Preface

Lawrence M. Zbikowski
Reflections on Word and Music

Sybille Krämer
Script and Sound: Reflections on the Creative Function of Visualization and Spatialization for Time-Bound Processes like Speech and Music

Heidi Hart
Translating Bodies: A Spatial Approach to Words and Music

Anette Vandsø
Technology, Sound, and Subject: A Cross-Disciplinary Investigation

Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen
The General Pause and the Enjambment: Silence as Qualitative Modes of Music and Poetry

François Staring
Audiences in Literature: On Understanding Musical Imaginations

Axel Englund
Of Great Pitch and Moment: Some Reflections on Operatic Performance, Interpretation, and Hermeneutics

Beate Schirrmacher
Musical Performance and Textual Performativity in Elfriede Jelinek’s The Piano Teacher

Molly McDolan
Stille in the Lutheran Baroque: A Musical-Textual Analysis Using Quantitative Methodology

Notes on the contributors
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Preface

This special issue of Danish Musicology Online constitutes the proceedings of the 3rd biennial conference of the Word and Music Association Forum (WMAF) held on November 13–15 2014 at Aarhus University, Denmark, under the title “Emerging Paradigms: New Methodologies in Word and Music Studies.” WMAF is a network mainly for junior scholars dealing with different kinds of intermedial intersections of words and music. As the title suggests, the goal of the conference was to discuss new, alternative methodological approaches that are currently being shaped in the work of emerging scholars from different disciplines.

Like any inherently interdisciplinary research field, Word and Music Studies is characterized by a methodological multitude, and especially so because of the broad range of possible study objects. The field concerns itself with everything from abstract musico-literary phenomena, such as the way literary works imitate music (or vice versa), to the very concrete ways in which music and lyrics align in vocal works. However, one can certainly point out a few established principles in the research field. Ever since the seminal efforts of Steven Paul Scher to create a typology of word–music relations,¹ a tripartite classification of music in literature (e.g. literary text imitating musical structure), literature in music (e.g. programme music), and music and literature (e.g. song) has been at the core of Word and Music Studies. This has meant that analytical approaches to word–music relations have had a tendency to conform to this classification by focusing on either one of these types.²

While this predominantly structuralist tendency in the field has been, and still is, of great significance, it seems to have fostered certain methodological biases; for instance in favor of an emphasis on a work-oriented approach with the literary text or written score as the object of analysis. Our point of departure for the 3rd WMAF conference was to discuss possible methodological approaches that can potentially ex-

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2 This might also show that Word and Music Studies is as prone as any branch of intermedial or interartial scholarship to unconsciously approach the topic with “the paradigmatic assumptions and the methods of their home discipline.” Literary scholars may be more inclined to investigate ”music in literature” than objects involving actual music, and so forth. See Claus Clüver, “Intermediality and Interarts Studies,” in Changing Borders: Contemporary Positions in Intermediality, ed. Jens Arvidson, Mikael Askander, Jørgen Bruhn, and Heidrun Führer (Lund: Intermedia Studies Press, 2007). Rather than construing it as a tripartite subdivision, one can also see it as a dichotomy of direct and indirect types of (musico-literary) intermediality: on the one hand music and literature and on the other music in literature or vice versa. Werner Wolf, The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999).
pand and supplement established frameworks. In our call for papers, we especially welcomed reflections about the theoretical and methodological implications of studying words and/or music as sounding performance rather than written representation, since the latter approach is likely to limit the empirical scope to canonized/classical “art works.” We figured that the study of performative practices could open up another set of methodological questions concerning the intermedial qualities of words and/or music as ephemeral sound in time. We were curious about the “how to” of interdisciplinary inquiry if the written representation is not the point of departure. However, a number of papers showed that working with works from the classical western canon did not necessarily imply a work-oriented approach. Other papers showed an interest in musical-textual works that blurred the line between word and sound.

The conference entailed an attempt to think about word-and-music-relations in ways that circumvent the typological understanding of musico-literary intermediality. The papers called for attention to intermedial aspects that did not fall neatly into pre-established categories, but, more importantly, they explored alternative methodological paths that might open up new insights in word-and-music relations. The concern was not so much to classify or establish yet another set of typologies of word-and-music relations—that is, a concern with what word-and-music relations are—but rather explore what they do.³ This was in particular expressed in attempts to deal with embodied and participatory aspects and notions such as experience, spatiality, and performativity, which challenge the traditional dichotomic understanding of score vs. performance, sound vs. writing, or sound vs. sense. The potential of this direction will be clear in the articles which are gathered here, and which are preliminary introduced and discussed in Lawrence Zbikowski’s article immediately following this preface.

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³ As Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle have pointed out, there has been a general shift in musicological research from concerns with “what does music mean” to “what does music do” in relation to the contemporary “affective turn.” As the present volume shows, the move from “meaning” to “doing” also applies to the interdisciplinary field of Word and Music Studies. Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 19.
Reflections on Words and Music

Lawrence M. Zbikowski

That there should be a close alliance between words and music is, in certain respects, hardly surprising. Both find primal expression through the human voice, and both offer a means through which humans can convey their most sophisticated thoughts. And yet each wants to go its own way: words toward the definite and concrete, and music toward the allusive and ephemeral.

In the paper I presented at the meeting of the Words and Music Association Forum at Århus University (a version of which was later published in Signata1) I endeavored to explain this divergence by making recourse to my recent research, which has explored the foundations of musical grammar.2 That exploration took inspiration from work over the past few decades by cognitive linguists on what are called construction grammars. In a construction grammar, the basic elements of grammar consist of stored pairings of form and function, called “constructions.” If, for example, you want to ask a question in a given language you need to put words into a particular form, which we might call the “question form.” The function achieved by putting words into the “question form” is to elicit information from another person. As a whole, then, the grammatical unit known as a question puts words into a particular form (the “question form,” that aspect of the construction that corresponds most closely with what has been traditionally called syntax) to achieve a particular function (eliciting information from another person, which we can think of as representing the semantic dimension of the construction). I should want to note that this is an overly simplistic example—questions are complex structures that can take a variety of different forms, and that realize a wide range of functions—but it gives a flavor for the idea of a construction grammar. It also helps to illustrate an important difference between language and music: while it seems quite apparent that language is a useful tool for eliciting information from another person, music is not. This suggests that language and music have different functions in human cultures. If one conceives of grammatical units as combining form and function, then, it seems quite apparent that linguistic grammar and musical grammar would be substantially different from one another. From this perspective, what is remarkable is not so much the divergence of words and music but the close relationship often found between two modes of expression with quite different grammatical forms.

If it is the case that language and music have different functions in human cultures, how might we characterize these functions? In considering this question I have

found it useful to draw on the work of the developmental psychologist Michael Tomasello, whose research over the past three decades has explored how children acquire language and how other primates do not. Following Tomasello, I have adopted the position that the basic function of language within human culture is to direct the attention of another person to objects or concepts within a shared referential frame, and thus to make it possible for humans to engage in a kind of communication that facilitates cooperation within social contexts. Music, by contrast, is not very good at directing the attention of another person to matters of shared interest—what tune would I play to let you know that you were blocking my view and making it hard for me to read?—but it is unparalleled as a resource through which various dynamic processes that are important within human culture can be represented through patterned sound. Chief among these dynamic processes are those associated with expressive gestures, with the emotions, and with the patterned movements of dance. According to the perspective that I have developed in my recent work on musical grammar, then, one of the basic functions of music within human cultures is to provide representations for dynamic processes such as these by means of sound sequences that serve as analogs for those processes.

This perspective is framed by two further considerations. First, using a sequence of sounds to make reference to some dynamic process (which might itself not have any sonic component) requires a robust capacity for analogical thought. On the best evidence we currently have, humans are the only species to have such a capacity. Second, human communication—whether it is through language, music, or some other medium—relies on an infrastructure for collaborative interactions. To take a simple example, consider a situation in which I meet you prior to a lecture and point to an empty seat in the lecture hall. My gesture could be interpreted in any number of ways: I could be indicating where I intend to sit, where you should sit, where a mutual friend will be sitting, or the fact that the lecture is a popular one and only one empty seat remains. At least two things are required to interpret my gesture: a shared frame of reference (relative to which the information I provide through my gesture can be understood to apply to myself, to you, to our friend, or to the popularity of the lecture) and the knowledge that I offer this information in order to be helpful. Within the context

7 Tomasello, Origins of Human Communication, chapter 1.
of interactions between humans, then, the communication engendered by my pointing to the empty seat involves a collaborative effort between the two of us that takes advantage of a referential frame that we hold in common, along with shared ideas about how the gesture of pointing is intended to be helpful. If this infrastructure is in place, the act of pointing (or, for that matter, uttering some string of linguistic sounds or offering an evocative passage on the piano) can serve a communicative purpose. If this infrastructure is not in place—that is, if there is no shared frame of reference, and no sense that there is an intent to communicate—the gesture (or sequence of linguistic sounds, or musical passage) will not realize its communicative function.

In that both language and music rely on this same infrastructure for communication, and both can potentially be enacted through the voice, an alliance between the two is, indeed, hardly surprising. Such an alliance should not, however, obscure the marked differences that obtain between language and music, nor justify a priori assumptions about which better expresses human thought. As a way to illustrate these differences, let us take a look at the beginning of Yip Harburg and Harold Arlen’s “Over the Rainbow,” written for MGM’s The Wizard of Oz (which premiered in 1939), a work I discussed in my original paper. The opening eight bars of the song are given in Example 1. The first words of Harburg’s lyrics are what the linguist Gilles Fauconnier would call a “space builder,” as they establish a mental space (“Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high”) within which the small story told by the song will unfold.\(^8\) The words that follow begin to furnish this space, introducing an autonomous geographical construct (a “land”) associated with the experiences of childhood (“I heard of once in a lullaby”). The music that sets and accompanies these words would seem to offer us nothing so definite as this collection of concepts (especially if one simply hums the melody, without the words), and yet there is much that is of substance in these opening bars. Consider Arlen’s rather famous opening interval, the octave leap that sets “Some-where”: this serves as a sort of musical space builder, one which opens up a registral span (from G4 to G5), a rhythmic frame (since the articulation of each of these pitches correlates with the main beats of the bar), and which suggests that G will be an important referential pitch for what follows. The octave leap also requires a kind of vocal athleticism (just \textit{try} to sing that opening interval without taking a good breath beforehand) which is in tension with the childlike cast of the words.\(^9\) Over the course of bars 3–7 the melody traces a gradual descent from the upper limit established by G5 (from E5 in bar 3, to D5 in bar 4, to C5 in bar 5, to B4 in bar 6, to A4 in bar 7, all of which are indicated by arrows on Example 1). Although stepwise motion relieved by small leaps predominates, vestiges of musical athleticism remain: not only are there leaps from G4 to E5 in bar 3 and from E4 to C5 in bar 5, these leaps also mark off two-bar units, temporal spans long enough to suggest that the whole of the melody is being carefully molded by a voice that is thoughtful and assured. If


\(^9\) I discuss the tension between the words and music of “Over the Rainbow” in more detail in “Words, Music, and Meaning,” 157–60.
we think of this sequence of sounds as serving as a sonic analog for a dynamic process, that process would not easily correlate with the actions of a tentative spirit lost in childhood reflections; it would, however, correlate quite strongly with the energetic demeanor of a brave and confident agent ready to venture forth to discover the promised land that lies just “over the rainbow.”


As this brief example suggests, words have the potential to prompt the construction of rich mental spaces furnished with objects and events that we can use to build a narrative. Harburg’s lyrics, by themselves, introduce a mythical land in the far beyond of a sort that would enchant a young child on the edge of sleep. Music, by contrast, gives us nothing as concrete as this, but instead offers a sonic analog for a detailed and multi-dimensional dynamic process (especially if we take into account the effect of melody, harmony, and rhythm working together). Arlen’s music does not fill out the picture of Harburg’s mythical land as much as it suggests what it might feel like to have a deep yearning for the promise of such a land as well as a profound confidence that this land is, in some way, within reach.

As might be expected, the account of musical grammar I have developed in my recent work is rather involved, and offers a novel view of the role of music in human cultures. That said, there are any number of interesting intersections between the perspective I have developed and other work presented at the Århus University meeting, and in the following I would like to explore connections between my work and that of other contributors to this volume.

Sound, technology, and the infrastructure for communication

Anette Vandsø’s “Technology, Sound and Subject” takes as its main example Gilberto Zorio’s Microfoni, in which a soundscape is created through interactions between people within a gallery space and five suspended microphones (interactions that are
encouraged through plinths placed underneath each microphone to facilitate access to the microphones). This example leads her toward a thoughtful investigation of a range of works of sound art, all of which use technology to a greater or lesser degree. Vandsø’s emphasis is, quite rightly, on the way technology writ large provides a means to communicate our thoughts and ideas, an instrumentality brought to the fore by sound art (which, in most cases, would not exist without sound (re)producing technologies). Technology thus provides a means of constructing a subject, understood as the person who uses or interacts with the technology. Equally striking, however, is the infrastructure for communication that is assumed by sound art (and, to a certain extent, by sound (re)producing technologies). Zorio’s Microfoni, for instance, relies on the shared space created by the gallery, microphones, and amplification system, all of which establish a framework for interactions with Zorio (via his installation), with other individuals in the gallery, and even with those we might imagine joining us in the gallery—that is, an infrastructure for communication. And it is worth pointing out that the interactions facilitated by this infrastructure are typically understood within an intentional context: if, unbeknownst to them, the conversation of two individuals walking through the gallery were picked up by one of the microphones we might understand both that they did not intend us to hear their conversation and that Zorio intended we hear the conversation as part of the shared space created by his installation. To the extent that technology facilitates the construction of a subject, then, that construction inevitably happens within a social context that is the rationale both for the technology and for attempts at communication.

**Words and music as modes of expression**

As hinted at by my analysis of the opening of “Over the Rainbow," words and music have different functions in human cultures and realize these functions through organizing the materials of communication in different ways. The relationship between the two is nicely captured in François Staring’s “Audiences in Literature,” which explores the way music prompts imaginative responses from everyday listeners, responses that are expressed through words. Staring’s aim is to offer an account of the listener as an engaged agent who, to a certain extent, co-creates the artwork initiated by the composer and enacted by the performer. This co-creation reflects the background and skills of the listener, as well as the context for the listening experience, and is documented (so to speak) by rich accounts of listening experiences provided by authors like E.M. Forster and Hélène Grimaud. What is particularly striking about the literary descriptions of passages from Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* quoted by Staring is their reliance on dynamic images: in *Howards End*, Helen Schlegel hears the movements and actions of a malign goblin in the third movement of the symphony; in *Variations sauvages*, Hélène Grimaud recollects the way Beethoven’s music pushed and pulled her, almost as though it were a physical force. An argument could be made, then, that the activation of these images by those reading *Howards End* or *Variations sauvages* relies to some extent on the reader’s own encounters with musical evocations of dynamic processes. In the absence
of such encounters, a reader might well be able to develop some idea of how Helen’s goblin moves and acts by drawing on knowledge about malevolent beings but will not be able to summon the rich dynamic image activated by Beethoven’s music.

The relationship between words and music adumbrated by Staring is, to an extent, filled out in Beate Schirrmacher’s “Musical Performance and Performative Discourse in Elfriede Jelinek’s Die Klavierspielerin,” which shows how Jelinek’s characterization of her troubled protagonist is informed by the embodied realities of musical practice. To be sure, some of the ideas activated by Jelinek’s prose that Schirrmacher explores might be associated with a range of human endeavors. To play a musical instrument well involves a kind of athleticism—albeit one typically focused on small, rather than large, muscle groups—which is also evident in actual athletic activity. Thus the disciplined body of the musical performer is also the disciplined body of the gymnast or the long-distance runner, and as such all could have served as the basis for Jelinek’s metaphors. Where musical practice is different (and where it is similar to the practice of dance or the theater) is in the assumption that bodily discipline is in the service of a species of communication. And yet it is communication—at least about that which matters most—that is beyond the protagonist of Die Klavierspielerin. Thus music, representing both the ineffable (in the sense of “that which is beyond words”) and the embodied (through the physical act of practicing for performance and through the representation of dynamic processes), comes to be a wraith that haunts the novel.

It is the possibility of pinning down this elusive wraith through graphical means that Sybille Krämer explores in her “Script and Sound.” Krämer notes how the technology of writing takes time-dependent media out of time, and facilitates systematic accounts of those features that are captured within the two-dimensional frame of the printed or written page. Although she draws her example of this practice in a musical context from diagrams that appear in René Descartes’s Compendium Musicae of 1618, one can also find such diagrams in works as early as the Euclidian Sectio Canonis, which dates from around the third century BCE. On the one hand, diagrams that graphically represent musical relationships are clearly part of a process of systematization; on the other hand, they also serve as what Edwin Hutchins has called material anchors. The purpose of material anchors—which are widespread across human cultural practices—is to provide a stable material referent for often ephemeral or complex concepts; they also help to guide interactions between humans negotiating those concepts.

10 A translation of the Sectio Canonis, with commentary, is provided in Andrew Barker, ed., Greek Musical Writings, vol. 2: Harmonic and Acoustic Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 190–208. As Barker observes (194, n. 9) the manuscript tradition for the diagrams is not as consistent as for the manuscript proper; it does seem, however, that these diagrams were incorporated into the manuscript at a relatively early date.
Thus pieces of metal or even paper can be used to anchor the rather intangible notion of “money,” or dots amidst lines to represent musical pitches. The potential of material anchors to aid thought is in fact mentioned by Krämer, who observes that graphism, spatialization, and visualization all have the potential to stimulate the creative production of music. What is perhaps most striking, however, is the way such anchors can even threaten to displace that for which they stand: as shown by Lydia Goehr, the “work concept” that developed around European musical practices during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries owed much to the possibility of capturing the salient features of musical utterances through graphic means—that is, through the score.13 Although, as Krämer notes, the distortion of the temporally-dependent nature of media introduced by graphism applies equally to words and to music, an argument could be made that this distortion is more pronounced in the case of music. Words, after all, give humans a means to transcend the boundaries of time through allowing us to construct notions of a “past” and a “future.”14 Music has nothing to equal this, but through the interactions of resources like melody, harmony, and rhythm, makes possible the creation of a present of unparalleled richness.

Sonic resources in music and language

Another aspect of alliances (and misalliances) between words and music considered by a number of contributors to the conference concerned the resources that each medium deployed in the service of communication. Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen, in her “The Generalpause and the Enjambment,” explores a sort of “negative” resource exploited both by music and poetry: silence. If we conceive of expressive media as exploiting figure-ground relationships (with the “message” of the medium a figure situated against some ground), it seems clear that both music and words rely, to some extent, on silence as a contrasting element against which to array their sounds (something particularly evident if we try to attend to either music or words in a noisy environment). Following the composer and theorist Edward T. Cone, we might even conceive of silence as a kind of frame that sets a musical composition off from its surroundings, just as a picture frame sets a picture off from the wall on which it hangs.15 The silence with which Stougaard Pedersen is concerned, however, is internal to a work (be it of music or poetry), and typified by the Generalpause and poetic enjambment. On the one hand, such a silence provides a means to interrupt the flow of musical events or the metrical structure of poetic verse, signalling a break in the dynamic process summoned by the preceding events. On the other hand, a case could also be made that silence of this sort is not unlike the watercolorist’s “white.” Given the nature of watercolors, the only practical way to represent a white color (so that one can depict, for instance, the sail of a sailboat) is to apply no color to the surface upon

which one is painting—the visual equivalent, then, of the musician’s or the poet’s silence. In her 2007 study of the functions of silence in music Elizabeth Margulis offers other ways to think about how silence is deployed in music (and, by extension, in poetry). Margulis notes that, in addition to serving as a boundary or an interruption, silence can also reveal the operation of the inner ear (that is, the “hearing along” that is the mark of close attention to a sequence of sounds), promote attention to the listening process itself, and (perhaps most strikingly) “communicate” through imitating the kinds of silences that occur in expressive speech. As Stougaard Pedersen suggests, the resources of silence play a role both in music and in poetry, and reveal much about the way sound—against the backdrop of silence—shapes our understanding. Molly McDolan is equally concerned with silence, but here as a multidimensional concept rather than simply as the absence of sound. In her “Stille in the Lutheran Baroque” McDolan explores various means by which Baroque composers represented the notion of Stille which, within ecclesiastical texts, was associated not only with silence but also with the context for seeking a quietude of the spirit. As such, composers summoned Stille through coordinating a variety of musical resources, including “rests or a pedal tone in the bass line, a sustained note in a low register in the solo voice, a generally reduced texture, and active harmonically-stable figuration in the accompaniment,” all of which Johann Sebastian Bach uses in his setting of Stille in his cantata Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille (BWV 120). Perhaps of equal importance, Bach juxtaposes these compositional strategies with those he uses to set the word lobet (“praise”) immediately prior to Stille, which are nearly their direct opposite: a moving bass line, an incredibly florid melody, a rich orchestral texture, and harmonies that suggest a directed, progressive process. McDolan proposes that this approach to the text exemplifies what she calls “musical iconography,” through which music is used to summon visual images. This notion fits quite well with my idea that one of the basic functions of music is to provide sonic analogs for dynamic process—in the case of Bach’s cantata, I would see these processes as beginning with energetic praise that then fills the stillness of quiet, prayerful reflection with something like an electrostatic charge—and is further supported by the extensive corpus analysis that informs McDolan’s study.

Although Axel Englund does not focus directly on the sonic resources of music and language in his “Of Great Pitch and Moment,” his analysis of the importance of “moment” in opera studies could be seen to highlight the contribution music makes to theatrical works. As Englund observes, a complex discourse has built up around the notion of “moments”—typified by an absorbed engagement equal to, if not exceeding, sexual climax—which tends to direct attention away from the multileveled and at times overlapping processes that create the possibility of such climactic experiences. What we need, Englund proposes, is a hermeneutics of opera that allows meaning to be contingent and changeable. From the perspective developed in my work, I would suggest that the tendency against which Englund reacts, which has its consequence in

assertions of meaning inadequate to the aspirations of opera, is in part a result of trying to reduce all kinds of meaning to that which is concretized in language, and which resists the ongoing dynamic processes that are central to musical expression.

Reflections on music and words

As was evident in the discussion of linguistic and musical construction grammars with which I began these reflections, the perspective that informs my research is that of a music scholar. My contribution to scholarship, then, has been to give an account of the unique expressive resources music has provided to human cultures—a uniqueness evident in the fact that every human culture of which we have knowledge has both music and language. In consequence, the comments I have made on these provocative contributions to the meeting of the Words and Music Association Forum at Århus University have focused more on music than on words (although I believe the contrast between the communicative resources each offers can be instructive for our study of both). Needless to say, scholars whose work focuses more on words than on music will almost certainly take different things away from these papers, as they do from their study of words and music. That said, I believe that continuing to think about what music brings to human life—with both “music” and “life” understood in all their complexity—can help us better understand what words can and cannot accomplish, and thus to enrich our study of music and words, as well as words and music.
Script and Sound
Reflections on the Creative Function of Visualization and Spatialization for Time-Bound Processes like Speech and Music

What is at issue

Speech and music occur through the medium of sound; they take place in the temporal order of succession. Whether it concerns linguistic or musical sounds: Whenever a sound occurs it is also already gone. Spoken language and music consist of an extremely fleeting, ephemeral material; it is a kind of substance which only exists in its disappearance. It is therefore no surprise that speech and music have a significant common characteristic: For both, the invention of techniques of inscription is a far-reaching event with serious consequences for the conceptualization of language and music. Writing negates the temporal evanescence of sound. It transmutes the ephemerality and fluidity of spoken words and music with the help of a stable symbolic configuration that is spatially and visually organized.

Yet, as long as writing is interpreted as the fixing of fluid tonality, writing is seen as a secondary system of symbols, which refers to speech and music as its primary objects. In this perspective, writing is considered a subordinate medium, which extracts its fluid reference item from the flow of time and transfers it to the fixed state of a spatial structure. Let us call this concept of writing, as the vehicle and functionary of the sounds it records and represents, the “phonographic dogma.”

The main idea of this essay is to discuss and revise the “phonographic dogma,” in so far as it is an insufficient perspective for understanding the real “genius” of creating inscriptions as a cultural technique. The potential of the spatiality and visuality associated with script is not adequately grasped when writing is reduced to the translation of the linear order of temporal succession into the linear order of spatial succession. “For visual signs are not necessarily linear.” rather, the specific feature of writing is its ability to transgress this linearity, which is typical of spoken words and performed music. This transgression consists in the two-dimensional form of ordering, which usually underlies the use of writing. It is simultaneity that matters: The spatial simultaneity of the written image contains—together with the stable materiality and visual perpectivity of the written sign—an operative potential, which has no

1 For the concept of “cultural techniques,” see “Cultural Techniques,” ed. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, Ilinca Iurascu, and Jussi Parikka, special issue, Theory, Culture & Society 30, no. 6 (2013).
analog in the fluid temporality of spoken and musical sounds. Written characters can be handled. This creative and operative power comes into view when writing is not simply considered a form of transcribed speech or music, but rather when its iconicity and thus its "pictorial character" are taken into account. To be more precise: In order to recognize the creativity of writing for all practices of language games and musical performances, one must first acknowledge that visibility and spatiality play a decisive role in the process of transcription. What speech and music "are," how they are interpreted, and how we act with language and music will change under the conditions of their spatial transcription.

I will elaborate on these ideas in three steps: (1) The implicit "scripticism" of the theory of language and philosophy of music is described as a latent and hidden consequence of the phonographic dogma. (2) "Artificial flatness" is considered a special form of spatiality associated with writing and graphism in general. (3) The role that imagery plays in music and speech is examined by means of two historical examples: René Descartes' musical diagrammatics and Friedrich Nietzsche's idea that language results from the union of music and image.

An implicit scripticism?

For Jacques Derrida, Western philosophy marginalizes writing in favor of the living presence of the voice. He characterizes this as "phonocentrism." However, this diagnosis of a phonocentric orientation to the vocal as the sole and guiding tendency is incomplete. As long as writing remains a blind spot in the traditional theory of speech and music—and this applies to speech theory until the debate on orality/literacy, and to music theory until today—the influence of writing in theorizing speech and music remains nearly unrecognized. The "blind spot" returns from behind: The hidden impact of the written medium is even more obvious. Therefore, we have to transform Derrida's picture of "phonocentrism": What comes to light is not simply a phonocentric privileging of the voice, but rather an "implicit scripticism."

Two examples—taken from the fields of linguistic theory and musicology—will illustrate scripticism as a non-explicit dimension: They both depend on the connection between the expulsion of the genuine sensuality of speech and music, on the one hand, and the hypostatization of their systematicity, on the other. Thinking about speech and music first and foremost in terms of the idea of a system means modeling them along the lines of writing.

5 See Christian Stetter, Schrift und Sprache (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 117.
Look at the origin of modern linguistics: Ferdinand de Saussure distinguished between “parole”—spoken language—and “langue”—the system of language. The latter constitutes the original and sole object of linguistics, while the phonic or graphic sensuality of speech is not taken into linguistic consideration. For Saussure, the audible sounds of speech are not part of language as a scientific object. At the same time, however, he unintentionally employs writing as a silent model of the fundamental properties of language. For example, his principle of differentiality breaks with the idea that words have specific, well-defined meanings. For Saussure, the meaning of a word—which he calls its “value”—emerges from its difference from all the other words that are part of the system of language. The structural principle of determining an individual element through the exclusion of all others is in its rigidity only legitimate in finite artificial sign systems, for example in writing: The function of the letter “a” is not to be “b,” “c” … “z.” The differentiality principle, which for Saussure is based on the genuine systematicity of human language, stems not from the autonomy of spoken “natural” language, but rather from that of artificially invented writing.

Let us move on to music theory. A contemporary philosopher, Gunnar Hindrichs, recently presented a philosophy of music. Although Hindrichs considers the musical sound to be the material of music, he emphasizes that this sound should not be identified with what is heard by the senses. Rather, the sound emerges as a musical phenomenon—much like Saussure’s differentiality principle—from its relation to all the other sounds that constitute the whole sound system. This system principle is a characteristic feature of European art music. According to Hindrichs, it was already established in ancient Greece, as the Pythagoreans discovered the mathematical proportionality between audible relations and tonal ratios, characterizing the “logos” of music. The musical meaning of a sound is thus rooted in its system-based relation to other sounds; for Hindrichs, it is something that cannot be ascertained through the senses, but only through the intellect, by rational insight. Yet such a tonal relationality and systematicity of sounds is evident not in the auditory event itself, but rather in the image of written music. Nevertheless, the musical notation plays no role whatsoever in Hindrichs’ philosophical discussion of European art music. Music in its written form remains the blind spot of his philosophy of music, although transcription is the necessary condition of especially that form of art music which Hindrichs thematizes as “pure music”: We have known it under the heading of “autonomous music” since
Eduard Hanslick. For musicology, a debate analogous to the debate on orality/lit-
eracy is yet to come.

