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## MUSICAL METAPHORS AND EPISTEMES THE CASE OF THE CLASSICAL STYLE IN THE AUSTRIA OF THE EMPRESS MARIA THERESA

### METAPHORS IN MUSIC AND EXPRESSION OF MEANINGS

There are questions about music which intrigue listeners in all times, like whether musical meanings have changed through the ages, and if yes, are we able to portray them and to say in general anything essential about music? Are we prisoners of metaphors when we try to reach the non-verbal reality of the tones?

From these issues, a lot of observations, theories, and comments open, starting as early as from the eternal problem, whether music is communication, and if we admit it, then what is involved there? The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss arrived at his famous statement in his *Mythologiques* that music is language without meanings: “La musique, c’est le langage moins le sens.”<sup>1</sup> This argument has been repeated by music semioticians many times. Because music is a kind of deficient language, we feel irresistible desire during a concert to bring along our own meanings there. Yet, which kind of meanings? As it has already been stated, the speech about music often takes place via metaphors. The writer Roland Barthes said about music: “seule la métaphore est exacte;”<sup>2</sup> and he added

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<sup>1</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologiques*, vol. 1, *Le cru et le cuit* (Paris: Omnibus, 1971), 579.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, *Œuvres complètes I-V*, nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et présentée par Éric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 524.

that one has to “*toujours penser l’écriture en termes de musique.*”<sup>3</sup> I shall return to this issue.

Metaphors surround music. Albeit music is an autonomous art and functions according to its own laws, it cannot afford without a verbal discourse. The metaphors are not used only by music listeners but also composers. The return to the musical hermeneutics among contemporary composers is obvious. One only needs to read the program comments in any modern music festival in which the avant-garde composers try to make their work understandable. I make a reference to the recent *Musica Nova* festival in Helsinki (March 2023; quotations taken from the program of the Festival):

Heartbreaking acoustic moments blend together. The work investigates the search for an endless acoustic enjoyment, prolonged ecstasy in pure clarity (Sara Glonjarić on *Pure Bliss*, 2022).

One of my greatest inspirators has been the Irish poet Dorothy Molloy, whose output I have used. I have been taken by a feeling that I am in a closed space where the air is filled with dust. First you cannot move. Darkness covers all. Little by little you see the particles in the air and colours, and you understand that even the slightest ray of light can change the experience of an apparently immobile world (Clara Iannotta on *a stir among the stars, a making way*, 2020).

Cello (in the flute concerto) refers to the harpy of the classic mythology, a creature whom the gods have sent to return the peace, if needed by force (Olga Neuwirth on *Magic Flu-idity for solo flute and typewriter*, 2018).

*Vampyrtheone* [1995], the name of the work evokes a fictive monster shimmering in the darkness of the deep sea, *Vampyrotheuris Infernalis* who lives in the profundity of the dark ocean and binds its octopuses like pudding type organs without any supporting bones, around everything (Olga Neuwirth).<sup>4</sup>

However, we have to remember what Charles Rosen stated in his work *The Romantic Generation* in connection with Robert Schumann: the knowledge about a composer’s psychology does not increase the understanding of his music.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Roland Bartes, *La Préparation du roman I et II. Cours et séminaires au Collège de France (1978-1979 et 1979-1980)*, texte établi, annoté et présenté par Nathalie Léger (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 321.

<sup>4</sup> *Klangforum Wien: Elena Schwarz, Musica Nova Helsinki*, March 1–12, 2023 (festival program), [https://musicanova.fi/app/uploads/sites/4/2023/02/MnH\\_kasihjelmaA5\\_klangforum.pdf](https://musicanova.fi/app/uploads/sites/4/2023/02/MnH_kasihjelmaA5_klangforum.pdf). All translations by the author.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (Expanded Edition) (New York–London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 646-710.

Nothing seems to have changed since the golden time of musical hermeneutics at the beginning of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The ideas of Arnold Schering in his work *Beethoven und die Dichtung*<sup>6</sup> are still current (although they were already criticized earlier: in Finland, e.g. in the doctoral thesis by Nils-Eric Ringbom in the 1950s<sup>7</sup>). Schering namely claimed that in the background of every work by Ludwig van Beethoven, there was some literary text, from Friedrich Schiller's *Maria Stuart* (A-flat major sonata, Op. 110), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* (*Waldstein* sonata), to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre* and its funerals of Mignon (7th symphony, allegretto movement).

Nevertheless, the theory of Schering was not quite that naive. He said a literary program constituted so to say the scaffolds of the composition, which could be released and forgotten when the work was completed. In Finland, the monumental two-part tractate *Der Stimmungsgehalt der Symphonien von Jean Sibelius*<sup>8</sup> represented just such hermeneutics which was not accepted by the composer (Sibelius) nor music scholars, although Krohn's discourse was totally acceptable in the German context. Krohn visited Ainola, home of Sibelius, with his study, and Sibelius wrote in his diary: "The day was spoiled."<sup>9</sup>

The extreme case of metaphors' use was, of course, the program music and symphonic poem as well as symphony. The idea world of a composer – is it transmitted by music and can it be described verbally? If this takes place, what is involved is a kind of translation, which has been investigated by the Polish musicologists Małgorzata Grajter<sup>10</sup> and Małgorzata Gamrat.<sup>11</sup> As early as Ferruccio Busoni said that the first translation or transcription occurred when a composer wrote down his thoughts on the music sheet.

Richard Wagner had naturally much to say about these topics, and he did it quite willingly in his pamphlets and autobiography. Once he said to his wife Cosima, who kept a diary: "The musician who does nothing but write music from morning

<sup>6</sup> Arnold Schering, *Beethoven und die Dichtung: mit einer Einleitung zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Beethovendeutung* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1936).

<sup>7</sup> Nils-Eric Ringbom, *Über die Deutbarkeit der Tonkunst* (Helsinki: Edition Fazer, 1955).

<sup>8</sup> Ilmari Krohn, *Der Stimmungsgehalt der Symphonien von Jean Sibelius* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1945).

<sup>9</sup> Jean Sibelius, *Dagbok 1909–1944*, ed. Fabian Dahlström (Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland; Stockholm: Bokförlaget Atlantis, 2005), 169.

<sup>10</sup> Małgorzata Grajter, *Applying Translation Theory to Musicological Research*, *Numanities – Arts and Humanities in Progress* 27 (Cham: Springer, 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Małgorzata Gamrat ed., *Translating Human Inner Life In and Between the Arts. A Semiotic Approach to the Emotions and the Process of Human Translation* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025).

till night, entirely ignoring, the world of ideas, must be an ox—he is missing far more than those who, knowing nothing of music, observe the rest of the world.”<sup>12</sup> This was said naturally with all respect to cows (*Vieh*), since Wagner was a great defender of animals.

Yet, the perpetual paradox of Wagner was that he was not able to fulfill his ideas and particularly his theories in his music, and perhaps to his luck, since otherwise, we would not go to listen to him. Wagner namely wrote theory treaties with the same logic as he wrote his operas. It was only bad that in philosophy, it did not function. As little he was able to analyze conceptually, how he in fact composed and he with full reason abstained from commenting on, mostly. Accordingly, he was not worried about the music producing processes but about the meanings linked to them. He would have been extremely happy with the text machines of modern opera houses and their translations.

But neither a composer nor an artist in general can even determine which significations and ideas listeners get from his/her works. Goethe said to his secretary Eckermann that in his *Faust*, many had seen something which he himself had never thought of. The idea of an artwork as the realization of the intentions of an artist is a classic example of the so-called intentional fallacy. The hero of the *Ein Heldenleben* by Richard Strauss is not Strauss himself, but – what we call in literary theory – an implied author.

However, metaphors at performers of music and their teachers occupy a central position. Performance and interpretation always start from signification, isotopy; if it is wrong, nothing can be done. If for instance orchestra does not understand the “isotopy” of a composition, it is useless to say: “play here louder, here more silently, here faster, there more slowly”. The mistake is on a deeper level of meaning.

