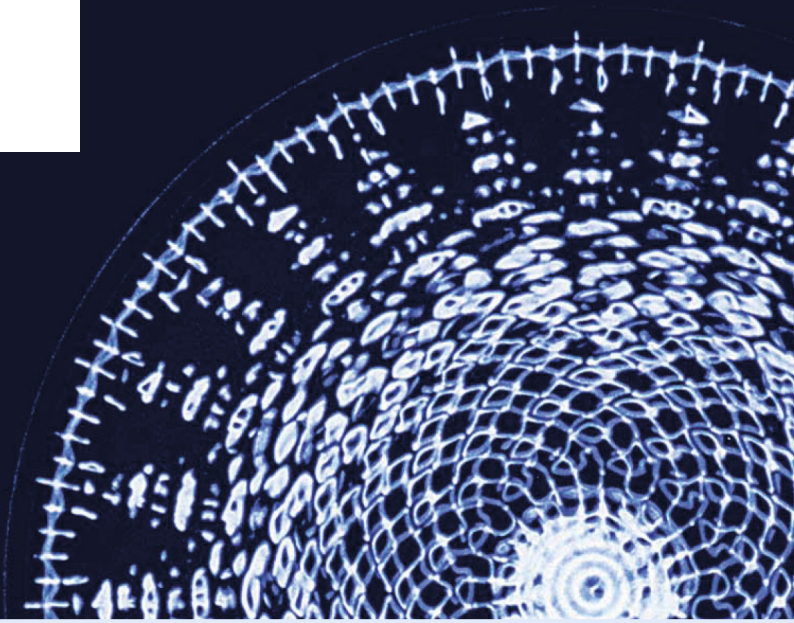




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# 2025

Zeit und Zeitlichkeit in der Musik  
Temps et temporalités en musique  
Tempo e temporalità nella musica  
Time and Temporalities in Music

Neue Folge 42

Herausgegeben von  
Laura Moeckli, Vincenzina C. Ottomano, Lea Hagmann und Margret Scharrer



Schweizerische Musikforschende Gesellschaft  
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# Inhaltsverzeichnis

Vorwort / Préface / Prefazione / Preface ..... 1

## KEYNOTE

**Performance, Heterochrony, Historiography: The Wooster Group's 2007–2009 Production of Busenello/Cavalli's *La Didone* (1641) and Baroque Opera Representation ..... 13**  
*Mauro Calcagno*

## HAUPTARTIKEL / ARTICLES PRINCIPAUX / ARTICOLI PRINCIPALI / MAIN ARTICLES

**Tic-tac ou « Manon Lescaut mi chiamo » : Puccini et la dramaturgie du temps ..... 39**  
*Guillaume Castella*

**The Poetics of Time and Space in Abdullah Ibrahim..... 55**  
*Stephanie Vos*

**“Ein schlagartiger Einbruch der Ewigkeit in die Zeit” – On the Spatiality of Musical Time..... 69**  
*Lauge Dideriksen*

**Balancing Time: Seeing the past, present, future and other time in the productions of Siamsa Tíre, the National Folk Theatre of Ireland ..... 87**  
*Daithí Kearney*

**Tiefenzeit. Anton Bruckner als Gegenstand der energetischen Musikbetrachtung ..... 101**  
*Tim Martin Hoffmann*

**Remembering Imperfectly: Bridging the Past and Future Through Yiddish-American Folk Song Recordings ..... 115**  
*Zeke Levine*

**Disrupted and Stretched Linearity in Stephen Sondheim's *Company*..... 129**  
*Nick Braae*

**Bruyantes mécaniques du temps repassé : l'orgue de foire et ses instaurations..... 139**  
*Achille Kienholz*

## ZEITZEUGEN / TÉMOIGNAGES / TESTIMONIANZE / TIMES AND PERSPECTIVES

**Züri West, „Loch dür Zyt“. Eine Zeitreise zurück in die bewegten 1980er Jahre in Bern..... 151**  
*Martin Pensa*

**The A-B-A' structure as a social 'return' in opera buffa ..... 159**  
*Gioia Filocamo*

**Une temporalité musicale non linéaire ? ..... 163**  
*Bruno Deschênes*

**Wladimir Vogel as a mediator: John Cage in Donaueschingen, Zurich, and Milan ..... 167**  
*Manuel Farolfi*

**sieben gedichte** .....171

*Tihomir Popović*

WERKSTATT-CH / ATELIER-CH / OFFICINA-CH / WORKSHOP-CH

**Resonances in the Realm of Intercultural Music Education: Insights from Multi-sited Fieldwork ...** 179

*Maria Peres, Alix Didier Sarrouy, Ricardo Castro*

**«Wir brauchen Vorbilder und keine Kopien». Gespräch mit Noldi Alder über die neueren Entwicklungen der Appenzeller Musik. Urnäsch, November 2024** ..... 183

*Joshua Broger*

**Hommage an Marcel Cellier zum 100. Geburtstag. Gespräch mit Alexandre Cellier. Lavaux, Januar 2025**.....187

*Lea Hagmann*

**Zivile oder militärische Blasmusik? Ein Vertrag von 1822 zeigt deren Verflechtung** ..... 193

*Yannick Wey*

**The Concept of *Ma* in Western Art Music: From Religious Architecture to the Interpretation of Time**..... 197

*Luca Marty*

REZENSIONEN / COMPTES RENDUS / RAPPORTI / REVIEWS

**Anja Dreschke and Michaela Schäuble (2024): *Tarantism Revisited*. Produced by EMB – Ethnographic Mediaspace Bern and Petit à Petit Cologne. Italian voice-over, texts & credits english. colour, b/w. 145 minutes (preliminary version)**..... 199

*Fulvia Caruso*

# Vorwort

DOI: [10.36950/sjm.42.0](https://doi.org/10.36950/sjm.42.0)

Als Redaktionsteam ist es uns eine grosse Freude, die 42. Ausgabe des *Schweizer Jahrbuchs für Musikwissenschaft* im Golden Open Access Format präsentieren zu dürfen. Für diese Ausgabe haben wir Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler dazu eingeladen, verschiedene Aspekte von Zeit und Temporalität in der Musik zu untersuchen und dabei zu erörtern, wie die Zeit mit verschiedenen kulturellen, geografischen, historischen, repräsentativen und theoretischen Konzepten interagiert. Unterschiedliche zeitliche Rahmenbedingungen und Ontologien der Musik spiegeln die Flexibilität und Durchlässigkeit der Zeit wider, wie sie von Komponisten, Interpretinnen, Musikschaaffenden und (nationalen) Institutionen im Laufe der Geschichte an verschiedenen Orten der Welt geformt wurde.

Die Beiträge nehmen Perspektiven aus der Musikwissenschaft, der Ethnomusikologie, Musiktheorie, Musikpädagogik oder den Sound Studies ein sowie weiterer Disziplinen, z. B. der Literaturwissenschaft, Linguistik, Kulturgeschichte, Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft, Filmwissenschaft, den Gender Studies, Sozialwissenschaften oder Performance Studies, um zu verstehen, wie Musik Zeit auf einzigartige Weise organisiert und zum Ausdruck bringt. Zu den behandelten Themen gehören Fragen wie beispielsweise: Wie werden psychologische Phänomene wie Erinnerung, Vorfremde oder Nostalgie durch zeitliche Strukturen geprägt? Wie funktionieren narrative Mittel wie Beschleunigung und Rückblende innerhalb von Konventionen in verschiedenen historischen und kulturellen Kontexten? Wie können wir das komplexe Zusammenspiel verschiedener Zeitlichkeiten in der Musik verstehen, darunter dargestellte Zeit versus Zeit der Darstellung, gegenwärtige versus evozierte Zeit sowie die unterschiedlichen Zeiten von Sprache, Handlung, Affekt oder Wahrnehmung?

Im ersten Teil von Band 42 finden wir acht Hauptartikel (double blind Peer Review), die sich allesamt mit musikalischer Zeitlichkeit aus verschiedenen historischen und methodologischen Perspektiven befassen. Der Abschnitt beginnt mit einem Leitartikel von Mauro Calcagno, der die Inszenierung von Cavallis *La Didone* durch The Wooster Group in den Jahren 2007–2009 als paradigmatischen Fall für ein Umdenken in Bezug auf musikalische Zeitlichkeit in der Aufführung untersucht. Unter Einbeziehung von Aufführungsstudien, Geschichtsschreibung und Medientheorie untersucht der Artikel, wie heterochrone und nicht-lineare Strategien insbesondere durch Reenactment und Intermedialität traditionelle Gegensätze zwischen historisch informierter Aufführung und Regietheater in Frage stellen. Indem er die Operninszenierung als eine Form der Aufführung von Geschichte und nicht als deren Darstellung konzeptualisiert, schlägt Calcagno einen alternativen zeitlichen Rahmen vor, in dem Vergangenheit und Gegenwart in dynamischen, instabilen Konfigurationen koexistieren.

Mit Fokus auf die italienische Oper des 19. Jahrhunderts untersucht Guillaume Castella in seinem Artikel Giacomo Puccinis *Manon Lescaut* unter dem Blickwinkel der dramatischen Zeitlichkeit. Auf der Grundlage einer eingehenden musikalischen und dramaturgischen Analyse zeigt seine Studie, wie Puccini die Zeit zunehmend objektiviert und sie nicht als rein formalen oder abstrakten Parameter, sondern als greifbares und konstitutives Element des dramatischen Prozesses behandelt. Dies wird besonders deutlich in der zeitlichen Funktion wiederkehrender Motive. Durch ein Umdenken in der Beziehung zwischen Form, Wahrnehmung und Erzählfluss positioniert Castella *Manon Lescaut* als ein Schlüsselwerk in der Transformation der Operndramaturgie des Fin de Siècle.

Der Artikel von Stephanie Vos untersucht die Poetik von Zeit und Raum im Frühwerk von Abdullah Ibrahim, wobei ein besonderer Schwerpunkt auf dem Zeitraum zwischen 1965 und 1970 liegt. Durch die Untersuchung von Schriften, Interviews, dokumentarischen Quellen und ausgewählten Kompositionen des Musikers zeigt die Studie, wie Zeit zu einem zentralen Ort kreativer Ausarbeitung wird, an dem Exil,

Erinnerung und Geografie verhandelt werden. Zeitlichkeit fungiert nicht bloss als musikalischer Parameter, sondern erweist sich als Medium für die Erschaffung von Orten, für historische Vorstellungskraft und für politischen Widerstand gegen die koloniale zeitliche Ordnung des Apartheid-Regimes.

Lauge Dideriksens Artikel nähert sich der musikalischen Zeit aus einer philosophischen und interdisziplinären Perspektive und entwickelt dabei eine Theorie der musikalischen Zeitlichkeit als von Natur aus räumlich. Die Studie bringt Philosophie, Musiktheorie, Ethnomusikologie und kognitive Forschung in einen Dialog, um zu argumentieren, dass Rhythmus, Mikrorhythmus und Form sich nicht nur in der Zeit entfalten, sondern zeitliche Erfahrung aktiv räumlich erlebbar machen und somit prägen, wie musikalische Ereignisse wahrgenommen, organisiert und erinnert werden. Indem diese als räumlich empfundenen Zeitlichkeiten mit Erfahrungen von Flow, Verkörperung und kollektiver Sinnstiftung in verschiedenen kulturellen Kontexten verknüpft werden, bietet der Artikel einen differenzierten Rahmen für das Verständnis von Musik als einem Ort, an dem Zeit nicht nur gemessen, sondern erfahrungsmässig transformiert wird.

Daithí Kearney untersucht in seinem Artikel, wie Siamsa Tíre, das Nationale Volkstheater Irlands, durch die Inszenierung von Musik, Tanz und Folklore zwischen den 1960er Jahren bis in die frühen 2000er Jahre mit Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft umgeht. Ausgehend von einer Reihe symbolträchtiger Produktionen zeigt die Studie auf, wie Zeit sowohl als narratives Mittel fungiert, indem es das Publikum „in die Vergangenheit“ oder in andere zeitliche Bereiche einlädt, als auch als strukturierendes Prinzip, das vom sozialen Wandel, dem Tourismus und sich entwickelnden künstlerischen Praktiken geprägt ist. Unter Einbeziehung von Henri Lefebvres Konzept der Rhythmanalyse beleuchtet Kearneys Artikel, wie multiple Zeitlichkeiten auf der Bühne koexistieren und dabei die Bewahrung immateriellen Kulturerbes mit der Reaktionsfähigkeit auf zeitgenössische kulturelle Kontexte in Einklang bringen.

In seinem Artikel geht Tim Martin Hoffmann dem Konzept der Tiefenzeit in der historischen Musikwissenschaft anhand einer genauen Lektüre der Schriften von August Halm und Ernst Kurth über Anton Bruckner nach. Die Studie zeigt, wie geologische Metaphern und strukturgeschichtliche Denkweisen ihre analytischen und historiografischen Ansätze zur Musik Bruckners prägen. In dieser Perspektive erscheint Bruckner weniger als isolierter kompositorischer Sonderfall, sondern vielmehr als Schlüsselfigur innerhalb eines Versuchs zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts, ein vielschichtiges, nicht-teleologisches Verständnis von musikalischer Zeit zu artikulieren.

Zeke Levines Beitrag folgt der Verbreitung von Aufnahmen jiddisch-amerikanischer Volkslieder und untersucht, wie musikalische Medien in den Vereinigten Staaten Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts Beziehungen zwischen Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft vermittelten. Ethnografische Feldaufnahmen und kommerziell veröffentlichte LPs im Zusammenhang mit Ruth Rubin und dem American Folk Revival zeigen, wie Aufnahmetechnologien Praktiken der Erinnerung und der kulturellen Weitergabe prägten.

Nick Braae analysiert in seinem Artikel Stephen Sondheims *Company* (1970) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Artikulation musikalischer Zeit. Sein Artikel führt die Begriffe der unterbrochenen und gedehnten Linearität ein, um zu erklären, wie harmonisches Tempo, Phrasenstruktur, kadenzelle Verzögerung und formale Brüche die Erfahrungen der Zuhörer mit dem zeitlichen Fluss prägen. Es wird gezeigt, dass diese zeitlichen Strategien mit der unkonventionellen Erzählstruktur des Musicals und dessen thematischer Auseinandersetzung mit Vorwegnahme und Verzögerung im Einklang stehen.

Die Rubrik der Hauptartikel schliesst mit einem Beitrag von Achille Kienholz, in welchem er die Rolle der mechanischen Musik- und insbesondere der Jahrmarktsorgeln bei der Prägung moderner Zeitvorstellungen untersucht. Mit dem Fokus auf die Wiederholung, die technologische Vermittlung und die Wirkmacht dieser Instrumente verdeutlicht die Studie, wie die mechanische Reproduktion zur Konstruktion zeitlicher Rahmenbedingungen und sozialer Praktiken beiträgt, und verbindet so die Organologie mit umfassenderen kulturellen und historischen Prozessen.

Im Abschnitt „Zeitzeugen“ werden weitere künstlerische Ansätze zum Thema musikalische Zeiten und Zeitlichkeiten beleuchtet und an konkreten Beispielen aufgezeigt. Martin Pensas Beitrag reflektiert über den Song „Loch dür Zyt“ (2023) der Berner Band Züri West als musikalische und kulturelle Meditation über Zeit und Erinnerung. Indem der Artikel den Song in die Geschichte der Band und den



soziokulturellen Kontext im Bern der 1980er Jahre einordnet, zeigt er auf, wie die Wiederverwendung von Texten, musikalische Zurückhaltung und audiovisuelle Gestaltung des Songs eine Reflexion über Vergänglichkeit artikulieren ohne in eine offensichtliche Nostalgie zu verfallen.

Gioia Filocamo überdenkt die Handlungen von *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* und *Così fan tutte* aus der Perspektive dramaturgischer Zeitlichkeit, indem sie die zirkulären Erzählstrukturen dieser Opern mit dem dreiteiligen A–B–A'-Modell der Da-capo-Arie verknüpft. Der Artikel macht deutlich, wie musikalische und dramaturgische Wiederholungen als Metaphern für soziale Stabilität fungieren, während die emotionalen Erfahrungen ungelöst bleiben.

Bruno Deschênes' Beitrag untersucht nichtlineare musikalische Zeitlichkeit und reflektiert über die Aufführung des Solorepertoires für die japanische Shakuhachi. Indem er Stille, Atem und zeitliche Flexibilität in den Vordergrund rückt, interpretiert der Artikel musikalische Zeit als gelebte, phänomenologische Erfahrung, die in und durch die Aufführung stetig neu geformt wird.

Manuel Farolfis Beitrag untersucht John Cages Begegnungen im Europa der Kriegszeit, indem er sich auf die vermittelnde Rolle konzentriert, die Wladimir Vogel bei der Verbreitung amerikanischer experimenteller Musik in Donaueschingen, Zürich und Mailand spielte. Der Artikel beleuchtet, wie Netzwerke, Korrespondenz und institutionelle Kontexte Prozesse persönlicher Vermittlung und damit transnationale musikalische Zeitlichkeiten in der frühen Phase des Kalten Krieges prägten.

Zum Abschluss des Abschnitts „Zeitzeugen“ präsentiert Tihomir Popović sieben Gedichte aus seinem Zyklus *venèsia*, in denen musikalische Bezüge und Alltagsbilder in einer poetischen Erkundung von Zeit, Erinnerung und Vergänglichkeit zusammenfließen.

In der Rubrik „Werkstatt CH“ bietet das *Schweizer Jahrbuch der Musikwissenschaft* Forschenden eine Plattform, um laufende Projekte und Forschungsaktivitäten vorzustellen, die an Schweizer Institutionen initiiert worden oder derzeit durchgeführt werden. Musikwissenschaftler und Musikwissenschaftlerinnen erhalten so die Möglichkeit, in verschiedenen Phasen ihrer Karriere erste Ideen, methodische Ansätze und vorläufige Ergebnisse auszutauschen. Die hier publizierten Beiträge spiegeln aktuelle Forschungsarbeiten wider, die an der Haute école de musique de Genève, der Hochschule Luzern – Musik, der Universität Bern und der Hochschule der Künste Bern durchgeführt werden.

Der Band schliesst mit einer Rezension von Fulvia Caruso zum ethnochoreologischen Dokumentarfilm *Tarantism Revisited* (Regie: Anja Dreschke und Michaela Schäuble), der Archivmaterial und zeitgenössische Aufnahmen kombiniert, um die Zeitlichkeiten des Tarantismus und ihre Resonanz in der Gegenwart kritisch zu reflektieren.

Das Redaktionsteam des *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* ist stets bestrebt, eine breite Vielfalt an Ansätzen und Perspektiven zu präsentieren. Wissenschaftler\*innen verschiedenster Hintergründe, unabhängig von Nationalität, Geschlecht oder Religion, sind eingeladen, Beiträge einzureichen. Chancengleichheit hat für das *Schweizer Jahrbuch der Musikwissenschaft* eine hohe Priorität. Diese Vielfalt gilt auch in sprachlicher Hinsicht, da es unser erklärtes Ziel ist, die sprachliche Vielfalt der Schweiz in gewissem Masse widerzuspiegeln.

Wir danken allen Autorinnen und Autoren für ihre Beiträge sowie den Personen, die zur Realisierung dieser Ausgabe beigetragen haben, allen voran unserem Journal Manager Luc Vallat und des Weiteren Cristina Urchueguía, Zentralpräsidentin der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, sowie unseren Ansprechpartner\*innen bei der Bern Open Publishing Plattform, Andrea Hacker und Jan Stutzmann. Unser Dank gilt auch den Mitgliedern des Redaktionsbeirats, den Gutachter\*innen und der Schweizerischen Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften, deren grosszügige Unterstützung die Veröffentlichung dieses Bandes ermöglicht hat.

Wir hoffen, dass alle Leserinnen und Leser Freude an dieser Ausgabe haben und sich davon inspirieren lassen!

Basel, Venedig, Bern, Heidelberg, Dezember 2025

Laura Moeckli, Vincenzina C. Ottomano, Lea Hagmann und Margret Scharrer

## Préface

Nous avons le plaisir de vous présenter le volume 42 des Annales suisses de musicologie (ASM), publiée pour la cinquième fois sous forme numérique et en libre accès. A travers ce numéro, l'équipe éditoriale est heureuse de vous proposer un ensemble de contributions réunies autour du thème « Temps et temporalités en musique ». Les auteurs ont été invités à explorer la manière dont le temps se situe à l'intersection de multiples frontières – culturelles, géographiques, historiques, représentationnelles et théoriques. Les différents cadres temporels et les ontologies de la musique reflètent la flexibilité et la nature poreuse du temps tel qu'il est façonné par les compositeurs, les interprètes, les créateurs et les institutions (nationales) au fil de l'histoire et à travers le monde.

Les contributions rassemblées mobilisent des perspectives issues de la musicologie, de l'ethnomusicologie, de la théorie musicale, de la pédagogie musicale et des *sound studies*, mais également d'autres disciplines telles que la littérature, la linguistique, l'histoire culturelle, les études comparées, les études cinématographiques, les études genre, les sciences sociales ou encore les *performance studies*. Elles visent à éclairer la manière singulière dont la musique organise et révèle le temps. Les questions abordées sont notamment : comment des phénomènes psychologiques tels que la mémoire, l'anticipation ou la nostalgie sont-ils façonnés par des structures temporelles ? Comment des procédés narratifs comme l'accélération ou le retour en arrière opèrent-ils dans différents contextes historiques et culturels ? Comment appréhender l'interaction complexe de différentes temporalités en musique, entre temps représenté et temps de la représentation, présent et temps évoqué, ou encore les multiples temporalités de la parole, de l'action, de l'affect et de la perception ?

La première partie du volume 42 comprend huit articles principaux abordant la temporalité musicale à partir de perspectives historiques et méthodologiques variées. La section s'ouvre sur un article introductif de Mauro Calcagno, qui examine la production de *La Didone* de Cavalli par le Wooster Group comme un cas paradigmatique permettant de repenser la temporalité musicale dans la performance. Mobilisant les *performance studies*, l'historiographie et la théorie des médias, l'auteur montre comment des stratégies hétérochroniques et non linéaires remettent en question l'opposition traditionnelle entre interprétation historiquement informée et *Regietheater*, notamment par le recours à la reconstitution et à l'intermédialité. En concevant la mise en scène d'opéra comme une manière de « performer l'histoire » plutôt que de la représenter, Calcagno propose un cadre temporel alternatif dans lequel passé et présent coexistent dans des configurations dynamiques et instables.

Consacré à l'opéra italien du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'article de Guillaume Castella examine la Manon Lescaut de Giacomo Puccini sous le spectre de la temporalité dramatique. Fondée sur une analyse musicale et dramaturgique détaillée, l'étude montre comment Puccini tend progressivement à objectiver le temps, qu'il ne traite plus comme un paramètre purement formel ou abstrait, mais comme un élément tangible et constitutif du processus dramatique. Cette évolution apparaît particulièrement dans la fonction temporelle des motifs récurrents. En repensant les relations entre forme, perception et flux narratif, Castella situe Manon Lescaut comme une œuvre charnière dans la transformation de la dramaturgie opératique à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

L'article de Stephanie Vos explore la poétique du temps et de l'espace dans les premières œuvres d'Abdullah Ibrahim, en particulier pour la période 1965–1970. À partir de l'analyse des écrits du musicien, d'entretiens, de sources documentaires et de certaines compositions, l'étude met en évidence la manière dont le temps devient un lieu central d'élaboration créative où se négocient l'exil, la mémoire et la géographie. La temporalité n'y apparaît pas seulement comme un paramètre musical, mais comme un médium de construction des lieux, d'imagination historique et de résistance politique face aux régimes coloniaux et à l'ordre temporel imposé par l'apartheid.

Adoptant une perspective philosophique et interdisciplinaire, l'article de Lauge Dideriksen développe une théorie de la temporalité musicale comme intrinsèquement spatiale. En mettant en dialogue

philosophie, théorie musicale, ethnomusicologie et recherche cognitive, l'auteur montre que le rythme, le microrhythme et la forme ne se déploient pas uniquement dans le temps : ils contribuent également à spatialiser l'expérience temporelle, influençant la manière dont les événements musicaux sont perçus, organisés et mémorisés. En reliant ces temporalités spatialisées aux expériences de flux, d'incarnation et de construction collective du sens dans différents contextes culturels, l'article propose un cadre nuancé pour comprendre la musique comme un lieu où le temps n'est pas seulement mesuré, mais aussi transformé sur le plan de l'expérience.

Dans son article, Daithí Kearney examine la manière dont Siamsa Tíre, le National Folk Theatre of Ireland, articule passé, présent et futur à travers la mise en scène de la musique, de la danse et du folklore depuis les années 1960 jusqu'au début des années 2000. À partir de l'analyse de plusieurs productions emblématiques, l'étude montre comment le temps fonctionne à la fois comme dispositif narratif – invitant le public à « voyager dans le temps » ou à pénétrer dans d'autres temporalités – et comme principe structurant façonné par les transformations sociales, le tourisme et l'évolution des pratiques artistiques. En mobilisant le concept de rythmanalyse développé par Henri Lefebvre, l'auteur met en évidence la coexistence de temporalités multiples sur scène, conciliant la préservation du patrimoine culturel immatériel et l'adaptation aux contextes culturels contemporains.

L'article de Tim Martin Hoffmann explore la notion de « deep time » en musicologie historique à partir d'une lecture attentive des écrits d'August Halm et d'Ernst Kurth consacrés à Anton Bruckner. L'étude montre comment des métaphores géologiques et des modes de pensée historico-structurels influencent leurs approches analytiques et historiographiques de la musique de Bruckner. Dans cette perspective, Bruckner apparaît moins comme un cas compositionnel isolé que comme une figure centrale dans une tentative, au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'élaborer une conception stratifiée et non téléologique du temps musical.

En retraçant la circulation d'enregistrements de chansons folkloriques yiddish américaines, la contribution de Zeke Levine analyse la manière dont les médias musicaux médiatisent les relations entre passé, présent et futur aux États-Unis au milieu du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Des enregistrements ethnographiques de terrain et des microsillons commerciaux associés à Ruth Rubin et au mouvement de l'American Folk Revival mettent en lumière le rôle des technologies d'enregistrement dans la formation de pratiques de mémoire et de transmission culturelle.

L'articulation du temps musical dans *Company* (1970) de Stephen Sondheim est ensuite examinée par Nick Braae. L'auteur introduit les notions de linéarité interrompue et de linéarité étendue afin d'expliquer comment le rythme harmonique, la structure phrastique, le retard cadentiel et les ruptures formelles façonnent l'expérience du flux temporel chez l'auditeur. Ces stratégies temporelles entrent en résonance avec la structure narrative non conventionnelle de la comédie musicale et avec ses thématiques d'anticipation et de suspension.

La section des articles principaux se conclut par une contribution d'Achille Kienholz, qui examine le rôle de la musique mécanique – en particulier des orgues de foire – dans la formation des conceptions modernes du temps. En se concentrant sur la répétition, la médiation technologique et l'agentivité des instruments, l'étude met en lumière la manière dont la reproduction mécanique participe à la construction des cadres temporels et des pratiques sociales, en reliant l'organologie à des processus culturels et historiques plus larges.

La section « Témoignages » met en lumière une autre approche artistique de la question des temporalités musicales. La contribution de Martin Pensa propose une réflexion sur la chanson *Loch dür Zyt* (2023) du groupe bernois Züri West, envisagée comme une méditation musicale et culturelle sur le temps et la mémoire. En situant la chanson dans l'histoire du groupe et dans le contexte socioculturel de la ville de Berne dans les années 1980, l'article montre comment la réutilisation de paroles, l'économie musicale et la mise en scène audiovisuelle élaborent une réflexion sur le caractère éphémère du temps, sans céder à une nostalgie explicite.

Gioia Filocamo propose une relecture des intrigues des *Noces de Figaro*, de *Don Giovanni* et de *Così fan tutte* à la lumière de la temporalité dramaturgique. En reliant les structures narratives circulaires de ces opéras au modèle tripartite A–B–A' de l'aria da capo, l'étude montre comment les retours musicaux et dramaturgiques peuvent être interprétés comme des métaphores de stabilité sociale, tout en laissant l'expérience émotionnelle irrésolue.

La contribution de Bruno Deschênes, consacrée à l'interprétation du répertoire solo pour shakuhachi, explore quant à elle la forme non linéaire de la temporalité musicale. En mettant l'accent sur le silence, la respiration et la flexibilité temporelle, l'auteur envisage le temps musical comme une expérience vécue et phénoménologique façonnée dans et par l'acte d'interprétation.

Manuel Farolfi examine les rencontres européennes de John Cage après la Seconde Guerre mondiale en mettant l'accent sur le rôle de médiation joué par Wladimir Vogel dans la circulation de la musique expérimentale américaine entre Donaueschingen, Zurich et Milan. L'étude montre comment les réseaux, la correspondance et les contextes institutionnels ont contribué à façonner des processus de médiation personnelle et, ce faisant, des temporalités musicales transnationales dans le contexte du début de la guerre froide.

La section se conclut par la présentation de sept poèmes du cycle venèsia de Tihomir Popović, dans lesquels références musicales et images du quotidien se rejoignent dans une exploration poétique du temps, de la mémoire et de l'éphémère.

A travers la section « Atelier-CH », les Annales suisses de musicologie offrent une plateforme permettant aux chercheurs de présenter des projets et des activités de recherche en cours menés dans des institutions suisses. Des chercheurs à différents stades de leur carrière peuvent ainsi partager leurs premières idées, leurs approches méthodologiques et des résultats préliminaires. Les contributions réunies dans cette section reflètent des travaux actuellement conduits à la Haute école de musique de Genève, à la Hochschule Luzern – Musik, à l'Université de Berne et à la Haute école des arts de Berne.

Cette publication s'achève par un compte rendu de Fulvia Caruso consacré au documentaire *Tarantism Revisited* (réal. Anja Dreschke et Michaela Schäuble), qui combine matériaux d'archives et documents contemporains afin de proposer une réflexion critique sur les temporalités du tarentisme et leur résonance dans le présent.

L'équipe éditoriale des Annales suisses de musicologie s'attache à promouvoir la diversité des points de vue et des perspectives. Les chercheurs de tous horizons, indépendamment de leur nationalité, de leur genre ou de leur confession, sont invités à contribuer à la revue. L'égalité des chances constitue une priorité essentielle pour les ASM. Cette diversité s'exprime également sur le plan linguistique, la revue ayant pour objectif de refléter, dans une certaine mesure, la pluralité de la Suisse de ce point de vue.