In cultural studies, literary studies, and linguistics the debate on orality/litera-
cy overcomes the paradigm of writing as secondary and recognizes the oral and the
written as two equivalent forms of language. Distinguishing between acoustic and
visual modalities is a decisive and even exciting turn within cultural research in lan-
guage theory. Yet, we must recognize that the phonographic dogma remains undis-
pputed in the theory of literacy, as writing is still considered the transcription of spo-
ken language; and that means that writing is still interpreted as a form of language.

When ranked in the familiar matrix of the distinction between language and image,
discursivity and iconicity, writing belongs to the field of language, not to that of im-

age. However, the creativity and operativity of writing are based on the fact that scrip-
ture is more than a phenomenon in the realm of language: Its spatial-visual character-
istics indicate that it is a mixture of linguistic and pictorial attributes. In written signs
language and image are merged into a hybrid phenomenon. But why is it important
to consider this hybridity?

Artificial flatness

According to the phonographic perspective, writing transfers and translates: The tem-
poral order of succession in speaking is transformed into the spatial ordering of letters
in strings of text. The idea of the linearity of writing is commonplace. Even a media
philosopher as critical as Vilem Flusser insists on the linear character of writing; and

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14 For Hanslick, music consists in forms of sounds only without external reference and without connec-
tions to feelings: Hanslick attributed autonomy to music as artwork. Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein Bei-
trag zur Revision der Ästhetik der Tonkunst (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 32.

15 First works include Dieter Appelt, Hubertus von Amelunxen, and Peter Weibel, eds., Notation, Kalkül
und Form in den Künsten (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2008); David Magnus, “Transkription und
Faktur musikalischer Zeichen von Anestis Logothetis,” Zeitschrift für Sprache und Literatur 107, no. 42
(2011); Hermann Gottschewski, “Musikalische Schriftsysteme und die Bedeutung ihrer ‘Perspektive’
für die Musikkultur: Ein Vergleich europäischer und japanischer Quellen,” in Schrift, Kulturtechnik
zwischen Auge, Hand und Maschine, ed. Gernot Grube, Werner Kogge, and Sybille Krämer (München:
Fink, 2005); Hyuntaek Yim, ”Der Begriff und die Funktion der ‘Schriftbildlichkeit’ im Rahmen der
Beziehung zwischen dem koreanischen Schriftsystem und dem traditionellen koreanischen Musi-

16 Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher, “Schriftlichkeit und Sprache,” in Schrift und Schriftlichkeit: Writing
and its Use; Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch internationaler Forschung, vol. 1, ed. Hartmut Günther
and Otto Ludwig (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994); David R. Olson, “Literacy as Metalinguistic Activity,” in
Literacy and Orality, ed. David R. Olsen and Nancy Torrance (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University
Press, 1991); Wolfgang Raible, “Die Entwicklung ideographischer Elemente bei der Verschriftlichung
des Wissens,” in Vermittlung und Tradierung von Wissen in der griechischen Kultur, ed. Wolfgang Kull-
mann and Jochen Althoff (Tübingen: Narr, 1993); Paul Zumthor, La poésie et la voix dans la civilisa-

17 An important handbook defines: Writing is “the amount of graphic signs with which spoken lan-
guage is recorded.” Hartmut Günther and Otto Ludwig, eds., Schrift und Schriftlichkeit: Writing and its
Use; Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch internationaler Forschung, vol. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), viii.

18 Different from the flatness of pictures and the punctuality of computer-generated pixels: Vilém Flus-
many critics of Western rationality ascribe the sequentiality of deductive reasoning to the sequentiality of writing as a universal representation of rational thought.

However, the assumption that writing is linear misjudges precisely what distinguishes visual script from audible speech. Writing uses the two-dimensionality of the plane—a quality it shares with images, diagrams, tables, and all types of graphism. Planes do not empirically exist. Through the act of inscription and annotation, surfaces with depth are transformed into planes without depth. The virtual metamorphosis that transforms three-dimensionality into two-dimensionality is triggered by the performance of writing or drawing. What emerges is a separate space, an artificial spatiality that is completely neat, understandable, controllable, and often also manageable, as it excludes everything hidden behind and below, which is normally part of our living space. An illustrated or inscribed surface can become a laboratory of cognition as well as a workshop for aesthetic experimentation. The cultural technique of flattening is a development principle that shapes our symbolic and technical devices. This is clearly demonstrated by the role of screens, which permeate everyday life with mobile communication, such as iPhones and tablets.

Yet the graphical production of flatness embodies an ancient anthropological technique. It extends from carvings on bones, tattoos on skin, paintings on walls, pictures, diagrams, maps, writing, through to contemporary computer screens and mobile phones. The mobility and creativity of the mind are indelibly linked to the invention and evolution of spatial flatness. Is the obligatory privileging of “depth” and “deep structure,” as a signature feature of successful thought—in contrast to the discrediting of “superficial thought”—a rhetorical compensation for the constitutive role of the cultural technique of flatness?

Writing, which is etched or applied onto mobile storage media, establishes an operational space for artistic and cognitive designs. The inscribed surface gives rise to the procedure of time axis manipulation. The irreversibility of time is—to some extent—revised in the terrain of the inscribed surface. Think about oral language: It is possible to repeat a spoken word, but it is impossible to take it back literally and transform it. It is also impossible to recite a word backwards or sing a melody backwards. However, in the medium of written language and music it is easy to invert the sequence of letters or musical figures. Every drawn configuration can be reverted; every structure can be turned around. Or think about the phenomenon of crossword puzzles. It is clear that this operative potential of writing exponentially multiplies linguistic and musical

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21 David Summers has examined the aesthetic consequences of “flatness” in the realm of art history; an analog examination of the cognitive impacts of flatness in the history of the mind is still missing. Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism (London: Phaidon, 2003).
inventiveness. Compositional work is hardly possible without musical notation, just as spoken theater is hardly possible without scripts, and dance performances often depend on forms of choreography. The complexity of literature and European art music is inconceivable without the operational space of notational practices.

To sum up: The idea that writing is the spatial transmission of temporal spoken language and is thus subordinate to the linearity principle obscures the fact that writing establishes an operational space of simultaneity, which is precisely not associated with the linguistic, but rather with the graphic and the pictorial. I call this dimension the "notational iconicity" of writing. The representational and operational potential of writing is anchored in the combination of linguistic and pictorial characteristics, of the discursive and the iconic.

But what are the consequences of "notational iconicity" under the condition that it shapes the way "language" and "music" are conceived, theorized, and practiced in the Western tradition? Remember that Saussure's differentiality principle of language and Hindrichs' systemic determination of the aesthetic properties of sound demonstrated that writing was implicitly and involuntarily used as a model for the system-oriented approach to speech and music. The idea of an inherent systematicity that is valid for both language and music is the unintentional trace left behind by the influence of the inscription system, which reveals itself behind the backs of the authors.

However, there is another way in which the elements of imagery and visuality have shaped the conception and interpretation of language and music. However, this is not implicit, but rather explicit, and it is done deliberately. I start with a musical example: René Descartes' musical diagrammatics.

René Descartes: the genesis of music theory from musical diagrammatics

Writing shares an operative form of iconicity with tables, diagrams, and maps, which all result from the graphic interaction of point, line, and plane. "Operative iconicity" means that the representation of a mostly non-pictorial phenomenon in the form of these iconic configurations reveals insights through operating with the configurations that would be impossible or at least difficult to achieve without this kind of visualization. At the same time, it is clear that such visualizations are not to be understood as straightforward translations or mappings; they rather imply a metamorphosis of the represented and visualized object.

What is important here with regard to "graphing" structures in music is that the visual-spatial representation of musical processes not only creates new possibilities for the composition of music; it can also be used as a means of acquiring knowledge of musical phenomena.

23 Terminus introduced in Sybille Krämer, "Writing, Notational Iconicity, Calculus: On Writing as a Cultural Technique," Modern Languages Notes 118, no. 3 (2003).
This is precisely the concern of René Descartes’ (1596–1650) first completed work, *Compendium Musicae* (1618), an introduction to music theory, where he summarizes the state of diatonic musical thinking in the 16th century; it was not published until 1650 though.25 Here Descartes wants to understand and determine more precisely the emotional and aesthetic effect of the sensual tonality of music on humans. For this purpose, he includes a variety of diagrams depicting acoustic features. Please note that the subject of Descartes’ investigation remains music as a sound event. The visualization serves to understand and demonstrate why we experience music as an acoustic phenomenon the way we do. One example is intervals, which are experienced by listeners as either harmonious or dissonant. Descartes is searching for the underlying cause of this distinction in the auditory impression. To this end, he visualizes tones as graphic line ratios and examines their relations. In doing so he introduces and debates the distinction between proportional and non-proportional line ratios.26 His thesis is that harmonious sounding intervals can be reconstructed according to the principle of arithmetic proportionality, while disharmonious intervals have a line ratio that is incommensurable: These lines do not share even the smallest common feature, and therefore their relation cannot be expressed as a simple numerical ratio.

![Figure 1: Three line segments visualizing harmonic relations by arithmetic proportionality.](image1)

In contrast to the harmonious sounding intervals, no proportional relationship appears to exist between the line ratios of the disharmonious sounding intervals: They are lacking what we visually experience as “symmetry.”

![Figure 2: Three incommensurable line segments visualizing disharmonic relations.](image2)


I will not go into the details of Descartes’ musical analyses in the medium of musical diagrammatics, but I will add a few general observations. Descartes’ object of inquiry is not written musical notation, but rather the acoustic sounds in musical performance. To get access to the acoustic music, he translates tonal ratios into graphic line relations, which negates the ephemerality of sounds and makes their internal relations understandable, observable, and analyzable. In doing so the diagrams do not serve simply to illustrate a claim; rather they are employed as an epistemological instrument: The phrase “Ex hac figura apparat, quid […]” (“From this figure one recognizes [...]”) is frequently found in his text. For Descartes, musical diagrams function as a means for scientific discovery, which is called the *ars inveniendi*, as well as a means for evaluation, which is called the *ars iudicandi*. Moreover, Descartes understands his musical diagrammatics as a set of guidelines that facilitate the composition of music and help the composer to avoid mistakes.—Music should therefore not be deprived of its sensual qualities; rather, graphism, spatialization, and visualization should serve to stimulate the creative production of music through visualizing and understanding the underlying structure.

*Nietzsche: the birth of language from the combination of music and image*

After this example from the philosophy of music I will now turn to the philosophy of language in order to demonstrate how the reference to the visual is constitutive for a concept of language that does not follow the hidden tracks of scripticism discussed in the beginning of the paper. With Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) we find a very unusual picture of what it is to be a language. His notes on language are dispersed throughout his oeuvre. For him, language has a double life: It is a “tonal language” as well as a “gestural language.” This does not refer to the familiar distinction between speech and gesticulation, but rather to a difference within the *spoken* word itself. By “gesture” Nietzsche means “Mundgeberde,” “the mouth gesture,” which refers to the formation of consonants and vowels, but without their tonality; in other words, the gesture is only understood as a configuration of the organs of speech. Through these mouth gestures a symbolism, something that is semiotic, is produced. According to Nietzsche, this symbolism is linked to an accompanying mental image, and therefore it is associated with the visual. In contrast, the aesthetic dimension of vocality, the tonality of speech, is for Nietzsche not linked to visual images, but rather to “Strebun-

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29 Ibid., 57.
gen des Willens” (“strivings of the will”), which are expressed as pleasure and pain and are always associated with power or powerlessness.

For Nietzsche, human language emerges from the combination of mouth gestures and tonality: “The most intimate and most frequent merging of a type of gesture symbolic and the tone we call language.” We see: Nietzsche makes language a hybrid of image and music. However, the visual and the musical sides are not equally important: “The most understandable aspect of language is not the word itself, but rather the sound, volume, modulation, and tempo with which a series of words are spoken; in short, the music behind the words.” Unlike many philosophies of language committed to the linguistic turn, which attribute a foundational and unavoidable authority to language, Nietzsche thus characterizes language itself as generated by and emerging from the interaction of music and image.

The musical and pictorial genesis of language opens up an innovative perspective and has far-reaching consequences: We are used to looking at music as a kind of language. It was Adorno who last advocated the idea of language as a character of music. Albrecht Wellmer’s philosophy of music also provides a starting point for the idea of interpreting music as a kind of language. With Nietzsche, however, this perspective can be problematized and reversed: not all music has to be interpreted oriented to the model of language, yet language can be interpreted according to the model of music. What is fundamental for Nietzsche is not the language-like character of music, but rather the music-like character of language.

This methodological reorientation has interesting implications for the observation and theory of language: The act of communicating with one another can be understood as analogous to the collective act of making music together. Communication is not harmony in terms of the shared meanings of words, but rather a resonance in the “wavelengths” of the speakers, in tone and rhythm, and it is here that social bonding and agreement—as well as the potential for rupture and disagreement—develop. This can be seen as a perspective-rich supplement to the socio-philosophical theory of communication. Communicative consensus is usually associated with the ability to raise and criticize claims dialogically; however, recognition of a musicality in speech could attribute consonant and dissonant communication to the pre-propositional parameters of speech as a sound event.

Nietzsche’s idea that language originates from the spirit of the combination of music and image raises yet another issue. His distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian is a very familiar conceptual pair in art theory. Nietzsche uses Apollonian and Dionysian to articulate two dynamics of artistic development: Apollonian energy is associated with measurements and ratios, and it is realized in the drawing of bounda-

34 Nietzsche, Sämtliche Werke, vol. 1, 572.
35 Ibid., 575.
ries between objects, the creation of distance between the artist and the work, and the
foundation of individuality. In contrast, Dionysian energy breaks down boundaries,
is excessive, collapses and negates distances, and merges individuality into collective
experience; this energy is a performance of power. Nietzsche associates the Apollonian
with the properties of the image and the Dionysian with the power of music. And
yet hardly anyone is aware that Nietzsche originally developed this distinction as an
insight into the philosophy of language. He attributes a Janus-faced nature to speech
as simultaneously gesture and sound, as it oscillates between the Apollonian and the
Dionysian or between something analogous to the image and something analogous to
music. Nietzsche explicitly emphasizes that, for him, the difference between tonal lan-
guage and gestural language is a model for both the distinguishability and the interac-
tion between the Dionysian and Apollonian dimensions in the arts.

If Apollonian and Dionysian dynamics work together in speech, then this sheds a
revealing light on our understanding of the role of the voice. The orality/literacy de-
bate associates literacy with propositionality, rationality, deductive thinking, and sci-
ence. As a result, the voice and orality are mostly associated with the extra-rational
and the prepredicative, the affective and appellative dimensions of communication. If
we follow Nietzsche, however, this division of voice and writing between the poles of
the Dionysian and the Apollonian is incorrect. Rather, the complex interaction of both
dynamics in spoken as well as in written communication needs to be examined. The
role of the vocal cannot be reduced to affectivity; and the role of writing cannot be re-
leased from affectivity.

By the way: A subsequent question arises on this point. Does digital writing in
the virtual worlds of online forums, social networks, and blogs, in which phenom-
ena like cyberbullying and “hate speech” are so ubiquitous as urging, reveal that writ-
ing—and not just the voice—has an inherently Dionysian dimension? If that is the
case: Why is the net such a privileged medium for a “liberation” of this violent form
of the Dionysian?

Conclusion

Let us underline short conclusions that can be drawn from these considerations, re-
reflecting on new methodologies in word and music studies.

1. The media-theoretical discussion of speech and music has to take into account
the shaping power of iconicity and the pictorial of both spoken and musical forms.
Yet this influential power cannot be reduced to “visuality”; rather, we have to reflect on
this iconicity in terms of spatiality and operativity. The spatiality, visuality, and tactil-
ity of the written image influence the culturally specific ways in which speech and mu-
sic are realized and theorized under the conditions of their transfiguration into spatial
configurations.

2. The formative potential of writing can only be understood in connection with
the human invention of flatness and the formatted surface. To use surfaces as planes
of inscription and picturing is so “natural” that we normally do not notice the cultural
power of this medium. The interaction of point, line, and plane creates a space for creative, cognitive, and aesthetic operations.

3. One of the most significant forms of intermediality is that which occurs between time and space. Inscription systems spatialize temporal sequences, just as spatial arrangements are turned into temporal performances. The role of time and space is not symmetrical under the cultural-historical conditions of ocularcentrism. Due to the culture-endowing role of images, graphs, and writing, the spatial patterns of ordering seem to constitute a privileged medium. Note that the temporal is preferably represented in spatial constellations.

4. To finish with a very general remark: Whenever there is a problem in practical or theoretical orientation and insight, humans tend to resort to inscribed surfaces. Is there something like a “cartographic impulse” within our culture, not only for bodily, but also for mental orientation? Writing in the realm of language and music provides a “cartography” of both.
HEIDI HART

Translating Bodies
A Spatial Approach to Words and Music

Introduction

In his 1986 book *Arctic Dreams*, Barry Lopez describes the resonant bone structure of the narwhal in its ocean environment, which it navigates largely by sound. Lopez considers “[h]ow different ‘the world’ must be for such a creature, for whom sight is but a peripheral sense, who occupies, instead, a three-dimensional acoustical space. Perhaps only musicians have some inkling of the formal shape of emotions and motivations that might define such a sensibility.”¹ Aside from the challenge of imagining another creature’s acoustical-affective world, thinking about human sound-making in three-dimensional space allows for analysis of more than words on a page and notes in a score. As urban sound researchers Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue have noted, “no sound event, musical or otherwise, can be isolated from the spatial and temporal conditions of its physical signal propagation,” and “sound is also shaped subjectively depending on the auditory capacity, the attitude, and the psychology and culture of the listener.”² This article seeks to bridge the gap between such spatial awareness in sound and in text, the threshold at which word and music studies holds its richness and challenge. The long-established spatial turn in literature, combined with a current focus on performativity and materiality in sound studies, can be combined to include listener/viewer experience, in a dynamic, three-dimensional, rather than horizontal, two-dimensional interaction. The question of what and how musical-textual experience means can also counter reductive thinking about passive sensual and affective intake in performative-material space. A methodology that amplifies word-and-music analysis in participatory space yields surprising hermeneutic gray zones, in which text blurs into tone and music carries with it traces of the word.

As Lars Elleström has noted, conceptualizing physical space as a model for intermedial analysis, every medium has three dimensions: the embodied, the technical, and the qualified or social.³ In performativity studies, the current emphasis on sonic materiality and immersive acoustic environments has tended to minimize additional inquiry into what—and how—sound in space means within larger physical, social spaces. The field of word and music studies, with its tradition of inquiry into text-setting

and musical aspects of text, is ripe for such inquiry. Applying a spatial approach to this hybrid field can illuminate both its material and semiotic aspects, from investigations of text-based music in performance to studies of sound-art installations involving language. The long tradition of “Raumsemiotik” or spatial-semiotic studies, from Giambattista Vico’s 1725 “Poetic Geography” to Gaston Bachelard’s 1958 Poetics of Space and more recent work by Niklas Luhmann on space as invisible medium, can certainly shed light on material-semiotic interplay in acoustic spaces. In order to focus on these spaces’ boundaries, this article draws on Yuri Lotman’s 1982 essay “On the Semiosphere” to demonstrate that embodied experience of words and music in three dimensions allows for contingent and variable “translations” by listeners and spectators.

As Aleksei Semenenko of Stockholm University has pointed out, Lotman treats his semiosphere as a metaphor, in contrast to Vladimir Vernadsky’s physical “biosphere” that inspired it and also to the “noosphere [earthly layer of thought], which is a three-dimensional material space.” At the same time, Semenenko notes, Lotman insists that the semiosphere is “real and concrete” in its shaping of meaning and dialogue.4 Lotman describes the “structural heterogeneity of semiotic space”5 and its slippery peripheral zones, in which several “languages” overlap. These languages can, for the purposes of this article, include established musical codes. Such a complex and overlapping web of text and sound relates to Jørgen Bruhn’s term “heteromedia” in intermedial studies, used to indicate a “mixed character” not only of obviously multimedial forms such as film, but also of “texts and media which have traditionally been considered pure, without traces of other media.”6 The idea of the “pure” performance or art exhibit, available to passive recipients, has long been questioned by Brecht, Cage, and many others, but much academic discourse on word and music tends to maintain a conservative focus on the work-in-itself, without considering its less obviously shared media and its spatial-material dimensions. This gap may result partly from the lack of control experienced in three-dimensional spaces, as Sybille Krämer has noted in her recent study of flat surfaces (see Krämer’s contribution to this volume). Applying Lotman’s metaphor to literal sound-spheres provides a map for such complex, dynamic environments and their negotiable borders. In addition, Lotman’s idea of a “constant game of positions” between text and readers, in which the actual reader has an effect on the “ideal” reader,7 de-hierarchizes this ideal (in this case, of listener or

spectator) and allows for semiotic-material translation as a form of participation in a given sound-world.

The language of sound-art theory is also helpful in relating embodied space to words-and-music study. Now moving beyond long-running debates about hierarchies of visuality and sound,8 much sound-art theory echoes Lotman’s image of a semiosphere with negotiable borders. Giancarlo Toniutti’s essay “Space as a Cultural Substratum” also draws on bio-physiological models to relate space to perceptual phenomena, noting that even the word “comprehension” arises from “spatial semantics” and expressing particular interest in “perturbations” of the sound-field, in dialogue with the organic subject’s morpho-kinesthetic map.10 Kristen Kreider’s newly released Poetics and Place works toward an intersubjective, material poetics of art spaces, taking into account not only non-linguistic sights and sounds but also “the performance of the verbal message: its embodied enactment through the reciprocal acts of ‘speaking’ and ‘listening’.”11 Brandon LaBelle’s 2013 Background Noise takes into account sound’s occurrence “among bodies,” with a “multiplicity of acoustical ‘viewpoints’” as it “performs with and through space … [and] escapes rooms, vibrates walls, disrupts conversation.”12 LaBelle moves from analysis of John Cage’s “open” works, which expose the boundary-transgressive aspect of sound,13 to 1970s and 80s sound art and musical-poetic compositions that “drag” linguistic material into immersive soundscapes,14 blurring the conventionally imagined line between word and music or “mere” sound, and finally to contemporary architectural and digital experiments with sonic space. Christopher Dell’s Replay City reverses this approach, applying musical form metaphorically to a study of improvisational urban spaces.15

The three works under consideration here—an extended-technique piano work based on Joyce’s Ulysses, a sound-art installation on the music of Hanns Eisler, and a space-designed symphony responding to Peter Weiss’ novel The Aesthetics of Resistance—all function within literal acoustical spaces in which material-semiotic interaction occurs. In each case, text is layered or “dragged,” to use LaBelle’s term, into the soundscape either implicitly or explicitly. How that text is perceived depends largely on listener/spectator participation, which becomes an act of translation as well. Reading program notes or moving through the sound-space in an art gallery allows the audience to bring semantic-associative readings into the performance space, complicating its immersive materiality. In this perceptive encounter, to use Lotman’s simile, “the border points of the semiosphere may be likened to sensory receptors, which trans-

10 Ibid., 40.
13 Ibid., 24.
14 Ibid., 104.
15 See Christopher Dell, Replay City: Improvisation als urbane Praxis (Berlin: jovis, 2011).
fer external stimuli into the language of our nervous system, or a unit of translation, which adapts the external actor to a given semiotic sphere.” Lotman’s project imagines a single semiosphere with semi-permeable boundaries; here each work under consideration is taken as a semiosphere in its own right. Three factors set the stage for each of these spheres’ semiotic instability: varied languages, in Bakhtin’s sense of heteroglossia; optional meta-texts, or translation agents, such as program or gallery notes; and the listener/viewer’s embodied, participatory experience, which can vary according to background knowledge of the material and responses to spatial sound effects such as reverberation, distortion, and physical movement. What results from analyzing textual-musical experience in this three-dimensional framework is an overlapping border between what are usually conceptualized separately as “text” and “sound.”

Openings/Rhapsodies

Musical resonance is a phenomenon as material as it is invisible. Sound or pressure waves at varying frequencies course through instrumental and human bodies, along the contours of the surrounding room or outdoor surfaces, and sometimes through amplifying technologies as well. Sung, spoken, or recorded text adds another resonant-material as well as semiotic element into the acoustic complex. What happens if text is implicit in a musical work that moves through a concert grand piano into a recital hall? American composer Curtis Curtis-Smith’s 1973 work Rhapsodies asks the pianist to interact with the instrument’s interior, in an extended-technique piece based on lines from the “Sirens” chapter in James Joyce’s Ulysses. The text is never sung or spoken aloud. The score includes elaborate instructions for threading, bowing, hammering, and picking a grand piano’s strings (see Appendix, figure 1); the piano’s body is literally mapped on the page and thus exposes its function as resonant space, or what Niklas Luhmann calls space-as-medium. Each movement begins with an unheard text-fragment (limited to score and program notes) from the Joyce chapter. The first, “... a swift pure cry ...” refers directly to sound and plays out in conventional keyboard playing, with “swift” and “pure” qualities marked in “accelerando” tempo markings and notes to the pianist such as “clear sound (scarcely any Ped. created sonorities).” The second movement begins to open the piano’s body to bow and mallet, with the epigraph “But Wait! Low in dark middle earth. Embedded ore”; this text itself evokes a spatial location. In the third movement, the pianist responds to the text-fragment “And a call, pure, long and throbbing. Longindying call” with bowings meant to “begin imperceptibly if possible—they must always emerge from the previous sound.” How close this evocation of a “call” is to Joyce’s imagined sound is of course contingent, not only dependent on the pianist’s skill but also on the listeners’ expectations and associations.

19 Ibid., 5.
20 Ibid., 9 (italics in original).
In the *Rhapsodies*’ fourth movement, with its title line “Listen! The spiked and winding cold seahorn,” listeners would once again have to read these words in the program notes or in the score to know that they inspired the music. Perhaps this movement’s complex play of overtones, with metallic sounds emerging from a brass mallet dragged across the piano’s lowest strings, combined with the pianist’s own whistling, can evoke associations with words such as “spiked,” “winding,” “cold,” and “horn.” The “Listen!” invocation may also become visually embodied, as the pianist leans into the instrument to test the partials the composer notes should “emerge” from bowing and picking the strings. But with so much performance contingency (does the pianist tilt her head to listen? does the audience member bother to read the program?), the sound-space becomes semiotically unstable, allowing for a variety of hearings and interpretations. At the border of this “semiosphere,” various agents of translation appear: not only the program notes but also the composer’s visually detailed maps and instructions in the score. These border guards are unpredictable, however, and allow individual readings of the music to enter its space. Whether or not a listener has read Joyce’s “Sirens” chapter, or for that matter the *Odyssey* that inspired it, certainly influences his or her experience of the music but is not essential to “hearing” its implied text. The text becomes implicit in the pianist’s sound material, becoming more embodied, just as the music enters specific literary spaces in the audience’s field of response.

“Imagine a room in a museum,” writes Lotman, “where exhibits from different eras are laid out in different windows, with texts in known and unknown languages, and instructions for deciphering them, together with explanatory texts for the exhibitions created by guides who map the necessary routes and rules of behaviour for visitors. If we place into that room still more visitors, with their own semiotic worlds, then we will begin to obtain something resembling a picture of the semiosphere.” Applying this museum-image to the literal concert hall, performer and listeners encounter Curtis-Smith’s *Rhapsodies* as a layering of more-or-less familiar text and sound, mediated by the score (in the pianist’s case) and program notes. The “semiosphere” exists in layers of shared and individual cognition, as well as in the literal spaces of piano, performing body, and larger acoustical environment. As Nicholas Cook has noted, the individual performer works as more than a mere conduit for pre-composed music and brings his or her embodied sense of the unheard text to bear in its sonic interpretation as well. If this semantic layer is “dragged” into the material-acoustic sphere, just as the pianist’s mallet is dragged across the strings, that layer manifests differently with each performance. Curtis-Smith’s score instructions for the pianist allow for contingency and change: in the fourth movement, unstable overtones require some flexibility on the performer’s part: “Due to the highly variable nature of the overtones produced by the bowing of the low strings, one may not be able to produce an overtone within the

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21 Ibid., 13.
24 LaBelle, *Background Noise*, 104.
To evoke “[t]he spiked and winding cold seahorn,”26 within the performance space requires translation, at the far border of language, on the part of the performer as well. For the audience, text and music are likely to blur through the “remanence” effect, or lingering of sound in the imaginative ear, an effect that results both from musical overtones and poetic echoes such as alliteration, “whether the reading is silent or not.”27

A twelve-tone walk

To literalize Lotman’s museum metaphor, imagine an art gallery housed in a former train station, with twenty-four pillars and no seating except at each end of the main hall. The space is warm, clean, and filled with light, its usual sculptures removed. Visitors’ steps and voices echo between twenty-four loudspeakers, each one playing a tone recorded on an individual instrument, spatially displacing twelve-tone-inspired film music by Hanns Eisler, composed between 1926 and 1947. Twelve prints of Eisler’s scores overlapping with his FBI file, during his McCarthy-era surveillance and eventual hearing by the House Committee on Un-American Activities,28 appear on the gallery walls. This sound-installation, Part File Score by Scottish artist and vocalist Susan Philipsz, works with Eisler’s own idea of aesthetic displacement to unsettle the traditional concert- or film-music experience.

