anticipates the second theme. This keeps the same principle and character of a song, exposed in a Mixolydian A. Note the contrapuntal texture that implies a harmonization with the elements of the mode, using chords with *ajoutée* notes, and figurations continuously subjected to transpositions and transformations in the second sector of the Exposition.

E.g. 2



S. Toduță, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, Part I, theme 2, m 26-28, fragment

Part II is a lullaby quoted or created in a folkloric spirit, set in a Dorian mode with an augmented second between the V-VI steps with cadences on the second step and an ethos specific to Transylvanian folklore. It presents a lied form with variational elements (harmonic variations).

E.g. 3

II

20

Andante

140

S. Toduță, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, Part II, m. 138-143 fragment

Part III is a Rondo in which the dance principle is manifested. The alert themes, built on ison figurations reminiscent of the popular band (*taraf*), are exhibited in a lively rhythm, an imitative, spectacular contrapuntal work configures an A-B-A-C-A-D-Av form.

E.g. 4

III

S. Toduță, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, Part III, m. 1-4, fragment

Similar in writing and conception, *The String Quartet* composed by **Cornel Țăranu** is built on a modal-diatonic thematic material present in the form of a folkloric quote (carol) in Part I *Andantino* and of folkloric inspiration in Part II *Allegro con slancio*. The two themes cited in the first part bring to attention two melodic archetypes of the song (carol) type T1, and dance T2, a second theme whose character, however, preserves the lyricism and cantabile style of the post-Enescian lineage from which the composer claims to be. The first theme of the first part is adapted to the *parlando* principle by indicating recitative, it is harmonized by pedals of the ison type in fifths, chords with *ajoutée* notes. Motivational imitations in strettis are also present in the bridge themes m. 11-30.

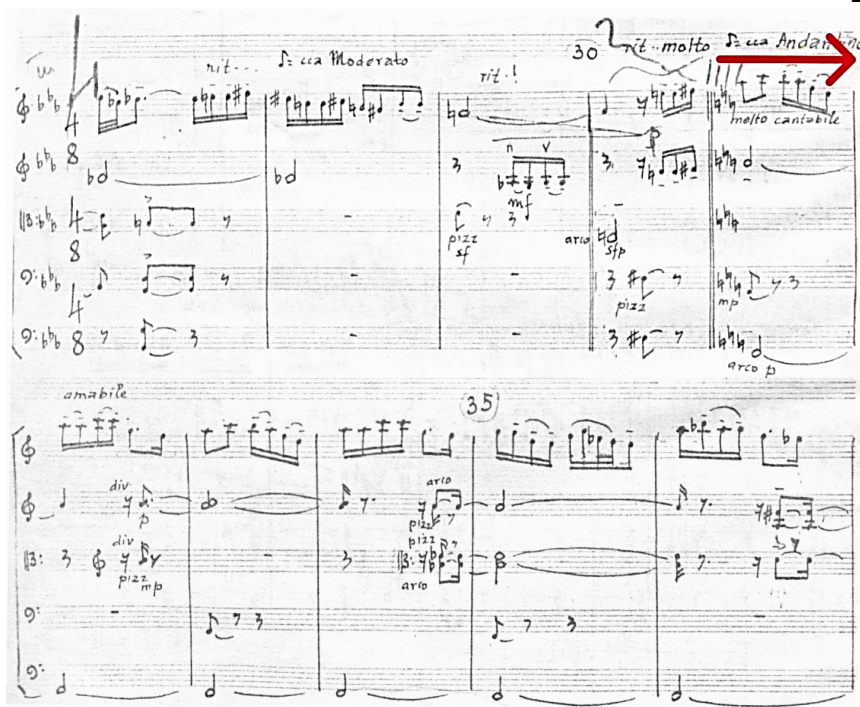
E.g. 5



**Cornel Țăranu, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, first theme,
m. 1- 10 in Aeolian F**

The second theme, *Andantino molto cantabile*, brings a dancing theme in Lydian F on the ison pedals on the double bass and chords on the violin 2, viola and cello.

E.g. 6



**Cornel Țăranu, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, m. 31- 45,
second theme in F Lydian**

Part II, in pentastrophic form, launches into processing two themes: *Allegro con slancio* A, and B *Maestoso rubato* reversing the two stated principles: dance – song.

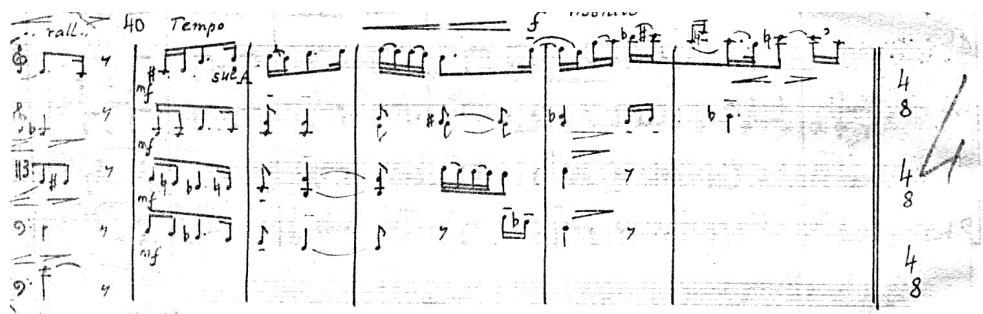
E.g. 7

Handwritten musical score for Part II, theme A, Dance. The score is for a string quartet (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, Double Bass) and includes a conductor's part. The tempo is *Allegro con slancio*. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts with a key signature of one flat and a 4/8 time signature. The second system starts with a key signature change to two sharps and a 4/8 time signature. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *mp*, *pizz*, and *cresc. molto*.

Cornel Țăranu, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, Part II, theme A m. 1-6, Dance

E.g. 8

Handwritten musical score for Part II, theme B, Song. The score is for a string quartet (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, Double Bass) and includes a conductor's part. The tempo is *Maestoso rubato* with a tempo marking of 60-68. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts with a key signature of one flat and a 4/8 time signature. The second system starts with a key signature change to two sharps and a 4/8 time signature. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *mf*, *sonore*, *stringendo*, and *calmato e*.



**Cornel Țăranu, Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet), Part II,
Theme B m. 35-44, Doina.**

The return of the second phrase from theme I of part I in the **Epilogue** gives the work a cyclical nature.

Conclusion

The two works are emblematic of the youthful stage of the creation of the two composers, S. Toduță, remaining anchored in a neoclassicism / neomodernism of folkloric essence attached to the Enescian branch. C. Țăranu leaves this direction in his later creations, moving towards "[...] an increasingly chromatic, freer modal language, with obvious appeals to archaic folklore (woe – doina) [...] towards taking a bold step towards serialism and finally orienting towards a controlled aleatorism"⁷. In 1962, in *Simfonia brevis*, C. Țăranu already explores the area of dodecaphonic serialism⁸.

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⁷ Viorel Cosma, *Muzicieni din România (Musicians from Romania)*, Ed Muzicală, București, 2006, p. 126.

⁸ Lucrare pe care am analizat-o în cartea *Articularea formei în simfoniile compozitorilor clujeni (The Articulation of Form in the Symphonies of Cluj Composers)*, Editura Universității din Oradea, 2007.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blqZq2Y0ybE>

ANNEX

Nr.	Year	Composer	Title	Published	Instruments
1	1936	S. Toduță	Quartet	Computer-aided copywriting	String quartet
2	~1955-1960	C. Țăranu	Quartet	Manuscript	String quartet
3	1968	V. Timaru	String quartet no. 1	Manuscript	String quartet
4	1971	V. Herman	String quartet "Homage to Enescu"	Manuscript	String quartet
5	1974	E. Terényi	String quartet No. 1, op 8	Editura Muzicală București, 1979	String quartet
6	1974	E. Terényi	Gallant dances, op. 12	Lithography Cluj	Flute, oboe, cello, harpsichord
7	1975	H. P. Türk	<i>Meditationen über kv 499</i> , Quartet	Manuscript	String quartet
8	1977	V. Herman	Quartet no. 2 "Choruses"	Manuscript	String quartet
9	1978	A. Pop	Inventions	Lithography ANMGD	Flute, cello, doublebass, percussion
10	1979	C. Ripă	Quartet for horn, doublebass, percussion and piano	Lithography ANMGD	Horn, dbass percussion, piano
11	1981	C. Țăranu	"Prolegomena"	Edition Salabert Paris	String quartet with piano
12	1984	E. Terényi	String Quartet No. 2	Grafycolor	String quartet
13	1984	E. Terényi	Five Bagatelles for String Quartet	Grafycolor	String quartet
14	1985	D. Voiculescu	Toccata	Gentner Hartmann / Karlsruhe Musiknoten Verlag	Xylophone, triangle, crotale, cymbal susp.
15	1985	E. Terényi	Swinging Suite / Tahiti	Litogr. ANMGD	Percussion quartet
16	1986	E. Terényi	For Four	Litogr. ANMGD	Percussion quartet
17	1987	E. Terényi	Lydian Concept, String Quartet with Percussion	Grafycolor	String quartet with percussion
18	1988	H. P. Türk	Improvisations on a folk theme	Manuscript	String quartet

Nr.	Year	Composer	Title	Published	Instruments
19	1988	E. Terényi	Parade		Jazz quartet with piano and dbass
20	1989	I. Pop	The Memory of Time	Manuscript	String quartet
21	1991	V. Timaru	Carol <i>in memoriam</i> S. Toduță	Manuscript	Quartet, magnetic band and percussion
22	1992	V. Timaru	Quartet no. 2	Manuscript	String quartet
23	1992	Adrian Pop	Invenzioni	Manuscript	Flute, viola, cello, percussion
24	1992	E. Terényi	String Quartet No. 3	Grafycolor	String quartet
25	1993	V. Timaru	„Tuba mirum” <i>in memoriam</i> Bodor Tibor	Manuscript	Trombone quartet
26	1993	Adrian Borza	Dysthymia	Manuscript	Blockflöte, violin, viola da gamba, harpsichord
27	1993	Iulia Cibișescu	Poems for string quartet	Manuscript	String quartet
28	1994	D. Cojocaru	String quartet no. 1	Manuscript	String quartet
29	1994	Adrian Borza	Algorythm	Manuscript	Trombone quartet
30	1995	E. Terényi	String Quartet No. 4	Grafycolor	String quartet
31	1995	A. Borza	String quartet	Manuscript	String quartet
32	1996	Adrian Pop	8 Bagatels for string quartet	MediaMusica Cluj -Napoca	String quartet
33	1996	Dora Cojocaru	„...sei ihr Vater, Führer und Freund”	Manuscript	String quartet
34	1997-1998	Adrian Borza	akSax	Manuscript	Saxophones' quartet
35	1997	Ionică Pop	Blue Winter	Manuscript	Saxophones' quartet
36	1997	Ionică Pop	The Soul of the Time	Manuscript	Flute Clarinet, Fg. Percussion
37	1998	D. Cojocaru	QU.- SAX	Computer-aided copywriting	Saxophones' quartet
38	1998	Eduard Terényi	String Quartet No. 5	Grafycolor	String quartet
39	1999	I. Cibișescu	String quartet no. 2	Manuscript	String quartet
40	2001	I. Cibișescu	String quartet no. 3	Ed. MediaMusica	String quartet
41	2001	Dora Cojocaru	<i>Die andere Seite der Stille</i>	Müller & Schade Edition, Bern/Switzerland	Oboe, violin, viola and cello
42	2001	Eduard Terényi	String Quartet No. 6	Grafycolor	String quartet

STYLISTIC STAGES IN THE QUARTET GENRE OF THE COMPOSERS FROM CLUJ-NAPOCA

Nr.	Year	Composer	Title	Published	Instruments
43	2002	Eduard Terényi	String Quartet No. 7	Grafycolor	String quartet
44	2003	I. Cibișescu	String quartet no. 4	Ed. MediaMusica	String quartet
45	2003	Adrian Borza	Transylvanian Suite	Computer-aided copywriting	Flauto dolce, flauto traverso, cello, harpsichord
46	2003	D. Cojocaru	Etude oubliée	Computer-aided copywriting	Quartet of clarinets or bassoons
47	2004	I. Cibisescu	String quartet no. 5	Ed. MediaMusica	String quartet
48	2009	I. Cibișescu	String quartet no 6	Ed. MediaMusica	String quartet
49	2010	I. Cibișescu	Two songs for a quartet of cellos	Manuscript	Quartet of cellos
50	2011	A. Pop	Mătasea și metalul (La seda ey el metal)	Ed MediaMusica	Torso for String quartet
51	2012	C. Bence-Muk	21.12.2012	Ed MediaMusica	String quartet with clarinet
52	2012	Ș. Marcu	Five bagatelles for clarinet and string quartet	Ed Media Musica	String quartet with clarinet
53	2012	R. Metea	The Shadow of the While	Ed MediaMusica	String quartet with clarinet
54	2012	C.G. Pop	<i>Ludus cvintetix</i>	Ed Media Musica	String quartet with clarinet
55	2015	I. Cibișescu-Duran	The Walls from Avila	Computer-aided copywriting	Basson, guitar, Piano, Viola
56	2018	A. Pop	Pas de quatre	Computer-aided copywriting	String quartet
57	2019	I. Cibișescu	6 miniatures for quartet	Computer-aided copywriting	String quartet with piano
58	2023	I. Cibișescu	Whispers	Computer-aided copywriting	String quartet

L. VAN BEETHOVEN – PIANO SONATA OP. 110 (I): FORMAL, RHETORICAL, AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

ADRIANA PALER¹, PETRUTA-MARIA COROIU²

SUMMARY. This article offers a combined formal, rhetorical, and semantic reading of the first movement (Moderato cantabile molto espressivo) of Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 110 in A flat major (1821). Building on sonata-form analysis, it interprets historically grounded rhetorical categories and performance-practice perspectives drawn from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century treatises (Türk, C. P. E. Bach, Czerny, Hiller). In a brief, cautious semantic layer - situated within reception history and key-character discourse - the study notes the importance of the rhetorical and declamatory conventions for Beethoven's style, arguing that a purely 'note-based' reading risks missing decisive cues for phrasing, articulation, timing, and affect.

Keywords: form, rhetoric, semantic, analyze, modernity

1. Introduction

Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 31, Op. 110 in A-flat major (1821), is part of the final triad of genre works by the great composer: written between 1820 and 1822, they also benefited from numerous revisions. Their complex character is influenced by the context in which the composer was working at the time: the Missa solemnis crowns the period in which the maestro was struggling with the visible deterioration of his health. While the first movement (Moderato) is in sonata form, the second (Allegro) presents an unexpected scherzo, and the last contains an avant-garde formal pattern, which also includes recitative formulas, a dolente arioso, and two complex fugue structures. An analysis of the sonata (for now, of the first movement) is necessary when combining aspects of traditional (formal) analysis with rhetorical and semantic ones.

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2. L. van Beethoven – Piano Sonata Op. 110 (Part I): formal, rhetorical and semantic analysis

“The movement begins directly in the manner of the theme from the variations op. 109. The similarity is striking when you play op. 110 immediately after op. 109, because op. 109 ends with the return of the theme”, observes H. Riemann³.

In this sense, the beginning and the end of Sonata Op. 110 may be inspired by a note from Bülow, which he writes about the final measures of Sonata Op. 109 in his instructive edition Beethoven: *“The theme itself should be played with even simpler expression than at the beginning of the entire movement, like a kind of recapitulative epilogue, like a memory. The final measures are only allowed to be ‘softened/drowned’ (‘Hingetaucht’)”*⁴.

The theorist and piano teacher Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935), originally from Austrian Hungarian Galicia, studied all of Beethoven’s sonatas and the Ninth Symphony; among other things, he produced a critical edition of the last five piano sonatas, with numerous pieces of information and explanations, which are also visually very interesting. No detail is taken for granted but analyzed very thoroughly (Kapp⁵).

In the analysis of Sonata Op. 110, Schenker assigns a structure to the exposition divided into three “groups of ideas.”⁶ The construction of the main theme in Sonata Op. 90 is very similar to Op. 110: tripartite, with three contrasting emotional spheres that come together in an arch and round off.

FORM

The first part, in sonata form, includes the following sections:

Exposition:

Main theme:

1. First affective sphere:

a) first phrase: theme head (measures 1–4)

A-flat major, T–D–T–D

b) second phrase (measures 5–11)

A-flat major, a brief modulation to the subdominant (*) and back to the tonic (A-flat major)

³ Hugo Riemann, *L. van Beethovens Sämtliche Klavier-Solosonaten (L. van Beethoven's Complete Piano Solo Sonatas)*, p. 419.

⁴ Hans von Bülow (Hrsg.), *Beethoven, Sonate Op. 109, Instruktive Ausgabe (Beethoven, Sonata Op. 109, Instructive Edition)*, Stuttgart und Berlin, 1891, p. 35, footnote.

⁵ Reinhard Kapp, seminar on Beethoven, 27–29 Apr. 2007, Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien (*University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna*).

⁶ Heinrich Schenker, *Beethoven – Die letzten Sonaten. Sonate As-Dur Op. 110 (Beethoven—The Last Sonatas. Sonata in A-flat Major, Op. 110)*, Universal Edition, Wien, 1972.

c) third phrase (measures 12–20)

(ornamental passages modeled on the theme head, T–D–T–D, with a closing modulation to the dominant and back to the tonic)

2. Second affective sphere:

a) first part with two phrases (measures 20–28)

b) second part with one phrase (measures 28–33)

3. Third affective sphere: closing thought (measures 34–39)

Development (measures 40–55)

Recapitulation (measures 56–104)

Coda (measures 105–116)

Exposition

The first section of the exhibition connects three phrases full of expressiveness. The melody begins with a “C²” in the main voice and will end — in measure 20 — also with a (higher) “C⁴”, immediately starting the next period: thus, forming an “anadiplosis”, with the aim of creating a musical and mental link between the two parts. Interestingly, the “C” in the main voice returns at the beginning of the development (measure 40) and the recapitulation (measure 56); it moves to the left hand at the beginning of the coda (measure 105) and appears, in the end, again in the main voice, repeated twice, as the final sound of the section (measure 115–116).

E.g. 1



First theme of the first movement ⁷

A beautiful ‘embellishment’ of this note — but what significance could it have? Beethoven wanted to link the properties of the key of A^b major (flat keys are gentle and melancholic from the start; the four flats of A^b major, however, strongly indicate ‘death, tomb, doom, judgment, eternity are contained

⁷ David Beach, *Advanced Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive, and Form*, Routledge, New York, 2012, p. 243.

within it' [Schubart, 1806]⁸) either to an allusion to C major ('completely pure'; 'innocence, simplicity, naivety, childlike language'⁹ of pure love), or to Lady Antonia, the queen of his dreams, or to a call to God — or to all of these at once.

The head of the four-measure theme (see figure 2) begins pianissimo, with a major third in the main voice, between C² and A^{b1} — a symbol of 'Antonia'? — repeated three times and interrupted by dotted notes, like sighs. The soprano and alto voices alternate in forming the chords, from the same 'imperfect'¹⁰ consonance (the major third C²–A^{b1}) to the 'perfect'¹¹ (and controversial) consonance of the perfect fourth (A^{b1}–E^{b1}).

Beethoven's dotted notes refer, according to Hiller, to a way of playing that is particularly expressive, similar to singing: "The easiest of the voluntary additions and ornaments, through which the melody becomes more lively and emphasized, is the dot after a note [...] it is [...] a means of strengthening the accent of the declamation."¹² The head of the theme thus gains "a better and more penetrating declamation,"¹³ and such dotted notes are generously introduced in the second emotional sphere of the theme (measures 5–11), as well as at the beginning of the third (measures 20–21) and, of course, in the development.

The harmony is pure A^b major, and in the second measure it 'rests' and 'waits' allegorically¹⁴ on a long B^b — a symbol of Beethoven? — in the dominant seventh chord. The melody rises and falls alternately.

⁸ Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (*Ideas for an Aesthetics of the Art of Music*), Wien, 1806.

⁹ Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (*Ideas for an Aesthetics of the Art of Music*), Wien, 1806.

¹⁰ Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule* (*Piano School*), facsimile reprint of the 1st ed. (1789), Bärenreiter, Kassel, p. 57.

¹¹ Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule* (*Piano School*), facsimile reprint of the 1st ed. (1789), Bärenreiter, Kassel, p. 57: „Ob die reine Quarte eine Kon- oder Dissonanz sey, darüber haben sich die Tonlehrer, nach vielen und heftigen Streitigkeiten, bis jetzt noch nicht vereinigen können. [...] Da das Konsonieren ... nichts Absolutes ist, so lässt sich überhaupt nicht genau bestimmen, wo das Konsonieren zweyer Töne aufhöre und das Dissonieren anfangen. Sulzers Theorie.“ *“Whether the perfect fourth is a consonance or a dissonance is something on which theorists, after many fierce disputes, have still not been able to agree. [...] Since consonance ... is not something absolute, it is therefore impossible to determine precisely where the consonance of two tones ends and dissonance begins. Sulzer's theory.”*

¹² Johann Adam Hiller, *Anweisung zum musikalisch-zierlichen Gesange* (*Instruction for Musical, Ornamented Singing*), Leipzig, 1780. Reprint, Leipzig, 1976, pp. 35 ff.

¹³ Hartmut Krones and Robert Schollum, *Vokale und allgemeine Aufführungspraxis* (*Vocal and General Performance Practice*), Böhlau Verlag, Wien–Köln, 1983, p. 159.

¹⁴ Allegory – an acoustic symbol; from the Greek, meaning “emblem” or “parable.” Here: a long note can signify “rest” or “waiting.”

In the third measure, the positive and luminous ascent of an anabasis is intertwined with a crescendo that, surprisingly, is “cut” in the fourth measure by a piano. On this ascensus, the notes are marked with portato articulation: “*prescribed as a means of indicating a precise expression and, therefore... must always be respected.*”¹⁵ Türk gives instructions on how portato — “drawing the sounds” — should be played: “*The dot indicates the pressure each key must receive, and the tie (the beam) reminds the performer to maintain the sound after the pressure until the prescribed note duration has completely passed.*”¹⁶

In this fourth measure, prepared by a phatopoeia, there follows a dilemma presented by an extensio and a salto semple: a fermata on the dominant, with a diminished fifth and a trill in the right hand, creates unease and questions. The fact that this fermata receives a trill is, according to C. Ph. E. Bach’s instructions, perfectly logical: the fermatas found “*in slow and affectionate pieces “must” be ornamented, otherwise you fall into the mistake of simplicity.*”¹⁷

“*The trill (trillo – Italian, tremblement – French) consists of a repeated alternation, at the same speed, of two notes, which, according to the key or the added accidentals, relate to each other as a major or minor second,*” Türk describes¹⁸. In measure four, the trill must be on the notes D $\flat$ ² and E $\flat$ ², not on D $\flat$ ² and D², otherwise an inadmissible augmented unison would be formed. According to Hiller, trills must be “*executed with the greatest speed and clarity*”¹⁹; they must be the same in measures 25–27, 55, 59, 84–86. Under no circumstances should a large ritardando be introduced well before the fermata, but only “*immediately before the ‘holding’²⁰ (of the final note) the tempo slows down and then stops.*”²¹

¹⁵ Hartmut Krones and Robert Schollum, *Vokale und allgemeine Aufführungspraxis (Vocal and General Performance Practice)*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien–Köln, 1983, p. 83.

¹⁶ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 354.

¹⁷ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen (Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments)*, facsimile reprint of the 1st eds. (Berlin 1753 and 1762), Breitkopf & Härtel Musikverlag, Leipzig, 1969, 2. Hauptstück (Second Main Section), p. 113.

¹⁸ Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende (Piano School, or Instruction in Piano Playing for Teachers and Learners)*, facsimile reprint of the 1st ed. (1789), Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1997, p. 252.

¹⁹ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 253

²⁰ Carl Czerny, *Klavierschule*, Op. 500 (*Piano School*, Op. 500) (1842), cited in Alfred Brendel, *Nachdenken über Musik (Thinking about Music)*, München und Zürich, 1976, p. 39.

²¹ Hartmut Krones and Robert Schollum, *Vokale und allgemeine Aufführungspraxis (Vocal and General Performance Practice)*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien–Köln, 1983, p. 136.

After the rest comes four thirty-second notes, the first of which is tied to the trill note, followed by a double ascending appoggiatura towards “F².” Türk calls this appoggiatura a “*Schleifer*”: he says, “*it consists of two or three appoggiaturas that ascend or descend gradually and which — as the name itself indicates — are always ‘slid’ into the main note; this can be a step above or below the last tone of this manner.*”²² In our case, this unnotated *Schleifer* must be “*played quickly, without regard for the longer or shorter note that follows,*”²³ and, of course, on the beat²⁴. It is used “*especially to enhance liveliness.*”²⁵ In the same vein, C. Ph. E. Bach notes about the *Schleifer*: “*they make thoughts flow.*”²⁶

A *ritardando* is allowed here, because the passage can fall into several categories described by Czerny: “*It is most appropriate to ritard: [...] c) on those sustained notes that must be struck with a special accent and after which short notes follow; d) until the passage [...] moves to a part completely different from the previous one; [...] l) at the end of any long trill that forms a sustain and a cadence and has a diminuendo, as well as at any gentle cadence in general.*”²⁷ This fermata, which can also be seen as a small cadence, “*generally should not last longer than can be held in a single breath.*”²⁸

At the fermata, the “< >” sign refers only to the trill marked with the fermata character, and for the following reason: “*above all, good taste has established the rule to attack dissonances, or dissonant chords in general, more strongly than consonant ones, namely because passions must be stirred especially through dissonances.*” (Türk²⁹)

²² Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 245

²³ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 246

²⁴ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 246

²⁵ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 246

²⁶ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Klavier zu spielen (Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments)*, kritisch revidierter Neudruck nach der 2. Auflage (Berlin 1759/1762), ed. Walter Niemann, 5th ed., C. F. Kahnt, Leipzig, 1925, p. 107. Online at: [https://imslp.org/wiki/Versuch_%C3%BCber_die_wahre_Art_des_Clavier_zu_spielen%2C_H.868%2C_870_\(Bach%2C_Carl_Philipp_Emanuel\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Versuch_%C3%BCber_die_wahre_Art_des_Clavier_zu_spielen%2C_H.868%2C_870_(Bach%2C_Carl_Philipp_Emanuel)) [accessed 2 Mar. 2026].

²⁷ Czerny, *Die Kunst des Vortrags (The Art of Performance)*.

²⁸ Johann Adam Hiller, *Anweisung zum musikalisch-zierlichen Gesange (Instruction for Musical, Ornamented Singing)*, Leipzig, 1780, cited in Hartmut Krones and Robert Schollum, *Vokale und allgemeine Aufführungspraxis (Vocal and General Performance Practice)*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien-Köln, 1983, p. 171.

²⁹ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 350

E.g. 2



The second phrase of the first affective sphere (measures 5–11) ³⁰

The second phrase (measures 5–11) sings an ethereal, wonderful, syncopated melody in the main homophonic voice of the right hand, mainly emphasizing two notes: A $\flat$ and E $\flat$, with a very simply ornamented accompaniment in the left hand. The syncopations (also called “ligature” or “synkopatio”) belong to the “figurae fundamentales” and originate, according to Bernhard, from the old style (“stylo”). They interrupt the melodic flow and require a “spoken” attention, an “*immediately recitative-like shaping*.”³¹

Türk considers that “*syncopated notes ... are not so difficult to play on the piano*,”³² but he points out that they occur between different individual sounds “*that must be presented with accent*.”³³ The syncopations fall on “*the weak parts of the beat or the measure*” (that is, on the unaccented beats)

³⁰ David Beach, *Advanced Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive, and Form* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 243

³¹ Hartmut Krones, in *Vokale und allgemeine Aufführungspraxis (Vocal and General Performance Practice)*, by Hartmut Krones and Robert Schollum, Böhlau Verlag, Wien–Köln, 1983, p. 223.

³² Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 105

³³ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 337

and create an additional stimulation in the melody: “*This type of notation is used, among other things, to break, for a time, the excessive monotony and, so to speak, to create a displacement of the beat parts [...]. This goal would not be achieved if the first half of those notes were played softly and the accent were placed on the second half.*”³⁴ The good performer must therefore accentuate the syncopations in the right hand - even if delicately, due to the overall dynamics of the phrase.

Measures 5–8 “embrace” $A\flat$ through rises and falls in the melodic contour, suggesting heaven and sin in the love for Antonia. The entire phrase is constructed through sequences that recall an “epizeuxis,” with a “kyklosis” and, simultaneously, a “climax” that culminates on $E\flat^3$. The sforzando on F^3 (measure 11), as an appoggiatura toward $E\flat^3$, was prepared by the great crescendo and a small modulation to the subdominant in the two preceding measures. Should this effort suggest a desire for beauty, for perfection? Everything speaks in favor of this idea; one can even see the circle around $B\flat$ as a symbol of the ring of love. An ‘anadiplosis’ links the end of this sentence to the beginning of the next.

E.g. 3

The image shows a musical score for measures 12 to 19. The score is written for piano (p) and is marked 'leggiermente'. It consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 12 is labeled 'Transition'. The music features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. There is a crescendo marking at the end of measure 19.

The third phrase of the first affective sphere (measures 12–19): Beach³⁵

³⁴ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 337-338

³⁵ David Beach, *Advanced Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive, and Form* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 243

E.g. 4



Measures 18-23, Beach³⁶

The third phrase of the first affective sphere presents eight measures (12–19) full of ascending and descending passages, “*consisting of various isolated figures*,”³⁷ in the right hand, supported by short eighth-note chords and sighing rests in the left hand. Although Türk evaluates the “passaggio” as “a [...] piece that has rather the purpose of practicing the fingers than any other purpose,” this statement fits Beethoven’s creation less well than Czerny’s observation: “*all the passages and moving figures are always only means, never an end; and even if [...] there are many places that call for the so-called brilliant interpretation, this must never become essential. Anyone who would want to merely display finger dexterity would completely miss what is spiritual and aesthetic and would prove that they do not understand these works.*”³⁸

To each first note of such a passage, Beethoven wrote a staccato; such short notes symbolize the restlessness, haste, and liveliness of this segment. Because only the indication *piano leggiermente* was added to the passages, and only later (from measure 17) does a crescendo appear, you can also draw inspiration here from Mattheson³⁹ regarding dynamics: repetitions should not be played the same way, but differently; repetitions of the melody should be “dressed” in a new “garment” and, in addition to “changed sounds, long and short notes, mannerisms, embellishments, ornaments,” differentiations of “strength and weakness” should also be used.