Nous remercions chaleureusement l'ensemble des auteurs pour leurs contributions ainsi que toutes les personnes qui ont participé à la réalisation de ce numéro : en particulier notre *Journal Manager* Luc Vallat, la présidente de la Société suisse de musicologie Cristina Urchueguía, ainsi que nos interlocuteurs auprès de la plateforme Bern Open Publishing. Nous adressons également nos remerciements aux membres du comité éditorial, aux évaluateurs et à l'Académie suisse des sciences humaines et sociales, dont le généreux soutien a rendu possible la publication de ce volume.

Nous espérons que nos lectrices et lecteurs auront plaisir à découvrir ce numéro et que celui-ci saura nourrir leur réflexion.

Bâle, Venise, Berne, Heidelberg, décembre 2025

Laura Moeckli, Vincenzina C. Ottomano, Lea Hagmann et Margret Scharrer

## Prefazione

È per noi un grande piacere dare il benvenuto al volume 42 dell'Annuario Svizzero di Musicologia, il quinto della nuova edizione digitale ad accesso libero *Golden Open Access*, dedicato al tema "Temporalità in musica". In questo numero abbiamo invitato studiosi e studiose a esaminare diversi aspetti del tempo e delle temporalità musicali, esplorando il modo in cui essi si intrecciano con molteplici confini, siano essi culturali, geografici, storici, rappresentativi e teorici. Diverse cornici temporali e ontologie della musica riflettono la flessibilità e la natura porosa del tempo così come viene manipolato da compositori, interpreti, creatori musicali e istituzioni nel corso della storia e in diverse aree del mondo.

I contributi raccolti in questo volume attingono a prospettive provenienti dalla musicologia, dall'etnomusicologia, dalla teoria musicale, dalla pedagogia musicale, dai *sound studies* e da altre discipline quali la letteratura, la linguistica, la storia culturale, gli studi comparati, i *film studies*, i *gender studies*, gli studi sociali e i *performance studies*, per comprendere come la musica organizzi e riveli il tempo in modo peculiare. Le questioni affrontate sono le più disparate, tra esse figurano, ad esempio, in che modo fenomeni psicologici come memoria, anticipazione o nostalgia vengono modellati dalle strutture temporali? Come operano dispositivi narrativi quali l'accelerazione o il flashback all'interno di convenzioni appartenenti a differenti contesti storici e culturali? Come possiamo comprendere la complessa interazione di diverse temporalità nella musica, come il tempo rappresentato rispetto al tempo della rappresentazione, il presente rispetto al tempo evocato, o i diversi tempi del discorso, dell'azione, dell'affetto e della percezione?

Nella prima parte del volume 42 si troveranno otto articoli principali sottoposti a *double-blind peer review*, che nel loro insieme affrontano la temporalità musicale da prospettive storiche e metodologiche differenti. La sezione si apre con un *keynote article* di Mauro Calcagno, che esamina la produzione della *Didone* di Cavalli – realizzata dal Wooster Group tra il 2007 e il 2009 – come caso paradigmatico per ripensare la temporalità musicale nella performance. In dialogo con i *performance studies*, la storiografia e la teoria dei media, l'articolo esplora come strategie eterocroniche e non lineari – in particolare attraverso *reenactment* e intermedialità – mettano in discussione le tradizionali opposizioni tra esecuzione storicamente informata e *Regietheater*. Concettualizzando la messa in scena operistica come una forma di "fare storia" piuttosto che di rappresentarla, Calcagno propone un quadro temporale alternativo, nel quale passato e presente coesistono in configurazioni dinamiche e instabili.

Concentrandosi sull'opera italiana dell'Ottocento, l'articolo di Guillaume Castella esamina *Manon Lescaut* di Giacomo Puccini attraverso la lente della temporalità drammatica. Il saggio prende le mosse da un'analisi musicale e drammaturgica, mostrando come Puccini oggettivizzi progressivamente il tempo, trattandolo non come un parametro puramente formale o astratto, ma come un elemento tangibile e costitutivo del processo drammatico. Ciò emerge in particolare nella funzione temporale dei motivi ricorrenti che spingono a ripensare la relazione tra forma, percezione e flusso narrativo, e quindi a collocare *Manon Lescaut* come opera cruciale nella trasformazione della drammaturgia operistica del *fin de siècle*.

L'articolo di Stephanie Vos esplora la poetica del tempo e dello spazio nella produzione iniziale di Abdullah Ibrahim, con particolare attenzione al periodo compreso tra il 1965 e il 1970. Attraverso l'analisi di scritti e interviste del musicista, di fonti documentarie e composizioni selezionate, lo studio rivela come il tempo diventi un luogo centrale di elaborazione creativa in cui esilio, memoria e geografia vengono negoziati. Piuttosto che funzionare semplicemente come parametro musicale, la temporalità emerge come un mezzo per la costruzione del luogo, per l'immaginazione storica e per la resistenza politica ai regimi temporali coloniali e dell'apartheid.

Affrontando il tempo musicale da una prospettiva filosofica e interdisciplinare, l'articolo di Lauge Dideriksen sviluppa una teoria della temporalità musicale come intrinsecamente spaziale. Il saggio mette in dialogo filosofia, teoria musicale, etnomusicologia e ricerca cognitiva per sostenere che ritmo, microritmo e forma non si limitano a dispiegarsi nel tempo, ma spazializzano attivamente l'esperienza temporale, modellando il modo in cui gli eventi musicali vengono percepiti, organizzati e ricordati. Collegando queste temporalità spazializzate alle esperienze di flusso, corporeità e costruzione collettiva di significato in diversi contesti culturali, Dideriksen propone un quadro articolato per comprendere la musica come un ambito in cui il tempo non è soltanto misurato, ma trasformato a livello esperienziale.

Daithí Kearney esamina come Siamsa Tíre, il National Folk Theatre of Ireland, negozia passato, presente e futuro attraverso la messa in scena di musica, danza e folklore dagli anni Sessanta ai primi anni Duemila. Concentrandosi su una serie di produzioni emblematiche, lo studio evidenzia come il tempo funzioni sia come dispositivo narrativo – invitando il pubblico a “tornare indietro nel tempo” o a entrare in altre dimensioni temporali – sia come principio strutturante, modellato dal cambiamento sociale, dal turismo e dall'evoluzione delle pratiche artistiche. Facendo riferimento al concetto di *rhythmanalysis* di Henri Lefebvre, l'articolo mostra come molteplici temporalità coesistano sulla scena, bilanciando la conservazione del patrimonio culturale immateriale con la capacità di rispondere ai contesti culturali contemporanei.

Il saggio di Tim Martin Hoffmann esplora il concetto di “deep time” nella musicologia storica attraverso una lettura ravvicinata degli scritti su Anton Bruckner di August Halm ed Ernst Kurth. L'autore mostra come metafore geologiche e modalità di pensiero storico-strutturali modellino gli approcci analitici e storiografici di Halm e Kurth alla musica di Bruckner. In questa prospettiva, Bruckner emerge meno come un caso compositivo isolato che come figura chiave all'interno di un tentativo, all'inizio del Novecento, di articolare una comprensione stratificata e non teleologica del tempo musicale.

Seguendo la circolazione delle registrazioni di canti popolari yiddish-americani, il contributo di Zeke Levine indaga il modo in cui i media musicali mediano le relazioni tra passato, presente e futuro negli Stati Uniti della metà del XX secolo. Registrazioni etnografiche sul campo e LP commerciali associati a Ruth Rubin e all'American Folk Revival mostrano come le tecnologie di registrazione abbiano plasmato le pratiche della memoria e della trasmissione culturale.

Nel suo articolo, Nick Braae analizza *Company* (1970) di Stephen Sondheim, prestando particolare attenzione all'articolazione del tempo musicale. Il saggio introduce le nozioni di linearità interrotta e linearità dilatata per spiegare come il ritmo armonico, la struttura delle frasi, il ritardo cadenziale e le fratture formali modellino l'esperienza del flusso temporale da parte degli ascoltatori. Queste strategie temporali risuonano con la struttura narrativa non convenzionale del musical e con il suo impegno tematico attorno alle dinamiche di anticipazione e ritardo.

La rubrica degli articoli principali si conclude con un contributo di Achille Kienholz, in cui egli esamina il ruolo della musica meccanica – in particolare degli organi da fiera – nella costruzione delle moderne concezioni del tempo. Concentrandosi su ripetizione, mediazione tecnologica e agentività degli strumenti, lo studio mostra come la riproduzione meccanica partecipi alla definizione di cornici temporali e pratiche sociali, mettendo in relazione l'organologia con più ampi processi storico-culturali.

La rubrica “Testimonianze” illumina un ulteriore approccio artistico al tema delle temporalità musicali. Il contributo di Martin Pensa riflette sul brano *Loch d'ür Zyt* (2023) della band bernese Züri West come meditazione musicale e culturale su tempo e memoria. Collocando il brano nella storia del gruppo e nel contesto socioculturale della Berna degli anni Ottanta, Pensa mostra come il riuso lirico, la sobrietà musicale e l'inquadratura audiovisiva articolino una riflessione sulla transitorietà priva di nostalgia esplicita.

Gioia Filocamo ripensa le trame di *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* e *Così fan tutte* attraverso la lentezza della temporalità drammaturgica. Collegando le strutture narrative circolari di queste opere al modello



tripartito A–B–A' dell'aria con da capo", l'articolo mostra come i ritorni musicali e drammaturgici funzionino come metafore di stabilità sociale pur lasciando irrisolta l'esperienza emotiva.

Esplorando la temporalità musicale non lineare, il contributo di Bruno Deschênes riflette sull'esecuzione del repertorio solistico per lo shakuhachi giapponese. Ponendo in primo piano il silenzio, il respiro e la flessibilità temporale, l'articolo inquadra il tempo musicale come un'esperienza vissuta e fenomenologica che prende forma nella e attraverso la performance.

Il contributo di Manuel Farolfi esamina gli incontri europei di John Cage nel secondo dopoguerra concentrandosi sul ruolo di mediazione svolto da Wladimir Vogel nella circolazione della musica sperimentale americana tra Donaueschingen, Zurigo e Milano. L'articolo mette in luce come reti, corrispondenze e contesti istituzionali abbiano modellato processi di mediazione personale e, di conseguenza, temporalità musicali transnazionali nel primo periodo della Guerra fredda.

A chiusura della sezione, Tihomir Popović presenta sette poesie dal ciclo *venèzia*, in cui riferimenti musicali e immagini della quotidianità convergono in un'esplorazione poetica di tempo, memoria e transitorietà.

Nella sezione intitolata "Officina-CH", l'Annuario svizzero di Musicologia offre una piattaforma ai ricercatori e alle ricercatrici per presentare progetti in corso e attività di ricerca avviate o condotte presso istituzioni svizzere. Studiosi e studiose in diverse fasi della loro carriera hanno così l'opportunità di condividere prime idee, approcci metodologici e risultati preliminari. I contributi raccolti in questa sezione riflettono ricerche attualmente svolte presso la Haute école de musique de Genève, la Hochschule Luzern Musik, l'Universität Bern e la Hochschule der Künste Bern.

Il volume si conclude con una recensione di Fulvia Caruso del documentario *Tarantism Revisited* (regia di Anja Dreschke e Michaela Schäuble), che combina materiali d'archivio e contemporanei per riflettere criticamente sulle temporalità del tarantismo e sulla loro risonanza nel presente.

Il comitato editoriale dello SJM mira costantemente a includere una pluralità di approcci e prospettive. Studiosi e studiose provenienti da ogni contesto, indipendentemente da nazionalità, genere o religione, sono invitati a contribuire alla rivista. Le pari opportunità rappresentano una priorità fondamentale per l'Annuario. Questa pluralità si applica anche in termini linguistici, poiché il nostro obiettivo è quello di riflettere, almeno in parte, la diversità linguistica della Svizzera.

Desideriamo ringraziare tutti gli autori e le autrici per i loro contributi nonché tutti coloro che hanno collaborato alla realizzazione di questo numero: in primo luogo il nostro redattore Luc Vallat, Cristina Urchueguía, presidente centrale della Società Svizzera di Musicologia, e i nostri referenti presso la Bern Open Publishing Platform. Ringraziamo inoltre i membri del Comitato scientifico, i revisori e l'Accademia Svizzera di Scienze Umane e Sociali, il cui generoso sostegno ha reso possibile la pubblicazione di questo volume.

Vi auguriamo una buona lettura, con l'auspicio che queste pagine possano offrire ispirazione e nuovi percorsi di riflessione!

Basilea, Venezia, Berna, Heidelberg, dicembre 2025

Laura Moeckli, Vincenzina C. Ottomano, Lea Hagmann e Margret Scharrer

## Preface

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to Volume 42 of the *SJM*, the fifth edition of the newly digital Open Access 'Swiss Journal of Musicology'. The editorial team is delighted to present the work of authors on the theme of "Temporalities in Music". In this issue, we invited scholars to examine aspects of time and temporality in music, exploring how time engages with various borders: cultural, geographical, historical, representational, and theoretical. Different temporal frameworks and ontologies of music reflect the flexibility and porous nature of time as manipulated by composers, performers, music creators and (national) institutions throughout history and across the globe.

Contributions draw upon perspectives from musicology, ethnomusicology, music theory, music pedagogy, sound studies, and other disciplines like literature, linguistics, cultural history, comparative studies, film studies, gender studies, social studies or performance studies to understand how music uniquely organizes and reveals time. Among the topics considered are: How are psychological phenomena like memory, anticipation or nostalgia shaped by temporal structures? How do narrative devices, such as acceleration and flashback, operate within conventions across different historical and cultural contexts? How can we understand the complex interplay of different temporalities in music, including represented time versus time of representation, present versus evoked time, and the varying times of speech, action, affect, perception, etc.?

In the first part of Volume 42, we find eight double-blind peer-reviewed main articles, which together address musical temporality from diverse historical and methodological perspectives. The section opens with a keynote article by Mauro Calcagno, who examines The Wooster Group's 2007–2009 production of Cavalli's *La Didone* as a paradigmatic case for rethinking musical temporality in performance. Engaging performance studies, historiography, and media theory, the article explores how heterochronic and non-linear strategies—particularly through reenactment and intermediality—challenge traditional oppositions between historically informed performance and Regietheater. By conceptualizing operatic staging as a form of performing history rather than representing it, Calcagno proposes an alternative temporal framework in which past and present coexist in dynamic, unstable configurations.

Focusing on nineteenth-century Italian opera, Guillaume Castella's article examines Giacomo Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* through the lens of dramatic temporality. Based on close musical and dramaturgical analysis, the study shows how Puccini progressively objectifies time, treating it not as a purely formal or abstract parameter but as a tangible and constitutive element of the dramatic process. This becomes particularly evident in the temporal function of recurring motifs. By rethinking the relationship between form, perception, and narrative flow, Castella situates *Manon Lescaut* as a pivotal work in the transformation of operatic dramaturgy at the *fin de siècle*.

The article by Stephanie Vos explores the poetics of time and space in the early work of Abdullah Ibrahim, with particular attention to the period between 1965 and 1970. By examining the musician's writings, interviews, documentary sources, and selected compositions, the study reveals how time becomes a central site of creative elaboration in which exile, memory, and geography are negotiated. Rather than functioning merely as a musical parameter, temporality emerges as a medium for place-making, historical imagination, and political resistance to colonial and apartheid regimes of temporal order.

Addressing musical time from a philosophical and interdisciplinary perspective, Lauge Dideriksen's article develops a theory of musical temporality as inherently spatial. The study brings philosophy, music theory, ethnomusicology, and cognitive research into dialogue to argue that rhythm, microrhythm, and form do not merely unfold in time but actively spatialise temporal experience, shaping how musical events are perceived, organised, and remembered. By linking these spatialised temporalities to experiences of flow, embodiment, and collective meaning-making across diverse cultural contexts, the article

offers a nuanced framework for understanding music as a site in which time is not only measured but experientially transformed.

In his article, Daithí Kearney examines how *Siamsa Tíre*, the National Folk Theatre of Ireland, negotiates past, present, and future through the staging of music, dance, and folklore from the 1960s to the early 2000s. Focusing on a series of emblematic productions, the study highlights how time functions both as a narrative device—inviting audiences “back in time” or into other temporal realms—and as a structuring principle shaped by social change, tourism, and evolving artistic practices. By engaging Henri Lefebvre’s concept of rhythmanalysis, the article illuminates how multiple temporalities coexist on stage, balancing the preservation of intangible cultural heritage with responsiveness to contemporary cultural contexts.

Tim Martin Hoffmann’s article explores the concept of “deep time” in historical musicology through a close reading of August Halm’s and Ernst Kurth’s writings on Anton Bruckner. The study shows how geological metaphors and structural-historical modes of thought shape their analytical and historiographical approaches to Bruckner’s music. In this perspective, Bruckner emerges less as an isolated compositional case than as a key figure within an early twentieth-century attempt to articulate a stratified, non-teleological understanding of musical time.

Tracing the circulation of Yiddish-American folk song recordings, Zeke Levine’s contribution investigates how musical media mediate relationships between past, present, and future in the mid-twentieth-century United States. Ethnographic field recordings and commercially released LPs associated with Ruth Rubin and the American Folk Revival reveal how recording technologies shaped practices of memory and cultural transmission.

In his article, Nick Braae analyses Stephen Sondheim’s *Company* (1970) with particular attention to the articulation of musical time. The article introduces the notions of disrupted and stretched linearity to account for how harmonic pacing, phrase structure, cadential delay, and formal rupture shape listeners’ experiences of temporal flow. These temporal strategies are shown to resonate with the musical’s unconventional narrative structure and its thematic engagement with anticipation and delay.

The section on main articles concludes with a contribution by Achille Kienholz, in which he examines the role of mechanical music – in particular fairground organs – in shaping modern conceptions of time. By focusing on repetition, technological mediation, and the agency of instruments, the study highlights how mechanical reproduction participates in the construction of temporal frameworks and social practices, linking organology with broader cultural and historical processes.

The „Times and Perspectives“ section sheds light on another artistic approach to the topic of musical temporalities. Martin Pensa’s contribution reflects on the song *Loch dūr Zyt* (2023) by the Bernese band *Züri West* as a musical and cultural meditation on time and memory. Situating the song within the band’s history and the socio-cultural context of 1980s Bern, the article demonstrates how lyrical reuse, musical restraint, and audiovisual framing articulate a reflection on transience without overt nostalgia.

Gioia Filocamo rethinks the plots of *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte* through the lens of dramaturgical temporality. By linking the circular narrative structures of these operas to the tripartite A–B–A’ model of the da capo aria, the article shows how musical and dramaturgical returns function as metaphors for social stability while leaving emotional experience unresolved.

Exploring non-linear musical temporality, Bruno Deschênes’s contribution reflects on the performance of solo repertoire for the Japanese shakuhachi. By foregrounding silence, breath, and temporal flexibility, the article frames musical time as a lived, phenomenological experience shaped in and through performance.

Manuel Farolfi’s contribution examines John Cage’s post-war encounters in Europe by focusing on the mediating role played by Wladimir Vogel in the circulation of American experimental music across Donaueschingen, Zurich, and Milan. The article highlights how networks, correspondence, and institu-

tional contexts shaped processes of personal mediation and, in turn, transnational musical temporalities in the early Cold War period.

Closing the section, Tihomir Popović presents seven poems from the cycle *venèsia*, in which musical references and everyday imagery converge in a poetic exploration of time, memory, and transience.

In the section entitled “Workshop-CH”, the Swiss Journal of Musicology offers a platform for musicological researchers to present ongoing projects and research activities initiated or conducted at Swiss institutions. Researchers at different stages of their careers are thereby given the opportunity to share first ideas, methodological approaches, and preliminary results. The contributions gathered here reflect current research carried out at the Haute Ecole de Musique de Genève, the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, the University of Bern, and the Bern Academy of the Arts.

The volume concludes with a review by Fulvia Caruso of the documentary *Tarantism Revisited* (dir. Anja Dreschke and Michaela Schäuble), which combines archival and contemporary materials to reflect critically on the temporalities of tarantism and their resonance in the present.

The editorial team of the SJM consistently aims to include a broad diversity of views and perspectives. Scholars from all backgrounds, regardless of nationality, gender or religion are invited to contribute to the publication. Equal opportunities are a high priority for the Swiss Journal of Musicology. This diversity also applies in linguistic terms, as our stated aim is to reflect the linguistic diversity of Switzerland to some extent.

We would like to thank all the authors for their contributions and the people who have contributed to the realisation of this issue, above all our Journal Manager Luc Vallat, Cristina Urchueguía, Central President of the Swiss Music Research Society, and our contacts at the Bern Open Publishing Platform Andrea Hacker and Jan Stutzmann. We would also like to thank the members of the Editorial Board, the reviewers and the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, whose generous support has made the publication of this volume possible.

We hope all our readers enjoy reading this issue and find it inspiring!

Basel, Venice, Bern, Heidelberg, December 2025

Laura Moeckli, Vincenzina C. Ottomano, Lea Hagmann and Margret Scharrer

# Performance, Heterochrony, Historiography: The Wooster Group's 2007–2009 Production of Busenello/Cavalli's *La Didone* (1641) and Baroque Opera Representation

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**Keywords:** opera, performance studies, nonlinear time, dramaturgy, media, postdramatic theater

**Abstract:** *The Wooster Group's acclaimed production of Francesco Cavalli's La Didone challenged traditional Baroque opera representations by rejecting the typical dual-track approach of historically informed sonic philology and Regietheater's modernized visual staging. Baroque productions on European and American stages have largely followed stylized practices that emphasize emotional and psychological realism, often aligning acting choices with contemporary interpretations of gender and emotional depth. In contrast, the Wooster Group introduced a heterochronic, nonlinear approach to the opera's dramaturgy, rooted in experimental postdramatic theater techniques. Using methods different from those in conventional opera, this groundbreaking production combined narrative elements with multimedia innovations, effectively decentering music's historical authority and rejecting strictly linear representations of time and history. Offering a fresh paradigm and foreshadowing the most avant-garde productions in today's operatic stages, the Wooster Group's La Didone bridges past and present by developing alternative temporal frameworks for engaging with historical materials.*

*We aren't trying to represent culture.  
We're performing it as an emerging art form*  
Bruce Odland<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary stagings of operas from the European period commonly referred to as 'Baroque' provide a notable case study for exploring how performers and creators employ temporal frames to highlight time's flexible and hybrid nature. In his recent *Opera in Performance*, Clemens Risi identifies three predominant approaches in contemporary performance practices of the operatic repertoire: the first, often labeled with the acronym HIP (Historically Informed Performance), demands fidelity to original works (*Werktreue*); the second, *Regietheater*, prevalent in German-speaking regions, preserves an opera's musical structure while radically reinterpreting its textual and visual elements; and the third, the "fragmentation" approach, creates hybrid forms by freely combining operatic fragments from different contexts, effectively reviving historical practices like *pasticcio* that waned with the rise of the concept of the musical work in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the first two approaches, Risi suggests that even 'historically informed' and reconstructionist performances should recognize opera's long experimental traditions rather than rigidly adhering to conventions. Therefore, a HIP perspective legitimizes rather than disproves *Regietheater* approaches that incorporate modern visual vocabulary and movement repertoires.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> TRACY 2009: 12, a local magazine interview with the music director of The Wooster Group's *La Didone*. The article's subtitle reads: "The Wooster Group plays it straight but still gives Cavalli's Baroque epic a twist".

<sup>3</sup> Risi 2021: 5–8.

<sup>4</sup> Classifications of contemporary operatic stagings can be found in SCHLÄDER 2001; LEVIN 2009; and Mary HUNTER 2014.

Baroque operas present a distinct challenge within these performance approaches due to their historical discontinuity. Most of these works lack continuous performance traditions, appear infrequently on modern stages, and seem fundamentally foreign to contemporary audiences compared to standard repertoires, where audiences have established expectations and frames of reference. This unique reception context adds another layer of complexity to the directorial choices among HIP, *Regietheater*, and fragmentation approaches, as directors must not only interpret the work but also bridge a broader historical and aesthetic gap between the material and modern sensibilities, making Baroque opera both more vulnerable to and potentially more suitable for experimental approaches.<sup>5</sup>

For instance, a perceived contradiction between the sonic and visual dimensions becomes increasingly relevant when representing works from three or four centuries ago. Since Peter Sellars' radical productions of Handel operas in the 1980s – an example of American *Regietheater* – Euro-American audiences of Baroque operas have come to expect a certain degree of historically informed performance from the pit orchestra (John Butt refers to this expectation as 'HIPness').<sup>6</sup> For these works, the public generally assumes that the music is performed with philological accuracy using period instruments, stylistic appropriateness, and critical editions. However, the same expectation does not apply to the visual component, especially in *Regietheater* productions that update operas with modern sets and costumes.<sup>7</sup> In these productions, the contemporary *mise-en-scène* operates on a different 'track' than the sonic HIP component, resulting in a hybrid that Butt compares to postmodern 'double coding' in architecture.<sup>8</sup> A minority of 'reconstructionist' productions aims to recreate Baroque sets, costumes, makeup, and lighting (such as with candles), thereby expanding the HIP approach from the sonic to the visual, particularly when staged in a historical venue.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to presenting the aforementioned contradiction between the sonic and visual dimensions, contemporary *Regietheater* productions share with audiences a fundamental assumption about acting. Singers are not expected to adopt the highly stylized and anti-realistic gestures and movements typical of HIP or reconstructionist productions;<sup>10</sup> instead, they are expected to emotionally and psychologically connect with 'real life' characters in an almost Stanislavskian manner. As Suzanne Aspden notes regarding Handel's operas, "We ... still want ... to see Handel's characters as rounded psychological presentations in order to make his operas satisfying, understandable dramatic wholes, comparable to those of the nineteenth century".<sup>11</sup> Singers predominantly adhere to conventional acting practices that originated in the nineteenth century, with today's directors often encouraging them to achieve realistic and emotional effects similar to those in film or television productions, particularly in sexually charged scenes.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, in Baroque opera representations, audience expectations regarding singers' realistic acting and emotional identification with the portrayed characters often clash with the dramaturgies and ideological premises of the works themselves, creating a conflict between perceptions of contemporaneity and those of 'history'. Stage directors attempt to resolve this dilemma by creatively adapting their productions to contemporary tastes. Discussing two modern productions of *La Didone* – the *dramma mu-*

5 FISCHER 2015.

6 See BUTT 2002: 129. Musicological scholarship devoted to today's operatic stagings has been steadily expanding since LEVIN 2007 up to RISI 2021 and HAVELKOVÁ 2021, partly following up on Carolyn Abbate's pioneering call for a performance focus in ABBATE 2004. For the specific issues raised by staging Baroque opera in our times, see DESHOULIÈRES 2000; GESS et al. 2008; Mary HUNTER 2014; KARA 2018; CANDIARD and GROS DE GASQUET 2019; MOUNIER-VEHIER 2020; and Magnus T. SCHNEIDER and WAGNER 2023.

7 Radical stagings in the tradition of *Regietheater* (director's theater) "aim to create new experiences and understandings of the operatic repertory through a process of defamiliarization – often involving visual elements that do not attempt to adhere to the composer or librettist's stage directions and/or intentions in a literal manner", ROTHE 2019.

8 BUTT 2002: 148–51.

9 See SAUTER and WILES 2014.

10 See T'HOOFT 2008.

11 ASPDEN 2013: 12.

12 For singers' conventional acting in *Regietheater* productions, see SMART 2020: 159–161.

*sicale* by Giovan Francesco Busenello set to music by Francesco Cavalli and first performed in Venice in 1641 – Wendy Heller notes that both subvert Busenello’s creative happy ending.<sup>13</sup> The librettist altered the queen’s death (as narrated by Virgil and preserved in operas such as Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*) into her marriage to the previously rejected suitor, King Iarbas. However, both modern productions examined by Heller, using period instruments, portray Dido as “an unwilling participant in the *lieto fine*, who accepts her new husband with stoic resignation and despair rather than with the joy evident in Cavalli’s music”.<sup>14</sup> The gap between acting and music reflects the challenge of presenting the original happy ending. The directors of these productions – Clément Hervieu-Léger, a student of Patrice Chéreau rooted in the *Regietheater* tradition, and Carlo Majer – presume that audiences experiencing Dido’s emotional journey following her abandonment by Aeneas would respond negatively to the inconsistency in the protagonist’s rapid change of heart at the opera’s conclusion. Most audiences would likely favor realistic portrayals of inner conflicts, mirroring contemporary notions of gender relationships. These ideas, however, contrast with those in seventeenth-century Venice, where, according to Heller, it was plausible that “Didone would have been obliged to celebrate her union with Iarba, even though it necessarily meant a loss of [her] autonomy”.<sup>15</sup>

The three perceived contradictions mentioned above regarding Baroque opera representation – between the sonic and visual levels, the contemporary and “historic” acting styles, and today’s plot standards compared to those of the past – highlight several historiographical implications involved in staging these works today. Directors’ assumptions and audience expectations about theatrically representing the past bear historiographical implications, as operatic productions suggest a visual and sonic conception of history. Staged performances, in essence, fulfill the role of historiography.<sup>16</sup> By interpreting an opera from the past and bringing it to the stage, directors act like historians; their preparatory work, often supplemented by research conducted by dramaturgs (especially in North European and Latin-American theatres), often aligns with that of historical musicologists.<sup>17</sup>

By ‘updating’ the plots and using theatrical representation to convey their ‘concepts’, *Regietheater* directors assume that time reveals meanings and that history elucidates truths, thus implicitly subscribing to classic historiographical tenets such as *historia magistra vitae* or *veritas filia temporis*.<sup>18</sup> As a result, *Regietheater* productions often carry an implicit didactic aim. Equally pedagogical, and indeed stemming from extensive historical research, are reconstructionist productions that adopt HIP tenets in both the sonic and visual dimensions. Viewed in their shared relationship to history as *magistra vitae*, the hermeneutical approach used by *Regietheater* directors is similar to the historicist one employed, within the same productions, by accompanying instrumentalists who adhere to HIP tenets. This convergence of aims may be why they blend in postmodern ‘double coding’, according to Butt (as mentioned). For both HIP musicians and *Regietheater* directors, history appears as a continuous line spanning past and present, ranging from, at one pole, the sonic rendition of the past pursued by the conductor and the instrumentalists, to, at the other end, the visual representation of the present explored by stage directors and set designers. Singers bridge the two extremes through their bodies, costumes, and voices.