Just as Eisler juxtaposed catchy tunes against troubling texts (often by Bertolt Brecht) and set Marxist workers’ choruses to formal parodies of Bach, opening a space for both performers’ and listeners’ critical engagement with text and music, Philipsz’ installation encourages questioning and participation. Part File Score requires visitors to keep moving rather than to receive the music, images, and text from a passive seated position. The lack of explicit connection between the FBI file images and the split twelve-tone rows creates a space for critical inquiry; the viewer/listener becomes a participant in the gallery experience, trying to piece together a connection between musical form and the subversion of political force, whether or not he or she is aware of Eisler’s efforts (through parody, interruption, and dissonance) to undermine the use of music for mass narcosis. It is impossible for visitors to hear Eisler’s three consecutively played pieces (Prelude in the Form of a Passacaglia [1926], composed for Walther Ruttmann’s Lichtspiel: Opus III; Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain [1941], for Joris Ivens’ film Regen; and Septet No. 2 [1947] for Charlie Chaplin’s The Circus) as anything but fragments. The Septet’s literal, historical interruption by Eisler’s deportation from the USA does link the music more directly to the installation’s visual aspects—if visitors read that information. The FBI files’ blacked-out sections add another element of displacement to the semiotic space, which Philipsz conceived as a commentary on transit and surveillance.

25 Curtis-Smith, Rhapsodies, 13.
26 Ibid.
27 Augoyard and Torgue, Sonic Experience, 90.
28 Hanns Eisler’s career was marked by political disfavor, from his and Bertolt Brecht’s Nazi-era exile to Eisler’s 1948 deportation from the U.S. for suspected Communist sympathies, and later to his censure, for a carnivalesque Faust opera, by Party ideologues in 1953 East Germany.
On one level, *Part File Score* works as a vivid example of heteromediality, highlighting the visual aspects of music by displaying Eisler’s scores. As Lawrence Kramer has noted, musical “text” works at a visual-semiotic border: “The score-hieroglyph is both code and image. It can be deciphered only by filling the pictographic gap, only by correcting the imperfect relation between the reduced symbol and its meaning.”29 This idea relates back to Lotman’s image of the semiospheric border zone, where codes require translation. Kramer goes on to include an “embodied subject” in the deciphering process, as well as his own spatial image: “[m]usical experience arises from an act of restoration that turns the symbol, formerly a pyramid-like tomb of its meaning, into a house where the meaning dwells.”30 If we literalize this image to apply to sound-art spaces, the symbol—in Philipsz’s case, a space evoking both transit and spectatorship—becomes an open room in which meaning not only dwells but changes depending on participants’ engagement. The code may not be easily broken, as Lotman indicates in his own museum metaphor: “Texts appear to be immersed in languages which do not correspond to them, and codes for deciphering them may be completely absent.”31 That said, he also notes that such a hetero-semiotic space “creates reserves of dynamic processes” allowing for “the creation of new information inside the sphere.”32 Here text and music are mediated by visual aspects of bureaucratic text, as perceived by moving gallery visitors in three-dimensional acoustic space.

On another level, *Part File Score* works as a porous container for recorded sound, which changes depending on where the spectator/listener stands and how slowly or quickly she moves. Ongoing debates about live versus amplified or digital sound tend to exhibit what Bruhn has called “mediaphobia,” or suspicion of sensory perception not traditionally recognized as immediate or unmediated.33 In her otherwise compelling application of Merleau-Ponty’s “being honeyed” to intersubjective sound-space, Salomé Voegelin discounts radio sound as a “dark serendipity” that “grants no room.”34 Jürgen Müller’s classic text on intermediality offers a more generous perspective. Taking what sounds very much like a heteromedical approach even to the radio-play script, Müller notes that “[d]ie Schrift bleibt hinter den Tönen zurück” [“the written script remains in back of the sounds”] in the “Überlappen von gesprochenen Worten, Musik und *bruitage*” [“the overlapping of spoken words, music and noise”].35 This explicitly spatial model of radio sound becomes even more em-

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30 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 214.
bodied and intersubjective when Müller describes the voice’s timbre, speech rhythm, and prosodic-paralinguistic features in terms of “Klang-Körper” [“sound bodies”] that begin to create a world of sound itself, destabilizing the storyteller’s traditionally privileged role. Here, again, the difference between “word” and “music” blurs. This sound-world, or radio semiosphere, approaches the “Klang-Welt des Hörers” [“listener’s sound-world”] until the borders between them loosen, performer/listener agency is blurred as well, and “[w]ir partizipieren ... in einer fiktiven Welt, die wir mit Hilfe der Stimmen und akustischen Zeichen des Hörspiels selbst konstituiert haben und fortwährend konstituieren” [“we participate ... in a fictive world that we ourselves have set up, and continually set up, with the help of the voices and acoustic signs of the radio play”].36

As Semenenko has noted, Lotman’s semiosphere actually reverses the usual semiotic order of Language > Text > Dialogue to begin with the “dialogic situation” (in this case, the “Klang-Welt” or sound-world), which then leads to “real dialogue,” then “text,” and then “language.”37 Without taking the time here to parse these categories, it is important to note that even recorded sound-spaces—often carefully engineered—can be thought of as preceding, by housing, the words and music that occur there, just as a singer’s body creates and shapes resonant text. As Eisler’s twelve-tone music loops through separate speakers, instrument by instrument, in the gallery space, that space provides gaps between the physical speakers and the tissue of sound they release. Additional spaces between the instruments’ voices and the texts (with their own blacked-out gaps) on the walls allow for further spectator/listener entry points, into which one brings knowledge of Nazi-era history, curiosity about dissonance as a political stance, or mental images of the films for which some of this music was scored. Written information provided in the gallery meets the spectator/listener partway, as a Lotmanian “border guard” or translator, but each participant’s experience is slightly different. The material-semiotic gaps in this installation function similarly to Eisler’s own musical endings, in which the “halb-Schluss” or “half-cadence” leaves room for the listener to engage critically with music, text, and the unresolved tensions between them.38 This spatial-semiotic gapping recalls the “ubiquity effect” in theatre, in which actors speak in different locations, and/or audience members move from place to place, de-hierarchizing the stage.39 In the unstable sonic-textual environment of Part File Score, “authority”—that of governmental power and of the composer himself—comes into question. Each instrumental voice in its separate speaker seems to do just that, to speak with slippery autonomy amid efforts to silence it, as if in code, once again blurring the line between music and word.

36 Ibid., 253.
37 Semenenko, Texture of Culture, 113.
39 Augoyard and Torgue, Sonic Experience, 141–42.
In the virtual museum

Before Berlin’s famous Pergamon Altar was closed in 2014 for a five-year restoration, visitors could approach it not only as a towering visual experience, with its writhing marble body-fragments and unexpectedly steep stairs, but also as a sound-environment, with voices in many languages echoing through the far-larger-than-human space. A similar overlapping of voices and languages occurs in Finnish Kalevi Aho’s musical work *Pergamon*, scored for four orchestral groups, four reciters, and organ. Notes for a 1994 recording of the work describe it as follows:

*Pergamon* is spatial music which takes as its point of departure the architectural form and acoustic of the Helsinki University Hall. The orchestral groups and narrators are placed in different parts of the hall. Sometimes the sounds they produce are allowed to circulate around the hall, whilst on occasion musical signals may be thrown straight from one side of the hall to the other.

The text is a dramatic depiction of the Pergamon Altar … by Peter Weiss (1916–1982), a German author who emigrated to Sweden during the Nazi regime. The image comes from the beginning of Weiss’ masterpiece, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands (The Aesthetics of Resistance)*. Each of the narrators recites the same excerpts simultaneously in four different languages: German, Finnish, Swedish and ancient Greek.40

The spatial scattering of sound in *Pergamon* embodies the polyphonic, centrifugal movement Mikhail Bakhtin maps at the textual level in Dostoevsky—movement that resists one-voiced ideology41 and echoes the de-hierarchizing “ubiquity effect” of Susan Philipsz’ *Part File Score*. Peter Weiss’ three-volume novel is itself richly polyphonic, with an unnamed narrator engaging in conversations with other young Germans about forms of resistance to fascism. That these conversations take place largely in art galleries gives them a spatial dimension within the text. The novel’s first volume opens with this complex description of the Pergamon Altar, here in the translation included with Aho’s musical work:

Around us the bodies arose from the stone, squashed together into groups, intertwinied or scattered in fragments, with a torso, a supported arm, a broken hip, an encrusted lump indicating its shape, always in the posture of war, getting out of the way, springing back, attacking, defending, stretched up high or bent over, here and there snuffed out, though still with an independent, forward-pressed foot, with a turned-around back, with the shape of a calf constrained in a single, common motion.42

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In his introduction to the 2005 English translation of Weiss’ novel, Fredric Jameson claims that the work is not itself a “monument” but rather “a machine for reliving … sheerly corporeal agony” and describes this machine in spatial terms: “a peculiarly juxta posed set of materials: sparsely selected yet vivid landscapes along with interiors and rooms which have a different function; the visual lessons of many paintings; and finally the sheer suffering of bodies whose primary sexuality … is replaced by pain.”

In Kalevi Aho’s musical adaptation of the Weiss text, this spatiality is given multiple voices whose movement and linguistic audibility reacts to their performance space. The machine for re-traversing historical pain begins to breathe. This sensory geography becomes even more complex if listeners take in its double locality: the concert hall and the echoing museum space it evokes, with the steep steps of the partially reconstructed altar looming over entering visitors, who must walk and climb and crane their necks to see the agonistic body fragments in the marble surrounding them on three sides.

Visitors to the literal Pergamon Altar may or may not know Weiss’ novel and, even if so, may or may not recall his intensely layered phrases as they view the ancient struggle between gods and giants, in the context of German appropriation of Greek art and Weiss’ attempt to reclaim these images in his words of protest. The overlapping voices in several languages in Aho’s musical work evoke this variable subjectivity: Even if the spoken texts are not understood, their voicing in echoing space gives listeners the experience of heteroglossia, in which they can imagine the words forming in their own minds taking shape as well. What museum-goers and concert listeners bring to their experience of the altar and its musical evocation occurs in the semiospheric border zone. As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it, “To be listening is always to be on the edge of meaning” occurring in space, as this “resonant meaning” or “the shared space of meaning and sound” not only vibrates and spreads but can also work as “an intersection, mixture, covering up.”

At the semiotic level, previous readings may cross over with and even obscure what viewers/listeners experience in approaching the Pergamon Altar and/or its musical enactment. In a spatial sense, the difficulty listeners may have in understanding Weiss’ text in its variously translated, overlapping, echoing recitations recalls the experience of overhearing conversations in many languages in a large museum space. Though architectural reverberation is “easily associated with various functions of power (religion, justice),” speech in large spaces “paradoxically … reduces the intelligibility of the message.” Bringing both together, in Lotman’s “vision” of the semiosphere, the Pergamon-Weiss-Aho constellation offers an unpredictable, participatory experience in which spoken text can blur into pitched tones more akin to music.

Hearing Aho’s Pergamon via a sound recording that can only approximate the experience of a concert hall or museum space, the work’s spatial element may seem materially absent. Returning to Jürgen Müller’s treatment of the radio play, however, we can begin to hear words and music in terms of “sound-worlds” and “sound-bodies” that
move beyond their explicit textual roles (for example Weiss’ narrator or Aho’s four reciters) to interact with the imagined sound-spaces listeners create. These listeners may catch a word in German or Swedish as the voices they hear overlap and blur the line between text and material sound. They may recall a visit to the Pergamon Museum or an image they have seen of fractured marble bodies; they may associate percussive sounds with violence or minor-second dissonance with film-music suspense; they may hear in the solo bassoon an almost-human voicing of lament. These musical-semantic associations, combined with fragments of reverberating, overlapping text, create yet another gray zone between “word” and “music.” Applying spatial semiotics to word-and-music studies can include not only physical spaces (or those spaces re-enacted elsewhere) but also virtual sound-spaces into which listeners can re-create three-dimensionality through imaginative response.

**Conclusion**

If word and music studies easily remain limited to object analysis in horizontal, linear space, a three-dimensional, spatial-semiotic approach can help to open musical-textual works, particularly those in performance or installation spaces, to more participatory readings that blur the line between “word” and “music.” Combined with recent sound-art theory, Yuri Lotman’s “On the Semiosphere” provides useful spatial metaphors for approaching musical-textual meaning and translation, much of which occurs in literally resonant spaces. The three works considered here provide examples of text and music operating in overlapping semiotic and material space. In Curtis Curtis-Smith’s *Rhaptodies*, the piano’s body works as a resonating chamber evoking text-fragments by Joyce, which performer and listeners “translate” from score and program notes into the non-verbal sound experience in the recital hall’s larger space. Prepared-piano overtones and implicit alliterative and rhyming textual passages (explicit if read in the program notes) yield similar remanence effects, lingering in the ear and raising the question of how much of this work is text and how much is tone. In Susan Philipsz’s installation *Part File Score*, twelve-tone music by Hanns Eisler plays in a museum space, the sound broken down instrument by instrument in a series of speakers as visitors pass Eisler’s FBI file texts, also broken by blacked-out sections of each page. Here musical code seems to speak from each amplifying body as if protesting acts of surveillance and silencing, which spectator-listeners reconstruct from physical evidence in an act of intermedial translation. In Kalevi Aho’s symphonic-vocal work *Pergamon*, a museum space is re-imagined in a concert hall, with overlapping voices and languages evoking the tortuous physical bodies in sculpted in marble and textually re-mediated in Peter Weiss’ *Aesthetics of Resistance*. Semantically blurred spoken text begins to sound more like music than word. Even in an ostensibly non-spatial, recorded version of this musical work, sound-materiality in tone, word, instrumentation, and echo plays out in re-imagined space that the listener can only provisionally “translate” from textual notes or through snatches of one or more of the spoken languages he or she understands. Overall, a methodology of words and music that includes spatial dimensions de-hierarchi-
izes the “expert” or “ideal” listener and opens analytical space for varied, participatory readings. This approach also foregrounds the materiality of text and the textual resonance of sound. Though the examples given here are not participatory art in the truly “hands-on” sense, they do reveal their contingent, translatable borders when viewed in spatial terms, also de-hierarchizing the work of art itself as an easily objectified entity.

Appendix: Curtis Curtis-Smith’s Rhapsodies

Figure 1.
Figure 2.
ANETTE VANDSØ

Technology, Sound, and Subject
A Cross-Disciplinary Investigation

Introduction

Five vocal microphones are hanging from the ceiling in their cables. Although they seem to be randomly dispersed across the far end of the gallery space, they still form an installational whole that silently demarks a scene. A young couple, nervously giggling, approaches a microphone and tryingly puts it to use. As the space is filled with their outbursts, I realize that the microphones are not just a visual or auditory installation, but rather they function as an open invitation for anyone to become a speaker. I approach one of the microphones and hesitate a moment before I say, “Eeeh ... Hello ...”

This short description, based on my own journal notes, encapsulates my first experience of the Italian artist Gilberto Zorio’s installation *Microfoni* from 1968, which was restaged in 2014 for the ANALOG exhibition at the BlainSouthern Gallery in Berlin.
Zorio’s installation has a palpable sonic presence, and yet, it is not music in the conventional sense of the word. It deals with (potential) speech acts, and yet, it is neither literature nor theater as such. It seems to fall between the well-established categories of art, and in doing so resists theoretical description by the use of conventional methods of musical or literary analysis. This kind of resistance can prove to be fruitful, because it challenges us to rethink our analytical, methodological, and theoretical modes of conceptualizing and analyzing art. Indeed, sound art practices like Zorio’s and others have already given way to developments of new and still emerging paradigms.1

Even though sound art practices can be traced back to the historical avant-gardes at the beginning of the 19th century, the established art world’s interest in sound is a relatively new phenomenon.2 However, the last two decades have seen increasing interest in sound, and today sound art can be found at many internationally renowned art events and museums, including Ars Electronica in Linz, the Venice Biennale, Documenta in Kassel, and MoMa in New York. For instance, in 2013 MoMa launched the exhibition *Soundings*, which was the first exhibition at this prestigious museum dedicated entirely to sound art.

This recent sonic boom has included a still growing amount of academic research in sound art, sonic art, or *Klangkunst* that discusses the specific qualities of sound as an artistic medium or listening as a specific modality in relation to art.3 However, the main focus of this article is not sound or listening itself. Perhaps my experience of Zorio’s installation was influenced by the fact that the gallery space was almost empty on the day of my visit, or by the slight anxiety I witnessed in the young people as they spoke into the microphones. But the core of my experience was not centered around the sounds as such. Instead it closed in on the silent, albeit insisting way these microphones created a yet unoccupied space where anyone can become a speaker: gain a voice, be heard, and thus assert themselves as “someone” in a public space in front of an audience. According to the French linguist Émile Benveniste’s theories from the 1950s, language is not a tool for expressing subjectivity; on the contrary, subjectivity is a linguistic category.4 It is by appropriating language in a singular act of enunciation that we become subjects. “Est ‘ego’ qui *dit* ‘ego’” (“‘I’ is whoever says ‘I’”),5 as he states.

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4 This is suggested by the title of his essay on language and subjectivity, “De la subjectivité dans le langage” (on the subjectivity in the language), from 1958, and by the chapter title “L’homme dans la langue” (man in the language), which groups a section of articles in his collected works. Émile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 159.
5 Benveniste, *Problèmes*, vol. 1, 160 (my translation).
I wish to suggest that Zorio’s installation creates a place for what Benveniste calls “the singular act of enunciation,” in which someone appropriates language and through that act constitutes themselves as an “I.” Seen in this light, the microphones do not merely invite people to produce sounds, but also to constitute themselves as subjects. However, when engaging with Zorio’s installation people do not necessarily use language. Some may just make random sounds. What really allows people to constitute themselves as subjects is therefore not language, but the sound-(re)producing technologies—loudspeakers, microphones, amplifiers, and wires.

The French thinker Bernard Stiegler is interesting in relation to Zorio’s installation, because he extends Benveniste’s theories on subjectivity from language to technology. Stiegler is in agreement with Benveniste; he also regards subjectivity as something that is not solely constituted on the level of the individual, but in “symbolic milieus” that exist on a pre-individual level. A symbolic milieu is a relay across distances connecting beings through both their differentiation and mutual recognition. They are thus constituted by that milieu both individually, in the position of the I, and collectively, as establishing a we, and they can distinguish themselves only to the extent that they acknowledge/recognize each other in this milieu.

Language is, for instance, a symbolic milieu that facilitates the “constitution and the expression of singularities.” In line with Benveniste, Stiegler claims that we constitute subjectivity as we appropriate language in a dialog, where the person listening can become the listener and later the speaker. Stiegler calls this process an act of individuation. As mentioned, Stiegler is interesting in relation to Zorio’s installation, because he claims that technology offers “a new milieu of psychic and collective individuation, which is at least as radically new as the writing of language was in its time.” The thesis I wish to pursue here is that Zorio’s installation allows us to experience sound-(re)producing technologies as what Stiegler would call a milieu for individuation, for becoming subjects. Here it is the sound-(re)producing technologies—including the microphones, amplifiers, and loudspeakers—that function as a place where we can become subjects.

Furthermore, I suggest that this understanding of sound art and sound-(re)producing technologies does not only apply to Zorio’s installation, but can work as a new perspective on sound art. The scope of my account is thus not primarily to suggest an entirely new methodology or approach to sound art, but rather to expand our understanding of the relation between subjectivity, enunciation, and media. Whereas studies of art conventionally focus on either the expressive subject of the artist or, in a

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 35.
critique thereof, on the subject of the audience, my investigation interrogates the very intersection of technology and subjectivity as something that can be exposed and interrogated by the artwork itself.

Following Benveniste’s theory of enunciation and Stiegler’s ideas of technologies as symbolic milieus for acts of individuation, the article explores different aspects of this intersection of human subjectivity and sound-(re)producing technologies through a tentative analysis of works of sound art. Besides Zorio’s installation, this article investigates Static Language Sampler’s Language Removal Service (2004), Luc Ferrari’s Far-West News (1998–1999), and Hong Kai Wang’s Music While We Work (2011). The article does not present in-depth analyses of these works of art, but in a more tentative manner points to different ways in which the intersection of technology and subjectivity is at play in the specific cases.

Investigating sound art as a post-medial phenomenon

The thrust of my argument is that the study of sound art benefits from a cross-disciplinary approach combining linguistic theory, media theory, and sound studies. In suggesting this I seek to traverse the all-dominant approach to sound art that argues that the presence of sound makes sound art fundamentally different from, say, language, visual art, or music.

While the epistemological positioning may differ, what most recent publications on sound art have in common is that their argument in favor of one specific approach over others is based on the assumption that sound art is ontologically different from other art forms, music in particular. Musicologist Brian Kane convincingly describes this stance against music in the research in sound art, naming it “musicophobia.”¹² The research in sound art often describes music as a temporal and inherently symbolic art form that unfolds an abstract structure of internal references for the listener to decode, while sound art is a tempo-spatial art form which in a more direct and strategic way plays with the recipient’s audio-visual perception of space and time.¹³ In line with such thinking, some stress that sound is an artistic media that evokes space and bodies in a different way than other artistic media.¹⁴ Others, in turn, claim that music is something that is written in scores that we can see, while sound art requires an approach that is based on listening.¹⁵ Although he is critical of the discourse arguing for the specificity of sound, Kim-Cohen’s argument is nevertheless to some extent based on “musicophobia,” and he describes music as an autono-

¹⁴ LaBelle, Background Noise (London: Continuum, 2007), ix.
¹⁵ Voegelin, Listening to Noise and Silence, 8.
mous and “a-referential” art form,\textsuperscript{16} while sound art is thought to exist in a cultural matrix of narratives.\textsuperscript{17}

Contrary to these emerging paradigms, the approach I wish to investigate is not specific to sound art. Instead of viewing artwork such as Zorio’s installation as something fundamentally different from other artistic expressions such as music or literature, I regard it as something that exists in a continuum of speech acts of which some are verbal, some are written, some are sounding, and some are musicalized.

Thus, my investigation is more in line with the so-called cultural musicology, which has proliferated over the last decades.\textsuperscript{18} Here a piece of music is not described as a structural, symbolically encoded, autonomous artwork notated in a score. Instead, what is explored is how musical phenomena constitute subjectivity in the broadest sense: both how specific examples of music negotiate cultural subject positions, and how the individual listener uses music and listening to create self-identity.\textsuperscript{19} However, my investigation focuses not on sound, music, or specific listening practices, but on the role of technology in relation to subjectivity.

\textit{Technology, art, and the subject of utterance}

Zorio’s installation can easily be read in line with German theorist Peter Bürger’s theory of the avant-garde from 1974 that describes how the avant-garde artwork negates the category of individual production.\textsuperscript{20} The lack of pre-composed content in Zorio’s installation can be experienced as a gesture that eliminates the authority of the composer or author. But even more so, it seems to be a generous invitation for others to become the privileged subjects of expression. One important indicator of this generous invitation are the concrete blocks that are placed underneath each microphone and thus function as pedestals or “soap boxes” for the speakers to stand on.

The open structures of this piece resembles those which the American composer John Cage observed in 1957 in the art of this time:

\begin{quote}
For in this new music nothing takes place but sounds: those that are notated and those that are not. Those that are not notated appear in the written music as silences, opening the doors of the music to the sounds that happen to be in the environment. This openness exists in the fields of modern sculpture and architecture. The glass houses of Mies van der Rohe reflect their environment, presenting to the eye images of clouds, trees, or grass, according to the situation. And while looking at the constructions in wire of the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} Kim-Cohen, \textit{Blink of an Ear}, 39 and 163.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 107.
\textsuperscript{19} For the latter, see for instance Tia DeNora, \textit{Music in Everyday Life} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
\textsuperscript{20} Peter Bürger, \textit{Theorie der Avantgarde} (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 70–120.
sculptor Richard Lippold, it is inevitable that one will see other things, and people too, if they happen to be there at the same time, through the network of wires.21

Indeed, when seeing Zorio’s installation we also see other people who happen to be there at the same time, and we (potentially) hear them too. However, there is not only openness, but also a participatory element in Zorio’s piece, because it does not randomly amplify all the ambient sounds in the gallery space. On the contrary, the singer’s microphones used in the installation have few characteristics and mainly (though not only) pick up sounds that are close to them. Zorio’s piece seems to focus on the participatory elements, including the agency of the audience and the relational quality of the installation. The piece can therefore be described as an example of art that engages the audience rather than communicates content, which is in line with Clair Bishop’s idea of “participatory culture,” Erika Fischer-Lichte’s “performatives,” and Nicolas Bourriaud’s “relational aesthetics.”22

In this article I want to focus on this aspect of engagement. But instead of looking at the relation between artwork and audience I want to zoom in on the role of the sound-(re)producing technologies, and how they set the stage for participation.

Benveniste argued that language is designed with an openness that ensures that anyone can appropriate it in a singular act of enunciation and become the discourse subject—the “I” across from the “you”—implied in the communicative act. This openness can, according to Benveniste, be seen in the so-called deictic shifters, words such as “I,” “you,” “here,” and “now,” whose referent shifts according to the specific situation in which they are used. The referent of the word “I” is simply the one speaking.23 The act of enunciation is, then, not merely an act of communicating content and expressing who you are; it is rather, as already stated above, in this act that subjectivity is constituted.

In Zorio’s installation this openness is not constituted by linguistic shifters, but through the specific “affordances”24 of the microphones, the pedestals, and the loudspeakers. The microphones and the pedestals invite people to take action: to step onto the pedestal, to stand close to the microphone, and to make a sound. The loudspeakers project the sounds into the gallery space, and the sounds lead the audience’s attention back to the person using the microphone, and thus this person becomes an “I” across from the potential “you” of the audience. The microphones are thus not merely a technology that enhances certain aspects of the world; they are performative

22 Claire Bishop, ed., Participation (Cambridge: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2006); Erika Fischer-Lichte, Ästhetik des Performativen (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004); Nicolas Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002). Bourriaud’s ideas are already standard reference in the literature on sound art (see LaBelle, Background Noise, 248–49), and in general scholars tend to see sound art as something that engages the listener (see Voegelin, Listening to Noise and Silence, 6–12).
and constituent of sociality and subjectivity, because they function as a space for acts of individuation—for becoming a subject.

A narratological and cultural view on utterance via technology

It has been suggested that recording is an act of enunciation. In his book on Sonic Art from 1997 the American composer Trevor Wishart distinguishes between different layers of utterance. As a thought example he mentions a case where someone is listening to a concert on the radio. Then all of a sudden the roof of the concert hall falls down and the audience screams. Now the listener is made aware of the fact that the music was produced by an orchestra playing in an actual concert hall. Then a voiceover says that we have just listened to a radio play or a piece of electroacoustic music, and with this statement the listener is made aware of the fact that the performance was also presented or uttered by the composer and via a recording. Most of the time these layers of embedded utterances are not obvious to us, as we generally listen to music without noticing the technological act of re-mediating the performance. Wishart here stresses an important fact: namely that the act of recording is also an act of utterance, or enunciation, as I would call it in order to stress the theoretical implications of Benveniste’s theory of enunciation.

The French composer Luc Ferrari’s compositions are often almost 1:1 montages of everyday sounds. This is, for instance, the case in Presque Rien No. 1 and in Far-West News Episode No. 1 (1998–1999). In Far-West News, which was published and distributed in CD format, we hear Ferrari’s own voice as a voiceover saying, “there was an opportunity to buy coffee” (at 1’59”), followed by a montage of sounds of people talking in a supermarket. This could be an example of the levels of enunciation that Wishart is talking about. In this case, there is clear distinction between these different levels of enunciation: The narrator talks in the present about events that occurred in the past, and these past events are presented to us in the montage in their own (past) present. It is this mixture of temporalities of experienced events that structures the level of enunciation in the piece.