³⁶ David Beach, *Advanced Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive, and Form* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 244

³⁷ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 389

³⁸ Czerny, *Die Kunst des Vortrags (The Art of Performance)*, p. 33.

³⁹ Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister (The Complete Kapellmeister)*, Hamburg, 1739, chapter “Vom Nachdruck” (*On Emphasis*), § 38.

The passages follow, in fact (measures 12–15), the harmonic basis of the main theme A $\flat$ major, T–D–T–D—A $\flat$ major, T–D–T–D—A $\flat$ major, T–D–T–D, while the small figures “embrace” either A $\flat$ or E $\flat$, leading to an ascending modulation in crescendo—the rhetorical figure of “anabasis.” The “passus duriusculus” in the right hand can be complemented by a reminiscence of a “pathopoiia” in the harmonization of the chromatic bass line. With the closure of the first affective sphere, “anadiplosis” on C 4 , in measure 20, brings along the next affect. Dotted eighth notes in the right hand, syncopations in the left hand—everything piano, molto legato, and yet only simple octaves in a “katabasis” (measures 20–21): it descends, the joy fades; such is love—a bitter doubt can sink all happiness.

The expansion of the statement through the repetition of these octaves in measures 22–23 resembles a figure from the Emphasis class, namely ‘paronomasia.’ Additional syncopations are added here (in the right hand), sighs and suspension notes leading to the octaves (in the left hand), and even a ‘parrhesia’ (measure 22, between A $\flat^2$, G 1 , and F $\sharp^1$).

E.g. 5

Mm 24-38, Beach⁴⁰

⁴⁰ David Beach, *Advanced Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive, and Form* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 244

“Epizeuxis” (measures 23–24) brings the second interval into agreement with the bass’s ‘diabolus in musica’ dissonance; thus, it modulates to the more ‘holy’ and ‘charming’ key of E $\flat$ major. The contrasts (‘antitheton’) of the previously used katabasis begin softly (piano) and conclude majestically with a sforzando on ‘C³.’ ‘Anabasis’ (measures 25–27)—interrupted by ‘tmesis’—sighs—culminating in a ‘hyperbole’ (measure 27), and the combination of ‘klimax’—equally both a ‘hyperbaton’ (in the upper voice) and a ‘palillogia’ (in the bass)—gives the musical phrase a special intensity, further reinforced by the notation symbolism: in measure 28, the hyperbolized ‘B $\flat$ ³’ immediately leaps to ‘G¹,’ from where another ascent begins, allegorically comparable to the sunrise across the firmament.

However, the bass line descends at the same time, always toward the same target note “G,” which can sometimes also be understood as a synonym for “grave” and, therefore, “death” — perhaps due to the Greek Γῆ (gê), which means “earth,” from which the association with “grave” becomes plausible. The double grace notes in the upper voice (measures 25–26) should be sung in time, together with the beginning of the trills in the bass. These attacks, whose notes are so far apart from each other, should not be sung as quickly and mechanically as Türk describes: “*this manner is sung somewhat more slowly when the first small note is several steps away from the main note that follows.*”⁴¹

C. Ph. E. Bach describes exactly the case of the trills mentioned: “*When many trills follow one after another, and after them come one or more short notes that can serve as an ending (Nachschlag), then the latter disappears.*”⁴² C. Ph. E. Bach also clarifies the way of playing the ascent from measure 28 to the beginning of measure 31 in such a way, “*that the beginning of the bow receives a slight pressure from the finger. (...) the end of the bow is not sustained, because the finger must be lifted quickly.*”⁴³ The four notes marked ‘sf’ (sforzando) must, according to Türk, ‘*be played strongly, as if the sound were forced out; (often it only applies to the note next to which it stands),*’⁴⁴ and indicate the highest tension in the upper voice as well as in the bass (where the sforzando is caused by gradual katabasis () and increasingly dense chords of ‘palillogia’).

⁴¹ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p.242

⁴² C. Ph. E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen*, 2. Hauptstück, C. Ph. E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen (Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments)*, 3. Hauptstück (Third Main Section), p. 76

⁴³ C. Ph. E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen (Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments)*, 3. Hauptstück (Third Main Section), p. 127

⁴⁴ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 116

After a sighing pause follows a “passus duriusculus” in piano (measures 31–32) and a chromatic “tirata” in crescendo and, ultimately, diminuendo. In piano and dolce — “pleasant, sweet, gentle”⁴⁵ — the next four measures (34–37) must be played, without any dynamic change, despite the numerous rhetorical figures that continuously emphasize the affect. “Kyklosis” (on A $\flat$ ¹ and C¹), simultaneously an “interrogatio,” is repeated, with the help of another figure — “polyphoton” — in a lower register. From there begins the final “anabasis” of the exposition (measures 35–37) toward the octaves that precede the development.

These two measures (38–39) present a striking similarity to measures 20–21, which recalls the figure of “epanalepsis” – thus, the beginning and the end of the third affective sphere of the exposition are “linked,” “repeated,” mentally associated. The dynamics should be “decreasing,”⁴⁶ with only the last “reb¹” receiving an odd marking: “cresc.,” and immediately afterward the development begins with the beloved figure of “anadiplosis” (on “do”). But how can the piano produce a crescendo on a single note? For a key struck by hammers, this is not really possible — Beethoven surely knew this! Then the spiritual meaning of the crescendo must be sought; in this way, the desired affect can be conveyed. This crescendo must be felt internally, as preparation for a tragic modulation that will be described below. Acoustically, the first sound of measure 40 will sound fuller and more intense; there must be no pause between the previous note and this one.

The theme of love in Beethoven shifts from A $\flat$ major at the beginning of the movement to F minor in the development (measure 40). It is very interesting to note that the pairing of A $\flat$ major as the main key with its parallel F minor recalls the initials A (from Antonia) and F (from Franz Brentano). In addition, according to Quantz, a melody in F minor is particularly sad: “A minor, C minor, D $\sharp$ major, and F minor express the sorrowful affect far more than other minor keys...”⁴⁷. To Schubart, it suggests “a deep melancholy, wailing, moaning of grief, and longing for the grave”⁴⁸.

The theme’s head is extensively recapitulated in various registers and tonalities. It modulates to D $\flat$ major in measures 47–48; then to B $\flat$ minor from measures 50 to 54. This B $\flat$ minor, suggesting Beethoven’s name (in measures

⁴⁵ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 115

⁴⁶ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 117

⁴⁷ Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen (Essay on a Method for Playing the Transverse Flute)*, 3rd ed., Breslau, 1789. Facsimile reprint, Kassel, 1968, p. 138.

⁴⁸ Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst (Ideas for an Aesthetics of the Art of Music)*, Wien, 1806.

52–53 the B $\flat$ –E $\flat$ combination even appears), is “a *strange one, dressed more in the garment of the night. It is somewhat sullen and very rarely takes on a pleasant expression. Ironies against God and the world; dissatisfaction with oneself and everything; preparation for suicide — resound in this tonality.*”⁴⁹ (Schubart) However, the final suffering of the development quickly modulates — in measure 55 — back to the main key of A $\flat$ major and thus leads, through “anadiplosis,” to the recapitulation.

E.g. 6

The Development⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst (Ideas for an Aesthetics of the Art of Music)*, Wien, 1806.

⁵⁰ David Beach, *Advanced Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive, and Form* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p.245

Recapitulation (measures 56–104): a return, but “different”

E.g. 7



The Recapitulation⁵¹

This final section of the part reprises—as expected—the material from the “exposition.” However, some things appear slightly differently, for example: the theme-head chords (measures 56–59) are in the right hand, and the left-hand accompaniment consists of the same passages as in measures 12–20; from the fermata in measure 4, only the trill remains now, under a changed dynamic (instead of a crescendo–decrescendo there is a long decrescendo, leading to a restatement of the theme-head in the left hand).

The second syncopated phrase of the first affective sphere (from measure 63) takes place in E $\flat$ major (after the modulation from measure 62, see figure 10) and leads to a completely unusual modulation, such as the one to E major (measures 67–77) – and E major means “*a shout of strong joy, laughing merriment, and still not fully, not completely, pleasure*” (Schubart, 1806⁵²). The performer must, therefore, emphasize this modulation very delicately: it speaks of hope – even if not yet fully – and then returns “to the grave.” Keys with many sharps – like E major – express “*wild and powerful passions*” (Schubart, 1806⁵³).

Through the subsequent modulation in measure 76, the sun appears (the first dotted note waits on G = “sol” = “sun”; this note can therefore have a double meaning) on the way to A $\flat$ major - Antonia; in G minor in the third part, the sun will be extinguished in the grave (recapitulation of the Arioso - Ermattend, klagend; Perdendo le forze, dolente). The final section of the reprise prepares the coda through a brief modulation to E $\flat$ major (measures 97–100), “*the key of love, piety, and intimate conversation with God; through*

⁵¹ David Beach, *Advanced Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive, and Form* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p.245

⁵² Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst (Ideas for an Aesthetics of the Art of Music)*, Wien, 1806.

⁵³ Idem.

its three flats expressing the Holy Trinity" (Schubart⁵⁴). Coda (measures 105–116): the "F" that always stands in the way, the final dissonance, and silence

The passages in the coda, lightly played in A $\flat$ major, rise in crescendo and suddenly find piano and silence on the 'f' that forever stands in the way (Franz Brentano?) – something that happens once more, with the crescendo of a section of the theme in the left hand (measure 112), which again leads to piano and 'f' in measure 113.

E.g. 8



Measures 110-113, Beach⁵⁵

The final ascent of the passage culminates in fortes on a repeated dissonance (augmented second: "G" – "F $\sharp$ " in the alto voice) and resolves in the short final chord, repeated twice. The sigh ("suspiratio" in measure 115) ends in the silence of an "aposiopesis" – eternity seems full of longing and silently waiting.

3. Conclusion

*"The sonata deserves, among the pieces intended for the piano, probably with the most right, the first place."*⁵⁶ "Die Sonate verdient unter den Tonstücken, welche für das Klavier bestimmt sind, wohl mit dem mehrsten

⁵⁴ Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst (Ideas for an Aesthetics of the Art of Music)*, Wien, 1806.

⁵⁵ David Beach, *Advanced Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive, and Form* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 249

⁵⁶ Türk, *Klavierschule (Piano School)*, p. 390

Rechte die erste Stelle.” In works such as Beethoven’s Sonata Op. 110, there is much more than can be clarified with just a few pages of commentary. For us, in the 21st century, the musical language of the 18th century remains always an attraction and visually very interesting. No detail is taken for granted but analyzed very meticulously. (Kapp) never fully deciphered. We will always ask ourselves: what was the ideal back then? What did Beethoven want? Why? Is that compatible with the spirit of our time? Can it still be played as it was then? How can I approach a certain work if I am influenced by so many factors?

Today we have at our disposal, everywhere, centuries of musical development—how can we ask our ears to remain ignorant yet curious, noble, perhaps skeptical, and to process a piece as the ears of that time did, for which it was written? One option would be to take the music written then and engage in interpretive history with it, growing within this music, interpreting it, and enriching it in accordance with the present time. In this way, a score can continue to develop—shaped by personality—toward infinity.

Another option would be to use today’s knowledge, technical level, tools, and contemporary taste, and yet look back to where the sources and scores are waiting to be deciphered — even if incompletely! From this symbiosis, music can be built and played. Of course, it will always sound different; nevertheless, there are limits and rules in interpretation: *‘Up to here and no further!’ ‘Bis hierher und nicht weiter!’*⁵⁷ One thing is certain, however: if I want to be faithful both to our time and to that time, and to enjoy music through playing, I will best remember the words of Czerny, the great student of Beethoven, and apply them in regular practice: *‘For you can easily imagine, young lady, that the happiest talent is of no use if the fingers are incapable of obeying and following it.’ ‘Denn Sie können sich leicht denken, Fräulein, dass das glücklichste Talent nichts nützt, wenn die Finger unfähig sind, demselben zu gehorchen und nachzufolgen.’*⁵⁸

⁵⁷ J. Moscheles, *Vorbericht zur Beethoven Ausgabe (Preface to the Beethoven Edition)*, Leipzig, 1858.

⁵⁸ Carl Czerny, *Briefe über den Unterricht auf dem Pianoforte (Letters on Instruction at the Pianoforte)*, Wien. Reprint, 1988, p. 81. Online at: <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb10598440?page=89> (accessed 2.3.2026).

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A DETACHED EXPRESSION: THE FINALE OF CHOPIN'S THIRD SONATA

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SUMMARY. Scholarly debates about the finale of Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58, have centered on its formal structure, yet the movement's striking expressive dimensions reveal the work's essential character. Musical topics and the concept of high points prove effective tools for elucidating the work's expression, while their analysis delineates the work's expressive structure and addresses the dominant expressive concerns in Chopin's music. This expressive analytical approach thus contributes to the formal debate by delineating the work's expressive form. Given the finale's rondo characteristics, the analysis incorporates concepts from the comic opera tradition that popularized this form, including elements such as the shock tutti and stretta, which provide an appropriate framework for examining the content presented within the finale. This study applies this analytical method to examine the finale's disputed formal sections and coda while considering evidence from score editions. The findings validate the effectiveness of the analytical tools and concepts employed while filling interpretive gaps in the literature concerning this movement.

Keywords: musical topics, high points, buffa finale, Chopin

1. Introduction

Early studies of the finale of Chopin's Sonata in B minor, Op. 58, reveal its distinctive character: while displaying fiery rhythmic energy, it possesses a quality markedly different from the blithe character found in the

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composer's earlier similar works. Its relentless forward momentum creates a compelling effect that diverges from the typically cheerful nature of classical rondo form⁴. Though these observations offer valuable insights, they leave unanswered the question of how Chopin achieved this particular expression.

Subsequent related studies are predominantly form-focused, though these primarily examine the Sonata's first movement rather than its finale⁵. When certain musical events resist explanation within established formal paradigms, interpretations of the work's expression often remain superficial or resort to metaphysical speculation. Explanations invoking violations of form, anomalies in form, form fusion, and form evolution fail to illuminate how heterogeneity emerges within normative structures. Regarding the imitative passage with chromaticism in the first movement's exposition (mm. 23-29), its designation as an "interpolated atemporal module"⁶ offers narrative insight but inadequately accounts for the passage's underlying expression. Alternative scholarship on Chopin's Third Sonata explores motivic cohesion⁷. While this "post-Leichtentrittian"⁸ approach to material homogeneity elucidates the logical construction of the composition, interpretive issues remain dependent upon discrete musical parameters. As Walker observes, expressive elements including tempo, timbre, and dynamics articulate musical meaning through their own discursive modes.

Nevertheless, different theoretical frameworks yield divergent interpretations. Helman⁹ applies Reicha's dichotomous theory of sonata form to analyze the first movement at multiple structural levels. Through proportional analysis, she designates the exposition of the B minor Sonata as one unit and combines the development and recapitulation as another. Utilizing dramaturgical principles, she distinguishes the primary theme and transition from the secondary theme and closing section, arguing that the persistent cantilena mood throughout the closing section creates expressive equilibrium between the two parts,

⁴ Leichtentritt, Hugo. *Analyse Der Chopin'schen Klavierwerke [analysis of Chopin's Piano Works]*. Max Hesses Verlag, 1922; Chomiński, Józef. *Sonaty Chopina*. Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1960.

⁵ See e.g.: Newman, William S. *The Sonata Since Beethoven*. W.W. Norton, 1983; Leikin, Anatole. "The Sonatas." *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, edited by Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 160–87.

⁶ Davis, Andrew. "Chopin and the Romantic Sonata: The First Movement of Op. 58." *Music Theory Spectrum*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2014, p. 281.

⁷ See Walker, Alan. "Chopin and Musical Structure: An Analytical Approach." *The Chopin Companion: Profiles of the Man and the Musician*, W. W. Norton, 1973, pp. 227–58; Samson, Jim. *The Music of Chopin*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985;

⁸ Tomaszewski, Mieczysław. *Chopin: The Man, His Work and Its Resonance*. Edited and translated by John Comber, The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2015, p. 547.

⁹ Helman, Zofia. "Norm and Individuation in Chopin's Sonatas." *Polish Music Journal*, translated by Radosław Materka and Maja Trochimczyk, vol. 3, no. 1, 2000, pp. 1–18.

thereby resolving conflict rather than perpetuating instability. Yet for tonal music, the inherent ebb and flow of tension and release remains present, and the underlying causes of these fluctuations warrant further investigation.

As Agawu¹⁰ demonstrates in his study of Romantic music, rigid formal norms may impede comprehension of deeper musical significance, failing to accommodate elusive and implicit meanings. Moreover, evidence from the Sonata – including ten musical topics evaluated in Sonata Op. 58 through separate research currently awaiting publication – suggests that Chopin privileges expressive immediacy over formal architecture. This does not diminish the importance of formal conventions but rather positions them as subsidiary characteristics. In this context, any deviation from formal expectations represents an expression of specific needs or desires, inviting investigation into the circumstances that generate such requirements. Agawu analyzes Romantic music by examining the events that establish formal norms and their sequential unfolding – a methodology that “promotes a processual and phenomenological view of the work; it recognizes moment-by-moment succession but worries not at all about an overall or resultant profile that can be named and held up as an archetype”¹¹. This approach informs the present analysis of the finale through Agawu’s concept of high points, as demonstrated in the examination of high points within the coda and their dynamic trajectory. This methodological choice explains the selection of the finale as the primary analytical focus. First, it exemplifies one of Agawu’s six analytical rubrics for Romantic music; second, the musical topics within the finale constitute interpretative acts constrained by topical signification, which correspond with other aspects of the work, including form. Consequently, this topic motivates a coherent framework for understanding both the encoding of meaning implantation and the decoding of meaning reconstruction within the finale.

This study therefore conducts an analysis based on musical topics, which constitute one of the most important codes for constructing musical meaning. As discussed extensively in the literature, musical topics serve as a powerful tool for examining the expressive qualities conveyed by music, offering essential interpretive foundations. Musical topics are among the few elements in music that carry rich semantic content, stimulating interpretive engagement. Based on the constraints defined in their significative process, they achieve satisfactory interpretation at specific levels. They motivate rather than dictate the interpretation of musical meaning. In a semiotic sense, given the elusive nature of musical meaning, these characteristics of musical topics

¹⁰ Agawu, Victor Kofi. *Music As Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music*. Oxford University Press, 2009. Oxford Studies in Music Theory.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

naturally establish them as a key sign for studying musical signification. Furthermore, the evaluation of musical topics reflects the formal framework of a work, which constitutes one of the constraints imposed by the topics themselves. Accordingly, concepts related to the buffa finale are applied in analyzing the finale. Although Platoff's¹² exposition of the buffa finale derives from opera libretti and their inherent dramatic nature – manifested primarily through comparisons between musical effects and textual correspondence – these elements, including specific musical styles and articulating characteristics, are readily applicable to instrumental music. From this perspective, the musical shaping derived from text inspires a complementary interpretation of the finale.

This approach resonates with Agawu's conception that analysis, performance, and creation constitute creative activities¹³. The method operates without predetermined objectives. Through topical evaluation and interaction with musical material, the outcomes fulfill both the functional requirements of genre-related references and the aesthetic autonomy of formalism. Table 1 delineates the finale's thematic content and structure, representing its principal sections as a rondo – designated ABABA – alongside its tonal regions. The arrow indicates modulatory passages. The terms *shock tutti* and *stretta* are defined subsequently. The table's bottom row evaluates the finale's musical topics and associated styles. Table 1 serves as an analytical framework for this study's discussion, functioning as a guide rather than a definitive formal interpretation.

Table 1

A	B		Shock Tutti	RT	A	B		Shock Tutti	RT	A	Stretta
Refrain	Episode 1			Retransiti on	Refrain	Episode 2			Retransiti on	Refrain	Coda
9-52	52-76 (a)	76-83 (b)	84-90	90-99	100-143	143-167 (a)	167-174 (b)	175-195	195-206	207-253	254-286
b	B-d#	F#	B	V/e	e	E _b -g-c	E _b	A _b → F#	V/b	b	B
Tarantella					Tarantella					Tarantella	Brilliant Style Hunting Call

Outline of The Finale of Chopin's Third Sonata

¹² Platoff, John. "Musical and Dramatic Structure in the Opera Buffa Finale." *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1989, pp. 191–230.

¹³ The characteristics of musical analysis have been addressed convincingly by Agawu elsewhere; see his famous article: Agawu, Kofi. "How We Got Out of Analysis, and How to Get Back in Again." *Music Analysis*, vol. 23, nos. 2–3, July 2004, pp. 267–86.

2. Topic of Finale

What, then, are the expressive constraints of the finale, and how can it be interpreted appropriately within these constraints? Existing scholarship converges on a singular characterization: the movement's extraordinary driving force. How is this relentless momentum achieved? Examining the basic characteristics of the finale – 6/8 meter at rapid tempo, the quality of perpetual motion, alternation between principal and auxiliary tones, and an effective vehicle for virtuosic display – evaluates it as a tarantella¹⁴. This dance genre, originating in Taranto in southern Italy, is traditionally considered a representation of hysteria¹⁵. Schumann, reviewing Chopin's precedent Op. 43, similarly observed the wildness and darkness embodied in this frenetic dance¹⁶. The finale's melodic structure parallels this earlier work through its characteristic rhythmic pattern: an eighth note followed by a quarter note, concluding with a dotted half note.

Grimalt¹⁷ categorizes the tarantella as a dance topic within the body genre, distinguishing it from the spirit genre. Religious traditions posit that spiritual pursuit necessitates bodily sacrifice, with martyrs exemplifying ultimate faith through physical transcendence. When discussing Chopin's transcendence of corporeal signs in music, Tarasti cites the finale's theme to demonstrate its dialectical nature: the originally pastoral, dance-like figure transforms through relentless repetition, acquiring transcendent qualities via its "fascination with process"¹⁸. Within the finale's context, this transformation culminates in ecstatic states, reinforcing the tarantella's association with frenzy. Following Tarasti's framework for transcendent moments in Chopin's music, the finale presents a dual dynamic: Chopin initially constrains his physicality within the tarantella's generic conventions – encompassing social contexts and stylistic parameters – as evidenced in the refrains; conversely, when his authentic creative identity emerges, transcendence manifests, particularly in the coda's climactic passages.

The agitation of Tarantella in the coda is notably influenced by the horn quartet in the bass and the subsequent four ascending-fourth calls. Unlike the triadic structure characteristic of military signals, this single-note

¹⁴ Schwandt, Erich. "Tarantella." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2nd ed., vol. 25, Macmillan, 2001, p. 96.

¹⁵ Riemann, Hugo. *Dictionary of Music*. Translated by J. S. Shedlock, 4th ed., vol. 2, Da Capo Press, 1970; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Tarantella." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 23 Feb. 2020.

¹⁶ Niecks, Frederick. *Frederick Chopin: As A Man and Musician*. 3rd ed., vol. 2, Novello, 1902.

¹⁷ Grimalt, Joan. *Mapping Musical Signification*. Springer International Publishing, 2020. *Humanities - Arts and Humanities in Progress* 15.

¹⁸ Tarasti, Eero. *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics*. Mouton de Gruyter, 2002. *Approaches to Applied Semiotics* 3, p. 132.

call typically signifies a hunting call. The repeated leap of a fourth constitutes a primitive marker of the hunting call, evoking associations with the outdoors – morning, woodland, freedom, adventure, and nobility. In the finale's coda, the shift to the tonic major supports a vigorous and euphoric musical adventure, while a series of horn calls in the bass leading up to the global high point (which will be elaborated on later) vividly conveys Chopin's masculine qualities. According to Tarasti, the "transcendental subject"¹⁹ within Chopin's music underpins both the coherence of the musical discourse and the evolution of the topic.

3. Form of Finale

Formal structures, as noted by Agawu and Dahlhaus²⁰, constitute significant elements in the creative practices of Romantic composers, yet these structures more often invite active participation from the subject rather than demanding rigid adherence. In this regard, the formal elements within the finale complement its topical references – particularly its frequently discussed rondo-like structure – which is inherently shaped by the tarantella's signification. As Cole notes, "the rhythms, thematic character and phrase regularity of the dance"²¹ frequently provide composers with a foundation for imbuing the rondo refrain with distinctive character.

Zukiewicz²² reviewed the scholarly debate concerning the finale's formal structure in his doctoral dissertation. Given that several aspects of the finale resist conventional formal categorization – notably the E minor A-refrain's failure to return in the tonic key and the premature appearance of the tonic within the B-episode – scholars have primarily disputed whether the movement constitutes a modified rondo or a sonata-rondo functioning as an alternative to a sonata. In his monograph on Chopin, Tomaszewski observed that the independent rondo characterized Chopin's early compositional period, serving dual purposes: displaying pianistic virtuosity and incorporating folk elements. This early predilection evolved into a more restrained yet expressive approach in Chopin's mature works. In these later compositions, which align with classical traditions, Chopin embedded the rondo within larger structures,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 140.

²⁰ Dahlhaus, Carl. *Foundations of Music History*. Translated by J. Bradford Robinson, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

²¹ Cole, Malcolm S. "Rondo." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2nd ed., vol. 21, Macmillan, 2001, p. 652.

²² Zukiewicz, Adam. *Chopin's Third Piano Sonata, Op. 58: Late Style, Formal Ambiguity, and Performance Considerations*. 2012. University of Toronto, D.M.A.

specifically as the finale of Sonata Op. 58. Certain formal anomalies – including the refrain's absence in the tonic key and the tonic's premature emergence – prompted Tomaszewski to assert: "With the mature Chopin, it is not form that (a priori) shapes expression, but rather expression that determines the ultimate shape of form"²³.

The finale's formal framework is undoubtedly rooted in the rondo, with its distinctive expression reflecting the composer's contemplation within this structure. The finale's expression is simultaneously constrained by the tarantella and shaped by the composer's practical considerations. Drawing on extensive testimonies, Tomaszewski identifies two stages in Chopin's compositional process: the spontaneous stage (improvisation) and the reflective stage (perfection). The latter became particularly prominent during the 1840s, evidenced by Chopin's frequent manuscript revisions and delayed submissions to copyists. From an interpretative perspective, however, improvisation and perfection function as "complementary rather than opposing"²⁴ concepts. While improvisation establishes the work's framework, perfection draws from Chopin's rich musical repository to extract diverse materials, refining them into appropriate musical effects. This repository encompasses the elements and techniques that secured Chopin's widespread popularity, including his astute assessment of the contemporaneous music market.

The enduring popularity of Chopin's music stems from the synergy between his distinctive personal style and acute market awareness²⁵. This acumen likely originated from young Chopin's frequent visits to Brzezina's store in Warsaw, where he absorbed not only canonical works but also piano adaptations based on popular tunes, dance idioms, recent operas, and historical narratives²⁶. Within this context, the finale's deviations from conventional formal expectations may reflect the influence of opera buffa on the popularization of the rondo, as opera buffa composers' treatment of this form significantly contributed to its widespread adoption.

4. Buffa Finale

By the early 19th century, the rondo genre had firmly established its popularity in the music market. Both C.P.E. Bach and Mozart reported the

²³ Tomaszewski, *Chopin*, p. 427.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

²⁵ Bellman, Jonathan D. "Middlebrow Becomes Transcendent: The Popular Roots of Chopin's Musical Language." *Chopin and His World*, edited by Jonathan D. Bellman and Halina Goldberg, Princeton University Press, 2017, pp. 147–70.

²⁶ Goldberg, Halina. *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

impact of this genre on the sales and performances of their works. The straightforward and unembellished style of the rondo theme laid the foundation for its reputation among the public, while the incorporation of the spirit and techniques of opera buffa further enhanced the expressiveness of the form. Platoff points out that in the finales of Viennese opera buffa, two “detached”²⁷ expressive actions contribute to the dramatic demands of the music: shock tutti and stretta. The former represents an astonished reaction to an unexpected musical event through a sudden pause; the latter refers to the final expressive section of the finale, releasing musical tension with unexpected and forceful impact.

Much of the debate in research centers on the formal division of episode 1, due to the premature appearance of the tonic key in the second part (part b) of episode 1 and the subsequent refrain not appearing in the tonic key. In Platoff’s study of the buffa finale, he mentions an exceptional case in a given context, where a detached expressive passage often emerges during a plot twist or at the height of dramatic tension. This passage, on one hand, articulates shock through dramatic expression, and on the other hand, creates a “sense of separateness”²⁸ that interrupts the musical flow to mark distinct expressive moments. Such a detached expressive passage is evident in these contested formal areas.

In part b of episode 1, the anticipated return of the refrain is subverted by a passage in B major (mm. 84-90). This disruption transforms into a dominant preparation section (RT) for the subsequent return of the E minor refrain (mm. 90-99) through Chopin’s characteristic addition of a minor seventh to the tonic triad. This surprising maneuver unfolds as follows: at m. 83, a compound articulation – *portato* – marks the cadence of the phrasing-end (II-V⁷ in B major). This cadence, featuring rhythmic diminution, creates a rapidly closing gesture and reality that intensifies rhetorical expression. It releases the signal of shock tutti with its characteristic *portato* articulation. The harmonic progression also serves as the framework for the ensuing B major passage; thus, the peculiarity of this seven-measure segment stems not merely from the premature tonic arrival but from its response to the narrative’s demand for change while conveying separation. Chopin employs *portato* primarily to enhance expressiveness while maintaining thematic resonance, as exemplified in the Nocturne Op. 48 No. 1 (the *agitato* theme restatement at m. 54 and related measures) and Op. 55 No. 2 (the subordinate 16th notes in the alto voice at m. 8). Another use of *portato* by the composer is

²⁷ Platoff, *Musical and Dramatic Structure*, p. 219.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

to emphasize structural articulation points, or what Agawu terms “key moments of punctuation”²⁹, such as the end of the chief theme before the *maggiore* coda in the finale of his F minor Second Piano Concerto (mm. 87-88), where the descending scale in the piano solo features *portato* articulation. This theme ends with a half cadence, reinforced not only by an accent mark on the final dominant seventh chord but also by the marking *con forza* at the descent’s beginning. The reinforcing function of the descending impulse articulation preceding the dominant seventh chord is thus unmistakable.

The half cadence in m. 83 of the finale thus interrupts the ongoing harmonic motion, and this sudden cessation can be experienced not only through listening and hand positioning but is also signified by the *portato* itself (Example 1). This gasp serves merely as a rehearsal – a sign for the detached expressive passage, pointing to the subsequent real shock tutti.