Musicians are on different levels verbally or capable of expressing complex musical situations. It was told about the Finnish conductor Paavo Berglund that when he wished to get out of the orchestra some overwhelmingly impressive colours, he exclaimed finally: “Molto Rubens”. In an extremely dramatic moment, the legendary conductor Georg Schnéevoigt shouted: “Get all mad! But it is not always that easy”. When Serge Koussevitzky conducted an orchestra in Paris, he was dissatisfied with the manner a cellist played the interval f-c. “But I played just those notes,” said the cellist. “Non, c’était entre les notes” [no, it was between the notes]. (Koussevitzky had always difficulties with his French; he said in Paris to his orchestra “Vous êtes très vertueux” – he meant that they were all great virtuosos, but he

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<sup>12</sup> Martin Gregor-Dellin, and Dietrich Mack, eds., *Cosima Wagner’s Diaries*, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 384.

confused the word “virtuoso” with “virtuous”). A contemporary Finnish conductor Jukka-Pekka Saraste said to a drummer after a work by Pierre Boulez: “It must be tramparampparallalaa.” The drummer: “But I just played tramparampparallalaa!” Saraste: “Yes, but you have to think it differently!” A teacher said to his pupil at Sibelius Academy: “You play like a mimosa!” What did he mean by this? About another famous pianist, his colleague said: “When he took only one note from the piano, the fate was present there.”

What number of meanings is there in the music itself and its interpretation traditions? About Schumann’s *Träumerei*, Op. 15, No. 7, Alfred Cortot said to his pupil: “Il ne faut pas le jouer, il faut le rêver!” [Don’t play it, dream it!]. Frédéric Chopin is saturated by such advice, to the one who knows the tradition. In Paris, it was said that his *Fantaisie in F minor*, Op. 49 had a passionate theme of George Sand, and the opening march portrayed the Poles as prisoners in Siberia. In Sibelius’ *Violin Concerto in D minor*, Op. 47, its finale has been described by Olin Downes as a polonaise of the ice bears. In Bloomington, the famous violin pedagogue Josef Gingold kept a master class and supervised a young Korean violinist to correct interpretations: “Imagine the winter in Finland, the darkness, snow, spruces, the whole country which is full of a brooding atmosphere – but it is noble brooding.”<sup>13</sup> The side theme of the first movement is Finno-Ugrian by its expression. If the soloist knows it, he/she plays it differently, and “correctly”, what at least the Finns can recognize. In the same way, *Lemminkäinen’s Return* is something in which Valery Gergiev and the orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre have never attained the right character (an essential philosophical question which I shall deal with in the following is: are the metaphors already **epistemes** of music or do they provide us with signs of the epistemes looming behind – as “light” as they may sound).

If we still return to France, then the harpsichord piece by François Couperin *Les Barricades mystérieuses* is comparable to the paintings of masquerades by Antoine Watteau, like for instance his *Le Pèlerinage à l’île de Cythère*. Later, *L’isle joyeuse* by Claude Debussy is even that a reference to Watteau and to the intertextual field of French culture. Music is full of motifs, themes which contain cultural and aesthetic meanings. They have to be learned, but how? These significations blend intimately to the signifiers of music itself, that they cannot be separated from them. Sometimes interpreters of music invent those signifiers by themselves. Leif Segerstam, a Finnish conductor, once introduced his theory of Sibelius’ *6th Symphony in D minor*, Op. 104. To his mind, its principal motif was e-d-d to which one could hear the

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<sup>13</sup> Gingold interviewed by E. Tarasti, in the spring term 1987 at The School of Music, Bloomington, Indiana University.

“answer”: d-e-d, which is in Swedish *Är det det?* and its response *Det är det!* (“Is it it?” “Yes, it is it”, this pun is almost untranslatable!).

Yet, there is also much cultural knowledge about music which we can take seriously. The deceptive cadence at the beginning of *Piano Sonata in E-flat major “Les Adieux”* by Beethoven (No. 26, Op. 81a) makes it instantly romantic, it becomes farewell. What makes Chopin’s *Nocturne in D flat major* (Op. 27, No. 2) something special, was asked by one professor of medicine, who was also a musician. The title, of course, refers to the genre of nocturne, nightly atmosphere. Or for instance in Wagner, there is the awakening of Brünnhilde in *Siegfried*: the harmonies E minor and C major and then E minor and D minor; yet the same motif is repeated at the opening of *Götterdämmerung* from *Der Ring des Nibelungen*: E-flat minor – C-flat major: this is the *düstere Abblendung des Klanges* (the sombre darkening of the sound) of Theodor Adorno, whereby he characterized the whole late-Vienna school.

Moreover, the music terms – those verbal indicators making their own world – are in the art music mostly Italian, but beginning from romanticism – more and more in national languages, for instance in German (Beethoven) or in French (cf. Debussy). However, sometimes one does not need a language at all. The manner of Koussevitzky to start conducting was hard to the one not familiar with his technics. He only left his hands descend slowly. A young violinist, new at Boston symphony orchestra, wondered: “When do we have to start?” His more experienced colleague in the side helped him: “I close my eyes and when I open, all others already play, and then I join them!”

Nevertheless, a speech about music is not always without problems to musicians. Charles Rosen once had to play Beethoven’s *Piano Sonata in C minor*, Op. 111 at the Imatra congress (The 9th World Congress of Semiotics, 2007). In the previous day, at dinner, I said how at *École Normale de Musique de Paris* the piano teacher Jules Gentil advised to take the first octave by two hands, by their thumbs: that would hit certainly the right keys. It was a mistake: when Rosen started to play, the octave failed, and the tempo got wild, Rosen then interrupted, turned to the audience and said: “I am sorry, it is going too fast, I start again!” He did so, but then the right *Sturm und Drang* quality was lost. From this, we learn: before the performance, one must not say anything to the artist!

I once had to accompany Koussevitzky’s *Valse miniature* to a young Polish double bass virtuoso. The work contains a cadential passage, about which we debated in the rehearsal whether it is vocal or instrumental. On stage then, it happened so that double bass player jumped over the whole passage by mistake, which I quickly noticed and reacted, so that the audience, however, did not notice anything.

Beethoven’s *Appassionata*, Op. 57 must have those ideas of power according to John Ruskin, i.e., struggle with material, otherwise it is not a correct *Appassio-*

*nata*. For the main motif of the finale of Beethoven's *Sonate pathétique*, Op. 13, Debussy's piano teacher Antoine François Marmontel advised: "Imagine there the words *O pauvre mère, douleur amère*, and you find the right phrasing."

In Schumann's *Fantasie in C major*, Op. 17, there is a quotation from a poem *Die Gebüſche* by August W. Schlegel "Durch alle Töne tönet im bunten Erdentraum ein leiser Ton gezogen..." Later, people thought that the "silent tone" was the interval g-c which was a motif of Clara Schumann. Then at the end there is that citation from Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* song (Op. 98; text by Alois Isidor Jeitteles), at the end of Schumann's first movement. For me, a long time ago, when I played it, that silent motif was rather a reference to Goethe's poem *Und alles Drängen, alles Ringen, ist ewige Ruh im Gott dem Herrn* from *Xenien* 6. Moreover, the third movement of that *Fantasie* is for me the end scene of *Faust II*, in the mountains, in its gravitation less, floating space where the angels carry Faust's immortal soul. Such hermeneutics can be, of course, considered completely subjective, unless it is supported by information about the genesis of the work. Yet, if the association is offered by a person who is familiar with the culture and internalized its principles, one does not need any other proof.

In any case, there must be a lot of cultural knowledge in order to interpret correctly the concealed meanings of a composition. Sometimes even quite explicit indications can be challenging, like the French terminology at Ernest Chausson and Reynaldo Hahn: *cédez, retenu, élargissez, augmentez* – what you have to augment? Tempo? Dynamics? Sound? What about Brazilian music: Ernesto Nazareth may write advice in his piano tangos: *gingando*. It is in Portuguese, but I needed to visit a specialist in Rio de Janeiro before its meaning was opened. The director of the Institute for African studies, Aloysio de Alencar Pinto, a pianist himself, clarified: *gingando* means the rhythmic subtleties characteristic to Black people. Look at small boys who drum on street on empty banana boxes with their palms.

Lost meanings are their own world. For instance, the significations of baroque affect the doctrine and theological connotations which were still familiar to the listeners and performers of the time. One may think for instance of the *Fugue in C-sharp minor* of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I*. The theme makes a sign of the cross. Moreover, is it silent, contemplative or loud music? Sviatoslav Richter interprets it as mysticism. However, the Viennese piano professor Bruno Seidlhofer said: "if Bach writes something for five parts, it cannot be anything quite silent. The chromatic theme of the F minor *Fugue* is a kind of 'row' and in the middle section, it dives up twice like an angel blowing to a horn and declaring the end or beginning of the world." Have such meanings disappeared? Triple rhythm and dotted rhythm blend together at Chopin following the old school of harpsichord playing.



Must we play the Busoni's arrangement of Bach's D minor *Chaconne* in the same tempo of a strict chaconne since the beginning to the end? What about Strauss who said: "Wenn man schreibt schnell, spielen sie noch zweimal schneller!" [if you write fast, please play twice as fast].