In a critique of the German media theorist Friedrich Kittler’s description of sound recording as a way to access “the real” unfiltered by the human symbolic systems of interpretation, Kim-Cohen stresses that what we hear in sonic art—including Ferrari’s compositions—are not sounds alone, but rather “symbolic grids.” These symbolic grids, in the production, interact with

the matrix of symbolic grids on the side of reception: the recorded sounds as received, the awareness of the process of recording, the recorder’s interventionist presence in the recording, the listener’s awareness of the walker/observer’s awareness of himself.

The main focus of Kim-Cohen’s argumentation here is not the embeddedness of levels of enunciation in the finished piece, but rather the sociality and symbolic grids of which sounds are always and already part. Where Wishart’s perspective can lead to a narratological analysis of sender positions in relation to the told, in line with Gérard Genette’s account of focalization or Seymour Chatman’s notion of the implicit organizer in films, Kim-Cohen’s perspective leads to a more general observation of the social and cultural nature of recorded sounds. Kim-Cohen’s emphasis on the practice of recording points toward something that is not merely work-internal, but also related to the act of using sound-(re)producing technology. With its fragmented montage of everyday sounds and its lack of consistent narrative structure we never learn anything about the subject who talks and records in Ferrari’s *Far-West News*. However, thanks to the technology we still experience a subject talking and recording.

**Exteriorization**

In Kittler’s account of the phonograph this technology serves as a supplement to human memory:

> If the phonographic disk had self-consciousness, it could point out while re-playing a song that it remembers this particular song. And what appears to us as the effect of a rather simple mechanism would, quite probably, strike the disk as a miraculous ability: memory.

We exteriorize our memory when we record sounds or songs, Kittler claims. The technology remembers for us. Stiegler claims that the interior (the memory) does not precede the exterior (the recording). Rather the interior and the exterior are constituted in movement between the two, which leads him to conclude that they are the same thing. I think it is common for people to doubt whether they actually remember the scenes of their childhood pictures, or if it is the pictures that have installed and ensured the memory in us. Stiegler even talks about human beings as a process of exteriorization. To be human is therefore, according to Stiegler, to be a technical being. In *Far-West News* the narrator’s voiceover is filtered, making it sound distant. In effect it sounds as though the narrator is further away from the listener than the field recording of him in the supermarket—which is an event the narrator comments on. Via the recording the past thus becomes a more present tense of the narrating voice. It seems difficult not to read *Far-west News* as a piece about memory and about recording as a means of exteriorizing memory. And thus also about subjectivity, about who it is who

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33 Ibid., 50.
remembers: Is it the narrator? The language? Or the tape recorder? And is Ferrari as a subject, ultimately, separable from the act of recording?

**New technologies—the tape recorder and the microphone**

In the 1950s the scene of sound-(re)producing media changed dramatically, when the tape recorder was commercialized. From then on the situation in the Western world changed: It was now fairly easy to bring the recorder along and record real-world sounds, just as it became easier to mix and distribute recorded sounds. In the milieu around the larger radio stations in, for instance, Paris, Cologne, Stockholm, and New York, composers and sound technicians began exploring these new potentials.34 This would later be called electroacoustic music, which refers to various concepts such as tape music, electronic music, and acousmatic music. Seen from the point of production, we could say that new technologies gave way to new means of production, which in turn led to new ways of communicating and producing art. But perhaps the arts were not only investigating new means of producing art, but also the new conditions for human memory and subjectivity brought about by the new technologies, including the tape recorder?

The German researcher Marion Saxer describes sound art as a process of medial Ausdifferenzierung, where the technological media of music—for instance, microphones and loudspeakers—are exposed and thus noticeably differentiated from the musical sounds.35 But perhaps Zorio’s installation is not just a media critique that forefronts the otherwise hidden media of music? Perhaps it is part of a broader examination in the arts of the new sound-(re)producing media developed in the post-war era, as a milieu for the process of individuation? A medial Ausdifferenzierung not of music, but of humans? Ferrari’s electroacoustic experiments, which he began in the early 1960s, can also be seen as part of such an examination.

**Reconfiguration as a critique of cultural industry**

Stiegler is a media pessimist in the sense that he notices that the symbolic milieus are integrated in new modes of organization, where the production of the symbolic becomes industrial. The problem is, according to Stiegler, that the symbolic ought to be an object of exchange and circulation and not consumption. The act of individuation is always something we do in a larger “we” in a process of transindividuation whereby “technical innovations are socially appropriated.”36 In the large media and entertainment industry he observes what he calls the “short-circuiting” of transindividuation.37 According to the Danish researcher in aesthetics Jacob Lund, the role of contemporary


37 Ibid.
art is to reconstitute a symbolic milieu that has been “destroyed by the consumerism of the culture industries, and try to reappropriate and reassociate the media and technical milieus that have become dissociated.”

It is easy to see how the new sound-(re)producing technologies available in the post-war period offered new possibilities for sound production and reception to both radio networks and the sound artists. But instead of seeing this development as two parallel tracks, one within the commercial framework of the radio station and the other within the field of arts, the art field can also—as it has often been suggested before—be seen as a critique of the cultural industry. The lack of conventional content in Zorio’s installation, which is open to any sound, and Ferrari’s 1:1 soundscape of trivial everyday sounds can be experienced as a resistance to the overflow of content, intention, and manipulation in the cultural industry. Here we are not entertained or thrilled, but just faced with ourselves (in Zorio’s installation), or perhaps with our own boredom or disorientation (in Ferrari’s recordings). However, I also believe that there is a critical potential in the way the art field creatively plays with the sound-(re)producing technologies that are standard in the cultural industry. One way to describe this critical potential is to look at such works of art as an investigation or even reconfiguration of the sound-(re)producing media as a symbolic milieu.

A similar critical potential can also be found in Language Removal Service by Static Language Sampler published on the CD The Agents of Impurity from 2004. On the more than four minutes long track we hear no words, only the sounds of the movements of tongue, lips, mouth, teeth, breath: the sounds that are left when words are removed from speech. Here the materiality of the human body is placed at the forefront, the body that is often forgotten, because we focus on what is being said and not on the bodily process of saying it. This piece also brings to the fore the level of recording and postproduction, because the removal of language is a gimmick only possible due to the postproduction. The level of recording hereby reveals itself as a hypermediated space. The piece is also an eerie desubjectivizing gesture where we, on the one hand, are left with no clues as to who the speaker is, and on the other hand, are placed in uncomfortable proximity to the actual bodily act of speaking. We can no longer identify any specific subject in this piece, and therefore it seems to point toward a more general level of preindividuation. Instead of merely distinguishing between media immediacy and hypermediacy, we might ask what possibilities for becoming a subject these different media provide?

Music While We Work—hacking and resistance

This is also the question posed in the Taiwanese sound artist Hong-Kai Wang’s work Music While We Work (2011), which is a project Wang made together with factory

workers from her hometown. The workers were given recording technologies and, based on Wang’s instructions, recorded the soundscape of their everyday lives. The sounds and still footages from the recording process together form the material for the audio-visual installation *Music While We Work*. The piece was exhibited as a part of the Taiwanese pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011 along with other sound art projects which gave underprivileged people, for instance homeless, a chance to make themselves heard. In *Music While We Work* we do not hear the voices of the workers, only the rumbling, noisy soundscape they live in. Neither are we given any narratives that will enable us to understand who these people are.

Kittler claims that “[w]hat remains of people is what media can store and communicate. What counts are not the messages or the content […] but rather […] their circuits, the very schematism of perceptability.”40 In Wang’s piece it seems as though the focus is on these circuits and the “schematism of perceptibility” rather than on the content or the message. There is the risk that the only voice the Asian factory workers in Wang’s piece can gain in the Western art sphere of material and cultural privilege is that of a “subaltern other.”41 And if we look at the installation with critical eyes the only one who gains any presence, as a subject on an international scene, is the artist herself. However, the lack of speech can also be seen as an attempt to expose their

40 Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, xi.
subalterity and to point to how they have been kept out of public discourse and heard merely as “noise.” In a discussion of the political potential the French thinker Jacques Rancière explains that when it comes to refusing workers the title as political subjects it has traditionally been sufficient to assert that they belong to a [...] space separated from public life: one from which only groans or cries expressing suffering, hunger, or anger could emerge, but not actual speeches [...]. And the politics of these categories has always consisted in re-qualifying these places [...] in getting what was only audible as noise to be heard as speech.42

In Wang’s installation the lack of speech and the presence of noise is striking, and it is difficult not to see this opposition as an opportunity to discuss the workers’ status as political subjects.

Wang’s work does not promise to create a location from which the factory workers can speak and be heard in a global context. Instead it seems as though the project merely wants to introduce the workers to a technological practice that may on a smaller scale develop into a local, personal media practice, which may or may not hold a global perspective, but still gives the workers agency. With this media practice they can exteriorize their everyday sensorial experiences, and in that sense also be empowered to “speak” on their own behalf, and not just be represented by a position of cultural and economic power. In that sense the installation not only interrogates the opportunities of the subaltern to produce speech; it also tentatively explores how they can be given political agency.

The sound art field seems in general to be full of projects where people are invited not to create new narratives or to organize existing narratives in a new manner, but rather to learn new media practices. We see an abundance of sound art walks, field recordings, and hackathons in the art field such as for instance the Monthly Music Hackathon in New York and the hackathon workshop at the Transmediale Festival in Berlin. At the Monthly Music Hackathon people experiment with creating their own hacks, old-fashioned sound circuits from scratch, or new sounds from existing sound-(re)producing technologies. This hands-on experience has no particular objective. It is not directed toward any specific creation of sound or any specific use of sound. One goal, however, seems to be to create sound-(re)producing technology that is not controlled by the industry. As one of the participants at the Transmediale Hackathon in 2015 stated, “if I buy a synthesizer I get the same sound as anyone else, but when I build my own circuits I will probably make small errors or other kind of quirky things [...] this will give my hack unique sound.”43 This statement suggests that the hackathon is a way to participate in a resistance against the cultural industry and to reconfigure the symbolic milieu of the sound-(re)producing technologies.

Perspectives

The small and tentative investigation I have conducted here deals with art with little or no narrative constitution of subjects. Instead these works of art scrutinize the very act by which we may appropriate sound-(re)producing technology in a process of individuation and transindividuation. With their lack of conventional narrative content in the form of fictional characters these artistic practices investigate the potential of such technological symbolic milieus. The works discussed here each reveal different aspects of these milieus and the act of individuation. In Zorio’s piece the focus seems to be on the open structure of the milieu, and of the very act of individuation, of becoming a subject, an “I” in front of others. Language Removal Service seems instead to foreground the materiality of the body: the mouth, the teeth, the tongue as instruments or technologies. In Far-West News the recording functions as something that does not only present sound and sound events, but is also an essential tool for the very act of exteriorization. The works thus seem to scrutinize humans as technical beings in terms of sociality (Microfoni), body (Language Removal Service), memory (Far-West News), power and voice (Music While We Work).

In all cases there is an element of anxiety, discomfort, or distance: as though we are either too close or not close enough to that which is being presented. These works of art challenge our understanding of sound-(re)producing technologies as a transparent media through which we can communicate. Instead they are inseparable from the process of becoming humans. What conditions our culture, or us, is not mainly, or just, our thoughts and ideas, but also the technologies we use in order to communicate these thoughts and ideas. While sound art may at first sight seem to be a very introvert exercise directed toward a small audience in the art world, my analysis shows that it holds a larger potential, as it critically investigates our sound-(re)producing technologies—and even reconfigures them and creates new possibilities for them as symbolic milieus. And if humans are technical beings, as some would claim, then that investigation is crucial to more than just the art world.
BIRGITTE STOUGAARD PEDERSEN

The General Pause and the Enjambment
Silence as Qualitative Modes of Music and Poetry

Silence is the other side of sound.\(^1\)

Taking the above quotation by Don Ihde as my point of departure here I wish to investigate and discuss silence as a qualitative element in music and poetry. Qualifying this aspect at a NorSound seminar in Denmark in June 2013, the French sociologist and expert on the role of sound in urban environments Jean Paul Thibaud stated: “Silence is not synonymous with lack of expression—it can be understood as a step from one qualitative mode to another.”

On the basis of these two phenomenologically based assertions I wish to pursue and unfold the qualitative and aesthetic role of “the rest” in music and poetry through two specific examples, namely a vocal piece by Arvo Pärt and three short poems by the Finland-Swedish poet Gunnar Björling. This qualitative mode is investigated through the performative aspects of two concepts: the general pause in music and the enjambment in poetry. The general pause in music is discussed in continuation of its ability to create an interlude or hesitation, a break that can appear both metrical and non-metrical. The enjambment is investigated as a rest in a poem related to the caesura, which may have similar features. In free verse, though, the enjambment should be discussed as non-metrical. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben inspires the theoretical framing of the relation between hesitation and enjambment. His thoughts will function as an elaborating theoretical perspective later in the article.

The study of silence is an extensive and complex field that deals with a number of different research areas such as for instance literature,\(^2\) music,\(^3\) musical improvisation and music therapy,\(^4\) and conversation studies. Concerning avant-garde music, the research

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seems to a wide extent to be inspired by John Cage’s work, which deliberately stages and reflects on silence as a part of music. Both the artistic strategies of Cage and the theoretical ideas of Clifton observe how the listener can experience silence as anticipation or surprise, and how silence can be used deliberately as a means to creating musical tension. In the field of sound studies silence is studied in relation to, for instance, noise.

The overall theoretical framing of the rest in this paper concerns its attention-creating force, its capacity for creating a qualitative, yet silent effect in relation to the listener or the reader, as also enhanced by Clifton. In this sense the rest is understood as an aesthetic, i.e. sensed, phenomenon that is perceived. Sound as well as the rest itself—silence—are experienced and, in this sense, perceived objects—referring to the French phenomenologist Mikel Dufrenne: “The aesthetic object is a perceived object.” In continuation hereof, sound is often described as having special phenomenological potentials in relation to its ability to grasp our sensuous relation to our surroundings.

Sound is regularly accused of not being as precise as vision in differentiating impressions, as suggested by Steven Connor: “Where we are in a constant and a determinate position with regard to a visual object, we are usually in more than one position as regards sound.” On the other hand, sound can communicate nuanced meaning concerning speed, size, material, etc.—as well as emotional nuances in music and tone of voice. We sense sounds not with one single sense, but through the body as such: “We may register the sound as vibration, through our feet, solar plexus and other portions of the body, and we get a spatial distribution as opposed to a spatial convergence.” This bodily perception may perhaps contribute to the fact that sound, despite its lack of semantic clarity, is effective in terms of aesthetic communication; note for instance the persuasive use of the sound of voices also in non-artistic fields such as commercials.

The aesthetic quality of sound could, I would suggest in continuation of my opening statements, also be applied to the other side of sound, namely silence, here exemplified through the general pause and the enjambment. The gaps in-between sounds—the silence of the rest—could thus be considered of substantial qualitative importance to the aesthetic effects and performative quality of music and poetic language itself; silence becomes a co-player in creating aesthetic quality in the listening/reading situation.

The rest in a broad perspective, concerning both music and poetry, thus establishes and unfolds a space in-between a number of concepts: The rest takes place in-between sound and silence, as a suspension of sound that both generates an interlude, but also presupposes the coming sound. The intentionality of a rest is directed to-

7 Clifton, “Poetics of Musical Silence.”
11 Connor, “Ear Room.”
ward the moment when the sound continues. As such, the rest involves both retrospection—conscious consideration of the sound that has just ended—but also always points toward the future sound—anticipation. In this tension in the relation between retrospection and anticipation an experienced hesitation emerges, and this specific moment, I argue, creates attention.

The general pause

Moving to a more specific analytical level I wish to investigate if and how the performance of the general pause in music tends to create hesitation? In this analytical process, however, it is of vital importance to underline two aspects: first, that my arguments concern the qualitative features of the general pause and, in continuation hereof, are primarily related to and based on the performed score—that is, the actual, sonic realization of a specific musical material. Second, concerning listening to music, my argument will depend on whether or not the listener has the score at hand, a detail which I will expand on in my analysis.

Consulting several music dictionaries, references to the general pause are relatively few. According to Grove Music Online, the general pause is “a rest for the whole orchestra, usually unexpected and sometimes marked with the letters ‘GP,’” while The Oxford Dictionary of Music is more taciturn: “rest or pause for all executants.” Finally, On Music Dictionary provides a bit more detail:

The general pause or the long pause serve the same function, and are identical in function to the fermata when used over a rest or barline. The function of these pauses is to create a silence for a period of time at the discretion of the performer (or conductor with an ensemble). As indicated in the name, these are intended to be pauses of longer duration than any of the others. They also interrupt the normal tempo of a composition.12

It is clear that the general pause is connected to the long pause, but also shares characteristics with the caesura: a short silence or a performative breath mark that is used in a similar manner as the general pause, though typically of a shorter duration. The general pause can appear both with and without fermatas, a sign that is crucial due to the micro-rhythmical feeling of delay or insecurity according to the musical pulse.

In using a formal description of a listener’s experience as a systematic musical idiom, I assume, to some degree, that it is possible to describe a musical syntax, but also that this musical syntax depends on the actual performance as well as the tuning of the single listener’s musical intuition. Like language, to some degree, music has a syntax that can be broken, violated, and challenged.13 However, the approach of this paper does not build on a formal musical semiotic basis, but instead wishes to unfold the idea of anticipation and syntax as experienced, aesthetic phenomena. The general

pause is a rest in all parts in ensemble music and can, according to the dictionaries, be both metrical and non-metrical. Metrical, if the pause does not include a fermata. But although the general pause may be metrical due to the notated score, it is often used as a tool in the actual performance to create moments of attention—for instance, using rubato effects. In symphonies the general pause is known as a moment where both musicians and audience, together with the conductor, hold their breath and wait for the next releasing conducting impulse or “downbeat.” During the general pause, in silence, all senses are enhanced. A moment of both anticipation, attention, and hesitation occurs in the specific timing of the actual performative moment.

The effect and character of the rest in general depend very much on its metrical position in music—whether it is on a stressed beat or not, the general pause relies on silence in all parts of the music as well as a stressed part of a bar.

Pärt and general pause

In order to discuss the aesthetic effect of the general pause in relation to a specific choir piece I will continue by introducing the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. Since the late 1970s Arvo Pärt has worked in a minimalist style and is primarily known as a religious composer. Labels that have been applied to Pärt’s music are: minimalism, spiritualism, spiritual minimalism, and new simplism. After 1980 the majority of Pärt’s works are for chorus or small vocal ensembles, using for instance speech patterns to determine melodic contours.14 Pärt makes great use of general pauses, especially in his vocal music. In continuation hereof, the role of breath in his music is crucial. The organic feeling of breath—known from a more romanticized repertoire—is somehow suspended or challenged in Pärt’s use of general pauses. When listening to his music it is often hard to identify a clear pulse; the pulse seems continuously destabilized due to both rhythmic patterns, syntax, and actual performance, a feature which I wish to unfold in the coming analysis.

In Arvo Pärt’s recent piece The Deer’s Cry (2008) general pauses are almost as frequent as the sounding music itself. I will focus my analytical discussion on the first 12 bars of the choir piece, performed by the Danish vocal ensemble Ars Nova, conducted by Paul Hillier.

According to the score, the rests appear to be metrical, as they contain no fermatas. However, listening to the Ars Nova performance this sense of metrics is challenged. In spite of this metrical notation of rests, the concrete performance nevertheless generates hesitation in the singular experience of the general pauses in the music.

The general pauses are rhythmical rather than strictly performed, however slightly delayed. The rests within the musical phrases, for instance between bar one and two, are also performed slightly displaced, which is pushing the sense of pulse. The general pauses are thus performatively stretched. The rests are both composed and performed in a way that creates micro-rhythmic displacements according to rhythmical stresses.

The General Pause and the Enjambment: Silence as Qualitative Modes of Music and Poetry

\[ \text{\Large \textbf{Christ with me, Christ with me,}} \]

\[ \text{\Large \textbf{Christ before me,}} \]

\[ \text{\Large \textbf{Christ behind me,}} \]
The sounding (possibly micro-rhythmical) elements of rhythm could be described as follows:

It is important to distinguish between levels of pulses within such a theoretical framework and what is actually heard, between quarters as a reference structure and quarters as a sounding rhythmic gesture [...] Hence the need for explicating a paradigmatic premise for the analytical work that follows, namely that rhythm is conceived as an interaction of something sounding and something not sounding [...] The latter is always at work in the music, and to me it is impossible to understand rhythm without taking it into consideration.¹⁵

The sense of a micro-rhythmic gesture or displacement thus seems more closely linked to the way rhythm is performed and perceived than to the metrical characteristics of the pulse. In the Pärt example both the changing duration of bars (shifting between six and eight beats per bar) and the changing of stresses within the musical phrases contribute hereto. Instability in the ground pulse emerges, and from here a hesitant feeling is created in the performance. However, this feeling very much depends on whether or not the score is visually present during the listening.

Micro-rhythmic gestures are thus closely related to the aesthetic experience of a piece of music, and therefore it is appropriate here to go on to introduce phenomenological tools in the analysis. This approach is supported by the positions of Clifton and Connor, mentioned in the introduction. To support the experienced perspective when analyzing rhythm C. F. Hasty states:

Central to our understanding of rhythm is the notion of regular repetition. Any phenomenon that exhibits periodicity can be called rhythmic, regardless of whether evidence of this periodicity is accessible to our sense perception [...] To many, rhythm in music is above all else the repetition of pulse or beat. [...] At the same time, we can use the word rhythm to characterize phenomena in which periodicity is not apparent: a fluid gesture of the hand, [...] the "shape" of a musical phrase. Such applications necessarily rely on human sensory perception [...] This second meaning relies on aesthetic judgment and admits of degrees.¹⁶

The musical phrases from bars one–two and four–five could syntactically be understood as one coherent phrase. However, the rest in-between the bars acts as a caesura or may even be named an enjambment. The rest creates an interlude in the middle of a phrase that would otherwise be understood as a syntactically coherent statement. Due to the relatively extended general pause a hesitant feeling arises. In this process of displaced stresses it seems that our expectation or anticipation is confused, and here hesitation as an aesthetic feeling emerges, based on qualitative shifts of silence—the aesthetic object appears as a perceived object. The expressive power of the rest is thus

connected to the performance level of musical enunciation and hereby becomes part of the aesthetic experience in the listener’s perception.

**The poetic rest—enjambment and Björling**

In the present article the enjambment is discussed as a break of a syntactic unit at the end of a line in poetry. Both the caesura and the enjambment in free verse seem to produce a silence that is non-metrical, and hereby possibly create hesitation in the reading of the rhythmical structure of the stanzas.

The enjambment is in itself affected by a contradiction in terms. The line visually ends, whereas the semantic or syntactic meaning continues on to the next line. In a way, the enjambment produces a tremor in-between sound and silence. Following the argument of the role of the score in the Pärt example above, where the experience of confusion in the pulse seemed to be stronger when the score was visually present, the opposite seems to be the case concerning the enjambment. The hesitant effect of the enjambment in the poem seems to be stronger when the break of the line on the written page of the book is visible to the reader than when he listens to the poem be performed. When the poem is read aloud one would often prefer to accentuate the syntactic and semantic formation of the text.

I will follow this line of thought by presenting three selected late poems by the Finland-Swedish poet Gunnar Björling. Björling is known for his radical poetic syntax, through which he creates a delicate rhythmic tension, especially underpinned by the poems’ use of enjambments.

Fredrik Hertzberg introduces Björling as follows: “Gunnar Björling (1887–1960) was arguably the most radical Finland-Swedish modernist poet, yet he was also, in some ways, the one who adhered most to the poetic tradition.”17 Björling’s production moves from poems inspired by nature in the debut, *Vilande dag* (Resting Day, 1922), toward the Christian, mythology-inspired manifest *Kiri-Ra* (1930). From *Solgrönt* (Sungreen, 1933) onward his poetic style becomes more confident and consistent, and Björling’s late poems are characterized by a stringent, simple, though intense language use. Björling developed a poetic practice sometimes referred to as “leaving out parts of sentences” or “breaking up the syntax.”18 In a 1949 introduction to Björling’s poetry Bengt Holmqvist states:

On the whole, it seems as if Björling’s sensitivity for words is mainly of a different kind than that which is achieved by a style based on effects created by images. He has realized this himself, when over the years he has increasingly restricted his images and instead directed his efforts at liberating the syntax itself from the schemes of everyday language. In this lies his great and innovative achievement.19

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
Besides the liberating syntax, Björling is famous for his use of small words which play a main role in relation to the enjambments—for example “if,” “and,” “as,” “that,” “like,” “you,” “the” etc. Small words are not usually accentuated in poetic language use, counting both universal, common words and a frequent use of deixis marks. “That these small words can be seen as meaningful, as poetic, means that they are not neutral vessels: they reveal the fabric of language. This is because they carry so little obvious meaning.”

Björling’s poems thus seem to establish their aesthetic strategy in-between language, understood as a referential, semantic system of meaning and a physical, concrete, and expressive materiality, especially emphasizing the latter. In Björling’s oeuvre rethinking the materiality and the syntax of the poetic language as well as the role of enjambment seems to be of great poetic importance.

The rest in free verse is never metrical, as it depends either on an inner or a sonic scan—a concrete articulation or silent reading situation. The enjambment in combination with this specific syntax seems to increase the expressive poetic potential—the enjambment functioning as a sort of magnet for attention.

I use Hertzberg’s English translations of the poems, which he himself debates due to the difficulty hereof.

From the 1946 collection of poems Luft är och ljus (Air is and light):

It is hymn
it is word
without word
it is eyes and the hand
air is and light

The present poem establishes a rhythmical feeling through its enumerating character. The enjambments occupy different positions, since the meaning of the words in more than one occasion only seems to be carried on to the next stanza. This special use of syntax and the practice of leaving out words in some instances—“it is eyes and the hand / air is and light”—actually seem to suspend the creation of meaning across the lines that normally characterize the enjambment. However, in the line break between “it is word / without word” the enjambment seems to function as a regular enjambment, whereas the break between “it is hymn / it is word” represents a caesura. In this sense hesitation establishes a semantically open space of interpretation, where the rhythm and tone of the words or their materiality seem to take over the control of the poem, becoming a ruling principle, prior to semantics.

The following poem also shifts between a more classical use of enjambments and installing caesuras:

One time
but none really
and no one knows

20 Fredrik Hertzberg, Moving Materialities (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2002), 56.
I have a name
and name have
just that
oh that a
name

The suspension of meaning across the enjambment seems even more evident in this poem—for instance between “and name have / just that,” whereas in the last line, “oh that a / name,” the enjambment is used in a traditional way. In the third line, “and no one knows / I have a name,” I would argue that we can observe a doubling, in the sense that the break can work both as a caesura and as an enjambment. The poem is characterized by a very distinct use of the small words “that” and “and,” which are performed primarily as material or rhythmic enunciations. These small words contribute to the overall feeling—that it seems to be the rhythmic feeling rather than the enjambment that is the controlling or decisive principle of the poem. The materiality of language seems pivotal, but the tension between sound and sense is what makes the poetic space quiver.

In the last poetic example, the enjambment establishes and underlines a silence, in the sense that it both performs and becomes a silence:

That shadows
wordlessness
Till that is
and silence

The semantic space of the poem is wordless as well as without sound; it is silent. A silence or hesitation emerges between the stanzas: “Till that is / and silence,” as it performs a muting movement. Hesitation seems not only to be present as a rhythmic figure, but also, in a semantic manner, to create a silencing gesture. The poetic space of Björling is wide and open in a way that makes the rhythmic silence, the rest, point to a semantic or even existential silence as well. The emptiness of the poetic semantic space seems, however, to be replaced by the touch of the materiality of language, which creates a sense of presence.

Björling's use of the enjambment thus challenges the enjambment as a figure that covers the relation between sound and meaning. General to the enjambment is that meaning must straddle the joint of the line. In Björling’s case, this meaning often remains absent. Thus, the enjambment, understood as a figure that functions in the relation between sound and meaning, form and content, is challenged or extended. The enjambment is connected to the caesura or the breath—it produces muteness—a disruption of meaning that almost makes it stronger than hesitation.