E.g. 1

79

82

F#:

I⁴⁷

B: ii

V⁷

Portato
Sign of Detached Expression

Portato at the conclusion of Episode 1, Part B, m.83

²⁹ Agawu, *Music As Discourse*, p. 77.

In episode 2, the composer employs a technique similar to that used earlier, adding a minor seventh (G $\flat$) to the tonic triad in m. 179. However, unlike the corresponding earlier section, this seventh chord does not function as a retransition. Instead, mm. 183-195 present a distinctive harmonic progression: beginning with an A $\flat$ triad, the voice leading moves through B $\flat$ as a passing tone to an A4/2 chord, then continues to F $\sharp$ ⁷ while maintaining common tones. This technique represents one of Chopin's characteristic methods for articulating transitions between formal sections, comparable to passages in the development section of the first movement and the harmonic progression linking the F minor section in the Largo's middle section to the final appearance of the middle section's theme. The *forzando* markings that appear at the beginning of each segment's dominant seventh chord intensify the mounting tension throughout this process. This accent sign, which Ekier (2013) identifies as "indicat[ing] crucial points in the forging of medium-sized formal structures"³⁰, constitute one of Chopin's most idiomatic expressive devices.

The harmony in these thirteen measures (mm. 183-195) creates a static harmonic state through the use of pedal point, effectively suspending temporal flow and interrupting the music's forward momentum, despite the tremolo oscillations in the bass. This passage receives exceptional treatment within the finale's overall design. The purely figurative texture lacks any melodic line – a striking contrast to even the preceding *leggero* section, which maintains melodic content through the additional note heads Chopin provides in the left hand. This disposition creates a pronounced sense of detachment; as a decisive turning point, it alters the trajectory of the episode, responding to the dramatic demands of the moment with astonishing expression. All characteristic elements from the episode converge in this shock tutti: the intervallic neighbor motion from part a and the expanded scalar runs from part b, indicating that these elements take on new meanings in this dramatic context. The passage culminates with imitative intervallic motion supported by a denser octave texture in the bass, preparing the retransition (Example 2). The accumulated tension from this shock tutti finds its ultimate resolution through the strategic deployment of high points in the coda.

³⁰ Ekier, Jan. *Introduction to the Polish National Edition of the Works of Fryderyk Chopin: Part 2. Performance Issues*. Edited by Paweł Kamiński, Translated by John Comber, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 2013, p. 27.

E.g. 2

Shock tutti, mm. 183-195

5. Coda of Finale: The Experimental Station of High Points

The *stretta*, another buffa finale technique that addresses dramatic requirements, finds precise exemplification in the Sonata's finale. Its tension-release mechanism aligns closely with Agawu's concept of high points. High points function as markers of "superlative moments"³¹ in music, typically signaling moments of intensity, peak tension, or release. From a psychological perspective, these individual high points collectively shape the work's dynamic curve, fundamentally influencing audience perception. This perception subsequently informs listeners' appreciation as prior experience, shaping both expectations and responses. As Agawu explains in his preface to studying Romantic music, the six principles, including high points and the dynamic curve,

capture salient features of the Romantic repertoire and can therefore convey aspects of their truth content ... Together, they provide listeners with a mechanism for organizing their intuitions about Romantic music. The resulting analyses can in turn engender further speculation about meaning³².

³¹ Agawu, *Music As Discourse*, p. 61.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

High points and musical topics work in tandem to illuminate the musical foreground; together, they constitute a semiotic method that reveals how a work's expressive form takes shape. The coda contains three distinct high points: first, a B with grace note, both under an 8va marking (m. 254), functioning as a decisive tension release; second, a B approached by melodic leap with 8va marking (m. 274), representing the finale's climactic moment; and finally, the work's endpoint, an octave B notated at actual pitch (m. 286), serving as the global high point. M. 268 presents what might be considered a pseudo high point (an E₆ with 8va marking), though its transient character and association with supertonic harmony diminish both its accentual force and harmonic significance within the high-point schema.

How does Chopin construct these transcendent high points in the coda? The coda begins with a four-bar cadence progression (I⁶-II4/3-IV-V6/4-V⁷ in mm. 250-253) that transforms the chromatic descent at the end of the refrain into an ascending line with chromatic alterations. A *crescendo* hairpin drives the agitation to a boiling point, creating the first high point of the coda: the *fortissimo* high B (Example 3).

E.g. 3

254 Broken Octave B as High Point
ff Brilliant Style
B: 1

258 Literal repetition for pure musical excitement
Coda as Stretta in tonic major
Phrasing ends
V⁷

The broken octave B as the high point, mm. 254-261

This B presents a crucial notational ambiguity that bears on both performance practice and analytical interpretation. While it appears to have an acciaccatura structure, the ornament, rather than functioning as a non-harmonic tone, participates in the harmonic structure by forming a broken octave with the main B. Its melodic execution introduces octave stretching

that immediately distinguishes the coda from preceding sections. This departure from the preceding harmonic intervals marks a decisive structural boundary. The National Edition, in its critical examination of the score sources, reveals that neither the autograph nor other versions clearly indicate whether the first grace note in mm. 254 and 258 falls under the 8va sign. Based on contextual evidence and performance practicalities, the National Edition applies the 8va sign to both the grace note and the main note. This editorial decision corroborates the hierarchical organization of high points revealed in this study. Excluding the grace note from the 8va sign would not only contradict the National Edition's considerations but would also disrupt the perception of subsequent high points, given the progressive hierarchical relationship between the coda's high points. Such an initially exaggerated registral leap would compromise the internal coherence and emerging expression of the dynamic curve, undermining the work's aesthetic whole. The coda functions within the *buffa* finale tradition, where it must fulfill dual requirements: it must release accumulated tension while simultaneously conveying sufficient climactic force to establish its role as the movement's final statement. The high points in the coda therefore create formal articulation not through maintaining musical continuity, but by constructing "strongly articulated points of closure, which build steadily towards a climactic cadence"³³.

Following this first high point of the coda, a four-bar arpeggio passage in brilliant style appears twice in literal repetition (mm. 254-261). The separation becomes evident at the end of the second iteration (mm. 260-261), where the left hand's phrasing slur, unlike the first time, terminates at the final dominant seventh chord rather than extending to the next measure, thereby emphasizing the isolated quality of the individual high point. In fact, omitting this repetition would neither compromise the musical architecture nor diminish the listener's sonic experience – indeed, it would eliminate the technical demands of connecting two phrases over a large span (one might experiment by performing the passage without repetition, proceeding directly from the first phrase to m. 262). As Platoff observes, this exemplifies a characteristic feature of the *stretta*:

The use of such a long repeated section, which states over and over words that do not need repeating, suggests that, in the *stretta*, dramatic values are by convention subordinated to musical ones ... the important action has concluded, and pure musical excitement can take over³⁴.

³³ Platoff, *Musical and Dramatic Structure*, p. 227.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

However, a single relaxation cannot adequately counterbalance the finale's prolonged accumulated tension. This tension-release process extends throughout the coda's dynamic trajectory. The dynamic level recedes to soft before restarting with a rapid, chromatic ascending figure (m. 262). This linear ascent is supported by an accompaniment that references the "dancelike character"³⁵ of the *leggiere* section, while demanding greater agility and flexibility. At m. 268, the right hand's narrow position expands into an arpeggio and reverses direction. When this downward plunging motion coalesces into block chords in m. 270, the movement evokes the iambic rhythm characteristic of episode a. This passage gradually ascends in stretto fashion to reach the coda's – and the entire piece's – superlative moment: the *fortissimo* B in m. 274. While this pitch matches the previous high point, its formation of an ascending interval of a 17th with the preceding A $\sharp$ establishes it as a focal point in the musical experience. Following this climax, the musical movement subsides again. These dynamic fluctuations in the high-point scheme reflect "organic life and psychological processes"³⁶.

The oblique descent commencing from the second high point alludes to Chopin's A minor Etude Op. 25, No. 11. The left-hand *marcato* chromatic descent concluding the Etude finds its parallel in the corresponding *crescendo* descent within the Finale's coda (mm. 280-282). Chopin accentuates the coda's climactic moment through a horn call built upon a 6/4 chord in the bass (mm. 274-276). This 6/4 chord, approached and left by leap before resolving to I⁶, functions as a constant 6/4 generated by the arpeggiated tonic chord in the bass. Throughout the coda, rapid, florid figures in the right hand assume prominence, while the left hand provides arpeggiated support to create a turbulent effect. This consonant arpeggio 6/4, however, transcends its previous supporting role to become an independent melodic line. Beyond its altered chordal function, it sustains for nine full measures near the coda's end (mm. 274-282). Within the constraints of the tarantella topic and its transcendent elements – specifically the hunting-style horn calls – the superlative moment of the coda signifies a "firm commitment to the male gender, and a tone that is strongly euphoric"³⁷, thereby facilitating the effective signification of musical signs, as shown in Example 4:

³⁵ Zukiewicz, *Chopin's Third Piano Sonata*, Op. 58, p. 157.

³⁶ Agawu, *Music as Discourse*, p. 62.

³⁷ Monelle, Raymond. *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military and Pastoral*. Indiana University Press, 2006. Musical Meaning and Interpretation, p. 95.

268 Pseudo High Point
8^{me} sirello

273 High B with an ascending 17th
The Superlative Moment
8^{me}
Descending pattern referencing Etude Op. 25 No. 11
ff
Consonant 7 expanded by arpeggiation
Horn Quartet signifies euphoric musical adventure
V⁷ I

277 dim.
Horn Calls articulates masculine expression

281 Expression affirmed by *marcato* articulation
cresc.
ff
Global High Point
A Written-Out Octave B

The superlative moment, the high B with an ascending 17th, and the global high point -- a written-out octave B, mm. 268-286

The final cadential tag (mm. 282-286) echoes the preceding climax with a *fortissimo* V⁷-I progression. This cadential motion, articulated through rhythmically punctuated dotted chords, reasserts tonic authority and culminates in the ultimate global high point – a written-out octave B. Its robust stance distinguishes it from the previous two high points, revealing these earlier points to function as local high points within a broader dynamic curve. Together, they form a gestalt perceptible as a complete high-point schema throughout the coda's ebb and flow.

Beyond the coda, other sections of the finale, including the refrain (G, m. 44; C♯, m. 135) and episode (B, m. 52; G, m. 143), similarly feature salient registral peaks. From a synoptic perspective, however, these peaks delineate a more expansive dynamic contour wherein earlier high points assume varied roles. The refrain's peak, for instance, operates as an upper neighbor to the prevailing harmony while simultaneously connecting to the preceding measure's anchor tone (A♯, m. 43), thereby establishing a moderate tessitura. Conversely, episodic peaks frequently serve as formal delineators, signaling the transition from refrain to episode. These preliminary dynamic nodes collectively prepare the arrival of subsequent structural high points.

6. Conclusion

Compared to its predecessor, Sonata Op. 35, which generated at least some brief commentary, Newman found that Op. 58 left no records beyond publication-related information. In this context, the score itself, as the composer's direct legacy, provides essential clues for analysts seeking to uncover the work's essence.

According to Dahlhaus's division of aesthetic postulates in music history, the aesthetic of expression dominated art theory in the 18th and 19th centuries, emphasizing how style reflects the composer's persona. In semiotic terms, interpreting meaning invariably involves signs. The musical topics employed in this study, along with the high points rubric operating under their constraints, represent signs of musical expression. Musical topics reference the work's artistic character while simultaneously carrying inherent social functions as genre tokens. Through the preceding discussion, musical topics convincingly explain Tomaszewski's evaluation of Chopin's late sonatas: "an absolute and unquestionable unity on the level of expression and meaning, an iron logic on the level of form, and a dramatic tension which, in a performance worthy of the works, brings genuine catharsis"³⁸.

This study focused on one of Agawu's six proposed rubrics for analyzing Romantic music: high points. Future research could incorporate all six rubrics into a comprehensive analytical framework. Furthermore, the concept of climax analogous to high points appears in the discourse of other musicians. Rachmaninoff, for instance, identified "culminating point(s)"³⁹ as essential to a work's organic nature, noting that their position and intensity vary across

³⁸ Tomaszewski, *Chopin*, p. 534.

³⁹ Bertensson, Sergei, and Jay Leyda. *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*. New York University Press, 1956, p. 195.

different compositions and that failing to recognize them would cause the entire expression of the work to collapse. This observation suggests that the concept of climax is at least pervading Romantic music. Future research could employ this concept for comparative analyses across composers' works, further investigating how high points illuminate structural coherence and expression. This approach also underscores Dahlhaus's endeavor to reconcile the historical and aesthetic dimensions of musical works, that is, by revealing historical connections through high points, thereby situating compositions within their historical context.

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SALVE REGINA – DEVOTION AND REFINEMENT IN THE MUSIC OF FRANZ LISZT

RÉKA-ILDIKÓ BABES-ARDAI¹ 

SUMMARY. Franz Liszt is one of the most diverse composers in music history. His faith and devotion to the church always played a central role in his life, as evidenced by his efforts to reform the church and its music. The large-scale, virtuoso works he composed in his youth stand in sharp contrast to his later works, which, with their clarity, reveal a mature personality and a rich, eventful life. The aim of my study is to analyze one of Liszt's most extraordinary late works, the choral piece titled *Salve Regina*, in light of the composer's relationship with religion and his sacred compositions, presenting his late style as well.

Keywords: Liszt, *Salve Regina*, sacred music, late style

Introduction

Franz Liszt, the celebrated pianist, composer of virtuoso études, was one of the outstanding creators of symphonic poems and program-music in general. At the same time, the refined style and simplicity of his late compositions shed light on his creative personality from a completely different perspective. It is perhaps no coincidence that in the later period of his life he turned increasingly to church music. His strong faith and his desire to play a role in reforming church music played a major part in this.

The composer had always been interested in the church and had been a devout believer since childhood. His father contributed significantly to this, while also steering him decisively toward a career in music. Although he took up the cassock in the last stage of his life, he never gave up composing.

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In addition to his monumental masses, oratorios and organ works, Liszt also composed numerous significant choral pieces, mostly with accompaniment. His late a cappella work, *Salve Regina* may seem unusual, captivating the listener with its simplicity and unique sound world. The composition bears some of Liszt's important late stylistic features, which will be discussed later.

The purpose of this study is to examine the choral work *Salve Regina* through the lens of Franz Liszt's religious faith, sacred musical output and his late musical style.

Franz Liszt and Spirituality

"From the outset, he was a deeply religious, mystical child."² His father, Ádám Liszt, entered a monastery as a Franciscan novice in 1794, and although he ultimately chose a career in music for his son, he raised him in a deeply religious environment.

Despite their sudden success and fame, Liszt and his father did not turn away from religion in Paris, but lacking contemporaries, Liszt suffered from loneliness, which he tried to compensate for by reading. However, his immersion in ecclesiastical literature led to a serious "religious mania." The young Liszt often longed to become a priest, but his father did not want the young talent to follow the same path he had once taken.

He was most influenced by the writings of Lamennais, the rebellious French theologian, who eventually became his mentor. Under his influence, Liszt composed numerous sacred works and began writing polemical treatises as a form of reform activity.³

The young talent was shaken by the death of his father, and then severely affected by his banishment from Caroline de Saint-Cricq, which led to him becoming obsessed with religion. He spent most of his time in church, visiting the confessional every day.

Several clergymen influenced his life, and he joined various religious movements, but strangely enough, his faith was renewed in Weimar, a Protestant city. After 1847, he returned to orthodox Catholicism with the support of his partner, Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein.

Later in his life he finally decided to take up minor ecclesiastical orders. He gave up piano concert performances but did not stop composing.

² Walker, Alan. *Franz Liszt: The virtuoso years, 1811-1847*. Cornell University Press, 1987, p.97.

³ *On the Future of Church Music* (1834) and *On the Position of Artists and Their Place in Society* (1835)

In addition, he played a role in the Cecilian reform movement, which sought to renew and restore church music, when he came into contact with them in May 1869. Although the composer had numerous church works to his credit, the conservative movement did not want them, arguing that it could not identify with Liszt's style.

Liszt and Sacred Music

Liszt's corpus of sacred works is very rich, including masses, oratorios, smaller choral works, and organ pieces.

His early sacred works, the cycle *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (*Poetic and Religious Harmonies*) and *Psalm 129 (De profundis)*, were followed by numerous smaller choral works—twenty-nine in total—and larger-scale compositions: oratorios, legends, and masses, as well as psalm arrangements. He had already begun writing some of these in Weimar and took them with him to Rome, such as the *Ave Maria* and *Pater Noster* prayers.

The period between 1860 and 1886 can also be considered productive, as it was during this time that such pivotal works as the *Missa choralis*, the *Ungarische Krönungsmesse* and a *Requiem*, a composition based on three psalm texts, as well as *Via crucis*, *Septem sacramenta* and *Rosario*, choral pieces based on biblical texts, and *Responsorien und Antiphonen*, a homophonic composition for male choir based on Gregorian melodies. His works inspired by the figures of St. Paul and St. Francis of Assisi also date from this period.

In 1879, Liszt turned to Saint Cecilia once again, resulting in his next works: *Cantantibus organis* and *Antiphone zum Feste der hl. Cäcilie*. Finally, we also know of an unpublished work for female choir, accompanied by piano and harmonium, with optional harp, entitled *The Legend of St. Christopher*. Liszt composed twenty-nine minor church works between 1860 and 1886. Some were written for specific occasions or events. A significant portion of this collection consists of choral works setting texts from prayers to music, but there are also arrangements of Marian antiphons, Christmas motets, responsories, and hymns.

Despite his work and efforts in church music, Franz Liszt's music was not well received in Cecilian circles. Thus, only the *Ave Maria* and the *Pater Noster* survived "censorship," appearing as Liszt's first church choral works in the cycle *Poetic and Religious Harmonies*. Liszt's church music was also greatly influenced by the Cappella Sistina, thanks to which a cappella works occupy a significant place in the composer's church music, although they are accompanied, in most cases by the organ, *ad libitum*. Nevertheless, his style differed from that of the Italian masters, in contrast to whom Liszt boldly used

strong harmonic changes and unison passages, and the expressive use of intervals is also a characteristic feature of his works.

Liszt's Late Musical Style

The composer's style is generally characterized by experimentation with form and the use of theme transformation, which stems from the fact that Liszt's music is mostly monothematic.

The most characteristic element of his late style is his play with tonality and his endeavor to extend, even stretch, its boundaries. The tools he used to achieve this were unusual scales, chords built from fourths and sevenths, chains of functional tones, chromaticism, and various intervals. The shift towards atonal music was influenced, among other things, by a lecture given by Belgian musicologist François Joseph Fétis about the idea of *ordre omnitonique* (a chromatic modulation system that loosens the foundations of tonality). As a result, to illustrate the essence of the theory, Liszt wrote his *Prélude omnitonique*, the manuscript of which has unfortunately been lost. This would then have been followed by a modern study of harmony, which was also never published.

Liszt often broke out of the confines of tonality by using a series of functional chords, a technique that actually characterizes Debussy's works, in such a way that the internal structure of the chord remains constant, only the pitch changes. This is illustrated by the following excerpt from the piano piece *Unstern*:

E.g. 1



Franz Liszt, *Unstern*, bars 63-67

Until 1870, his harmonic approach was similar to that of Chopin and Schubert in their later styles, and the influence of Italian opera *cantilena* can also be detected. Over the years, there was a growing tendency towards the

use of chromatic harmonies, with frequent use of augmented and diminished chords, especially the tritone, which appears strikingly in the first bars of the composition quoted above.

E.g. 2



Franz Liszt, *Unstern*, bars 1-7

Another characteristic technique of the composer is the use of unusual scales, such as the whole-tone scale, on which the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* series is also based:

E.g. 3



Franz Liszt, *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses: Funérailles*, bars 7-8

The grand *Mephisto Waltz* clearly illustrates the composer's bold and unique chord-building techniques, one of Liszt's distinctive means of expression, whereby he derives chords from a single interval, in this case the fourth:

E.g. 4



Franz Liszt, *Mephisto Waltz no. 3*, bars 1-10

In addition to all this, one of the most distinctive and - in light of the composer's musical background - most surprising features of Liszt's late style is his economical use of musical elements.

His works often fall into monody, then into deep silence, as if they were disappearing into nothingness, leaving the end of the composition open, such as in the *Mephisto Polka*:

E.g. 5



Franz Liszt, *Mephisto Polka*, bars 217-223

However, the primary aim of his piano music was not to push the boundaries of tonality, but rather to exploit the full capacity of the instrument to the performer's advantage, achieving various effects, such as an orchestral effect in his transcription of the *Tannhäuser* overture, or in the *Mazeppa* étude, which gives the impression of being a three-handed piano piece.

His late style did not, of course, extend solely to his instrumental music. The elements listed above can also be found in Liszt's vocal works and compositions specifically intended for choir, a significant proportion of which are a cappella, with alternative organ or orchestral accompaniment.

Salve Regina

One of the most unique pieces in his collection of twenty-nine minor church choral works is *Salve Regina*, as it is one of the few choral works that does not have instrumental accompaniment.

Although we find dynamic markings in the work, its title and Gregorian-style melody structure require a restrained volume and slow tempo even without them. The dynamic range thus extends from pianissimo to mezzo piano, with minor increases and tempo changes reflecting the intimacy of prayer.

In his treatise entitled *The Future of Church Music*, the composer placed great emphasis on a return to Gregorian roots and sought to put his principles into practice. During this period, a common practice in church music composition – as seen in the Cecilian movement and the practices of the *Cappella Sistina* – was the harmonization of Gregorian melodies. We can observe the application of this method in his organ piece, also titled *Salve Regina*:

E.g. 6



Franz Liszt, *Salve Regina*, bars 1-9

Unlike the instrumental version, the choral work does not contain any Gregorian melodies, which is unusual. In the case of the organ work, in the absence of any actual text, the use of melodies seems more justified, as the vocal composition already evokes the antiphon through its text.

It is quite unusual in the musical setting of this text that the composer uses only the first line of the antiphon: the address. He repeats this in various ways throughout the work in an extremely personal and intimate tone. According to Dolores Pesce, the frequent Marian theme in Liszt's late works is a sign of the composer's deepening devotion to the Virgin Mary.⁴

The work is therefore not a narrative piece. Instead of the programmatic nature often found in his oeuvre, it conveys a mood, which is why the melodies used radiate the intimate, simple, ethereal atmosphere characteristic of Gregorian chant.

⁴ Pesce, Dolores, *Liszt's Final Decade*. University of Rochester Press, 2014.

Liszt associates the short text passage with four different melodies, which return with minor modifications and repetitions along with the text. While most of the melodies convey the same lyrical mood as the accompaniment, the musical unit corresponding to the word "misericordiae" forms a significant contrast in terms of harmony and texture. This is what gives the work its internal tension.

With few exceptions, the parts mostly move in steps, with frequent melismas. We can discover the same Gregorian roots in the small-range parts from which Palestrina's music also grew. At the same time, the texture of the work is fundamentally different from Palestrina's imitative polyphony. The soprano can be considered the leading voice, but the other parts also retain their relative independence.

The work has its own unique breathing. Thus, similar to Palestrina, the musical process takes place in musical arcs larger than the beat. At the same time, Liszt divides the text passages with caesuras in places. This is particularly true of the musical setting of the word *misericordiae*, which always begins with a pause falling on a heavy beat.

E.g. 7

ma - - - - - ter mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae, mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae,
ma - - - - - ter mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae, mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae,
ma - - - - - ter mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae, mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae,
ma - - - - - ter mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae, mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae,

Franz Liszt, *Salve Regina*, bars 7-12

At the parts with the word *misericordiae*, Liszt creates a tense, sighing motif from alternating notes separated by a minor second. At the end, as the harmony clears, this melodic turn dissolves into a diatonic arc in the soprano, as we see in the musical example, bars 38-41:

E.g. 8

cor di ae, mi se ri cor di ae, *pp* mi se ri cor di ae, mi se ri cor di ae,
 cor di ae, mi se ri cor di ae, *pp* mi se ri cor di ae, mi se ri cor di ae,
 cor di ae, mi se ri cor di ae, *pp* mi se ri cor di ae, mi se ri cor di ae,
 cor di ae, mi se ri cor di ae, *pp* mi se ri cor di ae, mi se ri cor di ae.

Franz Liszt, *Salve Regina*, bars 35-41

In addition to diatonicism, Liszt also uses chromaticism for melodic and harmonic purposes, to create tension or color. In measure 15, the tenor part's melodic figure features an F sharp passing note in a dominant seventh chord, which lends a distinctive color to the chord.

E.g. 9

Franz Liszt, Salve Regina, bar 15

Finally, in the last bars, the soprano melody opens and, rising step by step, reaches the highest note in the work, a D5. Then it truly settles down and the piece clears up. This can be seen as a kind of culminating point.

The key of the composition is F major, but there are relatively few cadences reinforcing the key throughout the piece. While listening to the work, we can rightly sense its modal character due to the plagal cadences. For example, we encounter several passages ending on the submediant. At the same time, before the last chord, we do not encounter dominant harmony, we go from the mediant to the tonic.

43

diminuendo - - - - - pp

ter mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae.

diminuendo - - - - - pp

ter mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae.

diminuendo - - - - - pp

ter mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae.

diminuendo - - - - - pp

ter mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae.

Franz Liszt, *Salve Regina*, bars 46-49

The most characteristic detail of the composition is the harmonies accompanying the text *misericaordiae* beginning in the 9th bar. The composer uses extremely simple means to create an intensely dramatic atmosphere. He contrasts the bass and soprano parts with mirror-image minor seconds, “compressing” the harmonic structure and then stretching it apart in the repetition. Both chords are altered: the first is a subdominant minor chord in second inversion, and the second is a dominant seventh chord in third inversion with a diminished fifth (see e.g. 7).

In the 20th bar, we encounter another surprising harmonic progression, namely in the musical setting of the text *misericaordiae*: while the bass moves around the subtonic of D minor, the three upper voices move to a high chord (F major), and for a moment the C sharp in the bass sounds together with the C in the tenor. The extraordinary tension of this musical unit is resolved with a single sigh-like note.

E.g. 11

un poco ritenuto

19

-se - ri - cor - - di - ae,

-se - ri - cor - - di - ae,

-se - ri - cor - - di - ae,

-se - ri - cor - - di - ae,

Franz Liszt, *Salve Regina*, bars 19-21

In the 22nd bar, when the opening material returns, we encounter several minor modifications: the F sharp in the soprano is the raised third in D minor prepared in the previous measure (with a coloring and expressive effect), which changes back to a minor third after an upper passing note (inverted chromaticism) in the melody; for harmonic reasons, in the tenor part the note does not appear as B flat in the next bar, but functions as a seventh. Finally, the descending chromaticism of the bass further colors the sound.

E.g. 12

un poco ritenuto *A tempo*

19

-se - ri - cor - - di - ae, sal - - - ve Re - gi - - -

-se - ri - cor - - di - ae, sal - - - ve Re - gi - - -

-se - ri - cor - - di - ae, sal - - - ve Re - gi - - -

-se - ri - cor - - di - ae, sal - - - ve Re - gi - - -

Franz Liszt, *Salve Regina*, bars 19-23

We could even perceive that the composer prepared a D minor resolution in the previous measure, but instead, similar to the opening material, it surprisingly sounds in a major key. This is essentially a D minor resolution with a raised third, which is supported by the fact that the rest of the phrase resolves the third and closes in D minor.

This section is repeated, but this time with a dynamic marking of *pianissimo*, which acts as an intensification in the opposite direction. This lends the work a particularly loving tone, expressing sincere admiration for the Virgin Mary. The musical material is repeated in the following bars.

When the *misericordiae* part returns, the composer repeats the text over eight bars, so four times, but the melodies and harmonies are modified: he uses "multiple exit routes" for the same musical phenomenon.

From the 42nd bar, the relatively long-sounding conclusion of the work begins, in which there is an intensification compared to what we heard before. The soprano melody opens up and reaches the highest note of the work, then calms down over several long bars, while harmonically we move from a subdominant sound to F major with the help of basic seventh chords and plagal chord progressions.

From the perspective of musical form, the work is divided into two large sections, each with a closing section. The musical form is divided according to the text. Liszt strings together four musical themes, which are repeated with some expansion in the second section. The division is particularly interesting. The four materials show an arched structure in succession: A (4 bars), B (2+2 bars), C (2+2 bars), D (4 bars).

Since *Salve Regina* is a vocal piece, it raises questions of intonation: the ethereal beauty and harmonic tensions of the work are fully realized when the chords are executed with pure intonation.

The most intense passages of the work consistently coincide with the text *misericordiae*. For the dramatic effect to be fully realized, the bass voice must intonate the G-flat with a raised pitch, while the soprano must sustain the E with a lowered intonation (see e.g. 7).

From the perspective of vocal production, however, it is the measures 19–21 that demand the most attention. The bass voice is tasked with sustaining the C-sharp at a lowered pitch, despite the upward pull exerted on the harmony by all the remaining voices (see e.g. 11).

The primary consideration in the subsequent section — the varied recapitulation — is that the soprano arrives on a lowered F-sharp, to which the bass later responds by producing a raised B-flat following a lowered B-natural.

Following the recapitulations, additional tension emerges in the closing section, specifically on the third and fourth beats of measure 46, the

realization of which requires the soprano to sustain a raised B-flat. The sustained A in the subsequent measure, however, presents an intriguing challenge. The A must be lowered at the end of measure 47, yet despite the note being held for two further measures, its intonation does not necessarily remain constant. Although the deviation amounts to barely a single cent, it nonetheless illuminates the task of adjusting pitches relative to one another, as well as their inherent flexibility (see e.g. 10).

Conclusion

Franz Liszt is perhaps one of the most controversial figures in music history. When studying his biography, we encounter numerous episodes that justify his attachment to the church.

He always considered the church to be his calling, but he was only able to fulfill this desire in his old age. Of course, he did not give up composing, and, in fact he composed such significant ecclesiastical works as *Christus Oratorio* and *Missa Solemnis*. His late style equally pervades his sacred musical output.

Although his late music still bears traces of romantic traditions, it has a new tone; he produced a considerable number of works that verge on atonality. His church music is particularly restrained and refined. This can be seen in his short-mixed choir composition *Salve Regina*, which uses melodies reminiscent of Gregorian chants with a small melodic range and, unusually for the composer, no accompanying music.