The stagings that Risi identifies as ‘fragmented’ (his third category) operate under various historiographical assumptions. The 2007–2009 production of *La Didone* by the experimental theater company The Wooster Group – the main focus of this article – employs a radically different approach to the

13 HELLER 2017: 3.2 and 3.3. The two referenced video recordings of Francesco Cavalli’s *La Didone* are CAVALLI 2007 (stage director Carlo Majer) and CAVALLI 2012 (stage director Clément Hervieu-Léger).

14 HELLER 2017: 3.2.

15 HELLER 2017: 3.3.

16 See FRANKO and RICHARDS 2000, RENIHAN 2020 (especially chapters 1 and 3), and KREUZER 2021.

17 See MOUNIER-VEHIER 2020: 211–313; BLIN 2018.

18 For *historia magistra vitae* (“history is life’s teacher”, after Cicero, *De Oratore*, II, 36) in modern historiography, see KOSELLECK 2004: 26–42 (chapter 2) and HARTOG 2015: 72–77. For *veritas filia temporis* (“truth is the daughter of time”), DIDI-HUBERMAN 2000: 58.

past and its theatrical representation than *Regietheater* and HIP ones, overturning the assumptions, expectations, and historiographical implications mentioned earlier.<sup>19</sup> The fragmentation adopted by this group – more accurately described as a multiplication – does not demonstrate a ‘pasticcio’ attitude on the musical level. The production maintains certain principles common to both Historically Informed Performance and *Regietheater* approaches, such as stylistic vocal appropriateness and quasi-philological attention to preserving the integrity of the individual scenes in the original score. However, in tackling Cavalli’s *La Didone*, The Wooster Group fundamentally reconfigures the relationships between the source texts (i.e., the score and the libretto) and the staged performance, as well as the connections between contemporary times and the Baroque period. In doing so, the Group implicitly proposes an alternative paradigm to traditional reconstructionist and *Regietheater* productions. I argue that the Group achieves this reconfiguration through strategies of reenactment and visual and sonic representation emerging from a heterochronic, non-linear understanding of the past. The Wooster Group’s approach to history mirrors the traditional notion of a historian’s work as *opus oratorium (rhetoricum) maxime*, rather than *historia magistra vitae* or *veritas filia temporum*.<sup>20</sup> History, that is, is viewed as rhetoric, oratory, and narration, thus a textual genre akin to literature, an approach recently championed by the late Hayden White.<sup>21</sup> Relatedly, the Wooster Group’s multilayered view of history resonates with that adopted by critics of historicism such as Walter Benjamin and Reinhart Koselleck.<sup>22</sup>

Like most current operatic productions of Baroque works, the stagings of Cavalli’s *Didone* by Hervieu-Léger and Majer, discussed by Heller, imply instead a linear view of time and history that places the performance’s present in direct dialogue with the past, allowing it to ‘speak’ to, and even teach, audiences. This choice influences both their sonic and visual dimensions: music performance seeks to recover past practices through HIP techniques, while the visual aspect addresses the need of contemporary audiences to connect their own present with the perceived distant context of the represented work.

In the following sections, after providing a general survey of The Wooster Group and its production of Cavalli’s opera (“Decentering Music in Early Opera”), I will focus on three passages from *La Didone*: scenes 4 and 9 in Act II (section “Film, Opera, Reenactment”) and the *finale* (“Out of Joint: Time and Performance”). In the last section, I will return to the Hervieu-Léger production as representing a *Regietheater* approach to time and history. I claim that The Wooster Group differs in its approach in ways that overlap with practices and aesthetic premises termed today as ‘postdramatic’ which have been present since the 1970s on Euro-American theatre and performance stages, though in less pervasive ways in opera.<sup>23</sup>

### Decentering Music in Early Opera

The Wooster Group (hereafter referred to as TWG or “the Group”) is an avant-garde artist collective, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte, which has been active in New York City since 1975 and originated from the Performance Group, led by Richard Schechner. Described by Marvin Carlson as the “best-known experimental theater company of the postmodern era”,<sup>24</sup> TWG rehearses and premieres its shows in the

19 The Wooster Group’s website features the entire video of *La Didone* (serialised) for archival purposes; see (Bibliography) *The Wooster Group: August 21, 2017 - from the archives – LA DIDONE (2009) – serialized – part one* and Video Examples nos. 1–3 here.

20 “A branch of literature closer than any other to oratory (rhetoric)”, Cicero, *De legibus*, I, 2, 5, as translated in CICERO 1928: 302–303.

21 E.g., WHITE 1990; for the relationship between White’s view on history and that by Cicero as *opus oratorium maxime*, see WOODMAN 1988: 197–198.

22 See, for instance, the XVIII thesis of the ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ in BENJAMIN 1968: 216 (“Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history”) and chapter 6 of KOSSELCK 2004: 93–104.

23 A useful list of “postdramatic theatrical signs” is in LEHMANN 2006: 82–106. Discussions of postdramatic approaches both in contemporary opera and performances of standard operatic repertoire are included in, among others, LEVIN 2007, 23–24; NOVAK 2015: 25; HARTUNG 2020: 42–70; and RISI 2021: 8, 45, 126.

24 CARLSON 2003:15.

Performing Garage, a small venue in SoHo measuring roughly fifty by thirty-five feet and seating 150. Its salaried company members and organizational structure facilitate longer rehearsal periods than those of traditional theater and opera circuits.

TWG performances incorporate texts from various historical periods, including the Group's own past. These texts encompass traditional plays (by Shakespeare, Molière, Chekhov, Stein, Miller, Williams, O'Neill, Pinter, Brecht), autobiographical materials from TWG members, and media content ranging from novels to films, sound recordings, and archival footage, with no rigid distinctions between high and popular cultures.<sup>25</sup> However, texts are not merely re-presented on stage but serve as organizing principles of performance, often in simultaneous combinations, alongside a variety of media and technologies, in ways that deemphasize linear narratives and univocal meanings. In this context, 'performance' encompasses a broad spectrum of activities that engage, most often concurrently, with theater, dance, film, and other media. The past is not merely absorbed or actualized in the here and now of performance: its presentation is mediated, distanced, and framed through overlapping devices, media, and strategies, including the often-reenacted interactions between actors and sound/video technologies, the latter as both live feeds and recordings. As Bonnie Marranca observes, actors work like 'figures of speech' through a non-naturalistic acting style and a fluid relationship between themselves and the characters, as well as between their voices and bodies.<sup>26</sup> Stage elements, props, and costumes are often recycled from previous productions, the material components of the performance (such as cables) are exposed, and the stage space and sets are frequently organized symmetrically as architectural elements.<sup>27</sup>

Over the years, the Group's performance practices have established a foundation for experimentation in theaters worldwide, challenging audiences and critics while generating extensive scholarship.<sup>28</sup> For theater scholars, TWG's practices resonate with the principles of the historical avant-garde of the early twentieth century, the New York experimental avant-garde of the 1960s, and the 'postdramatic' styles of the past fifty years as discussed by Hans-Thies Lehmann.<sup>29</sup> For the music historian, these practices evoke striking parallels with characteristics of early Baroque musical theater, including: texts of departure viewed as fluid and non-prescriptive; emphasis on process rather than product, highlighting its artificiality; performers avoiding psychological and realistic portrayals by doubling roles or enhancing their physical presence; technologies integrated into the performance and interacting with bodies; and affects prioritized over representation.<sup>30</sup> In TWG's staging of Cavalli's *La Didone*, these practices produce a 'historicizing' effect that activates the audience's historical imagination in ways that diverge from productions that either attempt to reconstruct past practices (HIP or 'reconstructionist') or accentuate contemporary concerns as 'readable' in the texts of departure (*Regietheater*), both types implicitly accepting the past as recoverable through performance. This historicizing effect arises from heterochronic strategies that reconfigure the relationship between the operatic text and its performance, including Busenello's happy ending, which today's audiences and directors, as mentioned above, resist.

The main heterochronic strategy employed by TWG in *La Didone* involves the use of media. Cavalli's opera is performed simultaneously alongside a screening and a reenactment of Mario Bava's 1965 science-fiction film, *Planet of the Vampires*, which is itself an adaptation of a 1960 Italian novel (see Appen-

25 The TWG website (*The Wooster Group*) includes a self-history and a list of works.

26 MARRANCA 2003: 5.

27 On these aspects of TWG's productions, see LEHMANN 2006: 168–69.

28 The extensive body of literature on TWG includes a large number of publications from SAVRAN 1985 to HUNTER 2021.

29 Postdramatic theater decenters dramatic texts, reflecting the New York theater culture of the 1960s and 70s, which influenced TWG. The collaboration between TWG and Richard Schechner in the Performance Group helped shape the academic discipline of Performance Studies in the U.S.; see Karen Jürs-Munby, 'Introduction' to LEHMANN 2006: 1–15.

30 See MARRANCA 2003: 6. Branislav Jakovljević discusses the three productions by TWG that have used seventeenth-century texts of departure, *La Didone*, *Hamlet*, and *To You, the Birdie!* (based on Racine's *Phèdre*). He observes resonances between *La Didone* and Baroque aesthetics and practices, such as the use of illusion, the "play with surfaces ... from acting, to stage design, to their use of video and digital technologies", the "obscurity of signs and ambivalence of meanings", and the "poli-centrality of techniques, effects, and meanings", JAKOVljević 2010: 89–91.

dix).<sup>31</sup> Throughout the performance, the film is shown in its entirety on TV screens or heard while the reenactment occurs, either simultaneously with the opera or alternately by itself (actors mostly lip-sync the film dialogue). Excerpts from the opera are performed in conjunction with the film and/or its reenactment. The sound component also features the film soundtrack reworked and mixed with Cavalli's music.<sup>32</sup> The overall result is a highly calculated coordination between the live elements (opera and film reenactment) and the mediated component (the film).

The partial reenactment of the film requires that four TWG actors and four singers hired for the performance frequently exchange roles; thus, actors and singers not only double roles in the opera but also in the film (see casting in the Appendix). The multiple roles played by actors and singers across media create a 'historicizing effect', given that operas from the time of Cavalli featured extensive doubling, allowing for interchangeable roles between actors and singers.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, in TWG's *La Didone*, actors and singers replicate Baroque-style gestures (Fig. 1). However, in reenacting the film, they also imitate the gestures and physical motions of the sci-fi characters (in addition to their speech), highlighting their acting conventions. Both actors and singers mostly wear the astronaut space suits featured in the sci-fi film. However, when portraying the opera characters, elements such as head coverings are added (Fig. 2). In effect, viewers are exposed to two reenactments, one of the opera and one of the film, referencing two temporal frames: the early Baroque and the mid-twentieth century, respectively.



Figure 1: Scott Shepherd as Wess, with, in the background, Hai-Ting Chinn as Dido, Ari Fliakos as Mark, Judson Williams as Acate (on the floor). Photo by Antonia Belt.

31 The film *Planet of the Vampires* is available on widely distributed internet commercial platforms. In it, "two spaceships, the Argos and the Galliot, are investigating a mysterious signal emanating from the planet Aura. Suddenly the force of gravity increases like mad, and both ships plummet to the planet's surface. The Argos crew survives, but the crew of the Galliot is entirely wiped out and the corpses rise up as zombies, reanimated by the alien life forms of the planet. The aliens are desperate to escape their dying sun and are trying to steal a spaceship. A deadly battle ensues between the humans and zombies over the one remaining meteor rejector, an indispensable piece of spaceship hardware. Eventually the Galliot is blown to bits, and the Argos escapes with three survivors, not all of them human" (plot by TWG).

32 On the soundscape of *La Didone*, see VERSTRAETE 2011.

33 Magnus Tessing SCHNEIDER, 2012.



Figure 2: Hai-Ting Chinn as Dido, Andrew Nolen as Iarbas. Photo by Paula Court.

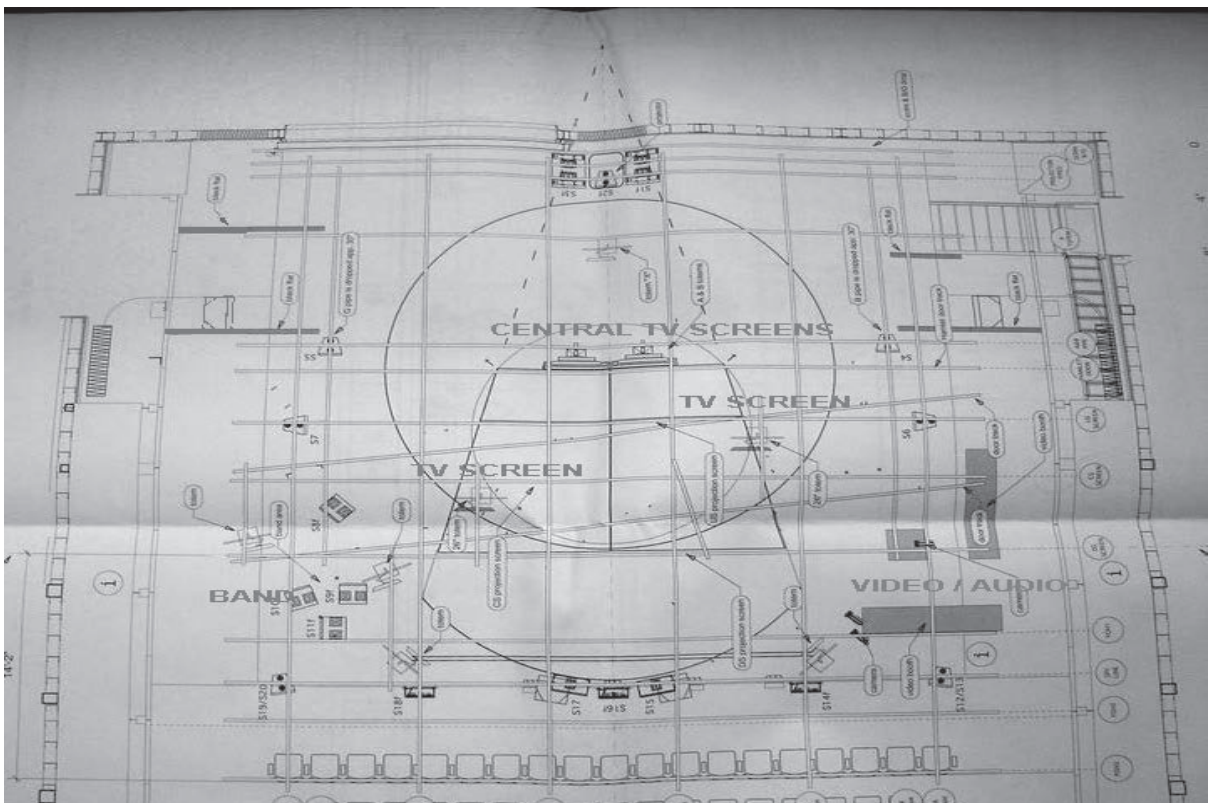


Figure 3: ground plan for the performances of La Didone at REDCAT in Los Angeles, June 11–21, 2009 (courtesy The Wooster Group). Capitalized indications are the author's additions.

The ground plan for *La Didone* (Fig. 3) displays a central perspective and symmetrical design.<sup>34</sup> A small band of musicians (stage right) and the video-and-sound artists (stage left) are positioned at the front sides of the stage, integrated into the performance space, spatially merging their respective technologies (actors and singers occasionally play instruments on stage). The small band features baroque guitar and theorbo, as well as ukulele, accordion, tambourine, electric guitar, and a synthesiser producing the sounds of a historical harpsichord. The 'historical' and the 'contemporary' dimensions coexist within the sound (both acoustic and electronic) and are not juxtaposed as a dichotomy between the aural and the visual, like in *Regietheater* productions where the pit and the stage operate on different 'tracks' (as mentioned above). The manipulated soundtrack of the movie provides an additional temporal layer to the soundscape.

Two main 42-inch TV screens are positioned side by side at center stage, flanked by two 26-inch screens on each side (Figs. 3 and 4). As previously mentioned, the screens display segments of the 1965 film, along with still images from it, abstract art mimicking the geometric sets (sometimes superimposed on the film), live feed, and, occasionally, clips from another movie (*Queen of Outer Space* by Edwards Bernds, 1958). The two adjacent central screens present mirror images. The arrangement of the large screens creates two primary performance areas for the actors and singers: one located center and downstage in front of the screens, and the other upstage, behind them (Figs. 4 and 5). All four screens intermittently show live feeds of the body parts positioned just behind them, thereby becoming 'transparent' and effectively blurring the boundary between the two performance spaces (Figs. 5 and 6). Given the limited stage space due to the screens' placement, as well as the band and AV personnel, the props and other set elements are kept minimal. Some items are recycled from previous TWG productions: a long table and a chair, both on wheels (Figs. 2, 4, and 6), a sliding panel of transparent glass (Fig. 2), and a metal staircase (Fig. 4). Three glass panels (Figs. 2 and 4) descend from above, with the middle one capable of extending to floor level; projections on these panels create abstract patterns (cogs, Mondrian-like designs) or visual ambiances (palm trees, Fig. 2). By referencing scenic elements of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century opera theaters (still visible today in historical venues such as Drottningholms Slottsteater in Stockholm), these panels have a historicizing effect, especially considering that the stage space is designed symmetrically and according to central perspective (Fig. 3).<sup>35</sup> The top of the front panel displays the film supertitles stage right, while simultaneously showing the libretto translation stage left (Fig. 4). When the film dialogue is inaudible, the supertitles continue, at times becoming autonomous elements of the performance, independent of any related sound or visuals.

The production skips Act I, set in Troy, from where Aeneas departs during the fire. In the remaining two acts, set in Carthage, nine of twenty-five scenes are omitted (see Table 1, center column). The show begins with scene 4 of Act II, corresponding to performance units I–IV (see boxed row in Table 1). It continues through scenes 5 and 7 (units V–VII), returns to scene 2 (units VIII–IX), and then resumes from scene 9 (unit X) until the end of the opera (unit XXVII), omitting five scenes along the way (scene 8 in Act II, and scenes 2, 5, 9, and 10 in Act III). While two-thirds of the opera are cut, the film runs continuously throughout the show from start to finish with virtually no cuts, whether it is reenacted on stage, shown on TV screens, heard as sound or dialogue, or in some combination of these modalities. The scenes of the opera, on the other hand, are not performed continuously; instead, the film is featured in seven segments of the performance without the opera (see the 'Inserts' in the center column of Table 1, starting with Insert 1 in the boxed row, which corresponds to performance unit III and scene 4 of the libretto).<sup>36</sup> During these segments, the reenactment of the film and its dialogue provisionally suspends the opera, as its music fades away and then re-emerges.

34 I thank Clay Hapaz, TWG archivist, for granting me access to the materials of *La Didone*.

35 SAUTER AND WILES 2014.

36 The performance units I use in my analysis, including the 'inserts' featuring only verbal text, reflect the segmentation of Cavalli's score present in the prompt book for the TWG production (by Teresa Hartmann, courtesy of archivist Clay Hapaz). For the methodology of performance analysis, I draw from BALME 2008: 132–160.



Figure 4: Hai-Ting Chinn, Scott Shepherd, Ari Fliakos, Kate Valk (see Appendix for respective roles). Photo by Paula Court.



Figure 5 (R-L): Hai-Ting Chinn, Andrew Nolen, Judson Williams, Ari Fliakos, Kate Valk, John Young (see Appendix for respective roles). Photo by Antonia Belt.



Figure 6: Kamala Sankaram as Juno. In the background (L-R): Ari Fliakos, Judson Williams, Scott Shepherd. Photo by Antonia Belt.

Libretto 1641 premiere		The Wooster Group 2007 production	Libretto 1641 premiere	
Acts	Scenes	Performance units (Roman numerals)	Plot summary	Subplots
<b>ACT I</b>				
Troy	1–11	OMITTED	Aeneas escapes from burning Troy.	A
<b>ACT II</b>				
Court of Dido	1	OMITTED	Iarbas laments being rejected by Dido.	B
	2	VIII, IX=Insert 3	Dido continues to reject him.	B
	3	<b>Production continues below, act II scene 9 ↓</b> OMITTED	Premonition of Dido.	C
Shores of Carthago	4	<b>Production begins here</b> I, II, III=Insert 1 (Table 2 and Video Example 1), IV ↓	Juno orders Aeolus to sink the Trojan ships.	A
	5	V, VI=Insert 2 ↓	But they are saved by Neptune.	A
	6	OMITTED	Venus dresses Love as Ascanius.	A
	7	VII <b>Production continues above, act II scene 2 ↑</b>	Aeneas rejoices with Acate for having made it to the shore.	A
	8	OMITTED	Anchises captured, Aeneas sends Ilioneus to Dido.	A
Court of Dido	9	X (Table 3 and Video Examples 2a and 2b) ↓	Ilioneus welcome by Dido. Love/Ascanius drives an arrow into Dido's breast.	C
	10	XI ↓	Dido falls in love with Aeneas.	C
	11	OMITTED	Court ladies excited.	B
	12	XII ↓	Iarbas jealous and resented.	B
	13	XII (continued) ↓	Iarbas's madness. An old man.	B
<b>ACT III</b>				
Court of Dido <i>(ultima)</i>	1	XIII, XIV=Insert 4, XV ↓	Dido fears offending Sicheus. Anna consoles Dido.	C
	2	OMITTED	Intermezzo: ladies.	B
	3	XVI ↓	Boar hunting.	C
	4	XVII, XVIII=Insert 4a ↓	Jove sends Mercurius to Aeneas.	C
	5	OMITTED	Mercurius make Aeneas leave.	C
	6	XIX, XX=Insert 5 ↓	Aeneas is about to leave.	C
	7	XXI, XXII=Insert 6, XXIII ↓	Conflict with Dido.	C
	8	XXIV ↓	Curse of the shadow of Sicheus.	C
	9	OMITTED	Intermezzo: Ladies.	B
	10	OMITTED	Mercurius, Iarbas.	B
	11	XXV, XXVI=Insert 7 ↓	Dido attempts suicide.	C
	12	XXVII (Video Example 3)	Iarbas attempts suicide. Both are saved. Happiness.	B

Table 1: Overview of The Wooster Group's *La Didone* production (premiered 2007) as compared to G. F. Busenello's libretto for F. Cavalli's opera (premiered 1641). Libretto subplots in the right-hand column refer to: A = actions related to Troy; B = love of Iarbas for Dido; and C = tragic love of Dido for Aeneas.

Despite the cuts – unsurprising in Baroque opera productions both today and during that era – the libretto scene remains the fundamental dramaturgical unit around which the performance is organized. The integrity of the individual scenes is generally preserved, with few or no cuts within them. The rearrangement of the scenes aligns with the progression of the three subplots unfolding in Acts II and III of Busenello's libretto (see the right-hand column in Table 1): the episodes related to the action in Troy, those showcasing Iarbas's love for Dido (who first rejects and then accepts it), and the tragic love of Dido for Aeneas (respectively, subplots A, B, and C). Regarding TWG's approach to Busenello's *La Didone*, the program distributed at the performances includes the following excerpt translated from the preface of the original Italian libretto:

... because according to good doctrine it is permissible for poets not only to alter fictional stories but even history, Dido takes Iarbas for her husband ... He who writes satisfies his own fancy ... It is not necessary here

to remind people of understanding how the best poets represented things in their own way: books are open, and learning is not a stranger in this world.<sup>37</sup>

By referencing Busenello's anti-Aristotelian vision of the role of history and the use of pre-existing materials, the Group emphasizes its critical perspective on linear narratives and its framing of, as well as distancing from, 'texts'. The resulting freedom is one reason why the Group's performances have been described as 'postdramatic'.<sup>38</sup> However, the Group's rigorous interpretation of Busenello's libretto and Cavalli's music demonstrates that this approach does not compromise a historically informed perspective on the source texts.<sup>39</sup> This balance between freedom and fidelity (*Werktreue*) challenges the categories used to discuss contemporary opera productions, which are labeled as either historically informed or in the tradition of *Regietheater* (see above). Furthermore, the 'fragmented' category (as described by Risi) does not apply here either, since *La Didone* stages a single opera, even though its media heterogeneity multiplies the texts being employed.

TWG adopts a similar approach in *Hamlet* (2007–2012), the production that immediately preceded *La Didone*. It utilized John Gielgud's 1964 filmed Broadway production (featuring Richard Burton) as its primary medium 'track' reenacted by TWG's actors on stage. The film is reenacted on stage similarly to *Planet of the Vampires* in *La Didone*, but is much more heavily edited both on a small and large scale, with its timing disrupted by frequent cuts and fast-forwards. In contrast, *Planet* provides a more consistent and continuous medium 'track': against this layer, the timing of the opera is measured. In both *Hamlet* and *La Didone*, TWG's multi-layered approach conveys the notion that history is not merely a tangible and recoverable reality. In *La Didone*, for example, the musicians' wide-ranging approach to the score permits extreme freedom in instrumentation (ukulele, electric guitar, accordion) while upholding accepted (HIP) conventions of basso continuo, ornamentation, and proper stylistic vocal delivery.

The same approach allows the singers to reenact so-called Baroque gestures while historicizing them as the illusory reconstructions that they are. These stylized gestures are made by singers in space suits and are intermingled with those of the sci-fi characters in the film, which are at times melodramatic (but often equally stylized). The actors or singers who reenact the film wear earbuds transmitting the film dialogues to better replicate them, while they watch additional TV screens unseen by the audience to imitate gestures and movements. This quasi-philological effort to accurately reenact the film is one of the strategies activating historicizing effects – a time arrow pointing to the 1960s rather than, in the case of the opera, the 1640s.

On a larger scale, the juxtaposition of film and opera – two parallel tracks – operates under the same mirroring yet inevitably asynchronous reenactment logic. The film provides time as *Chronos* – objective, sequential time – onto which Cavalli's music is mapped. The entire performance lasts, like most of TWG's shows, a little over an hour and a half, a few minutes longer than the film, while the opera, as mentioned, is abbreviated since it would otherwise extend beyond three hours. TWG's *La Didone* effectively reinterprets and reverses the traditional argument that operatic music serves as a strong textual block, a rigid 'track' dictating the timing of the performance to the rest of the production, in contrast to spoken theater where time is dictated by speech, under the control of the stage director and actors. In opera, it is the music director who, along with the singers, controls the time of the performance, while the stage director can only adapt the visual components accordingly. In TWG's *La Didone*, however, it is the film – the predominantly visual component – that dictates time to the other media, becoming as binding as a score, although when music is present, it too intermittently functions as a framing device.<sup>40</sup> When the opera and the film run simultaneously, the challenge becomes their synchronization, a task

37 BUSENELLO 1656: 3–4 (*Argomento*).

38 LEHMANN 2006.

39 The score of Cavalli's *La Didone* is not available in a modern edition, thus TWG based its performance on a transcription of the manuscript preserved in Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, It.IV.355 (=9879).

40 JAKOVljević 2010: 108 claims that the film in TWG's *Hamlet* works like a "moving choreographic score".

that TWG accomplishes with virtuoso precision, resulting in uncanny intermedial and intertextual resonances between the two media and their narratives.<sup>41</sup>

The Group's reinterpretation of the hierarchy among media in opera production is achieved through rearranging the opera scenes into small 'blocks' of musical time set against the continuous duration of the film as the dominant textual framework. By decentering music through film, Cavalli's opera emerges even more as that "literary theatre recited musically" which the genre historically represented.<sup>42</sup> This is especially true since in TWG's production the opera's verbal component is intertextually emphasized by its simultaneous interaction with the audible film dialogue and the running, concurrent supertitles of both film and opera. Hearing the film dialogue alongside Cavalli's arias and recitatives indirectly reminds audiences of the roots of a genre that aimed to "imitate with song those who speak".<sup>43</sup>

### Film, Opera, Reenactment

TWG's *La Didone* employs scene 4 of Act II from Cavalli's opera as a Prologue (see Table 1, boxed row: Act II scene 4, corresponding to performance units I–IV). This approach is historically appropriate as it features a supernatural character, the goddess Juno (singer Kamala Sankaram). As the film's opening soundtrack begins, Juno enters from off right, standing on a wheeled chair, initiating her recitative "The ashes of Troy" ("Le ceneri troiane") (see Table 2 and Video Ex. 1). Her right-arm gestures (while her left hand holds a microphone) are performed by an actor in an astronaut suit, hidden behind her, pushing the chair (see Fig. 6). This entrance not only highlights fluid characterization, inaugurating the mixed film/opera aspect of the production, but also references past TWG productions since 1975, where wheeled chairs made an appearance on stage. Scholars such as Carlson have discussed how TWG's frequent recycling of objects and costumes, along with the recurring appearance of the company's actors, creates a haunting, ghostly effect that is essential to theater as a whole.<sup>44</sup> In the broader context of TWG's poetics of temporality, this recycling evokes the dimension of memory, recalling the company's past and engaging in a dialogue with the historical moments represented, in this case those of the film and the opera.

When Juno starts singing, while the film soundtrack is heard in the background, a constellation of simultaneous temporal indices, like time arrows, coalesces into a single visual and acoustical image: (→1975–) as the time encompassing the TWG's productions using reused objects; (→1964–) as the time since the sci-fi movie was released; and (→1641–) as the time of the opera's premiere. Since sci-fi is, by definition, a projection into the future, the past stretches across the present. In addition, as Branislav Jakovljević observes of TWG's reenactment techniques in *La Didone*, "the synchronization of actor's body and screen is replaced by the co-temporalization of two radically different times: the mythical past and the fantastic future. Dido – Jakovljević concludes (but this can also be applied to Juno) – remains suspended in a pluperfect of sorts".<sup>45</sup> Juno's rage ("My rage ... will never be quenched ... until my great vengeance has surpassed the original offence",<sup>46</sup> see Video Ex. 1 at 00:16) emerges from nothing, appearing not as a realistic, internal emotion externalized by the singer/character, but as an affect, an expression originating from outside, reminiscent of Baroque *Affektenlehre*.<sup>47</sup>

*Video Example 1: The Wooster Group's La Didone: performance units I–III corresponding to the beginning of Act II scene 4 in Table 1 (boxed row). See Table 2 for text. <https://thewoostergroup.org/blog/2017/08/21/from-the-archives-la-didone-2009-serialized-part-one> or <https://vimeo.com/230218733>*

41 I use 'intermediality' in the sense of "media combination" according to RAJEWSKY, 2005: 51–52. The connections between opera and film in terms of narrative structure are, instead, 'intertextual' when considering the two media as macro texts.

42 STROHM 2001.

43 "Imitar col canto chi parla" is one of the goals listed by Jacopo Peri in his Preface of the score of *Euridice* (1600).