Altogether by reading literature in which music is dealt with, one often gets already close to the mysteries of tones. I recommend to my students and all the following package – Marcel Proust: *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Hermann Hesse: *Das Glasperlenspiel*, Thomas Mann: *Der Zauberberg*; *Buddenbrooks: Verfall einer Familie*; *Doktor Faustus. Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde*, Franz Werfel: *Verdi: Roman der Oper*, Robert Musil: *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Romain Rolland: *Jean-Christophe*, George Sand: *Consuelo*, E.T.A. Hoffmann: *Kater Murr*, Goethe: *Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre*.

Proust portrayed music more profoundly than most musicologists, although he did not possess any theoretical music education. In the background stood his friend Hahn, a composer, albeit their musical tastes separated them: Proust was a Wagnerian and Hahn – anti-Wagnerian. The climax of Proust's music descriptions is the passage in the volume 5 *La Prisonnière* about a concert at the salon of Madame Verdurin.<sup>14</sup> Its most essential contribution to a semiotician is its view on the nature of musical communication. Namely in the communication by sounds, there is no center at all to the mind of Proust! If we try to interpret it with the model by the Swedish musicologist and music semiotician Ingmar Bengtsson concerning the chain of musical communication *Den musikaliska kommunikationskedjan* in his classical work *Musikvetenskap. En översikt* [Musicology. An Overview],<sup>15</sup> the messages do not go from left to right from sender to receiver but across all the members of the model. The radical end result is that there is nothing like a musical object. The center is when the work, when its performers, when the structure of composition, when its aesthetics, when its genesis.

In fact, in that Parisian salon no one understands anything of the Vinteuil composer, but the audience only pretends to understand it. "It is very difficult," they can exclaim at best. The only person who by her expressions, gestures and stature wants to show understanding is Madame Verdurin herself, that "goddess of Wagnerism and migraine."<sup>16</sup> In fact, writers enjoy playing with ignorance. One story illustrates how in Vienna, the lady holding a salon talked with a visiting famous violinist: "Welche

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<sup>14</sup> Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, vol. 5, *La Prisonnière*, 14th edition (Paris: Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 1923), 62-85.

<sup>15</sup> Ingmar Bengtsson, *Musikvetenskap. En översikt* (Stockholm: Norstedt & Söner, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> Marcel Proust, *The Prisoner* (Newcomb Livraria Press, 2023), 222.



Sonate wollen Sie Hören, A moll oder C moll?" The lady answered: "Spielen sie so oft wie sie wollen" because she heard in Viennese dialect: A moll = *Einmal*, and C Moll = *Zehn mal* (A minor = once, C minor = ten times).

"When does the next swan come?" asked someone at a loge of the Paris opera house during *Lohengrin*. How is the case with the *petit phrase*, small phrase in Vinteuil's sonata which is never revealed by Proust; moreover, his comments on music concern a work which never existed, except in his phantasy. The musical prose of Proust is Wagnerian. And as said, Wagner's philosophical prose is again musical like opera. Yet, Proust was quite right when he said that every musician is in search for his lost fatherland. "La musique est la fleur de la terre même," said the French writer Georges Jean-Aubry.<sup>17</sup>

At the end, how do we speak and write about music? Of which nature is in this case the metalanguage whereby we speak about another "language?" If music is a story, narration, can it be translated into verbal expression? Sometimes not: the opening horn motif with its empty intervals of a fifth and fourth at the beginning of Sibelius' *Symphony no. 5 in E-flat major*, Op. 82, leaves the listener to wait for something because it is an archetype of gap/fill,<sup>18</sup> and the answer is heard in the climax of the finale, when it is filled by a scale to the tonic. What is involved, is a narrative arc.

What about the fate motif of the beginning of the Beethoven's *Symphony no. 5 in C minor*, Op. 67 and its eighth-note pause? The motif must not be performed as a triplet but expressly an incomplete *Gestalt*. That empty pause is needed later when the *Gestalt* is filled decisively into a perfect shape. Moreover, the expansion of the horn motif in the finale of the symphony as Hans von Bülow had the courage to do, produces an effect which is similar as later in the 9th symphony: "Seid umschlungen, Millionen!" We are permitted to do this *ritardando*.<sup>19</sup>

Is music at the end a communication? Not in the same sense as verbal, in which words have certain fixed meanings. *Ekfrasis* denotes that by one art, we speak about another (see studies by Siglind Bruhn et al.), see for instance my essay on Proust's and Hahn's work *Portraits des peintres*.<sup>20</sup> But have the words we use assumed new meanings? A great amount of very *cliché* type utterances has expanded from media to writing about music, like in the concert programs and critics.

<sup>17</sup> Georges Jean-Aubry, *La Musique et les nations* (Paris: Les Éditions de la Sirène, 1922), 33.

<sup>18</sup> Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 130-31.

<sup>19</sup> Felix Weingartner, *On the Performance of Beethoven's Symphonies*, trans. Jessie Crosland (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1906), 80.

<sup>20</sup> Eero Tarasti, "Marcel Proustin ja Reynaldo Hahnin Portraits de peintres: ekfrasisen harjoitelma," *Synteesi: taiteidenvälisen tutkimuksen aikakauslehti* 40, no. 2-3 (2021): 6-26.

The musical metaphors in criticism are often upsettingly banal: This went under the skin, this was felt until the stomach, etc. One orchestra advertises itself: Do you want to experience something new? Hot feelings? Cold vibrations? Yet, is it interesting to anyone to know about the emotional or physiological state of a critic? The culture of media speakers has occupied the discourse about music in general.

Yet, the criticism has its own theory.<sup>21</sup> There is both the correspondence and coherence as well as pragmatic theory of the truth. A judgment about music is true if it corresponds to a musical fact, i.e., what one really heard; or it is true because the statement is supported by other utterances in the same discourse. Moreover, there is the pragmatic criterion. Some critic was famous for his funny and bitter estimates. But at whose cost?

#### CHANGE – WHAT HAS CHANGED?

It is a particular feature of Western classical music that it changes continuously. Therefore, it is under historical process unlike the music of the so-called archaic cultures (although their lack of history has been exaggerated).

In Finland, once in the 1980s, the first music research project was launched, funded by the Finnish Academy by the name “The change or rupture of music in the Finland of the industrialisation period.” As the basis was the hypothesis that when the society changes, then also music is transformed or vice versa – the change of music anticipates social changes (Platon); that was repeated by Jacques Attali, for example in his book *Bruits* (1977).

Yet, music can get detached from its context in the manner of José Ortega y Gasset: the art is separated from the human. It is perhaps the only way to now listen to for instance Dmitri Shostakovich or Sofia Gubaidulina; I heard Gubaidulina’s *Violin Concerto* in a concert of Berliner Philharmoniker, and this way of listening functioned: I did not think of the Soviet Union. Once, the same orchestra performed Gustav Mahler’s *Symphony No. 8 in E-flat major* and Arnold Schoenberg’s *Ein Überlebender aus Warschau* one after the other as if Mahler would have forecasted the future events of the Second World War. Is it correct? Music is never limited within its conditions of creation.

The theological meanings of baroque concerning affects and rhetorical figures have disappeared from our collective music memory. Katabasis and anabasis move-

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<sup>21</sup> See Eero Tarasti, *Musiikin todellisuudet. Säveltaiteen ensyklopedia* (Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 2003), 1-4.

ments up and down meant once: Christ ascended to the Heavens, or Christ descended to the realm of death.

If everything changes, is there anything like an authentic interpretation? Is there for instance authentic Bach? In the work *Conversations avec Pablo Casals*, there is a chapter about Bach.<sup>22</sup> Casals abruptly denied efforts to search for an authentic style: “L’exécutant de Bach doit précisément se méfier du souci de reconstitution historique.” The reason for this is that such an attitude prevents a spontaneous expression. “La valeur strictement musicale est supérieure à la valeur instrumentale.”<sup>23</sup> There is only music, and Bach’s music is universal; when one plays it, one is allowed to use all musical and instrumental means. Basically, Bach, who knew everything, could not write a note, even the most insignificant one, without that note being transcendental.<sup>24</sup> Authenticity is therefore our construction, fiction; authenticity is not a reconstruction of something “original” as if all that had happened in the music history in the meantime would not have existed.

One may think again of Wagner; there is no authentic Wagner staging or style as such, basing upon the fact how he directed his own works in Bayreuth. The eyewitness testimonies by Heinrich Porges and Richard Fricke tell us about how Wagner changed everything every day as well as expressed himself so indistinctively and in an inarticulate manner that no one knew what he finally wanted.