Intimacy is also expressed in dynamics. Even without the composer's instructions, the message and the music demand restraint. However, this does not detract from the energy and intensity of the piece, as the colored harmonies, especially in the setting of the part with the text *miserericordiae*, create tension. This is how the contrasting nature of the work is expressed. The chord progressions lend a modal character to the composition, which may also be a reference to Palestrina's traditions.

Salve Regina is a unique and brilliant work in every aspect. However, the performance plays a central role in bringing this to fruition. This raises various questions of intonation, above all the importance of clear, acoustic principles of voice production.

In conclusion, *Salve Regina* occupies a unique place among Franz Liszt's sacred works in every aspect. We can discover in it the fundamental characteristics of his late style, which made the prayer set to music even more intimate. Through the composition, the composer's life is also seen in a different light. We see the composer with his difficult life behind the celebrated piano virtuoso, and beyond that, his musical confession of his faith.

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BÉLA BARTÓK: SONATA FOR SOLO VIOLIN

ELŐD GÁBOR¹ 

SUMMARY. Béla Bartók's personality was a defining force in the musical life of the 20th century. His musical legacy contains countless elements that, even today, 81 years after his death, continue to inspire performers around the world to return to his works with great enthusiasm. From folk roots to modern innovations, the works composed with an almost scientific precision have resulted in a final "product" that is both intellectual and powerfully expressive, both national and universal in character. In my article, I would like to offer readers a closer look at one of Bartók's last completed works from his mature period, and I can only hope that in doing so I contribute to the continuation of Bartók's musical legacy. This work is none other than the Sonata for Solo Violin, which the composer completed in March 1944 and dedicated to the renowned American violinist Yehudi Menuhin. In my work, I would like to discuss Bartók's final years spent in America, his meeting with Yehudi Menuhin, their friendship, as well as the main topic of this article—the Sonata for Solo Violin, its genesis, and its structure.

Keywords: Béla Bartók, sonata, violin, solo, analysis

The American Years

It was 1939, and at the end of November Bartók decided to accept the previously offered request, according to which he was invited to an American concert and lecture tour in May 1940. In one of his letters, he wrote that he did not even want to undertake such a long journey. It is more than likely that, due to the death of his mother on December 19, 1939, he felt he might leave Europe for a longer period. Thus, he wrote to Paul Sacher² in a letter from

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² Paul Sacher (1906-1999) – Swiss conductor, one of the most influential supporters of 20th-century music. Bartók wrote for him the famous *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* in 1936.



December 1939: "I am not at all happy about this trip, but now it has to happen."³ He devoted the income from this tour to his folk music research. In the United States, he had a large number of copies made of scores that had already been completed. Only later did it become clear that this publication far exceeded his financial means. Some consolation for Bartók was the fact that on this American tour he did not primarily value the concert fees, but rather that during his visit he established contact with Columbia University in New York. The university senate decided to award Bartók an honorary doctorate, allowing him to officially begin his research work there. At the same time, they began seeking financial resources to support his work in ethnomusicological research. It very much seemed that this commission was created to fulfill Bartók's final scholarly dream. Both children of the couple remained in Hungary, awaiting an opportunity to leave. The sea voyage lasted ten days, and they finally arrived in New York on October 30. The journey, like so many others, was not easy: baggage problems, delays, and inaccurate information seemed to confirm Bartók's lifelong pessimism. In the end, having lost their large luggage, they arrived successfully with just a single handbag. There is hardly anything different to say about his five years in America than what has already been said. These years were years of struggle and ordeal, first economically and later, unfortunately, physically as well. For his performances, he usually received a gross fee of 150–200 dollars, which only rarely offered any moral or intellectual reward as well. Contemporary newspapers (Time, Newsweek) outdid each other with such headlines about the Bartók couple's concerts as "Kitchen Sonata" or "New Footwork by Bartók." His only relatively secure source of income was the already mentioned Columbia University, and unfortunately even that was not always entirely certain. The university extended his contract only one semester at a time, which caused Bartók great anxiety. His livelihood came from many small, low-budget concerts as well as from the research work, he carried out at the university. The greatest problem, however, was that his final illness was approaching. In addition to his persistent joint problems - which had in fact plagued the composer for years - he had been suffering from continuous fever since April 1942. Despite this, throughout the year he carried out his work with remarkable endurance, up until his collapse in February 1943. With this, the low point of the American years arrived, and the diagnosis was made myeloid leukemia. Only later did it become clear that at the time the composer had not been informed of the true diagnosis of his illness. After the previously mentioned health collapse and the subsequent radiation treatment at Mount Sinai Hospital, he was permanently

³ The original Hungarian text: „Ennek az útnak egyáltalában nem örülök, de most már meg kell történnie.” (Tallán Tibor: Bartók Béla, p.345)

discouraged from giving public concerts. The medical expenses he had incurred up to that point had already been costly, and those that followed required even more money - far more than Bartók could have afforded. For this reason, his friends began to organize support. Many people rushed almost immediately to Bartók's aid, among them Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge⁴, Irving Kolodin⁵, József Szigeti⁶, Serge Koussevitzky⁷, Ernő Balogh⁸, and ASCAP, as well as likely many others. It should be noted that ASCAP⁹ (the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) supported the composer throughout his medical treatments and periods of rest. It later emerged - through Béla Bartók Jr.¹⁰ - that these financial aids were in fact advances charged against the composer's future royalties. In the summer of 1943, after treatments in Saranac Lake, Bartók began to feel better. His physical and mental strength visibly increased, he rested, read, worked with Romanian materials, and, of course, resumed composing. At this time, he composed the *Concerto for Orchestra*, commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation, which also helped ease his difficult financial situation. After this first major American work, events continued to unfold rapidly, Bartók alternated between periods of illness and improvement. Following the premiere of the *Concerto for Orchestra*, interest in his music began to grow noticeably - one might even say that a kind of Bartók cult was beginning to emerge. His last complete work was *Piano Concerto No. 3*, which he finished in 1945 (by that time he was already working extensively on the *Viola Concerto* as well). It is an interesting fact that the *Viola Concerto*, commissioned by William Primrose¹¹ in January 1945, was placed "only" second in priority by the composer, first place was given to the aforementioned *Piano Concerto No. 3*, which he dedicated to his wife. It seems likely that by the summer of 1945 Bartók sensed that his time was limited. He set aside the *Viola Concerto* - having completed it in draft form - and wished to finalize the full score of the *Piano Concerto No. 3*. In a letter dated September 8, 1945, he wrote to violist William Primrose about the work:

⁴ Elisabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864-1953) – American music patron and philanthropist, renowned for her significant contributions to classical music.

⁵ Irving Kolodin (1908-1988) – American author, music historian and music critic.

⁶ József Szigeti (1892-1973) – Hungarian violinist and pedagogue. Premiering works by composers such as Bartók Béla or Kodály Zoltán.

⁷ Serge Koussevitzky (1874-1951) – Russian born composer, conductor and music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

⁸ Ernő Balogh (1897-1989) – Hungarian-born pianist and teacher.

⁹ ASCAP was founded in 1914 and it is a U.S.-based organization that protects the rights of its members by licensing and collecting royalties for the public performance of their music.

¹⁰ Béla Bartók Jr. (1910-1994) – Older son of Béla Bartók.

¹¹ William Primrose (1904-1982) – Scottish violist, regarded as one of the greatest viola players of the 20th century.

"I am very pleased to inform you that your Viola Concerto is finished in draft, so that only the orchestration remains to be written, which, so to speak, is merely mechanical work."¹²

Unfortunately, there was no time left for the "mechanical work." The piece was completed by Tibor Serly¹³, who belonged to Bartók's circle of friends in America. It took Serly four years, based on Bartók's notes, to prepare the viola part of the work. It should also be mentioned that in later years a new reconstruction of the Viola Concerto was created by Csaba Erdélyi¹⁴, who remarked: "The Piano Concerto No. 3 portrays Ditta, while the Viola Concerto is the self-portrait of Bartók in his final months."¹⁵ On August 30, 1945, Bartók's condition once again worsened, by evening he was extremely exhausted and had a fever again. By September 21 his condition had become critical, and he had to be taken to the hospital immediately. According to the recollection of Péter Bartók, while they were waiting for the ambulance, the weakened composer asked his son to draw the final seventeen bar lines into the score of the Piano Concerto, afterward, the composer himself drew the closing double bar line.

Béla Bartók died on September 26, 1945, in the West Side Hospital in New York.

Bartók and Menuhin

The friendship between Béla Bartók and Yehudi Menuhin¹⁶ began in 1943, when Menuhin included the composer's First Sonata for Violin and Piano in his program. At that time, the 27-year-old Menuhin already enjoyed considerable international fame, not only in the United States but also in Europe. In October 1943, the Bartók couple had just returned to New York from Saranac Lake, (where the composer had been recovering and resting) because he very much wanted to hear a performance of his Violin Concerto, which he had never heard before with orchestral accompaniment. It is an interesting fact that even after the turn of the century, it was still common practice for concertos to be accompanied by a single piano. Meanwhile, Menuhin also learned the Violin Concerto and performed it in Minneapolis in November of that same year. At his next concert, the young violinist

¹² Tallián Tibor: *Bartók Béla*, p. 404

¹³ Tibor Serly (1901-1978) – Hungarian American composer, violist, student and friend of Béla Bartók.

¹⁴ Csaba Erdélyi (1946) – Hungarian-born violist, soloist, chamber musician, teacher.

¹⁵ Erdélyi Csaba, „Béla Bartók: Viola Concerto. Erdélyi Restoration. Foreword to the Critical Edition”(Wellington, New Zealand: *Promethean Editions*, 2004), pp. III-V.

¹⁶ Yehudi Menuhin (1916-1999) – American-born violinist and conductor.

programmed the already mentioned First Sonata for Violin and Piano, as well as Bach's Sonata in C major for solo violin, at Carnegie Hall. That was when they met for the first time. While he was studying the sonata, the young Yehudi Menuhin wrote a letter to Béla Bartók, asking whether they might meet so that the composer could listen to the sonata and offer him a few comments. Bartók accepted Menuhin's request, and the meeting soon took place at the home of one of Menuhin's friends, "Auntie Kitty" Perera, herself a violinist and a close friend of the conductor Arturo Toscanini. The meeting was held in Perera's apartment on Park Avenue. After Menuhin and his pianist had performed the first movement, Bartók rose from his chair and said:

"I did not think music could be played like that until long after the composer was dead.¹⁷" From that day on, their friendship lasted until the composer's death.

The commission

In November 1943, during the meeting between Bartók Béla and Yehudi Menuhin, the young violinist was well aware that the composer's health was fragile, and he also knew that his financial circumstances were far from favorable. After performing the First Violin Sonata together with Adolph Baller¹⁸ for Bartók, Menuhin asked the composer whether he would write a piece for him, thereby helping to ease his already strained financial situation. Bartók never accepted financial loans from anyone, he was too proud for that¹⁹. We do not know what Yehudi Menuhin might have expected. Perhaps he thought he would receive another sonata with piano accompaniment, or possibly a rhapsody, as Székely Zoltán or Szigeti József had earlier²⁰. At that time, Menuhin could not yet have suspected that he would probably receive one of the masterpieces of the twentieth century from Bartók Béla. Four months after the commission, in March 1944, Yehudi Menuhin received the first letter from the composer, enclosing a four-movement sonata for solo violin. Menuhin later stated that when he first looked through the work, he began to tremble, thinking it was unplayable.

¹⁷ Yehudi, Menuhin. „Unfinished Journey” . Great Britain: *Macdonald and Jane's Publishers Limited*, 1976. p.169

¹⁸ Adolph Baller (1898-1994) – Austrian-born American pianist, chamber musician and teacher.

¹⁹ Yehudi, Menuhin. „Unfinished Journey” . Great Britain: *Macdonald and Jane's Publishers Limited*, 1976. p. 171

²⁰ Bartók composed in 1924 (Sz.86, BB 94) for Székely Zoltán and Szigeti József. These pieces are celebrated for their virtuosic violin writing, intricate rhythms, and folk-inspired melodic language.

Later, however, he realized that he had drawn a hasty and mistaken conclusion at first, and that the piece was indeed playable on the violin - dramatic yet deeply satisfying. He also added: since the Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin by Johann Sebastian Bach, no one had written a work of such caliber for solo violin. Menuhin paid for Bartók 500 US dollars for the Solo Sonata, 250 as an advance and another 250 after the work was completed. And before we think that this might seem like a rather small amount for a work of such caliber, I looked into it and converted the 500 dollars from 1944 into today's value in 2026, naturally taking inflation into account. So what was 500 dollars in 1944 would be approximately 9,000 US dollars today. I believe that this was therefore quite a substantial and fair sum at the time as well. At the same time, I would like to present a list — that very list (which many of you have probably already seen or are familiar with) — compiled by Dr. Herbert R. Axelrod²¹ and Todd M. Axelrod²² in the famous Heifetz biography. The list below was published by the New York Philharmonic for its 1949–1950 season.

Figure 1²³

Fees Paid by N.Y. Philharmonic Society to Assisting Artists		
Date	Soloist	Fee
Nov. 17, 18, 1949	Ginette Martenot	\$200
Nov. 24, 25, 27, 1949	Jacques Abram	\$2150
Dec. 1, 2, 4, 1949	Isaac Stern	\$2800
Dec. 15, 16, 18, 1949	Joseph Szigeti	\$2800
Dec. 22, 23, 25, 1949	Elinor Warren (singer)	\$150
Dec. 22, 23, 25, 1949	Astrid Varnay	\$1200
Dec. 22, 23, 25, 1949	Frederick Jagel	\$1000
Dec. 22, 23, 25, 1949	Herbert Janasen	\$1000
Dec. 22, 23, 25, 1949	Irene Jessner	\$950
Dec. 22, 23, 25, 1949	Elena Nikolaidi	\$1200
Dec. 22, 23, 25, 1949	Michael Rhodes	\$350
Dec. 29, 30, 1949	Oscar Levant	\$3500
Jan. 5, 6, 7, 8, 1950	Rudolf Serkin	\$4100
Jan. 14, 15, 1950	Szymon Goldberg	\$1350
Jan. 19, 20, 22, 1950	Zino Francescatti	\$3600
Jan. 21, 1950	Leonard Pennario	\$300
Jan. 26, 27, 29, 1950	Casadesus	\$4150
Feb. 2, 3, 5, 1950	Myra Hess	\$7000
Feb. 5, 1950	Rudolf Firkušny	\$350
Feb. 11, 1950	Nikita Magaloff	\$300
Feb. 16, 17, 19, 1950	Jascha Heifetz	\$9500
Feb. 23, 24, 26, 1950	Lukas Foss	\$550
March 16, 17, 19, 1950	Nathan Milstein	\$3800
March 18, 1950	Miriam Solovieff	\$250
March 23, 24, 26, 1950	Artur Rubinstein	\$8000
March 25, 1950	Moura Lympany	\$300
April 1, 1950	Joseph Battista	\$250
April 6, 7, 9, 1950	Camilla Williams	\$500
April 6, 7, 9, 1950	Carlos Alexander	\$450
April 6, 7, 9, 1950	Uta Graf	\$500
April 6, 7, 9, 1950	Frances Yeend	\$700
April 6, 7, 9, 1950	George London	\$500
April 6, 7, 9, 1950	Louise Bernhardt	\$400
April 6, 7, 9, 1950	Martha Lipton	\$600
April 6, 7, 9, 1950	Eugene Conley	\$700
April 13, 1950	Adolph Andersen	\$100
April 22, 1950	Leonid Hambro	\$200

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²¹ Dr. Herbert R. Axelrod (1927-2017) – American publisher and philanthropist.

²² Todd M. Axelrod (1949) – American businessman and autograph dealer.

²³ Dr. Herbert R. Axelrod & Todd M. Axelrod: HEIFETZ, Published by PAGANINIANA PUBLICATIONS, INC. 211 West Sylvania Avenue, Neptune City, NJ 07753, p.12

The solo sonata

Tempo di Ciaccona

At that particular New York concert, when Béla Bartók heard Yehudi Menuhin perform, the program (in addition to the already mentioned First Violin Sonata) also included the Solo Sonata in C major by Johann Sebastian Bach. It is likely that Bartók modeled the structure of his own work on this sonata. In the Baroque period, a shorter introductory movement — a kind of quasi-fantasia — was typically written before a fugue²⁴. In Bartók's case, this is omitted, and he begins immediately with a *Tempo di Ciaccona* movement, thereby paying homage to Bach's D minor *Chaconne*. It is also worth mentioning that Bartók's work is in G minor, just like Bach's First Solo Sonata²⁵. Like every "classical" Ciaccona, this one is likewise in 3/4, and it is based on the Sarabande dance movement. Johann Sebastian Bach's Chaconne, however, begins with a rest on the downbeat, therefore, in effect, the emphasis always falls on the second beat of the measure.

E.g. 1



Johann Sebastian Bach: *Ciaccona*, BWV1004, mm. 1-5

E.g. 2



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, 1st mvt., mm. 1-3

²⁴ Johann Sebastian Bach, Johann Georg Pisendel, and even Georg Philipp Telemann wrote works for solo violin. Almost without exception, each of them composed a slower, fantasy-like movement preceding the fugue that followed. In many cases, these fugues already contain the "DNA" of the preceding movements, carrying forward their musical ideas and motifs.

²⁵ First sonata for solo violin – BWV1001

But as I already mentioned, fundamentally it is based on the Sarabande dance movement.

E.g. 3



Johann Sebastian Bach: *Sarabanda*, BWV1004, mm. 1-4

In the examples presented above, Bartók's homage to Bach is clearly evident. After the first section of the main theme already discussed, Bartók continues with a highly rhythmic counterpoint, which he had in fact already introduced on the second beat of the third measure. It may not be an exaggeration to say that in this counterpoint he very skillfully incorporated a distinctly Hungarian character as well.

E.g. 4



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, mm. 9-11

The somewhat contorted main theme comes together into a symmetrical whole over the course of sixteen measures. From measure seventeen onward, the secondary theme appears, which - like the main theme - is another homage to Johann Sebastian Bach. The latent polyphony beginning with pizzicato strongly resembles Johann Sebastian Bach's d-minor Harpsichord Concerto²⁶, BWV 1052 (it is worth noting here that contemporary musicological research tends to regard this concerto as originally a violin concerto).

²⁶ In the official catalogue, this work is listed as a harpsichord concerto, however, many Bach scholars question the authenticity of this designation. According to certain theories, it was originally written for violin and orchestra and only later transcribed for harpsichord. Nowadays, an increasing number of performers play the concerto on the violin as well, under the catalogue number BWV 1052R (Reconstruction).

BÉLA BARTÓK: SONATA FOR SOLO VIOLIN

E.g. 5



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, mm. 15-17

E.g. 6



Johann Sebastian Bach: Harpsichord concerto, *Allegro*, BWV1052, mm. 60-62

Bartók also concludes the secondary theme with a sharply articulated, distinctly Hungarian rhythm²⁷.

E.g. 7



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, mm. 30-31

He introduces the third and final theme in measure 32 with a very gentle triplet figure (Bartók even explicitly indicates a piano dynamic marking). Four measures later, he presents the same closing theme a fifth higher, in much the same way as Hungarian folk songs are traditionally structured.

²⁷ Similarly to the Hungarian language, the accent generally falls on the first syllable of the word.



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, mm. 30-37

And since we are speaking of a closing theme, it is worth mentioning that here Bartók employs the large-scale sonata form that Joseph Haydn began to shape freely, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart consolidated, and which Ludwig van Beethoven ultimately developed further - one might even say that under Beethoven this form truly reached its full maturity. In fact, the formal structures of Beethoven's late string quartets seem to resonate here. All this clearly shows that the Solo Sonata is constructed in a truly "classical" manner. It was no coincidence that I mentioned Beethoven a moment ago, since the development section of the movement also bears a strong resemblance to Beethoven's treatment of development. I am referring in particular to the very first measure of the development section.



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, mm. 53-54

It is sufficient to look at the main theme of the solo part in Ludwig van Beethoven's Violin Concerto and the beginning of its development section. The main theme, as we know, is in D major, whereas the development continues in C major. But the formal structure is the same.

E.g. 10,11



Ludwig van Beethoven: *Violin concerto in D major*, op. 61, 1st mvm.,
mm. 89-90; 279-285

What follows is also particularly interesting, as Bartók, making use of the main theme, inserts a canon.

E.g. 12



Bartók Béla: *Sonata for solo violin*, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, mm. 56-61

Subsequently, the composer introduces a highly interesting “dialogue,” juxtaposing a shimmering legato character that moves in sixths with a raw and a brutal character built from triplet seconds. Here, the composer even explicitly marks the character as *ruvido*²⁸ (rough) - an indication one does not encounter every day.

²⁸ In string playing, it suggests a slightly gritty, strongly articulated sound quality rather than a smooth, lyrical one.

E.g. 13

Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, mm. 75-76

This is followed by the recapitulation. In the recapitulation, Bartók once again brings back the main theme, the secondary theme, and the closing theme - naturally not in exactly the same way as in the exposition. Before moving on to the coda, a very dear friend of mine pointed out that in measure 108 the sixths closely resemble the opening theme of the Fifth String Quartet.

E.g. 14

Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, mm. 107-109

E.g. 15

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Violoncello

♩ . 138 - 132

Bartók Béla: *String Quartet no. 5*, 1st mvm., mm. 1-3

The composer concludes the coda with the motif already introduced in the main theme, and, as there, one could say that he intended to provide the work with a kind of summary or framing.

E.g. 16



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Tempo di Ciaccona*, mm. 137-140

Fuga

Just as in Bach's C major solo sonata, the second movement here is also a fugue. The only difference is that while Bach's fugue is in three voices, Bartók here experiments with a four-voice fugue, and does so with considerable success. Menuhin uses the following words to introduce the fugue: "*Then comes the violence of the Fuga, perhaps the most aggressive, even brutal, music I play.*"²⁹

The main subject of the fugue is essentially based on the coexistence of major and minor thirds, that is, at the beginning we cannot really decide whether it is in C major or C minor.

E.g. 17



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Fuga*, mm. 1-4

²⁹ Yehudi, Menuhin. „Unfinished Journey” . Great Britain: Macdonald and Jane's Publishers Limited, 1976. p. 171

Essentially, here too the composer contrasts two characters: first, the brutal, *risoluto*³⁰ character of the main theme, which lasts for four full measures, and in the final measure (which still belongs to the main theme), it concludes the subject with a legato character. In fact, after each statement of the fugue subject, it is always the legato that ultimately prevails.

E.g. 18



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Fuga*, mm. 1-8

It is also worth noting that Bartók introduces each voice into the fugue in a very classical manner. The first, of course, appears in the home key, the second enters a fifth higher (as Johann Sebastian Bach so often does in his fugues) the third returns to the home key, only an octave higher, and the last - that is, the fourth voice - again enters a fifth higher than the third voice. With the presentation of the subjects at the fifth, I can only repeat what I mentioned about the first movement: the stylistic features of folk music are very strongly perceptible.

I would also consider it worth highlighting the pizzicatos in one of the fugue's episodes. We all know that Bartók could not play the violin at all, however, just like other pianist-composers, he had outstanding violinist friends. It is enough to mention Szigeti József and Székely Zoltán. Similarly, in the case of Johannes Brahms - who was also a pianist composer - he played extensively with Reményi Ede³¹ and, of course, with Joseph Joachim³² as well. I considered this important to mention because, although they were

³⁰ Like most musical terms, this one also originates from the Italian language. Its meaning is: resolute, determined, or firm. In performance, it indicates that a passage should be played with strong character, confidence, and decisiveness. Giacomo Puccini makes frequent use of this character in his operas.

³¹ Ede Reményi (1828-1898) – Hungarian violinist and composer. He had an important role in the early career of Johannes Brahms.

³² Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) – Hungarian violonist, violist, composer and teacher. Many premieres of romantic violin concertos are associated with his name.

not violinists themselves (unlike earlier composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach or Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart), they nevertheless had a very clear understanding of what could and could not be effectively written for the violin.

Returning to the previously mentioned pizzicatos, Bartók uses them very boldly. At a fairly fast tempo, immediately after passages of sixteenth-note motion, he suddenly writes double-stop pizzicatos. Often, they move in octaves, but there are also instances where the upper voice moves downward while the lower voice moves upward.

E.g.19



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Fuga*, mm.65-67

It is also worth mentioning what is nowadays commonly referred to as the *Bartók pizzicato*. This means that the string must be plucked much more forcefully and from a different angle, so that it snaps back against the fingerboard of the violin. In this way, it creates a truly authentic folk-like atmosphere. Here I would add that it seems quite possible that the composer may have had in mind the so-called ÜTŐGARDON³³, an instrument used primarily in the Gyimes³⁴ region in Transylvania.

E.g. 20



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Fuga*, mm. 68-70

³³ Its shape resembles that of a cello, yet it is played in a completely different way. The body of the instrument is carved from a single piece of solid wood. The player holds it between their legs, and sometimes a strap is attached so it can also be played in a standing position. It has four strings, usually made of sheep gut. The instrument is played by striking the strings with a wooden stick in the right hand, while the left hand plucks the top string simultaneously. It primarily serves a rhythmic role in Hungarian folk music. Its tuning is D–D–D–d.

³⁴ Gyimes (Ghimeş) - is a region in the Eastern Carpathians, traditionally inhabited by ethnic Hungarians known as Csángós.

Listening to Yehudi Menuhin's recording of this work, I noticed that from measure 95 of the fugue movement, in the paired sixteenth-note passages, he plays these notes with a certain asymmetry. There is no indication in the score referring to this, yet I find it interesting, since in the Baroque period - especially in French-speaking regions - the so-called *notes inégales* style was used very frequently. That is, a strong hierarchy was applied between the notes. Of course, we do not know whether we are simply hearing the performer's personal taste, or whether it is possible that Bartók himself may have suggested this approach to the then young violinist.

E.g. 21



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Fuga*, mm. 93-96

The composer closes the fugue movement in a similar way, with a broad legato passage lasting two measures, beginning in forte and gradually diminishing to piano pianissimo. At the same time, he incorporates a diminuendo, a left-hand pizzicato, and even a long glissando. After this, as a surprise, the head of the fugue subject appears once again.

E.g. 22



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Fuga*, mm. 101-107

Melodia

The movement following the third fugue of the solo sonata is the *Melodia*, and just like Baroque (solo) sonatas in general, it is a slow movement. The movement is built on a ternary A-B-A form; therefore, it can be considered completely classical in structure. If we take a closer look at

section A, we can observe that it essentially consists of a four-line melody, which is followed by a small extension at the end. In order to understand it better, I feel that it is absolutely necessary to show it in the score. I will mark the melodic line with one color and the extension with another.

E.g. 23

Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Melodia*, mm. 1-27

I find it interesting that the *Melodia* movement begins in the same way as Double Concerto for Violin and Cello by Johannes Brahms, except that Béla Bartók starts it a semitone higher.

E.g. 24, 25

Johannes Brahms: Double concerto For Violin, Cello and orchestra, 2nd mvm., mm. 1-4

Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Melodia*, mm. 1-2

The structure of section B is similar as well: there is always a given melody followed by a short extension. Here I would like to note that the development section of this movement bears a striking resemblance to the development section of Piano Concerto No. 3 by Béla Bartók. Researchers dealing with Bartók's works often refer to this passage as "birdsong."

E.g. 26



Bartók Béla: Sonata for violin solo, *Melodia*, mm. 28-33

Measure 49, that is, the returning A section, begins with a variation similar to the main theme, but here the composer already asks for *sordino*³⁵.

I consider it important to highlight that in the sixteenth-note motion written in the second and third beats of measure 51, the composer - just as in the fugue - requests an *inégal* style of playing from the performer. The folk-like construction is present here as well, namely the already mentioned melody–extension structure.

At the end of the movement, he repeats the "birdsong" motif, which he concludes with a *poco rallentando*³⁶. *Melodia* closes with pure, transparent harmonics, and the composer writes in a diminuendo lasting for two measures.

Presto

The fourth *Presto* movement begins with a repetitive introduction built on sixteenth-note motion. If we think back to the ending of the third movement (*Melodia*), it almost makes sense why the composer asks for a

³⁵ The sordino, historically made of wood and nowadays often made of rubber or even aluminum, is placed on the bridge of the instrument by the player. This prevents vibrations from being transmitted as strongly to the body of the instrument, producing a much quieter and more intimate sound. Composers usually request it to change the tone color rather than to reduce volume.

³⁶ Less extreme than a full *rallentando* or *ritardando*, suggesting only a subtle deceleration to add expressiveness or emphasis to a passage.

mute (*con sordino*) at the beginning of the *Presto*. Moreover, Bartók even instructs the performer to play *punta d'arco*, which means playing on the upper half of the bow, with a less defined tone and more in the string. This also shows that although Bartók was a pianist, he knew very well what could and could not be effectively composed for the violin. Incidentally, when Menuhin first received the initial copy of the sonata, it was the fourth movement that seemed unplayable to him, mainly because of the passages involving quarter-tone motion. I would now like to quote from one of the letters that Béla Bartók wrote to Yehudi Menuhin on April 21, 1944:

"The quarter-tones in the 4th movement have only colour-giving character, i.e. they are not 'structural' features, and therefore may be eliminated, as I tried to do so in the alternatives on the last page, which you may use if you don't feel inclined to worry about quarter-tone playing.³⁷"

So that the reader can better perceive the significant difference between the two scores, I will include one example from each. The first is a Russian edition containing the version approved by Yehudi Menuhin, while the second is the Urtext version published by Péter Bartók, which is based directly and entirely on the original manuscript.

E.g. 27

Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Presto*, mm. 1-7

E.g. 28

Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Presto*, mm. 1-7

³⁷ Preface from the Sonata for solo violin, Urtext Edition, *Boosey and Hawkes*, Copyright 1994 by Péter Bartók.

After the three-page introduction (depending on which edition one is playing from), a rather virtuosic transition follows, and then the principal motif of the sonata's first movement reappears. I deliberately used the word *virtuosic*, since this previously mentioned main theme must already be played without the mute, and in fact there is no time to remove it from the bridge. Therefore, while plucking an open D string³⁸ (with a left-hand pizzicato, of course), one must gently remove the mute at the same time.

E.g. 29

Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Presto*, mm. 94-107

As we have already come to expect from Béla Bartók, he never writes the same idea twice in exactly the same way. We can observe that he introduces the G minor theme in a 2/8 pulse, even though the movement itself is in 3/8. This creates an interesting hemiola-like effect. After a short interlude, he once again brings back the main theme of the movement with the sixteenth-note motion, again *con sordino* and with the *punta d'arco* character. It is no coincidence that I said he “brings back” the main theme, since we are dealing with a movement that is quite rondo-like in form.