22 Ibid.
Enjambment, Agamben, and concluding remarks

Giorgio Agamben states in *The Idea of Prose*: “No definition of verse is perfectly satisfying unless it asserts an identity for poetry against prose through the possibility of enjambment.”23 For Agamben, the enjambment points to a fundamental difference between verse and prose. In *The End of the Poem* Agamben thus argues that the enjambment is the “opposition of a metrical limit to a syntactical limit, of a prosodic pause to a semantic pause,” a point which supports the analytical ideas of this article.24

To Agamben, poetry is a practice where the opposition between sound and meaning is made visible, whereas the opposition between the semiotic and semantic events cannot occur in prose. One of Agamben's most significant statements in this line of thought is, referring back to the French poet Paul Valery, “This sublime hesitation between meaning and sound is the poetic inheritance with which thought must come to terms.”25 This “sublime hesitation” is the moment when poetry moves toward pure materiality, a strategy that seems present in Björling's poetry. The enjambment in Björ ling's poems becomes an almost physical gesture of language, acting as material, tone, and rhythm. However, the strange thing about this materiality is that it, at the same time, performs a muting gesture, a silent hesitation.

The article has focused on unfolding the hesitation between sound and silence, sound and meaning, and on how this is realized in Björling’s use of the enjambment and in Pärt’s use of the general pause. The general pause as well as the enjambment appeared as a hesitation between sound and silence and possibly between sound and meaning. In continuation of this analytical draft the examples should be discussed in more detail due to their medial differences. Listing a number of formal differences between the general pause and the enjambment one could, for instance, point to the following distinctions.

First, music consists of sound, and poems, when read in silence, consist of metaphorical sound. Second, the rest in music consists of a relation between sound and the suspension of sound—that is, silence—whereas in the case of the poem, the enjambment furthermore creates a hesitancy between (metaphorical) sound and meaning. Third, the notated general pause is a graphical sign in a musical score as well as an audible difference between sound and silence in the musical performance, whereas the enjambment is the graphical and spatial break or shift at the end of the line on a printed page. The hesitation is only "heard" or experienced in the reading situation; besides, it is visible in the printed text. However, both, regardless of medial differences, become expressive impulses of the artwork. Thus, the role of anticipation as an aesthetic effect in both examples seems crucial—indeed, independent of the present basic or qualified aspects of media.26

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The general pause and the enjambment are both silences and not synonymous with a lack of expression, building on Jean Paul Thibaud. Sound may be suspended, but the rest creates an impulse that leads to hesitation. This hesitation and its aesthetic effect emerge on the basis of a shift from one qualitative mode to another.
FRANÇOIS STARING

Audiences in Literature
On Understanding Musical Imaginations

Introduction

In recent years, traditional musicology has been thoroughly reshaped by a performance-oriented discourse, stemming from the work of musicologists such as Nicholas Cook and Lawrence Kramer,1 and the broader “sensory turn” in the humanities and social sciences,2 stating that any act of perceiving and interpreting music is both multimodal and constructed. According to Lars Elleström, “[t]he term ‘modality’ is related to ‘mode’,” which refers to “a way to be or to do things.”3 Hence, every medium contains a certain degree of “multimodality” or number of ways to be or to do things, “constituted by [its] physical realities and the cognitive functions of human beings” (my italics).4 On the one hand, this means that music, rather than being constituted of the single physical modality of sound, is always embedded in a specific performance situation (live or recorded, presence or absence of others, work, leisure, social, cultural) and a specific medial complex (monomedial or multimedial) in which it appears to the listener. On the other hand, this means that, depending on the cognitive functions of the listener, music is also always surrounded by a very specific artistic, cultural, intermedial, and/or personal context. Hence, music is capable of being performed in multiple multimedial ways and always results into the co-existence and interaction of multiple (translations of) musical imaginations of both the composer and the listeners/performers.

In research the listening subject has very consciously been put on a par with the performing musician, since they would both relate to Kramer’s performative sense of interpreting music: “as address, as understanding, as performance.”5 The only difference between them depends on whether or not the listener, like the musician, translates their musical imagination into “a sort of material entity,”6 as Georges Poulet has called it. This materialization of human consciousness could be any sort of medial configuration ranging from a written or spoken discourse about music, to the musical

1 The emergence of this “performative turn” has been well-documented in Nicholas Cook, “Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance,” Music Theory Online 7, no. 2 (2001).
4 Elleström, “Modalities of Media,” 16.
performance itself. By implication, one would expect contemporary music analysts, critics, and theorists concerned with questions of musical meaning to both take into account this active role of listeners as performers, synesthetically constructing their idiosyncratic imaginative responses to music based on information coming from all five of the senses, and to adopt a “multimedia mentality,”\(^7\) which means to include all aspects of the musical performance that may affect the recipient’s mind and body whilst “experiencing,” rather than just “listening” to music.\(^8\)

In the first part of this contribution I discuss recent approaches to associations in literary descriptions of audiences’ imaginative responses to music, and how they can fruitfully be utilized to analyze the significance of such, often arbitrary, associations related to listeners’ individual backgrounds and listening situations in experiencing music. In the second part I compare the interpretive association processes in two descriptions of the imaginary responses to Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony by two very different listeners. The first one is the famous description, at the beginning of chapter five in E. M. Forster’s Howards End from 1910,\(^9\) of the character Helen’s collective listening experience of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as an adult in Queen Hall in early 20th-century London. The second one comes from a much more recent autobiographical novel, Variations sauvages from 2003,\(^10\) written by the French author Hélène Grimaud, who other than being a professional pianist has dedicated her life to the protection of wolves. This novel contains a passage that describes the experience of solitary listening to a recording of Beethoven’s symphony by Hélène as a child in the late 20th century.

**Understanding musical imaginations**

**Beyond intermediality ...**

In contrast to the multimedia mentality mentioned above, the “intermedial turn” at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries seems to have contributed to the revival of a very 19th- and 20th-century “autonomy-based ideology” of interpreting music.\(^11\) On the basis of sometimes very circumstantial evidence, many researchers try to reconstruct the intermedial transposition process of a work in order to classify it according to leading interart and intermedial taxonomies before concrete analysis. In doing so, they rest on a classical and hierarchical “artistic triangle” of artist, mediation and beholder, which draws upon Roman Jakobson’s basic formula: “The ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE.”\(^12\) Musical meaning, which the listener is urged to

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\(^8\) This shift from “music listening” to “music experiencing” comes from cognitive studies on music and emotion. For a recent overview, see Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, eds., Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).


reconstruct in as authentic a manner as possible, is hereby confined to the composer’s imagination and cultural, artistic and political influences. For instance, Claude Debussy’s *Clair de lune* could be approached as a form of literature in music, based on Calvin S. Brown’s or Steven Paul Scher’s influential triadic models, or as a narrow form of intermediality, as Irina O. Rajewsky defines it. Because how could it be possible not to perceive the intermedial references in this piece of music to Paul Verlaine’s homonymous poem or to Jean Watteau’s *Fête galante* paintings? Likewise, Gabriel Fauré’s music could be said to induce an *odor di femmina* in the listener, since many of the composer’s listed lady-like friends have been identified as crucial to his musical inspiration. By contrast, J. S. Bach’s *Trio Sonatas* for organ would be classic examples of monomedial music, to be interpreted as “music alone,” as Peter Kivy would suggest.

Nevertheless, if already such “Lisztian” interpretations of music are capable of reconstructing the entire associative process of the composer’s musical imagination, it is wrong to believe that they can equally account for the ways in which everyday music listening takes place. Because even if we “presuppose an ‘informed’ reader who […] has a certain knowledge of music and musical forms,” and who has a full “intermedial knowledge” of the artwork’s genetic creation process, we are still confronted with the various contexts in which listening can take place. From programme music, symphonic poems, and Gustav Mahler’s dimming of the lights during musical performance, to the invention of the gramophone at the end of the 19th century (making the same musical performance infinitely repeatable) we have tried to thwart contextual and situational variables in order to evoke similar “composer-based” imaginative responses in different listeners. Yet, 21st-century developments such as the iPod, the Internet, and 4G mobile telecommunication standards, have made it possible for us to literally carry music with us anywhere we go and to share it with almost anyone we know, and do not know.

Furthermore, empirical evidence demonstrates that listeners not only draw upon information for the construction of meaning from the whole multimedia event, but also from very personal associations. It is suggested that attempts to impose a particular mind-set on them puts severe limitations on their individual imaginative potential. An example of such empirical research can be found in a study by Emilie Crapoulet.²⁰ By exposing an uninformed audience to three piano pieces of different styles and genres—“Prelude and Fugue” by Bach, Chopin’s Fantaisie impromptu, and Debussy’s Jardins sous la pluie—Crapoulet wanted to test the role of the visual in French Impressionistic program music. The audience was asked to listen to all three of the pieces twice and subsequently to write down their imaginative responses to the music. The first time they listened none of them knew anything about the pieces; the second time they were given the title, the context, and both the literary and musical associations they should pay attention to in the music. Interestingly, after the second hearing of the Debussy piece many subjects “felt very much constrained by their knowledge of the programme.”²¹

A very illustrative example of the way in which personal variables unique to the listener dominate musical interpretation can be found in Vikram Seth’s novel An Equal Music from 1999, in which the protagonist Michael Holme can no longer engage with music without painfully associating it with Julia McNicholl, the woman he once loved and abandoned after his studies at the Musikhochschule in Vienna. He therefore “will play nothing […] that reminds [him] of [his] recent music-making with any human being.”²² But even when playing the happy “leaps and plunges of the right hand of the piano” of Franz Schubert’s Die Forelle on the violin, the memory of Julia comes back to him:

Where a piano note is too low for the violin, it leaps into a higher octave. As it is, it is playing the songline an octave above its script. Now, if it were a viola … but it has been years since I played the viola. The last time was when I was a student in Vienna ten years ago. I return there again and again and think: […] Where are you now, Julia, and am I not forgiven?²³

By contrast, listening to a recording of Beethoven’s “Opus 104” in C minor, an arrangement for string quintet of his trio for piano, violin, and viola, “Opus 1 Number 3,” Michael feels as if he is immersed in “a world where I seem to know everything and nothing.”²⁴ That he does not think of Julia in this case is probably due to his exquisite mood whilst listening to this very rare recording for the first time, which he had just lost and found again.

This literary case can illustrate the idea that a detailed reconstruction of the intermedial and contextual relations between artists and their artistic production on the

²³ Seth, Equal Music, 5–6.
²⁴ Ibid., 68.
basis of a classical “artistic triangle” does not suffice to explain how actual recipients give meaning to music. What is important is not to study the “intended” meaning, but the “constructed” imaginative responses of everyday listeners, which are heavily dependent on idiosyncratic associations linked to their personal backgrounds and specific listening situations. But how can we analyze these imaginations and arbitrary associations, “the products of the imagination”?25

... Towards audiences in literature

The methodological solutions possible for a systematic analysis of listeners’ imaginative responses to music have recently been called a “desideratum” by Bernhart.26 One approach is to monitor subjects’ blood flow to different regions of the brain as they respond to specific musical stimuli through functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The problem with such studies is that the laboratory setting and the acoustic noise generated by the MRI technology hamper an accurate representation of what happens during real-life music perception.27 Another empirical approach is based on written reception testimonies as advocated and practiced by Herbert, Ter Bogt, and others.28 According to Rabinowitz, this constitutes “the ideal source for evidence about interpretive strategies about actual listeners.”29 However, as Wolf indicates, even such empirical results cannot be called conclusive, since we are always confronted with the inevitable “gap” between the recipients’ imaginative responses in real-time perception and their belated verbalizations.30 Finally, in order to overcome all idiosyncrasies related to what he has called “the recipient as a methodologically problematic factor in music perception,” Wolf suggests resorting to the construction of an “average recipient.”31

As opposed to these three approaches, I would like to further explore a method already hinted at by Isabel Wagner in the first volume of the WMAF conference proceedings, and by Emily Petermann in her book The Musical Novel.32 By examining the role of music in three novels by Gert Jonke, Wagner explores how the medium of lit-

erature disseminates positions of musical interpretation. According to Wagner, the ev-
ocation and embodiment (or imitation) of a “utopian spatial music” by Jonke, as a
way to express, in a musical language, “the realm of the ineffable beyond words,” can
be understood as the defense of a mid-20th-century modernist aesthetics about mu-
sic, in which the integration of space in musical composition and interpretation chal-
lenges Schopenhauer’s notion of music as merely a temporal medium.33 Likewise,
Petermann recognizes that musical novels, besides being such “guides to reception”
(my italics),34 which dictate a particular form of musical interpretation, also contain
guides about reception which allow for an examination of how the listener constructs
musical meaning through private associations.35 However, as the title of her book
suggests, Petermann defines the musical novel’s musicality primarily in terms of its
form, not its content:

Though music often plays a role in the content and themes of the novel, this
genre definition of the musical novel relies on a significant or overarching pres-
ence of some variety of music on a formal, structural level; any explicit themati-
ization of it is strictly optional.36

Petermann’s study therefore only “includes an implicit examination of the [idio-
syncratic] processes of music reception,” in favor of analyses of the musical novel’s
imitation of musical sounds and structures.37 Well aware of the arguably bigger gap
between real-life music experiences and controlled empirical test situations, I pro-
pose a renewed attention to literary descriptions of audiences’ imaginary responses
to music in narrative fiction in order to gain insight into the ways in which music
triggers associations in the recipient’s imagination. In this view, the listeners as hu-
man individuals are distinguished from their imagination as “mental structure[s] [formed] in cognitive space,”38 and—rather than being passive observers of music’s
inherent meaning—are recognized as active producers, capable of translating this
musical imagination into a concrete and therefore analyzable medial product, such
as literature. If recent neuropsychological research has shown that the two mental
activities of perception and imagination involve similar cognitive activities,39 then
an analysis of the ways in which various semantic fields are textually associated with
each other can yield representative results about the way in which imaginary associa-
tions structure everyday music perception.

35 Ibid., 11 and 33.
36 Ibid., 3.
37 Ibid., 35.
38 Lars Elleström, introduction to Media Borders, Intermediality and Multimodality, ed. Lars Elleström
(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2.
39 That is, the bilateral activation of secondary auditory association areas in the brain. See Andrea R.
Halpern, Robert J. Zatorre, Marc Bouffard, and Jennifer A. Johnson, “Behavioral and Neural Corre-
When Helen’s goblins meet Hélène’s wolves

Nünning identifies five possible levels of inquiry for descriptions in fiction: narrative form and mediation, linguistic style, structure, content, and function. If we look at their narrative form and mediation, the descriptions of Helen’s and Hélène’s imaginative responses to Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in Forster’s Howards End and Grimaud’s Variations sauvages, respectively, seem to vary considerably from each other. First, if both are internally focalized, Helen’s description is mediated by a heterodiegetic, third-person narrator presenting the minds of multiple characters—although Helen remains the central consciousness of the story. By contrast, Hélène’s listening experience as a child is presented by Hélène the adult writer and pianist in the form of a homo- and autodiegetic, first-person narration. Second, whereas Helen listens to a live performance of Beethoven’s piece, set in early 20th-century London, the description of Hélène’s listening experience at the end of the century seems to imply a recording—this is not explicitly mentioned—of the piece, directed by Herbert von Karajan. Then again, the executers of Helen’s live performance are not explicitly mentioned either, making her listening experience seem fictional. Not only do these passages allow for a study of their dictated interpretations of Beethoven’s music, but they also present us with unique listening situations with unique limitations and possibilities. Therefore, their comparison represents an ideal case study for analyzing how private associations related to the individual and the unique listening situation affect the levels of narrative form and mediation—added to the music by the listeners—and how its various building blocks are structured or associated with each other.

Helen’s goblins

In his well-known analysis of the passage in Forster’s novel, John Neubauer shows how Helen, after seeing heroes and shipwrecks in the first movement, loses her attention during the second and mentally travels between the architecture of London’s Queen Hall, the audience, and the music. As the third movement begins, she is again fully immersed into the music until its conclusion in the fourth and final movement. But which mental triggers initiated these wanderings? And which are the associative principles that govern them? Besides Lydia Goehr’s emphasis on the associational and intermedial nature of this scene, it seems as if these questions have not yet been dealt with in detail.

40 Ansgar Nünning, “Towards a Typology, Poetics and History of Description in Fiction,” in Description in Literature and Other Media, ed. Werner Wolf and Walter Bernhart (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 101–16.
As mentioned above, Helen is not alone in her interaction with Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*. In a brief conversation preceding the second movement her aunt Mrs. Munt points out a young man whom she believes her niece Margaret might take an interest in. However, men do not appeal to Helen, because “[m]usic enwrapped her, and she could not enter into the distinction that divides young men whom one takes an interest in from young men whom one knows.”43 As the second movement begins, Helen thinks the Andante “bear[s] a family likeness to all the other beautiful Andantes that Beethoven had written” (Ibid.). This reflection triggers a short-term memory association with her earlier thoughts on young men, which Mrs. Munt had aroused in her. Based on the same feeling of disinterest in similarity, Helen’s auditory attention to the music shifts to a visual contemplation of the architecture of the Queen’s Hall. However, even these “Cupids who enircle the ceiling of the Queen’s Hall” (Ibid.) like the music that enwrapped her, display identical traits. Their sallow pantaloons and inclining to each other with a vapid gesture take her back to her initial thoughts on young men: “How awful to marry a man like those Cupids!” (Ibid). Bored again by the decoration of the concert hall, she suddenly notices how “Beethoven [also] started decorating his tune” (Ibid.), and this association triggers yet another shift in Helen’s attention: from the visual, back to the auditory. However, she only hears the tune through once more, because she soon notices the diverse influences that music has on its recipients. This dynamic contrast to the tedious music, the young men, and the decoration of the ceiling makes her attention shift back to the visual, the audience surrounding her:

she smiled at her cousin Frieda. But Frieda, listening to Classical Music, could not respond. Herr Liesecke, too, looked as if wild horses could not make him inattentive […]. And next to her was Aunt Juley, so British, and wanting to tap. How interesting that row of people was! (45–46)

As opposed to her interpretation of the second movement, which was strongly guided by short-term memory associations with her thoughts on young men evoked by Mrs. Munt, Helen seems eager to make sure that her experience of the following movements is guided by her own thoughts. In a brief conversation preceding the third movement she incites the company to look out for “first of all the goblins, and then a trio of elephants dancing” (46). As the third movement begins, Helen musically associates the C minor key in which the cello and contrabass begin the peaceful melody of the Scherzo (Example 1) with a goblin embodying ”malignity” (47). Likewise, the insistent rhythm of the music, systematically accentuating the first beat of every measure, and its non-progressive tonal character, staying in the C minor and B flat minor keys (Example 2), are associated with the goblin’s quiet walking pace and its passive, observant character:

the music started with a goblin walking quietly over the universe, from end to end. Others followed him. They were not aggressive creatures; […] They merely observed in passing that there was no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world. (46; my italics)

It is this image of passivity that consecutively triggers a long-term association in Helen’s mind with memories of the way she has felt during all events of her adulthood. After she “had seen the reliable walls of youth collapse,” Helen was capable of walking the entire world, just like the goblins. However, she soon realized that there was nothing but “[p]anic and emptiness” to be observed. In this state of passivity, “Beethoven took hold over the goblins [/Helen] and made them do what he want[s]” (46). It is this personification of the music in the figure of the composer which gives it an active role of change, just like Beethoven was capable of moving its recipients at the end of Helen’s interpretation of the second movement. If “a little push” turns them into a major key, instead of a minor key, the following blow of his mouth scatters them, because in Nietzschean terms a “magnificent victory” always implies a “magnificent death” (46–47). Yet, the “gusts of splendor,” semantically associated with
the blow which initiated them, might in their turn “boil over and waste to steam and froth” again, to finally be brought back in the symphony’s conclusion (Ibid.). If, on the one hand, the music is capable of rebuilding the safe ramparts of youth and can make Helen sing in a major key instead of a minor, it is the image of being passively immersed in a world where everything changes, except for her, that dominates here:

The music had summed up to her all that had happened or could happen in her career. […] The notes meant this and that to her, and they could have no other meaning, and life could have no other meaning. (47)

Hélène’s wolves

In the following, much shorter description of Hélène’s musical imagination as a response to Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony the same feeling of being enwrapped by the music is represented, although accompanied by a much more physical fulfillment. Furthermore, as opposed to the short- and long-term associative triggers linked to the collective listening situation and music in Helen’s case, Hélène’s experience of solitary listening to a recording as a child, with limited musical knowledge, begins with a very specific, interesting, and personal intermedial association with the novels of Alexandre Dumas:

J’avais le sentiment physique d’être englobée par la musique. […] J’avais [déjà] ressentie cette force en écoutant la Cinquième symphonie de Beethoven par Karajan. À l’époque, j’étais totalement imbibée du monde de Dumas, et plus particulièrement des personnages du comte de Monte-Cristo. J’écoutais et m’apparaissait le fantôme du château d’If en armure. Je me souviens très bien de cette symphonie, et de moi, me balançant; alors la prison sublime que la mer enveloppe, le rugissement des vagues dans le même mouvement que celui de la musique et celui de mon corps pendulaire et cette violence qui ravissait mon âme, m’ont entraînée dans ce tourbillon sonore vers les abysses.

Je crois que c’est à cet instant que j’ai compris que les véritables abîmes sont au ciel, ceux du ciel, et de là, par là, les vrais vertiges aussi.44

The sudden appearance of the armored Ghost of the Château d’If in Hélène’s imagination can be explained by two earlier accounts in the novel. In the first one the author informs us of an “ineffable absence,” a “paradise to be found” that had been “haunting” her throughout her childhood:

44 Grimaud, Variations sauvages, 56–58. My translation: “I felt as though I was being physically embraced by the music. […] I had [already] felt this force whilst listening to Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony directed by Karajan. At the time I was completely immersed in the world of Dumas, and in particular the characters of the Count of Monte Cristo. I was listening and suddenly the Ghost of the Château d’If appeared to me in armor. I remember this symphony very well, and me, swaying; then the magnificent prison enwrapped by the sea, the roaring of the waves in the same movement as the music and my pendular body and this violence which delighted my soul, carried me into this sonorous whirlpool toward the abyss. I believe it must be at this moment that I understood that the true ruins are in heaven, from heaven, and that from this, because of this, the true vertigos as well.”
In the second passage, where Hélène has already identified this “ghostly paradise” as the music, the score of Chopin’s études, due to the resemblance of its vertical musical “staves” to bars that “imprison the intelligence,” comes across to her as a “mysterious alphabet set up like a wall” that, once in possession of “the philosopher’s stone,” she would be able to translate into “a deep world”:

Ainsi, un jour, j’ai pu lire les études de Chopin et en jouer certaines. […] Ces petits dessins, ces notes rébarbatives sur des portées, cet alphabet mystérieux dressé comme un mur pour emprisonner l’intelligence révélaient d’un seul coup leur secret. J’avais la pierre philosophale pour transmuter l’encre et le papier en une architecture mélodieuse, un monde profond.

The action is then reversed, and instead of the music, it is now Hélène who is enwrapped by the music, trapped on the island of the “magnificent prison” where she had found the ghost and broken its armor. Associated with the sea, the “roaring” of the musical waves surrounding her makes her physically feel the music. As her body begins to sway to the movements of the music, she eventually loses her balance and is mentally dragged into the abyss of the ocean, where the music has fully conquered space: “Ce jour-là, […] j’ai senti la musique s’emparer de l’espace.”

When comparing both descriptions, Helen’s imaginative response to Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony is first guided by principles of similarity, dissimilarity, and envelopment related to her thoughts on young men. It is on the basis of this short-term memory aroused by her collective listening situation that Helen’s imagination in the second movement associatively shifts between, in William Nelles’ words, an “auricularization” (the music and its decoration) and an “ocularization” (the ceiling’s decoration and audience). Second, the description of her imaginative response to the third and fourth movements draws on her musical knowledge and earlier interpretations.

45 Grimaud, Variations sauvages, 11–17. My translation: “I have no nostalgia at all for childhood. Throughout the passing years I have never had the feeling of a paradise lost, but rather of a paradise to be found, elsewhere, one that was waiting. […] Moreover, although rather hollow, this desire was a part of my being, it was like a pressing lack, and this inexpressible presence, its ineffable absence tormented me, haunted me” (my italics).

46 Grimaud, Variations sauvages, 57. My translation: “And so, one day, I was able to read Chopin’s études and to play some. […] These little drawings, these daunting notes on staves, this mysterious alphabet set up like a wall in order to imprison the intelligence suddenly revealed their secret. I possessed the philosopher’s stone to transmute the ink and the paper into a melodic architecture, a deep world” (my italics).

47 Grimaud, Variations sauvages, 58. My translation: “[t]hat day, […] I felt music take possession of space.”

48 In order to distinguish between different forms of focalization in fiction, William Nelles coined the terms “ocularization,” “auricularization,” “gustativization,” “tactivilization,” and “olfactivization.” Frameworks: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narrative (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997), 95–96.
of the piece. By associating the C minor key and the lack of development at the begin-
ing of the scherzo with the slow gate of an evil goblin, Helen’s imagination (in Forster’s novel) connects the piece with memories and anticipations of the future of her own life, based on principles of action, passivity, and envelopment. Hélène’s expe-
rience (in Grimaud’s novel) of solitary listening to a recording as a child with limited musical knowledge then focuses solely on the music and makes for a physical percep-
tion of it as an envelopment that is less an “auricularization” than a “tactivilization.” She then goes on to intermedially associate the feeling of being mentally swallowed by an inaccessible sound with Dumas’ armored Ghost of the Château d’If.

**Conclusion**

Our everyday interaction with music cannot be represented by a classical “artistic tri-
angle,” which centralizes the artist and reduces the recipients to passive beholders of artworks’ inherent meanings, which they should try to reconstruct in as authentic a manner as possible by digging into the past to try and understand the artist’s cultural, political, and social influences as well as the artwork’s intermedial genetics. “Mean-
ing is lodged in our experience of the present”; 49 it is based upon connotative mean-
ing construction, inspired by our mental and physical surroundings of the moment. As opposed to the unnatural and experimental set-up of empirical studies, literature gives us very concrete examples of characters acting in very concrete situations, provid-
ing insight into the perceptions, ideas, and structures of our human imagination. By analyzing literary descriptions of audiences’ imaginary responses to music in narrative fiction, this article has tried to show how idiosyncratic associations related to the individual (age, musical knowledge) and the listening situation (individual or collective, live or recorded, early or late 20th century) influence musical imaginations. In doing so, I hope to have suggested a way to further explore the ways in which each variable of the multimedia performance individually affects the associations evoked in the recipient’s imagination.

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Of Great Pitch and Moment

Some Reflections on Operatic Performance, Interpretation, and Hermeneutics

Opera is a matter of life and death, nothing less. Should this claim be in need of support, one might, for instance, take the historical route and start with the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice through which the genre’s foundations were laid around the year 1600 in the first operas of Peri and Monteverdi. Here operatic singing itself is the laissez-passer that grants passage between the world of the living and that of the dead. One could equally well cite the extremes of opera fandom, where opera is something one lives and dies for. Few writers have rendered this devotion with as much candor and precision as Wayne Koestenbaum in The Queen’s Throat. “If I die a peaceful death, I want to have an opera record playing in the room,” writes Koestenbaum, “because of its scenes of dying and departure, and because singing uses the body so exorbitantly and ultimately that I want to be reminded, when I leave my body, that even when I lived inside it I never completely used it.” Yet another option would be to remind oneself of the operatic undertows of misogynist violence traced in Catherine Clément’s classic essay Opera or the Undoing of Women, which reveals the startling consistency with which opera’s core repertoire conflates its aesthetic climaxes with the death of the female leads.

A slightly less expected configuration of life, death, and opera, however, can be found in Carolyn Abbate’s intense and influential polemic “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?” published in 2004. Here interpretation is posited as the destructive force that threatens to kill opera. Abbate argues that musicology has consistently held on to a gnostic bent, taking as its object the musical text and work, but has shunned “real” music (that is, music in live performance), the experience of which is drastic in character. Musical hermeneutics gets to bear the brunt of her criticism. Searching for a way to decipher an immanent content (which is how Abbate understands hermeneutics) is what makes us erroneously think of music as fixed works rather than as events. Abbate’s concluding statement reads: “A performance does not conceal a cryptic truth to be laid bare. But accepting its mortality, refusing to look away, may nevertheless be some form of wisdom.”