44 CARLSON 2003: 15.

45 JAKOVLEVIĆ 2010: 117.

46 Lines 4–8 in Table 2.

47 For a discussion of affect in Baroque opera in relation to contemporary productions, see Risi 2013.

<i>Planet of the Vampires</i> : Mark, Burt, Wess, Sanya	Busenello, <i>La Didone</i> , libretto: II, 4 (Giunone) and I, 4 (Cassandra)
[sounds from movie]	[Giunone:] Le ceneri troiane 1 non soddisfano ancora al mio giusto disdegno. L'ira, benché gioisca 5 nel bere ogn'or dell'offensore il sangue, non s'appaga però, finché non vede nel mezzo a strage agl'occhi altrui palese l'alta vendetta sormontar l'offese. Io del re dell'Olimpo 10 venerata consorte fui da Paride in Ida disprezzata, e posposta a Citerea? Ben vendicate in parte ho le passate offese, e staran l'ossa 15 degl'estinti troiani e nude, e insepolti a far tacita fede ai dì venturi, che contro i numi irati i regni, e i regnator non son sicuri. 20 Prodigioso volo porta l'armata de' troiani in modo che l'occhio non la segue, il pensier non la giunge, effetto portentoso 25 di propizia Fortuna. [spoken:] Ma voglio che sommerso Enea rimanga. ..... [Cassandra (off stage):] [L'alma fiacca svani] 1* la vita ohimè spirò, Corebo, o dio morì, e sola mi lasciò, 5* per sposa ei mi voleva, e io qui piango prima che sposa, vedova rimango. La vita così va, anco mio padre il re nel fin di grave età 10* regno, e vita perdé. [continues]
[Mark, Burt, Wess, Sanya enter]	
[Mark:] Are you able to see anything at all, Burt? [Burt] Nothing at all, Captain. Only a surface of clouds. This planet seems to be made of fog. Not even infrared rays get through.	

Table 2: The Wooster Group's *La Didone*: texts of film and opera at performance units I–III corresponding to the beginning of Act II scene 4 in Table 1 (boxed row). See Video Example 1.<sup>48</sup>

The suspension of time's linear progress is also aural. The sound of Cavalli's music emerges from the film's soundtrack, such blurring inaugurating the two-fold relationship of cooperation and antagonism between the two media, which originate in different times and are perceived as such. On the visual level, the film's opening titles are absent, but its initial atmosphere (the spaceship traversing space before

48 English translation of libretto text, from the supertitles of The Wooster Group's *La Didone*:

II, 4: Juno: [1] The ashes of Troy / have not yet satisfied / my righteous anger. / My rage happy as it is / [5] drinking the blood of my offenders hour after hour / will never be quenched, until the carnage / proves to all eyes watching / that my great vengeance has surpassed the original offense. / I, revered consort / [10] of the King of Olympus, / was rejected by Paris on Mt. Ida / in favor of Venus? / It's true I've avenged / in part the offenses past, and the bones / [15] of the deceased Trojans, / naked and unburied, / will be a silent promise to future men / that against the wrath of gods / kingdoms and kings are not safe. / [20] But now an unnatural wind / is carrying the Trojan fleet so fast / that no eye can follow it, / thought cannot reach it, / a miracle wrought / by propitious Fortune. / [spoken] But I want Aeneas to stay underwater.

From I, 4: Cassandra [off stage]: [[1\*] The wary soul passed away,] / his life expired, / Oh God, Corebo died / and left me alone. / [5\*] He wanted me for his wife, and now I weep, / a widow who never was wife. / So life goes, / even my father the king, / at the end of his heavy days / [10\*] lost his Kingdom and his life.

landing on Aura) is suggested on the two lateral TV screens, enhanced by the darkness from which Juno appears as a ghost. After the line “But now an unnatural wind”, starting a new section in Juno’s recitative (Table 2: line 20; Video Ex. 1: 01:09), the soundtrack fully returns as the film begins playing on the two central screens. The first reenactment of the film on stage now commences (Table 1, boxed row: performance unit III = Insert 1). As the actors enter from stage left to reenact the film, Juno gradually exits stage right, and she speaks her last line of recitative (“But I want Aeneas to stay underwater”)<sup>49</sup> rather than singing it, amplified and marked by rage.

In the film reenactments of *La Didone*, two bodies function in quasi-sync: those on stage and those in the film, mirroring each other but with the split-second gap that live bodies take, before or after the moving image, to reenact the mediated ones. The coexistence of bodies and technology, of the live and the mediated, challenges traditional notions of time and presence, allowing for the simultaneity of the ‘here and now’ of performance and its negation in the preexisting medium of film (which possesses its own temporality that cannot be manipulated).<sup>50</sup>

As Rebecca Schneider highlights, reenactments explore “the warp and draw of one time into another time – the *theatricality* of time”.<sup>51</sup> Schneider discusses Civil War reenactments but also TWG’s *Poor Theater*, a 2004 production in which actors reenact segments of a documentary film of Jerzy Grotowski’s 1962 theater piece *Akropolis*. The ‘caesura’ between bodies on stage and those shown on the TV screen is both spatial and temporal. In preparatory sketches for the Group’s 1998 *House/Lights*, based on Gertrude Stein’s 1938 *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights* and the 1964 film *Olga’s House of Shame*, director Elizabeth LeCompte quotes Stein’s notion of ‘syncopated time’ (“Your emotion is either behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking”) and observes: “[TWG’s] performers watch video and react to moves – always a little behind the move or anticipating the coming move.”<sup>52</sup> Since movement synchronization or exact mirroring is, like precise translation, impossible, the interval that reenactment opens up enables, according to Schneider, a “leak of affective engagement between the then and the now”.<sup>53</sup>

Reenactment, however, is only part of a wider chain of Derridean repetitions and citations (of movements, costumes, objects) by which TWG performances relate to the past. In *La Didone* this chain extends to sound and sound design. As already mentioned, the production skips Act I of the Cavalli opera, set in Troy, which includes Cassandra’s lament for the death of Coroebus, set by Cavalli to a descending chromatic scale in *ostinato*, “L’alma fiacca svani” (“The weary soul passed away”). When Juno exits after her recitative and the film’s reenactment has begun, this aria from the previous Act is heard from off stage, starting with its second line (Musical Ex. 1, measure 3; Video Ex. 1: 01:40).<sup>54</sup> A ghost, a specter, is heard. The lament becomes an auditory trace, blurring with the soundscape originating from the film. Barely audible, Cassandra’s voice is disembodied and technologically mediated, her lament transformed into the stuff of memory, as “the space in which a thing happens for the second time”.<sup>55</sup>

Performance, technology, and memory are inextricably intertwined, evoking a resistance to chronological time and presence. The lament is not embedded in the production as a continuum of the present and past, as if the aria were merely a learned reference to the previous act of the opera (which indeed was omitted); nor is the musical excerpt simply commenting on the film reenacted by the Group’s ac-

49 Line 26 in Table 2.

50 For the relationship between the live and the mediated in TWG, see CAUSEY 2006: 39.

51 SCHNEIDER 2011: 6.

52 See Elizabeth LeCompte’s 1996 journal entries for the rehearsals of *House/Lights* reproduced in QUICK 2007: 170.

53 SCHNEIDER 2011: 112.

54 “... la vita ohimé spirò”, see Table 2: line 2\*.

55 Paul Auster as cited by David Savran’s discussion of TWG in SAVRAN 2005b: 16.

tors (to which it has no discernible relation). Meaning is created by the spectators, who can interpret the constellation formed by the sound of a seventeenth-century lament and the reenactment of a twentieth-century film for themselves.<sup>56</sup>

After being suspended to make way for the film’s reenactment, Juno’s expressive recitative resumes as the goddess returns stage right, singing the line she had previously only spoken (“But I want Aeneas to stay underwater”). She then continues to the end of the scene (not shown in Video Ex. 1). At this point, however, the opera and the film have begun to coexist – the spaceship *Argo* is landing on the planet *Aura* – and the respective timelines of the two media, which were initially presented independently (except for the audible interference of the lament during the film), are now fully interwoven. The opera scenes will be interrupted, within or between them, only by the ‘inserts’ that allow the film’s reenactment to co-opt and suspend the opera’s performance.



The image shows a musical score for a vocal line in two parts: Treble Clef (Soprano) and Bass Clef (Bass). The music is in a 17th-century style, likely a recitative. The lyrics are in Italian and are transcribed below the notes.

6

L'al - ma fiac - ca sva-ni      la vi-ta ohi - mè spi-rò      Co-re-bo oh

6

dio mo-ri      e so - la      mi la-sciò,      per spo-sa,ei mi vo      le - va      ed io qui

11

pian - go      e pria che      spo - sa      ve - do - va      ri - man - go.

Musical Example: Francesco Cavalli, setting of the first strophe of Cassandra’s aria “L’alma fiacca svani”, from *La Didone*, Act I, scene 4. Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, It.IV.355 (=9879), 23r. See [Table 2](#), lines 1\*-6\*, for text and translation, and [Video Example 1](#): 01:40 (starting from m. 3).

56 The challenge for audiences to grasp the various layers of TWG’s productions is a recurring theme in critics’ reviews, including those for *La Didone*. For example, BRANTLEY 2009: “This production splits your attention into so many fragments that even the most accomplished multitasker won’t be able to take it all in”. MÜLLER-SCHÖLL 2008: 42 notes that many audience members at the Brussels premiere of *La Didone* expressed feelings of “excessive demands” and “overloading”. Peter Sellars, in the foreword to SAVRAN 1985 (xv), observes that “because [in TWG’s productions] there is so much detail, too much certainly to be taken in during a single performance, each viewer’s experience of the work is quite different”.

<i>Planet of the Vampires</i> (at 25' 32"): Mark, Wess, Sanya, Eldon	<i>La Didone</i> , II, 9, libretto: Didone, Ascanio (Amore), Ilioneo
[In the spaceship <i>Galliot</i> ] [M] Shh! Listen	[A] Piovan le sfere su questa reggia nemi di grazie, e 'l ciel sia sempre vago di prosperar, di sublimar Cartago [Instrumental ritornello]
[W] It's coming from the generator room.	Bella Regina per ringraziarti figurati vedere a tutte l'hore su le mie labra l'obligato core
[M] Turrell. [S] And Salas, Mark. [W] The meteor rejector is out of commission. It can't be repaired either. The <i>Galliot</i> won't fly again.	[Ritornello] L'etade mia picciole offerte per contrapporre a beneficio tanto un ossequio bambin ti bacia il manto. [Ritornello]
[M] Neither will her crew.	[D] E chi sei tu bellissimo fanciullo ch'in età pargoletta hai sensi così adulti?
[M] What can we do about this bulkhead? We've got to get through. [E] I'll take care of it Mark. I'll get the cutting torch from the <i>Argos</i> . [M] No, you'd never make it alone. No, we'll bury Derek and the others, and then we'll leave you on guard, Eldon. We'll go for the cutting torch and I promise you we'll get back just as fast as we can.	[I] Questi è del grand'Enea Ascanio unico figlio. [D] Amico, errasti e m'offendesti; dirmi dovevi tu dal bel principio, quale fosse questo fanciullo onde honorato avessi lui con altre accoglienze, e in altri amplessi. Ma si emendi ogni error: siedimi in grembo, figlio di un Semideo. Ecco, io bacio le gote della Diva di Cipro al bel Nepote
[By the graves: <i>Sanya</i> groaning and sobbing] [M] Easy, Sanya, easy. I know how you feel, but don't go into pieces now. Just be thankful we were spared. Come on we've got to keep moving. We'll get back as fast as we can, Eldon. Keep a sharp watch.	[A] Regina, ecco mio Padre, che viene ad inchinarsi alla tua Maestade. Miralò un poco, e dimmi, non ha torto il destino a farlo andar ramingo, e pellegrino?
[The living dead:] Eldon . . . Eldon . . . Eldon . . .	[D] Ohimé, che aspetto luminoso e grande! Che movimento - che guardar - che ciglio! Ben d'una Dea si vede esser lui figlio!

Table 3<sup>57</sup>: The Wooster Group's *La Didone*: texts of film and opera at performance unit X corresponding to act II scene 9 in Table 1. See Video Examples 2a and 2b.

57 English translation of libretto text, from the supertitles of The Wooster Group's *La Didone*:

[Ascanius/Love] [1] Let the Spheres rain / over this kingdom, / clouds of grace, and let heaven be forever ready / to enrich and exalt Carthage / [Ritornello] / [5] Beautiful Queen, / as thanks to you, / imagine that you see at all times / on my lips my indebted heart / [Ritornello] / My youth / [10] can only offer small compensation / for so much beneficence. / A respectful child kisses your mantle / [Ritornello] / [Dido] And who are you, beautiful little boy, / who at a child's age / [15] has such grown-up sense? / [Ilioneus] This is Ascanius, / the great Aeneas's only son. / [D] Friend, you've made an error, you've done me wrong; you should have told me / from the very beginning who / [20] this little boy was, / so that I might have honored him / with a different reception, and a different embrace. / But let every error be emended: sit in my lap, / son of a demigod. / [25] Behold, I kiss the cheeks / of the fair grandchild of the goddess of Cyprus. / [A/L] Queen, here comes my father / to kneel down / before your Majesty. / [30] Look at him for a moment, and tell me, / is fate not mistaken / to make him go wandering, a pilgrim? / [D] Oh, what a radiant aspect, and grand! / What movement - what glances - what eyelashes! / [35] It's quite obvious that he's the son of a goddess!

The Group's performance of scene 9 of Act 2 (Table 1: performance unit X; see Table 3 and Video Ex. 2a) demonstrates the temporal multiplicity – or heterochrony<sup>58</sup> – that arises from fluidly interweaving the two distinct 'tracks' of the acted opera and the reenacted film, even though the latter is visually absent in this instance. Although the film is reenacted downstage behind the TV screens and its dialogue is audible as the opera unfolds, no movie is displayed, only palm-tree leaves used for ambiance. Ascanius (Cupid in disguise) visits Dido, who is lovestruck and has her first, fatal encounter with Aeneas. In the parallel moment of the movie (see Video Ex. 2b), the crew members of the Argos, after landing on the planet Aura, discover that some of their colleagues have been killed; they bury them outside but leave one of their members, Eldon, to guard the spaceship, where he hears the voices of the dead aliens calling him.

In this segment of *La Didone*, actor Ari Fliakos portrays Ascanius, whose part however, is sung by soprano Kamala Sankaram (who had played Juno), with voice and body separate.<sup>59</sup> Fliakos and Sankaram enter from stage right accompanied by soprano Hai-Ting Chinn (Dido), who sits on a wheeled chair. Behind her, countertenor/bass Andrew Nolan (the ambassador Ilioneus) is seated on a similar wheeled table. Fliakos and Sankaram are followed by actor Scott Shepherd, who temporarily joins the continuo group by playing the ukulele (holding the instrument as the film characters hold their guns). Meanwhile, in a dark area behind the lateral screen upstage right, the film is reenacted. The audience can follow both narratives (film and opera) through the supertitles and can hear, simultaneously with Ascanius's song, the voices of Mark, Wess, Sanya, and Eldon, as well as the film's soundtrack. The soundtrack is audible, for example, at the moment of the discovery of two dead astronauts' bodies, Turrell and Salas (Video Ex. 2a and 2b, both at 00:19). In the film dialogues occurring upstage, tenor John Young portrays Eldon (played by actor Mario Morales in the original movie), but then Eldon transforms into Aeneas, returning downstage left to meet Dido (Video Ex. 2a from 02:40).

*Video Example 2a: The Wooster Group's La Didone: performance unit X corresponding to Act II scene 9 in Table 1. See Table 3 for text, and Video Example 2b for corresponding segment of film Planet of the Vampires. <https://thewoostergroup.org/blog/2017/09/05/from-the-archives-la-didone-2009-serialized-part-six/> or <https://player.vimeo.com/video/232542630>*

*Video Example 2b: Planet of the Vampires at 00:25:32 corresponding to performance unit X and to act II scene 9 in Table 1. See Table 3 for text, and Video Example 2a for corresponding segment of The Wooster Group's La Didone. <https://watch.plex.tv/movie/planet-of-the-vampires>*

During the gradual reunion of Dido with Eldon/Aeneas, the queen's affect of joy emerges primarily as a liminal, indeterminate *locus* between the two media of opera and film, and only secondarily as the typically prominent element of Baroque opera.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, through the adoption of heterochronic strategies that tap into theater's traditional ghost-like qualities, TWG's performance undermines and transcends dichotomies such as those between presence and absence, embodiment and disembodiment, language and voice, the live and the mediated, actor and character, and past and present. In doing so, the performance hints at the boundary-crossing quality that is quintessential to opera as a genre. If performance always occurs in the present, it can simultaneously create a sense of the past. In watching queen Dido in a 1641 opera mixed with a 1965 film, we become aware that a historical character who

58 For the notion of heterochrony, as derived from that of heterotopy by Michel Foucault, see RANCIÈRE 2012.

59 On voice's disembodiment in this passage of *La Didone*, see VERSTRAETE 2011: 93.

60 In discussing Dido's falling in love in this scene of *La Didone*, Müller-Schöll identifies analogies between the portrayal of the queen as lacking psychological depth and inwardness on the one hand, and the Baroque notion of 'surface' on the other, see MÜLLER-SCHÖLL 2008: 41.

has traversed media narratives for two thousand years has now fallen in love – wearing an astronaut suit.

### Out of Joint: Time and Performance

The temporal strategies highlighted above both contradict and affirm chronological time, the measured time that inexorably marches on.<sup>61</sup> At specific junctures of the performance and at various levels – bodies, technology, objects – the creation of multiple times that are ‘out of joint’ or ‘syncopated’ complicates and intensifies the relationships between the opera performance and the chronological forward motion provided by the unfolding of the film, whether reenacted or not. It is as if the opera ghosted the film, although real and virtual dimensions are inverted. The film’s plot features ghosts (living dead bodies), and so does Cavalli’s opera. At the beginning of Act III, Dido’s ex-husband, Sicheus, haunts the queen in a dream, berating her for her dalliance with Aeneas and condemning her to death. In TWG’s *La Didone*, the ghost of Sicheus is initially heard as pure sound originating off stage, Cavalli’s original solo line transformed into a polyphonic one.<sup>62</sup> The ghost then appears, impersonated by actor Ari Fliakos, addressing a frightened Hai-Ting Chinn as Dido. While the supertitles of both film and opera continue running and their sounds are heard, Fliakos quickly transforms into the character of one of the astronauts in the film, struggling fiercely on the floor with Chinn. She, in the meantime, has turned into Tiona, reenacting the film. Dido’s emotional struggle has thus morphed into Tiona’s physical one. In this ‘spectral’ context, reminiscent of Derrida’s ‘hauntology’, there appears to be no past and no reality to grasp: all that remains is narrative – i.e., history as *opus oratorium (rhetoricum) maxime*.<sup>63</sup>

As philosopher Giorgio Agamben highlights, “every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time that is implicit to it, conditions it, and thereby must be elucidated”.<sup>64</sup> In *Performing History*, theater historian Freddie Rokem discusses the relationship among history, performance, and narrative by invoking Aristotle’s idea that the work of poets relates to that of historians, since “most of our poets use the methods of the historian”.<sup>65</sup> Poets are free to make “selections from the seemingly unrelated events ... emphasizing their significance in relation to each other”. As Rokem concludes by referencing Hayden White’s historiographical methodology, “any process of telling or writing a version of what has happened is a form of performing history and of resurrecting that past”.<sup>66</sup> However, as TWG’s director LeCompte stated about *Sakonnet Point* (from 1975, but her statement can be extended to the Group’s subsequent works), “the piece isn’t about the past, it’s really about us [i.e., TWG] thinking about the past”.<sup>67</sup> Within TWG’s poetics of memory and temporality, the reality that most cogently relates past, present, and future is death. An important feature of some TWG productions is to bring back, via video, the deceased members of the company in interaction with living actors.<sup>68</sup> In comparison to death, which is inevitably bound to chronological time, other temporal endpoints are provisional and can thus be resisted, suspended, or refused.

This poetics of death influences how TWG navigates the challenging denouement of *La Didone*. As both the opera and the film reach closure, the happy end of the former, as discussed above, becomes problematic, especially when contrasted with the not-so-happy end of the latter. In the final scene of Cavalli’s opera (Table 1: Act III scene 12, performance unit XXVII), Iarbas saves Dido from suicide, and

61 For an extensive discussion of temporality in performance studies, incorporating Walter Benjamin’s and Giorgio Agamben’s philosophical views, see WICKSTROM 2018. For the out-of-jointness of time and performance in opera, see RENIHAN 2020: 128–130. For time and performance in Italian opera, see DAHLHAUS 2003: 107–113.

62 Act III, scene 8, corresponding to performance unit XXIV (Table 1).

63 DERRIDA 1994: 10 and 20–25 discussing “the time is out of joint.”

64 AGAMBEN 1993: 99.

65 ROKEM 2002: 10.

66 ROKEM 2002: 10.

67 LeCompte as quoted in VANDEN HEUVEL 2007: 340.

68 For this feature of TWG’s productions, see CARLSON 2003: 169–70.

the characters conclude the work by singing an extensive, joyful love duet (Video Ex. 3: 05:25, “Cupid, your laws are too obscure and profound”). In the film, Wess, Mark, and Sanya manage to leave planet Aura in the spaceship, but Wess discovers that his companions are possessed by aliens, prompting him to sabotage the spaceship’s meteor rejector. Despite irreparably damaging it, he is electrocuted and collapses to the floor (reenactment at 04:25); Mark and Sanya alter the course of the spaceship to land on nearby planet Earth – right in New York City, year 1965.

*Video Example 3: The Wooster Group’s La Didone: final segment of performance unit XXVII corresponding to Act III scene 12 (ultima) in Table 1. <https://thewoostergroup.org/blog/2017/10/09/from-the-archives-la-didone-2009-serialized-part-sixteen/> or <https://player.vimeo.com/video/237348273>*

For the simultaneous denouements of both opera and film, all actors and singers gradually converge on stage. The movie and its reenactment, however, end before the opera concludes, as Wess’s dead body remains on the stage floor (05:36–06:01). Dido and Iarba continue the joyful duet and join Mark and Sanya downstage, all facing the audience. The affect ‘joy’ in Cavalli’s duet takes over as the film characters unite with the previously staged narratives, but also create a sense of discontinuity. After the stage goes dark, the past becomes immediately available to spectators as a flash, to be re-experienced as a memory, much like all past performances.

Once again in *La Didone*, TWG’s heterochronic strategy results in a ‘refusal of time’, to borrow from the title of a 2012 multimedia installation by William Kentridge at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Kentridge’s work juxtaposes different temporalities by situating a dynamic “breathing machine” – an “organ-like automaton with pumping bellows” – in the middle of a dark room, with its walls animated by five-channel video projections.<sup>69</sup> They cycle for about thirty minutes and combine various materials, including: ticking metronomes and archival material and found footage related to Africa’s violent history, Kentridge’s own stop-motion animated films, which often erase as well as add lines and form to his drawings, and finally, a video excerpt by modern choreographer and dancer Dada Masilio, which however is displayed in reverse motion.<sup>70</sup> Media scholar Christel Stalpaert discusses the heterochrony of Kentridge’s *The Refusal of Time* by identifying four types of represented time: time as Chronos, that is, measured time, as in the metronomes and the pumping machine; the related time as ‘protocol’, as in calendars, time zones and travel system schedules, which are thematized in the installation’s videos; time as Aeon, that is, time intended as duration, emerging, for example, in the reversed dance by Masilio; and finally, the related time as Kairos, usually understood as a proper or opportune time for action. Stalpaert invokes Agamben’s view of Kairos as being implied “in every representation we make of time”, and yet not being “entirely consumed by representation”.<sup>71</sup>

For Agamben, Kairos represents the non-linear time that coexists with Chronos, the linear Aristotelian time understood as a succession of ‘instants’. However, Chronos can include within itself the “seeds of its undoing”, since Kairos is, by definition, out of sync.<sup>72</sup> Chronological time is the time *in which* we are inevitably situated, in contrast to the time *that* we truly are – the time that we construct, feel, and experience. Agamben refers to this kairological time. In discussing Agamben and relating Kairos to performance art, Marquard Smith defines Kairos as “a qualitative account of... a moment of time lapse, a moment of indeterminate time, an intervention in time ... interruptions, for example, through editing, repetition ... slowness, constraint ... layering ... casting and recasting”.<sup>73</sup> This concept also applies to TWG’s *La Didone*, which can be seen as an installation opera. It is fitting that Stalpaert concludes that in *The Refusal of Time*, Kentridge “does not

69 See the description at <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/499717>, which includes details and images.

70 STALPAERT 2018.

71 AGAMBEN 2005: 67.

72 AGAMBEN 2005: 68–69. Agamben’s discussion of Kairos and Chronos (pp. 59–87) is commented upon by WICKSTROM 2018: 19 and 117–121 and Marquard Smith in SMITH 2015: 20.

73 SMITH 2015: 19.

reconstruct the past in the present. Instead, he tests the archive of the past in the present ... in order to inaugurate particular collisions in a kairological revolution".<sup>74</sup> These "collisions" characterize the heterochronic strategies employed in *La Didone*.

### Conclusion: Heterochronic Strategies

Kairological works like *La Didone* or *The Refusal of Time* offer a sense of the past emerging intermittently from the 'now' of performance. This past cannot simply be reconstructed as such, since it is not readable as a "precise, infinite, quantified *continuum*",<sup>75</sup> or as a single point located on a timeline from which it can be retrieved, resumed, or excavated. As mentioned above, *Regietheater* and reconstructionist types of productions of Baroque operas adopt shared historiographical strategies that are comparable to hermeneutic and historicist approaches, which imply linear time and a corresponding idea of a recoverable past.

The treatment of the *finale* in Clément Hervieu-Léger's production discussed at the start of this article reinforces the plot's linear aspect and its perceived temporal implications. Despite the happy ending, the staging tragically displays Dido's hands and body stained red from the blood of a dead deer, which had already been lying on stage during Act I, that is, during the earlier chronological episodes taking place in Troy.<sup>76</sup> This temporal connection allows the performance to allude to the negative effects that historical events, such as the fall of Troy, have on subsequent ones occurring in Carthage. Although at that point in the narrative, as Iarba marries Dido during Cavalli's joyous duet, these events have radically changed, in reality (or so we are told) they have not: death always prevails in history (*historia magistra vitae*). The director interprets Busenello's dramaturgy in a linear, classicistic, neo-Aristotelian manner, despite the librettist's own fundamentally non-linear, Baroque, and anti-Aristotelian vision of history mentioned in the *Didone* libretto preface discussed above. The fidelity to the text (*Werktreue*) that William Christie evokes in the pit *via* his musical interpretation is not marked at a visual or dramaturgical level.

In contrast to such a representational approach, the Group's overall narrative strategy in *La Didone* engages spectator memories by implying non-linear time both within the performance and in relation to its past, including the source texts (film and opera). Throughout *La Didone*, this strategy operates on a smaller scale by exploring the intervals and gaps between and within spaces, objects, media, actors, and characters, all fluidly reconceived. On a larger scale, the strategy juxtaposes the measured time of the film with the malleable time of the opera in a virtuosic montage, allowing chronological time to contrast with kairological time while simultaneously encompassing it. In both instances, heterochronic strategies create syncopated overlaps and uncanny correspondences, through which agents and media are intermittently in and out of sync.

This heterochronic strategy, as we recall, was inaugurated at the beginning of TWG's *La Didone* by Cassandra's lament for the death of Coroebus "L'alma fiacca svani", which sonically emerges from nowhere as a ghostly, acousmatic presence. This lament from the initial act staged in Troy (I, 7) is lifted and inserted into a passage of Act II staged in Carthage, which, however, is paused to temporarily leave room for the reenactment of the film. Through an asynchronous theatrical performance, we recognize that kairological and chronological times are out of joint.

Intermedial strategies that disrupt the continuity of dramatic time by creating multitemporal layers are currently shared by several theater directors and choreographers (e. g., William Kentridge, Robert Wilson,

74 STALPAERT 2018: 394. On Kentridge's *Refusal of Time*, see WICKSTROM 2018: 135–54.

75 AGAMBEN 1993: 101–102.

76 A picture of Dido and the dead deer in this *finale* is used as the DVD cover.

Romeo Castellucci, William Forsythe, and others) whose works have populated European and American stages since the 1970s – works that Lehmann terms “postdramatic”.<sup>77</sup> TWG’s productions, as mentioned, engage with postdramatic theater in multiple ways: from the relationship between the performance and the source texts, to the use of technology, to the non-naturalistic acting style and the sheer density of simultaneous performance layers.<sup>78</sup> The Group’s use of heterochronic strategies in *La Didone* within the context of opera suggests innovative approaches for a genre that, at its beginnings in the early Baroque, was acutely aware of its new temporal dimension in a relationship of both continuity and discontinuity with the past (not unlike film four centuries later).<sup>79</sup> By observing and simultaneously rejecting time as Chronos, TWG’s adoption of heterochronic strategies in *La Didone* questions linear time in both history and performance. This critical move, as discussed regarding the disjunct double *denouements* of opera and film, also defies defined closures. When the audience is abruptly left in the dark at the *finale*, the show refuses to end: memories are activated, and the performance continues in the mind’s eye and ear. By pushing the limits of the source texts, TWG projects the performance’s presentness toward its future reiterations. Indeed, the adoption of various heterochronic strategies in *La Didone* enabled a twenty-first-century New York theater company to perform a 1641 Italian opera and reenact a 1965 Italian film not by representing “culture” (see epigraph) but by “performing it as an emerging art form”, effectively propelling seemingly distant cultural artifacts into future times and spaces.

## Appendix

### **Details about The Wooster Group’s *La Didone*.**

World premiere: Kaai Theater, Brussels, Belgium, May 19–24, 2007; United States premiere: New York, St. Ann’s Warehouse, March 17–April 26, 2009. Director: Elizabeth LeCompte; assistant director and Baroque gesture coach: Jennifer Griesbach; set: LeCompte, Ruud van den Akker; lighting: Jennifer Tipton; costumes: Antonia Belt; sound: Matt Schloss and Omar Zubair; video: Zbigniew Bzymek, Joby Emmons, Andrew Schneider.

*La Didone*. Opera by Giovan Francesco Busenello and Francesco Cavalli (1641).

Musical direction: Bruce Odland; musicians: Harvey Valdes (electric guitar), David Walker (theorbo), Hank Heijink (Baroque guitar), Jennifer Griesbach (keyboard) [additional performers below].