In measure 270, Béla Bartók marks *Tranquillo*³⁹, and this is truly the point where everyone can relax a little — the performer, the listener, and perhaps even Bartók himself. Here the composer introduces a very lyrical, yet at the same time hopeless melody. In the final five measures of this section, he indicates an *accelerando*⁴⁰ and once again brings back the

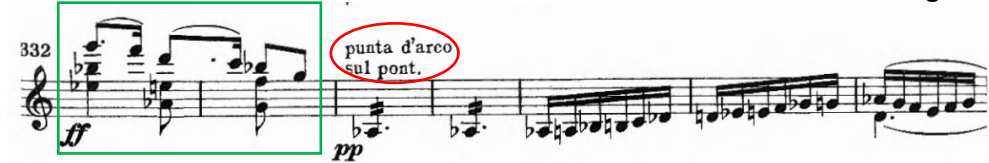
³⁸ This motion is very similar to the pizzicato technique used on the ütőgárdony. And, not incidentally, here too the D string is plucked, just like on the previously mentioned instrument.

³⁹ A passage marked *tranquillo* in a violin piece would be played softly, evenly, and with a sense of calmness.

⁴⁰ Its meaning is a gradual speeding up from a given tempo. Typically, this process lasts for at least two measures and can extend over several more.

previously mentioned G minor theme. This is followed by another interlude, which again begins with sixteenth-note motion, and the composer once more indicates *punta d'arco*, this time accompanied by *sul ponticello*⁴¹.

E.g. 30



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Presto*, mm. 332-338

The movement is concluded with a coda featuring a descending chromatic melody, which ends with the extension already familiar from the *Melodia* movement, played as a harmonic. However, it does not stop there, this is followed by a four-bar passage of sixteenth-note scales that begin pianissimo and culminate in a G major chord played fortissimo.

E.g. 31



Bartók Béla: Sonata for solo violin, *Presto*, mm. 413-419

Conclusions

In my article, I sought to present a more in-depth portrayal of Béla Bartók's uniquely remarkable Sonata for Solo Violin. I consider the publication of this article important because I feel that, even with this small contribution, I can help preserve Bartók's legacy. I aimed to introduce the period before the composer's arrival in America as well as his years in the United States. I also discussed his friendship with Yehudi Menuhin, one of the most outstanding violinists of the twentieth century and addressed the circumstances surrounding the commission of the work to the extent possible.

⁴¹ Just like using *sul tasto* or a *sordino*, this is a type of tone color change in music. As the name suggests, it is played near the bridge to achieve this effect.

Afterwards, I endeavored to provide a comprehensive analysis of all four movements of the piece. Naturally, there are still shortcomings, and I myself have many unanswered questions, however, I intend to find answers to these as soon as possible in the near future.

I hope that my article will assist those readers, researchers, enthusiasts, and, of course, violinists who are interested in Bartók's oeuvre, life path, and compositions.

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BETWEEN ROMANTICISM AND FOLKLORE: ANALYSIS OF AMY BEACH'S *VARIATIONS ON BALKAN THEMES*, OP. 60

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SUMMARY. This article provides an in-depth analysis of Amy Beach's piano composition *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60 (1906), one of her most significant Romantic works. The four Balkan folk songs ("O Maiko Moya," "Stara Planina," "Nasadil e Dado," and a Macedonian plea) serve as source material for eight variations and a coda. Using Beach's own notes and scholarly sources, we identify each theme's role (e.g. "O Maiko Moya" opens the work and underlies Variations I–V; "Stara Planina" introduces Variation VI; etc.). We also consider the piece's publication history, noting its original 1906 solo-piano edition and later versions (1936 revised solo, 1942 two-piano, and a partial orchestration). The analysis shows how Beach begins with character-like variations closely following the theme, then gradually "opens up" into freer, rhapsodic writing, unifying the set through motivic development. This contribution enriches the literature on American women composers and suggests avenues for future research, such as performance practice and comparisons to related works (e.g. Dvořák's folk-song variations).

Keywords: Amy Beach; solo piano; variations; Balkan folk music; Romantic piano music; women composers

1. Introduction

Amy Beach (1867–1944) was a pioneering American composer and pianist, often called the first successful female American composer³. She was born on September 5, 1867, in Henniker, New Hampshire. A child prodigy

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³ Block, Adrienne Fried. *Amy Beach, Passionate Victorian: The Life and Work of an American Composer, 1867–1944*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 2.



on the piano, she married surgeon Henry H. A. Beach in 1885 (at age 18), after which her husband insisted she limit public performances to focus on composition. Beach's compositional output grew in this period, including her celebrated *Gaelic Symphony* (1896). After being widowed in 1910 and losing her mother the same year, she toured Europe before settling back in the U.S. to compose.⁴

By the early 1900s, Beach had established herself as a leading composer. In 1904 she composed *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60, completed in Germany and published in Boston in 1906. This piece, for solo piano, is written in C# minor and typically lasts 25–30 minutes. It is notable for its technical difficulty and scale; as one scholar notes, it is “her longest and most technically demanding work for solo piano”. The variation set is based on four folk songs from the Balkans, which Beach had learned from the missionary Sleeper family.⁵ These exotic melodies and the work's free-form variation structure make the piece a rich example of early 20th-century folk-influenced Romanticism. This article will analyze the structure, themes, and style of *Variations on Balkan Themes*, drawing on primary sources (the 1906 score) and relevant scholarship.

2. Literature Review

The most detailed existing analysis of Beach's *Variations on Balkan Themes* is by E. Douglas Bomberger, who studies its motivic development and form. Bomberger shows that the work belongs to the tradition of *free* or *fantasia* variations: it begins with a theme followed by variations that increasingly depart from the theme's original structure.⁶ He points out that Beach's early variations (I–V) adhere closely to the opening theme, but later ones introduce new thematic material and extended codas. Bomberger also transcribes Beach's source themes and traces how they appear in the piece (as detailed below). Bomberger's conclusion is that Beach gradually “opens up” her form, using a unifying three-note motif from the first theme to bind the set.

In correspondence regarding Beach's score, it is noted that Beach's thematic choices may evoke Beethoven's style of variation, suggesting a

⁴ Winzenried, Rebecca. “Amy Beach (1867–1944): Biography, Music + More.” *The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center*, accessed 10 March 2026, <https://www.chambermusicsociety.org/about-the-music/composers/amy-beach>

⁵ Bomberger, E. Douglas. “Motivic Development in Amy Beach's *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60.” *American Music* 10, no. 3, 1992: pp. 326–327.

⁶ Nelson, Robert U. *The Technique of Variation: A Study of the Instrumental Variation from Antonio de Cabezón to Max Reger*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948, pp. 121–125.

classical influence. While this short note adds historical perspective, it does not contain a full analysis.

The recent DMA dissertation by Yiwen Zhang covers *Variations on Balkan Themes* comprehensively.⁷ Zhang's abstract confirms that four versions of the work exist (the original 1906 solo, a 1936 revised solo, a 1942 two-piano version, and an orchestral arrangement in fragments). Zhang analyzes these versions and provides historical background on the Sleeper songs. Our study focuses on the original version but notes these editions for completeness.

Biographical sources help contextualize Beach's late-Romantic style. According to Winzenried (Chamber Music Society biography), Beach was known as a gifted composer who had to subsume her performance career after marriage. Her capacity for dramatic, richly colored music is evident throughout her works. No prior studies in Romanian have treated this specific piece, so our literature review draws mainly on English-language scholarship.

3. Methodology

This study uses a musicological analysis approach, combining score analysis with historical research. The primary source is Beach's 1906 piano score (Arthur P. Schmidt edition). We identify thematic material by comparing Beach's score with published folk song sources (as cited in Beach's preface). Secondary sources include Beach's own notes, scholarly articles, and dissertations.

4. Analysis of Variations on Balkan Themes

4.1. Thematic Material and Sources

Beach's variation set is built on four Balkan folk tunes, all relayed to her by Rev. W. W. Sleeper and his family. The four themes, in the order they appear, are:

- **"O Maiko Moya"**: The first theme, in C# minor, of five four-measure phrases. It "opens the work" and forms the basis of Variations I–V (and again Variation VII).
- **"Stara Planina"**: A slower theme in F# minor, introduced as a prelude to Variation VI.

⁷ Zhang, Yiwen. *An Analysis of Amy Beach's Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60. DMA diss. West Virginia University, 2021.

- “**Nasadil e Dado**”: A lively tune, quoted at the end of Variation VI.
- “**Macedonia**” (untitled plea): A sorrowful melody (Beach’s “Macedonian appeal for help”) that begins Variation VIII.

Beach’s published preface describes these tunes as “of unknown origin” and ubiquitous in the Balkans, passed down by generations. We accept Beach’s crediting of Sleeper’s collection as the source.

4.2. Form and Structure

Variations on Balkan Themes takes the form of a theme (Adagio) followed by eight variations and a coda².

E.g. 1



Amy Beach, *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60, mm. 1–4

The structure is: Theme (mm. 1–20), Variations I–V, Variation VI (double-section dance), Variation VII (Andante-like), Variation VIII (Adagio finale), then a brief *Da capo*.

In the early variations (I–V), Beach treats the initial theme *O Maiko Moya* in a *character variation* manner. For example, Variation I (*Poco allegro*) speeds up the rhythm, Variation II (*Ritardando*) slows it, Variation III (*Tempo primo*) recapitulates it, Variation IV (*Poco sostenuto*) provides a broad, sustained take, and Variation V (*Poco animato*) turns into a spirited Hungarian-style dance. Only the original three-note motive of “*O Maiko Moya*” remains constant in all these variations, though Beach frequently alters the harmony and texture.

After Variation V, Beach introduces the second theme. An Andante “*Stara Planina*” in F# minor serves as a slow prelude to Variation VI. Variation VI is essentially a long dance (Hungarian *lassu-friss* form). Bomberger notes its two fast sections: the first is based on the original “*O Maiko Moya*” motive,

and the second (in F# major) is the only appearance of “Nasadil e Dado”.⁸ The slow *Stara Planina* reappears as a frame around this dance. Thus Variation VI links themes II and III together seamlessly.

E.g. 2



Amy Beach, *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60, Variation VI, mm. 1–4

Variation VII returns to the style of the opening theme: it is a slow waltz (*Andante*) that, after a brief upbeat, evolves harmonically and thematically to recall *O Maiko Moya* in a lyrical form.

E.g. 3



Amy Beach, *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60, Variation VII, mm. 1–9

Finally, Variation VIII (*Adagio*) expands the fourth theme (“*Macedonia*”) from Beach’s vocal model. In this last variation, Beach employs a funeral-march character and broad recapitulations.

⁸ Bomberger, E. Douglas. “Motivic Development in Amy Beach’s *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60.” *American Music* 10, no. 3, 1992: pp. 328–329

E.g. 4



Amy Beach, *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60, Variation VIII, mm. 1–2

The piece concludes with a short *Da capo* of the first theme in C# minor, bringing back the original melody one final time.

4.3. Harmonic and Motivic Development

Beach's variations are "free" or *fantasia* variations: apart from the initial passages, she often abandons strict metric and harmonic constraints of the theme. As Bomberger explains, frequent changes of mode (minor keys), added tones, and extended codas are present throughout.⁹ For example, the many appoggiaturas and altered chords give color beyond the simple folk melody. The unifying element of the cycle is a short germinal motive from "O Maiko Moya" (three ascending notes), which Beach weaves into various variations to tie the work together. By Variation VI and beyond, development of these motives becomes essential, as the original theme is sometimes only hinted at. In sum, the work starts like a set of character variations but gradually transforms into a more rhapsodic structure, exemplifying what Bomberger terms a transcendence of formal restraint.

5. Performance and Reception

Beach's Variations have historically been seldom performed, but they gained renewed attention in the 21st century. James Bennett praises Claire Huangci's 2024 recording, calling *Variations on Balkan Themes* a "major work worthy to stand alongside the Gaelic Symphony or Piano Concerto," noting it "needs a virtuosic artist to do it justice".¹⁰ He highlights the piece's rich, Lisztian writing and technical demands. Bennett also mentions Martina

⁹ Bomberger, E. Douglas. "Motivic Development in Amy Beach's *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60." *American Music* 10, no. 3, 1992: pp. 328–329

¹⁰ Bennett, James. *MusicWeb International*, 22 Oct. 2024 (review of Huangci "Made in USA").

Frezzotti's 2023 recording of the Variations, and he finds both Huangci's and Frezzotti's versions excellent. This modern praise indicates a growing appreciation. Early 20th-century sources show little documented reception; likely Beach's busy career and changing tastes limited performances of Op. 60 in her lifetime. Today's performers (Kanneh-Mason, Huangci, Frezzotti) continue to explore Beach's solo piano works, often highlighting Op. 60 in recital or recordings. Pianists note that the piece's chromatic writing and virtuosic passages (double-sharps, wide leaps) demand mature technique, suggesting why it remained relatively obscure until recent champions brought it to light.

6. Further Research

Future work could explore performance and editorial aspects of this piece. For instance, comparing the expressive requirements of the 1906 solo edition with Beach's own 1936 revision or the 1942 two-piano reduction might yield insights into her evolving style. A transcription for orchestra (with revisions from 1906) is mentioned in memoirs; examining any surviving orchestration fragments could illuminate Beach's orchestral approach. Comparative studies—such as juxtaposing this work with Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* or *Ballade on Slovak Folk Songs*—would situate Beach's composition in the broader context of Western classical engagement with Slavic music. Finally, research into the original Balkan source songs (via folk-song collections) might clarify Beach's choices and adaptations of melody, text, and meter, adding ethnomusicological perspective to the analysis.

7. Conclusion

Amy Beach's *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op. 60, is a masterful fusion of American Romantic pianism with Eastern European folk material. This analysis has shown how Beach assigns each Balkan melody to specific variations, then creatively develops them: the first theme governs Variations I–V (and VII), the second theme appears as a slow *Stara Planina* introduction to Variation VI, the third theme ("*Nasadil e Dado*") closes Variation VI, and the final theme ("*Macedonia*") forms Variation VIII. Initially, Beach's variations closely echo the folk tune, but she progressively frees herself from the theme's strict form, expanding the texture and harmony and relying on motivic development for unity.

This study expands the English-language scholarship on Beach by providing a full structural analysis of *Variations on Balkan Themes*. It highlights Beach's sophisticated handling of foreign folk melodies within a Romantic framework and confirms her innovation in variation technique. The piece stands out not only as a technical showpiece but also as a cultural synthesis, reflecting Beach's interest in non-Western music.

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EXPRESSIVE AND STRUCTURAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEXT AND MUSIC IN PAUL RICHTER'S *SECHS LIEDER NACH CHINESISCHEN TEXTEN FÜR EINE FRAUENSTIMME UND ORCHESTER* (SIX LIEDER ON CHINESE TEXTS), OP. 95: A HERMENEUTIC APPROACH

GINA-MIHAELA PAVEL¹ 

SUMMARY. The year 2025 marked a double anniversary connected to the name of Paul Richter: 150 years since his birth and 75 years since the death of the Braşov-born composer. This study centers on the *Sechs Lieder nach chinesischen Texten für eine Frauenstimme und Orchester*, Op. 95. The composer's attention to the subtleties of the poetic text, the diversity of musical imagery and timbral nuances, as well as his refined handling of all elements of musical language (melody, harmony, rhythm, agogics, dynamics), become particularly evident. In this cycle of vocal miniatures, Richter reveals a refined capacity for synthesizing a broad spectrum of distinct yet fundamental images within a concise formal framework. He carefully selects and deploys, at structurally and expressively decisive moments, those components of musical language best suited to articulate the desired affect and poetic imagery with clarity and precision. The intrinsic beauty and subtle refinement of these miniatures persuaded me to undertake a chamber adaptation, one that proves considerably more practical to stage, requiring a reduced number of performers.

Keywords: Paul Richter, Six Lieder on Chinese Texts, musical dramaturgy, chamber music, voice

Introduction

The year 2025 marked - in addition to the 70th anniversary of the passing of Romanian composer George Enescu - another double anniversary connected to the name of Paul Richter: 150 years since his birth and 75 years since the

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death of the Braşov-born composer. In order to celebrate the personality of Paul Richter - a Transylvanian Saxon composer unjustly unknown to the Romanian public, especially outside Transylvania - I proposed to the *Forum Arte Foundation for Culture and Heritage* the idea of a chamber recital entitled *In memoriam Paul Richter*. The event took place on August 31, 2025, at the Fortified Evangelical Church in Codlea, Braşov County, and was part of the *Musica Barcensis Festival*, a project by the *Forum Arte Foundation* team. The recital program included: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 89* (Gina-Mihaela Pavel - piano; Theodora Bălănică Ciurezu - violin); *Three Lieder: Du, Op. 84 No. 4; Wenn ich dir blickt ins Auge, Op. 84 No. 7; Lied, Op. 104 No. 1* (Gina-Mihaela Pavel - piano; Maria Pană - soprano); *Meditation for Violin and Piano Op. 90* - transcription for flute and piano (Gina-Mihaela Pavel - piano; Diana Cristea - flute); *Sechs Lieder für Sopran und Orchester nach chinesischen Gedichten Op. 95* - transcription for soprano, flute, and piano (Gina-Mihaela Pavel - piano; Maria Pană - soprano; Diana Cristea - flute). The chamber version was undertaken on my own initiative, and the arrangement is my own, realized in collaboration with Diana Cristea, who also engraved the scores.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Kurt Philippi, who offered a comprehensive and warm presentation of Paul Richter's personality during the recital.

I will not dwell too much on Paul Richter's biography, as others before me have done so in a far more thoroughly documented manner. The most substantial research on his life and works is Hans Peter Türk's book *Paul Richter* (Kriterion Publishing House, Bucharest, 1975). Mr. Kurt Philippi has also prepared a brochure - *The Estate of Paul Richter (Nachlass von Paul Richter)*, a document preserved at the Casa Mureşenilor Museum in Braşov. The inventory of compositions included there was compiled by Dr. Hans Peter Türk.

I will mention only a few biographical details that ultimately shaped Paul Richter's professional path and led him toward his true vocation. As was expected at that time, Paul Richter was supposed to pursue a prestigious profession rather than a career in music, since music was regarded merely as a hobby in middle-class families. For this reason, he began studying medicine in Graz, although he was not genuinely drawn to the field². The unpleasant experiences during his medical studies - particularly those in the dissection room and his participation in a surgical operation alongside his father - ultimately led him to abandon this career path.

² This situation also recalls aspects of his teacher Rudolf Lassel's life, who had been compelled to study theology and philosophy.

Although he possessed remarkable musical talent, Richter received a fragmented education, which influenced his later artistic development. After completing his musical studies at the Leipzig Conservatory, he chose to return to his hometown - Braşov, even though he had been offered the opportunity to conduct the choir of the *Weltlichen Oratorien Vereins* in Leipzig. The decision that caused the regret of the Leipzig Society was later regarded by Richter himself as a mistake. His return home, however, contributed to promoting a high standard of musical excellence in his native city. His career, spanning 35 years, was marked by numerous obstacles and did not achieve the artistic impact he had hoped for. Richter later acknowledged that the sacrifices he had made were not rewarded as he had expected. And I believe his works have yet to receive the recognition they deserve.

Materials and Methods

This study centers on the *Six Lieder on Chinese Texts for Female Voice and Orchestra, Op. 95* (*Sechs Lieder nach chinesischen Texten für eine Frauenstimme und Orchester, Op. 95*), owing to the compositional complexity, expressive diversity, and, above all, the distinctive beauty that characterize these vocal-instrumental miniatures.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Steffen Schlandt, whose generous assistance granted me access to the full score of the *Six Lieder on Chinese Texts for Female Voice and Orchestra, Op. 95*. Published in Sibiu in 2006 with the support of the Axel Azzola Foundation in Berlin, this edition constituted the primary source for the arrangement for soprano, flute, and piano discussed above. Within Paul Richter's oeuvre, Op. 96 comprises a further cycle of *Lieder on Chinese texts*, conceived on this occasion for male voice (*Sechs Lieder nach chinesischen Texten für eine Männerstimme und Orchester*)³.

The manuscripts of Paul Richter's compositions are preserved in the archives of the Casa Mureşenilor Museum Braşov, and the museum's website also provides a number of documents concerning his life and activity⁴.

A particularly valuable recording of these female Lieder in their orchestral version is available on the YouTube platform, featuring soprano

³ This information can be found in the brochure prepared by Mr. Kurt Philippi – *The Estate of Paul Richter (Nachlass von Paul Richter)*.

⁴ <https://muzeulmuresenilor.ro/>;
https://culturalia.ro/search?page=1;size=10;view=LIST;searchType=NORMAL;q=casa%20muresenilor;mode=FUZZY;qf=METADATA_PROVIDER_FILTER%28Muzeul%20Casa%20Mure%C8%99enilor%20-%20Bra%C8%99ov%29

Bianca Luigia Manoleanu and the Sibiu State Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Petre Sbârcea. According to the information provided in the video description, the recording dates from October 12, 2006, and documents a concert held at Thalia Hall in Sibiu, an event that marked the world premiere of the cycle. It is, however, necessary to note a correction regarding the information presented in that post: the titles of the Lieder are not those indicated in the video description, which in fact reproduces the incipits (opening lines) of each Lied as titles. In Paul Richter's score, the following titles are given for the six Lieder:

1. *Das älteste Volkslied* (The Oldest Folk Song)
2. *Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast* (Night Watch in the Imperial Palace)
3. *Der Pavillon aus Porzellan* (The Porcelain Pavilion)
4. *Die Einsame* (The Lonely Woman)
5. *Die verstoßene Freundin des Kaisers* (The Emperor's Banished Beloved)
6. *Der Tanz der Götter* (The Dance of the Gods).

Results

With an extensive catalogue of works written for the orchestra, Paul Richter demonstrated a remarkable vocation as a symphonist - a genre in which he achieved particular distinction. At the same time, he cultivated chamber music with equal seriousness, as evidenced by *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano*, Op. 89, *Meditation* for violin and piano, Op. 90, the three *string quartets* Op. 98, Op. 99, and Op. 122, the *Piano Quartet*, Op. 110, and the *Quartet for piano, flute, violin, and cello*, Op. 111. His output also includes a substantial number of art songs for voice and piano, among them *Vier Lieder für eine Singstimme und Klavier*, Op. 101 and 102, and *Fünf Lieder für eine Singstimme und Klavier*, Op. 103 and 104, in addition to numerous other works in the genre. Furthermore, he composed extensively for the piano - pieces (*Stücke*), mazurkas, and sonatas - an instrument which he mastered with particular authority.

The *Six Songs on Chinese Texts for female voice and orchestra*, Op. 95 (out of a total of 122 opus numbers), represent a work of maturity within his oeuvre. Although these orchestral miniatures still reveal the influence of major European composers at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the cycle displays a refined and varied musical language, enriched by original features and characterized by a discourse that is at times vigorous and compelling, at others sensitive and profoundly expressive. The six-song cycle once again attests to Richter's ingenuity and subtlety as a symphonist. The poetic

texts of the first two Lieder are based on the German translations by Zoltán Franyó⁵, published in the volume *Chinesische Gedichte/Chinese Poems* (1940), whereas the final four songs draw upon the translations by Hans Bethge, included in *Die chinesische Flöte/The Chinese Flute* (1929)⁶.

I should note that Hans Peter Türk likewise provides an analysis of this song cycle⁷. However, his approach focuses primarily on its harmonic and formal structure, while also drawing parallels with other works by Paul Richter and with the compositional language of other composers, such as Debussy and Mahler.

The text of the first song - *Das älteste Volkslied* (*The Oldest Folk Song*) - conveys a message that is at once profound and disarmingly simple: true happiness and freedom are to be found in the modesty and simplicity of life rather than in power or wealth. Conceived as a meditation on essential values, the Lied is notable for its highly condensed symphonic-vocal form, with a duration of approximately one minute and thirty seconds.

Table 1

<i>Das älteste Volkslied</i>	<i>Cel mai vechi cântec popular⁸</i>	<i>The oldest folk song</i>
<i>Die Sonne steigt; ich greife zu. Die Sonne sinkt; ich geh zur Ruh. Ich grab den Born und trink daraus,</i>	<i>Soarele răsare - eu m-apuc de lucru, Soarele apune - mă-ntorc la odihnă. Sap un izvor și beau din unda lui,</i>	<i>The sun climbs; I take up my toil. The sun falls; I return to rest. I dig the spring and drink its water,</i>

⁵ https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zolt%C3%A1n_Frany%C3%B3

⁶ In the preface to the supplement of *Muzica* magazine - *Piese vocale și instrumentale de Paul Richter/Vocal and Instrumental Pieces by Paul Richter*, (*Muzica*, Revista Uniunii compozitorilor din Republica Populară Română și a Ministerului Învățământului și Culturii, Editura Muzicală, p. 2) - the organist and musicologist Victor Bickerich reports that the verses are attributed to Paul Bethge, but it probably refers to Hans Bethge. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Bethge_\(poet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Bethge_(poet)). Nonetheless, in his book *Paul Richter*, Hans Peter Türk specifies that the translations of the first two Lieder are by Zoltán Franyó (*Chinesische Gedichte/Chinese poems*, 1940), while the subsequent four are based on Hans Bethge's translations from *Die chinesische Flöte/The Chinese Flute* (Türk, Hans Peter. *Paul Richter*. Kriterion Verlag, Bukarest, 1975, p.146). At the same time, in *Bibliografia generală a etnografiei și folclorului românesc, 1956–1964/The General Bibliography of Romanian Ethnography and Folklore* (Bugeanu, Dan; Dăncuș, Elena; Fochi, Adrian; Taloș, Ion. Bucharest: Editura Saeculum I.O., 2004), Zoltán Franyó is cited as the translator of the text *Das älteste chinesische Volkslied / The Oldest Chinese Folk Song* (p. 281).

⁷ Türk, Hans Peter. *Paul Richter*. Kriterion Verlag, Bukarest, 1975, pp.141-155

⁸ The Romanian and English translations of the verses are my own, and they do not aim at a poetic rendering, but rather at remaining as close as possible to the original German text. The Romanian version also appearing in the concert program booklet for the Musica Barcensis Festival.

<i>Das älteste Volkslied</i>	Cel mai vechi cântec popular⁸	The oldest folk song
<i>mich nährt die Frucht des Ackerbaus.</i>	<i>Rodul pământului îmi ține viața.</i>	<i>the harvest of the fields sustains my life.</i>
<i>Des Kaisers Macht, was hätte nun sie noch für mich zu tun?</i>	<i>Iar puterea-mpăratului, ce rost mai are asupra mea?</i>	<i>The Emperor's might - what concern is it of mine now?</i>

**Unknown author (from the time of Emperor Gao, 1257–1277 A.D.),
Das älteste Volkslied, German translation by Zoltán Franyó**

The verses of the unknown author express the life of the simple man, closely connected to nature and daily labor, where the rhythm is set by the sun: work begins in the morning, and rest follows in the evening. Paul Richter masterfully succeeds in rendering this scene in music: the opening of the cycle is constructed through a series of ascending parallel fourths (only the first being a fifth), vividly depicting a sunrise. This parallel ascending motion also serves as an archaic musical indicator, alluding to the intonations of Chinese music.

E.g. 1

Six songs on Chinese poems

I. Das älteste Volkslied (Aus der Zeit "Kaiser Gao" 1257-1277 n. Chr.)

Paul Richter (1875-1950)

Aranjament: Mihaela Pavel
Aranjament și tehnoredactare: Diana Cristea

Allegretto ***p***

Paul Richter, *Das älteste Volkslied*, ms. 1-7

In the orchestral version, the initial phrase is first entrusted to the first and second violins (solo), performed in parallel motion and at a *piano* dynamic level, the musical idea then being taken over by the flutes and clarinets. The

musical examples presented in this study are derived from the reduction mentioned previously, arranged for soprano, flute, and piano, one of the main motivations for this choice being spatial economy within the analytical presentation. The previous example illustrates the manner in which the orchestral texture has been redistributed within the trio reduction.

Richter extends the depiction of the morning soundscape by portraying birdsong through the flute, employing appoggiaturas and trills to articulate the effect. The harp is assigned two ascending sextuplets, arpeggiated chordal figures, and, subsequently, a four-octave *glissando*, all of which mirror the unfolding of sunrise and the progression of daily human activity. The vocal line then enters, articulating verses that further enhance the impressionistic character of the tableau: "*Die Sonne steigt; Ich greife zu/The sun climbs; I take up my toil.*" (measure 14).

In the dramaturgical framework of this miniature, the representation of sunset follows shortly at the *Langsamer* indication, occurring within a highly compressed temporal span (the Lied having a duration of approximately one minute and thirty seconds). The sunset is suggested through the timbral combination of the celesta and harp, which introduces descending arpeggiated figurations in measures 28-29.

The atmosphere gradually becomes more restrained (*Langsamer, mp, pp*), suggesting the fatigue associated with the completion of a day of labor. For the first time in the cycle, in measure 36, Richter introduces the gong immediately following the verses "*Die Sonne sinkt, ich geh zur Ruh/The sun sets; I return to rest.*" Traditionally associated with marking the beginning or conclusion of a ritualistic, temporal, or contemplative process, the gong here accentuates the image of sunset and symbolically signals the end of the working day.

The subsequent verses evoke spring water and the fruits of the field, symbolizing the human being's harmonious relationship with nature. The concluding line - "*Des Kaisers Macht, was hätte nun sie noch für mich zu tun?/What use is the Emperor's power to me?*" - suggests a withdrawal from worldly authority, conveying the idea that the simple individual finds fulfillment not in material splendor, but in nature and in the dignity of personal labor.

From a musical perspective, Richter shapes the dramaturgical architecture of this miniature tableau by employing the lower register of the soprano voice in the passages associated with the sunset imagery, the melodic contour itself adopting a descending trajectory. As the Lied approaches its conclusion, the vocal line, together with the orchestral ensemble, gradually ascends toward the upper register, culminating in the structural and expressive climax of the work.

E.g. 2

Paul Richter, *Das älteste Volkslied*, ms. 48-55

The conclusion of the miniature tableau is marked by a harp glissando in the home key of G major, a sonority associated with luminosity, joy, and contemplative serenity. Through this compact musical structure, Richter demonstrates his capacity to synthesize a variety of expressive images within a highly concentrated and economically constructed formal space.