4 Abbate, “Drastic or Gnostic?,” 536.
Of Great Pitch and Moment

whiff of disinterment, and the polarized figure of life and death is a recurrent feature in Abbate’s argument. She suggests that it can be useful to think of musical works as “living things towards which we must develop an ethical position,” and adds, with distinct overtones of the erotic, that “material presence and carnality” is what produces “our love for music to begin with.” Musical hermeneutics, by contrast, not only puts these living beings “in a cage […] continuously and without regrets”; it also displays a “morbid grandiloquence,” which has to do with the fact that it is a “byproduct of classical music’s slow-motion death in the twentieth century.” The recordings and scores, with which musical hermeneutics typically deals, she subsumes under the name of “music’s necropolis.” This phrase was used for the same purpose in her book In Search of Opera from 2001: “To write about opera, to represent it in fiction, or as a metaphor in poetry, or as a figure in philosophy, is to add to the architecture of its necropolis.”

Taking Abbate’s drastic imagery as my point of departure, I aim to review and evaluate some recurrent tropes, patterns, and arguments in contemporary criticism, and to elaborate on what I take to be their implications for the field of opera studies. Before I do so, however, a brief recapitulation of the developments in the field over the last decades is in order.

Opera, of course, is an art that takes place not on the printed page of a score, but in a concrete staged performance. It is a fundamentally temporal experience, equally defined by visual and aural impressions. Self-evident as this fact may seem, scholarly writing on opera, for a long time, paid little attention to it. In terms of academic territory, opera was chiefly the province of musicology, and musicology in a very limited sense, which took the study of musical structure as its primary purpose. Around 1990 a number of studies began to emerge which challenged this view. Since then scholars associated with the school of New Musicology—Susan McClary, Lawrence Kramer, and others—have addressed music as cultural practice, deeply involved in the production of social and ideological meaning, and developed methodologies based on critical hermeneutic attitudes to musical scores. During the 1990s, moreover, proponents of literary studies, psychoanalysis, film studies, and philosophy also raised the critical attention to the opera libretto to new levels of sophistication.

Although this body of work did much to wring the field of opera studies out of the stiffening hands of structuralist musicology, it continued to focus on the written work rather than the theatrical event: Opera remained a textual object. Roughly since the year 2000, however, the much-noted “performative turn” within the humani-
ties has led to a growing interest in thinking about opera in and as performance, and several interesting attempts have been made to reframe the methodology of opera studies. David Levin’s *Unsettling Opera* from 2007 remains, a decade after its publication, the most ambitious attempt at expanding the vocabulary and methodology of opera-staging criticism.\(^\text{11}\) While Levin still values the project of interpretation, others have been less inclined to do so: Not only Carolyn Abbate, but also Michelle Duncan, Clemens Risi, Mary Ann Smart, and many others have made thought-provoking interventions into this debate.\(^\text{12}\) Typically, this work revolves around notions of liveness, presence, and corporeality, on the one hand, and notions of interpretation, meaning, and hermeneutics on the other—often with strongly agonistic positions pitting those conceptual clusters against each other.

On the anti-hermeneutic side, few writers have been as influential as Abbate or as uncompromising in their polarization. In her above-mentioned article, interpretation and writing, with their concomitant focus on meaning, come across as morbid, murderous, even necrophilic: In so far as our original, carnal love for opera is redirected towards representations of it in media other than the live performance—scores, texts, recordings—we actually desire dead objects. The live event of music is mortal, and hermeneutics constructs a suffocating crypt to put it in, only to triumphantly desecrate it. But what, precisely, does life mean here? To be alive is to be subject to change, because living beings react to and interact with their surroundings. To be dead, by contrast, is to be mute and unchangeable (which, notably, also goes for the state of immortality, although not for survival).\(^\text{13}\) Life is above all fleeting, ephemeral—in short, it is temporal. Its epitome, therefore, is the *moment*, which is always constituted by its own passing.\(^\text{14}\) When Faust (who is just as sick of the gnostic work as Abbate) decides to postpone his suicide, what he hopes for is an *Augenblick* that inspires him to say: “Verweile doch, du bist so schön” [Stay a while, you are so beautiful]. It seems natural enough, then, that those who privilege liveness and absorption over interpretation take recourse to the concept of the moment.

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13 For an incisive account of the difference between survival in life and immortality beyond it, see Martin Hägglund, *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); especially the introductory chapter entitled “Of Chronolibido,” 1–19.

14 In Hägglund’s words: “The passage of time requires not only that every moment be superseded by another moment, but also that this alteration be at work from the beginning. Every moment must negate itself and pass away in its very event. If the moment did not negate itself there would be no time, only a presence forever remaining the same.” Hägglund, *Dying for Time*, 3 (italics in original).
What primarily interests Abbate, who is drawing here on the French philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch, is “the relationship between real music and its action upon performers and listeners at a nonrepeatable moment and place, in a context that will exist only once and not again.” The relationship thus established at this moment becomes “so fundamental, so viscerally powerful and ephemeral, so personal, contingent, fugitive to understanding, that it elicits the unfashionable.” For something that is supposedly unfashionable, however, this kind of moment appears with a remarkable frequency in contemporary opera studies.

Let me give a few examples, which are rather bluntly aimed at drawing the reader’s attention to the use of the word moment. Clemens Risi, searching for a new analytical approach to opera in performance in a 2012 article, suggests it should start “from the observation that in operatic performances moments can be experienced that cannot be explained as mere translation of a prewritten text or score.” He goes on to specify the kinds of moments he is talking about:

moments to which I cannot immediately assign any significance or meaning, moments when nothing other than the actual configuration of the employed materials (bodies, voices, rhythms, sounds, and tones) and their effect on the spectator is relevant, and where this material comes into existence only in the moment of performance.

Risi, then, repeats the word with remarkable frequency and finishes by italicizing it. The same goes for Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, who in The Production of Presence argues for a culture of presence, as opposed to the reigning culture of meaning. He talks of a class in which he wanted to “evoke for my students and to make them feel specific moments of intensity that I remember with fondness.” The first example in his list of moments comes from opera: “I wanted my students to know, for example, the almost excessive, exuberant sweetness that sometimes overcomes me when a Mozart aria grows into polyphonic complexity and when I indeed believe I can hear the tones of the oboe on my skin.”

Of some importance here is the implied association of aesthetics with eros, which has been struggling against interpretation at least since Susan Sontag launched a heavy punchline at it fifty years ago, claiming that: “In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.” Perhaps this notion still echoes as a moralist overtone in Abbate’s life and death imagery: Sound eroticism (pun intended) is a life-giving activity,

15 Abbate, “Drastic or Gnostic?” 529.
16 Ibid.
18 Ibid. (italics in original).
while the necrophilic inclination of hermeneutics is a non-reproductive perversion. Such moralism is emphatically absent, by contrast, in Samuel Abel’s book _Opera in the Flesh_, although Abel is equally interested in sensual immersion. Like Koestenbaum, he writes with intense personal investment from the perspective of gay male subjectivity and wholeheartedly embraces the experience of live opera as a sexual act by repeatedly stressing the importance of singular moments:

> Opera’s music penetrates my ear, works around my body as the opera progresses, and climaxes at regular intervals, usually at the ends of arias. The orgasm inhabits the music itself, and it also enters my body, sending me into sexual ecstasy at the same moment the music enacts its climax.\(^{22}\)

With this shop-soiled, but still apposite metaphor we may ask whether it is reasonable that the experience of an absorbing orgasm should prevent us from discussing what sex means to us, its personal, social, and political significance. I do not think so. I call Gumbrecht as my witness to illustrate this point, as he does not think it problematic to continue his above-quoted list of enjoyable moments in the following manner:

> I want my students to live or at least to imagine that moment of admiration (and perhaps also of despair of an aging man) that gets hold of me when I see a beautiful body of a young woman standing next to me in front of one of the computers that give access to our library catalogue.\(^{23}\)

The culture of presence does not care that erotic absorption in the moment is conditioned by power structures. As much as we love the ecstasy of _jouissance_, it has a flip side that we need to acknowledge. It is our responsibility to counterbalance it with critical attention to its ideological substrates—which those privileged by age, gender, ethnicity, and academic stature are liable to forget when caught up in the erotics of the present moment. Presence, if it is polemically propagated as the _only_ way of honoring the experience of opera, comfortably liberates us from any ideological considerations of class, race, ethnicity, or gender.

In its most polemical form, found in Abbate’s article, the glorification of absorption amounts to a willful short-circuiting of critical readings, allowing the many ideological problems of, say, Wagnerian music drama—to pick a not so random example—to be swept under the sumptuous rug of romantic orchestral texture with a vibrant voice object on top. Needless to say, the caveat about unacknowledged perpetuation of ideological power structures has been and should be issued at philosophical hermeneutics too: Hans-Georg Gadamer’s emphasis on preliminary understanding, for instance, obviously runs the risk of promoting the hermeneutic circulation of received wisdom. But if the obsession with presence makes us dismiss interpretative dialogue about meaning as irrelevant per se, it forecloses the opening toward immanent criticism that Gadamer’s perspective actually does

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23 Gumbrecht, _Production of Presence_, 97.
allow for, namely his explicit emphasis on the open-endedness and mobility of our interpretative horizons.24

Abbate notes that “saying what [the work] represents reflects the wish not to be transported by the state that the performance has engendered in us.”25 The example she gives in the subsequent paragraph is *Die Meistersinger*. Of course, Abbate stresses later on, she knows the critical literature on that opera as well as Wagner’s political essays, the opera’s reception history, and the “unspoken anti-Semitic underside to the comedy.”26 Without musical hermeneutics, however, she would not have known, because if we had not let critical interpretation accompany our musical transport once the moment had passed, that literature would not have existed.27

We may also observe that the very concept of climactic moments presupposes that they are always preceded and followed by non-climactic ones. However much I admire *Parsifal*, I venture to suggest that there is no such thing as a five-hour moment of sensual absorption. Furthermore, there are other significant moments than the climactic ones (which goes for sex as well as for opera). Shifting the outlook to the writers dealing hermeneutically with live performances of opera and music, one may note a similar tendency to focus on the moment that distinguishes itself from the others. For instance, consider how the following example from David Levin’s reading of Peter Sellars’ *Le Nozze di Figaro* illustrates this. Levin writes:

> the shift between the andantino and the allegro of the finale is registered on-stage: the characters are temporarily suspended in mid-action in a moment of musical self-reflexiveness […] the characters […] take a sudden, unexplained, and otherwise uncharacteristic turn toward the introspective, turning slowly, quizzically, as if asking: Where are we? What is going on?28

This is not really a musically absorbing passage, as Levin stresses: “The moment does not call attention to itself as especially important.”29 It is not a drastic, climactic moment, yet it is a moment that poses a question, and thus sets an interpretation in motion. Similarly, a passage that occurs a few pages later zeroes in on an instant that suggests a question: “In the final moments, amid the raucousness, the principals pair off and exit the stage. And as the final accord resounds, we are afforded a fleeting glimpse of a single figure, Cherubino, left behind. What are we to make of this?”30 The moment where something odd happens, something that catches our attention not by

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25 Abbate, “Drastic or Gnostic?” 505–6 (italics in original).
26 Abbate, “Drastic or Gnostic?” 505–6 (italics in original).
27 Ibid., 535.
28 The discussion about the anti-Semitic strata in *Die Meistersinger* is too extensive to review here, but prominent examples can be found in, for instance, in Barry Millington, “Nuremberg Trial: Is There Anti-Semitism in ‘Die Meistersinger’?” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3, no. 3. Abbate refers to Marc A. Weiner, *Richard Wagner and The Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 117–35.
29 Ibid., 81.
30 Ibid., 89.
being a musical orgasm, but by inciting questions about how to make sense of, how to understand the meaning of what is going on—this is the moment when hermeneutic attention is born, and it happens (or may happen) during the performance.

While Levin’s hermeneutic moment occurs in an actual, singular performance, Lawrence Kramer has suggested the recurrence of such moments as indispensable to opera in general. In his 2014 essay on opera and meaning in The Oxford Handbook of Opera Kramer takes as his point of departure the notion of a “reflective moment,” which typically involves what he calls a “song act”—that is, an instance of operatic singing that is heard as singing not only by the audience, but also by the fictional characters. Kramer understands this type of vocal utterance as a specifically operatic counterpart to the speech acts theorized by J. L. Austin:

Like its verbal analogue, the song act does what it does, or not, by channeling a certain force through its utterance—in opera through the sensory weight of the song act’s performance as song. A regular effect of that force is to broach the possibility that the song act may be taken as an instance of generic self-staging. It may, not must: the reflective moment becomes what it is by inviting or demanding interpretation, with all the uncertainties that this entails.

The reflexivity of this moment, to Kramer, is a generic imperative of opera: Through the song act opera is continuously staging its own genre (the examples on which Kramer elaborates include the second-act canzonetta in Don Giovanni as well as the pastoral air, the protagonist’s entry in the song contest, and Wolfram’s hymn to the evening star in Tannhäuser). The central role of this characteristic, in turn, makes opera essentially dependent on meaning, because it is the reflective moment that is chiefly responsible for creating the critical distance that is a call to interpretation.

Having reached this operatic moment, which is far removed indeed from the moments of physical presence evoked by Abel, Gumbrecht, and Risi, I would like to stress two points. The first is simple, namely that the moments evoked above are typically understood in terms of resistance to that by which they are surrounded. Even though not all of these critics indulge in unnecessary extremes of polarization, the definition of a given moment demands that it is understood in contrast to the stretches of time that surround it. In other words, it is the nature of the moment to be singular—to be singled out, detached from a temporal continuum.

The second point is even simpler: Presence comes to us in moments, and so does meaning. As every operagoer has experienced, opera is long (sometimes too long). But during the hours we are seated in the opera house we may now and then experience a moment striking enough to present itself to us as a vantage point from which the performance as a whole—and, by extension, even operatic performance in general—can be made out. This gesture appears over and over in all of the texts from which I have quoted here; Abel, Levin, Abbate, Gumbrecht, and Risi are all fond of it, as are Kramer

and McClary. The prominent rhetorical position thus granted by opera studies to the concept of the moment is, I believe, worth dwelling on.

Perhaps one may object that this recurrence of the singular moment is accidental—an insignificant turn of phrase—or a mere matter of convenience: When one wants to connect a theoretical argument to an actual operatic performance—or, indeed, any aesthetic product or practice—exemplification is necessary, and the isolated, captivating occurrence is a handy means of making one’s point. There is, however, something more to the idea of the moment when it comes to opera, which has to do not only with the aforementioned emblematic function of the moment vis-à-vis life and liveness (although that remains important), but also with the specific overabundance of the genre.

Opera’s hallmark is the surplus of diverse elements and impressions, of semiotic systems and artistic temperaments, of parts that do not add up. The perennial debate about the ascendency of words or music indicates that the genre has always been conceived as a sum of parts that struggle simultaneously with each other and with the impossible task of forming a whole. Whether in the speculations of the Florentine Camerata or those of Richard Wagner, the seamlessly harmonious coexistence of words and music is only ever located either in a prelapsarian state or a projected future. But words and music are not the only combatants: The dominant role of the singers in the early 18th century, when the virtuoso voice and its elaborate ornamentation were elevated over libretto and score alike, emphasized the performer as another combatant, and with the role of emancipated mise-en-scène and radical stagings in the 20th century, the directors and their visions have come to constitute yet another. The same goes for sensory impressions, of course: In opera the visual and aural registers have as a rule competed for the audience’s attention with frantically hyperbolic aesthetics.

I would not hesitate to say that this conflicted overabundance in different registers lies at the very core of opera’s particularity (the obvious contender being the operatic voice itself, which always remains the genre’s most distinctive feature). If it is a center, however, it is one that cannot hold. And although postmodern thought has taught us to see how everywhere discourses are falling apart, to no genre or medium is that falling apart as defining as it is to opera.33

Precisely because the experience of opera is not just multifaceted, but superabundant to the point of disintegration it resists treatment as an organic whole. When that superabundance is distributed on a temporal axis—that is, when it becomes opera’s characteristic excess of duration—the parts that refuse to form a whole become moments that stand in relief against an unfolding process. The significant moments of opera, as I suggested above, can be understood less as points in time than as points that resist being subsumed into a temporal continuum. To speak about the moment in opera, then, is not only to acknowledge the essential temporality that is specific to live

33 This affinity between opera and postmodern thought has been noted in numerous places. See, for instance, Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, introduction to Analyzing Opera, ed. Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 23–24. Abel, on his part, suggests that a “postmodern elusiveness stands at the core of opera’s endless fascination and fuels its powerfully ambiguous eroticism.” Abel, Opera in the Flesh, 83.
performance, and most rigorously so to music, but also to emphasize the difficulties of incorporating each individual part into a continuous temporal whole, which are specific to opera. To attend to a specific moment is to detach a slice of time from the temporal stretch of an opera and let it stand as pars pro toto for the performance itself, or even for the genre as a whole. This rhetorical device becomes so appealing precisely because in opera the parts—whether moments, media, or sensory channels—do not add up to a whole.

If the difficulty of melding together disparate elements marks opera in all its registers, theorists have, from the genre’s very beginnings, tried to cope with this situation simply by assigning primacy to one of the elements involved: prima la musica, poi le parole (or, on occasion, the other way around). To give a contemporary example, Paul Robinson, in a polemical chapter of his book Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters, exalts an experience of listening to Gounod’s Romeo and Juliet thus: “I found myself listening to the performance over and over. I listened without a libretto; nor did I consult a synopsis of the opera. I simply indulged myself in the thing itself.”34 The libretto and the synopsis having been cleaned out, together with scenery, acting, and stage drama (Robinson is listening to a sound recording), the purity of music is the only remaining contender for the prestigious title of the Thing Itself.

The temptation to reduce the excess of opera to a given element, it would seem, is just as strong when it comes to the aesthetic attitudes that have been my focus here: the focus on meaning versus the focus on presence. To postulate, on the basis of the moment that you enjoy most, that this is the essence of operatic experience is just as questionable as appointing a winner in the battle between the sensory channels, semiotic systems, and artistic contributors. Letting moments of presence and absorption eclipse moments of critical reflection and meaning is as much of a betrayal to the live experience of opera as the other way around. In fact, the mutual exclusion between the two poles is in itself a distortion of what in actual experience is an on-going dialectic, or perhaps more accurately, an erratic vacillation or vibrant coexistence.35 That exclusion, I submit, appears only if the move from the instantiating striking moment to the theoretical conception is made in a carelessly totalizing frame of mind.36

Adding the audience’s aesthetic attitude to the list of opera’s internal conflicts, however, does not imply that it is coextensive with the other ones. This insight is important: To simply align words and language with text and interpretation, and music with liveness and immersion, is an out-and-out blunder. These pairs cannot be neatly

35 David Levin aptly dubs this tendency in Abbate’s argumentation “either/or-ification,” objecting to the idea that “the eventness of a piece is to be understood in contradistinction to it hermeneutic aspiration.” I fully agree with Levin when he concludes: “In short, I want to have it both ways: I want to be transported and to think about where we are going.” Levin, Unsettling Opera, 9–10.
36 Abbate, in her article on music as drastic or gnostic, is ambiguous about this: She does argue for the mutual exclusion, and is adamant in her defense of what she calls drastic moments as the raison d’être of music, yet she does concede that relevant gnostic moments can take place in a performance. Abbate, “Drastic or Gnostic?” 512.
mapped over each other, because the “other” term is constantly present in both media. As has been repeatedly made clear in recent literary theory, material embodiment plays a significant part in the way we read and understand texts (and certainly not less so when we hear them pronounced on stage). Likewise, and this claim of musical hermeneutics remains essential, music as a socially and culturally embedded practice takes an active part in the circulation of meaning. Any attempt to purify opera by straightening out the alignment of aesthetic components and critical attitude—to make literature the exclusive realm of hermeneutic logos and music that of material melos—therefore fails to account for the intermedial cross-contamination that has defined the genre throughout its first four centuries.

This is precisely why increased attention to the staged performance of opera is so vital: Nowhere is the experience of words and music less purified, more enmeshed, and yet more impossible to read into a comprehensive whole than on the operatic stage itself. Likewise, no situation makes it so abundantly clear that the experience of opera can accommodate both moments of interpretative thought and moments of sensual immersion (not to mention moments of boredom and distraction), and that these two states of mind cannot be unambiguously ascribed to words and music, respectively.

Therefore, opera in performance needs to serve as a corrective to old-school hermeneutics and as a model for new interpretative efforts—especially if these are to attend to the performance of opera, as opposed to the hermeneutics of New Musicology, which despite the best of theoretical intentions has remained rather focused on the score as text object. A truly operatic hermeneutics has to take leave of anything that resembles the insistence (central to traditional philosophical hermeneutics) that proper understanding presupposes the parts that add up to a coherent whole. It must allow meaning to be momentary. The hermeneutic circle as the emblem of understanding is too complete a shape through which to perceive the unruliness of opera. A mode of interpretation geared toward operatic performance needs to place greater emphasis on the open-ended and uncontrollable quality of meaning in opera, and resist the temptation to subsume all of opera’s elements under the category of meaning. In other words, it must allow the moments of drastic presence—musical or otherwise—to remain themselves.


38 In a sense, this is what Lawrence Kramer has insisted on for the last twenty-five years with respect to the meaning of music. “Hermeneutics,” he sums up, “needs to be musicalized if it is to work free of the self-imposed restraints that have hobbled its historical development.” Interpreting Music (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 3. This musicalization implies a lot of things, the most of important of which I take to be that it envisions interpretation as essentially temporal and performative. Much like interpreting a piece of music typically means to perform it, interpretation “neither decodes nor decipher. It demonstrates”; “it is not reproduction; it is a mode of performance, and more specifically a mode of performance as cognition.” Ibid., 7 and 9. Simply put, to interpret is to present something in a specific way that could also be presented in a different way. Kramer, however, only rarely addresses specific musical performances, but rather seeks to take the place of the performer. Typically, he carries out a hermeneutic performance of musical scores as an alternative to a live performance, rather than as an interpretation of it.
If the idea of a necessary, if hypothetical, totality of meaning is the aspect of Gadamerian hermeneutics that seems to sit least comfortably with operatic performance, the one that is most thoroughly compatible with it is the principle of *Wirkungsgeschichte*. The notion that the interpretative discourse that accompanies a work of art in its progress through decades, centuries, and millennia cannot be considered external to its meaning is one of the primary insights of *Wahrheit und Methode*. This fundamental historicity of meaning, which is part and parcel of Gadamer’s emphasis on the “classic” work that speaks to different epochs in different ways, opens the concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte* up toward an alignment with the contemporary practice of operatic *Regietheater*, which lays equally strong emphasis on the interpretative renegotiation of highly canonized operatic scores. While assigning an important role to the act of interpretation—not only by reinterpreting operatic works, but also by demanding a different level of activity from the interpreting audience—this strand of musical theater typically carries no illusions that such interpretation would be able to domesticate the new layers of meaning added by experimentally inclined stagings. The hermeneutic principle of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, like *Regietheater’s* persistent renegotiations of canonical operas, does not confer upon its objects an immortality beyond life, but, quite to the contrary, a historical survival through moment after moment of lived time.

For the same reason, writing texts about opera does not necessarily confirm its status as a dead object. Scholarly writing on live performance inevitably compromises the temporality of live experience by mediating it through printed language. But surely, this is equally true regardless of whether that writing tries to capture and elaborate on a moment of bodily *jouissance* or on a moment of interpretative *reflection* (the former, in fact, is typically the one least likely to survive this transference into a scholarly text). The blame for this problem, therefore, cannot be laid on interpretation as such, but belongs, for better or worse, to all academic writing. Consequently, the problem cannot be solved by discarding hermeneutics. It seems to me that the best response to this predicament is for scholarly writing to part with any remaining aspirations to eternal life—which, in the case of traditional hermeneutics, appeared as the will to affiliate itself with the aspects of canonical immortality that are only the flip side of death—and instead to emphasize its own quality as a momentary performance, part of an on-going dialogue, continuously revised and revisable. If performance itself is thus allowed to serve as the model for interpretative criticism, the hermeneutic circle need not be hung as a noose around opera’s neck, and a revitalized hermeneutics, which is able to do justice to the inconsistencies and incongruities of opera, in all its diverse moments of overwrought splendor, can bring new life to the scholarly stage.

40 This potential affinity between *Regieoper* and hermeneutics has been noted by several critics. Mary Ann Smart writes that “a meaning-centered approach meshes neatly with Regieoper-style stagings, which themselves tend to act as commentaries, drawing out concealed layers of textual meaning and creating friction with the base text.” “Operatic Alphabet,” 2. Cf. Levin, *Unsettling Opera*, 32–35.
Musical Performance and Textual Performativity in Elfriede Jelinek’s The Piano Teacher

Introduction

Music depends on performance. “There is no known ramified art of music that is performer-less,” Jonathan Dunsby writes. When listening to or performing a piece of music, the role of temporality or of bodily presence differs from that which is actualized when perceiving written literature. Having pointed out this difference, however, we become aware of similarities or possible connections such as, for example, the role of performance in oral literature or in spoken-word poetry. Intermedial comparison often works in this way; perceived differences open up for previously overlooked similarities.

In written literary fiction, however, aspects of performance are less prominent. This article deals with the question of how literary narration may be enriched or challenged by referring to musical performance in the plot. It will be argued that narrated performance is a means to highlight aspects of language that are dependent on bodily presence. Referring to the performer in the narrative draws attention to how the narrating text itself performs, stages, and presents.

These questions are highly relevant when discussing Elfriede Jelinek’s The Piano Teacher (Die Klavierspielerin, 1983). The novel’s protagonist is a pianist, and performing music is a recurring element of the plot. The following will demonstrate how intermedial references to musical performance in the diegesis interact with the self-referential performativity of Jelinek’s prose. In the novel, bodily and performative aspects of music are put center stage, and the way performance is narrated affects the

1 This article was written with financial support of the foundation Sven and Dagmar Salén Stiftelsen.
way literary language performs. In fact, an intermedial perspective on this early novel in Jelinek’s oeuvre uncovers new aspects of music’s influence on her writing in general.

As recent research has shown, intermedial interaction, in spite of perceived differences between the media involved, is based on a transmedial modal ground. Thus, intermedial references to music always highlight the transmedial traits that both literature and music share, but which, in literature, may require references to specific musical concepts in order to become explicit. The intermedial reference to musical polyphony in a text is thus employed to highlight language’s own capacity of simultaneous multi-voicedness. This applies beyond references which allude to a structural transmediality with music. I would argue that reference to musical performance in the plot works to highlight aspects of embodiment in the text. The study of intermedial references to music in literature has often focused on how references to music might establish alternative narrative structures. At the same time, other approaches have explored historical and social contexts, as intermedial references to music also exploit the reader’s associations and contextual knowledge of music, which may be confirmed or challenged. In order to understand the role of music in The Piano Teacher, these two perspectives on intermedial references to music must be combined, as the novel exposes the idealization and instrumentalization of Western art music by relying upon the structural means of performativity in literary discourse.

In the following analysis of intermedial references to music in The Piano Teacher, the focus will be on how narrated music performance connects to different aspects of performativity in language and literature. In Jelinek’s novel, the act of performing (music), on the one hand, and the performative ability of language, on the other, inform each other. Different aspects of performativity that will be relevant for the analysis are therefore presented below, followed by a short outline of how the influence of music in Jelinek’s writings is usually perceived.

**Performativity and Performance**

In all of its various aspects, “performativity” is a term that deals with the inseparability of language use and social interaction—the idea that the production of meaning cannot be separated from bodily, material presence. Performativity of language was first noted when J. L. Austin drew attention to performatives, words that are part of
the action they describe. However, language is not only performative in the execution of speech-acts. According to Derrida, language appears as a system of signs that is performatively self-referential. As every sign iteratively quotes a sign used before, both repetition and change are inherent in every use of a sign. Following Derrida, Judith Butler foregrounds the influence of iterative performativity in social interaction and the ways in which social identity is established or destroyed through the performative use of language.

The concept of performativity has also been a means of rethinking the role of the performer as such. Although performance is central to music and theater, the performer has long been neglected, as the concepts of music and drama have long been based on written works. The neglect of performance can be attributed to the capacity of the storage media available, as well as to the valuation of the written work as “superior.” The Romantic aesthetic concept of “absolute music” conceived of music as independent of both words and bodily affect—as sublime, spiritual, and transcendent—and made even less room for the bodily presence of the performer; the direct physical impact of music was downplayed not only with regard to performing but also with regard to listening to music.