Wagner’s operas: are they symphony or theater? This is the central question. In 1882, he promised to compose a symphony to Cosima for each of her birthdays, so that he could *frei musikalisch ausrausen* there, rage musically freely without the constraints set by the drama. But there is no other composer than Wagner who was misunderstood as much. The concept by Vladimir Jankélévitch, *méconnaissance*,<sup>25</sup> misunderstanding, fits him perfectly well.

Let it be how it is, history is always present: we do not listen to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart as a document of the 18th-century history, but as a music which talks to us directly, because it has the aesthetic contemporaneity, *ästhetische Gegenwartigkeit* as Carl Dahlhaus already said (I shall return to this). At the end, when we speak about history in music, one may ask: does it exist in the music itself or in the arrangement of musical events into a narrative called history?

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<sup>22</sup> Joseph M. Corredor, *Conversations avec Pablo Casals. Souvenirs et opinions d’un musicien* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1955), 149-74.

<sup>23</sup> Corredor, 165.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Corredor, 149.

<sup>25</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Le je-ne-sais-quoi et le presque-rien*, vol. 2, *La méconnaissance. Le malentendu* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957).

Does the musical history stem from the inner development of music? Heinrich Schenker believed that it was based upon the *Urlinie* offered by the nature itself i.e., from a simple triad. Jacques Chailley, the professor of Musicology at Sorbonne University, continued this idea by the argument that the musical “development” followed the employment of the overtones and their continuously densifying intervals, and always in a faster time.

We can compare various music models during the times from Al-Farabi to Athanasius Kircher and Charles Burney, or John Hawkins to romanticism and modernism – and ultimately to John Cage, who came to the conclusion that there was no correct musical understanding anywhere, the tones “are” by themselves: “I do not want to force sounds to follow me ... I do not refuse melody. I refuse it even less when it produces itself.”<sup>26</sup> For Cage, music was not communication: “Each sound in it is so much the center of its own existence.”<sup>27</sup> This was his liberating aesthetics.

### MUSIC IS CULTURAL

As early as on a quite naive level of understanding the cultural nature of music is obvious, we start to approach the area of the **epistemes** as promised at the beginning of this essay.

Franz Schubert’s “*immer gemütlich!*” – this notion already contains something essential about the Viennese character. Hugo von Hofmannsthal wrote in his *Rosenkavalier*: “Leicht muß man sein: mit leichtem Herz und leichten Händen, halten und nehmen, halten und lassen... Die nicht so sind, die straft das Leben und Gott erbarmt sich ihrer nicht.”<sup>28</sup> But for a Viennese and German, there was something still more lighter – the French culture. A brilliant parody of France can be found at the Paris scene of *Die lustige Witwe* (1905) by Franz Lehar.

Only Frenchmen can, however, play with “good bad taste” (*bon mauvais goût*) beginning with Jacques Offenbach. Wagner confirmed: the national character of Frenchmen is revealed by *cancan*. Instead, Germans are always *tüchtig*, substantial, rooted in earth. *Andante* is the typically German tempo. Germans can write music as *Angst*. By tones, one can illustrate the Heideggerian *Scheitern*, collapse. Roberto Rossellini’s cinema *Germania anno zero* (1948) with its atonal music, portrays the soul of a small boy after the war.

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<sup>26</sup> John Cage, *For the Birds. John Cage in Conversation with Daniel Charles* (Boston–London: Marion Boyars, 1981), 87.

<sup>27</sup> Cage, 152.

<sup>28</sup> Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Der Rosenkavalier*, Projekt Gutenberg-De, accessed September 18, 2024, <https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/hofmanns/rosenkav/rosenkav.html>.

## FINALLY: ARE THERE EPISTEMES IN MUSIC?

All the above-mentioned examples are in fact psychic states of one musical subject, activities, acts; nevertheless, music is undeniably also social reality. What is involved is also always the manifestation of collective musical consciousness, when something significant happens in music. Now we come to that point of the text where an explicitly semiotic theory is brought on stage as a scheme to articulate and arrange the situation. I introduce here the zemic model by existential semiotics and its elaboration.<sup>29</sup> We get a series of concepts: zemic, sig-zemic and a new term to be launched here: “sig-epic-zemic.” It describes the epistemic level of the zemic.

Now we can further ponder again what is original in music, how it appears in the facts of music history. A year ago, I gave a lecture series on the canons of European music, and I am publishing it as an essay collection *Icons and Canons*.<sup>30</sup> One has to know icons and canons before they are decanonized – this practice is very fashionable nowadays.

Yet, behind the canon there is something else, and it is the **epistemic** level, to which the music under question is compared in order to distinguish the original from the unoriginal, authentic from inauthentic. Those moments when music is experienced as true, when one feels a truth there, are those in which the episteme is revealed (see Figure 1). Even this is Heideggerian!

For example, the musical *Scheitern* or collapse (not only shipwrecking) means the getting down of the unoriginal. Therefore, from musical canons, one has to pick up their hidden epistemes. From this again emerges newly the music history à la Foucault (cf. my earlier theory of cultural semicrisis as the oscillation of the epistemic level like the continental plates of an earthquake<sup>31</sup>).

We may assume that the zemic model *MIM2S2S1* is a universal, omnipresent structure. The persuasion of music is based upon its epistemic participation in reality. Truth may be concealed from *Moi* and *Soi*. The veridictory square appears as a particular case in which the truth manifests as a revelation, annunciation, as a transcendental supertruth: see the choir at the end of Bach’s *Matthäus-Passion*, after the death of Jesus, or the end of Wagner’s *Parsifal* where the text gets silent. What remained is a transfigured color in music (and maybe on stage).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Eero Tarasti, *Existential Semiotics* (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000); Eero Tarasti, ed., *Transcending Signs. Essays in the Existential Semiotics*, assistant editors S. Dasgupta, P. Forsell and A. Haukka (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2023).

<sup>30</sup> Eero Tarasti, *Ikonit ja kaanonit. Kirjoituksia kulttuuriperinnöstä* (Helsinki: ntamo, 2024).

<sup>31</sup> Eero Tarasti, *Sein und Schein: Explorations in Existential Semiotics* (Berlin–Munich–Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2015).

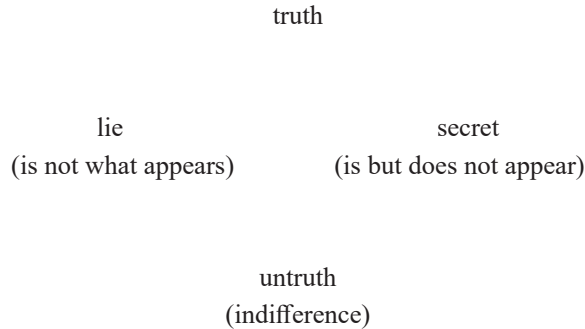


Figure 1. The veridictory square by Algirdas J. Greimas

The musical form takes place as its phenomenological-existential series of epistemic moments. Each culture, each community has its own epistemic scheme, upon which it selects the intonations of its music, *alles andere verbleibt am Rande*, all other remains in the side (said by Hans Eggebrecht, but see also Vladimír Karbusický's criticism). If music does not correspond to this epistemic model, it is passed by. But if the epistemic scheme changes later, can a certain music get back its "truth value?"

Therefore, the musical form must not be searched for (paradoxically!) in a musical form, its signifiers but in the psychic event of getting convinced. Examples: If *M1* does not flow freely but is obstructed by the topics of *S2*, say, is then *S2* a positive force, i.e., an evaluating aspect? Can a composer or *Moi2* create its own topics? See here the case of Heitor Villa-Lobos, e.g. in his works like *Choros* and *Bachianas Brasileiras* which are in favor of this.

Topics can serve as a social force (like Umberto Eco thought); see Sibelius' *Jägermarsch* or Wagner's *Meistersinger* as a topic of German patriotism and aesthetics, values (*S1*). BUT: this is a mistake; it is all comedy! Or what is involved is typically Jankélévitchian *méconnaissance*. Moreover, Chopin is a gold mine of topics.

The symphony form is *S2*, yet can *M2* change it? Note: Beethoven did not compose **in** a symphony form (i.e., inside a ready-made form) but **with** a symphony form or transforming it freely. Topics penetrate into everything, and composers therefore willingly speak about the role of topics if they want to communicate: topic is a structure of communication, not of signification.<sup>32</sup> The end of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* where the tragical D minor changes from a morality to the opera buffa of D major is an example of a topical shift of keys.

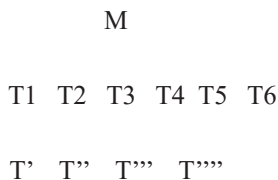
<sup>32</sup> Eero Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 16.

