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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).

2 For a recent overview, see David Howes, *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses in Society* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

3 Lars Elleström, “Modalities of Media: A Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations,” in *Media Borders, Intermediality and Multimodality*, ed. Lars Elleström (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 14.

4 Elleström, “Modalities of Media,” 16.

5 Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 279.

6 Georges Poulet, “Phenomenology of Reading,” *New Literary History* 1, no. 1 (1969): 61.

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 H  l  ne 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 H  l  ne 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

7 Nicholas Cook, “Beyond Music: Mashup, Multimedia Mentality, and Intellectual Property,” in *The Oxford Handbook of New Audiovisual Aesthetics*, ed. John Richardson, Claudia Gorbman, and Carol Vernallis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 55.

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).

9 E. M. Forster, *Howards End*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (London: Penguin Books, 1983), 44–47.

10 H  l  ne Grimaud, *Variations sauvages* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 2003), 58.

11 Cook, “Beyond Music,” 53.

12 Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics,” in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 353.

reconstruct in as authentic a manner as possible, is hereby confined to the composer's imagination and cultural, artistic and political influences.¹³ 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,¹⁴ or as a narrow form of intermediality, as Irina O. Rajewsky defines it.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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,"¹⁷ and who has a full "intermedial knowledge"¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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.

13 Edward Pearsall and Byron Almèn, "The Divining Rod: On Imagination, Interpretation, and Analysis," in *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, ed. Byron Almèn and Edward Pearsall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3.

14 Calvin S. Brown, *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1948); Steven Paul Scher, ed., *Literatur und Musik: Ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines kompositorischen Grenzgebietes* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1984), 14.

15 "[T]he given media-product thematizes, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means." Irina O. Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," *Intermédiatités: Histoire et théorie des arts, des lettres et des techniques / Intermediality: History and Theory of the Arts, Literature and Technologies* 6 (2005): 53.

16 Peter Kivy, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

17 Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 72.

18 Werner Wolf, "Narratology and Media(lity): The Transmedial Expansion of a Literary Discipline and Possible Consequences," in *Current Trends in Narratology*, ed. Greta Olson (Göttingen: De Gruyter, 2011), 155.

19 Walter Bernhart, "Aesthetic Illusion in Instrumental Music?" in *Immersion and Distance: Aesthetic Illusion in Literature and Other Media*, ed. Werner Wolf, Walter Bernhart, and Andreas Mahler (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 370–72.

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 inter-medial and contextual relations between artists and their artistic production on the

20 Emilie Crapoulet, “From Intermedial Music to Interactive Multimedia Event: The Performance of Ravel’s *Miroirs*,” *Cultura, Lenguaje y Representación / Culture, Language and Representation* 6 (2008): 121–36.

21 Crapoulet, “Intermedial Music,” 134.

22 Vikram Seth, *An Equal Music* (London: Phoenix House, 1999), 5.

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-

25 Cairns Craig, *Associationism and the Literary Imagination: From the Phantasmal Chaos* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 19.

26 Bernhart, “Aesthetic Illusion,” 378.

27 See Michael E. Ravicz, Jennifer R. Melcher, and Nelson Y.-S. Kiang, “Acoustic Noise during Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging,” *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 108, no. 4 (2000).

28 Ruth Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening: Absorption, Dissociation and Trancing* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011); Tom F. M. Ter Bogt, Juul Mulder, Quinten A. W. Raaijmakers, and Saoirse Nic Gabhain, “Moved by Music: A Typology of Music Listeners,” *Psychology of Music* 39, no. 2 (2010).

29 Peter J. Rabinowitz, “Chord and Discourse: Listening through the Written Word,” in *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, ed. Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 41.

30 Werner Wolf, “Aesthetic Illusion,” in *Immersion and Distance: Aesthetic Illusion in Literature and Other Media*, ed. Werner Wolf, Walter Bernhart, and Andreas Mahler (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 29.

31 Wolf, “Aesthetic Illusion,” 27 and 31.

32 Isabel Wagner, “Aeolian Harps and Creators of Acoustic Spaces: Gert Jonke’s Self-reflexive Soundscapes,” in *Time and Space in Words and Music*, ed. Mario Dunkel, Emily Petermann, and Burkhard Sauerwald (Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang, 2012); Emily Petermann, *The Musical Novel: Imitation of Musical Structure, Performance, and Reception in Contemporary Fiction* (New York: Camden House, 2014).

erature disseminates positions of musical interpretation. According to Wagner, the evocation 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 music, in which the integration of space in musical composition and interpretation challenges 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 presence of some variety of music on a formal, structural level; any explicit thematization of it is strictly optional.³⁶

Petermann’s study therefore only “includes an implicit examination of the [idiosyncratic] 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 propose 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 human 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 associations structure everyday music perception.

33 Wagner, “Aeolian Harps,” 53–57.

34 Petermann, *The Musical Novel*, 24.

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 Correlates of Perceived and Imagined Musical Timbre,” *Neuropsychologia* 42 (2004): 1281–82.

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.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ 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,⁴² 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.

41 John Neubauer, "Tales of Hoffmann and Others on Narrativizations of Instrumental Music," in *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media*, ed. Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, and Erik Hedling (Amsterdam: Rodopi 1997), 117–18.

42 Lydia Goehr also remarks that "one [might] read Forster's description as a critique of 'unserious' listening practices in the concert hall." "How to Do More With Words: Two Views of (Musical) Ekphrasis," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40, no. 2 (2010): 407.

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 encircle 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)

43 Forster, *Howards End*, 45.

Example 1: Beethoven, *Fünfte Symphonie*, 37.

Example 2: Beethoven, *Fünfte Symphonie*, 37–38.

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."

Je n'ai aucune nostalgie de l'enfance. Tout au long des années qui ont passé, je n'ai jamais éprouvé le sentiment du paradis perdu mais plutôt de celui d'un *paradis à trouver*, ailleurs, en attente. [...] [C]e désir d'ailleurs était en mon être quoique en creux, il était comme un manque impérieux, et cette indicible présence, son *ineffable absence* me tourmentaient, me *hantaient*.⁴⁵

In the second passage, where Hélène has already identified this “ghostly paradise” as the music, the score of Chopin’s etudes, 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 révélait 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*.⁴⁶

The action is then reversed, and instead of the music, it is now Hélène who is envelopped 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.”⁴⁷

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).⁴⁸ 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. [...] [M]oreover, 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 etudes 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 beginning 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 experience (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 perception 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 triangle," 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. "Meaning is lodged in our experience of the present";⁴⁹ it is based upon connotative meaning 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, providing 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.

49 Jann Pasler, *Writing through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 51.