Erika Fischer-Lichte’s performative aesthetics implies an important shift of perspective, because she places performance center stage and focuses on how the bodily presence of both actor and audience participates in the emergence of meaning. In musicology Nicholas Cook, among others, supports a “performative approach to performance.” He conceives of the performance of music as a performative act in the manner of Butler, suggesting the “inseparability of intellectual and bodily knowledge, the way in which the one informs the other.” Cook thus stresses on the central importance of the performer, who does not stand in opposition to the work but rather is inseparable from what is usually perceived as the work.

The performativity of literary language is perceived in the world-creating aspect of writing as a self-referential performative act, or with the act of reading which performatively constitutes an imaginary world. As literary discourse always performs what it says, aspects of self-referentiality has been in focus, especially within poststructuralist perspective. As a consequence the connection to social and non-linguistic action is not always perceived as central. The performative ability of literary language to create

18 Wirth, “Der Performanzbegriff,” 25–34.
19 Ibid., 27.
worlds precisely is due to the fact that performative utterances and performative acts stated or carried out within a diegetic world lack the ability of directly impacting the social world. Still, what is narrated may in certain cases affect the performativity of literary discourse. Svend Erik Larsen has noted that if performance is narrated in a self-reflexive and performative way, the boundary between what is taking place in the diegetic world and what is part of its presentation by literary discourse is weakened. This leads to a shift in focus in the narrative text: from what it means, or represents, to what it does, or presents.20 Also, Wolfgang Iser has drawn attention to cases when a plot appears to be a representation of the social world but is in fact better understood as self-reflexive presentation of literary discourse.21 The uncertain boundary between representation and presentation forces the reader to consider the whole text from a performative perspective as linguistic performative acts interact with aspects of theatrality that usually are more characteristic of performing arts. Thus, Larsen concludes, language and literature “can be conceptualized as a performative medium.”22 This shift, it will be argued, can be perceived in the The Piano Teacher; performance of music narrated in the text interacts with different aspects of performative acts in Butler’s sense as well as with iterative performativity in the novel’s discourse. The performativity of discourse which is characteristic for all of Jelinek’s texts will now be briefly presented before the article explores the way it is used in relation to narrated performance in The Piano Teacher.

Music and performativity in Jelinek’s writing

Elfriede Jelinek is not only one of Austria’s most controversial and prolific writers, but also an accomplished musician. The influence of music on Jelinek’s writing is acknowledged both by Jelinek herself and in related scholarship. In spite of the fact that the novel’s protagonist is a performer of music, The Piano Teacher has long been neglected in discussions of the ways Jelinek’s writing is influenced by her musical training.

The novel’s protagonist is Erika Kohut, a failed pianist and strict piano teacher, who passes on to her students the same relentless training she herself once had to endure. Her mother tries to restrict and control her social life, and her sexual and emotional existence is restricted to voyeurism, self-harm, and fantasies of bondage and discipline, involving sadism and masochism (BDSM). When her student, Walter Klemmer, tries to make Erika his sexual conquest, he responds to her desire for BDSM by actually raping her. Erika’s plans for getting revenge only end in renewed self-harm.

The novel has a coherent plot and psychologically complex characters, and the multi-voiced literary discourse that scholars usually bring to bear with regard to music

in Jelinek’s prose is not as prominent as in other texts. Another aspect in Jelinek’s writing that frequently is connected to music is the extreme self-referentiality of discourse in her prose,\(^\text{23}\) which gradually pushes plot and characters into the background,\(^\text{24}\) and instead presents a body defined by the sound-bite.”\(^\text{25}\) Jelinek’s texts are perceived as a “musical flow of voices and counter-voices,”\(^\text{26}\) and “a speech-act in which every word, every sentence, and every paragraph is double-voiced or even heteroglot, that is, internally dialogical polyphonic, giving voice simultaneously to several intentions or viewpoints.”\(^\text{27}\)

As the quote above suggests, in Jelinek’s literary discourse ambiguous and polysemic phrases performatively both iterate and destabilize conventional meaning. Polysemy unfolds in an incessant simultaneity of multiple connotations, similar to that of multiple independent voices in musical polyphony. This “cacophonous music,” Pye and Donovan argue, draws attention to a materiality of words, which they describe as an “ideological materiality,” a materiality not primarily of words, of phonemes and graphemes, but of the ideological material that establishes a certain use of language.\(^\text{28}\)

Although the The Piano Teacher appears much more accessible than Jelinek’s later texts, even in this novel, meaning is deliberately made ambiguous and unstable. A single sentence may state various things at the same time. In a phrase like “the intricate crocheted patterns of contrapuntal tissue,” the metaphoric use of the polysemic “tissue” invokes associations with both textile fabric (which may be crocheted), and “tissue” as part of the organic, living body.\(^\text{29}\) Both associations inform the concept of counterpoint with a web-like, bodily quality, which undermines general notions of counterpoint as rule-based, strict structure.

Semantic meaning is metonymically destabilized when “Erika shakes the pearl strand of a trill [literally run] out of her white blouse cuffs; she is loaded with nervous haste” (161; my italics).\(^\text{30}\) Even here, polysemy renders the passage ambiguous: as the German “Lauf,” meaning “run,” the rapid movement up or down the musical scale, becomes threatening, as the verb “load” switches the connotation of “Lauf” so as to


\(^{28}\) Pye and Donovan, “Schreiben und Komponieren,” 192.

\(^{29}\) “des verschlungenen zu Mustern gehäkelten Kontrapunktgewebes” (63–64). Translation by Heidi Hart as half of the passage is omitted in the English version: Elfriede Jelinek, The Piano Teacher (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1999), 62. In the following, all quotes in English refer to this edition. The German quote above and in the following refer to Elfriede Jelinek, Die Klavierspielerin (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1986).

\(^{30}\) “Erika schüttelt die Perlenschnur eines Laufs aus ihren weißen Blusenmanschetten und ist mit nervöser Eile geladen,” (162; my italics).
relate it to the loaded barrel of a gun. Here a musical term is metonymically connected to threats of violence.

In these examples, it has already become clear that every time music is mentioned in Jelinek’s text, elements of the discourse performatively comment on the way we perceive music. Connecting Western art music to violence, bondage, and self-harm may on the one hand appear to contradict the way Jelinek normally highlights music as an important point of departure in her writing. On the other hand, violence can be understood as a central means in Jelinek’s texts to unmask society’s myths and ideologies. In all of Jelinek’s texts, actions of direct, physical violence and violent metaphors are used to unmask the structural violence in, for example, gender and class relations.

Strangely enough, Jelinek’s use of violence has not been discussed in connection with the influence of music on her writing. As scholars connect self-referential performativity and polyphony to music in Jelinek’s writing, the story about a failed pianist with auto-aggressive sexuality has not fit in. The role of music in The Piano Teacher has mainly been understood in terms of unmasking society’s myths; it has been assumed that Jelinek uses reference to music in order to criticize society, illustrating hoped-for social advancement or Austrian identity in general. Several studies of The Piano Teacher have focused more on the Erika’s gender and sexuality. Solibakke mentions in passing how performing gender in the novel relates to performance of music, and Powell and Bethman explore more in detail how Erika’s profession as a pianist in fact connects with her inhibited sexuality and how the novel actively engages with the instrumentalization of music. In the following, however, it will be demonstrated how intermedial references to performance appear to be intimately linked to the way music influences Jelinek’s writing.

When Jelinek reflects on her own musical training and the relationship between music and language, music is repeatedly defined as the passing of time made audible, and is thus rooted in the moment of performance. The idea of the abso-

31 Marlies Janz, Elfriede Jelinek (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995).
32 Janz, Elfriede Jelinek, 73.
34 Karl Ivan Solibakke, “Discourse on Classical Music in Jelinek’s The Piano Teacher,” in Elfriede Jelinek: Writing Woman, Nation, and Identity, ed. Matthias Piccolruaz Konzett and Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 250. On the other hand, to Karl Ivan Solibakke, Erika’s sexuality appears only as a “superficial layer” covering a “configuration and flow of musical discourse” turned into “a remarkably subversive analysis of Austrian identity.”
37 Powell and Bethman, “Tradition in Oneself,” 173.
38 Jelinek appears not to be the only writer and musician to stress this aspect of music. Also in the texts of Kathrine Mansfield, writer and musician, the quality of music as performing art is stressed and affects to a certain degree the performativity of literary discourse. da Sousa Correa, “Musical Performativity,” 76.
The performer’s body in focus

When music lessons, practice sessions, recitals, and concert rehearsals are narrated in *The Piano Teacher*, very little focus is given to the aural quality of music; instead, Jelinek explores the effort required to produce it. Whenever a musical performance is described in *The Piano Teacher*, the performer’s body is in focus, and the strain of producing music is highlighted. Acoustical foregrounding, imitation of musical rhythm or other structural patterns, visual-musical associations, techniques familiar in ekphrases of music are absent: 43 When piano student Walter Klemmer watches his teacher play a Bach concerto, his focus is on the moving body and not on the sound of music:

He unselfishly admires Erika's technique, he admires the way her back moves to the beat, the way her head sways, judiciously weighing the nuances she produces. He sees the play of muscles in her upper arm, he is excited by the collision of flesh and motion. (63)

As Walter Klemmer has his own sexual interest in mind, this is also an obvious objectification of the female body. Nevertheless, even the music practice of an adolescent Erika is described with a focus on her bodily movements: "She gathers all her energy, spreads her wings and then plunges forward, towards the keys which zoom up to her like the earth toward a crashing plane" (37); "The final note dies out, fades away. HER tendons relax" (41); "Two hands zoom out and play the Brahms again, this time better" (58). The focus on the body leads to that performing music is perceived as forced and painful:

Reluctantly, the violin finally moves under her chin, heaved up by an unwilling arm [...] Her fingers press the painful steel strings down the fingerboard. Mozart’s tormented spirit, moaning and choking, is forced out of the resonator. (35)

Although sounds are described in this passage, they are primarily perceived as pure noise or screams, and appear to be a question of moving the body correctly as demanded. This is a way of highlighting the performer’s perspective on music, as opposed to the listener’s focus on auditory experience. And from the point of view of the performer's body, the tradition of Western art music demands discipline and subjection.

The human body appears as beastly; beginners are said to “grunt and root about in Czernys elementary études” (28), and they are to be trained like a circus animal like “a weary dolphin” (58) or a “bear on a bike” (109). While the musical instruments are repeatedly described as organic and living, the professional performer is inhuman, mechanized, an automaton: “like clockwork the fingers tick the seconds into the keys” (40), or “The gears click, the pistons bang, the fingers move in and out. Sounds are emitted” (114). The demands of technique and perfection, all-consuming from the
perspective of the performer, are described with metaphors relating to technology and engineering, and the performer appears to merge with her instrument:

Mother makes sure the piano is kept properly tuned; and she also keeps twisting her daughter’s vertebrae, unconcerned about the child’s mood, worrying solely about her own influence on this stubborn, easily deformable, living instrument. (36; my italics)\textsuperscript{50}

Once again, Jelinek exploits the polysemic ambiguity of homonyms such as “Stimmung” (in German both “mood” and “tuning”) and “Wirbel” (both “vertebrae” and “tuning peg”). The demanding piano teacher Erika applies the instrumental perspective on her students: “she has to take the idling student engine and step on the gas, slam down hard in order to rev it up” (28)\textsuperscript{51}. When a student fails to meet her standards, the playing of a piece of Bach is described in the manner of a dirty car: “The main theme was messed up […] and the whole piece was anything but transparent: An oil-smereared car window” (100)\textsuperscript{52}.

The harsh description and the focus on strain and coercion connected to performance of music highlights the role of music as cultural violence, as culture which supports structural violence.\textsuperscript{53} Due to the performer’s long invisibility in the history of Western art music, the foregrounding of performance and of the performer’s bodily presence often is connected with violence.\textsuperscript{54} Even contemporary art music forcing musicians to encounter physical boundaries during performances may be a means of “evoking the body by rendering its limitations distinctly audible.”\textsuperscript{55}

**Performing music and performing female gender**

Performing music is not only straining and coercive. The playing of instruments is presented as a rather inglorious, trivial occupation, often described via metaphors based on imagery relating to needlework or cooking. As a piano teacher, Erika Kohut “corrects the Bach, mends and patches it” (105),\textsuperscript{56} and a Bach concerto may consist of “intricate crocheted patterns of contrapuntal tissue” (62). The needlework metaphors even affect Erika’s lectures on Beethoven, which she renders in “regular knit two/purl two” or “loosely crocheted air stitches” (151) with regard to

\textsuperscript{50} “[Die Mutter achtet] auf die gute Stimmung des Instruments, und auch an den Wirbeln der Tochter dreht sie unaufhörlich herum, nicht besorgt um die Stimmung des Kindes, sondern allein um ihren mütterlichen Einfluss auf dieses störrische, leicht verbildbare, lebendige Instrument” (37).

\textsuperscript{51} “den trägen Schülermotor durch heftigeres Gasgeben auf höhere Touren schrauben” (30).

\textsuperscript{52} “Das Haupthema ist verschmiert worden […] das Ganze fern jeder Durchsichtigkeit. Eine ölverschmierte Autoscheibe” (102).


\textsuperscript{54} Around 1800, suspicion of the emotional and bodily impact of music, gave rise to the topos of die Gewalt der Musik, not only perceived of as “power,” but also as “violence” (the German word Gewalt ambiguously expresses both), Gess, Die Gewalt der Musik.

\textsuperscript{55} Axel Englund, Still Songs: Music in and Around the Poetry of Paul Celan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 131.

\textsuperscript{56} “Erika K. bessert den Bach aus, sie flikt an ihm herum” (107).
Liszt. Performing music is thus gendered; it is expressed as a part of female-connoted housework. The novel’s literary discourse performance of music is intrinsically linked to the performance of (female) gender. This is already expressed in the novel’s German title, which posits music as a female-gendered performative act: Die Klavierspielerin—literally “the female piano player”—is a term invented by Jelinek in order to designate a womanly occupation that is not even a profession along the lines of “pianist” or “piano teacher.” The title already presents performance of music as a performative act in Butler’s sense. This implication is expressed in the very term that designates Erika’s occupation. The household metaphors in the text bring out a gendering that in Western art music has been remarkably strong. The metaphysical idealization of music during the nineteenth century entailed acts of exclusion and discipline regarding both the performer and the audience. As instrumental art music was increasingly related to the sublime, considered to be spiritual and transcendental, musical genius became increasingly gendered as male; conversely, women—who in the Western dichotomy are defined by and confined to their bodies—were excluded. Thus, women were denied direct contact with music in composition, but encouraged to access music by using their bodies in the act of performing. Disciplining the (female) body appears to be the obverse of the idealization of music as spiritual and transcendental, and musical education came to be seen as appropriate self-discipline for women, a means “to assign woman a place in the symbolic order.”

As a female piano student and female piano teacher, Erika reproduces and confirms this traditional female gender role. In her attempts to become a successful pianist, she appears to be more ambivalently gendered and tries to redefine her role as a musical performer in a way that is, after all, creative, as the performer “always spices the soup of his playing with something of his own” (14). Once again, this very formulation performatively questions the success of her attempts. Even if the male pronoun is used, the comparison of playing music and cooking maintains the connection to the domestic sphere. Additionally, as a result of her sexual behavior, such as visiting peep shows, Erika moves in domains that are gendered as male. Her voyeurism, auto-aggression, and desire for BDSM experiences appear as an attempt to “gain the

57 “verschlungene Mustern gehäkelten Kontrapunktegewebe” (65); “in regelmässigem Zweiglatt/Zweiverkehr”, “in locker gehäkelten Luftmaschen” (151).
60 Dahlhaus, Idee der absoluten Musik, 91–105.
61 See also Inge Suchy, “Buffosopran und Koloraturtenor: Von der verkehrten Musikwelt in Körperliche Veränderungen,” in Die Frau hat keinen Ort: Elfriede Jelineks feministische Bezüge, ed. Stefanie Kaplan (Wien: Praesens, 2012), 75–88. The notion that exclusory patterns are still at work is confirmed in the ways in which female composers are received and perceived. When Jelinek compares composer Patricia Jünger’s work with “traces of the Yeti,” she thus highlights a female composer who appears to be a mythical, which is to say non-existent, creature, like the famous snowman. Jelinek, “Die Komponistin,” 36.
63 “Er würzt die Suppe seines Spieles stets mit etwas Eigenem” (16).
[Lacanian] law that she fails to reach as a pianist,” as Powell and Bethman claim.64 However, in this line of interpretation, Erika’s disturbing sexual behavior remains the subject of psychological interpretation. The Piano Teacher is to them essentially a story about her “development as a (perverse) sexual subject.”65 This line of interpretation connects Erika’s profession as a piano teacher, the description of musical discipline, to her failure in sexual emancipation and draws attention to the instrumentalization of classical music. Still, in this line of interpretation, the depiction of the performer of music remains unconnected to the specific influence of music on Jelinek’s writing, which Bethman and Powell discuss using examples from other texts by the author.66

However, the novel is not only about how music has been used; at the same time, it reveals further aspects of Jelinek’s use of music in her writing. As noted above, music-making is connected with gender performance by means of a performative literary discourse. Following Svend Erik Larsen, this blurs the border between narrated performance and textual performativity.67 As a result, acts carried out in the diegetic world gain characteristics of performance; not the way they are described in literary discourse but the fact that they are “actually” carried out (in the diegetic world) gains importance and starts to signify in a certain way. This aspect becomes more apparent when exploring a third aspect of the intermedial references to music performance, its frequent use of violent metaphors and their connection to violence actions in the diegesis.

**Performing music and the assault of the body**

Violent metaphors are used to describe coercion and the amount of discipline applied. Performance of music appears as an assault on both the performer and the audience. The contrapuntal structure of a Bach concerto performed at a recital is connected to violence:

> The light is vehemently dimmed when a cushion is propped against the piano lamp. The cushion trembles at the whiplashes of the intricate crocheted patterns of contrapuntal tissue. (62)68

Violence is partly connected to musical pleasure, as Erika notes while observing the audience at the recital: “One has to tyrannize them, one has to suppress and oppress them, just to get through to them! … They want thrashings and a pile of passions” (68).69 Also, the force and coercion exerted on the student’s body result in aggression. The musician resembles not only a technical instrument but also a weapon: Playing a
Bach concerto, Erika is said to be “loaded with nervous haste” (161), and thus resembles a loaded rifle.\footnote{“sie ist mit nervöser Eile geladen” (162); see above FN 29.} Returning from her music lessons, the adolescent Erika appears to be as dangerous as a bomb: “Emulating a kamikaze pilot, she uses herself as weapon … Bristling with instruments she arduously staggers into the mob of homebound workers, detonating among them like a fragmentation bomb” (15–16).\footnote{“In Kamikazemanier nimmt sie sich selbst als Waffe zur Hand … Sie torkelt müde und instrumentenübersät in die Arbeitsheimkehrer hinein und detoniert mitten unter ihnen wie eine Splitterbombe” (17).} Finally, the demands for strictness and discipline in classical music education also unfold in metaphors of bondage: “This grid system has hamstrung [Erika] in an untearable net of directions […] like a rosy ham on a butcher’s hook” (190).\footnote{“Dieses Rastersystem hat sie in ein unzerreißbares Netz von Vorschriften … geschnürt, wie einen rosigen Rollschinken am Haken des Fleischhauers” (191).}

The violent metaphors used to visualize structural violence connect to Erika’s deviant sexual behavior. In BDSM sex as well as in the classical music tradition, Inge Arteel notes, pleasure is connected to restriction and discipline.\footnote{Inge Arteel, ‘Ich schlage sozusagen mit der Axt drein’: Stilistische, wirkungsaesthetische und thematische Betrachtungen zu Elfriede Jelineks Roman Die Klavierspielerin (Gent: Studia germanica Gandensia, 1991), 113.} Both when visiting peep shows and sitting next to her piano students, Erika is geared to watching people who work hard, because they want results. In this respect, the normally large difference between music and sexual pleasure is quite tiny. (106)\footnote{“Erika ist darauf geeicht, Menschen zuzusehen, die sich hart bemühen, weil sie ein Ergebnis wünschen. In dieser Hinsicht ist der sonst so große Unterschied zwischen Musik und Lust eher geringfügig” (108).}

However, what is acceptable in musical performance is regarded as perverted in sexual relations; what is acceptable for the male genius remains eccentric and perverse when gendered as female.\footnote{Powell and Bethman, “Tradition in Oneself,” 175.} As disciplining the body is transferred from the musical to the sexual sphere, its physically aggressive nature is made visible. Thus, even if Erika’s deviant sexuality can be seen as an attempt to escape her gender role, as is argued by Powell and Bethman, it should be noted that the end result of Erika’s behavior is the sexual equivalent of a performer’s discipline, which we have seen is a means of disciplining the female body. Seen from this perspective, performance and performativity connect in Erika’s deviant sexuality. Erika performs in her sexual life the demands of discipline and contempt of the female body that are professionally expected from her.

*Playing music, performative acts, performative discourse*

The metaphors of violence described above unmask education in classical music as a means to control the female body. At the same time, these metaphors connect to Erika’s social and sexual behavior in the plot. While the household metaphors are only found on the level of literary discourse (there are no descriptions of Erika cooking or...
the violent tropes, both metaphors and metonymies, reappear in the novel’s diegetic universe, in Erika’s deviant sexuality, in her voyeurism, in her self-harm, and in her inclination to BDSM sex. When the musical staves are described as a grid system that has “hamstrung [Erika] like a rosy ham on a butcher’s hook,” the reader is still free to focus on the similarity of restriction between the net of a smoked ham and the musical staves, and can interpret the metaphor as a criticism of restrictive norms. However, something happens when the reader is confronted with Erika’s sexual practices. When she asks her would-be lover Walter “that he ties her up with the ropes I’ve collected and also the leather straps and even the chains! Hogtie her; bind her up as thoroughly as he can—solidly, intensely, artfully, cruelly, tormentingly, cunningly” (215), it appears as if the implications of the bondage metaphor are acted out. And there are more connections between violent literary metaphors referring to music and Erika’s sexual desires. Erika not only speaks contemptuously of her musical audience and their alleged desire to be gagged and thrashed; she also wishes, quite literally, to be beaten and gagged: “and you’ll keep me in all sorts of different positions, hitting or kicking me or even whipping me! […] and gag me so cunningly that I can’t emit the slightest peep (217–18). The adolescent Erika is not only compared to a bomb; her fellow tram passengers are brutally attacked by Erika’s musical instrument cases:

[She beats] with the narrow end of the instrument (sometimes the violin, sometimes the heavier viola). (15)

SHE furiously kicks a hard bone, which belongs to a man. (17)

Almost casually, SHE viciously pinches the female calf to her left or her right. (18)

In these descriptions, the violence is not only suggested in discourse, but it happens—at least in the diegesis. The latent violence in metaphors used to speak about music (re)appear in Erika’s social and sexual life: Thus, the Gewalt der Musik, the “power of music,” connects to actual abuse and violence (the German word Gewalt ambiguously expresses both), the strict form of contrapuntal composition connects to bondage and discipline, the demands of technique become mechanical in nature. The violent metaphors of literary discourse thus relate to Erika’s most disturbing actions, such as her self-directed aggression when cutting her hands (44) and her vulva’s labia with a razor (86), and the maiming of her too-talented student’s hands with glass shards (170), actions that evoke rejection, uneasiness and qualms when reading them. The idealiza-

76 “daß er sie mit Genuß so derart stramm, gründlich, ausgiebig, kunstgerecht, grausam, qualvoll, raffiniert mit den Stricken […] und auch den Lederriemen und sogar Ketten! […] fesselt, ver- und zusammenschnürt und zusammenschnällt, wie er es nur kann” (216–17).


78 “[S]ie [prügelt] mit dem schmalen Ende des Instruments, einmal ist es die Geige, dann wieder die schwere Bratsche” (17). “SIE tritt wütend gegen einen harten Knochen, der einem Mann gehört” (18); “SIE zwickt wie nebenbei die eine oder anderen Frau […] in die Wade” (20).
tion of classical music is performatively questioned by literalizing the metaphoric language used to discuss music.

This shortcut leads to a blurring of the borders between actions carried out in the diegesis and their mediation by means of a performative literary discourse. In a way, Erika’s most questionable actions start to resemble art performances that incorporate self-abuse and deliberate maltreatment of the performer’s body, actions that are felt to symbolize something but at the same time are not to be taken symbolically or metaphorically but are actually carried out. Fischer-Lichte stresses the fact that the materiality of art performances with self-abuse prevents us from directly interpreting them on a solely symbolic level. The performance employs bodily reactions, “the holding of one’s breath, the feeling of nausea,” in order to set the process of reflection in motion. Erika’s aggression toward her body is not only illustrated by violent metaphors, but it actually takes place—at least in the diegetic world of the novel:

She gingerly tests the edge, it is razor sharp. Then she presses the blade into the back of her hand several times […] The metal slices her hand like butter. For an instant a slit gapes in the previously intact tissue; then the arduously tamed blood rushes out from behind the barrier. (44)

This thin elegant foil of bluish steel, pliable, elastic. SHE sits down in front of the magnifying mirror; spreading her legs she makes a cut, magnifying the aperture that is the doorway into her body. (86)

In contrast to the metaphor which compares Erika to a piece of meat at a butcher’s hook, these actions are to be imagined to actually take place in the diegesis. The revulsion one likely feels in reading these passages is provoked in order to performatively engage the process of reflection.

Erika Kohut’s disturbed sexuality thus reveals something more than a perverted individual. In the text, her actions in the diegesis reveal a performative connection to what is discussed in literary discourse. Thus, the novel not only points out its criticism on how music has been instrumentalized, but the narrative plot also gains the performative ability to actually do what usually is said about music. Thus, not only literary discourse is a means to performative acts in literature, not only literary discourse exploits the “ideological materiality” of language, the ideological presumptions sedimented in language. In Jelinek’s prose, actions carried out in the diegetic world, are turned into a performance site in which the violence in literary discourse is “actually” carried out and this violence hurts even while reading it.

80 Ibid., 18.
81 “SIE prüft vorsichtig die Schneide, sie ist rasierklingenscharf. Dann drückt sie die Klinge mehrere Male tief in den Handrücken hinein […] Das Metall fräst sich hinein wie in Butter. Einen Augenblick klafft ein Sparkassen-Schlitz im vorher geschlossenen Gewebe, dann rast das mühsam gebändigte Blut hinter der Sperre hervor” (45); “Dieses dünne, elegante Plättchen aus bläulichem Stahl, biegsam und elastisch. Sie setzt sich mit gespreizten Beinen vor die Vergrößerungsseite des Rasierspiegels und vollzieht einen Schnitt, der die Öffnung vergrößern soll, die als Tür in ihr Leben hineinführt” (88).
Conclusion

This article began with the question of how intermedial reference to musical performance may challenge literary narration. It also raised the question of whether this early novel about musical performer connects to Jelinek’s understanding of music in her writing at large. Based on the assumption that intermedial references to another medium always exploit the transmedial common ground of the media involved, my analysis focused on elements in the text that literary language shares with the performance of music, but that would require musical references in order to be noticed in literature. The focus on performance and the body in the plot has highlighted several aspects: The way performance is described performatively undermines ideas of musical transcendence and spirituality by focusing on the bodily strain and discipline of the performer, which has been instrumentalized in controlling the female body. Musical performance, which is narrated in a self-reflexive way, blurs the borders between representation and presentation. Thus Erika’s sexual most disturbing actions, instead of being causally explained, gain performative meaning of doing/acting out metaphors in literary discourse.

Elfriede Jelinek’s prose is thus not simply characterized by highly self-referential literary discourse. Performances of music and gender are described in a way that do not merely highlight the role of performance in music or criticize the instrumentalization of music. Just as intermedial reference highlights and brings forth the transmedial common ground of the media involved, the novel highlights the ability of narrative to perform, as a performance site that confronts the reader with the bodily consequences of language use. In The Piano Teacher, then, not only the performer of music is placed center stage, but the performing ability of language is also rendered visible.
MOLLY MCDOLAN

Stille in the Lutheran Baroque
A Musical-Textual Analysis Using Quantitative Methodology

This paper is a presentation of initial results from my on-going research into the musical settings of textual elements, either individual words or phrases, related to the concept of Stille in the Lutheran Baroque. I will present the innovative data-driven methodology I developed for the purposes of this project and the criteria for its application before moving on to explore specific patterns of meaning emerging from its application to settings of Stille in the works of five early 18th-century German composers. It is my aim to show how a quantitative approach to analysis can be considered a “reverse engineering” of the musical evidence, allowing modern researchers the possibility to access composers’ tacit understanding of specific textual elements. Through the comparison of large quantities of similar settings certain repetitive patterns emerge which act as a Rosetta stone between the languages of music and text, helping to decipher cultural or theological semiotic environments which may not be evident from other primary sources, such as visual depictions or textual descriptions.