*Planet of the Vampires (Terrore nello spazio)*. Film directed by Mario Bava (1965) based on the novel *Una notte di 21 ore* by R. Petriniero (1960); screenplay: Bava, Alberto Bevilacqua, Callisto Cosulich, Antonio Roman, and Rafael J. Salvia (English version: Louis M. Heyward, Ib Melchior); producer: Fulvio Lucisano. Music: Gino Marinuzzi Jr.

<sup>77</sup> On the “disintegration of time as a continuum” emerging from modernity and continuing in postdramatic theater see the chapter “Time” in LEHMANN 2006: 153–62, at 155. The English translation, however, abridges the corresponding chapter in the original German edition, which includes reflections on memory, anticipation, and performance, see LEHMANN 1999: 309–59, esp. 348–49.

<sup>78</sup> See HARTUNG 2020, 54–55 and 140–142.

<sup>79</sup> See PIRROTTA, 1982 and ROSAND 1991: 47–51. Analogies such as those discussed here between the post-dramatic temporal techniques used by TWG on the one hand and those present in Baroque works (as pre-dramatic) on the other, are traditionally examined within the conceptual domains of the Neo-Baroque, modernism, and postmodernism. See LYONS 2019 and CERMATI 2021.

<i>La Didone</i> : actors/singers	Opera characters	Film characters	Film actors
Ari Fliakos (actor)	Cupid, ghost of Sichaesus, shadow of Aeneas	Capt. Mark Markary	Barry Sullivan
Kate Valk (actor)	Old man, guard, shadow of Dido	Sanya	Norma Bengell
Scott Shepherd (actor and ukulele)	Boar, shadow of Iarbas	Wess	Ángel Aranda
Hai-Ting Chinn (mezzosoprano)	Dido	Tiona	Evi Marandi
Judson Williams (actor, doubling as singer)	Acate	Brad/Mud	Stelio Candelli
Judson Williams		Burt/Garr	Franco Andrei
Judson Williams		Dr. Karan	Fernando Villena
John Young (tenor)	Aeneas, ghost chorus	Eldon	Mario Morales
		Carter/Dervy	Ivan Rassimov
Andrew Nolen (bass/ baritone, countertenor)	Neptune, Iarbas, Ilioneus, Jove, ghost chorus	Keir	Federico Boido
		Toby Markary/Wan	Alberto Cevenini
Kamala Sankaram (soprano, accordion, tamburine)	Juno, Mercury, Anna, voice of Cupid		

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CAVALLI 2012: stage director Clément Hervieu-Léger, music director William Christie, filmed in Caen at the Théâtre de Caen in 2011 for broadcast by France Télévisions, DVD Opus Arte, 2012.

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# Tic-tac ou « Manon Lescaut mi chiamo » : Puccini et la dramaturgie du temps

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**Keywords:** Dramaturgie, Temporalité, Opéra italien, Puccini, Manon Lescaut

**Abstract:** *This article examines the value of dramatic time in Giacomo Puccini's Manon Lescaut. This opera follows in the footsteps of the narrative and formal manipulations of Angelo Zanardini, Amilcare Ponchielli, Arrigo Boito and Giuseppe Verdi. However, Puccini and his librettists leave behind formal manipulations based on the conventional alternation between static and dynamic sections. Thanks to an elaboration of the orchestral texture and the assimilation of the motif to a temporal value, Puccini succeed in making time an objective and constitutive element of a dramatico-musical fresco. All the more essential in the deserts of New Orleans in Act IV, the 'motif of the name' that Puccini was able to define in time, becomes a reference point for the ineluctability of time passing. This definition of time as a tangible dramatic parameter denies the abstraction of the lyrical numbers of the old solita forma and contradicts Mosco Carner's criticism that Puccini's last act is no more than 'a lament in duet form, lasting as long as eighteen minutes'.*

## 1893

They say when you meet the love of your life, time stops. And that's true. What they don't tell you, is that once time starts again, it moves extra fast to catch up.<sup>2</sup>

Lorsque Edward Bloom rencontre Sandra Templeton dans une séquence du film *Big Fish* où la narration manipule les codes du cinéma, Tim Burton traite avec humour la gestion temporelle de la tradition dramatique.<sup>3</sup> De la même manière, dans *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini ponctue la *cadenza* du duo du premier acte entre Manon et Des Grieux par une petite cellule qui vient *rattraper le temps perdu* par le ralentissement conventionnel de la temporalité dramatique. Ce motif surprenant, en *pizzicati* indiqué « rapido », abrège la suspension émotionnelle des deux personnages (*ML*<sup>4</sup> I/1111<sup>5</sup>). Il anticipe leur surprise lorsqu'ils entendent la voix de Lescaut qui ramène les deux amants troublés à une temporalité réelle.

La manipulation de la temporalité dramatique constitue l'une des substances de l'opéra italien du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>6</sup> Ainsi, les schémas analytiques utilisés durant les dernières décennies pour étudier les structures de l'opéra sont conditionnés par la dialectique entre « temps dramatique » et « temps réel ». Carl Dahlhaus a, par exemple, circonscrit la question de la divergence entre « temps représenté » et « temps de la représentation » pour arriver à la conclusion suivante : « L'alternance entre action ou discours suivi et action ou discours freiné provoque dans un opéra la dissociation du cours du temps en deux entités différentes : l'une liée à la forme musicale, qui se manifeste dans la durée effective de l'exécution, et l'autre, liée au contenu dramatique, que le spectateur, en se basant sur sa propre expé-

1 [guillaume.castella@hesge.ch](mailto:guillaume.castella@hesge.ch)

2 BURTON 2004: 00:49:58.

3 Pour une réflexion plus approfondie sur la façon dont Tim Burton utilise les outils du cinéma pour adapter le roman de Daniel Wallace, cfr. PERDIGAO 2016: 86–98.

4 PUCCINI 2015a.

5 Cette notation correspond aux indications acte/mesure.

6 ZOPPELLI 1994: 148.

rience, déduit du déroulement de l'action elle-même». <sup>7</sup> Il distingue ainsi une valeur objective du temps à l'opéra et une valeur subjective qui nécessite une approche herméneutique du récepteur.

Dans son article pionnier sur la *solita forma*, par la distinction entre sections statiques [static] et sections dynamiques [kinetic], Harold S. Powers a montré la façon dont la gestion temporelle dépend de l'articulation formelle des numéros de l'opéra italien. <sup>8</sup> Marco Beghelli affirma alors la dépendance réciproque entre la situation dramatique et le « temps théâtral ». <sup>9</sup> Dans ce paradigme, la temporalité devient un outil dramaturgique essentiel. En manipulant les structures et la valeur temporelle qui les définit, les compositeurs jouent sur l'écoulement du flux temporel pour souligner des enjeux dramatiques liés à l'urgence de certaines situations ou l'état psychologique des personnages. <sup>10</sup> Ainsi, Donizetti évoque ponctuellement le sentiment du temps qui passe dans le III<sup>e</sup> acte de *Roberto Devereux* pour rappeler l'imminence de l'exécution du protagoniste et appuyé l'angoisse d'Elizabeta. <sup>11</sup> La gestion de la temporalité reste tributaire d'une articulation formelle corroborée par les habitudes d'écoute. <sup>12</sup> Une fois que l'archétype structurel disparaît des attentes de l'auditeur – tel qu'on l'observe dans l'opéra italien de la fin-de-siècle –, le compositeur doit trouver de nouvelles manières de gérer la temporalité dramatique au-delà de la convention formelle.

Dans sa monographie, *Italian Opera in Transition, 1871–1893*, Nicolaisen considère l'année 1893 comme un tournant dans l'histoire de l'opéra italien. Outre sa définition historique contestable de ces deux décennies comme une « période de transition », il considère que « [t]he premières of Catalani's *La Wally*, Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, and Verdi's own *Falstaff* within a period of 13 months brought an entire era of operatic composition to a close ». <sup>13</sup> Il est certes pertinent de mettre sur un pied d'égalité *Falstaff* et *Manon Lescaut*, dans la mesure où ils représentent l'un comme l'autre des phénomènes de réception retentissants dans le paysage lyrique européen. Cependant, il est plus problématique de réduire le dernier opéra de Verdi, et l'émergence de la jeune génération de compositeurs, au crépuscule des « anciennes conventions » [old conventions]. En effet, aucun des paramètres évoqués par Nicolaisen – la vocalité, l'orchestration ou le traitement harmonique – ne présente de point de rupture saillant en 1893. <sup>14</sup> Cette révolution concernerait alors la fin de ladite *solita forma* :

The musico-dramatic structures in use for a half-century or more had been cast off and the composer was faced with the responsibility of fashioning a new structure with each scene he set. <sup>15</sup>

Au tournant du millénaire, l'application des schémas des formes traditionnelles aux opéras de Puccini était au cœur des discussions. <sup>16</sup> Ce débat a débouché, sinon sur une aporie, sur des conclusions peu satisfaisantes. En réponse à Michele Girardi, Philip Gosset, William Ashbrook ou encore Harold Powers, <sup>17</sup> David Rosen nous offre certainement la réflexion la plus pertinente à ce sujet. Il remarque que la validité d'une application de la *solita forma* à Puccini dépend de la rigidité avec laquelle nous la

7 DAHLHAUS 1995: 138.

8 POWERS 1987.

9 BEGHELLI 2006.

10 FORNONI 2020: 83–120.

11 ZOPPELLI 2024: 353–354. En outre, ZOPPELLI 2002 avait montré la façon dont Donizetti use de différentes stratégies musico-formelles pour rendre l'écoulement du temps perceptible, lorsque la dramaturgie repose sur une succession d'événements inscrits dans le temps et qu'elle s'extrait de la nature dialectique de la tragédie.

12 FORNONI 2020: 83–107, montre la façon dont Donizetti procède pour accélérer, ralentir ou arrêter la temporalité dramatique à l'intérieur de ses opéras par la gestion des sections dynamiques ou statiques de la *solita forma* tantôt amplifiées, tantôt abrégées et tantôt omises selon les enjeux scéniques.

13 NICOLAISEN 1980: 60.

14 Et ce, d'autant plus si on élargit le spectre italo-centré à une perspective transnationale qui implique l'opéra français. Cfr. WILSON 2007: 11–39.

15 NICOLAISEN 1980: 65.

16 BERNARDONI et al. 2005 ; DAVIS 2010: 12–20.

17 GIRARDI 1995 ; GOSSETT 2003: 39–42 ; ASHBROOK 1991.

définissons.<sup>18</sup> Compte tenu de la flexibilité de cette convention formelle dans l'opéra italien, l'argument devient alors tautologique : si l'on élargit suffisamment la définition de la *solita forma*, on peut englober toute alternance entre sections dialogiques et sections lyriques.<sup>19</sup> Rosen ponctue sa réflexion en ramenant la problématique structurelle à une étude de la réception.<sup>20</sup>

La question de l'usage des anciennes conventions par Puccini sous-entendrait alors la validation ou la réfutation de la révolution soutenue par Nicolaisen. Cependant, ces études ont fait de la résurgence structurelle une fin. Il convient d'outre-passer cette réflexion stérile et de se demander de quelle manière la manipulation ou la négation des formes conventionnelles coïncide avec une marginalisation de leur logique temporelle. Cela nous permettra de mieux comprendre le *choc* ressenti par le public lors de la création de *Manon Lescaut* au Teatro Regio de Turin en 1893.

### «Sorprenderci forse, confonderci no»

Lei cominciava già a credere che io avessi dimenticato col cappello, colla spugna e colla spazzola anche il gran finale d'*Otello*. Non era così. Questo finale io lo ruminavo, lo ruminavo, e poiché è un boccone assai grosso, non riescivo mai ad assimilarlo al sangue della forma se posso esprimermi così, e ho durata fatica non poca per ottenere quel risultato che a quest'ora le è già noto, e che è, mi pare la conseguenza di tutti i nostri discorsi fatti a Sant'Agata.<sup>21</sup>

Le 24 août 1881, Arrigo Boito écrit à Giuseppe Verdi avoir « ruminé » le final de l'acte III d'*Otello* pour arriver à un résultat qui illustre le fruit de leur réflexion. En découle un *concertato* qui superpose le chant lyrique de Desdemona, Emilia, Cassio, Roderigo et Lodovico aux dialogues entre Otello et Iago, puis entre Iago et Roderigo. Désireux de distinguer les deux plans dramatiques, le librettiste propose de différencier les mètres de la partie lyrique et de la partie dialogique.<sup>22</sup> Il s'agit pour Boito de renoncer au « flux sanguin de la forme » lorsque la pièce d'ensemble « fusionne la partie lyrique et la partie dramatique ». <sup>23</sup> Cependant, la nature révolutionnaire de ce final concerne moins la structure du numéro que ses logiques narratives. En cela, Boito et Verdi poussent le *concertato* à la limite de l'implosion, car ils insistent sur un paradoxe de la gestion temporelle. Boito rend explicite la contradiction du temps figé du *concertato* lorsque Iago rappelle à Otello que le temps est compté : « Rapido slancia la tua vendetta! | Il tempo vola ». La logique linéaire de la temporalité de l'opéra italien est détruite à tel point que la graphie du libretto d'*Otello* publié par Ricordi rompt la lecture continue pour une disposition en trois colonnes qui correspondent à des sphères temporelles présentées simultanément mais distinctes.<sup>24</sup>

Cette négation des structures temporelles du *concertato* pourrait trouver son origine non pas dans la poésie de Boito, mais dans le livret d'un collaborateur d'Amilcare Ponchielli pour la révision de *La Gioconda* en 1878 : Angelo Zanardini.<sup>25</sup> Dans le final de l'acte III, on observe une pareille distinction de la temporalité du *concertato* pour fondre dans le numéro d'ensemble la dénonciation de la Cieca et

18 « Indeed, if we were to be so rigid as to require all four slots to be filled, I could end this paper with a few words answering the question posed in my title: 'no, there are hardly any instances of *solite forme* in Puccini's operas, for cabalettas were virtually extinct, having gone out of fashion long before', ROSEN 2004: 186. Il répond ici à l'observation de Roger Parker concernant l'inadéquation de tels schémas plaqués sur l'œuvre de Verdi, PARKER 1997.

19 ROSEN 2004: 190.

20 « It seems doubtful that the 'solita forma' template elucidates either Puccini's relationship to this duet or the 1896 audience's reception of it. And what about us, Puccini's audience of today? Is it useful to hear this duet as interacting with the 'solita forma de' duetti'? [...] I find it difficult to persuade myself that this is a useful way of hearing and analyzing this duet. The similarities are not sufficient even to 'evoke' the older form », ROSEN 2004: 199.

21 Lettre de Boito à Verdi, du 24 août 1881, dans MEDICI et CONATI 1978: 58.

22 HEPOKOSKI 1987: 39–40.

23 « Il pezzo d'insieme, ha, come avevamo progettato, la sua parte lirica e la sua parte drammatica fuse insieme; è, cioè, un pezzo lirico, melodico, sotto il quale s'aggira un dialogo di dramma. » MEDICI et CONATI 1978: 58.

24 Cette graphie se normalise dans les années 1890, notamment pour les opéras de Puccini.

25 Polignano observe que Ponchielli attribue à Zanardini l'idée de faire intervenir la Cieca dans « l'*adagio* » l'obligeant à repenser la nature lyrique du numéro, POLIGNANO 1987: 241–242.

l'échange entre Barnaba et Gioconda, et ainsi opérer une « superposition des plans ». <sup>26</sup> L'intertextualité avec *Otello* est saillante, car Verdi utilise également la tonalité de la  $\flat$  majeur et introduit, de la même manière, le plan dialogique dans une section centrale contrastante. Pour ne pas affecter le mouvement lyrique, Ponchielli soigne la transition entre la section statique et la section dynamique et restreint la focalisation sur le dialogue entre Barnaba et Gioconda à cinq mesures (LG, <sup>27</sup> 282/3–283/4<sup>28</sup>). Puccini reçoit les leçons de Ponchielli au conservatoire de Milan dès 1881, soit une année après la reprise de la version définitive de *La Gioconda* à la Scala, ce qui en fait un point de repère essentiel.

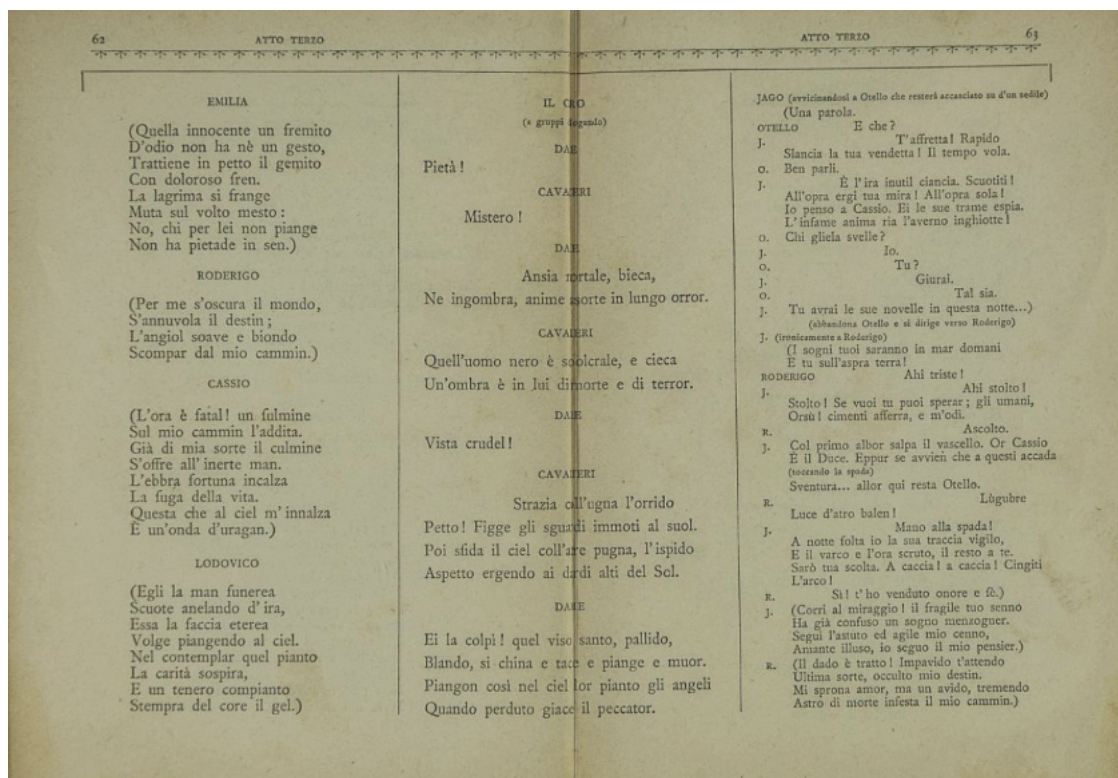


Figure 1 : BOITO 1887: 62–63.

La composante comique implique une radicalisation du procédé dans *Falstaff*. Comme l'affirme Luca Zoppelli, le *concertato* du final central, qui « mette insieme gruppi, metri, ritmi e motivi diversissimi, esager[a] all'estremo, sino al punto di disintegrazione, quella che era stata una delle grandi conquiste dell'opera italiana in generale e di quella verdiana in particolare ». <sup>29</sup> Boito et Verdi ne semblent plus vouloir simplement perturber les logiques qui régissent les rapports interpersonnels de l'opéra, ce qui marginalisait la figure de Iago dans *Otello*, mais ils se permettent un pied de nez à la convention tout en l'exploitant. <sup>30</sup> Lorsque Bardolfo hurle « Sozzo can vituperato » sur un *forte* orchestral et que Ford, Pistola et Cajus l'enjoignent à se taire, « Zitto! Zitto! Ulerai dopo », Boito et Verdi rompent la suspension de la temporalité dramatique pour une courte section dialogique. Ils contredisent ainsi la valeur du numéro. La dérision de la tradition est d'autant plus remarquable que Quickly et Meg chantent leurs strophes en *senari* dans un faux canon qui rappelle l'articulation rossinienne du *concertato*.

26 POLIGNANO 1992: 341.

27 PONCHIELLI 1973.

28 Cette notation correspond aux indications page/mesure.

29 ZOPPELLI 2017: 16.

30 Il s'agit là d'un principe fondamental de la parodie. Comme l'écrit Daniel Sangsue : « Qui dit refonctionnement 'critique' dit distance et opposition : recourant à l'étymologie dont nous avons déjà vu qu'elle impliquait à la fois la proximité et l'opposition.[...] Le texte parodié est ainsi à la fois une cible d'attaque et un matériau que le parodiste fait refonctionner dans un nouveau but », SANGSUE 2007: 77.

Quickly (accanto alla cesta, a Meg)

Facciamo le viste  
D'attendere ai panni;  
Pur ch'ei non c'inganni  
Con mosse impreviste.  
Fin'or non s'accorse  
Di nulla, egli può  
Sorprenderci forse,  
Confonderci no.

On comprend dans la strophe de Quickly l'enjeu dramatique de la scène. Elle n'aspire qu'à l'attente avant qu'un évènement externe à la situation, le débarras de la caisse de linge contenant Falstaff, ne vienne conventionnellement ponctuer le *concertato*. Le conflit entre les hommes et les femmes concerne ainsi la temporalité du numéro. Tandis que les femmes cherchent à ramener l'ensemble à sa nature statique conventionnelle, les hommes veulent le dynamiser pour mettre en place leur plan et surprendre le séducteur. S'opère une lutte entre la suspension du temps, symbolisée par l'articulation en triolets lyriques (*senari*) de Meg et Quickly, et son écoulement du temps et de l'action scénique obligé par la juxtaposition dialogique des répliques en binaire (*ottonari*) de Bardolfo, Pistola, Cajus et Ford.

Par le biais d'un détournement parodique, Verdi et Boito fonctionnalisent la nature du numéro selon les enjeux dramaturgiques de la scène, à tel point qu'il est impossible de définir l'ensemble ni comme un numéro dynamique, ni comme un numéro statique. La première de *Falstaff* à la Scala se tient huit jours après la création de *Manon Lescaut* au Teatro Regio, le 1<sup>er</sup> février 1893. Verdi et Puccini proposent ainsi parallèlement deux ouvrages qui révolutionnent les logiques de la temporalité dramatique de l'opéra italien. Si dans *Falstaff* il s'agit encore d'une bizarrerie ponctuelle émanant de la poésie agile de Boito et de la créativité musicale de Verdi, dans l'œuvre de Puccini la rupture avec la logique temporelle de l'opéra italien se normalise au niveau de la macrostructure. Afin de dépasser la proximité bien connue entre ces *concertati* et le final de l'acte III de *Manon Lescaut*,<sup>31</sup> nous porterons notre regard sur l'articulation musico-dramatique du premier acte de l'opéra de Puccini et ses conséquences sur l'acte final.

### La temporalité d'une fresque dramatique

[W]hen you come to Puccini, the composer of the latest *Manon Lescaut*, then indeed the ground is so transformed that you could almost think your-self in a new country. In *Cavalleria* and *Pagliacci* I can find nothing but Donizettian opera rationalized, condensed, filled in, and thoroughly brought up to date; but in *Manon Lescaut* the domain of Italian opera is enlarged by an annexation of German territory. The first act, which is as gay and effective and romantic as the opening of any version of *Manon* need be, is also unmistakably symphonic in its treatment.<sup>32</sup>

Bernard Shaw envisage le premier succès de grande envergure de Puccini comme une assimilation de la musique germanique et plus spécifiquement de sa logique symphonique. Dans la droite ligne de Shaw, Girardi décide d'aborder *Manon Lescaut* comme une « réinterprétation de Wagner ». <sup>33</sup> Cette approche a été corroborée par quelques lignes de Verdi sur Puccini : « Pare però che predomini in lui l'elemento sinfonico : niente di male. L'opera è l'opera; la sinfonia è la sinfonia; e non credo che in un'opera

31 Alfredo Soffredini, dans la *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, avait déjà remarqué le tour de force de « l'appello » : « Il *concertato* che nasce, si sviluppa e si conclude con la sfilata delle donne che devono imbarcarsi per l'America, è finalmente un *concertato* che ha *ragione d'essere*, perché motivato da una *azione* di movimento, durante la quale *tre azioni stabili* lo formano, cioè il dialogo di strazio, d'amore e di dolore fra Manon e Des Grieux, quello di Lescaut coi borghesi, e quello del popolo a varie sezioni, intanto che la *chiama* e la sfilata delle 12 donne ha luogo », SOFFREDINI 1893: 82. Girardi rappelle en outre la façon dont Puccini et Luigi Illica sont parvenus à réaliser le dessein infructueux de Verdi et Boito : « Grazie all'idea di Oliva, magistralmente interpretata da Illica, Puccini poté risolvere il problema di trasformare uno statico *concertato* in un brano d'azione, l'analogo compito che Verdi si era posto nell'atto III di *Otello* senza venirne a capo », GIRARDI 2024: 165.

32 SHAW 1995 [1893]: 183.

33 GIRARDI 2024: 133–148.

sia bello fare uno squarcio sinfonico, pel solo piacere di far ballare l'orchestra ». Le poids esthétique de cette remarque a cependant été largement surévalué, Verdi répondant ici sur le ton de la discussion de comptoir à quelque on-dit sur Puccini. Contrairement à l'idée reçue, Verdi n'a même pas en tête *Le Villi* ou ses intermèdes instrumentaux lorsqu'il avance ces propos. Il affirme simplement dans sa lettre « Ho sentito a dir bene del musicista Puccini. Ho visto una lettera che ne dice tutto il bene ».<sup>34</sup>

Cette définition de *Manon Lescaut* présume d'une équivalence des moyens aux fins : *Manon Lescaut* serait l'affirmation par Puccini d'un opéra italien « wagnérien ». Si *l'introduzione* de *Falstaff* articule la comédie selon des logiques symphoniques abstraites – voire absurdes – qui régissent les rapports interpersonnels, *a contrario*, dans *Manon Lescaut*, le savoir-faire symphonique de Puccini ne constitue pas une simple quête esthétique, mais lui permet de contredire la narration traditionnelle de l'opéra italien en faveur d'une fresque dramatico-musicale.

À ce titre, Puccini et ses collaborateurs œuvreront à transformer la disposition scénique afin de rendre le plateau vivant. Le librettiste d'*Aida*, Antonio Ghislanzoni, dans son livret satirique *L'arte di far libretti*, représentait encore le chœur comme une masse indolente et sans personnalité.<sup>35</sup> Pour Puccini, les choristes « non devono raffigurare una masse in significativa di persone immobili, ma [...] al contrario ciascuno rappresenta un personaggio e come tale deve sempre agire, muoversi, secondi i propri sentimenti, secondo l'azione che si svolge, mantenendo soltanto cogli altri quella certa unità di movimenti atta a meglio assicurare l'esecuzione musicale ».<sup>36</sup> L'édition critique de la *disposizione scenica* pour *Manon Lescaut* révèle le souci du détail accordé à la répartition des acteurs sur la scène afin de faire vivre le cadre visuel. Cette précision aussi bien des actions que des repères musicaux implique une disposition scénique qui suit le déroulement symphonique et ses événements.<sup>37</sup>

La première singularité de *Manon Lescaut* intervient après 42 mesures, lorsque le second thème lyrique du court prélude apparaît à la sous-dominante de la tonalité principale (*ML I/42*). Puccini privilégie au dynamisme logique, impliqué par le rapport tonique-dominante, la régression à la sous-dominante, comme le dévoilement d'un arrière-plan. L'entrée du chant d'Edmondo « Ave sera gentile » (*ML I/54*) à la relative mineure (fa# mineur), sans aucune préparation, conforte l'idée d'une superposition de couches autonomes. Puccini empêche par ce ressort musical de concevoir son numéro d'introduction comme l'enchaînement d'un propos logique et privilégie la juxtaposition des plans dramatiques.<sup>38</sup>

Le cas le plus caractéristique de modulation non préparée intervient pour la fameuse *arietta* de Des Grieux « Tra voi, belle, brune e bionde ». Lorsque l'attention se focalise sur le ténor, la tonalité en dièses (si majeur) bascule dans une tonalité en bémols (fa majeur), deux tonalités aux antipodes dans le cycle des quintes. La modulation abrupte de la section intermédiaire de sa chanson illustre la différence de plans entre Des Grieux et le groupe d'étudiants. Alors que le ténor tombe en la mineur pour la section intermédiaire mélancolique, impliquant un brusque changement de la couleur orchestrale, le rire du chœur l'interrompt et ramène le discours dans la tonalité principale (fa majeur). À la fin de la chanson, cette tonalité laisse place sans aucune préparation à la majeur, tonalité principale de l'acte (exemple 1). Le focus s'éloigne alors de la sphère intime de Des Grieux pour revenir sur l'arrière-plan.

Puccini joue, ici, sur le principe conventionnel de la focalisation. Zoppelli distingue deux types de focalisation dans l'opéra. Le premier résulte de l'utilisation de la musique de scène, qui implique une intégration du public dans le cadre scénique en raison de l'équivalence entre ce qu'entendent les per-

34 Lettre de Verdi à Opprandino Arrivabene du 10 juin 1884, dans CESARI et LUZIO 1913: 629–630.

35 GERHARD 2014: 138 fait le lien entre ce « Chor regelmäßig unfähig zu sinnfälligen Bewegungen auf der Bühne » et la définition qu'en donne un article satirique anonyme de la *Gazzetta musicale di Firenze* 1854: 158 : « I Cori rappresenteranno sempre un popolo d'imbecilli, qualunque sia la veste che indossino, e potranno adoprarsi per dar tempo ai macchinisti di preparare le scene, ed ai cantanti di vestirsi. »

36 PUCCINI 2021: 47.

37 La rigueur des premières indications révèle l'importance d'une corrélation entre la musique du prélude et la disposition scénique. Cfr. PUCCINI 2021: 50.