Rhetoric: for instance, the fugue theme does not need to be repeated in its entirety, but its end can be inferred on the basis of the ellipse. The keys as topics: *Eroica* of the E-flat major and the most common tonalities of symphonies. Is narrativity a topic? The beginning of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Trio* could be a typical case. Yet, the erudition in interpretation is not a virtue as an aesthetic quality: that was noted as early as Guido Adler spoke about the academic style as the decline of the classical style in his work.<sup>33</sup>

Topos of death: I...VI...IV...II like in the slow movement of Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* or in Schumann's *Fantasia C major* in its side motif of the movement III and moreover in the slow movement of Beethoven's 5th *Piano Concerto* in E-flat major. Dances, *Waltz*, *Ländler* are all topics. Brahms's *Hungarian dances*; baroque: one has to know the topics of the dance suites, in order to find the right gesture and tempo. One has to ask: how are the topics situated in the other musical parameters? To melodies, rhythms, timbres, harmonies?

#### THE EPISTEMIC STRUCTURE OF MUSIC AND OTHER TEMPORAL REALITY

Next diagram (Figure 2) illustrates what is meant by the epistemic level. *M(MOI)* picks up the truth moments, representations, the moments essential to it and makes the form of the work:



M – epistemic whole, the definitive truth scheme

T – moment of truth

Figure 2. The epistemic level appearing as moments of truth

Is the relationship from M to T that of a representation? The truth of a work can appear as the experienced attraction point.<sup>34</sup> The work can leave the receiver completely

<sup>33</sup> Guido Adler, *Der Stil in der Musik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911).

<sup>34</sup> The term developed by Altti Kuusamo, "Public Art and the Rubbish Theory: Varieties of Changing Faciality," in *Machineries of Public Art – From Durable to Transient, from Site-Bound to Mobile*, ed. J. Ruohonen, A. Kihlman (Turku: UTU, 2013), 128-44.



indifferent, when these epistemic moments do not appear. The more the music corresponds to the epistemic moment, the more convincing it is. Hence the *Moi* has its own epistemic model, but such one has also the *Soi*, the society (see Figure 3).

Behind the model, one may see Márta Grabócz's scheme of four narrative main events: *structure séquentielle quadripartite* (four-part narrative structure): 1) *situation initiale* (initial situation), 2) *méfait* (crime), 3) *intrigue, lutte, série d'épreuves* (intrigue, fight, series of tests), 4) *rétablissement de l'ordre initial* (return of the initial order).<sup>35</sup>

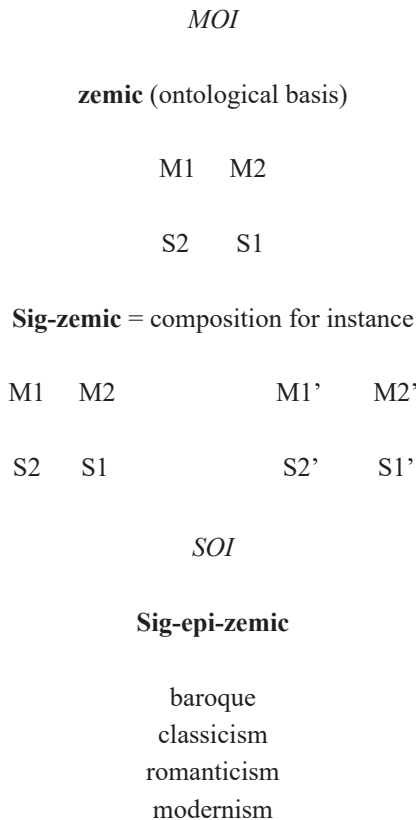


Figure 3. Representation between *Moi/Soi* = artwork

The essential thing is which one of the modes in each box is emphasized, foregrounded, *marqué*. Is the mode “same” through all zemic forms by ages? For example, let us take Bach's *C minor partita* (see Figure 4):

<sup>35</sup> Márta Grabócz, ed., *Sens et signification en musique* (Paris: Hermann, 2007), 245.

M1 physical	M2 implied author
S2 genre of partita	S1 category of sublime
In musical terms, this would mean concretely:	
M1 dotted energetic rhythm	M2 the theme, serious (implied author)
S2 French <i>ouverture</i>	S1 the tragic, solemn, inner

Figure 4. J. S. Bach *Partita C minor* according to sig-epi-zemic model.

Yet, inside these “boxes” and some macrodigital units, dynamic temporal processes occur all the time. All is in movement. These actions are portrayed by the so-called log-zemic operations. Altogether, I have made of them an inventory of eight cases: sublimation, embodiment, transascendence, transdescendence, dialogue, fragmentation, toward, against. But there can be even more. In any case, these operations together with the contents offered by zemic, sig-zemic and sig-epi-zemic, i.e., ontological foundations, constitute a sufficient arsenal to analyze music whatsoever. I have already tested their formalization into a suitable apparatus in my earlier essays.<sup>36</sup>

#### EPISTEMIC ANALYSIS OF THE ESSENCE OF THE CLASSICAL STYLE: A RETURN TO THE AGE OF MARIA THERESA

Now it is time to illustrate these theories and the way how epistemes mediate between the society and history, and its corresponding music. Again, my thoughts got an impulse from musical life. I was invited to give a speech at a summer festival of the orchestra Refugium musicum, of the University of Helsinki, at the Brinkhall manor. Its Hungarian conductor, the hornist József Hárs, asked me to speak about the empress Maria Theresa as a patron in Austria in the 18th century. I accepted the challenge, although I did not know almost anything of this ruler of Austria in the years 1742-1780, except of course that she had built the Schönbrunn Palace. Yet, I soon realized that this was exactly the period for the emergence of the classical

<sup>36</sup> Eero Tarasti, “Existential Semiotics and Its Application to Music: The Zemic Theory and Its Birth from the Spirit of Music,” in *Sounds from Within: Phenomenology and Practice*, ed. P. Chagas, J. C. Wu, *Numanities – Arts and Humanities in Progress* 18 (Cham: Springer, 2021), 29-57.

style in instrumental music. It took shape just in those years in the German language area of Europe – Italy had chosen another avenue of vocal tradition which it faithfully fostered.

When one thinks of that chaotic political history, the formation of Austria, its difference from Germany (“we are not Germans”) of the overall Viennese mentality, then how was it possible that from it emerged just something so essential to the entire European culture and Western music? Simply this is a case of a relationship between music and art with the society. In other words, what is involved are epistemes, from which something so congenial is sprouting. But what is the mechanism which makes this mediation?

The conservative Austro-Hungarian empire, old values, religious narrow-mindedness (the discrimination of Protestants and Jews), senseless wars and struggle for the crown – how was it possible that the center of this world was the multicultural Vienna and the Viennese people, for whom Austria was the same as Vienna, who defined themselves by such terms as *gemütlich* (pleasant) and *gesellig* (social), and who distinguished from the Germans as Seidlhofer, a Viennese piano professor, has spoken in his anecdote on the difference between Germans and Austrians. When a German says: the situation is serious but not catastrophic, a Viennese puts it that it is catastrophic, but not serious. Or is it so that just such a community which contains mutually contradictory epistemes is fertile ground for the creation of great art?

Maria Theresa’s life, politics and relation to her spouse Franz I who was crowned German-Roman emperor in the order of heritage of the Habsburgs as the Duke of Lorraine (at the same time, Maria Theresa was the queen of Hungary and Bohemia) – to their son emperor Joseph II, is such a fascinating chapter of the history of Europe. Accordingly, Maria Theresa shared the power for a long time with Franz, who died unexpectedly in 1756 only at the age of 56, and so ended their marriage of 29 years. The power was inherited by their fourth son Joseph II, who had already been elected as the “King of the Romans,” which was the formal precondition to become an emperor at that time.<sup>37</sup> In practice, the mother still ruled the country behind her son until her passing away in 1780.