There is a deceptively simple starting question at the basis of my research: How was the word Stille set to music in the German Baroque? This question is simple, as it suggests a more generalized question: How is any textual element set to music (in this period)? A straightforward approach would be to look at a defined set of musical examples, record what happens when the textual element is set to music, and analyze these findings for common elements. However, problems arise when a textual element has multiple or conflicting meanings. For such figures, it is imperative to differentiate settings with similar linguistic or contextual interpretations before useful patterns can be identified. Although the concept of Stille bears many such layers of meaning, it is also an excellent candidate for exploration with quantitative methods. Its setting in music (or even sound) is counterintuitive, as silence is often understood as the presence of a sound-free environment. Composers setting the textual concept of Stille are thus put in a position to describe a soundless condition using the musical means of sound, allowing us a unique view into their underlying understanding of the concept. Their setting will be informed by their understanding of the literal properties of Stille as well as any additional meaning borne in the composers’ theological or cultural environment.

To inquire into the question of how Stille was set to music in the Lutheran Baroque, my research draws on a large-scale database, which I designed and populated from individual analyses of 473 settings of textual elements related to Stille. These set-

1 Stille is often translated into English as silence, although this translation is problematic, as will be shown below.
tings represent the entirety of Stille settings throughout the oeuvres of five important composers working within a similar musical tradition. I first located each time these words were set in the collected works of these composers: Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), Reinhard Keiser (1674–1739), Georg Phillip Telemann (1681–1767), Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel (1690–1749), and Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759). The 473 settings, drawn from thousands of works (many of which do not use this terminology), thus represent the maximum possible survey population for analysis.

I then analyzed each text setting for the presence or absence of 98 musical and textual factors, including melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, formal, and linguistic elements, as well as special factors related to changes of texture, the use of rests, and figures specific to recitative or aria forms. The nearly 50,000 data points contained in my database represent a significant body of direct empirical observations of the composers’ text setting decisions, which cluster into meaning-bearing patterns upon closer analysis. These patterns of representation are often unexpected and are surprisingly consistent across the data observed.

Database structure

It is beyond the scope of this paper to present the data from my database in full. However, the following section will give an overview of the database's structure, with screenshot excerpts (figures 1 and 2) showing a representative selection of the 98 analysis factors. Each row represents a separate setting, while the column headings correspond to factors for which each setting was analyzed. The database can be filtered for any combination of these factors, facilitating complex multi-variable requests as to the frequency of occurrence of a set of user-defined factors, whether within a select group of settings or across the entire database. Regarding the size of the database, the population of samples must be large enough to enable the separation of meaningful patterns of communication from the inevitable statistical noise created by the comparison of massively multi-variable examples. The database then becomes a powerful tool for comparative musical-textual analysis. However, the finite amount of historical compositions presents a natural limitation on the amount of available data. As with any population-based study, survey size is directly related to confidence level and margin of error. The 473 analyzed settings forming the basis of this study represent nearly every occurrence of the target terminology and thus the largest possible data set.

Figure 1 (below) shows general classification and identifying information as well as some of the linguistic factors: the setting's textual element, composer, work title, movement type, work type (e.g. opera, cantata, oratorio, etc.), whether the work is sacred or secular, the language of the text, and date of first performance. Each setting was also grouped into silence types, corresponding to the descriptive or commentary approach of the composer to the individual type of silence at hand. For example, an inability to speak due to innate muteness is a very different type of silence than Jesus’ refusal to answer Pontius Pilate’s questioning. Jesus’ trial would also be an example of a “special narrative”: a specific external semiotic environment corresponding to ad-
ditional extra-textual meaning and conventions. The “text important” factor indicates whether the textual element is embedded in a larger text describing the silence itself. The factor “keyword” gives the central term of silence used in the setting’s textual element, whereas the remaining factors detail some of the keyword’s linguistic properties.

Figure 1: Database excerpt showing general classification elements and linguistic factors.

Figure 2 (below) presents an excerpt from another section of the database recording factors relating to melody and rests. This excerpt is typical of the factors corresponding to musical analysis (rather than textual or formal analyses). Nearly all such factors are recorded in binary form—a factor is either present along with the textual element in question (indicated by the number 1) or absent (left blank). This allows for simplified meta-analysis; after filtering the database for the exclusion of all but a select factor or set of factors, the sum of each column indicates the total occurrence of the selected factors within the database. Filtering the database for the factor “melody: static” would thus only display settings featuring this factor.

Figure 2: Database excerpt showing factors relating to melody and rests. In example 116, the factor “melody: static” is marked as present (1).

Criteria for selection of analysis material

In order to produce useful results using quantitative musical-textual analysis, it is important to limit the material under analysis to that emerging from a clearly and narrowly defined cultural environment. The five composers whose oeuvres form the basis of this study all emerged from the same Lutheran compositional tradition, their productive periods overlapped chronologically, and all were personally known to or influenced by the works of the others. The selection of the cultural environment is also
critical to the success of such an analysis. The composers in question must have worked within a tradition of composition relying on a body of communicative conventions. It is important here to differentiate between a more linguistic musical communication (with rational and consistent associations of ideas to clear semantic symbols) and a less categorical communication based on the evocation of emotional states.

In this study I have chosen to focus on text setting within a narrow chronological period in German Lutheran compositional tradition, the early to mid-18th century, following the careers of the five composers under examination. In this tradition music was used as a secondary language supporting verbal communication. Composers in this tradition, per Martin Luther’s directive, had the expression of text as their primary task. Luther’s mandate to composers was to bring the text to life, to become the *viva voce evangelii* (the living word of the Gospel) by explaining and elaborating on the meaning and significance of the words. The craft of composition was seen as writing poetry in music (*musica poetica*), using musical text as a special type of emotional communication, making use of all the classical oratory tools of rhetorical persuasion. A composer’s skill was acquired rather than inherent, an expertise emerging from the development and consistent application of musical-rhetorical figures and principles.

Texted music of the Baroque era is generally suited to an analysis of musical-textual symbols due to the primary emphasis on the communication of individual words and phrases through musical composition. However, while text and rhetorical principles were influential in the development of French, English, and Italian Baroque music, it was only in Germany that they were enthusiastically adopted and adapted into a system of terminology and methods used as a basis for composition.

Early 18th-century Germany held a special position in the European musical landscape. The German hybrid system of speculative and practical music, developing out of the evolving theories of music in previous centuries, left them with a highly analytical system of musico-rhetorical composition unparalleled in neighboring countries. Italian and French music was based on oration rather than rhetoric, favoring dramatic gesture and pathos-laden delivery over studied rhetorical form. Ornamentation was the medium of affectual communication, rather than rhetorical devices. Although text continued to be important in Italy and France, it served as a starting point for expressing affect rather than the object of a composition. The Italian style of composition relied on innate qualities such as good taste and inspiration, while the German *musicus poeticus* was a professional who painstakingly learned his craft in Protestant Kantor-schulen. The German discipline *musica poetica* was unique in Europe, connecting the classical discipline of rhetoric to affective aesthetic musical expression within a teachable analytic framework.

The idea of expressing text developed from literal depictions of words in 16th- and early 17th-century madrigalisms toward a more codified system of affect expression in
17th-century Germany. While Lutheran composers and musicians continued to assign primary importance to the expression of the text, later generations moved away from the 16th-century idea of literal word-for-word text setting toward an expression of the text’s general affect, which would move the listeners through the arousal of their passions. The listener, rather than the text, became the object of composition.5 The musician and theorist Johann Gottfried Walther (1684–1748) wrote on the subject:

when an affect is to be expressed, composition should focus on that, rather than individual words. Not that words should be disregarded, but words which contradict the affect should not be singularly expressed.6

The 18th-century movement toward subjectivity redefined the technical approach to Lutheran composition. Treating a word as an affectual object in itself lost ground to more subjective expression.7 Not only the physical image of the word was expressed, but also any additional levels of symbolic or theological meaning. The consequences of this shift can perhaps best be seen in the treatment of expressions of Stille. In 17th-century compositions silence is often represented in its most literal form: as a long rest after the key text. This literal depictive representation persists in the works of early 18th-century composers, but is augmented with other more nuanced descriptive devices and compositional techniques, reflecting the composer’s understanding and musical interpretation of the term. Whereas 17th-century audiences reacted to the presentation of literal silence, their early 18th-century counterpart was presented with the composer’s interpretation.

As the 18th century progressed, accompanied by a general societal shift toward subjectivity, this focus on subjective expression came to overshadow even the text itself, frustrating attempts to analyze the settings of single words. Expression at the single-word level gave way to setting the affect of an entire sentence, paragraph, or movement. What had been an ordered system of consistent musical motives and gestures (figurae) designed to evoke specific affects ultimately became a pure musical semiotic, largely independent of individual textual elements. The ideal of later music was to be felt emotionally (empfunden) rather than understood rationally. I thus declined to include composers working in the more subjective Empfindsamkeit style of the late 18th century in this survey.

Setting text to music: a literal translation

As the textual concept of Stille is multifaceted and requires some clarification, I will first explore the idea of translating a textual element to music using a term which is more straightforward, both in its literal sense and in terms of its wider interpretation: waves (Wellen).

5 Ibid., 32.
7 Bartel, Musica Poetica, 52.
The word *Wellen* is nearly always used in its principal form as a noun referencing its physical attributes, either alone or in conjunction with allusion to its connotations in other contexts, such as its theological contexts. A wave has a clear physical form which is easily reproducible in music: a repetitive cyclical motion over time. Textual reference to a wave effects a mental image of a physical wave, as its attributes are instantly recognizable to all observers. There is no special extra-textual knowledge required to visualize its physical form.

However, the literal definition of a term is not enough to determine its meaning. A single word is often inextricably linked to a body of related words carrying strong secondary meanings. In the case of *Wellen*, it is nearly impossible to disassociate waves from their relationship with water. Waves, or water, bear a certain theological significance, which is especially important to bear in mind when working with sacred music. Here, a reference to water is often a clear reference to water’s baptismal role in Christian theology. Water, and waves by association, can refer to troublesome times or metaphorically to salvation and eternal life. However, even with these additional layers of meaning, waves remain a relatively simple example for musical expression, as their physical form is easily represented in music.

**Das zitternde Glänzen der spielenden Wellen**

*HWV 203*

![Figure 3: HWV 203](http://imslp.org/wiki/9_German_Arias,_HWV_202-210_(Handel,_George_Frideric). License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0.)

In the opening measures of his aria *Das zitternde Glänzen der spielende Wellen* (HWV 203 from *Neun deutsche Arien*, 1724–1726) G. F. Händel gives a standard representation of the textual element *Wellen*. In the obbligato voice the figure outlines a narrow melodic range, and stepwise motion is prominent, mimicking the motion of the waves. The repetitive rise and fall of the waves is mirrored in the bass figure and the regular repetition of the figure over several bars. Händel’s representation of waves is immediately identifiable to both performers and audience members, as it clearly conveys the physical properties of the waves themselves. This representation is not limited to Händel’s particular setting of this textual element, or even his oeuvre, but is found throughout the works of his contemporaries. It is a uniform cultural understanding

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of the term *Wellen* which results in this consistency of musical setting. However, not all terms have such an evident meaning. The term *Stille*, for example, requires some amount of contextualization before I explore how it was set to music.

**Approaching Stille**

A first step in entering a composer’s semantic environment, for the purposes of musical-textual analysis, is to negotiate a viable historical understanding of the textual element in question. Approaching the meaning encoded in a particular term entails localizing it within its appropriate linguistic, cultural, and theological contexts. The term *Stille* is problematic in this respect, as it bears several simultaneously overlapping meanings and connotations. *Stille* can exist in several parts of speech, is theologically laden, and its representable form is abstract at best. *Stille* is often translated into English as silence, although the term in German carries significantly more meaning than the English concept of soundlessness.

*Stille* is a concept expressed using a broad range of synonymic vocabulary. The settings of these terms differ not only according to which term is being set, but also according to whether the setting is sacred or secular, among many other decisive factors. A composer’s decisions on how to set a text would have been made taking cultural, theological, and linguistic concerns into account. Linguistic concerns, besides the basic meaning of the word, include its register, part of speech, and any special connotations the word may have. This is of course in addition to any technical factors inherent in the textual element (e.g. syllable count, vowels and consonant groups, etc.).

*Stille* has multiple definitions, either distinct in meaning or overlapping. The German language has a wide range of vocabulary expressing silence, using both dedicated terms and phrasal constructions to represent different understandings of silence. Some of these forms are not easily translatable into English, as they are decidedly active concepts (e.g. *schweigen*, which can only be rendered as “to remain silent”). Each expression of the word *Stille* carries a different meaning and thus a different set of possibilities for musical expression. Although I took all forms and expressions of *Stille* into account in the course of my research, due to the scope of this article I will focus on one specific and significant expression: the term *Stille*, used as a noun in a sacred context. In preparation for showing how this term was set to music, I will first provide a brief overview of *Stille* as an early 18th-century Lutheran composer would have understood it.

**Stille in emergent Protestant theology**

*Stille* became a point of great theological debate in the emerging and diverging Protestant churches of the Reformation, especially at the intersection of the orthodox Lutheran and the increasingly divergent branches of reformed Protestantism.

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9 Compare these various types of silences: *Stille*, *Ruhe*, *stumm*, *schweigen*, *stillschweigen*, *innehalten*, *taub*, *er hat nichts gesagt*, *sein Mund ist geschlossen*.
Some churches, such as those of Huldrych Zwingli or (less strictly) John Calvin, saw music as a purely human creation, a seductive emotional power to be avoided during services. Luther, however, subscribed to the Augustinian view (via Pythagoras and Boethius) that individuals listening to music were experiencing musical-mathematical proof of God’s ordered creation. Music thus became an integral element of Lutheran services.

Lutherans and what the historian Diarmaid MacCullough calls the “magisterial” mainstream Protestant reformers of the 16th century (who envisioned reforming the Western church into a new universal and decidedly public body) ushered in “an era of words, relentlessly clarifying the Word of God”11 with their sermon-oriented services and new emphasis on music as a tool of congregational worship. It was “the inauguration of one of the noisiest periods in Christian history since its first two centuries; noise was the characteristic of the mainstream Protestant Reformation.”12 Whereas visual imagery had been an essential facet of the medieval Western church, the pulpit, and therefore the eminence of the sermon, became the dominant visual focus of the new churches. Whereas established codes of artistic visual symbolism had previously enriched a congregation’s emotional attachment to a Biblical narrative, this role was now undertaken by musical-textual “musikalische Mahlereyen.”13 A composer’s representation of text in music overtook the role of emotional adornment of the Word of God. Some “spiritual” Protestant churches, however, shared Zwingli’s priorities regarding the importance of silence in prayer, in contrast to their “noisy” orthodox Lutheran neighbors. Drawing on a body of neo-Platonic and mystic writings, they produced a version of radical Christian quietness. By turning inward to find their justification by faith, they “took up spiritual themes stressed by Erasmus, emphasizing the Spirit over the Word.”14

The Pietists’ focus on Spiritualism, stressing the individuality of faith and the mystic role of silence, resonated throughout German-speaking areas and beyond, becoming the major opposition to the Lutheran orthodoxy. In 1686 in Leipzig August Hermann Francke set up a Collegia biblica, a very popular series of lectures to university theology students and townspeople, under the guidance of the movement’s founder Philipp Jacob Spener. However, after three years of lectures the Pietists attracted the disapproval of the city’s orthodox theologians and left Leipzig to found the University of Halle, which quickly became the most important center of the internationally active Pietist movement.

Halle, the city immediately neighboring Leipzig, thus became an influential theological rival, much to the chagrin of the orthodox Lutheran theologians and officials in Leipzig. It was in this politically charged climate that Johann Sebastian Bach was

10 See the concept of Harmony of the Spheres, e.g. Miikka E. Anttila, Luther’s Theology of Music (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 86.
12 Ibid.
14 MacCullough, Silence, 143.
engaged as Thomaskantor, tasked with producing liturgical music in line with accepted doctrine. His librettists were to present their texts to the church consistory for review, as their “formulations had to be theologically correct and appropriate for the conditions which then obtained in Leipzig—in a period dominated by the conflict between Lutheran orthodoxy and Pietist fractionalism.” It seems, therefore, that Bach’s decisions to set texts with Stille exceed a purely theological interpretation. His settings of Stille can be seen as a political act, regardless if he presented an orthodox interpretation in line with his employers or one influenced by Pietistic thought.

Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille

It was on this theologically and politically charged background that J. S. Bach composed his cantata “Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille” BWV 120 (God, you are praised in the stillness/silence) over the text to Psalm 65. The exact provenance of the opening aria is unknown. It may have had its first performance in 1729 as occasional music for the election of the Leipzig city council. Viewed in the light of Stille’s loaded role in Protestant theology, Bach’s selection of this psalm text for this official function can be read as a political gesture. Whatever his motivation for the choice of text, Bach’s settings of Loben and Stille are entirely compatible with those of his other works and those of his contemporaries, suggesting a common musical depiction of the condition of Stille in a sacred context.

In order to locate Bach’s setting within the larger body of works included in my database, Table 1 (below) gives an overview of the most common factors occurring during all examples of descriptive settings of textual Stille. As a brief explanation of the table’s structure: the meta-analysis has first been filtered for the exclusion of settings containing the factors marked (C): (duplicate examples, no reaction to text, imperative, and question). The frequency at which factors (B) are present, when the database is filtered for the most significant factors (or pairs of significant factors) listed in column (A), is given in the corresponding columns on the right-hand side of the table. The relevant sample sizes are also indicated, with the total number of examples pre- and post-filtering shown in the left-hand columns and the number of arias and recitatives listed in the shaded columns at right. Thus, out of the 85 total examples of the factor “melody: low register” included in the entire database, 60 remain after filtering for the above-listed exclusion factors, which represents 71% of the total examples. Of this filtered set, we can see that the factor is accompanied by ‘melody: static’ 53% of the time. At right, the shaded columns show that 42 of the 60 examples are set in arias, with 71% of the 42 aria examples corresponding to a change in texture at the keytext.

### Table 1: Frequency of the presence of factors (A) in the presence of factors (B)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors (A)</th>
<th>Exclusion factors (C): Database examples filtered for factors: duplicate examples, no reaction to test, imperative, question.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single factors</strong></td>
<td>paired with Factors (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melody: low register</td>
<td>85 60 71 X 53 32 25 30 23 33 35 20 35 47 78 48 35 42 71 18 61 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melody: static</td>
<td>146 96 66 33 X 14 16 31 14 26 24 24 26 40 67 36 27 61 75 35 46 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bass: pedal</td>
<td>82 49 60 41 5 20 22 33 16 X 31 35 29 39 71 57 18 31 65 18 11 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active accompaniment</td>
<td>84 50 60 42 46 14 26 34 28 30 X 28 40 46 76 46 30 47 70 3 67 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combined factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melody: low register AND melody: static</td>
<td>32 X X 22 19 38 9 28 38 25 41 50 78 53 38 20 53 12 67 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melody: static AND bass: pedal</td>
<td>25 X X 0 16 40 4 X 0 40 20 40 60 56 16 14 79 9 0 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melody: low register AND bass: pedal</td>
<td>20 X 45 35 30 35 25 X 45 35 35 40 85 65 35 16 56 4 0 50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Frequency of the presence of factors (A) in the presence of factors (B)
Whereas many settings of Stille contain some combination of the main factors listed in Table 1, Bach’s opening aria, “Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille,” features an almost “textbook example” of Stille. All of the most significant musical factors (factors A in Table 1) are present: rests or a pedal tone in the bass line, a sustained note in a low register in the solo voice, a generally reduced texture, and active harmonically-stable figuration in the accompaniment.

Mirroring the rhetorical figure *antithesis*, the juxtaposition of opposing concepts, which is used in the poetry of the psalm text, Bach contrasts the extroverted dramatic gestures of *Loben* (praise) against the introverted static fullness of *Stille*. As the composition unfolds, Bach sets up an affectual counterpoint between the two terms, treating each concept individually at length and then in comparative alternation, clearly emphasizing either *Loben* or *Stille*. The extreme and repeated contrast of the two ideas serves to increase their affectual impact while simultaneously linking them in a duality of opposition.

The aria is scored for alto voice, two obbligato oboes d’amore, strings, and basso continuo. This rich scoring is significant, as the overlapping register of the upper voices offers many possibilities for abrupt or gradual changes in texture. As seen in Table 1, a change of aria texture upon occurrence of a key text (in this case, the word *Stille*) accompanies the other major compositional devices between 65–75 percent of the time. In the transition from measure 18 to measure 19 (see Figure 5 below) Bach takes advantage of the many voices at his disposal, capping off a long melismatic passage over the text *Loben* with an abrupt shift in texture, moving from extreme extroversion in all voices to a sparse, yet intense introversion over the text *Stille*.

Bach’s *Stille* figure is generally expressed with a limited ambitus in all voices and a reduction in ensemble texture. In this Bach is consistent with his other settings of *Stille* as well as those of his contemporaries, as can be seen in Table 1 when comparing the rates of frequency of the factors “melody: static” and “bass: pedal.” It is tempting to ascribe the quick activity present on settings of “*in der Stille*” (cp. mm. 72–75, Figures 10 and 11) to a spillover effect from the more jubilant setting of *Loben*. However, in the larger investigation into *Stille* beyond the context of this single work active accompaniment figuration as seen in mm. 72–75 is consistent with sacred settings of *Stille* in other works of Bach and his contemporaries. As shown in Table 1, an active accompaniment is one of the most significant compositional devices used across the entire database.

In addition to the static melody in the alto voice and active repetitive figuration in the accompanying instruments, the basso continuo loses its driving harmonic force, either fulfilling a pedal function (this figure is used throughout the aria, see especially mm. 27–30 [Figures 8 and 9], as well as parallel settings in mm. 64–67 and 80–83 [not shown]) or dropping out altogether on the text “*in der Stille*” (cp. mm. 19–22 [Figures 5 and 6] and 72–75 [Figures 10 and 11]). The solo voice often sustains a stable tone in a low or medium range (cp. mm. 28–30 and 72–80), allowing for expressive changes of dynamics, timbre, or color. Again, each of these compositional decisions has a statistically significant parallel in the database findings. It should be
stressed that Bach’s setting of *Stille* was by no means a unique occurrence, as similar settings of the concept are to be found in the works of his contemporaries throughout the Lutheran musical culture.

After having identified a clear pattern of musical-textual communication, a musical semantic element, we can begin to ask into its meaning. The figure’s compositional elements, though scaled back, by no means evoke an “emptiness.” On the contrary, the rapid repeated notes on tense harmonies in the accompanying voices act as an intensification, drawing the listener in. In the context of this psalm text one could understand this image of *Stille* to be influenced by the silence-oriented Spiritualists and Pietists as a turning-away from the noise of the world, turning instead toward silence, concentration, and God. It could also be read through the lens of Bach’s orthodox Lutheran employers, as the silent fervor in which jubilant prayer takes place. While it is clear that this musical-textual figure bears a communicative element, further research and deeper contextualization is necessary in order to approach its meaning. This is especially true as the meaning of this psalm text was subject to debate even among 18th-century theologians. In Johann Hunger’s 1721 *Biblisches Real-Lexicon* he describes his reservations in providing a definitive interpretation:

Diese Worte Davids sind fast allen Auslegern so schwer gefallen, daß sie nicht gewußt, wie sie sich heraus wickeln, und sie erklären sollen; auch die Hebräer nicht. [These words of David have been so difficult for almost every interpreter, that they did not know how to deal with them, nor how to explain them; not even the Hebrews].

In contrast, Bach’s *Loben* (seen here in mm. 23–25 [Figure 7] and 31–32 [Figure 9]) is predictably represented with quick melodic figures, dotted rhythms, an effervescent basso continuo, and jubilant melismatic passage work in the solo voice and obbligato oboes. The musical setting is unmistakably celebratory. Bach’s setting of *Loben* seems to correlate especially well with the decidedly public version of worship approved by his employers. This triumphant *Loben*, “making a joyful noise unto the Lord,” is consistently presented in combination with a thinning of the accompaniment texture. Bach thus further emphasizes the lightness of *Loben*’s melodic motion in contrast to the static omnipresence of *Stille*.

Working with such distinct and recognizable musical figures, Bach is also able to juxtapose elements of the two opposing concepts temporally. The *Loben* melisma in the voice (mm. 84–85 [Figure 11]; see also mm. 7–8 and 23–24) is accompanied by an impressive stepwise ascent over the oboe’s entire two-octave range, while the relevant accompanying oboe voice also has a very active figure—repeated 16th notes at a mostly fixed pitch, reminiscent of the static activity characterizing the figure of *Stille*. In this way, Bach could be understood to be layering the noise and activity of *Loben* on top of the intense silence of *Stille*, corresponding to the Augustinian view of silence as an active form of *schweigen* (remaining silent). Augustine (and thus Luther, 17 Johann Hunger, *Biblisches Real-Lexicon* […] (Chemnitz: Conrad Stößeln, 1721), 1481–82.
v.s.) viewed silence not as something which commences after one has finished speaking, but rather as an ever-present state, a silent and parallel anti-speech which can be heard when speech is interrupted.18

Bach’s “textbook example” of Stille is somewhat misleading in its near-comprehensive exhibition of all the musical factors significant to this musical-textual pattern (here summarized: rests or a pedal tone in the bass line, a note sustained in a low register in the solo voice, a generally reduced texture, and rapid harmonically-stable figuration in the accompaniment). As shown in Table 1, most other examples use only a selection of these factors to communicate Stille. This communicative pattern could therefore be understood, rather than a fixed formula, as a constellation of various compositional options available to a composer in order to express a specific textual concept (along with any associated extra-textual meanings or associations) using the language of music.

For the purposes of this article I have limited my discussion to the musical-textual expression of Stille as a noun in a sacred context. However, the communicative pattern described above is only one example of the many figures used to illustrate the several types, terms, and environments of Stille. Additional figures I have isolated, using my database as a tool of quantitative analysis, include a figure used to underline textual imperatives of “Stille!”, a musical-textual figure consistently associated with the term Ruhe, and an interesting division in the use and settings of various terms of silence in sacred and secular environments.

In conclusion

Musical semiology is a notoriously hermeneutical discipline. However, using the methodology I have developed it becomes possible to use quantitative methods to approach the consistent musical patterns of communication that composers employed to present their interpretations of certain textual elements. Recognizing musical patterns used to accompany text represents a “reverse engineering” of compositional intention and offers a unique insight into sub-textual levels of understanding, to which we would not otherwise have access. My creation and use of a database to carry out a meta-analysis of individual setting analyses of single textual elements in order to determine representative semiotic patterns is an original contribution to the musical discourse. A similar method exists in the visual discourse in the field of iconography, the analysis of historic visual imagery, 19 although this method has never before been applied to music at this scale. This method, by extension, could thus be called musical iconography. Using one example, the textual element Stille, I tested a significant body of works and uncovered various elements making up the musical vocabulary of the set and consistent musical semiotic in which composers were working. As with any quan-

19 See the ICONCLASS database, a massive classification system recording the presence of attributive individual elements in a visual composition: www.iconclass.nl.
titative method, informed interpretation is indispensable. Being able to use this quantitative approach in addition to conventional qualitative analysis strategies provides a degree of objectivity that is more universal than the “gut feeling” of performers and provides evidence to support or refute theoretical hypotheses.

By applying quantitative methods to settings of text in music, patterns of representation emerge which challenge our understanding of seemingly self-explanatory concepts. By itself, the textual element *Stille* could be thought of as a certain state of calm or absence. However, when set to music in a sacred context the concept takes on a consistently and surprisingly active aspect. This discrepancy gives us a unique and perhaps surprising view into the composer’s understanding of the concept and offers an opportunity for interdisciplinary contextualization.

As I continue my research I am aware that I am exploring new ground. It is my hope that the indications of my research and description of my statistical method will generate discussion on this topic and help refine the method, which is in its initial stages of development. The absence of precedent for this methodology in historical musicology opens up the possibility of establishing *musical iconography* as a truly unique interdisciplinary field.

![Figure 5: BWV 120/1, mm. 17–19.20](image)

Figure 6: BWV 120/1, mm. 20–22.

Figure 7: BWV 120/1, mm. 23–25.
Figure 8: BWV 120/1, mm. 26–29.

Figure 9: BWV 120/1, mm. 30–32.
Figure 10: BWV 120/1, mm. 72–74.

Figure 11: BWV 120/1, mm. 75–77.
Figure 12: BWV 120/1, mm. 84–86.
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