This is followed by another tableau, “*Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast/Night Watch at the Imperial Palace*”, whose verses originally written by Wang Anshi⁹ present a deeply contemplative nocturnal scene characterized by refined and subtle imagery, in which the protagonist’s inner emotional state is mirrored through natural elements. The expressive discourse is once again marked by concision, the Lied exhibiting a duration of approximately three minutes.

Table 2

Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast	Veghea de noapte la palatul împărațesc	Night Watch in the Imperial Palace
<i>Der Weichrauch glimmt im Goldgefäß, Still steht die Wasseruhr!</i>	<i>Tămâia fumegă în vasul de aur, clepsidra stă tăcută!</i>	<i>The incense glows in the golden vessel, the water clock stands still!</i>
<i>Die scharfen leichten Winde wehn stets kühler durch die Flur.</i>	<i>Vânturi iuți și subțiri adie, tot mai reci peste câmpie.</i>	<i>The sharp, light winds blow ever cooler through the meadow.</i>
<i>Des Frühlings Pracht hat mich verwirrt, ich kann nicht schlafen gehen...</i>	<i>Splendoarea primăverii m-a tulburat, nu pot să merg la somn...</i>	<i>The splendor of spring has confused me, I cannot go to sleep...</i>

⁹ <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/biography/wang-anshi>;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang_Anshi

Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast	Veghea de noapte la palatul împărațesc	Night Watch in the Imperial Palace
<i>Der Mond rückt höher auf den Zaun der Blumen Schattenspur.</i>	<i>Luna se ridică tot mai sus, luminând gardul pe care joacă umbrele florilor.</i>	<i>The moon moves higher, onto the fence the shadow-trace of flowers.</i>

**Wang Anshi (1021-1086, A.D.), Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast,
German translation by Zoltán Franyó**

For the opening of the Lied, Richter restricts the orchestral palette primarily to the string section, allowing only two brief interventions of the celesta. The passage is marked *piano, con sordino*, and *Andante*, features that collectively generate an atmosphere of introspection and solemn stillness in which temporal flow appears suspended - "*stillsteht die Wasseruhr/the water clock stands still!*" - a metaphor suggesting immobility, meditative contemplation, and a nocturnal state in which reality itself seems temporarily held in abeyance. The setting is of an imperial and quasi-sacred character, where the rising incense smoke ("*Der Weihrauch glimmt im Goldgefäß/The incense glows in the golden vessel*") contributes to a ritualistic atmosphere reminiscent of religious ceremony, reinforcing the silence and solemn dignity of the nocturnal scene.

E.g. 3

II. Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast

(Wang An Schi 1026-1086 n. Chr.)

Paul Richter (1875-1950)

Andante

Aranjament: Mihaela Pavel
Aranjament si tehnoredactare: Diana Cristea

Flute

p *pp*

con sordino

Piano

p *p*

Paul Richter, *Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast*, ms. 1-6

In the trio reduction, the piano part incorporates the material originally assigned to the second violin, viola, cello, and double bass, while the flute assumes the melodic line of the first violin.

Following eight measures characterized by a slow melodic progression articulated exclusively in quarter and half notes, the introduction of eighth-note motion - first in the flute and Clarinet I (m. 9), subsequently taken up by the cello - signals a shift in atmosphere and the emergence of a subtle agitation (*“Die scharfen leichten Winde wehn stets kühler durch die Flur/The sharp, light winds blow ever cooler through the meadow”*). The insistent, reiterative, and slightly hesitant character of the figuration, enriched by chromatic inflections, evokes the sharp gusts of cold wind and intensifies the expressive tension of the passage.

E.g. 4

The musical score for measures 16-20 of *Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast* by Paul Richter. It features three staves: Soprano (S.), Flute (Fl.), and Piano (Pno.). The Soprano part has the lyrics: "Die schar - fen leich - ten Win - de wehn stets küh - ler durch die Flur." The piano part features a reiterative eighth-note figure that builds in intensity, marked with *mf* and *p* dynamics, and an *expressivo* marking in the final measure.

Paul Richter, *Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast*, ms. 16-20

The reiterative eighth note figures progressively generate a crescendo, giving rise to a brief yet intense surge of expression that culminates in measures 24-25. The evocation of spring - a season traditionally associated with renewal, vitality, and joy, yet also with heightened emotional sensitivity and nostalgia - elicits in the protagonist a complex affective response, combining wonder and delight with inner unrest. Suspended between the splendor of nature and his own introspective disposition, the character experiences an emotional tension that ultimately manifests as insomnia.

At this juncture, the musical discourse undergoes an abrupt reduction in dynamic intensity; however, through the deployment of reiterative thirds and tremolo figuration, Richter momentarily intensifies the underlying atmospheric tension. Simultaneously, the soprano line is shaped by the descending augmented fifth $F\sharp - Bb$, an intervallic gesture that reinforces the prevailing sense of unease.

The Lied concludes by returning to the same climate of solemn tranquility that characterized the opening of the miniature. The moon emerges as the final symbolic image, suggesting beauty, transience, temporality, and a fragile, ethereal realm. The musical discourse gradually dissipates into silence (*ppp*), dissolving into an atmosphere of suspended stillness.

E.g. 5

The musical score for Paul Richter's 'Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast' (ms. 35-40) is presented for Flute (Fl.) and Piano (Pno.). The Flute part starts with a whole note G4, followed by a half note F#4, and then a series of eighth notes. The Piano part features a complex texture with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, creating a shimmering effect. Dynamics include *pp* and *ppp*.

Paul Richter, *Nachtdienst im Kaiserpalast*, ms. 35-40

For a more comprehensive understanding of the orchestral dimension of the work, reference may be made to the recording available on YouTube featuring Bianca Luigia Manoleanu and the State Philharmonic Orchestra of Sibiu, conducted by Petre Sbârcea¹⁰. This interpretation convincingly illustrates the composer's ability to capture, within a remarkably limited temporal framework, a moment seemingly suspended in time - an instance of introspection framed by a grand yet serene landscape.

The third Lied exhibits a series of distinctive features that confer upon it a singular position within the architecture of the cycle. Most striking is the abrupt contrast it establishes in relation not only to the first two miniatures, but also to those that follow. The agogic indication *Allegro*, coupled with the expressive marking *sehr leicht und scherzend*/very light-hearted and playful, generates a musical discourse characterized by agility, buoyancy, and playful vivacity. This expressive orientation stands in pronounced opposition to the contemplative, restrained atmosphere that defines the preceding two tableaux, thereby effecting a significant shift in affective and structural perspective within the cycle.

¹⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kpySDGHyk4&list=RD0kpySDGHyk4&start_radio=1

Another aspect of particular interest resides in Richter's decision to employ, in this instance, verses by the Chinese poet Li Po (Li Bai) - the very same poems that were set to music by Gustav Mahler in his celebrated symphonic song cycle *Das Lied von der Erde/The Song of the Earth*, specifically in the third movement, *Von der Jugend/On Youth*. It appears that Mahler had obtained a copy of *Die chinesische Flöte/The Chinese Flute* by Hans Bethge, a volume comprising eighty Chinese poems rendered into German in free poetic translation.

In his biographical study of Paul Richter, Hans Peter Türk offers a detailed parallel analysis of the two Lieder: Mahler's setting and Richter's¹¹. Regrettably, in the absence of precise documentation concerning the year in which Paul Richter composed the Lieder under discussion, any chronological correlation must remain hypothetical. Given that Mahler completed *Das Lied von der Erde* in 1909, with its premiere taking place in Munich in November 1911 under the baton of Bruno Walter, it is nonetheless plausible to advance the assumption that Richter may have been acquainted with, and potentially influenced by, Mahler's work. Such a hypothesis, while not yet substantiated by definitive archival evidence, remains stylistically and historically tenable within the broader context of early twentieth-century musical intertextuality.

It is equally important to underscore that Paul Richter, although established in Braşov after 1900, following the completion of his studies in Leipzig, maintained a sustained and active connection with the broader European musical milieu. Consequently, he was well informed regarding the most recent compositional developments of his time and cannot be regarded as operating in aesthetic isolation. At the same time, one must also consider the possibility that the convergence in poetic choice occurred independently, as a result of both composers drawing upon the same literary source. Hans Bethge's volume *Die chinesische Flöte* appears to have enjoyed considerable circulation within German-speaking cultural circles in Europe during that period, which renders entirely plausible the hypothesis that the shared textual basis may have arisen from parallel, rather than directly mediated, artistic impulses.

The inherent refinement and apparent simplicity of the verses appear to have constituted a fertile source of inspiration for both composers, prompting musical settings marked by elegance and subtlety. The imagery evoked is suggestive of traditional Chinese pictorial aesthetics: a tranquil pond, a delicate porcelain pavilion, a jade bridge, and a gathering of friends united in serene companionship. The poetic text articulates, with notable clarity, an atmosphere of harmony, cultivation, and contemplative repose. To this is added a further dimension of symbolic depth - the motif of reflection in the water - which subtly alters and refracts reality, transfiguring it into a poetic projection. This interplay

¹¹ Türk, Hans Peter. *Paul Richter*. Kriterion Verlag, Bukarest, 1975 (pp. 146-152).

between image and mirrored image not only enriches the descriptive layer of the text but also invites a more nuanced interpretative reading, situated at the intersection of perception and illusion.

Table 3

Der Pavillon aus Porzellan	Pavilionul de porțelan	The Porcelain Pavilion
<i>Mitten im kleinen Teiche steht ein kleiner Pavillon aus grünem und aus weißem Porzellan.</i>	<i>În mijlocul iazului mic se ridică un mic pavilion din porțelan verde și alb.</i>	<i>In the middle of the small pond stands a little pavilion made of green and white porcelain.</i>
<i>Wie der Rücken eines Tigers wölbt die Brücke sich aus Jade zu dem Pavillon hinüber.</i>	<i>Ca spinarea unui tigru se arcuiește podul de jad până la pavilion.</i>	<i>Like the back of a tiger, the jade bridge arches toward the pavilion.</i>
<i>In dem Häuschen sitzen Freunde schön gekleidet, trinken, plaudern, manche schreiben Verse nieder!</i>	<i>În căsuță stau prieteni frumos îmbrăcați, beau, stau de vorbă, unii aștern versuri pe hârtie!</i>	<i>Inside the little house sit friends, beautifully dressed, drinking, chatting, some writing down verses.</i>
<i>Ihre seidnen Ärmel gleiten rückwärts, ihre seidnen Mützen hohen lustig tief im Nacken.</i>	<i>Mâncile lor de mătase alunecă, coifurile lor de mătase se clatină vesel, lăsate pe ceafă.</i>	<i>Their silken sleeves glide backward, their silken caps sit high and jauntily deep at the nape of their necks.</i>
<i>Auf des kleinen Teiches stiller Oberfläche zeigt sich alles wunderbar im Spiegelbilde.</i>	<i>Pe suprafața liniștită a iazului se oglindește totul, ciudat și minunat.</i>	<i>On the still surface of the small pond, everything appears strangely mirrored.</i>
<i>Wie ein Halbmond scheint der Brücke umgekehrter Bogen</i>	<i>Ca o semilună lucește arcul răsturnat al podului</i>	<i>Like a half-moon, the bridge's inverted arch appears.</i>
<i>Freunde schön gekleidet trinken, plaudern, Alle auf dem Kopfe stehend</i>	<i>Prieteni frumos îmbrăcați beau, vorbesc, Toți cu capul în jos</i>	<i>Friends, beautifully dressed, drink and chat, All upside down</i>
<i>In dem Pavillon aus grünem und aus weißem Porzellan!</i>	<i>În pavilionul din porțelan verde și alb.</i>	<i>In the pavilion made of green and white porcelain.</i>

**Li Tai Po/Li Bai¹² (701-762), „Der Pavillon aus Porzellan”,
German translation by Hans Bethge**

Accordingly, following the contemplative and tranquil character established by the first two musical tableaux of the cycle, the third Lied decisively interrupts this quietude. From its very outset, it introduces a surge of exuberant vitality, as indicated by the expressive markings „*Sehr leicht und scherzend/very light and playful*” and *Allegro*, thereby effecting a marked contrast in both affective tone and kinetic energy within the structural trajectory of the cycle.

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li_Bai; <https://mypoeticside.com/poets/li-po-poems>

E.g. 6

III. Der Pavillon aus Porzellan (Li Tao Po)

Paul Richter (1875-1950)

Aranjament: Mihaela Pavel

Aranjament și tehnoredactare: Diana Cristea

Allegro
Sehr leicht und scherzend.

Soprano

Flute

Piano

6

S.

Fl.

Pno.

Mit - ten-im

klei - nen Tei-che steht ein klei-ner Pa-vil-lon aus grü - nem

mf

p

f

mf

p

p

p

Paul Richter, *Der Pavillon aus Porzellan*, ms. 1-9

The green-and-white porcelain, which assumes a distinctly metaphorical significance within this context, imparts to the musical discourse a sense of delicacy, refinement, and an almost ethereal beauty. Within Asian cultural symbolism, it additionally connotes transience and impermanence. These qualities are palpably manifested in Paul Richter's orchestration; yet the most arresting musical image remains the brilliant C major glissando in the harp (measures 11-14). Unsurprisingly, this effect is also preserved in the trio arrangement, where the glissando is executed across five octaves on the piano, maintaining both its virtuosity and its symbolic resonance.

Jade - another emblematic element - conveys a sense of purity and nobility, while the motif of the "jade bridge" functions as a symbolic passage from the tangible world (or, in an alternative reading, from nature) into the poetic (or artistic sphere). Richter further demonstrates his compositional finesse through the deliberate deployment of contrasts in tempo and character: following a brief moment of repose on the glissando (*Ruhig/calm, quiet*), the introduction of the tiger imagery prompts a shift toward a more apprehensive expression (*mit komisch-ängstlichem Ausdruck/with a comically anxious expression*) accompanied by increased animation (*Belebter/more animated*). Consequently, the musical discourse acquires heightened tension. The depiction of the jade bridge, "arching like the back of a tiger," proves particularly striking, the tiger itself serving as a potent symbol of strength and vitality.

In measure 31, the soprano's opening melodic line returns, preserving the same playful and light-hearted character of the musical discourse. At this juncture emerges the poetic image of a gathering of poets in a natural setting, evoking an ancient Chinese and Japanese cultural tradition in which nature is conceived as an ideal space for contemplation and artistic creation, a realm where time unfolds in a gentle, unhurried manner and human interaction is expressed through relaxed conversation, celebration, or poetic composition.

Demonstrating a high degree of sensitivity in his musical depiction of this scene, Richter employs appoggiaturas in the oboe, bassoon, violin, and cello, strategically aligned with the words „trinken/drinking“ and „plaudern/chatting“. These ornamental figures contribute to the reinforcement of the vivacious and animated character of the musical discourse, enhancing both the semantic-musical correspondence and the overall expressive dynamism of the passage.

What follows is a detailed, poetic depiction of the poets' attire, evoking aristocratic elegance and refinement. This passage warrants particular attention, as it appears - at least from my interpretative perspective - that Paul Richter partially distances the musical expression from the semantic content of the text. Beginning at measure 44 (*Tempo I*) and continuing through measure 53, the orchestration enters a noticeably more tense and slightly dramatic phase, marked by the first introduction of the timpani. This heightened tension occurs precisely at the point where the verses describe the participants' clothing. From an analytical standpoint, one might contend that a lighter, more serene treatment would have better aligned with the textual imagery, suggesting that Richter's choice reflects a deliberate expressive decision rather than a straightforward programmatic correspondence.

E.g. 7

46

S. *Ih-re seid-nen Är - mel glei-ten rück - wärts, ih - re*

Fl. *f* *tr*

Pno. *f* *tr*

50

S. *seid-nen Müt-zen ho-chen lu - stig tief im Na - ken.*

Fl. *f* *tr*

Pno. *f* *tr*

Paul Richter, *Der Pavillon aus Porzellan*, ms. 46-52

It is plausible that Richter sought to construct the climax of the Lied at this juncture, an objective that he succeeds in realizing from a strictly musical standpoint. It is perhaps the only moment within the entire cycle in which the composer appears to depart, to a certain extent, from a literal alignment with the textual meaning. In this respect, it may be observed that Mahler's musical treatment of the same verses demonstrates a particularly refined sensitivity to the semantic and expressive nuances of the poem, resulting in what could be considered a more organically integrated setting.

The musical discourse subsequently enters a more restrained and tranquil phase beginning at measure 53, marked by a *decrescendo* and a *piano* dynamic indication. Nevertheless, the imagery of the water's reflection

of the entire pictorial scene - described as "strange and wonderful," where "everyone is upside down" - generates new layers of imaginative projection and introduces a multiplicity of perceptual perspectives. Despite this play of illusion and mirrored reality, the real world and its reflected counterpart on the placid surface of the pond are presented as coexisting in a state of expressive harmony.

Once again, Richter integrates stylistic elements associated with East Asian musical idioms, particularly the whole-tone melodic motion occurring in the soprano line in measures 67-68, as well as in the flute, oboe, and clarinet parts. Similar scalar motion reappears in measure 70 in the flutes, oboe, and harp, and later in measures 75-76, where the soprano and celesta proceed in unison, reinforcing the impression of linear melodic continuity and timbral delicacy associated with these influences.

E.g. 8

65

S. Wie ein Halb-mond scheint der Brücke um-ge-kehr-ter Bogen

Fl. *mf* *pp*

Pno. *tr* *pp*

Paul Richter, *Der Pavillon aus Porzellan*, ms. 65-69

The concluding verses return the listener to the spatial and symbolic setting in which this celebration of art and fleeting precious moments unfolds. Once again, the composer underscores the semantic and symbolic weight of the word „*Porzellan*” through the use of parallel motion in whole tones and perfect fourths in the two flute parts. Following this passage, the musical atmosphere gradually subsides into extreme softness, reaching a *ppp* dynamic level, thereby restoring a state of contemplative stillness.

S. Por - zel - lan!

Fl.

Pno. *ppp*

Paul Richter, *Der Pavillon aus Porzellan*, ms. 86-89

Richter's Lied achieves a convincing musical rendering of the symbolic content of the text, effectively conveying notions of refinement, delicacy, and subtle aesthetic beauty, as well as the broader semantic fields of harmony, fragility, and ephemerality associated with porcelain, the emblematic element already suggested by the title itself, notwithstanding the minor interpretative divergence previously noted.

Among the movements of the cycle, this Lied presented the greatest challenges in terms of arrangement for small instrumental ensemble, owing to the greater complexity of its orchestration. Consequently, any attempt at reduction risks producing a version that may appear comparatively less complete, as certain timbral and textural layers are difficult to reproduce without compromising the integrity of the original sonic architecture.

The fourth Lied, *Die Einsame/The Lonely Woman*, follows, representing perhaps the most dramatic movement within the entire cycle. Like the other miniatures, it unfolds within a highly concentrated temporal and formal space, with a duration of approximately two minutes. In the orchestral score, the author of the text is indicated as Wang Seng Chu; however, my research has not yielded verifiable historical or biographical information regarding this purported Chinese poet, suggesting either a possible transcriptional variation of the name or the use of a pseudonymous or otherwise undocumented source.

Table 4

Die Einsame	Singuratica	The Lonely Woman
<i>Am dunkeln Himmel steht der Mond.</i>	<i>Pe cerul întunecat stă luna.</i>	<i>In the dark sky stands the moon.</i>
<i>Ich habe meine Lampe ausgelöscht, schwer von Gedanken ist mein einsam Herz.</i>	<i>Mi-am stins lampa, iar inima-mi singuratică e grea de gânduri.</i>	<i>I have extinguished my lamp; heavy with thoughts is my lonely heart.</i>
<i>Ich weine, weine meine armen Tränen rinnen so heiß und bitter von den Wangen, weil du so fern bist meiner großen Sehnsucht, weil du nie begreifen wirst, wie weh mir ist, wenn ich nicht bei dir bin.</i>	<i>Plâng, plâng - sărmănele mele lacrimile se preling fierbinți și amare pe obraji, pentru că tu ești atât de departe de dorul meu imens, pentru că tu nicicând nu vei înțelege cât mă doare, când nu sunt lângă tine.</i>	<i>I weep, I weep—my poor tears run so hot and bitter down my cheeks, because you are so far from my great longing, because you will never understand how much it hurts when I am not with you.</i>

Wang Seng Chu, „Die Einsame”, German translation by Hans Bethge

Composed in the relatively uncommon key of E-flat minor and set at a very slow tempo indication (*Langsam*), the miniature projects an expressive universe characterized by profound solitude, inner suffering, and an atmosphere suggestive of unfulfilled or possibly unrequited love. The poetic text unfolds as a nocturnal inner monologue, articulating the lament of a woman confronted with the experience of loneliness in the absence of the beloved.

E.g. 10

IV. Die Einsame (Wang Seng Chu)

Paul Richter (1875-1950)

Aranjament: Mihaela Pavel

Aranjament și tehnoredactare: Diana Cristea

Langsam *p*

Soprano

Flute

Piano

pp

p

Am dun - keln Him - mel steht der Mond. Ich

Paul Richter, *Die Einsame*, ms. 1-4

To evoke stillness, oppressive sorrow - *schwer von Gedanken ist mein einsam Herz/heavy with thoughts is my lonely heart* - and a sense of desolation, Paul Richter shapes the orchestration around sustained note values (half notes, dotted half notes, and whole notes), which impart weight and gravity to the musical texture. Only the soprano's melodic line introduces a hint of restlessness through its shorter rhythmic values. Within this prevailing stasis, the orchestra's sudden *sfz* accent in measure 6 stands out as the sole abrupt rupture of the silence. The extinguishing of the lamp symbolizes an inward turn - a gesture of isolation and withdrawal from the external world - marking a descent into the intimate sphere of personal suffering.

Yet this state of apparent calm proves fleeting. Beginning in measure 9, marked *Belebter/More lively*, the atmosphere is suddenly set in motion, initiating a gradual intensification that leads toward the climactic point. The poetic text mirrors this emotional escalation, conveying helplessness and fervent anguish: "*Ich weine, weine... meine Tränen rinnen so heiß und bitter/I weep, I weep - my poor tears run so hot and bitter*". Richter reinforces and amplifies the musical discourse through the introduction of dotted triplet figures across all instrumental parts, including the soprano's melodic line. This rhythmic device generates heightened dramatic tension and propulsive energy, significantly intensifying the expressive impact of the passage.

E.g. 11

12

S. *wei - ne mei - ne ar - men Trä - nen rin - nen so heiß und bit - ter von den*

Fl.

Pno. *f sfz*

EXPRESSIVE AND STRUCTURAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEXT AND MUSIC IN PAUL
RICHTER'S *SECHS LIEDER NACH CHINESISCHEN TEXTEN FÜR...*

15

S. Wan - gen, weil du so Erregt

Fl. *f* 3 3

Pno. 3 *f* *p*

Paul Richter, *Die Einsame*, ms. 12-16

Simultaneously, the pervasive tremolos in the string sections serve to heighten and prolong the accumulating tension, sustaining it until the climactic apex in measure 24. At this decisive moment, the underlying source of profound emotional anguish is revealed: the separation between the two figures is not one of physical distance, but of mutual misunderstanding. The beloved remains emotionally inaccessible, and it is precisely this inner estrangement that inflicts the most devastating wound.

E.g. 12

23

S. *f* rit. - - - wenn ich nicht bei dir bin.

Fl. *f* *p*

Pno. *f* *p*

Paul Richter, *Die Einsame*, ms. 23-27

This orchestral passage also presents considerable challenges in the piano reduction. Nevertheless, through a thorough study of the complete score, the pianist can successfully recreate the tension of the moment even within the more limited sonic framework of the reduction. After this climax of intensity, the concluding measures of the Lied restore the initial atmosphere of painful solitude through a marked expressive contrast. The sound of the gong is placed in the final measure, marked *p*, functioning as a last dramatic accent that underscores the emotional closure of the piece.

It is perhaps one of the most accomplished Lieder in Paul Richter's vocal oeuvre - a finely crafted miniature that conveys emotional vulnerability, inner conflict during a nocturnal spiritual ordeal, profound loneliness, and a love that remains ultimately misunderstood.

Table 5

Die verstossene Freundin des Kaisers	Prietena alungată a împăratului	The Emperor's Banished Beloved
<i>Wie aufgelöst ist meine Seele, ich hab geweint, dass meine Kissen durchnässt sind.</i>	<i>Cât de tulburat este sufletul meu, am plâns până ce pernele mi s-au îmbibat de lacrimi.</i>	<i>How dissolved my soul is; I have wept until my pillows are soaked.</i>
<i>Ohne Schlaf und ohne Träume wälz ich mich nachts auf meinem Bett.</i>	<i>Fără somn și fără vise, mă zvârcolesc noaptea în pat.</i>	<i>Without sleep and without dreams I toss about on my bed at night.</i>
<i>Schon ist Mitternacht vorüber, doch dringen immer noch Gesänge und Lautenspiel aus dem Palaste des Kaisers an mein wachsam Ohr.</i>	<i>E trecut deja de miezul nopții, dar din palatul împăratului răzbat încă cântece și sunete de lăute până la urechea mea trează.</i>	<i>Midnight has already passed, yet songs and the sound of lutes still drift from the Emperor's palace to my wakeful ear.</i>
<i>Mein Hals ist zart wie die Apfelblüte und schlank wie sonst sind meine Glieder.</i>	<i>Gâtul meu e gingaș precum floarea de măr, iar trupul meu, la fel de suplu ca odinioară.</i>	<i>My neck is delicate as an apple blossom, and my limbs are slender as ever.</i>
<i>Sag, Herr, warum hat deine Liebe sich grausam von mir abgewandt?</i>	<i>Spune-mi, stăpâne, de ce dragostea ta s-a întors de la mine cu atâta cruzime?</i>	<i>Tell me, my lord, why has your love cruelly turned away from me?</i>
<i>Ich liege schlaflos bis zum Morgen, ich starre in das Kohlenbecken und finde keine, keine Antwort auf meine Frage wilde Qual.</i>	<i>Zac fără somn până în zori, privesc doar în jăraticul din vatră și nu găsesc, nu găsesc răspuns la întrebarea chinuitoare ce mă macină.</i>	<i>I lie sleepless until morning, staring into the brazier, and find no, no answer to my question, to my wild torment.</i>

**Unknown author, „Die verstoßene Freundin des Kaisers”,
German translation - Hans Bethge**

A similar mood and expressive nuance can be found in the following Lied - *Die verstoßene Freundin des Kaisers/The Emperor's Banished Beloved* - whose verses are equally intense and emotionally charged. The dramatic text once again refers to the suffering of a woman who has been rejected by the most powerful figure - the Emperor. Unlike the previous poem, the pain here is also perceived as a form of humiliation, since the Emperor's love represented not only an emotional bond, but also a marker of social and symbolic status.

The turmoil and inner unrest are also conveyed musically through agogic transformations, as Richter inserts numerous indications in the score concerning both tempo and character: *Andante con moto* (at the opening), *crescendo-stringendo*, *Tempo I*, *Langsam*, again *Tempo I*, *etwas bewegter/a little more lively*, *drängend/pressing* and *leidenschaftlich/passionately*, *Sehr erregt/very agitated*, *ritenuto*, and finally, once more, *Langsam*. At the same time, the choice of key - E minor - is far from incidental, as its specific tonal color contributes significantly to the expression of suffering, passion, and heightened dramatic intensity.

E.g. 13

V. Die verstossene Freundin des Kaisers Paul Richter (1875-1950)

Aranjament: Mihaela Pavel
Aranjament și tehnoredactare: Diana Cristea

Andante con moto

Soprano *p* *mf* *p*

Flaut *fp*

Pian *fp* *p* *p*

Wie auf - ge - löst ist mei-ne See - le, ich hab ge - weint, daß mei-ne Kis - sen durch - näßt

Paul Richter, *Die verstoßene Freundin des Kaisers*, ms. 1-7

Once again, in the opening of the miniature, the composer employs predominantly long note values alongside extensive tremolo writing, evoking a state of stagnation - a kind of paralysis rooted in despair and profound suffering that prevents the protagonist from finding rest. The soprano's melodic line is likewise relatively static, characterized by frequent repeated pitches and hesitant chromatic motion. The orchestration is initially restrained, limited to the string section and the horn.

The expressive contrast emerges through the evocation of the courtly celebrations at the palace surrounding the Emperor, an image that serves to intensify the protagonist's nocturnal anguish. The dramaturgy is thus built upon a sharp opposition between light and darkness, joy and sorrow, as well as between power and vulnerability. The musical tension culminates in a first climax in measure 19, where a fuller orchestral sonority is achieved through the entrance of the wind instruments alongside the strings. The parallel fourths and fifths in measures 16-20 reintroduce a subtle suggestion of Asian musical color, employed with notable compositional ingenuity precisely at the moment when the poetic text refers to "Gesänge/songs" and "Lautenspiel/lute playing" within the palace setting.

E.g. 14

16

S. *ff Langsam* *p*

drin-gen im - mer noch Ge - sän - ge und Lau - ten - spiel aus dem Pa - la - ste des Kai - sers

Fl. *mp* *f* *p*

Pian *p*

Paul Richter, *Die verstoßene Freundin des Kaisers*, ms. 16-21

The protagonist continues her confession, expressing her inability to comprehend why she is being rejected without any apparent reason, despite the persistence of her physical attributes. Confronted with the sense of abandonment and uselessness, her inner agitation intensifies, and her emotional wounds deepen further. Once again, Richter exhibits a high degree of compositional inventiveness by integrating whole-tone scale motion and parallel writing into the orchestral texture, employing the full complement of woodwind and brass instruments - 1st and 2nd Flutes, 1st and 2nd Oboes, 1st and 2nd Clarinets, and 1st and 2nd Trumpets (measures 37-39).

E.g. 15



Paul Richter, *Die verstoßene Freundin des Kaisers*, ms. 37-39

The sense of pain intensifies as the arrival of dawn paradoxically deepens despair and reinforces the feeling of helplessness, while the soul remains metaphorically engulfed in darkness. In this passage, the burden of expressive tension is carried by the lower string sonorities - cellos and double basses - which sustain and gradually amplify the atmosphere of anguish. As the phrase approaches its climactic point in measure 47, the timpani further accentuate the bitterness of the emotional discourse. The confession, marked by profound and heartrending sincerity, gradually dissolves in the closing measures, suggesting the protagonist's realization that the answers to her existential questions will remain forever inaccessible.