The empress was not prepared to encounter several wars during her reign and its administrative problems. She had got her education in arts, and she made compositions (what kind, I do not know) and was interested in theater, opera, and balls but not abundantly. Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, who was her most important chancellor, managed to prevent the fulfillment of bad ideas: the Austrian economy

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<sup>37</sup> Pekka Valtonen, *Naisia valtaistuimella. Kuningattaria ja keisarinnoja uuden ajan alun Euroopassa* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2022), 371.

was completely dependent on Protestants. Instead, she realized many reforms in the legislation, for example the limitation of the power of the nobility: now they had to pay taxes to the central government. She immediately fell into endless wars with her neighbors and particularly with Friedrich II; she never accepted the loss of Silesia to Prussia. In order to repel the threat of Turkey, she joined France and Russia. The union with England was finished. She attended the first partition of Poland with Prussia and Russia but considered it shameful or as Friedrich II, called the Great, stated: “She wept when she took, and the more she wept, the more she took.”<sup>38</sup>

However, when one looks at those forty years of the reign of Maria Theresa, what catches our attention is her energy of work. Although she maintained the values of Habsburgs, she preserved a certain earthbound character; she was easily accessible.<sup>39</sup> The fact is that in Maria Theresa’s time, the realm of the Habsburgs developed enormously. Albeit Silesia was lost, the population grew by one fourth. Her power could just and almost be considered as an enlightened monarchy, but that was the merit of her ministers.<sup>40</sup> Instead, Joseph II with his reforms already belonged to that category. In the artistic sense, the leading composer was Christoph Willibald Gluck, but even he rose to his fame in Vienna and as late as 60 years old after having gained a great success with his operas *Orfeo* and *Iphigenie auf Tauris*.

Maria Theresa kept correspondence with her son Joseph II; her letters from the period of 1761-1789 have not been preserved. This correspondence was typically held in French, and it mostly dealt with wars, politics and marriages. At some moments, Maria Theresa shifted to the German language; obviously in some affairs, she expressed herself more easily in such a way. In vain one has to search for documents for instance in the exercise of arts. Although Joseph could write:

A quatre heures il y a eu les Ténèbres ; le premier nocturne les Minorités l’ont chanté, les deux autres seulement psalmodiés.... Les Franciscains de Lanzendorf chantent sotto voce en comparaison d’eux ... le soir, puisqu’on avait diné..., on a été à huit heures à l’église ... puis il a y eu la grande messe derechef chantée.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Norman Davies, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland*, rev. ed., vol. 1, *The Origins to 1795* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 390.

<sup>39</sup> Valtonen, *Naisia valtaistuimella*, 381.

<sup>40</sup> Valtonen, 381.

<sup>41</sup> Alfred R. von Arneth, ed., *Maria Theresia und Joseph II. Ihre Korrespondenz samt Briefen Joseph’s an seinen Bruder Leopold*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Carl Gerold’s Sohn, 1867), 121.

And it was this ruler who said about Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* that there were too many notes there!

If one thinks of the chaotic political history of that century, it is also good to recall the analysis by Egon Friedell in his cultural history of Europe in the chapter "The Agony of the Baroque":

In all these political cases the emotions and manner of the nations did not have any role: what was involved were so to say only mutual private controversies of individual sovereigns, their marriage projects, their efforts to expand their territories, their contracts and their breakings, their personal ambitions and desires.<sup>42</sup>

Or can we really reason anything about the collective epistemic situations of those nations? Friedell is right in the sense that a nation and patriotism could not be taken then in the 18th century any collective episteme, upon which the action could be based. He quotes some great names: Gotthold Lessing said that he had no conception of love for fatherland, and it looks mostly as a heroic weakness; Johann Herder asked: "What is a nation?" and answered: "A large uncultivated and uncleaned garden full of weeds";<sup>43</sup> the young Goethe wrote: "If we find in the world a place in which we can stay quietly with our properties, field which nourishes us, a house which protects us, do we not then have a fatherland? Is this not already possessed by thousands in every state? Do they not live happily in their limitedness?"<sup>44</sup> Georg Lichtenberg said: "I would give much in order to know exactly for whom all those deeds have been done of which it is publicly said they have been pursued for the benefit of the fatherland."<sup>45</sup> Schiller wrote to Körner in 1789: "A patriotic enthusiasm is important only to immature nations, to the youth of the world. It is a miserable and cheap ideal to write only for one nation, for a philosophic spirit this boundary is unbearable."<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, if we define the Austrian in the above-mentioned period this one has to take into account, i.e., the episteme of which collective or community is involved, particularly Joseph II is strongly criticized in his efforts to concentrate. Friedell mentions Maria Theresa only passingly but devotes many pages of text to Friedrich the Great whom he considers a genius by quoting Napoleon; genius is

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<sup>42</sup> Egon Friedell, *Uuden ajan kulttuurihistoria: Eurooppalaisen sielun kriisi mustasta surmasta maailmansotaan asti*, vol. 2, *Barokki ja rokokoo, valistus ja vallankumous*, trans. Erik Ahlman by the author's permission (Porvoo–Helsinki: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 1955), 211.

<sup>43</sup> Friedell, 340.

<sup>44</sup> Friedell, 340.

<sup>45</sup> Friedell, 341.

<sup>46</sup> Friedell, 341.

diligence (what would suit so well to Maria Theresa). Friedell naively believes in his genius theory and thinks that the geniality of Friedrich lay in the fact that he was a philosopher or that in order to follow Plato's idea, a philosopher had to be a ruler, and a ruler had to be a philosopher. Friedell's attitude towards Austria is otherwise negative: In Austria, the serious spiritual trends are inclined to appear as a superficial exaggerating fashion.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, Austria existed as a kind of social entity as early as in the late Middle Ages on the basis of the contract of Frederick III of Habsburg in 1446 as three areas: interior lands; upper; inner and lower Austria. The Austrian identity has been studied for instance in Ernst Bruckmüller's work *Nation Österreich. Kulturelles Bewußtsein und gesellschaftlichpolitische Prozesse*.<sup>48</sup> To Bruckmüller's mind, one may really speak of Austrianness. In 1979, there was an inquiry about Austrian persons as symbolic figures, which showed that in the list of *Berühmte Österreicher*, famous Austrians, there were three leading names: Johann Strauss, Mozart, and Maria Theresa. Typical features of an Austrian self-portrait were the following adjectives: 1) *gemütlich*, 2) *lustig*, 3) *musikalisch*, 4) *fleißig*, 5) *tüchtig*, 6) *hilfsbereit*, 7) *friedfertig*, 8) *höflich*, 9) *intelligent*. Austria is known as the nearest country to its cultural events like performances of classical music, for instance in a New Year's concert.

Altogether, as early as in the age of Maria Theresa and in spite of ultraconservative values, a general joy of life and lightness prevailed. This has been wonderfully portrayed by Stefan Zweig, who reasons in general: "In this vast empire everything stood firmly and immovably in its appointed place, and at its head was the aged emperor; and were he to die, one knew (or believed) another would come to take his place, and nothing would change in the well-regulated order."<sup>49</sup>

What aspects then characterized the Viennese identity? First, multiculturalism. To Zweig's mind, in no other European town the hunger for culture was as strong as in Vienna. Precisely, just because Austria had not been successful in its military activities, the homely pride was oriented to gain the artistic supremacy. The German quality was blended with Slavonic, Hungarian, Spanish, Italian, French and Flandrian blood. The congeniality of the town lay again in the fact how it smelted all these contrasts into a new and unique combination – the Viennese identity. It was easy to live in this atmosphere of tolerance.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Friedell, 329.

<sup>48</sup> Ernst Bruckmüller, *Nation Österreich. Kulturelles Bewußtsein und gesellschaftlichpolitische Prozesse*, 2nd edition (Vienna–Cologne–Graz: Böhlau, 1996).

<sup>49</sup> Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography by Stefan Zweig*, trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (London–Toronto–Melbourne–Sydney: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1943), 13.

<sup>50</sup> Tarasti, *Musiikin todellisuudet*, 297.

Moreover, the different strata of the society were already present in the plan of the town: the imperial castle was surrounded by the palaces of the high nobility and the center, then lower small nobility in the third arrondissement, the higher state functionaries, industrial families and old families at Ringstraße, while at the lowest – the small bourgeois inside the Ring, and poor people outside it. In spite of the class sections, they all met one another in the theater and festivities in Prater: in Vienna, everything became a fest. The Viennese people had the trend to see life as a play. It is just that in such a world, the so-called **classical style** was created, or the most advanced musical art of that period, i.e., the so-called **absolute music**.

I shall next scrutinize this phenomenon, and I hope the reader may understand why the longish historical excursion above was indispensable in this issue. The success of the classical style was based upon the fact that it offered something to all social classes and levels of Vienna. This happened according to the particular recurrent musical style features which have been started to call since Leonard Ratner's groundbreaking research as **topics**.<sup>51</sup> They were musical elements taken from their social context and internalized into parts of musical discourse, such as marches, dances, both folkish like *Ländler* or the upper class dances like polonaises, minuets, gavottes, musettes; and then hunting signals like horn motifs, or then such emotional motifs like Storm and Stress entities or sensitive interval leaps in the so-called *Empfindsamkeit* style, and finally national characteristics, like Hungarian rhythms or Turkish instruments and chords and rhythms imitating the Janitshar music.