38 Girardi remarque la force dramatique des modulations de Puccini dans *Manon Lescaut* : « La brusca modulazione da una tonalità coi bemolle a una coi diesis, gesto tecnico reso ulteriormente brusco sia dal timbro orchestrale sia dalle voci, ha una potente relazione col dramma, volendo generare un effetto di spaesamento, e ci riesce benissimo », GIRARDI 2024: 158.

sonnages et ce qu'entend le spectateur. Le second concerne les moments introspectifs qui excluent les autres personnages.<sup>39</sup> Dans le cas présent, Puccini ajoute un troisième niveau de focalisation :

1. La sphère émotionnelle de Des Grieux (la mineur)
2. La perception des étudiants de la chanson de Des Grieux (fa majeur)
3. Le cadre scénique (la majeur)

Dans les deux situations décrites par Zoppelli, le point de vue du spectateur est également le point de vue d'un narrateur substantiel qui structure le discours musical d'un opéra. Dans le cas présent, la narration tend à quitter la logique diégétique pour une attention musicale vagabondant entre les différents niveaux de focalisation tout en suggérant le déroulement continu des autres plans. Il est certes difficile de déterminer ce que les étudiants ont entendu durant la digression « Palesatemi il destino ». Ce thème central, prémonitoire, sera, en outre, récupéré au début de l'acte II, pour figurer l'ennui de Manon dans le salon de Géronte. Le chant perd ainsi momentanément sa fonction de musique de scène pour se faire « *Leitmotiv* » – abstrait par essence – d'un « narrateur omniscient ».<sup>40</sup> Cependant, la réaction ironique des étudiants à l'étourdissement émotionnel de Des Grieux révèle qu'il a une existence dramatique réelle et dans le temps. Puccini s'évertue ainsi à exprimer la simultanéité des plans et le refus de conditionner l'espace et le temps dramatiques à la narration. Le retour des thèmes initiaux et de la tonalité de la majeur suite à l'*arietta* de Des Grieux se fait sur une 9<sup>e</sup> de dominante qui module immédiatement vers sa sous-dominante, ré majeur, afin de donner premièrement l'illusion d'un arrière-plan en continu mouvement et deuxièmement la sensation de « dézoomer »<sup>41</sup> pour faire apparaître les plans plus reculés.



227 *a tempo string.*  
 DG ro - sa che m'a - spet - ta? Sei tu bru-na snel-la? Dil - lo a me!

231 **17** *Allegro brillante* ♩ = 132  
 Edmondo (le fanciulle comprendendo che Des Grieux scherza, si allontanano da lui corrucciate, crollando le spalle) \*  
 Soprani Ma bra - vo! Ma bra - vo!  
 Tenori Ma bra - vo!  
 Coro di Studenti Ma bra - vo!

*Allegro brillante* ♩ = 132  
 mf

Exemple 1 : Puccini 2015: 20

39 ZOPPELLI 1994: 133.

40 De la même manière, lorsque l'*arietta* réapparaît en fin d'acte, la section centrale devient une prémonition funeste, en commentaire des propos de Lescaut : « Assetato labbro aveva | coppa piena | ber voleva | e avidamente già suggestva... »

41 Nous utilisons ici volontairement le langage cinématographique, car il sied particulièrement bien au procédé diégétique de Puccini. Cependant, il faut tout de suite écarter l'idée d'une quelconque influence du cinéma sur *Manon Lescaut*. Le cinéma

La seconde stratégie de Puccini consiste à faire entendre dans l'accumulation de détails de la texture orchestrale la cohabitation des différents plans dramatiques. L'apparition récurrente du motif x – la queue du thème initial du prélude – que l'on peut associer aux étudiants<sup>42</sup> nous rappelle le fourmillement de la foule en arrière-plan. Par exemple, Puccini souligne l'entrée sur scène de Des Grieux par un profil mélodique aux contours sinueux qui bascule en fa majeur – tonalité de son ariette à venir. Alors qu'il nous plonge dans les divagations du personnage, il nous laisse encore entendre les étudiants par la présence de leur motif en filigrane (exemple 2). Cette valeur structurelle et sémantique du motif semble appuyer l'idée soutenue par Shaw, Leibowitz, Budden ou Girardi de voir *Manon Lescaut* comme une réinterprétation du *Musikdrama* wagnérien. Cependant, il faut nuancer cette thèse, car l'utilisation du motif par Puccini est aux antipodes des principes du *Leitmotiv* wagnérien. Puccini utilise son motif non pas comme une valeur symbolique, mais comme une expression de la réalité vivante. De la même manière, le discours orchestral s'articule dans *Manon Lescaut* comme le reflet négatif du discours abstrait de la symphonie.<sup>43</sup> Le soin accordé par le compositeur à rompre les logiques de la progression harmonique, privilégiant les points de rupture pour marquer de nouveaux points de vue, contredit tout idéalisme. Plutôt que de concevoir son discours orchestral selon des grandes idées, figées dans le temps, Puccini articule sa partition orchestrale comme la superposition de couches sonores en mouvement, correspondant au foisonnement de la *disposizione scenica*, ce qui contraint l'auditeur à une conscience permanente de l'écoulement temporel, y compris durant les moments introspectifs.

Exemple 2 : Puccini 2015: 18.

### Une objectivisation du temps

Le statut de musique de scène de l'*arietta* « Tra voi, belle, brune e bionde » permet à Puccini de conserver une perception du temps réel. Richard Strohm a montré la façon dont Wagner avait su exploiter la

des années 1890 n'exploite pas les procédés narratifs et l'articulation des plans que l'on rencontrera au cours du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. À propos des effets « cinématographiques » dans *Manon Lescaut*, cfr. GUARNIERI CORAZZOL 2018.

42 MANCINI 1991: 25 le présente comme un « thème naïf [...] à l'image de la foule de ce relais » et GIRARDI 2010: 53 comme « cifra della giovinezza ».

43 À ce titre, nous rejoignons Steven Huebner lorsqu'il affirme : « I find it difficult to hear number 1 as analogous to the first movement of a symphony (as René Leibowitz proposed, a position supported by Girardi) complete with exposition, development (at the student's 'Baie: Misteriose vittorie') and mirror recapitulation (beginning at 'Danze, brindisi, follie') », HUEBNER 2006: 94.

figure du barde dans *Tannhäuser* pour faire du chant de Wolfram aussi bien une introspection typique de l'*aria* qu'une chanson pour les personnages du drame :<sup>44</sup>

Wolfram's 'Lied an den Abendstern' is certainly a lyrical, meditative piece – but when Tannhauser appears on the stage after it, saying 'Ich horte Harfenschlag', we are reminded that time has been going on during Wolfram's meditation, and Tannhauser has been approaching. Imagine that a traditional operatic aria were followed by the entry of another character whose first words are 'I just heard an aria being sung!' Traditional arias are not only gaps in the dramatic time, they are also supposed to be not listened to, nor even perceived, by the other characters.<sup>45</sup>

Wagner privilégierait la continuité temporelle à la convention opératique qui implique des arrêts réguliers de la temporalité. Mais sa logique narrative ne se distingue pas du discours continu par lequel le compositeur-narrateur s'exprime parallèlement aux répliques de ses personnages ; et ce, que le temps soit continu ou dans une alternance dynamique et statique. Pour Puccini, il s'agit d'objectiver le temps afin de l'extraire de la narration conventionnelle de l'opéra et d'en faire un élément tangible de sa fresque dramatique.

Pour ce faire, il utilise le motif musical comme un référent temporel. Il suggère ainsi la dilatation du temps à l'entrée en scène de Manon. Sur la didascalie « Manon si siede sopra una panca presso il viale », Puccini reprend le thème initial ; cependant, il le ralentit pour le faire entendre *un poco meno* ( $\text{♩}=88$ ) alors qu'il était présenté en *allegro brillante* ( $\text{♩}=132$ ) dans le prélude. Lorsque la focalisation de la didascalie quitte Manon pour la diligence – « La diligenza entra nel portone dell'osteria » –, le motif réapparaît dans le *tempo primo*. La fluctuation temporelle est corrélée à l'état émotionnel de Des Grieux. Cela se confirme lorsque le thème principal ralentit à l'excès avant le premier échange entre les deux protagonistes<sup>46</sup> (exemple 3) : ne reste qu'une pulsation du cor en *rallentando*. Aboutissant aux syncopes des violoncelles sur le thème de l'*aria* à venir « Donna non vidi mai », la dilatation du tempo confère à l'auditeur une perte de référence temporelle qui n'a rien de la convention admise, mais qui émane de l'élargissement de valeurs objectives. Puccini le confirme durant le duo, car le motif du nom « Manon Lescaut mi chiamo » découle directement de la réaction de la foule à l'arrivée de Geronte, Lescaut et Manon (*ML* I/306 ss). Durant la rencontre des deux amants, puis dans l'air de Des Grieux, ce motif est rallongé (5/3 de sa durée initiale) pour révéler une variation de la perception temporelle (exemple 4).

rall.      Moderatamente      rit. molto      rall.

(Des Grieux, che non avrà mai distolto gli occhi da Manon, le si avvicina) \*  
ben cantato



Exemple 3 : Puccini 2015: 40

44 Il partage la fonction de la musique de scène ou de la scène de folie. Cet archétype dramatique s'appuie sur la réalité marginalisée par le personnage pour déconstruire les normes conventionnelles de l'opéra. À la jonction entre chant réel et chant conventionnel, l'air du protagoniste est perçu en même temps et de la même manière par le spectateur que par les personnages. Le compositeur souligne ainsi la tension « en temps réel » de la situation.

45 STROHM 1977: 7.

46 Adriana Guarneri Corazzol a parfaitement montré la manière dont les 20 mesures du dialogue et la *disposizione scenica* créent en substance un « cadre cinématographique », GUARNIERI CORAZZOL 2018: 186–190.

Manon

Ma - non Le - scaut mi chia - mo

*p*

Exemple 4 : PUCCINI 2015: 40–41.

L'aria de Des Grieux « Donna non vidi mai » constitue le grand moment lyrique du premier acte. Cependant, Puccini ne se résigne pas à composer un air *in abstracto*. Il le contextualise en l'encadrant par des motifs associés aux étudiants. Avant l'air, Puccini répète la cellule sur un long *rallentando* pour figurer une nouvelle dilatation du temps. L'enchaînement harmonique stéréotypé dominante-tonique qui initie la section lyrique vient régler le conflit des mesures précédentes entre les tonalités de sol majeur et si $\flat$  majeur : l'opposition structurelle entre tonalité en dièses associée au cadre scénique et tonalité en bémols revoyant à la sphère sentimentale. Le changement de plan est tout aussi explicite durant la conclusion de l'aria, où un abrupt *allegretto mosso* ponctue la cadence du ténor. La modulation soudaine en sol majeur affirme le retour du flux temporel initial, au moment où l'attention musicale se focalise sur le cadre.<sup>47</sup> On comprend à la didascalie – « [Des Grieux] rimanendo estatico » et « Edmondo e gli Studenti, che hanno spiato Des Grieux, si avanzano cautamente poco a poco » – que le ténor est resté hagard durant ce moment introspectif alors que l'arrière-plan a continué à évoluer.<sup>48</sup>

En outre, l'aria est construit sur l'obsession du motif du nom qui témoigne de la passion irréfrenable de Des Grieux pour Manon. Étant donné que Puccini a défini le motif dans le temps, sa répétition donne à l'air une valeur temporelle objective.<sup>49</sup> Contrairement au chant de Wolfram, l'air de Des Grieux n'est pas entendu par les personnages du drame. Cependant, on comprend aussi bien au contenu de l'aria qu'à la réaction des étudiants « La tua ventura ci rassicura. » que l'immobilisme introspectif de Des Grieux a une existence dans le temps. Les motifs étudiantins qui entourent l'air correspondent ainsi au déroulement autonome de l'arrière-plan et nous suggèrent – s'ils ne nous l'imposent pas – de prendre conscience du flux temporel, même ralenti à l'extrême, durant « Donna non vidi mai ».

Les points de rupture récurrents dans la partition de Puccini confèrent également à l'œuvre un caractère parodique. Cette ambivalence du drame de Puccini apparaît dès la première didascalie qui présente le chant d'Edmondo « tra il comico ed il sentimentale ». La cellule légère qui suit la cadence héroïque du ténor ou le motif *rapido* qui « rattrape le temps perdu » à la fin du duo entre Manon et Des Grieux et le rire des étudiants au milieu de l'arietta « Tra voi, belle, bruna e bionda » servent aussi de pied de nez, digne de l'humour « *scapigliato* », à la convention du genre. La parodie dramatique avait été définie par Gustave Lanson à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle comme la révélation des *ficelles* des genres théâtraux en faveur d'une objectivisation.<sup>50</sup> Puccini radicalisera ce procédé dans ses opéras suivants, ajoutant des personnages d'arrière-plan aux moments lyriques pour commenter, tourner en dérision ou critiquer les propos : Marcello dans « O soave fanciulla » de *La Bohème*, le sacristain dans « Recondita armonia » de *Tosca*, ou encore Sharpless dans « Dovunque al mondo » de *Madama Butterfly*. De cette manière, il

47 Notons que le point d'orgue sur le dernier quart de soupir (ML I/499) apparaît comme totalement artificiel et n'a vocation qu'à permettre les applaudissements ou le *bis*, comme il était d'usage.

48 Selon la *disposizione scenica* : « Edmondo e gli studenti hanno sempre osservato Des Grieux: a poco a poco si alzano, lasciano il giuoco, ed in punta di piedi si avanzano, circondano Des Grieux ch'è rimasto estatico », PUCCINI 2021: 56.

49 Cela donne une légitimité poétique au « meccanismo 'un'altra volta' » que Ricardo Pecci juge « ingombrante » dans *Manon Lescaut*, PECCI 2010: 12.

50 LANSON 1895: 271.

parvient à contredire l'équivalence idéaliste entre voix du narrateur et voix du personnage pour faire de l'air un élément objectif ancré dans un paysage dramatique défini dans le temps.<sup>51</sup>

### «Il tempo vola»

Riepilogando: il 1° Atto è compiuto e consegnato: il 4° tutto ideato, e mi pare non debba richiedere molto tempo per strumentarlo: metà del terzo è fatta: l'altra metà abbozzata, e potrebbe quindi mettere tutto l'atto in carta: rimarrebbe solo il 2°!! Possibile che in 4 o 5 mesi non le riesca di finire e strafinire tutto?...<sup>52</sup>

Nous savons à quel point la genèse de *Manon Lescaut* est labyrinthique. La correspondance entre Puccini et Ricordi révèle cependant que les modifications répétées et les incertitudes ont principalement concerné les actes II et III. Le 21 mai 1891, Ricordi pousse le compositeur à terminer son opéra au plus vite pour pouvoir le programmer dans un théâtre de premier ordre durant la saison de carnaval. Il affirme que Puccini a pratiquement terminé les actes I et IV. Outre le fait que le dernier acte se fonde essentiellement sur le matériau de *Crisantemi*, composé une année plus tôt, on remarque que l'acte d'Amiens et l'acte de la Nouvelle-Orléans ont été réfléchis en miroir ; ce qui explique leur composition simultanée. Le souvenir invoqué par Manon quelques mesures avant sa mort, sur une dégradation chromatique du motif du nom, a vocation à rappeler au public avec nostalgie la douceur de l'extase amoureuse du début de l'œuvre (*ML IV/354 ss*). Cette dramaturgie du retour sera renforcée dans *La bohème* lorsque Puccini demande explicitement à Illica de lui permettre de composer une réminiscence des airs de Rodolfo et de Mimi.<sup>53</sup>

L'acte IV de *Manon Lescaut* a longtemps été dénigré par les exégètes après que Mosco Carner l'a défini comme « a lament in duet form, lasting as long as eighteen minutes and thus failing on the dramatic plane ».<sup>54</sup> *A contrario*, les critiques de l'époque rapportent qu'il a été reçu avec stupéfaction lors de la première et de ses reprises.<sup>55</sup> Girardi le réhabilite en le qualifiant de « capolavoro del tardo romanticismo musicale »<sup>56</sup> et précise ailleurs qu'il s'agit « d'un des moments les plus représentatifs de la poétique de Puccini »<sup>57</sup> Il confirme la place centrale du temps dans la dramaturgie de *Manon Lescaut* lorsqu'il définit le final de l'opéra comme une antithèse de l'aspiration romantique à la sphère métaphysique qui ponctue *Don Carlos* et *Aida* :

Gli amanti pucciniani continuano ad avanzare nella sabbia del deserto, fino all'ultimo cercando un'impossibile salvezza, perché l'unica certezza è la vita.<sup>58</sup>

51 Le schéma utilisé par Zoppelli pour symboliser le rapport entre l'auteur et le destinataire de l'opéra ne convient plus dans ce cas-là, car la linéarité musicale est rompue pour laisser place à une superposition des strates dramatiques qui se distancie de la narration, ZOPPELLI 1994: 18.

52 Lettre de Giulio Ricordi à Puccini, du 21 mai 1891, ASR : CLET000096.

53 « Quello ch'io ho scritto nel segno: gelida manina mi è necessario come l'aria mi fai il favorone di mandarmi 2 o 3 o 4 versettini rimati buddhati da aggiungere ? m'è di efficacia ripeter per la bocca di Mimi l'idea della gelida manina. » Lettre de Puccini à Illica entre le 1<sup>er</sup> et le 3 octobre 1895, dans Puccini 2015b, 463. À propos des réminiscences finales et de leurs raisons d'être dans les opéras de Puccini : FORNONI 2022: 325–330, HUEBNER 2006 et BERNARDONI 2008:188–189.

54 CARNER 1968: 307–308. Cette idée a été récupérée telle quelle par Julian Budden : « Finally, 18 minutes is distinctly long for an act in which nothing happens apart from the heroine's death. » BUDDEN 2005: 130.

55 Les anthologies de la critique publiées dans la *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* entre 1893 et 1894 montrent que l'acte IV a suscité une vive approbation du public. Quelque critique rappelle que l'acte ne peut se résumer uniquement à « un gran duetto tra Manon e Des Grieux » mais constitue un moment dramatique « commovente ». *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* 1894: 86. Nous citerons ici les propos de Soffredini qui témoigne du choc éprouvé par le public du Teatro Regio lors de la première : « La commozione durante l'atto quarto è stata grande ; per quanto esso dura si poteva udire il respiro degli spettatori ; l'arte di Puccini, che qui sale alle maggiori altezze del sentimento, della passione, del dolore, e l'arte stupenda della Ferrani e del Cremonini conquisero totalmente gli spettatori », SOFFREDINI 1893: 82.

56 GIRARDI 2024: 169.

57 « Il vasto finale terzo invece di portare a uno sviluppo della vicenda prelude all'estenuante atto quarto: conclusione stigmatizzata dal pur benemerito Mosco Carner come 'un lamento in forma di duetto, che si protrae per diciotto minuti: un fallimento dunque sul piano drammatico'. Si tratta invece di uno dei momenti più rappresentativi della poetica di Puccini, essenziale per ribadire il tema centrale dell'opera: l'amore inteso come 'maledizione' e passione disperata ». GIRARDI 2010: 93.

58 GIRARDI 2024: 170.

De la même manière, Federico Fornoni évoque l'affirmation de la vie dans la sensualité de l'opéra de Puccini, qu'il relie au refus de la mort de Manon, aux antipodes de l'amour transcendantal de *Tristan*.<sup>59</sup> À travers cette revendication *pseudo-nietzschéenne* de la vie, typique de la sensibilité de la fin-de-siècle,<sup>60</sup> le final de *Manon Lescaut* se pose comme un renversement du *Liebeshod* wagnérien.

La composante temporelle est essentielle pour comprendre ce renversement poétique. Là où Gurnemanz annonçait la déstructuration du temps – « Du siehst, mein Sohn, zum Raum wird hier die Zeit. » – pour faire entrer Parsifal dans une sphère idéale lors de la présentation du Graal, Puccini induit dans son dernier acte que l'espace et le temps sont deux valeurs objectives. L'acte I de *Manon* était une superposition virtuose de couches motiviques représentant une réalité vivante. À l'inverse, l'acte IV traduit musicalement les plaines désertiques de la Nouvelle-Orléans. Sous le désespoir de Des Grieux « E nulla! Nulla! | Arida landa... non un filo d'acqua... | O immoto cielo! », Puccini dépouille la texture orchestrale de façon inhabituelle pour ne laisser qu'un *fa#* des cordes en trémolo et une montée chromatique aux cors (*ML IV/142 ss*). La substance mélodique de l'acte IV devient indigente. Elle peut se résumer aux thèmes tirés de *Crisantemi* et à une série de variations du motif du nom.

Plus qu'une valeur symbolique idéale, ce motif tient lieu de référence temporelle.<sup>61</sup> En le faisant revenir sous plusieurs formes, le développement musical de l'acte renvoie à l'écoulement du temps.<sup>62</sup> L'efficacité dramatique du final de *Manon* dépend précisément d'une prise de conscience permanente du temps qui passe et qui condamne les protagonistes. Manon rappelle ainsi à Des Grieux que le temps s'envole inéluctablement et qu'il n'est pas « l'heure de pleurer » : « Il tempo vola...baciarmi! ». Puccini le figure par l'apparition des nombreux dérivés du motif du nom, notamment dans l'ouverture et le final de l'acte, lorsque le présage lugubre de la mort de Manon ralentit le temps à l'extrême. Il s'agit de l'occurrence la plus étirée de la cellule initiale du motif construit sur son rythme iambique (exemple 5) ; ici, noire-blanche pointée (♩ = 58), soit trois fois plus lent que son occurrence principale (exemple 4) ou cinq fois plus lent que sa première apparition.

Andante sostenuto ♩ = 58      Si alza la tela

Exemple 5 : Puccini 2015: 240.

Puccini s'en sert également comme marqueur temporel lorsque Des Grieux attend désespérément la réponse de Manon à l'article de la mort : « Rispondimi, amor mio!... | Tace! Manon! Non mi rispondi ». La répétition obstinée du thème de Manon crée une insupportable sensation d'attente. Quelques mesures plus tôt, Manon réagit à la tristesse de Des Grieux sur ce que Pecci a identifié comme une variation du

59 FORNONI 2022: 280–283 ; 316–319.

60 CASTELLA 2025.

61 Il est en effet très compliqué de ramener le motif du nom à une signification précise. Budden l'envisage simplement comme le « thème de Manon », BUDDEN 2005: 112. Fedele D'Amico le présente comme une malédiction : « il tema dell'amore inteso come maledizione in sé e per sé », D'AMICO 1962: 282. Girardi relativise le caractère négatif du thème et le définit comme l'expression du destin et « [l']illusoria speranza di un avvenire migliore », GIRARDI 2010: 58.

62 Ricardo Pecci a parfaitement montré la façon dont le motif sert de fil conducteur narratif à Puccini au cours de son opéra, PECCI 2010.

motif du nom.<sup>63</sup> L'alternance des deux accords entre les cordes et les bois joue le rôle d'un tic-tac mortifère (exemple 6). Dépouillée de sa structure mélodique, l'oscillation pendulaire constitue, quelques mesures plus tard, la substance de l'accompagnement de l'air de Manon « Sola perdita abbandonata... ». Ce tic-tac menaçant disparaît lors du délire de Manon pour réapparaître d'abord sous une forme altérée et violente (*ML IV/257–261*) durant la section intermédiaire, puis *come prima* dans les dernières mesures. La conscience de la mort imminente terrifie Manon et la conduit à son cri de désespoir, la raccrochant à la vie au mépris de la métaphysique : « Non voglio morir!... Amore, aita! » (*ML IV/268 ss*).

**Lento** **a tempo**  
 (Des Grieux, ferito da queste parole, dimostra collo sguardo e cogli atti uno spasimo profondo)  
 a piacere (rassicurando Des Grieux)  
 Manon 33  
 - men - te! No! che dis - si?... u - na va - na, u - na stol - ta pa - ro - la...  
**Lento col canto** **a tempo**  
 fpp subito sf pp  
 Manon 37  
 Deh! ti con - so - la! Chieg - go bre - ve ri - po - so... Un so - lo i - stan - te...  
 affrettando e affannando rit.  
 col canto  
 sf pp sf pp sf pp

Exemple 6 : Puccini 2015: 243.

Il est fondamental pour Puccini de conserver une notion du temps dans l'acte IV de *Manon Lescaut*. Le dépouillement de la scène, l'absence de personnage outre les deux protagonistes et le cadre désertique n'offrent aucun point de repère externe aux interactions entre Des Grieux et Manon.<sup>64</sup> Alors que tout est réuni pour de longues introspections statiques, Puccini inscrit dans le temps sa substance musicale. Grâce à sa fresque dramatico-musicale vivante de l'acte I et à sa réminiscence en négatif dans le paysage inerte de l'acte IV – qui participe à ce que Girardi a nommé le premier exemple de « musica della memoria »<sup>65</sup> – Puccini construit une dramaturgie du temps qui passe.

D'autres compositeurs avaient certes déjà traduit dans l'opéra italien l'inéluctabilité du temps. Parmi les nombreux précédents dans lesquels la tension dramatique repose sur *l'œuvre du temps*, Donizetti

63 PECCI 2010: 19.

64 En témoignent les indications laconiques de la *disposizione scenica* pour tout l'acte IV : « In America. 1. Telone circolare: cielo infocato, verso il tramonto. 2. Sentiero praticabile. 3. Spezzati di terreno. 4. Sassi. Manon e Des Grieux scendono dal sentiero praticabile 2. Manon cade sulla fine del praticabile. » Puccini 2021: 97.

65 GIRARDI 2024: 167.

usait de plusieurs stratégies ponctuelles dans le traitement de la forme pour soustraire des numéros figés de *Lucrezia Borgia* la notion du temps implacable.<sup>66</sup> Dans *La traviata*, pour satisfaire l'enjeu dramatique de son dernier acte, Verdi avait recours à l'entrée en scène de différents interlocuteurs de Violetta pour constater une dégradation sans continuité, car stoppée, au summum de la tension dramatique, par des moments statiques tels que l'air « Addio del passato » ou le grand duo « Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo ». Puccini marque, cependant, un point de rupture avec les manipulations formelles qui l'ont précédé en faveur d'une objectivisation musicale du temps. Le temps n'est plus un paramètre ou un concept abstrait que le compositeur et le librettiste manipulent, figent ou exposent en affectant les formes traditionnelles.<sup>67</sup> Il devient, à l'instar de l'espace – ou du décor –, la substance omniprésente et essentielle du drame.

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66 « Solo che Donizetti non intende qui descrivere il vissuto soggettivo dei personaggi, bensì sonorizzare il carattere meccanico, freddamente cerimoniale, di quest'enumerazione di delitti, e anche mantenere un senso opprimente di tempo rallentato ma implacabile, che scorre verso lo svelamento dell'identità della dama », ZOPPELLI 2022: 263.

67 FABBRI 2006: 21.

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# The Poetics of Time and Space in Abdullah Ibrahim

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**Abstract:** *Time is a prominent theme in South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim’s writing, discourse and music. His elaborations of time converge with ideas about place. This assumes significance, given that he was away from South Africa while developing his aesthetic, in what would later cement into exile. This paper looks at the imaginative ways in which he deploys time as a metaphor for place, both in his writing and in his music. Through a discussion of time as a theme in his discourse, the blurring of time and place in stories and memory, and finally in connecting his discourse with five sites in his music where these ideas might be read sonically, the article attends to the political commitments that inhere in Ibrahim’s poetics of time and space, and suggests how resistance might be read in the imaginative elaboration of time and space in one musician’s work during exile.*

## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

Time is an enduring topic in Abdullah Ibrahim’s discourse about music and the music he makes. His ideas about the organization of time often converge with his ideas about space,<sup>3</sup> effectively creating a sonic poetics of both. We here trace these ideas in his writings and interviews and in his contributions to the documentaries about him, and their manifestation in his music. I argue that through his discourse and sounds, Ibrahim constructs a temporal poetics akin to what Johannes Fabian would call “temporal pragmatics”: “ways with time or temporal practices [...] that are ultimately about politics of time”.<sup>4</sup>

Dollar Brand – as he was then known<sup>5</sup> – left South Africa in 1962 to escape the apartheid laws and their increasingly harsh impact on his life and livelihood as an artist and in hopes of better opportunities in Europe and the United States. Despite achieving success abroad, he returned to South Africa from July 1968 to May 1969, when he converted to Islam and assumed the name by which he is still known, Abdullah Ibrahim. He left once more, only to return again in the early 1973, though he went into definitive exile in 1976,<sup>6</sup> not returning to South Africa until in 1990, when Nelson Mandela’s release signalled the turn of the tide on apartheid. He remains a permanent resident of Germany today.

In the time between his arrival in New York in 1965 and his return from his first visit to his native South Africa in 1969, Ibrahim’s albums attest to a marked increase in compositional activity. But they also demonstrate a reorientation from an ear trained predominantly to the examples set by American jazz towards a keener interest in (South) Africa, thematically as well as sonically. Consider, for example, the pro-

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2 I would like to express my gratitude to Christine Lucia, who gave me access to an extensive set of transcriptions of Ibrahim’s compositions that she did in the 1980s. This enabled me to check my own listenings against hers as I developed my thoughts, especially in the last section. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewer for their thoughtful input.

3 I follow Michel de Certeau’s definition of space as “practiced place”, in other words, place that assumes significance beyond a simple understanding as a geographical marker in the way it is placed in relation to other places, itineraries, social relations and spatial practices. DE CERTEAU 1988: 117.

4 FABIAN 2007: 44.

5 In this article I will refer to him by his adopted name, Abdullah Ibrahim, as he is better known. For traceability, the references will refer to his name as it appears on the publication or album.

6 LUCIA 2002: 127.

grammatical significance given to (South) Africa in the succession of solo albums titled *Anatomy of a South African Village* (1965), *African Sketchbook* (1968), *African Piano* (released in 1970, recorded 22 October 1969). These titles reverberate with a yearning for a country and a continent that would persist throughout Ibrahim's career. This does not exclude references to American jazz musicians. Figures like Fats Waller, Ellington and Thelonious Monk are still eminently present in tracks like "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Mood Indigo" on the album *Reflections* (1965), or "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" on *Anatomy of a South African Village* (1965), and most conspicuously in the later album named after three of Ibrahim's great inspirations, *Fats Duke and Monk* (1973). After these albums, however, their noted presence gradually fades out.

Around the same time (1965 to 1970), Ibrahim's discourse in his writings and his music start to reveal a distinct preoccupation with the notions of time and geography. Svetlana Boym's point that home only becomes topical when one is absent from home, seems applicable here.<sup>7</sup> "Home" in displacement, however, is necessarily linked with time. Home was then, in the past, accessed through memory. The present is here, in an elsewhere, lived. Yet evoking the past, home, is not a simple matter of recalling things as they were. Salman Rushdie, the Indian-born British and American novelist, has remarked as follows on emigrants writing about his native country from afar: "[...] our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind".<sup>8</sup> The absence from home in the physical sense, Rushdie argues, becomes the ground for creative elaborations of home. Remembering home is therefore as much a matter of place-making as recollection. The past becomes present in the act of creative elaboration.