The sixth and final song of the *Lieder on Chinese Texts* cycle for female voice represents the most elaborate architectural and orchestral design within the set and is also the longest, with an approximate duration of four minutes. Its middle section unfolds almost like a short development section, contributing to the overall structural complexity of the work. Through a striking expressive contrast, particularly in relation to the two-preceding *Lieder*, *Der Tanz der Götter/The Dance of the Gods* brings the cycle to a close in an optimistic and luminous tonal atmosphere.

The original Chinese verses, attributed to Li Tai Po - the same poet mentioned in connection with the third Lied - trace the symbolic journey of the musician across the stages of artistic existence. The first stage depicts the artist's isolation and misunderstanding while singing to humanity, representing a phase of suffering and existential struggle. The second stage portrays his encounter with the divine realm, where the gods receive him and dance to his music, signifying transcendence. The final stage marks the return to humankind, now capable of understanding his artistic message, thus illustrating the transformative power of creation. At its core, the poem conveys the universal narrative of art and its spiritual journey.

Table 6

Der Tanz der Götter	Dansul zeilor	The Dance of the Gods
<i>Zu meiner Flöte, die aus Jade ist, sang ich den Menschen tief bewegt ein Lied; die Menschen lachten, Sie verstandens nicht.</i>	<i>La flautul meu de jad am cântat un cântec, din adâncul inimii l-am dăruit oamenilor; dar oamenii au râs, nu m-au înțeles.</i>	<i>To my flute, which is made of jade, I sang a song to the people, deeply moved; the people laughed, they did not understand it. Then, in sorrow,</i>
<i>Da hob ich schmerzvoll meine Flöte, die aus Jade ist, zum Himmel auf und brachte mein Lied den Göttern dar.</i>	<i>Atunci, cu durere, am ridicat flautul, flautul meu din jad, spre ceruri, și am închinat cântecul meu zeilor.</i>	<i>I raised my flute, which is made of jade, up to the heavens and offered my song to the gods.</i>
<i>Die Götter waren beglückt und huben auf erglühenden Wolken nach meinem Lied zu tanzen an.</i>	<i>Iar zeii s-au bucurat pe nori aprinși s-au pornit să danseze pe cântecul meu.</i>	<i>The gods were delighted and began to dance upon glowing clouds to my song.</i>
<i>Nun singe ich mein Lied den Menschen auch zur Freude, nun verstehn sie mich auch spiel ich das Lied auf meiner Flöte; die aus Jade ist.</i>	<i>Acum cânt din nou și oamenilor spre bucuria lor; iar ei mă înțeleg când sufletul meu se revarsă în sunet din flautul meu, flautul de jad.</i>	<i>Now I sing my song to the people also for their joy; now they understand me too when I play the song upon my flute, which is made of jade.</i>

**Li Tai Po/Li Bai (701-762), „Der Tanz der Götter”,
German translation by Hans Bethge**

For the final tableau of the cycle, Paul Richter selects a key associated with festive brilliance and radiant sonority - D major - which confers upon the symphonic ensemble a ceremonial, luminous, and vibrant orchestral character. The Lied opens, however, in a serene expressive frame, marked *p* and *Andante con moto*, where the melodic writing of the violins and violas suggests a calm, flowing motion, over which the delicate sonority of the jade flute emerges. The flute functions not merely as a medium through which the artist addresses the external world, but also as a symbol of purity, artistic refinement, and perhaps even of the inner essence of the artist's soul.

E.g. 16

VI. Der Tanz der Götter (Li Tai Po) Paul Richter (1875-1950)

Aranjament: Mihaela Pavel
Aranjament și tehnoredactare: Diana Cristea

Andante con moto



Soprano

Flute

Piano

Paul Richter, *Der Tanz der Götter*, ms. 1-6

The atmospheric stability of the passage is sustained by the cello and double bass, which maintain a nine-measure pedal point on D and A, respectively. In measure seven, the introduction of the harp timbre further enhances the celestial and transcendent character of the sonic landscape.

The musician's inner drama soon becomes apparent when he is met with distrust and rejection by the people who fail to comprehend his artistic expression - a symbolic reference to the notion that the artist's recognition often comes only at a later stage of maturity. The soprano's delivery of the text "*Sie verstanden's nicht/They did not understand it*" should convey a subtle nuance of scornful irony, as indicated by the composer's own expressive marking (*etwas verächtlich*).

The sensation of suffering is further intensified through the use of sustained tremolos in the string section, which also function as a transitional device leading into the developmental-like segment spanning measures 17-43, marked "*etwas bewegter/somewhat more lively*". Emotionally wounded, the artist transcends worldly expectations, redirecting his creative act toward a higher spiritual plane, renouncing the need for earthly recognition and entering into communion with the divine by offering his song to the gods. To articulate this more animated expressive moment, the musical discourse introduces a persistent dotted rhythmic pattern, creating a dynamic contrast with the initial atmosphere of serenity.

E.g. 17

18 *mf*

S. Da hob ich schmerz - voll mei - ne Flö - te, die aus Ja - de ist,

Fl.

Pno.

Paul Richter, *Der Tanz der Götter*, ms. 18-20

This section also represents the moment in which Richter makes the most extensive use of percussion in order to reinforce the construction of the central developmental passage. Throughout the cycle, percussion is employed sparingly, with the gong appearing once in the first Lied, twice in the third, and once again at the close of the fourth, while the timpani are used only in two brief interventions in the third song and in two short tremolo figures at the end of the fifth. In the final Lied of the cycle, however, the composer expands the percussion palette by introducing, in addition to the timpani and gong, the glockenspiel and tambourine (measures 23-40). As previously noted, the gong carries symbolic associations with the closure of a cycle, stage, or ritual process, and may also signify the opening of a new beginning, as observed in theatrical, educational, or sporting contexts.

Accordingly, in the passage under discussion - which also represents, in my view, the climactic apex of the entire cycle - the percussion writing plays a decisive role in shaping the sonic and dramatic architecture of the musical tableau. The poetic image of the dancing gods constitutes the most powerful expressive moment of the poem, reflecting the artist's realization that his creative endeavor acquires value through its recognition by higher, transcendent forces; thus, his artistic struggle is revealed not to have been in vain. In this section, Richter allows the orchestral sonority to unfold in a broad and solemn manner (*Breit*, measures 32-43), the full orchestral ensemble constructing the vision of the gods engaged in their celestial dance. The harp glissandi are particularly noteworthy for their expressive and timbral impact.



Paul Richter, *Der Tanz der Götter*, ms. 33-34

The closing measures of the developmental section (mm. 40-43) symbolically mark the artist's return from the transcendent sphere to the human realm. The descending trajectory of the musical line suggests a movement from the divine toward the earthly world, thus musically illustrating the process of reconciliation between the two dimensions. The reintroduction of whole-tone scale motion and parallel writing further enhances structural cohesion while sustaining the expressive unity of the passage.

The initial atmosphere of serenity is reinstated through the return to the calm quarter-note motion (*Tempo I*), establishing a cyclical relationship with the opening of the tableau. The protagonist once again directs his artistic message toward the human community. However, unlike the earlier episode of rejection, his art is now received with understanding and appreciation, generating a sense of expressive and existential resolution. Consequently, the cycle closes in a mood of reconciliation and inner equilibrium. From a broader hermeneutic perspective, the song articulates the idea of art as a transformative and regenerative force. Genuine artistic creation is thus portrayed as a mediating principle capable of elevating the human condition and facilitating reconciliation between the divine and the human realms.

Conclusion

Thus, although at the end of the summer of 2025 I had the opportunity to perform before an audience the cycle of *Six Lieder on Chinese Texts*, Op. 95, a more in-depth analysis of these inspired miniatures revealed additional facets of Paul Richter's compositional personality. His attention to the subtleties of the poetic text, the diversity of musical imagery and timbral nuances, as well as his refined handling of all elements of musical language (melody, harmony, rhythm, agogics, dynamics), become particularly evident. In this cycle

of vocal miniatures, Richter reveals a refined capacity for synthesizing a broad spectrum of distinct yet fundamental images within a concise formal framework. He carefully selects and deploys, at structurally and expressively decisive moments, those components of musical language best suited to articulate the desired affect and poetic imagery with clarity and precision.

I would also like to reiterate the relevance of Türk's analysis (see the aforementioned work, pp. 141-155), which constitutes an important and highly useful complement to the present study. While my own investigation has been oriented primarily toward an interpretative approach, with particular emphasis on orchestration and on the intricate relationship between text and music, Türk's contribution is grounded more firmly in the examination of harmonic architecture and formal design. Taken together, these perspectives prove mutually enriching: his structurally focused analysis provides a solid theoretical foundation, whereas the present research seeks to illuminate the expressive, semantic, and timbral dimensions of the cycle. In this way, the two approaches converge to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the work, integrating both its technical construction and its interpretative potential.

Evidently, the transcription for voice, flute, and piano - with the optional addition of a violin - does not recreate the same atmospheric depth as the orchestral version, whose expanded timbral palette and heightened expressive intensity generate a more substantial impact on the audience. However, the intrinsic beauty and subtle refinement of these miniatures persuaded me to undertake a chamber adaptation, one that proves considerably more practical to stage, requiring a reduced number of performers and, at the same time, a more intimate performance space.

I leave open the prospect of further research into Paul Richter's vocal oeuvre, with potential avenues including the song cycles Op. 4, Op. 84, Op. 103, and Op. 104, all published by MusikNoten-Verlag Latzina (Karlsruhe) in 2000.

I remain hopeful that this concise investigation will foster increased scholarly interest in Richter's oeuvre and artistic legacy, reaffirming his significance as a prominent presence in the musical life of Braşov.

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THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION AND REDUCTION IN KAREL GOEYVAERTS' FIVE LITANIES

ALEXANDRA BELIBOU¹ 

SUMMARY. The culmination of Karel Goeyvaerts' minimalist production is the Litanieën series (5 works), which combines his compositional methods from the 1970s with a formal coherence and structural clarity. These five pieces mark a turning point in the composer's stylistic development as they strike a careful balance between repetition and constant transformation. Established at the intersection of postminimalism and minimalism, the Litany series shifts from static repetition to a dynamic process of transformation. Goeyvaerts defines his method as "evolving-repetitive" music because he leans the balance even more in the direction of transformation compared to pure minimalism, which typically applies gradual change to reductive material. This article explores the construction and reduction process in the Litany series.

Keywords: minimalism, postminimalism, Karel Goeyvaerts, Litanieën, construction/reduction

1. Karel Goeyvaerts' Style and Compositional Concepts

Karel Goeyvaerts (1923–1993) was a key figure in the evolution of avant-garde music after World War II. He was exposed to a wide range of musical ideas during his early education at the Royal Flemish Music Conservatory in Antwerp and the National Conservatory in Paris, especially under Olivier Messiaen's influence. By fusing Messiaen's inventive rhythms with Anton Webern's demanding serialism, Goeyvaerts was the first to use total serialism, extending the technique's use beyond pitch to include rhythm, dynamics, and articulation. His 1951 composition *Nummer 2* for 13 instruments is considered the first complete serialist work. His close relationship with

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Karlheinz Stockhausen further cemented his influence, as seen in the latter's *Kreuzspiel*, which drew from Goeyvaerts' *Sonata for Two Pianos*. In the early 1950s, he also ventured into electronic music, seeking greater precision and control over sound, leading to works like *Nummer 4 met dode tonen* (1952), one of the earliest compositions intended exclusively for electronic realization.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Goeyvaerts' focus shifted as he explored experimental techniques, aleatory procedures, and electroacoustic music. While he no longer played a central role in shaping avant-garde movements, his works remained highly structured and conceptually rigorous. His *Stuk voor piano en tape* (1964) systematically examined the interaction between live performance and pre-recorded sound, reflecting his ongoing interest in controlled musical processes. By the late 1970s, he embraced repetitive techniques influenced by minimalism, culminating in his *Litany* series (1979–1982).

Goeyvaerts' final decade was marked by a synthesis of his earlier techniques with new expressive possibilities. His large-scale opera *Aquarius* (1983–1993) exemplifies this integration, combining serial structures, minimalist techniques, and neo-tonal harmonies within a visionary, abstract framework. The opera's finale, based on his string quartet *De Zeven Zegels* (1986), illustrates how his serialist roots continued to inform his later neo-tonal language. The use of symmetrical structures, numerical symbolism, and distributive pitch organization reveal a deep continuity in his compositional thought, despite stylistic transformations over the decades. Goeyvaerts' lifelong obsession with musical time and structural purity remained a defining feature of his work, ensuring his legacy as a pioneering yet deeply cohesive composer within 20th-century music².

2. Extra-Musical Realities Behind the Compositions of the Litany Series

2.1. Temporality

In a letter to Stockhausen dated September 9, 1953, Goeyvaerts writes that the principle he follows in composition is rooted in the concept of the immobility of Being, which he considers the valid and foundational basis for his musical approach. This principle revolves around a series of identical sounds that are proportionally expanded and reduced over time and space. These changes happen within the “optical field” of time and space, meaning

² ***, “Karel Goeyvaerts.” *Flemish Composers Database*, Matrix - New Music, <https://matrix-new-music.be/en/publications/flemish-composers-database/goeyvaerts-karel/>. Accessed on 9th of January 2025.

they are perceived as alterations within the constraints of temporal and spatial dimensions. However, Goeyvaerts emphasizes that these changes do not possess absolute existence in themselves. Instead, the true, absolute existence is conceived as an inconceivable Oneness or Unity, which transcends any form of alteration or change³.

The essence of Goeyvaerts' principle lies in the organization of space and time in a way that remains fundamentally static. The focus is on creating a structural form where transformations exist only as proportional expansions or reductions, rather than as actual changes. In this sense, the composition does not evolve or develop in the conventional sense but instead adheres to a static framework that continuously reflects a sense of unchanging unity.

These ideas about extra and intra-musical temporality can be seen in the method of developing the sound material used in all 5 Litanyes. It is about unity - represented by coherent musical phrases of a few sounds, its construction by the joining of foreign entities - as a sign of a development without loss of identity, then its reduction, which most often represents a dissolution into a new entity that appears and will follow the same process of transition. If these realities about time are valid at the micro-structure level, we can observe that the entire series of Litany preserves its identity, precisely through the composer's fidelity to the compositional process that fits into the minimalist style - thanks to the austere material used.

In general, the musical discourse is largely shaped by its temporal articulation, where time plays a central role in composition⁴. Time can be understood through various perspectives, including theological, philosophical, and artistic lenses. One notable interpretation is sacred time, which introduces eternity into the flow of natural time. The ruptures between the ephemeral and the eternal creates an eschatological perspective that reflects the intersection of time and eternity, leading to a deeper understanding of existence⁵.

Composer's view of time reminds us of Lemeni's opinion that time is not merely linear but also a cycle of regeneration and participation in eternity⁶.

³ Misch, Imke, Markus Bandur, and Stockhausen-Stiftung für Musik. *Karlheinz Stockhausen bei den Internationalen Ferienkursen für Neue Musik in Darmstadt 1951-1996: Dokumente und Briefe* (Karlheinz Stockhausen at the International Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt 1951-1996: Documents and Letters). 1st ed., Stockhausen-Verlag, 2001.

⁴ Coroiu, Petruța. *Semantic and Hermeneutic of Music (Semantică și hermeneutică muzicală)*. Universitaria Publishing House, 2018, p. 77.

⁵ "Theological, Philosophical, and Scientific Aspects of Temporality" (*Ipostaze teologice, filosofice și științifice ale temporalității*). *Ziarul Lumina*, <https://ziarulumina.ro/societate/religie-si-stiinta/ipostaze-teologice-filosofice-si-stiintifice-ale-temporalitatii-76036.html>. Accessed 10th of December 2024. I

⁶ Lemeni, Adrian. *The Eschatological Meaning of Time in Life and Consciousness in the Horizon of Temporality (Sensul eshatologic al timpului în Viață și conștiință în orizontul temporalității)*. Basilica Publishing House, 2015, p. 25.

This convergence of time's ephemerality and eternity aligns with the philosophical conception of time as both objective (scientific) and subjective (artistic/human). Just as the ephemeral world is understood through its relation to the eternal, music captures this essence by engaging with temporal dynamics that transcend the limitations of the immediate moment, leading to a sense of unity that resonates beyond the music itself⁷.

2.2. The meaning of the Litany

The five compositions are titled *Litanies*, directly referencing one of the oldest forms of collective prayer. The composer explains this choice in the opening pages of the scores, stating that this archaic form of prayer naturally aligns with his concept of ostinato—repetition with the addition of sonic elements (in the form of development) and the layering of entities.

In prayer gatherings, as in the case of the Litany⁸, there is a remarkable interplay between the individual and the collective. These two forms of spiritual expression do not distinctly separate from one another; thus, the individual-collective dichotomy paradoxically signals an inseparable whole, precisely as the composer asserts. Through communal prayer, while preserving individual dignity, a unique temporal experience is created, enabling an unparalleled fusion between personal and ancestral will. *"Prayer must occupy a delicate position that offers a supportive, mutual experience, while also protecting the individual's sense of agency; it must accept ambivalence alongside faith,"* argues Esther Sperber⁹.

Thus, following the two extra-musical realities mentioned earlier, the works analyzed in this article engage with simultaneity and succession—configurations that determine the layering of sounds (and serve as a metaphor for monophony and polyphony in prayer). Additionally, they reflect the most fundamental relationships between objects: repetition and change (which pertain to time and temporality)¹⁰. These aspects define and shape the construction and reduction process in the Litany series.

⁷ Preda-Uliță, Anca. *The Concept of Harmony. A Structural Perspective*, Bulletin of Transilvania University of Brașov, Series VIII: Performing Arts, Vol. 14 (63) No. 2, 2021

⁸ Litanies are prayers led by a priest or deacon, consisting of petitions with fixed responses from the congregation. They began in the 4th century and were later included in the Mass.

⁹ Sperber, Esther. *The Paradox of Communal Prayer*. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 24 Sept. 2015, <https://www.jta.org/2015/09/24/ny/the-paradox-of-communal-prayer>. Accessed 10 Mar. 2025.

¹⁰ Georgescu, C. D. *Syntactic Categories (Categoriile sintactice)*. *Revista Muzica*, no. 2, 2017, <https://www.ucmr.org.ro/Texte/RV-2-2017-2-CDGeorgescu-Categoriile-sintactice.pdf>. Accessed 2nd of Mar. 2025.

3. The Construction and Reduction Process

I have employed the terms construction and reduction as used by Mark Delaere¹¹, one of the key analysts of Karel Goeyvaerts. These concepts are also prevalent throughout minimalist art, including architecture¹². They refer to the use of a limited artistic material that is built (developed) through the addition of elements and dissolves through reduction.

In Goeyvaerts' work, he employs a construction phase, signifying evolution or development, during which musical elements are added or modified within an initial structure. This is followed by a reduction phase, where the musical writing is progressively simplified. In very few instances, the reduction or dissolution phase is absent altogether, as we will see next.

3.1. Litanie I

Composed in 1979 for piano, *Litanie I* already displays from its very first page the main characteristics discussed in this paper, revealing a compositional strategy based on a fixed temporal module and a constant tempo and metre, within which Goeyvaerts develops a highly controlled process of construction and reduction characteristic of minimalist aesthetics.

Throughout the work, sequences are gradually built by adding small sonic elements and then slowly dismantled through systematic subtraction, while several sequences may overlap in different stages of growth and decay. Rather than relying on literal repetition of entire modules, the piece achieves continuity through the repeated placement of the same aggregates in identical rhythmic and metrical positions, each time slightly expanded or reduced. Dense passages emerge when multiple sequences coexist, some still under construction, others already fading, creating a layered texture in which chromatic, dissonant material is organized with extreme economy.

¹¹ Delaere, Mark. "Staff: Mark Delaere." *Department of Musicology*, KU Leuven, <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/musicology/staff/00007214>. Accessed 2nd of May 2024.

¹² Dief-Allah, Mohammad Hamed. "Reflection of Morphology of Construction and Minimalism." *Journal of Architecture, Art & Humanistic Science*, vol. 5, no. 24, 2020, pp. 347–360.

E.g. 1

1+2 $\text{♩} = 144$
 3+4 *sempre simile*
 5+6
 7
 8

Karel Goeyvaerts, Litanie I, first page (sequences 1 and 2)

In the musical example above, two superimposed layers can be observed, which are processed according to the methods described above.

After a long series of additions and superimpositions of three further sequences, the process of reduction of sequence 2 can be observed in the musical example below (as un upper layer).

E.g. 2

p *f* *f* *ff*
 2^{da} volta: *ff*

Karel Goeyvaerts, Litanie I, bars 180-181

The overall form is symmetrically balanced around a temporal centre, and each sequence follows a clear trajectory from minimal presence to maximal density and back to near disappearance. This method, closely related to early American minimalism, transforms repetition into a process of gradual transformation, in which musical material is constantly reshaped through restrained, incremental change.

3.2. Litanie II

In *Litanie II* for three percussionists (1980), Goeyvaerts continues and expands the processes of construction, superimposition, and reduction observed in *Litanie I*, while introducing a more clearly articulated formal principle. Dedicated to an ensemble from Cincinnati that premiered and frequently performed the work, this piece is likewise based on the gradual building and dismantling of layered material; however, in contrast to the continuous transformations of the piano work, these processes are repeatedly interrupted by a forceful refrain. This recurring, harsh motif functions in a manner comparable to a rondo, punctuating the evolving textures and marking moments of renewal.

E.g. 3

The musical score for Karel Goeyvaerts' *Litanie II* illustrates the construction of three layers. The first system (measures 10-13) shows Layer 1 on Xylophone and Layer 2* on Glockensp. The second system (measures 14-17) shows Layer 1 on Xylophone, Layer 2* on Glockensp., and Layer 3 on Marimba. Layer 3 begins with a piano (p) dynamic marking.

Karel Goeyvaerts, *Litanie II*, first appearance of the layers

The composition is structured around the superimposition of three evolutionary and repetitive sound layers, in which motifs are expanded or reduced through incremental modifications.

E.g. 4

36

Xylophone

Glockensp.

Marimba

Karel Goeyvaerts, Litanie II, becoming of the 3 layers

When the material becomes sparse through progressive depletion, the refrain reasserts itself, initiating a new cycle with fresh sonic material drawn from the wide range of percussion instruments.

E.g. 5

45 4 Temple Blocks Xylo *ff* Temple Blocks

Xylo *p* *ff* *p*

Cymbal (high) Chin. opera cymb. Susp. Cymb. (med.) (high) Chin. opera cymb.

Med. Tam-Tam *f* *f* *p* *mp* *f* *p*

Wood Blocks *p* *mf* *p*

Bass Drum Tam-Tam (high) Bass Dr. *p*

Timp. *f* *f*

Karel Goeyvaerts, Litanie II, refrain

Rooted in what Goeyvaerts describes as a “wild-sacral” basis¹³, the work evokes ritualistic and trance-like practices reminiscent of Balinese and African traditions, situating its minimalist construction–reduction techniques within a broader context of incantatory and quasi-ritual musical expression.

¹³ Goeyvaerts, Karel. *Litany II: for Three Percussionists*. Chamber music, percussion ensemble (3 perc). Publisher's no. 15995. Donemus.

3.3. Litanie III

In *Litanie III* for orchestra, composed in 1980, each individual instrument or pair of instruments functions as a distinct generator of minimalist layers that are gradually superimposed, continuing the same developmental technique based on the progressive addition of sonic entities followed by their systematic dissolution. As in the previous Litanies, musical material is constructed through incremental processes, in which small units are accumulated, transformed, and eventually reduced, creating a constantly evolving texture. Some of these entities are incisive and sharply articulated, while others remain more static, diffuse, and sonically diluted, contributing to a dynamic balance between movement and stasis. Through the interaction of these contrasting layers, Goeyvaerts shapes a carefully structured and coherent sonic landscape, in which timbral variety, density, and spatial distribution play a central role. The orchestral medium allows for an expanded palette of colors and textures, reinforcing the ritualistic and process-oriented character of the work, while preserving the minimalist principles of repetition, gradual transformation, and formal clarity that underpin the entire Litanies cycle.

3.4. Litanie IV

In *Litanie IV*, composed in 1981 for soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano in response to a commission from Radio France, Goeyvaerts further refines the compositional principles that govern the entire Litanies cycle. The work is shaped by a continuous process in which small musical units gradually unfold, reach a point of saturation, and are subsequently dismantled, with several such processes unfolding simultaneously. This overlapping evolution generates a strong sense of continuity and contributes to the work's ritual-like and meditative atmosphere.

In contrast to the more clearly differentiated layers of earlier pieces, *Litanie IV* is largely constructed as a single, intricate sound continuum, articulated collectively by the six performers. The voice plays a central role, moving fluidly between abstract phonetic sounds and fragments that suggest semantic meaning. From the opening moments, vocal gestures supported by dense instrumental sonorities establish a hybrid space between speech, song, and pure sound.

Starting from measure 45, we find a clear example of the construction of a vocal cell, which is progressively expanded every two measures, as shown below.

The image displays five staves of handwritten musical notation for a vocal line. The notation is in a single system, with each staff representing a line of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff has the lyrics "E - ti - a -". The second staff has "Te - ne - ti - a - o - ti - o". The third staff has "Te - ne - ti - a - o - ti - a - ti - o - ti". The fourth staff has "Te - ne - ti - a - o - ti - a - ti - o - ti - a - ti - o - ti". The fifth staff has "Te - ne - ti - a - o - ti - a - ti - o - ti - a - ti - o - ti". The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *f*, *p*, and *pp*.

Karel Goeyvaerts, *Litanie IV*, starting from bar 45, vocal line

At the end of the construction phase, this vocal cell, now transformed into a melismatic figure, enters a phase of reduction, while new sonorities from another cell are superimposed; this second cell can be seen dissolving in its final appearance in the example below.

E.g. 7

Karel Goeyvaerts, *Litanie IV*, starting from bar 62-67, vocal line

Throughout the work, subtle transformations of vocal and instrumental material evoke distant associations with liturgical chant, lullabies, and traditional theatrical forms, yet these references remain elusive and transient. Rather than forming stable allusions, they are absorbed into the ongoing musical flow, which steadily advances toward a persistent ostinato conclusion¹⁴.

Through this synthesis of vocal expression, unified texture, and gradual transformation, Goeyvaerts creates a complex and coherent sonic environment.

3.5. *Litanie V*

In *Litanie V* (1982), the final work of the cycle, Karel Goeyvaerts constructs an extended ritual-like form for at least three harpsichords, based on canonic sequences distributed across six tonal zones arranged in descending whole-step intervals. These zones unfold successively—from D through C, B-flat, A-flat, F-sharp, and E—before returning to the initial D, thereby

¹⁴ Goeyvaerts, Karel. *Litanie IV: voor sopraan, fluit, clarinet, viool, violoncello en piano*. Vocal music, voice and instruments (zang, fl, cl, vn, vc, pf). Publisher's no. 18919, Donemus.

completing a circular tonal process. The composition begins and ends with the same principal sequence, reinforcing its symmetrical design and sense of formal closure. Performers may combine live playing with prerecorded parts, allowing precise synchronization, while maintaining a steady pulse throughout the work. Within each zone, several sequences can be reordered or selectively omitted, provided that all parts follow the same structure and that every tonal region is presented in the prescribed order.

Below, I present an example of the treatment of the section in A-flat, articulated through two different rhythmic frameworks, which clearly highlight the principles of construction and reduction. This excerpt illustrates how the musical material is gradually expanded through the systematic addition of sonic elements and subsequently reshaped through controlled processes of subtraction. By placing the same tonal area within contrasting rhythmic contexts, the example reveals the flexibility of Goeyvaerts's compositional method, as well as the consistency of his structural thinking. The interaction between these two rhythmic profiles emphasizes the progressive accumulation and dissolution of musical cells, demonstrating how minimalist procedures generate formal coherence through subtle yet continuous transformation.

E.g. 8



Karel Goeyvaerts, *Litanie V*, Ab section – original version

E.g. 9

V1

V2

Karel Goeyvaerts, *Litanie V*, Ab section – variations 1 and 2

Although the harmonic language remains strictly tonal, it avoids traditional functional relationships, instead progressing through adjacent pitch areas in a stepwise manner. As the longest of the *Litanies*, this work emphasizes continuity, repetition, and gradual transformation on a large scale, culminating in a return to its opening material. Conceived as a musical rite, *Litanie V* embodies Goeyvaerts's vision of minimalist process as a ceremonial experience, in which formal rigor and meditative listening converge.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the five Litanies represent the culmination of Karel Goeyvaerts's mature minimalist language, bringing together the diverse strategies of construction, superimposition, interruption, vocal expression, and large-scale formal organization examined throughout this study. From the layered and symmetrical processes of *Litanie I*, through the ritualized refrains of *Litanie II*, the expanded orchestral textures of *Litanie III*, the unified vocal-instrumental continuum of *Litanie IV*, and the canonic, tonal cycles of *Litanie V*, a consistent compositional logic emerges, grounded in gradual accumulation and controlled dissolution. Each work demonstrates how repetition functions not as static reiteration but as a vehicle for continuous transformation, confirming Goeyvaerts's concept of "evolving-repetitive" music. Situated between minimalism and postminimalism, the Litanies replace mechanical recurrence with dynamic processes of growth and decay, resulting in forms that are both rigorously constructed and perceptually fluid. Through their shared emphasis on construction and reduction, these works achieve a balance between formal clarity and expressive depth, fulfilling the aims outlined in the abstract and affirming the Litany series as a central achievement in Goeyvaerts's late compositional output.

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THE HARMONY BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AFFECTION AND FESTIVE GRANDEUR IN LUCIANO SIMONI'S *MISSA SOLEMNIS*

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SUMMARY. The article presents the complex personality of the Italian composer Luciano Simoni (1932–2010), highlighting his dual career as an engineer and musician, as well as his rich compositional portfolio, which focuses primarily on religiously inspired vocal-symphonic music. It mentions his international collaborations and his artistic relationship with the Târgu Mureș Philharmonic, which resulted in numerous recordings under the baton of conductor Romeo Rîmbu. The central work analyzed is *Missa Solemnis*, composed between 1969 and 1977, and highlights Simoni's distinctive stylistic synthesis, which blends elements of post-Romanticism, Neoclassicism, serialism, and minimalism into an original language dominated by melody and expressiveness. It highlights the thematic unity of the work, achieved through the repetition and transformation of musical motifs across different sections, as well as the use of polyphonic techniques and Gregorian influences. The analysis examines each part (*Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Agnus Dei*) in detail, highlighting the correspondence between the musical discourse and the theological meanings of the text. An important aspect is the composer's artistic conception, based on expressive sincerity and the transmission of a spiritual message of hope and peace. The Mass thus takes on the character of a choral symphony, due to the extensive role of the orchestra and the instrumental interludes. Finally, the article highlights the aesthetic value and interpretive challenges of the work, as well as the critical acclaim received by Simoni's composition, which is characterized by stylistic coherence and fidelity to the Italian musical tradition.