Music was also the “graveyard” of another Old Period, i.e., high baroque elements to use the expression by Rosen, such as *sarabande*, French overture, *chaconne*, choral, fugue, *gigue*, etc. Various lists of topics have often been presented in recent musicological research such as at V. Kofi Agawu,<sup>52</sup> and Robert Hatten,<sup>53</sup> who also takes into account the heritage of rhetorical figures and their transformation into topics, like in the case of tropes studied by Hatten, or when speaking about military and pastoral features like at Raymond Monelle,<sup>54</sup> and in the broad repertoire of topics gathered by Joan Grimalt.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music. Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980).

<sup>52</sup> V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing With Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>53</sup> Robert S. Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes. Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> Raymond Monelle, *The Musical Topic. Hunt, Military and Pastoral* (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006).

<sup>55</sup> Joan Grimalt, *Mapping Musical Signification, Numanities – Arts and Humanities in Progress* 15 (Cham: Springer, 2020).



In the theoretical sense, one may ask: what is a topic and what is not? Is a mere quotation a topic? Can a composer himself create his topics if he happens to be a national icon? I would be inclined to think that the sole musical atmosphere can be a topic, so no longer any clearly articulated part or fragment of a musical text.

A scholar and musician who has indeed pondered the essence of the classical style is Rosen in his work *The Classical Style. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*, which has become a classic itself. I mean particularly its second enlarged edition from 1997. There, Rosen wrote a kind dedication: “For Eero, Professor Tarasti, in all friendship with hopes he will like the new chapter and the new CD.” In fact, Rosen’s work has had such an established position since its first edition that one has often not even referred to it. It has been taken for granted. Yet in this new context, we ponder how that classical style could emerge just in the Austria of Maria Theresa as well as its epistemes and the social situation filtered by them. Hence, I do not argue that classical style was a direct reflection of the class structure of Vienna, but with my theoretical models, I try to clarify how this transformation and transduction<sup>56</sup> took place from social facts to the musical style features and qualities.

When one reads now Rosen again, one notices that he in fact offers rather radical theses of the classical style. I list them as follows:

- 1) There is no Form, or the concept *Form* by big capital, as a kind of abstract scheme or metaphysical principle. Form is nothing separate and distinguished from what composers in all their individuality make when they create music.
- 2) A composer does not first make a structure, form and then decorate it with topics, for instance. Now one has to say that from this point of view, the dichotomy of structures of signification and communication I have done in my work *A Theory of Musical Semiotics*, corresponding to the ideological and technological models guiding them, would not hold true. Or the composer does not first create a significant form, musical meanings, and *Gestalts* which represent them, i.e., structures of signification and then insert them into ready communication structures and resort to such genre types like sonata, symphony, concerto, etc. in order to communicate his ideas to the listener.<sup>57</sup>

Among the classics, Beethoven was in Rosen’s opinion completely indifferent about the affair whether the listeners understood his music or whether they were able to decode contents from the message or not. Therefore, to his mind, the idea of a Form which tries to define itself in order to get concretized in different manners can be tempting, but it makes a trap. It can lead one to reason that at the end of the

<sup>56</sup> The term used in a sense by Aleksii Haukka in Tarasti, *Transcending Signs*.

<sup>57</sup> Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics*, 16.

18th century, there was something like “sonata form” and that composers knew what it was, although this thesis is not supported by any evidence. The feeling about a whatsoever form like minuet was much more flexible; composers and communities rather adopted styles which they needed in order to express themselves and their aesthetics<sup>58</sup> (in the terms of existential semiotics, *M2* or the artist makes what he likes, calls upon a form or style *S2* which follows aesthetic ideas of *S1*.) Exactly the same was stated by Dahlhaus when he said that Beethoven did not compose IN sonata form but WITH sonata form.<sup>59</sup> Or the idea of a kind of anonymous style without its supporters is impossible, or in the language of semiotics: a style or form *S2* without *M2* or the person of a composer.

3) Here we arrive at the bold idea of Rosen – which he rather launches in his work *The Romantic Generation* particularly when he examines the case of Schumann. Namely, a composer does not express his life in his compositions but, contrarily, narrativizes his life by the music and ideas he has created. Art thus elaborates and transforms the life and not vice versa. This view ruins the contrary and established supposition that music is an expression of composer’s emotions and experiences, in which the public and media so willingly trust.

4) The old forms and genres live in the new music, i.e., in the newly composed one as if buried in it, when all that which is NOT old genre or species (fugue, *Ländler*, minuet, aria, opera, mass, etc.) is MERE music, or PLAIN music<sup>60</sup>, or to this we could add: “absolute music” or, for instance, sonata. I shall soon return to this idea.

5) It is typical of classicism that there can be themes which may contain two contrary characters. The theme of Mozart’s *Piano Sonata in D major KV 576*, shown in Example 1, opens with a horn signal which is followed by a galant decorative motif, or gesture:



Example 1. W. A. Mozart, *Piano Sonata in D major*, KV 576, mm. 1-4

<sup>58</sup> Rosen, *The Classical Style*, 52-53.

<sup>59</sup> See Carl Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Approaches to His Music*, trans. Mary Whittall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 85-102.

<sup>60</sup> Rosen, *The Classical Style*, 53.

In romanticism, a theme has only one character which it repeats. A typical example is for instance *Vallée d'Obermann* by Franz Liszt. In turn in relation to the baroque, in the classicism, the varied characters cut musical texture into fragments, which are often brought into dramatic oppositions, whereas in baroque, the texture is a continuous, horizontally moving discourse which is based upon sequences.

6) The high baroque changes into classicism in the years 1750-1760: to listen to the music of that period, i.e., of Gluck, the sons of Bach, etc., demands a **historical sympathy** from us, as Rosen remarks.<sup>61</sup> Instead, we start to listen to the music beginning from the year 1780 as such; the style whereby it has been effectuated is so convincing and strong that we do not need any historic sympathy in order to appreciate Mozart's, Beethoven's or Joseph Haydn's late works. The music before them is lacking the unified, integrate style. In order to translate this into the concepts of our own theory, the historic sympathy simply means recognition of the epistemes of the period. But we do not go to listen to Mozart as a document of the 18th century idea world because it has, like Dahlhaus said, *ästhetische Gegenwartigkeit*, aesthetic contemporaneity (if we were Heideggerian, we would say the "quiddity" or "instantaneity"). Above, it was already referred to Pablo Casals, who said while playing Bach's solo suites that one did not need any orthodox reconstruction of the baroque style there because that music was universal as such, and so it was allowed in its interpretation to use all devices a musician had learned. This opinion was shared by the violin professor Tuomas Haapanen in Finland.

At the end, it is reasonable to listen to what Rosen says about the essence of the classical style. This style, of course, is identified with those three great names – Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven – who had completely different characters but were united by analogous resolutions in their works.

The tonal language which made classical style possible was the tonality, which was not a massive immobile system but a living and continuously changing language since its beginning. It had reached the decisive turning point before Haydn and Mozart created their styles. Rosen defines tonality like this: it is a hierarchic order of triads, which is based upon natural harmony or overtones. By building successive triads, both in rising and sinking direction, one arrives at a structure which is symmetrical but still unbalanced, since the overtones ascend, and the dominant or the sharpened overshadows the subdominant, which descends. Beethoven said that he was able to distinguish D-flat and C-sharp – but when he spoke about the characteristics of keys, it rather concerned his psychology than the tonal language itself.

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<sup>61</sup> Rosen, 47.

Yet, when we examine the forms of classical style, we have to note to Rosen's mind that the sonata form could be determined only when it was dead; Carl Czerny claimed in 1840 that he fixed it as the first one.

However, the central method of analysis is Schenker's linear system.<sup>62</sup> Rosen recognizes it in the sense that in the psychological exactness, it goes further than any other method of analysis, namely when defining upon which factors the unity of a musical work was based on. This unity apparently transcended the sectional, fragmentary external form of a work – or just what was the most essential characteristics of the classical style in relation to baroque as it was argued.

Schenker can still be criticized according to Rosen, above all, whether the Schenker's *Urfinie* diagram is really the principle producing the unity of the work. Second, the relation between *Hintergrund* and *Vordergrund* was not defined well. There are also other structural principles than horizontal ones. Joonas Kokkonen, the Finnish Academician of music, said that composing means to relate the vertical to the horizontal. And those horizontal principles can not only be more apparent but also more fundamental. "Where are my favourite scales?" asked Schoenberg when he saw the Schenker's scheme of *Eroica*, "Well, there they are as small notes," he finally realized. It is alarming in Rosen's view that the analysis minimizes the most significant features of a work. What would Schenker say when Wagner told Cosima about the c-sharp note of the opening theme of Beethoven's *Eroica*? That here starts the modern in music!