We posit here that in the work of Abdullah Ibrahim, time serves as the site of such creative elaboration of both home (South Africa) and his places of exile (Europe and the United States). Taking a closer look at two of his texts from the 1960s can help us trace the development of his musical engagement with time: the poetry cycle *Africa, Music and Show Business* first published in 1966,<sup>9</sup> and his "Talks on Jazz" produced for the Transcription Centre in London in 1965.<sup>10</sup> Two later documentary film portraits of him, *A Brother with Perfect Timing* (1987) and *A Struggle for Love* (2004) revisit the ideas presented in the earlier texts, suggesting that those ideas remained relevant to him for decades afterwards.<sup>11</sup> Collectively, these sources show his intertwined memory and (re)construction of "Africa", especially through notions of time.

The first three sections of the article trace how Ibrahim's ideas about time unfolds in his writings and discourse. The fourth section considers how senses of time play out in another modality of Ibrahim's discourse: the anecdote or story. Here, I am particularly concerned with the temporal blurring that occurs in stories and anecdotes as conduits of memory, and how memory, in the South African context, functions as a form of political resistance. The final section connects Ibrahim's ideas about time with his music, pointing to sites in his sound where these ideas might be observed. It is also a commentary and critique of the slippages between his discourse and sound, resulting in a recalibration of time as topos in his sound.

### Ibrahim's Discourses on Time and Space

"They took away time and gave us a clock", Ibrahim states in the opening of the documentary film portrait, *A Brother with Perfect Timing*.<sup>12</sup> The differentiation between "time" and the "clock" in this statement

7 "When we are at home, we don't need talk about it. [...] When we start speaking of home and homeland, we experience the first failure of homecoming." BOYM 2001: 251.

8 RUSHDIE 1992: 10.

9 BRAND 1966: 53–7. The poetry cycle was later republished in a book of collected poetry with figures no less than Dennis Brutus and Keorapetse Kgogitsile. For reasons of accessibility, I consulted this latter version. BRAND 1971: 1–11.

10 See VOS 2016: 108–157.

11 AUSTIN 1987; CAPPELARI 2004.

12 AUSTIN 1987: 00:20–00:30.

is key. Consistently across Ibrahim’s discourse, the clock is presented as a regulating device, an instrument that disrupts—often violently—a perceived natural order of time. In contrast, time as metaphor for natural daily or seasonal rhythms, and timing, as the quality of being attuned to an environment,<sup>13</sup> are held as the ideal that is disrupted by the clock. Consider, for instance, the second poem, “slave bell”, in Ibrahim’s poetry cycle of 1966 (republished in 1971) titled *Africa, Music and Show Business*. This poem demonstrates Ibrahim’s alignment of regulated time with coloniality, and also contests the ineluctability of time as signalled by a clock:

slave  
 master your bell  
 your master  
 like the cat  
 was belled  
 with time  
 no clocks  
 no clime  
 stipulate  
 late afternoon  
 nor early mourning for the dead [...] <sup>14</sup>

This poem constructs the clock and bell in opposition to natural cycles of day according to the position of the sun, and the archetypal cycle of life and death. But the poem does more than state an understanding of time as the site of epistemological and pragmatic contestation: in the call, “slave/master your bell”, the organisation of time becomes the site of resistance and reclamation of power.

The metaphor of time spills over into the domain of space. If regulated or ordered time can be notionally connected with colonization, we may start to imagine its spatial/geographical coordinates: the global north and the global south. The idea of northern and southern hemispheres is connected respectively with the present at the time that he writes (Ibrahim’s exile, first in Europe and the United Kingdom, and later in New York) and the past (South Africa). The untitled sixth poem of *Africa, Music and Show Business* is an example of how north and south are juxtaposed and contrasted throughout the poetry cycle:

The southern spring winds  
 Myself in two  
 One wintered in cold steel northern city  
 Brittle eyed neon guards my empty stomach  
 The other  
 A dimming summer  
 Camera-ed in youth  
 And matined each minute of each dreary day

If summer and winter mark the stark extremities articulated as the northern and southern hemispheres, in the poem they similarly function as metaphors for passing time. The past is a memory of the more idyllic image of youthful summer, for which a fading photograph embodies that receding reality. The present, by contrast, is all too stark, represented as harsh and inhospitable.

Throughout the poetry cycle, as in this poem, the “north” is unfalteringly portrayed as an industrialized, urban space that is inimical to the African, a place where he is eternally displaced and that eventually leads to his demise. The twelfth poem of *Africa, Music and Show Business* titled “the harmonica” tells the story about the rise to popularity and ultimate demise of a harmonica player. In the final two lines of the poem, the harmonica “rattled back into the gutter where it had fallen / with the inauguration

<sup>13</sup> RAMPHALILE, MANYIKE and MAXAULANE 2023: 9.

<sup>14</sup> “II: slave bell”, in BRAND 1971: 3.

of time".<sup>15</sup> The harmonica, staged as the instrument of the protagonist's demise, is aligned with the onset of ordered time: imposed, since it was "inaugurated". It is furthermore spatially connected with the unwholesome netherworld of urban spaces, the gutter. Time is also central in the last poem of the cycle, "Finale", which is a parable about the discovery of time in the form of "an ancient clock / ticking away in 1979<sup>3/4</sup>/35<sup>1/2</sup>" – a preposterous time signature implying such complexity as to be comical.<sup>16</sup>

Exile, by implication, locks the protagonist into this stifling cycle of displacement and demise. This dim view of the displaced and creatively stunted musician is bifurcated with the intangible, elusive memory of the south, which for that very reason, also becomes a fecund terrain for imaginative elaboration. This memory only becomes available ephemerally: through the wind in the untitled sixth poem quoted above, or elsewhere through references to alcohol intoxication and stories recalled through music.

These conceptions of time and place converge more explicitly in Ibrahim's later explanation of time signatures in the 2004 documentary film *A Struggle for Love*.<sup>17</sup> Ibrahim aligns urban spaces with the image of the grid when he proclaims that the "four walls" of the urban (read: northern) city, which boxes people in, are musically manifest in the 4/4 time that regulates music. He contrasts this to what he considers asymmetrical time signatures prevalent in African music, 3/4, 5/4 or 7/4, which for Ibrahim signify patterns free from industrial mediation, such as those found in nature, bodily movements and spirituality. For the purposes of this reading, I am less concerned with the accuracy of such statements (which is problematic);<sup>18</sup> I rather want to draw attention to their paradigmatic commitments. Ibrahim seems to imply a holism in African music whereby music in an "unspoiled" form – in Ibrahim's view not subject to Western (musical) structural organisation – is attuned to natural cycles. Ibrahim's hypothesis implies that Western structures augured a fundamental rupture that estranges African musics (or by extension, African musicians) from their environment and harmony with the world.

### Constructing Africa

In several respects Abdullah Ibrahim's conceptions are problematic to scholarly ears. The strong reliance on binaries in statements such as the last one, collapses Africa to a single, musically undifferentiated space; it overlooks the panoply of music practiced across an entire continent. Furthermore, the "Africa" sketched is an idealized, pre-colonial Africa, untouched by cultural contact with the west. This move does not take account of Ibrahim's own upbringing in the cosmopolitan space of Cape Town's District Six, imbued with the influences of Christian hymnody, nor the huge impact of American music heard on radio or on record. Indeed, the "traditional African" music to which Ibrahim alludes is not likely one that Ibrahim can lay claim to through extensive personal experience before leaving South Africa. Although he travelled beyond urban, cosmopolitan Cape Town and performed with some of the top black South African musicians like Kippie Moeketsi, Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, by all accounts their performances were in urban spaces and the repertoire drew heavily on bebop,<sup>19</sup> couched in a context of dance music steeped in

15 "XII: the harmonica" in BRAND 1971: 9.

16 "Finale: life in a national park/ or – take five", in BRAND 1971: 10–11.

17 CAPPELARI 2004.

18 Drawing on extensive fieldwork on many African musical traditions, ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik asserts otherwise. Commenting on the grouping of elementary pulsation into larger "beats", he writes: "[I]n African music, most metrical schemes combine four metrical units. Rarely is there something like 3/4 time; but there are, of course, many 12-pulse cycles, often reinterpreted by Western observers as 12/8 time." KUBIK 2010: 38. Also see ANKU 2000. Ibrahim seems to refer to bell patterns, also known as a timeline, prevalent in West and Central African music (largely absent in the music of southern Africa), rather than time signature. Timeline patterns are typically asymmetrical.

19 With saxophonist Kippie Moeketsi, trombonist Jonas Gwangwa and trumpeter Hugh Masekela, bassist Johnny Gertze and drummer Makaya Ntshoko, Ibrahim formed The Jazz Epistles, whose album *Verse 1* (1960) was hailed as South Africa's first bebop record.

American popular songs.<sup>20</sup> What I suggest is that Ibrahim's ruminations on African senses of time is less the product of memory than it evinces an imaginative construction of an African musical subjectivity. The "Africa" Ibrahim creates and theorizes in exile is an Africa *in absentia*: not only to a large extent absent in his own musical experiences before he left South Africa in 1962, but also in the time place where he develops these ideas: that is, in the first decade of his exile in Europe and the United States.

Indeed, in his writing Ibrahim consistently sets up a dichotomy through which he constructs Africa in relation to the West in the sense that it is cast as the antithesis of the latter. This manifests in unregulated, non-linear concepts of time and space: non-metrical or asymmetrical time and the notion of the cycle under the banner of a return to African values – now constructed in the West's negative. Indeed, the master's tools have been seized: whereas the essentialism in postcolonial literature is most often discussed as the prerogative of the West in designating its other, Ibrahim is affecting a self-essentializing that serves as distancing mechanism from western epistemology.

Ibrahim's notion of circular or cyclical timing thus acts as a radical reclamation of what is conceived as an African ordering of sound, time, and space, or rather, sound as time/space. At its fundament, as Valentin-Yves Mudimbe reminds us, colonization means ordering or arrangement.<sup>21</sup> The development of accurate time and geographical measurement devices, as cultural geographer David Harvey and others have argued, were critical to the ordering enterprise that underpinned colonial and capitalist expansion.<sup>22</sup> In a very literal sense this ordering can be seen in the South African landscape. In the nineteenth century, William Beinart writes, the African homesteads dotting the South African pastoral interior and Zululand and the Transkei in particular, comprised circular huts built with local materials, with conical thatched roofs. "Many families arranged their huts in a semi-circle around the cattle kraal [...]. Square houses, usually of mud-bricks, had appeared on mission stations and were a mark of Christianity [read: missionization, westernization] elsewhere."<sup>23</sup> In the latter part of the twentieth century, Jean and John Comaroff describe the white town Mafeking, as opposed to the adjacent black settlement Mafikeng, using similar terms: "Its rectangular ground plan, broad streets, and neatly fenced bungalows contrasted sharply with the sinuous paths and circular compounds of its black counterpart."<sup>24</sup>

From this perspective, the four walls Ibrahim considers the hallmark of the northern, industrialized city appears less fanciful: it operates as a symbol derived from the imposition of a colonial order on South African space. If we follow Ibrahim's line of argument, the ordering enterprise manifested in musical time, notably quadruple metre, can be heard in musical forms such as Christian hymnody.<sup>25</sup> Opposed to Ibrahim's analogy of the four walls as quadruple metre, its counterpart, the circle, could be read in the notion of the cycle. The cycle, ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik reminds us, is central to African music as it constitutes one of the three levels of inner references of African musical timing systems.<sup>26</sup> We will return to this idea in the final part of the article.

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20 See chapter three of Ibrahim's former wife, Sathima Bea Benjamin's (auto)biography, where she describes the popular music, dance band and jazz scene in Cape Town of the 1940s and '50s. BENJAMIN and MULLER 2011: 53–64. Also see Christopher Ballantine's definitive account of the birth of marabi (jazz) in South Africa in BALLANTINE 2012. David Coplan's account of South African jazz history stresses its predominantly urban setting. See COPLAN 2008.

21 MUDIMBE 1988: 1.

22 HARVEY 1990: 424.

23 BEINART 2001: 17.

24 COMAROFF and COMAROFF 1987: 201.

25 Christine Lucia remarks on the influence of hymnody on Abdullah Ibrahim's music, and functional harmony as heard in the simple I – IV – V chord progressions in particular. While for Kofi Agawu, this use of tonality might mark "colonizing force" and "tonal underdevelopment" in African music, drawing attention to the violence musical missionizing visited upon local practices, Lucia stresses the creativity and agency of artists' use of this bequest when she argues that this "residue of the syntax of centuries of encounter between ... hymns... and indigenous music" has become co-opted and reconstituted as it is drawn into a "gradually modernizing Africa". Similar arguments concerning metre and musical timing systems have not been made, and would be a worthwhile pursuit. See LUCIA 2002: 133; AGAWU 2016.

26 The others being elementary pulsation and the reference beat. KUBIK 2010: 41.

## Timing

If time is imbued with the politics of place, a related concept in Ibrahim's discourse, *timing*, reflects an attunement to place. The title of the 1987 documentary *A Brother with Perfect Timing* suggests both timing as an ideal, and a quality characteristic of Ibrahim. Timing demands acuity and sensory perceptivity in an environment to which the musician responds. While timing has a quotidian application and relevance, it is also a quality particularly germane to musicianship. This is illustrated in the story Brand tells to explain his notion of "perfect timing".<sup>27</sup> As Brand recounts, two friends are walking, in step, down the road while smoking marijuana. They become aware of a child playing in the path of an approaching car. Just before the car hits the child, one of the walkers reaches out to pull the child out of harm's way, picking her up and setting her down in a place of safety without breaking a step. In his narration, Brand stresses the rapid unfolding of these events, and the undisturbed measure of the walkers' strides even as the imminent accident registers and is subverted.

In this anecdote, time, as represented by the two walkers' casually walking in step, provides a steady pulse in which the narration unfolds. The walkers' pace is neither rushed nor directed; there is ample opportunity to absorb the spatial and social dynamics of their surroundings. No end-destination is specified; the story and its protagonists wander free from the constraints of purpose, destination, or time of arrival. The marijuana serves as a device that suggests an altered mind-state. The perception of the change in the social environment – the approaching car – leads to change or intervention. The decision of a course of action and the enactment thereof is done nearly instantaneously, yet within the imperturbable pulse of the walkers' step.

From a musical point of view, the story could be taken as an allegory for the heightened awareness ensemble playing requires of the musician, an awareness all the more crucial to the temporal unfolding of improvisation. The space of music is thereby constructed as an exceptional space: it obeys its own sense of timing outside of ordinary time. Music is (mostly) set within a consistent metre or pulse, or it deliberately plays with the absence thereof. Both improvisers and ensemble players have to be attuned to the subtle shifts in the sound dynamics between the musicians as well as their performance surroundings.<sup>28</sup> It has no clear purpose or particular end except the contingencies of its internal structural organisation (however strictly or loosely defined). One may go as far as suggesting that musical time operates outside of a regulated, normal time, that it creates its own pulse and temporal awareness.

Ramphalile, Manyike and Maxaulane discuss this anecdote in relation to the track "Bra Timing of Phomolong" in their article, "Echoes from Africa".<sup>29</sup> Mainly, they read Ibrahim's notion of timing as being attuned to the dynamics of one's social environment. More remains to be said about the *musical* understanding of timing in terms of the placement of notes within a groove or pulse, and the instantiation thereof in the track "Bra Timing" as well as Ibrahim's broader oeuvre. My reading adds to this interpretation a more careful reading of the notion of "timing" in Ibrahim's sound.

## Traversing Time: Stories and Memory

Stories and anecdotes abound in Ibrahim's discursive practices: they function as conduits of ideas. Ibrahim ascribes his own learning to stories told by (or of) "the masters" and adopts the same mode of transmission in his mentorship of others.<sup>30</sup> In so doing, he demonstrates the centrality of the stories in

27 Ibrahim in AUSTIN 1987.

28 Frederic Rzewski characterises improvisation as a 'wrong note' or a 'first idea' that forms the impetus for a subsequent 'recovery', which again becomes the next 'wrong note'. In this conception, improvisation might be understood as a chain of ideas and their recoveries. RZEWSKI 2002: 379.

29 RHAMPALILE et al. 2023: 7–9.

30 ANONYMOUS n.d.

discussions and interactions between jazz musicians, affirming the “deeply social nature” of jazz and “its celebrated oral tradition”.<sup>31</sup>

Stories and anecdotes blur senses of time in two important ways. First, in their telling and retelling, anecdotes generate a history of ideas that infuses memory with present elaborations. As much as memories could be understood as recollections of stories or lived experiences, they are also the canvases onto which current concerns are projected through the act of narration. As such, they are constructions as well as reconstructions of history, place and time, dependent on a social context that conditions their significance. Second, Tony Whyton notes that while “anecdotal accounts are almost always constructed in retrospect, [...] their narrative is capable of giving the recipient the sense of experiencing an event in the present. In this sense, an event that happened fifty years ago can be recounted as if it just happened yesterday.” Thus, anecdotes “[confuse] the relationship between past and present”.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the anecdote conflates the past and present by infusing the past with present interests and concerns, and bringing the past closer to the (narrated) present so as to elide the temporal distance between then and now.

Ibrahim’s untitled seventh poem in *Africa, Music and Show Business* vividly captures this porosity of times and spaces embroiled in processes of remembering:

the night my soul had herringed red  
 through raucous songs of childhood:  
 and friends and comic stories long forgotten  
 were whiskied out of memories dim  
 to function as narcotic  
 and silence cruel reality as it screamed  
 it’s neither here nor there<sup>33</sup>

This poem reflects how memory conflates time, recalling Edward Said’s description of exile as “contrapuntal” created through an awareness of at least two cultures, settings, or homes.<sup>34</sup> Then, there is made present, here, but also remains painfully absent or out of reach.

Memory and remembrance serve another important function in Ibrahim’s exile. Overt political references in Ibrahim’s music emerge not so much from articulations of protest (as it does, for instance, in Miriam Makeba’s song lyrics such as “Oppas Verwoerd”)<sup>35</sup> as through musical rituals mourning lost places and communities – through memory and remembrance. In this sense, memory could be understood as a form of resistance – a refusal to forget. The effect of Ibrahim’s music, drawing on and triggering in turn memory of soundscapes in South Africa held as ideal – particularly those of District Six – served as a soundtrack to resistance against apartheid.<sup>36</sup>

Interestingly, apartheid is seldom invoked by name in Ibrahim’s musical, spoken, or written discourse. The dominant discourse against which it protests is more that of colonialism and less specifically apartheid. Apartheid, however, could be regarded as part of the trajectory of colonialism that Ibrahim musically includes in its fold. One of the forms of violence that colonialism (including apartheid) wrought was the alienation of peoples from their histories. It manifests, amongst other means, in favouring written histories over oral histories, as Ngũgĩ powerfully argues.<sup>37</sup> More specific to the community in which Ibrahim grew up, amnesia is read in the assimilationism Mohamed Adhikari considers one of the central impulses of “coloured identity”

31 WHYTON 2010: 107.

32 WHYTON 2010: 108–9.

33 Untitled seventh poem in k1971: 6.

34 SAID 2000: 186.

35 Translated as “Beware Verwoerd!”, referring to South Africa’s former Prime Minister, also widely known as the architect of apartheid. Verwoerd was assassinated in the South African House of Assembly on 6 September 1966.

36 MASON 2007: 26; LUCIA 2002: 128–9.

37 NGŪGĨ 1998: 108.

(in the sense that this category was historically conceived by the apartheid state, denoting those who were neither of African nor European descent), that looked especially to the dominant (read: white) society in its aspirations for acceptance.<sup>38</sup> Nothing could therefore be more subversive than connecting with an African, precolonial lineage through a conscious research and re-imagining of obscured histories. Against this background, the assertion of pride in memory and an active interest in history emerge as acts of activism.

Music is a particularly potent tool in uncovering this history, as is suggested in this anecdote Ibrahim tells in *A Brother with Perfect Timing*:

When we came to the States, it must have been in '65 or '66; someone gave us an album of [...] Khoisan music, recorded on this Library of Congress folk music series, right. And this was recorded on location in the Kalahari. And there, on one of the tracks, they play a *ramkiekie* [a three-stringed lute] and rattles or shakers. There was [Ibrahim starts singing the same tune as the *moppie*<sup>39</sup> he remembers from childhood, "Gooi die pannekoek in die pan/ Daar kom Galiema aan"]. And there was exactly the same song. So there are these layers and layers of colonialism. Of colonial darkness and ignorance. Ignorance that has taken us away from the reality and the truth of the music. And of our history. And it is absolutely [through] music that it is beginning to be unveiled.<sup>40</sup>

Music, in this quote, functions as an archaeological site through which an unwritten past can be excavated. Music enables these ties to be picked up in a way that written record does not, as references to "colonial ignorance" imply. But it also makes possible a creative elaboration, an imaginative treatment of an erased or marginalized history that affords the possibility to make the story one's own. It is therefore through music that a hidden history can be excavated, salvaged from the obscurity into which the Khoisan heritage had evidently lapsed for Ibrahim (and probably many others in the Cape "coloured" community), and it is in this remembrance – bringing history into the present – that music's restorative nature lies, and its power to shape the future. This process, according to Ibrahim, fixes the "broken timeline" between past, present, and future.<sup>41</sup>

### Sites of Time in Ibrahim's Sound

So far, we have traced the ways in which time manifests in Ibrahim's verbal and written discourse, mapping how his poetics of time invoke senses of space. But how do these ideas translate to Ibrahim's sound? Taking the discourses outlined above as prompts, this section connects Ibrahim's discourse with his sound, locating sites where Ibrahim's poetics of time might be read in his music. This is not intended as an exhaustive discussion of time/timing in Ibrahim's music, but as an exploration of the possibilities and limitations of Ibrahim's discourse as interpretive frame for his sound.

The first site, as Ibrahim himself suggests, is time signature. A clear example of Ibrahim's discourse put in musical practice is "Bra Joe of Kilimanjaro", an early work that has remained a staple in Ibrahim's setlists. It is in 5/4 time, an asymmetrical time signature that directly demonstrates the thwarting of 4/4 time connoting the "four walls" of the city, which we may recall function as a metaphor for coloniality. The use of irregular metre is, however, not a feature as often encountered in Ibrahim's work as his discourse might suggest. In fact, much of his oeuvre is in simple quadruple or duple metre. A literal reading of Ibrahim's statement in relation to his sound does not serve Ibrahim's discursive intentions well. Following the spirit of Ibrahim's word rather than the letter, one might notice how his earlier work strains against regular metre. Listen, for instance, to "Jabulani – Easter Joy" or "Sunset in Blue", which

38 ADHIKARI 2005: vii.

39 A moppie is a comic song type popular in the Klopse and Malay choir traditions of Cape Town. See MARTIN 2013: 112–3.

40 Ibrahim in AUSTIN 1987.

41 Ibrahim in AUSTIN 1987.

pushes and pulls against quadruple metre, or to “The Aloe and the Wild Rose”, “Machopi” or “Zikr (Remembrance of Allah)”, where regular metre is avoided altogether.



Figure 1: “Bra Joe of Kilimanjaro”, short cycle pattern in the left hand, which repeats throughout the composition. Transcription by the author.

“Bra Joe from Kilimanjaro” also suggests a second site for reading Ibrahim’s poetics of time: that of form, or, how music unfolds in time. “Bra Joe” features a short ostinato pattern in the bass line (played by left hand of the piano), a feature of many African music traditions that Gerhard Kubik calls the ‘short cycle’.<sup>42</sup> We might recall that in Ibrahim’s discourse, natural cycles of time maps onto notions of ‘the south’ (read: Africa), as opposed to imposed orders of time connoting ‘the north’, coloniality and modernity. The short cycle could thus be read as a musical instantiation of ‘the south’.

The use of the short cycle principle is much more common in Ibrahim’s work than irregular metre. Examples include “Namhlanje”, “Ntsikana’s Bell”, “Tintinyana”, “Sunset in Blue”, and “Zimbabwe”. The short cycle also features in tracks based on the *marabi*-pattern (I-IV-I<sup>6/4</sup>-V-I). This is an early form of jazz in South Africa that has been likened to the blues, in that it has become one of the mainstays of a distinctly South African jazz sound.<sup>43</sup> Examples in Ibrahim’s work includes the well-known tracks “Mannenbergr” and what I often think of as its reprise, “Soweto”, as well as “Woza Mntwana”, “Xaba” or “Maraba Blue”, to name a few examples. Figure 2 shows how the *marabi* pattern functions in “Mannenbergr”, where it is repeated twice for the melodic theme to be completed.<sup>44</sup> These cycles on which the piece is based, are repeated throughout the track.



Figure 2: First phrase from “Mannenbergr”<sup>45</sup> as an example of the short cycle as formal principle. Transcription by the author.

The third site refers to Ibrahim’s notion of *timing*. This is a more opaque signifier than time as conceived through the notion of the cycle or time signatures. Ibrahim’s notion of timing conveyed through the story of the two friends walking in step, rehearses one understanding of timing: a concept concerned with placement within a steady metre or pulse. Again, taken literally Ibrahim’s discourse anticipates that in his music the placement of notes within metre would be highly distinctive. Yet Ibrahim’s placement is surprisingly ‘on time’, as opposed to the kind of latency that is heard in an artist like Miles Davis. In his

42 KUBIK 2010: 41.

43 BALLANTINE 2012: 33–38.

44 In ‘Soweto’, there is a brief 4-bar coda that functions as the ‘turnaround’ to the head, which briefly breaks away from the *marabi* short-cycle pattern.

45 The recording I refer to is from the album *Mannenbergr – ‘is where it’s happening’* (1974) available: <https://youtu.be/-irE-1AEH8Qg?si=Q8z7xiecMv711gTR> [accessed 4 September 2025].

discussion of time in jazz, Mark Doffman helpfully distinguishes between playing *in* time, which refers to players' ability to achieve "stability and consistency in their placement of notes", as opposed to playing *with* time, which he describes as the "expressive, perhaps playful, shaping of rhythm that adds communicative value to a performance".<sup>46</sup> In my listening, timing in Ibrahim has to do with the latter. This includes, for instance, disrupting a sense of metre; or Ibrahim's minimalistic approach to sound that creates a sonic spaciousness in which accents, harmony, dissonance, and embellishment become all the more poignant because of the relative sparseness of the material.

An example that invites a reading of timing is "Bra Timing from Phomolong".<sup>47</sup> The opening of the track plays with time in going from straight to swing feel, with the use of accents further disrupting clear senses of time. The first two bars start with a straight feel in the first statement of the piano groove (see Figure 3, bars 1 and 2). In the second repetition of the groove (bars 3-4), the right-hand harmonization is slightly swung, this new interpretation of the groove emphasized by the accent on the second quaver of beat 2, throwing the listener's initial sense of metre off-kilter. By the third repetition onwards (bar 5), the music has a clear swing feel, and the sense of 4/4 metre has returned. But as the horns enter, the play with accents and the resultant rhythm created between the horns, piano, and drums again thickens.



The figure displays a musical transcription for the opening of "Bra Timing from Phomolong". It is divided into two main sections: Piano and Horns. The Piano section is written in 4/4 time and spans six bars. The first two bars are marked "straight", the next two bars (3-4) are marked "slight swing", and the final two bars (5-6) are marked "definite swing onward". The Horns section also spans six bars. The first two bars are marked "A" and "B", and the third bar features a triplet of eighth notes marked "3". The Piano part consists of two staves (treble and bass clef), and the Horns part also consists of two staves (treble and bass clef).

Figure 3: Opening bars of "Bra Timing from Phomolong". Transcription by the author.

46 DOFFMAN 2019: 164.

47 The version I refer to is on the album *Ekaya* (1984), available: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fH\\_uY4UQybc&list=RDMMfH\\_uY4UQybc&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fH_uY4UQybc&list=RDMMfH_uY4UQybc&start_radio=1) [accessed 4 September 2025].

Often, Ibrahim's (dis)placement of accents within metre is intricately connected with the harmony and voicing. Consider, for instance, the harmonization of the accented chord labelled 'A' in Figure 3 as a triad in the right hand, followed by the chord labelled 'B', harmonized as a dyad in the right hand, which, together with the left hand, forms a quartal triad, creating a more open, 'spacious' sound. Here, there is a thicker harmonic texture that gives more punch to the accented beat. The sparser texture on the unaccented beat further emphasizes the accent already heard in the previous chord's difference in volume and attack. It is worth mentioning that Ibrahim's voicings remain remarkably stable across different recordings of a particular work. The voicings of these particular chords, in other words, are not accidental.

These plays with asymmetry and accent are admittedly subtle; they hardly register as radical interventions into time/timing in a spectrum of jazz practices. Yet the simplicity of the construction of "Bra Timing" (and many other compositions by Ibrahim) amplifies the impact of gestures such as these.<sup>48</sup> The minimalistic quality of other aspects like harmony, melody, rhythm, and even instrumentation renders aspects like voicing and accent all the more conspicuous. Read against the discursive importance Ibrahim accords time, these expressions of time and timing in his music assume heightened significance. What Ibrahim's musical approach to timing suggests is not just an attunement to other musicians within a matrix of time as metaphor of sociality, as Ramphalile, Manyike and Maxaulane suggest.<sup>49</sup> It rather suggests time unmoored from ineluctability. It is not only as a contestation of time as conceived in a strictured sense, but an assertion of flexibility, of the type of playfulness with time arguably born of the ambiguity of being 'hemisphered', being in two places and two senses of time (past and present) at once that Ibrahim refers to in his sixth poem.

The final site where I read senses of time is timbre. I give one example to demonstrate how different senses time might be instantiated through timbre, although I could give many. In "Blues for a Hip King", the electric piano's vibrato coupled with the hymn-like harmonization of the melody, is reminiscent of a church organ using vibrato. It is significant that Ibrahim's mother played piano for the American Methodist Episcopal Church in Cape Town, and that the chordal-style harmonization often heard in his music is more than just the invocation of a style; it is also an invocation of a place – that of his youth – and, by extension, of memory.<sup>50</sup> There is a heavy reverb in Basil Coetzee's saxophone, giving it a distal quality of a melody heard from afar. Coetzee's timbre and use of portamento as he slides into certain melodic notes, strikes me as similarly evocative of the sound of the *Kaapse klopse* and Christmas bands – sounds iconic of Cape Town, of home, of a past recollected.<sup>51</sup> Contrast this to the relative presence of the drum. Together, these sounds compress two senses of time: the present moment of listening, and that evocative space of memory. Other examples of tracks where timbre produces a similarly evocative senses of time is the use of the tack-piano in "Mannenbergh" (as on the eponymous album, *Mannenbergh – 'is where it's happening'*, 1974) or "Gwidza" (*Underground in Africa*, 1974).