Keywords: Luciano Simoni, *Missa Solemnis*, Contemporary vocal-symphonic music, Contemporary *Missa*, Religious expressivity

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1. Introduction (about Luciano Simoni biographical landmarks)

This article aims to shed light on a lesser-known composer, whose life and musical career are intertwined with a long teaching career in engineering at the University of Bologna, the oldest institution of higher education in Western Europe. His name is Luciano Simoni, and his lifelong passion for music has accompanied him throughout his entire life; he was a prolific composer of works in the most diverse musical styles, ranging from chamber music to symphonic pieces and large-scale works, such as vocal-symphonic compositions, both in the secular sphere and, above all, within the Western Christian context.

Luciano Simoni, born in Bologna in 1932 and deceased in the same city on December 23, 2010, was a multifaceted figure, holding a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Bologna, but also having studied composition from 1951 to 1959 with Lino Liviabella, director of the Bologna Conservatory and a student of Ottorino Respighi.

As a professor of electrical engineering, he rose through all the ranks of the academic career, authoring hundreds of scientific articles and being invited to lecture at numerous prestigious institutions in the U.S., Japan, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and Poland, with some topics related to scientific progress as well as the relationship between science and music.

In the musical field, Luciano Simoni is the recipient of a composition award, having won first prize in 1975 for his First Symphony from the "Cassa Nazionale Musicisti," and his works have been performed in Italy, Poland, and Romania.

As a conductor, my first personal encounter with the composer took place in Târgu-Mureș in September 1996, when I recorded a CD featuring his Symphony No. 3 and the work St. Paul Hymni, alongside the Târgu-Mureș State Philharmonic. This marked the beginning of a fruitful collaboration based on mutual affinity, which led to the release of several subsequent recordings. I thus collaborated with the composer on the production of six more CDs, some of which featured world premieres. Through these recordings, we introduced the public to the work of composer Luciano Simoni, with the selected repertoire being representative of his compositional style. However, a large portion of his works remained unperformed, given that Simoni was a highly prolific composer, with a body of work totalling 71 opuses.

The following works were recorded over the course of approximately 14 years of collaboration:

1996, 04-07 VII- CD: *Simfonia III, St. Paul Hymni*, Electrecord- EDC 207, Inedita- PI 2472

1999, 14-17 IX- CD: *Da sempre mi conosci, Concerto dell, Europa, Canto di liberazione*- Agora 253.1

- 2002, 10-12 III- Concert and CD: *Ouverture Transilvana*, Dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Târgu Mureș Philharmonic
2003, 01-04 IX- CD: *Concerto per violino, Simfonia IV*- Inedita, PI 2463
2005, 16 IX- Concert L. Simoni, CD: *Requiem della Misericordia, Magnificat*- Inedita, PI 2483
2007, 24-27 VI- CD: *Simfonia V, Inno alla Pace, Our Lady of Heavens*- Inedita, PI 2654
2008, 25 IX- CD and Concert - *Missa Solemnis*- Tactus, TC 931903
2010, 25 III- Symphonic Concert

2. Missa Solemnis, preliminary informations

Although the work under consideration here, *Missa Solemnis*, was composed and performed on October 13, 1988, on the **festive** occasion of the 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna, the work's subject matter is inextricably linked to the religious sphere, demonstrating, alongside many of his other works dedicated to this genre, the composer's deep affinity with the theological realm, especially since another major work of his bears the title *Requiem della Misericordia*, a piece dedicated to the memory of Pope John Paul II, recorded in 2005.

The composer's close emotional connection to the divine is also evidenced by the creation of numerous other works, such as *Agnus Dei, Canto di Liberazioni, Ave Maria, Piccola Messa Italiana, Messa Semplice, Sacrificium, Our Lady of Heaven, Allegoria della Speranza, Misterium Amoris, Hymni, Missa Festa, Dal Profondo Ti Prego, Magnificat, Gesù Signore, Inno a Dio Padre, Ante Crucem*, and *Salmo Ottavo*.

His secular works include five symphonies, concertos for violin and cello, as well as various orchestral and chamber pieces, totalling 71 works. *Missa Solemnis* is the result of an eight-year creative process, spanning from 1969 to 1977, and comprises all the significant parts of a Catholic Mass: *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*. In terms of musical language, Simoni employs a blend of styles that, though heterogeneous, achieves originality through the way it combines various trends—from post-Romanticism to serialism, neoclassicism, or minimalism—with the guiding thread always being the inspiration and melodic quality of the musical discourse, a defining characteristic of Italian composers.

As Adriano Cavicchi states in the preface to the program booklet for the gala concert, "His vast musical output, now appreciated, awarded, and performed in Italy and abroad, encompasses works ranging from symphonies

to choral symphonies, from chamber music to cantatas for voice and orchestra. His musical world, characterized by intense expressive vigor, finds its inspiration in the atmosphere typical of post-World War II Italy; then, in accordance with expressive needs, it moves toward horizons of conscious atonality... toward neo-Romantic spaces with post-expressionist accents, placing the *Missa Solemnis* in a particularly favorable position to illuminate a text so rich in diverse facets and dramatic situations of heart-wrenching expressiveness.”²

Figure 1



TEATRO COMUNALE DI BOLOGNA
ENTE AUTONOMO

STAGIONE
1988/1989

CONCERTO STRAORDINARIO NELL'AMBITO DELLE CELEBRAZIONI
PER IL IX CENTENARIO DELL'UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

GIOVEDÌ 13 OTTOBRE 1988 • ORE 20.30

BASILICA DI S. DOMENICO

Soprano PAOLA ROMANÒ
Tenore OSLAVIO DI CREDICO

Direttore
OTMAR MAGA
Maestro del coro
PIERO MONTI

**MISSA
SOLEMNIS**

PER SOLI CORO E ORCHESTRA
MUSICA DI
LUCIANO SIMONI

*Kyrie
Gloria
Credo
Sanctus
Agnus Dei*

ORCHESTRA E CORO DEL TEATRO COMUNALE DI BOLOGNA
PRIMA ESECUZIONE ASSOLUTA

Cover of the program booklet for the inaugural concert,
featuring the world premiere

In the same booklet, the composer makes several remarks regarding his artistic philosophy and the inner motivation that led him to compose such a monumental work; these remarks are drawn from an imaginary dialogue

² Program booklet for the premiere in Bologna, on October 13, 1988.

with a music lover. „With regard to the traditional form of the requiem, the Dies Irae section does not align with my conception of the Last Judgment, as I place my trust with serenity in divine forgiveness; thus, when I do not deeply share an idea, I cannot translate it into music. For me, composition is an act of supreme sincerity. The spark that ignites inspiration must spring from the depths of my soul. Thus, was born a work that is unique in form, structure, and strictly musical characteristics; featuring notable passages of polyphony and drawing upon Gregorian “tonalities,” which link the Missa to the great tradition of sacred music. But these elements coexist with the characteristics of my usual style, which is “novecentesco,” into which these elements fit naturally, with harmonic, dynamic, or coloristic contrasts. These contrasts, which provide the work with a further and interesting emphasis between the choral section—rigorously polyphonic—and the free flow of the substantial, purely orchestral intermezzos, true symphonic developments, give the Mass a character akin to a symphony with choir. This variety has allowed for the highlighting of multiple historical or theological meanings, embedded within a text of remarkable poignancy. Here are a few points to help the listener absorb and retain something of this uninterrupted musical flow, keeping it in mind and in heart.”³

3. Analysis

With regard to the analytical approach to the Missa Solemnis, I will outline several key ideas concerning its structure, as well as my own interpretive perspective on specific elements of the work’s performance.

Missa Solemnis is available from the Italian record label *Tactus*,⁴ but it can also be heard on YouTube in my own interpretation.

KYRIE ELEISON⁵

The first theme of *Kyrie eleison* begins in the low register of the cellos and double basses, presenting a lyrical melody that forms the core of the subsequent thematic development.

³ Program booklet for the premiere in Bologna, on October 13, 1988.

⁴ <https://www.tactus.it/tc931903-luciano-simoni-1932-2010-missa-solemnis/>, accessed on March 23, 2026

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAbnqrK9B8Y&list=RDqAbnqrK9B8Y&start_radio=1, accessed on March 23, 2026

E.g. 1



The beginning of *Kyrie*'s first movement

This introduction serves as a prelude to the choir's entrance, beginning with an initial B minor chord, immediately followed by the dominant F-sharp major chord with a descending altered fifth—a harmonic "coloring" technique characteristic of the composer's style:

E.g. 2



Choir's entrance, bar 21

Like many of his illustrious predecessors - such as J. S. Bach, R. Schumann, D. Shostakovich, Alban Berg, M. Ravel, G. Enescu, or E. Elgar - Luciano Simoni constructs many of the themes in his works by incorporating the musical cryptogram of his name into key moments within them. This encrypted personal signature appears as early as his first symphony in the form of a three-note motif that constitutes the beginning of the main theme in the second movement of the symphony. As a personalized *motto*, it is also present in most of his later works,

E.g. 3



***Motto* Luciano Simoni**

Luciano Simoni is not the only 20th-century composer whose musical output defies categorization into a specific style; the originality of his music lies precisely in its spontaneous inspiration, the naturalness of its melodies,

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and the solidity of its formal structure, with his background as an engineer contributing to the successful architecture of his works. A telling example is the theme from the sonata-form recapitulation of the Kyrie section, which appears in a transformed form in the final section, the Agnus Dei, thus demonstrating the composer's cyclical thinking. The coherence and unity of form demonstrate a logic of organizational strategies characteristic of a scientist whose sensitivity and expressiveness are shaped by a deepening of the sacred sentiment.

E.g. 4



Kyrie, First movement, varied recapitulation, bars 194-196

E.g. 5



Miserere, Sopran solo, Fifth movement, Agnus Dei, bars 24-26, Adagio

E.g. 6



Agnus Dei, First Movement, Tenor solo, bars 67-71

From these three examples presented above, one can observe, on the one hand, thematic unity, but also the way in which the composer develops the themes, thereby managing to create a blend of unity in diversity. In fact, it should be noted that sometimes, in the case of great composers, when the

work's structure is based on the sonata form, one can observe how the two themes, which are usually contrasting, share a common origin - an origin that is not easily discernible, but which confers a thematic unity perceived only intuitively, offering the listener a sense of familiarity that, in turn, provides a spiritual pleasure that is seemingly inexplicable and ineffable, yet perceptible on a sensory level. I believe that the use of such subtle techniques distinguishes "ordinary" composers from those of great stature, and Luciano Simoni, all things considered, seems to approach this privileged territory with reverence, at least from this perspective.

GLORIA⁶

Movement II, **Gloria**, is characterized by a dynamic and solemn atmosphere and begins with an *ff* played by the entire orchestra. Notable are the tonal harmonies marked by triads (chords), as well as the geometric chordal structures of fourths and fifths found in the works of all modern composers. Polytonality is also a discernible element in the musical discourse of this movement.

E.g. 7



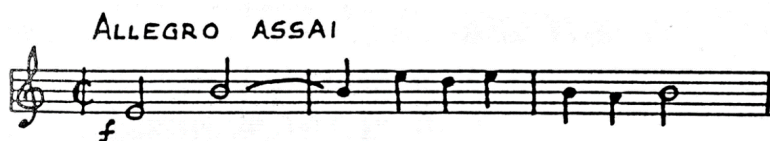
Gloria, first bars

In the Laudamus section, the composer chooses the flute and trumpet to introduce the main theme. This sets the stage for the entrance of the male voices of the choir, to which all the instruments of the orchestra are gradually added, thus creating a grandiose effect that prepares the ground for the "Domine Deus" section. Of particular interest is the moment when the composer invokes "Domine Figli unigenite," followed by the "Deus Pater" passage, with the symbolic intention of emphasizing the union between "Padre e Figlio."

⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5LqeQI0EVo&list=RDN5LqeQI0EVo&start_radio=1, accessed on March 23, 2026

Gloria has a particularly complex structure, consisting of multiple contrasting musical sections, in accordance with the symbols contained in the liturgical text; the varied and ornamented theme for solo soprano, "Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris," the "Quoniam" section, a hymn dedicated to the glory of Christ based on a diatonic theme that becomes the foundation for an elaborate fugato.

E.g. 8



Gloria, Quoniam, fugato, bars 219-221

The extensive section of Gloria concludes with the return of the opening theme, a refrain that encapsulates, in a magnificent corollary, the atmosphere of gratitude with which humanity honours the sacrifice of Christ's crucifixion.

CREDO⁷

Like the previous movement, Credo is a musically and structurally dense section, given the length of the original text. The composer constructs an equally complex framework, based on the depiction of a veritable fresco of human faith. From the depiction of the Creation of the World based on the text "Credo in unum Deum/Factorem coeli et terrae" to the musical portrayal of the suffering of the crucifixion with the evocation of the Resurrection in the central section, and in the final section the history of humanity after Christ, this complex movement musically illustrates all the eschatological anxieties and dramas through which humanity has gone, with faith and trust in the message of goodness and salvation that the Son of God conveyed to all. Significant for the symbol of Christian unity is the use of unison in the "recitation" of the first verse in the form of a recitative recto-tono on the note C (in Italian DO, from Domine).

⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K92eO3Or-mw&list=RDK92eO3Or-mw&start_radio=1, accessed on March 23, 2026

E.g. 9

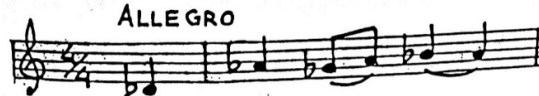


Credo in unum Deum, first bars

This theme is constantly revisited in various orchestral arrangements, followed by a new theme assigned to the flute that musically depicts the text “patrem omnipotentem” through sonic arabesques that create a luminous atmosphere. This theme is then taken up by the string section, lending timbral variety to the movement.

The complexity of the musical discourse is conveyed through the quasi-programmatic suggestiveness of the message employed; the trills of the strings overlap a deep pedal note from the double basses, signifying the primordial chaos preceding creation. It is the prelude to the presentation of the theme of creation, first intoned by the trumpet, joined by the other brass instruments, then the viola and the other strings, so that in the end the choir intones: “Factorem coeli et terrae”:

E.g. 10



Credo, Factorem coeli et terrae, bars 102-103

Various episodes are evoked, such as “Deum de Deo,” “Omnia facta sunt,” and “Incarnatus,” which describe the birth of Jesus, followed by the episode dedicated to the tenor soloist: “Et homo factus est.” The “Crucifixus” moment is particularly evocative, with the tenor singing extended intervals that symbolize, in an almost cinematic way, Jesus crucified on the cross:

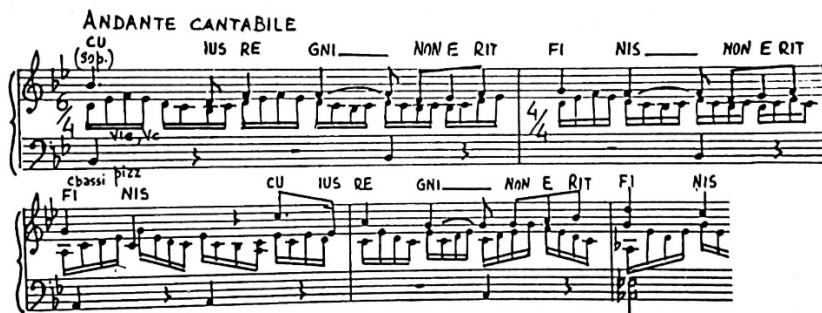
E.g. 11



Crucifixus, bars 294-298

The tenor also delivers the line “Et resurrexit tertia die,” and the choir responds, “Secundum Scripturas.” This is the moment when the composer employs a perfect D major chord, which, following numerous prior dissonances, signifies the Resurrection: the liberation of the spirit from the nightmare of death. One of the most melodious moments of the Credo is dedicated to the soprano soloist, forming the central section of the Mass, “Cuius Regni”:

E.g. 12



Cuius Regni, soprano solo, bars 388-392

The movement concludes with “Regno che no avra fine” and a final “Amen” from the choir, built on a perfect B-flat major chord.

SANCTUS⁸

After an introductory passage for the choir in *pp*, “Sanctus Dominus,” a theme emerges that evokes the turbulent history of the Jewish people, with their violent struggles, tragedies and victories, and the flame of faith sustained and rekindled by their great prophets; images conveyed through a harsh and dynamic twelve-tone composition:

E.g. 13



Deus Sabaoth, bars 34-36

⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E5YPN8R0gg&list=RD1E5YPN8R0gg&start_radio=1, accessed on March 23, 2026

The journey of Israel as it prepared for the coming of the Messiah is evoked, the one who would establish the covenant between humanity and God by building the community of believers through the Church. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is also recalled, which metaphorically signifies God's entry into human history, and the way in which He has transformed us.

After several dramatic episodes, the composer evokes, through the soprano's sweet voice, a "dolcissima" melody from the Benedictus section:

E.g. 14



Benedictus, bars 149-152

In classical Masses, the "Osanna" section of the Sanctus is usually repeated exactly as it appeared in the first exposition. Here, however, the "tripartite" form of the Sanctus stands out - that melodic structure already foreshadowed in the Kyrie and developed particularly in the Credo. Through this technique, the composer creates unity in diversity: unity through the varied repetition of previously presented themes, and diversity through the fact that, instead of an identical reprise, he presents this thematic synthesis.

E.g. 15



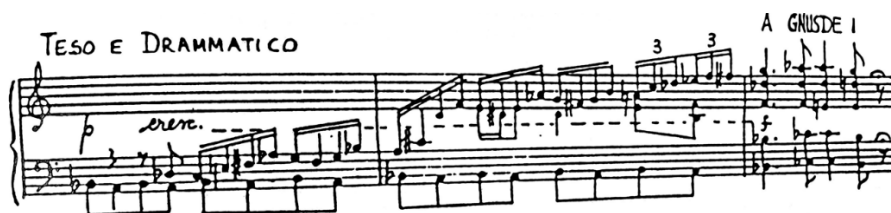
The Osanna sub-section from Sanctus, bars 220-221

AGNUS DEI⁹

In this final section of the work, the composer sought to depict the breath of the Spirit entering like a gentle breeze that draws in all the instruments of the orchestra one by one, preparing the choir's cry: Agnus Dei!

⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztraZMhuod8&list=RDztraZMhuod8&start_radio=1, accessed on March 23, 2026

E.g. 16



Agnus Dei, beginning

This theme, presented in various ways across several sections, is followed by the segments “Qui tollis” and “Miserere, miserere,” as well as an instrumental episode suggesting that our salvation came through the cross. As in the entire work, these segments also feature an abundant use of abstract-chromatic language, through episodes of significant scope, which justifies the composer’s initial observation that this Mass possesses the characteristics of a choral symphony due to the primary role of the choir in the structure of the sound architecture.

Agnus Dei also serves to provide a conclusive synthesis of the entire work, with the composer drawing upon themes present in the preceding sections and thereby imparting a stylistic and structural unity so essential to a work of such monumental scale. This is evident in the recurring presentation of fragments such as “Crucifixus” from the “Credo,” or the theme of peace, “Dona nobis pacem.”

The work’s finale brings to the fore a chromatic instrumental fugue also based on the development of a dodecaphonic theme:

E.g. 17



Final fugue from Agnus Dei, bars 220-223

This is a section in which the composer employs various serial compositional techniques, using the process of inversion based on a melodic-rhythmic cell in both ascending and descending patterns; this cell will also serve as material for the counter-theme, then serves as the foundation for the augmented theme, performed in a tense crescendo by the

choir and brass. After this climax, the choir and soloists ease the tension, murmuring together with the muted strings: "Peace," thus creating an atmosphere of tranquillity and inner peace.

Missa Solemnis concludes on a consonant B-major chord played by the entire orchestra, on a note full of hope and divine peace. The composer opens up in the conclusion of the introductory text in the program booklet for the premiere, emphasizing the impulse that constantly drove him in the creation of this monumental work: to convey a message of hope and peace to the listener, as well as the desire to reach directly into the listener's heart through that miraculous spiritual connection that only music - great music - can achieve.

From a conducting perspective, *Missa Solemnis* presents the usual technical challenges of bringing together a massive ensemble - one that includes a large orchestra, a mixed choir, and two soloists. The different sound production techniques specific to each instrumental or vocal group, along with the original score, which lacks predictable stylistic cues, make this complex work a challenge for both the performers and the conductor.

The prospect of performing the work in its world premiere may induce a certain sense of anxiety, uncertainty, or inner nervousness in the conductor or performers, states that must be controlled and must under no circumstances influence the atmosphere of the concert or performance. In the case of a recording intended to immortalize the work, the responsibility increases, as the performers are aware that this recording may serve as a future interpretive benchmark for future generations. From this perspective, the composer's presence at every recording session served as a source of reassurance, but also as confirmation of the quality of the final result we achieved.

As for the specialized press, I consider that it is important for the reception point of view, to include here a few reviews of Luciano Simoni's work/premieres:

"The final concert featured the *Missa solemn*is by contemporary Italian composer Luciano Simoni. The *Missa solemn*is is a large-scale work, intended for choir, symphony orchestra, and soloists (soprano and tenor). Luciano Simoni is not an avant-garde composer. His work draws, both in instrumentation and form, on the illustrious legacy of late Romanticism. Interesting harmonization and instrumentation, extensive use of polyphonic technique, and an emotionality that could be described as Puccinian—in the best sense of the word—are the stylistic hallmarks of this composer, the last excellent product of Italian musical culture. It should be added that the composer was greeted with warm applause at the end".

Maria Magdalena Janowska, After the Wroclaw Concert (December 8, 1991) in the local newspaper

"To place Simoni within a specific musical movement would be to undermine his stylistic richness and his music, in which the composer, with a highly personal language and without shocking the audience, moves from consolidated and traditional symphonic patterns to pantonal solutions. *Mio fiume* is a truly singular work; it presents itself as a recitative yet is simultaneously interwoven with intense, exclusively instrumental moments. It is a message-opera, like Ungaretti's opera, so imbued with cathartic pain and captivated by the figure of Christ. The orchestral instrumentation, which faithfully conveys all the nuances of the text and its anguished atmosphere, has been utilized in these pages with great sensitivity and skill. Due to its artistic and educational completeness, the work will be used by the Tirgu-Mures Philharmonic Orchestra to test the preparation of young conductors. But it is difficult to convey much in writing, and one realizes that very little actually reaches the reader".

Sivia Andretta IN THE SPOTLIGHT, Monthly Art News, No. 3, 1986

"Simoni's vocabulary is broadly traditional and neo-Romantic; at his most modern he sounds a little like Bartòk, and much of the time his tendency to break into pastoral melody or swelling romantic lushness places the music's antecedents a good deal further back than that. This is not to say that these works are anything other than thoroughly satisfying; the concerto is very much in the conventional mold and does all the things you would expect: a spirited dialogue between soloist and orchestra, virtuosic cadenzas for the violin, and a full-blooded sense of dramatic narrative. The symphony, confirming the four-movement plan that one would expect, gives an easy recommendation for anyone who regrets that the Romantic era didn't produce enough symphonies".

Records International, 2007

"The author's intent is singular: to illuminate the liturgical text in its most profound meanings as effectively as possible. To achieve this, he does not hesitate to converge the most heterogeneous languages of ancient and modern art into a grand symphonic-choral fresco, resulting in a synthesis that is a defining characteristic of his idiom. Precisely to support the clarity inherent in the liturgical message, the decision to intersperse extensive instrumental passages within the various sections of the work is neither arbitrary nor coincidental. Often, these 'intermezzos' correspond to precise expressive requirements of the text; in other instances, they represent a symphonic development of elements previously introduced by the voices".

Maria Chiara Mazzi, Presentation of the work in "Alla RIBALTA"

The complementary webography includes a few links where you can find more information about Luciano Simoni and purchase some of his CDs.

4. Conclusions

Luciano Simoni's *Missa Solemnis* reflects the spirit and creative identity of a 20th-century composer who is less well known to the general public. The work falls within the realm of musical post-modernism, distinguished by a pronounced polystylism, manifested through the diversity of its musical elements: extended tonality, post-Romantic influences, tonal and geometric harmony, as well as the free use of dodecaphonic and serial techniques. The musical discourse combines diatonic lyrical themes with chromatic structures of a serial nature, within an architecture that frequently draws on neoclassical forms, such as the fugue, fugato, sonata form, or ABA-type strophic patterns. This synthesis of compositional techniques, difficult to classify within a single stylistic movement, constitutes the very originality of his language.

Luciano Simoni thus emerges as an authentic creator who refused to align himself with the trends of the time, remaining faithful to his own artistic creed, grounded in intuition and personal expressiveness. In this sense, he represents a unique case in the history of music, in which his compositional vocation coexisted constantly with a demanding teaching career, without diminishing his creative force.

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INVITATION FOR PUBLISHING

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Starting in March 2008, we launched the release of a new series of musicology magazines under the name of “**Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai**”, with the title of “**MUSICA**”. If anyone is interested in publishing with us, we gladly accept your collaboration by editing your studies in an elegant and qualitative form.

The magazine is published twice a year:

- For **the first number of the year** the deadline for the receiving of the studies is: **15th of March.**
- For **the second number of the year** we accept the studies up to: **15th of September.**

We accept articles in **English (United States)**. We can receive the studies in an electronic form sent to the following e-mail address:

gabriela.coca.66@gmail.com

We are interested in any papers related to MUSIC.

All the authors are responsible for submitting manuscript in comprehensible English (United States) and ensuring scientific accuracy.

**ONLY ONE study from an author is accepted for publication
in a journal issue!**

*

The maximum size of papers submitted for publication **may not exceed 25000 characters** (include spaces, textboxes, headers, footnotes, endnotes and musical examples)!

Authors must complete the **Declaration of Authenticity** and send it to the editor together with the study. The form for this declaration can be downloaded from the website.

Authors must pre-register on the [ORCID](#) website and submit their system-generated [ORCID](#) unique number with the study for publication: [ORCID](#).

Due to the musical examples that are inserted in the studies, the authors are asked to apply in their studies the format types:

THE STANDARD FORMAT OF THE STUDIES:

PAGE SETUP:

Margins: Top = 4.8 cm; Bottom = 4.8 cm; Left = 4 cm; Right = 4 cm.

Orientation: Portrait

Paper size: A4

Layout: From Edge: Header = 4.8 cm, Footer: 4.6 cm;

Tick the boxes: *Different odd and even and Different first page!*

FONT:

ARIAL, the size of the letters = 11;

PARAGRAPH:

Align text: Justify.

First Line Indentation: Left, 1.25 cm.

Line spacing: Single

Spacing Before Lines: **0 pt**; Spacing After Lines: **0 pt**.

STYLES: Normal.

TITLE OF THE PAPER:

Font: ARIAL, MACROS, BOLD, the size of the letters = 12; Align text: Center

NAME OF THE AUTHOR:

The author's name is placed under the title:

Font: ARIAL, MACROS, BOLD, the size of the letters = 11; Align text: Center

The order of the name: first name then surname.

Name of several authors are separated by a comma.

FOOTNOTES: the size of the letter = 9; Align text: Justify; Line spacing: Single

Spacing Before Lines: **0 pt**; Spacing After Lines: **0 pt**.

!!! Important: The titles that are quoted into the footnotes will have their translation into English put in **round brackets in Italic the (*Translated Title*)**

- Hanging: 0.35 cm

Studia UBB Musica uses the **MLA Citation System**. See: MLA Formatting Guide

[MLA Format: Everything You Need to Know Here](#)

BIBLIOGRAPHY, called: REFERENCES

- The size of the letters in the list of references: 10.

!!! Important: The titles of the books (or papers, web pages links) that are quoted into the footnotes must be noted in the list of references as well!

TABLES: will be numbered in Arabic (for example: **Table 1**) - written above the table on the top right. They are written using Font: ARIAL, BOLD, the size of the letters = 11, Alignment: right

On bottom of the tables:

- The title of the table: centered, on bottom of the table, the size of the letters: 10

- The content of the table: size of the letters: 10

MUSICAL EXAMPLES: will be numbered in Arabic (for example: **E.g. 1**) - written above the example on the top right. They are written using Font: ARIAL, BOLD, the size of the letters = 11; Alignment: right.

On bottom of the example:

- The origin of the musical example (Composer, Work, and Measures Number taken from the score) is mentioned: on bottom of the example, with the size of the letters: 10, ARIAL, BOLD; Alignment: Center

FIGURES and PICTURES: the quality of the figures / pictures, the Xerox copies or the scanned drawings must be very high quality.

- The Figures and Pictures will be numbered in Arabic (for example: **Figure 1** or **Picture 1**) - written above the example on the top right. They are written using Font: ARIAL, BOLD, the size of the letters = 11, Alignment: right.

On bottom of the figures and pictures:

- Under each illustration, there must be an explication of the figure / picture attached with the size of the letters: 10, ARIAL, BOLD; Alignment: center.

*

Each study must be preceded by a SUMMARY into English of 10-15 lines:

- Indent full text of summary in the left side: 1.25 cm

FONT: ARIAL, the size of the letters = 10.

*

Each study must be containing under the summary 3-6 KEYWORDS extracted from the study.

- Indent in the left side: 1.25 cm

FONT: ARIAL, the size of the letters = 10.

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Each study must include, next to the name of the author on the footnote there must be mentioned the name and the address of the institution where he/she is hired, the profession (the didactic rank), the contact e-mail address of the author, and his/her ORCID number.

*

Each study must contain a short AUTOBIOGRAPHY of the author (ONLY 10-15 LINES), placed after the REFERENCES at the end of the paper.

The autobiography should be formulated as a cursive text, in the 3rd person singular.

- The size of the letter: 10.

In this short autobiography, the author can link to a personal web page, where readers can find more information about himself and his work. This excludes Facebook pages. We recommend institutional pages, or a profile page on www.academia.edu.

We ask authors to upload their CVs to the ORCID website.

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