Also, neglecting the rhythm is peculiar for Rosen. It does not matter whether the piece is slow or fast. We know of Goethe, who was musical in fact – "Goethe spielt Klavier – und gar nicht schlecht," said one of his young female friends Rahel Levin-Varnhagen;<sup>63</sup> he did not like slow melancholic adagio movements (they caused emotional states in him which he wanted to avoid<sup>64</sup>). We do not know how his *Tonlehre* in the side of *Farbenlehre* was.

Yet, it is still probable that Schenker is valid for all tonal music. Investigating this would, however, lead us outside the classical style. One only needs to read the Schenkerian analytical dissertation by Veijo Murtomäki about Sibelius' symphonies in order to get convinced of this.<sup>65</sup>

But is that unity we feel in music and especially in classical style mere illusion or critical hypothesis? As early as E.T.A. Hoffmann considered the unity of the Beetho-

<sup>62</sup> Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979).

<sup>63</sup> Claus Canisius, *Goethe und die Musik* (Munich–Zurich: Piper, 1998), 20.

<sup>64</sup> Canisius, 51.

<sup>65</sup> Veijo Murtomäki, *Symphonic Unity: The Development of Formal Thinking in the Symphonies of Sibelius* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1993).

venian forms a consequence of the work with motifs or musical actants as we could say semiotically (like Hoffmann's analysis of Beethoven's *Symphony no. 5* is one of the first "musicological" analyses of a work of classical style with many music examples and even taking into account the sound or orchestration). Nevertheless, Rosen thinks that the motivic development is sometimes considered a mystic process which only the greatest composers mastered. Every section can be derived from the same motif. However, this is denied by Sir Francis Tovey when he speaks of the fate motif of Beethoven's Fifth;<sup>66</sup> there is no method whereby from four notes one could infer a symphony, one needs something else as well. Rudolph Reti supports the motivic work in his at its time famous work *The Thematic Process in Music*.<sup>67</sup> Richard Taruskin again employs the term "thematic work" (*thematische Arbeit*).<sup>68</sup>

Still, according to Rosen, short motifs and genealogies are main methods, whereby one has created unity in Western music since the 15th century, that is, in existential terms by units to be called pre-*M2*: and log-zemics of generation. The paradigmatic method by Nicholas Ruwet and Jean-Jacques Nattiez is based upon this likewise. However, Rosen warns that great composers would have written their compositions as esoteric processes, as a motivic development but then organized them into easily understandable forms like sonatas or rondos, so that even an uneducated public was able to adopt them without difficulties. This idea is rejected by Rosen or he denies the above-mentioned idea of musical communication and signification structures as separate procedures (without of course using those terms); it is not true that theme, modulations and textural change would be superficial and less important factors than some motivic diminution technics.

Moreover, the essential aspect in the classical style is that music becomes a dramatic expression. Dramatics already existed in baroque, of course, but now it is linked with emotions, i.e., emotions determined the semantics of the four movements of the sonata form, which also corresponded to equal entities in opera (Panu Heimonen has furthermore shown by his studies in the internal communication in Mozart's piano concertos that moral sentiments particularly influenced upon their structures and musical events<sup>69</sup>). Nevertheless, each work by Bach has its

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<sup>66</sup> For Hoffman and Tovey analysis, see Elliot Forbes, ed., *Symphony No. 5 in C Minor: An Authoritative Score, the Sketches, Historical Background, Analysis, Views and Comments* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971).

<sup>67</sup> Rudolph Reti, *The Thematic Process in Music* (New York: McMillan, 1951).

<sup>68</sup> Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 2, *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 539.

<sup>69</sup> Panu Heimonen, "Is There a Role for Moral Choice in a Mozart Piano Concerto?" *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 72, no. 12 special issue (2024): 175-88.

own plain flow, whereas at Haydn, a composition becomes a series of articulated events.

After all, the most central place for dramatics was the development section of the sonata form. Technics were simple: all was based upon symmetry which could be withdrawn and then finally released. Nowadays, one might say a narrative arch, which is symmetrical. First, music is safe in its place spatially, temporarily and actorially, or *hic, nunc* and *ego*. Then something dramatic occurs or like Greimas said in the Paris school: *débrayage*, disengagement, and finally *embrayage*, engagement or return to a stable starting point. Symmetry has been conquered again. The easiest way to develop it is to play the theme with more dramatic harmonies or in more distant tonalities. Periodicity or temporal scheme was avoided: melodic actor was fragmented together with contrapuntal imitation. Or to resume it: 1) fragmentation, 2) counterpoint imitation, 3) use of distant harmonies, 4) expansion of melodies, and 5) avoidance of cadences.

In the years 1755-1775, a composer had to choose between either a dramatic surprise or a perfect form. Opera buffa influenced the symphony and also the chamber music. I would add that Lorenzo Coppola, clarinetist, and an orchestra conductor, has shown this with his lively lectures, e.g. in Barcelona, on how *commedia dell'arte* influenced upon sonata form works at Haydn. Yet, Rosen underlines the difference between the orchestral style and chamber music style or between great public and music amateurs, between music which was performed privately – we could say between musical *Moi* and *Soi*: but it was not absolute. In the middle of the century, symphonies and overtures and again sonatas, duos and trios were different in their style. Chamber music was more relaxed and simpler by its form and also by its details. However, Haydn brought chamber music to his orchestral style, and Mozart blended his concerto style to sonatas and quartets. The mixture of genres in the 1780s was quite obvious.

When public orchestral concerts became general and at the same time music became more and more social, then the distinction between public and private was also sharpened. To this one might add that it enabled the shift of topics into absolute music. What was involved was a dialectic between *Moi* and *Soi*. Piano music belonged to the sphere of *Moi*, it was by its nature amateurish, i.e., one could not see there *S2* or social practice, and one reason was gender: it was performed by women. Most sonatas by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven have been written particularly for women, and they require technically less demanding style. The last field conquered by classical style from baroque was church music.



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MUSICAL METAPHORS AND EPISTEMES  
THE CASE OF THE CLASSICAL STYLE  
IN THE AUSTRIA OF THE EMPRESS MARIA THERESA

Summary

This article deals with theoretical concepts, music of the 18th century and the current musical life presented as crucial elements for creating musical meanings at various levels of a musical work and its interpretation. The paper starts with comments on the presence of metaphors in music and its role in the expression of meanings. The second part of the article deals with the area of epistemes and shows the importance of this concept for the understanding of music. This central theoretical segment also leads to musical semiotics and existential semiotics enriched by the new definitions about Sig-zemic (composition) and Sig-epi-zemic (the musical styles). At last, there are details about a musical form and references to Charles Rosen's works on the classical style, the issue of unity of a musical work with references to the role of keys, and a statement that the most essential dimension of a musical work is the creation of a dramatic expression.

**Keywords:** metaphor in music; musical episteme; musical meaning; classical style; existential semiotics

MUZYCZNE METAFORY I EPISTEMOLOGIA  
ZAGADNIENIE STYLU KLASYCZNEGO  
W AUSTRII ZA CZASÓW CESARZOWEJ MARII TERESY

Streszczenie

Artykuł został poświęcony zagadnieniom teoretycznym, muzyce XVIII wieku oraz bieżącemu życiu muzycznemu, jako elementom kluczowym dla powstawania znaczeń muzycznych na różnych poziomach dzieła muzycznego i jego interpretacji. Autor wychodzi od uwag odnoszących się do obecności metafor w muzyce oraz roli, jaką odgrywa ona w wyrażaniu znaczeń, aby w kolejnej części artykułu odnieść się do epistemologii i podkreślić jej znaczenie w kontekście rozumienia muzyki. Ta centralna, teoretyczna część rozważań prowadzi do semiotyki muzycznej i semiotyki egzystencjalnej, wzbogaconej o nowe definicje dotyczące sig-zemiczności (kompozycja) i sig-epik-zemiczności (style muzyczne). Znalazły się tu ponadto ustalenia dotyczące formy muzycznej oraz odniesienia do poświęconych stylowi klasycznemu publikacji Charlesa Rosena, a także rozważania na temat jedności dzieła muzycznego (z uwzględnieniem roli tonacji), zakończone stwierdzeniem, że najistotniejszym wymiarem twórczości muzycznej jest kreowanie ekspresji dramatycznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** metafora w muzyce; epistemologia muzyczna; znaczenie muzyczne; styl klasyczny; semiotyka egzystencjalna