Hearing time in Abdullah Ibrahim is hearing place. The sonic sites to which I connected Ibrahim's discourse show that his pronouncements are indeed useful as a heuristic, but not necessarily in the

48 Although the scope of this article does not permit further elaboration, it is worth pointing out the influence of Zen in Ibrahim's minimalistic approach to musical material. Ibrahim is a long-time practitioner of Zen and martial arts. This aspect of Ibrahim's spirituality and aesthetic is invoked in the opening moments of the documentary *A Struggle for love* (CAPPELLARI 2004), where Ibrahim practices tai chi on Table Mountain, an iconic landmark in Cape Town. In this gesture, he enmeshes Zen (a spiritual centre) with his place of birth, itself a complex meeting point between Ibrahim's African roots as invoked through his references to Khoi and San heritage; Cape Town as urban port city that fostered connections between American jazz and its localization in South Africa; and the Sufi branch of Islam (a survival of slaves brought to the Cape from the Dutch East Indies), to which Ibrahim converts in 1968.

49 RAMPHALILE et al. 2023: 7–9.

50 LUCIA 2002: 133.

51 For aural reference, listen to the St Joseph's Christmas band playing the hymn 'Die here regeer' ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhk5naQmxPQ&list=RDjkh5naQmxPQ&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhk5naQmxPQ&list=RDjkh5naQmxPQ&start_radio=1)) or this short video capturing the typical sounds of the klopse parade (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elsilTKPm1Q>). One of the most direct invocations of this sound and musical structure in Ibrahim's recorded oeuvre is the track 'African Marketplace', as recorded on the eponymous album of 1980.

ways Ibrahim states. Ibrahim's discourse is more explicit and categorical than the sonic manifestations of his ideas that I traced in his music. One obvious conclusion might be that music signifies in a much more ambiguous way than language. But I would argue that there is more to the matter than this. Ibrahim's discourse draws our attention to the paradigmatic commitments of musical gestures in his works. To put this differently, Ibrahim's discourse heightens the significance of subtle gestures. I find Svetlana Boym's notion of diasporic intimacy helpful to unlock what is happening here.<sup>52</sup> Ibrahim's music *intimates* rather than states. It hints at a closeness, an intimacy, with home that is in question, absent, diasporic. Mindful of Boym's earlier quote that home becomes perceptible when it is absent, I would argue that Ibrahim's music performs this diasporic awareness: not always or necessarily through direct invocation, but also through gestures subtly coded as mnemonics, reminders of home.

## Conclusion

This article considered poetics of time and space in Ibrahim's writings and sound. It recalls de Certeau's conception of narrative in his essay "Spatial Stories", in which he posits that *narrating* place is a means of *constructing* place.<sup>53</sup> As much as "home" as narrated by Ibrahim is informed by memory, it is also constructed through discovery (e.g. listening to the Khoisan field recordings) and imaginatively elaborated. In these elaborations, Ibrahim is concerned with no less than the reclamation of an African epistemology. If colonization is understood as an epistemological imposition of order through the metric of time, rendering it "bounded, determinate, and therefore [...] countable",<sup>54</sup> Ibrahim's reclamation consists of the construction of an alternative epistemology, yet its tenets reach deeply into the recesses of ontology: hearkening to an African way of life, an African way with time, salvaging indigenous identity.

Another aspect of home as imagined in Ibrahim's discourse and music, is that it is an idealized space. Benedict Anderson writes that "[a]ll profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives".<sup>55</sup> Ibrahim's constructions of Africa in exile, through his musical thought and poetry, have as much to do with what memory has elided as what it recalls. The very partiality of memory, its elisions, serves the creative act. As Rushdie reflects on his experience of exile: "The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities."<sup>56</sup>

I would argue that the elision is crucial in another way: for opening space in which an imaginative construction of "Africa" becomes possible. Being unmoored from the embeddedness in traditions, communities and politics of a localized practice in Africa, seems, in the case of Ibrahim, conducive to assembling fragments differently. In this new assemblage, the recognisability of the remains gives the music poignancy. And arguably, this "Africa" assembled differently makes Ibrahim's music such a powerful vector for senses of a recovered history braided into alternative visions of, and hopes for, another South Africa.

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56 RUSHDIE 1992: 12.

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# “Ein schlagartiger Einbruch der Ewigkeit in die Zeit” – On the Spatiality of Musical Time

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**Keywords:** time; musical time; musical experience; nunc stans; rhythm; microrhythm; musical form

**Abstract:** Throughout history and across cultures, music and time have shared a special bond. Philosophers in the Western tradition have illustrated their theories of time with examples of music, while composers have written music that attempts to alter or even undermine our everyday experience of time. In an echo of medieval Christianity, twentieth century Buddhist philosophy, and 2000s rave culture, theorists such as Christopher Hasty describe the results of these efforts as a “spatialisation of time”. In this article, I go a step further and attempt to articulate a notion of musical time that is necessarily spatial. I argue that the modes in which time is contained in music—rhythm, microrhythm, and form—spatialise our experience of the time in which the music is itself contained. Thus investigating these “metaphors we hear by” facilitates a nuanced understanding of time in music and music in time.

## Introduction

Any attempt at reasoning about a fundamental issue inevitably starts by deciding which of Pandora’s many boxes one is willing to open, and which it might be possible to edge around. When reasoning about music, this task is made infinitely harder by the fact that one must begin by escaping from a crate-sized box in Pandora’s collection stencilled “What is music?”. Other subjects suffer from a similar primordial uncertainty; indeed, one might well substitute “music” for “time” in that oft-cited line of St. Augustine’s “What then is time? If no one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not”.<sup>2</sup> My current subject matter – the interpenetration of music and time, or, in other words, the existence of time in music and music in time – makes it necessary to crack the lid of both “Music” and “Time”. But to avoid drowning in questions about the physical nature of time, which others are undoubtedly better equipped to answer than I, my definition is rather dull: I define time as a one-dimensional manifold and further stipulate that time is neither circular nor reversible; two statements which, although questionable from some standpoints in theology, seem undeniably true at the level of ordinary human experience. Music, on the other hand, I define as broadly as possible to include everything from Palestrina to Danger music, from Brian Ferneyhough to work songs, and from The Beatles to Qawwālī. Initially, such a definition may seem so broad as to be unproductive, but, as I will discuss below, the “difference that makes a difference”<sup>3</sup> is whether an individual experiences something as music or not. For the same reason, my argument remains agnostic to the ontological status of a musical work as notated, recorded, or memorised.<sup>4</sup>

In what follows, it is my central argument that the experience of music entails a spatialisation of time. The notion of “spatialised time” is neither itself original to me, nor is its application to music. In the

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2 AUGUSTINE 2023 [AD 401].

3 BATESON 2000 [1972].

4 Thorough treatments of the ontology of music include: SCRUTON 1999; DODD 2007. See also STOCK 2007; MAHRENHOLZ 2021; footnote 31 below.

existing literature, however, is it also not a coherent concept. Christopher Hasty,<sup>5</sup> drawing on the work of Milič Čapek, Henri Bergson, and William James, describes it as the experience of a “timeless now”, or, in the words of Spinoza via D. T. Suzuki, “sub specie aeternitatis”, eternity in time.<sup>6</sup> As Hasty points out, this notion was popular among the continental post-war avant-garde: Karlheinz Stockhausen writes about the “consecrated moment”,<sup>7</sup> while György Ligeti, analysing the works of Olivier Messiaen, Anton Webern, and Pierre Boulez, writes about a “paralysis of the flow of time”.<sup>8</sup> Boulez distinguishes striated spacetime, which we “count in order to occupy”, from smooth spacetime, which we “occupy without counting”.<sup>9</sup> This concept was later taken up by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*,<sup>10</sup> where they apply the characteristics of smooth and striated to geopolitics, travel, cartography, and culture.<sup>11</sup> Across the Atlantic Ocean, the American experimentalists came up with similar metaphors. Writing about the five-hour monolith that is Morton Feldman’s String Quartet No. 2,<sup>12</sup> Chris Dahlen writes, “Anyone who hasn’t heard a Feldman piece may wonder how the time passes. The short answer is that it doesn’t. One of Feldman’s agendas was to turn time into space: to make time feel not like a line, but like a landscape that the listener has dropped into.”<sup>13</sup> Welsh-born composer and improviser Richard Barrett, on the other hand, describes notation as “the spatialisation of time”: a projection of linear, nonreversible time onto the two-dimensional space of the page, a space which can be traversed at will.<sup>14</sup>

More recently, the music philosophical discourse on movement in music has provided new perspectives on the notion of a musical space. Roger Scruton holds that, although the language we use to describe music is full of spatial metaphors (e. g. high and low), this can be nothing but metaphor.<sup>15</sup> On his argument, “[t]he essential feature of a spatial dimension is that it contains places, which can be occupied by things, and between which things can move.”<sup>16</sup> Instead, he presents a complex argument about the movement we hear in music (e. g. upwards and downwards) as existing in an acousmatic<sup>17</sup> space that contains a virtual causality wholly unrelated to what caused a sound in the physical world.<sup>18</sup> An opposing argument was initially advanced by Andrew Hamilton, who speculated that music contains something like literal but non-spatial movement.<sup>19</sup> He has later conceded this point and instead argued that music contains “something relevant that moves literally – the listener or performer”.<sup>20</sup> In the same text, a rare example of contemporary scholarship written in the form of a dialogue, Matthew Tugby appeals to quality-space theory,<sup>21</sup> to describe rhythm as “ patterns of changes of qualities in time”.<sup>22</sup> Another counterpoint to Scruton’s acousmatic concept of music, where everything required to completely understand a work is contained in its sound,<sup>23</sup> is Matthew Nudds’ argument that our understanding of the extra-musical causes of a sequence of sounds is central to the way we perceive them.<sup>24</sup>

5 HASTY 2020a: 364–374.

6 SUZUKI 1957.

7 STOCKHAUSEN 1963.

8 LIGETI 1965.

9 BOULEZ 1971 as cited in DELEUZE and GUATTARI 1987: 361–362.

10 DELEUZE and GUATTARI 1987: 474–500.

11 DELEUZE and GUATTARI 1987: passim.

12 FELDMAN 2010.

13 DAHLEN 2002.

14 Although Barrett alludes to this notion in a number of his writings (e. g. BARRETT 2019), I am not aware of any thorough exposition of the concept. I was introduced to the idea during my undergraduate degree where I studied with him.

15 SCRUTON 1997.

16 SCRUTON 1997: 14. Emphasis in original.

17 SCHAEFFER 1966.

18 SCRUTON 1997: 49–79.

19 HAMILTON 2011.

20 HAMILTON et al. 2019: 35.

21 ROSENTHAL 2010; 2015; FLEMING and SHEA 2024.

22 HAMILTON et al. 2019: 37.

23 SCRUTON 1997: passim; 2007.

24 NUDDS 2019.

Leaning on *auditory scene analysis*,<sup>25</sup> he suggests that we hear low pitches as heavy and loud sounds as close, not as qualities, positions, or movements in some virtual space, but rather as isomorphic with movement in the physical world.<sup>26</sup>

In what follows, I argue that musical time is necessarily spatialised. I also argue that each form of time in music affords a distinct spatial mode: rhythm gives time a vertical dimension in the form of salience; microrhythm turns the location of an event in time from a point or a striation into a directed space; form joins a succession of events into an indivisible span of musical time. To support this claim, I will first discuss the notion of musical time as compared to bare time. I will then describe three levels<sup>27</sup> of musical time: rhythm, microrhythm, and form. Each of these levels have been treated in great depth individually, but are rarely examined together, and rarely through the lens of musical time. Finally, I will revisit the notion of an eternal moment in time from the perspective of a participant rather than a listener, and I will examine how this may function as a tool for collective meaning making within a community.

## Musical Time

Across cultures, music is connected to time in a way that is perhaps unique among the arts,<sup>28</sup> yet to describe music as a temporal phenomenon fails to capture anything but the trivial observation that music, like any human activity, exists and unfolds in time.<sup>29</sup> The first question to address, then, is the phenomenological status of music in time.

With the possible exception of media like sculpture, painting, and photography, most art forms are contingent upon a chronology of events. Whether that is the syntactic ordering of words in a novel or the sequential ordering of frames in a film, the experience of a work consists in cumulatively witnessing moments. Depending on the medium, each moment or event may itself have meaning or not, and, depending on the medium, each moment or event may or may not have a duration. Contrary to film, where each frame is a nearly duration-less entity that exists independently of its being projected onto the screen, any “slice” of music only exists for its duration after which “it is gone, in the air”.<sup>30</sup> It is in this sense that music is temporal;<sup>31</sup> it not only exists inside of time because the laws of physics demand it, its existence is structurally analogous to time in a way that could even make it reasonable to speak of music “passing”.<sup>32</sup>

On this view, and especially in the wake of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological argument that time “is born from *my* relation to things”,<sup>33</sup> philosophers and musicologists have argued that music

25 BREGMAN 2006 [1990].

26 NUDDS 2019.

27 Although there are parallels to the model proposed by BIELAWSKI (2020), the three levels I discuss do not correspond directly to any of his categories. Bielawski distinguishes between “zones” of time, and “regions” within those zones. These regions are then grouped into “areas” based on our perception of events in those regions. On his analysis, rhythm is located in the area of the “psychological present” within the “zone of time”, which corresponds to durations in the range between 2<sup>4</sup> s and 2<sup>4</sup> s.

28 BRELET 1949: 25; music is “l’art du temps par excellence”; KARBUSICKY 1990.

29 See e. g. HASTY 2020b; KOZAK 2023.

30 DOLPHY 1965.

31 Cf. “music is a temporal structure; it is not a structure in time” (STAMBAUGH 1964: 266); musical meaning emerges “in and through time” (KRAMER 1988: 2).

32 This entire discussion plays bumper cars with a plethora of Pandora’s boxes, none of which the space here allows me to address in any depth. For discussions on these topics see: the ontology of musical works (LEVINSON 1980; ALPERSON 1987; KIVY 1987; DAVIES 1991; SCRUTON 1999; DODD 2007; ADORNO 2009 [1949]; MOHR 2010); temporality in music and other media (KLEIN et al. 2000; KLEIN 2000; MOHR 2012; BLUM 2016; MERCIIECA 2021; YOUNG 2021; KOZAK 2023); cultural time and temporality (AGAMBEN 2005; STADLER AND STÖLTZNER 2006; CLAYTON 2013; ERMOLAYEV et al. 2014; BORN 2015; BIELAWSKI 2020; ALAGHBAND-ZADEH 2021).

33 MERLEAU-PONTY 1945: 471. Emphasis in original.

is particularly suited to facilitating the experience of time.<sup>34</sup> Yet, music does more than give us a ruler by which to measure the passing of time; music makes certain moments more salient to us than others. That salience comes about, as does every instance of salience, through a negotiation between bottom-up sensory stimulus and top-down functions.<sup>35</sup> While our response to sensory stimulus is largely automatic, it can be disciplined or overwritten by cultural hermeneutics.<sup>36</sup> Based on this alone, I submit a rudimentary definition of musical time as a span of time in which music is the primary factor shaping experience. This definition already entails an essential difference between musical time and bare time: its finitude. On Aristotle's view, time is infinite – after all, if it had a beginning there would be something, a moment, before that beginning.<sup>37</sup> Any instance of musical time, on the other hand, is finite. And even though the beginning and end of a given span of musical time may not be punctate to our experience, there is nonetheless a qualitatively distinct “before” and an “after”.

A distinct downside of this definition is that it goes against existing definitions of musical time. These existing definitions hardly converge either, but range from Barbara Barry writing about “the experiential amount of time passing in the course of listening to [...] a musical work”<sup>38</sup> to Jonathan Kramer's notion of musical time as an ethereal entity which we only experience in its interaction with “ordinary” time.<sup>39</sup> As it happens, both Barry's and Kramer's concepts can be reconciled with my definition; others, however, can not. Barry's notion of musical time as experienced duration describes the quality of time experienced through music most readily associated with our everyday understanding of time. My claim is that duration is but one of several qualities of the experience of musical time. Kramer's claim echoes the phenomenological view of time as something which can only be experienced in relation to “things”.<sup>40</sup> Depending on the ontological status one ascribes to music and musical time, a point on which Kramer is less than precise, music may well qualify as such a “thing”.<sup>41</sup> And insofar as music is such a thing, two questions arise: what kind of thing can contain time, and in what form is time contained within it. The former will remain in Pandora's possession until another day, but the latter will occupy the remainder of this paper.

## Rhythm and Microrhythm

Rhythm is born from the relation between things belonging to a certain category. One of the primary characteristics of that category is duration. If a series of durations are too short, we automatically begin to chunk them into groups of more manageable duration, if too long, we subitize, or mentally divide them into smaller sections.<sup>42</sup> According to Justin London, the upper bounds of rhythmic durations, the “speed limit of rhythm”, is somewhere around 300ms, while the lower bound is somewhere between two and three seconds.<sup>43</sup> London's argument, an argument that is supported by a mounting quantity of empirical research, is based on the assumption that metre is a central component to our experience

34 Cf. LANGER 1953: 110: “music makes time audible, and its form and continuity sensible”; MOHR 2012; KOZAK 2023: 43: “any time we write or talk about music we are implicitly talking about time”.

35 LONDON 2012a; JAEGER et al. 2024.

36 BRATTICO and VUUST 2017; DIDERIKSEN 2025.

37 ARISTOTLE 2014. While that particular argument may not hold up to detailed scrutiny any longer, the infinity of time remains an uncontroversial position (EMERY et al. 2024).

38 BARRY 1990: 8.

39 KRAMER 1988.

40 E. g. MERLEAU-PONTY 1945.

41 One such ontological stance, which has been quite influential in the more radical quarters of music theory, is “object-oriented ontology” (HARMAN 2018). Some proponents of this theory posit that a sonic “object” (which can be anything from a musical work to a Schaefferian “objet sonore”) is on equal ontological terms with any other object (WONG 2018). Yet, this does not come without some difficulties: “[sounds] make peculiar sorts of objects: their capacity to overlap and pass through themselves makes them stranger than most everyday objects” (O'CALLAGHAN 2010; see also SCHAEFFER 1966; SCRUTON 1999 [1997]; COX 2011; TAXIER 2020).

42 HARRELL 1937; POLAK 2017; WÖLLNER and LONDON 2023.

43 LONDON 1993; 1995; 2001; 2004; 2002; 2012a; 2012b; 2019; 2024; DANIELSEN et al. 2024; 2019.

of rhythm, and that the experience of metre is caused by entrainment to a musical signal. For a signal to drive entrainment, it must oscillate with some regularity and although entrainment has been demonstrated in all traditional frequency bands, entrainment in the context of music seems to be limited to frequencies in the 300–3000ms range.<sup>44</sup> There can be little doubt that many, perhaps even most, rhythmical phenomena afford entrainment. Nonetheless, the ethnomusicological literature on rhythm includes numerous examples of music which are emically described with words analogous to “rhythmical” or “metrical”, but do not afford entrainment – at least not according to our current understanding of entrainment.<sup>45</sup> Even so, it seems that there is a limit beyond which we no longer perceive something as a rhythmic entity. Instead, we might perceive events beyond such a limit as a “bare” duration, which suggests that duration on its own is not enough to constitute rhythm. This is an argument which I have unpacked at great length elsewhere,<sup>46</sup> but in its most condensed form I submit that musical rhythm has not one but two constitutive parameters: duration and weight. The notion of musical weight is what Western music theory describes as strong and weak beats or, in the more descriptive German nomenclature, *Schwerzeit* and *Leichtzeit*. On this view, rhythm truly can be described as “order-in-time”.<sup>47</sup> Order, both in the sense of a sequence of durations, but more importantly a hierarchy of events, some more relevant, more salient, than others.

At first sight, one might assume that the experience of musical weight is co-located, if not isomorphic, with the experience of some acoustic characteristic, like amplitude or accent. Certain acoustic features (low pitch, sharp attack, high amplitude) indeed correlate strongly to the experience of weight in a beat-based context,<sup>48</sup> but even these can be overridden by conscious effort or musical enculturation.<sup>49</sup> On closer inspection, it appears that rhythmic weight cannot be located in the acoustic phenomenon itself, or at least not in isolation. This may begin to explain why musical forms which can not afford entrainment may nonetheless be experienced as metrical by insiders in that musical culture.

I have hypothesised that rhythmic weight should instead be understood as the result of relevance realisation,<sup>50</sup> that is, through an opponent process between bottom-up and top-down functions.<sup>51</sup> Regardless of the mechanism or mechanisms at play, this understanding of rhythm shows one modality in which time may be contained within music: as an ordered succession of events, each short enough as to not be perceived as composite, but long enough to be recognised as its own entity. What we call rhythm, then, is born from our relation to that succession of events, from our understanding of their relative durations, and from the difference in salience that result from our perceiving some events as more relevant than others.

Rhythm, however, is not the shortest increment of time in music. Microrhythm is a concept introduced by Anne Danielsen to describe rhythmical phenomena that occur on a timescale far shorter than the one on which we experience rhythm, but which nonetheless has a profound impact on how a rhythm feels; it is microrhythm that makes us experience something as “laid back” or “pushy”, or gives us a “pleasant urge to move”.<sup>52</sup> Central to her theory is the notion that the temporal location of a rhythmic event is not a point, but a probability distribution, such that “[m]ultiple onsets falling within

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44 LAKATOS et al. 2019; MADISON et al. 2017. It was long assumed that an oscillation had to be isochronous to drive entrainment, but Rainer Polak’s work has shown that to not be the case (POLAK 2010; 2015; 2021; 2025; POLAK et al. 2016; JAKUBOWSKI et al. 2022).

45 E. g. DEUTSCH and WEBER 2010; KONRAD 2005; DIDERIKSEN 2025.

46 DIDERIKSEN 2024.

47 Cf. HAMILTON 2011.

48 DANIELSEN et al. 2024;

49 BRATTICO et al. 2013a; BRATTICO et al. 2013b; BRATTICO and VUUST 2017; LAKATOS et al. 2019; DIDERIKSEN 2024.

50 JAEGER et al. 2024; VERVAEKE and FERRARO 2013.

51 DIDERIKSEN 2024: 47: “[m]usical weight qua salience is the result of an opponent process between at least three functions: bottom-up stimulus as received and processed by the sensory system; activation of endogenous reference structures by perceived (sensed) stimuli; intentional top-down control and focus.”

52 CÂMARA and DANIELSEN 2020.

the boundaries of the perceived beat bin will be heard as merging into one beat, whereas onsets falling outside these boundaries will be heard as belonging to another category – namely, that of ‘not part of the beat’.<sup>53</sup> The width and shape of a given “beat bin”, correlates strongly to the amplitude envelope of the rhythmic event, with a long attack time correlating to a broad beat bin and a short attack time to a narrow one.<sup>54</sup> This has two consequences: first, multiple events occurring close to but not exactly at the same time can be experienced as being in the same location or belonging to the same entity; second, even though we place a rhythmic event at a concrete location upon perceiving it, there is no guarantee we would place it there every time. On this basis one could make the stronger claim, a claim which Danielsen does not make, that a rhythmic event does not exist in a location as such, but instead affords a space within which we place it upon perceiving it.

Microrhythm thus accounts for two aspects of the experience of rhythm and, by extension, musical time. First, microrhythm shapes where and how precisely we locate a rhythmic event. Second, it affects how a rhythm feels. On this second point, Danielsen’s work has provided an empirical framework through which emic descriptions of rhythm like “swinging”, “groovy”, “flowy”, or “tight” may be compared.

The related phenomena of rhythm and microrhythm are thus not only modes of time in music, they each spatialise time in their own way. Where rhythm creates a vertical space in musical time in the form of musical weight, microrhythm creates a horizontal space, transforming points on a line into thresholds<sup>55</sup> between events.

### Form and Music in Time

In analysis, and certainly in theory, it is a relatively straightforward task to isolate a parameter such as rhythm. In empirical studies of music cognition less so, but one might take the opposite approach and use rhythm as a lens through which to look at other parameters by studying what effect, if any, a change in one parameter has on the perception of rhythm. Although, as I argued above, rhythm and microrhythm are both pivotal to the experience of musical time, we rarely hear them as isolated phenomena unless we explicitly focus our attention on them. Instead, rhythm and microrhythm meld with other elements of the musical material such as pitch<sup>56</sup> and timbre<sup>57</sup> when we listen to music. It is this grouping of parameters into constellations in each moment, which lays the foundation of our experiencing musical form. Form in music can result from a variety of processes, and while a complete taxonomy of musical time might distinguish between these processes as different formal levels or categories, that is unnecessary for present purposes. Despite their differences, all these processes lead to the same end: the material contained in a stretch of time closes on itself to form a coherent musical whole.

A common way to achieve this is through repetition. Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, an eminent theorist of musical repetition, identifies three primary parameters that influence how readily we recognise a repetition: duration of the repeated element, distance between repetitions, and how precisely the element is replicated.<sup>58</sup> Short, barely changing repetitions following right after each other thus tend to be very salient, while repetitions of long phrases, separated by extended periods of other material, and with significant variation on each iteration requires greater musical expertise to recognise as repetitions.<sup>59</sup>

Contrary to rhythm and microrhythm, where each event is characterised by the experience it calls forth in the moment, repetition joins a succession of events into an indivisible duration of musical time:

53 DANIELSEN et al. 2019; DANIELSEN 2010.

54 DANIELSEN et al. 2024.

55 Cf. Walter Benjamin’s distinction between a limit as a line and a threshold as a zone (BENJAMIN 1999 [1982]).

56 DANIELSEN et al. 2024;

57 DANIELSEN et al. 2024; Cf. REHDING 2021; DOLAN and REHDING 2021.

58 MARGULIS 2015: 188.

59 MARGULIS 2015: *passim*.

“When we listen to a melody we have the purest impression of succession we could possibly have – an impression as far removed as possible from that of simultaneity – and yet it is the very continuity of the melody and the impossibility of breaking it up which make that impression upon us.”<sup>60</sup> The point at which a series of events we have experienced in succession becomes an entity onto itself is the point at which time recovers itself from music and, in doing so, creates form. Following Vladimir Karbusicky’s analysis, “[d]er Begriff der DAUER [...] impliziert etwas räumlich Existentes, einen errungenen Zustand [...] oder eine Kreisbewegung”.<sup>61</sup> In other words, the experience of Bergsonian *durée* in music transforms time from an empty marker of its own passing, into a substrate in which, and in relation to which, relations can be made.<sup>62</sup> To spatialise time, then, is to give permanence to the impermanent, to turn the experience of something passing into an experience of something that is; in the words of Pierre Boulez, it is the transition from a striated time we “count in order to occupy”, to a smooth time we “occupy without counting”.<sup>63</sup>

Boulez’ notion of smooth and striated, as well as Deleuze and Guattari’s abstraction of the concept,<sup>64</sup> differentiates between two experiences of time: time divided into regular or irregular segments by some process, and time as an open expanse through which lines are drawn only by moving through it. In smooth spaces, expression lies in how one traverses a space. This is the quality of writing, drawing, and spinning that Tim Ingold describes as “making lines”,<sup>65</sup> and it is at the core of pieces like La Monte Young’s “draw a straight line and follow it”. In striated spaces, on the other hand, expression lies in navigating existing striations, interpreting and reinterpreting them as one encounters them, and imbuing the results of a thoughtless process with meaning; it is embroidery, navigating a city, and playing the blues. On this view, the experience of rhythm and microrhythm is an experience of time striated by a more or less transparent external process. The experience of form, on the other hand, is smooth. That is not to say that a musical structure, or the material of which it is made up, cannot be characteristically striated – indeed they often are. Rather, the temporal experience of form is the experience of traversing a form already constructed in memory,<sup>66</sup> not putting it together event by event.

### The Spatial Topology of Musical Time

In my treatment of rhythm, microrhythm, and form above, I have treated each as if it were a layer independent from the rest. And although it is often necessary to speak of any one element as separate from the others, doing so is always an abstraction. In reality, rhythm, microrhythm, and form are inextricably linked. Microrhythm exists within the frame of rhythm, but, in doing so, shapes how we experience that frame. Similarly, the experience of form integrates rhythm and microrhythm into a larger whole, but a whole whose character is indelibly shaped by the rhythm and microrhythm which it contains. Rhythm, microrhythm, and form are thus neither separate, nor do they stand in static relation to each other. Rather, they are bound in a dynamical system where the slightest change in one parameter has an, often outsized, effect on the others. It is in this interplay, and especially through musical time striated by regular rhythm, that we may access the truly profound experience of timelessness which is perhaps the closest we can get to experiencing bare time.

60 BERGSON 2010 [1946]: 125. Similar uses of melody to describe temporal oneness can be found in e. g. HUSSERL 1991 [1928] and VON EHRENFELS (1890).

61 KARBUSICKY 1990: 252. Emphasis in original.

62 Cf. KANT 2023 [1781]: “Nur in dem Beharrlichen sind also Zeitverhältnisse möglich (denn Simultaneität und Sukzession sind die einzigen Verhältnisse in der Zeit), d. i. das Beharrliche ist das Substratum der empirischen Vorstellung der Zeit selbst, an welchem alle Zeitbestimmung allein möglich ist.”

63 Boulez 1971 as cited in DELEUZE and GUATTARI 1987: 361–362.

64 DELEUZE and GUATTARI 1987: *passim*.

65 INGOLD 2007; 2015.

66 Cf. WÖLLNER 2023.

### Sub specie aeternitatis

Meister Eckhart’s “êwige nû”, “[ein] schlagartige[r] Einbruch der Ewigkeit in die Zeit”,<sup>67</sup> Buddhist descriptions of *sono-mama*<sup>68</sup> and *shunyata*,<sup>69</sup> and Stockhausen’s observation that “[i]f we realize, at the end of a piece of music [...] that we have ‘lost all sense of time’, then we have in fact been experiencing time most strongly”,<sup>70</sup> are all strikingly similar to descriptions of flow. I have elsewhere<sup>71</sup> argued that attaining and sustaining states of flow may be a fundamental motivation for choreomusical<sup>72</sup> interaction and for the participation in choreomusical situations as such.

Although flow states have been a topic of continued interest in psychology and cognitive science since Csíkszentmihályi’s introducing the concept in the 1960s,<sup>73</sup> it was the rise of embodied music cognition<sup>74</sup> that brought with it an interest in the role of flow states in musical performance and, more recently, in choreomusical interaction.<sup>75</sup> By now, however, music researchers have contributed significantly to the ethnographic and phenomenological study of flow. One such contribution is Tom Cochrane’s notion of group flow in music as “an experience in which the individual does not experience a mismatch between what she is intending and what the others are intending by means of radically deferring her intentions to the overall musical product. This happens when the musician is highly responsive to the possibilities of the moment and is not distracted by performance errors”.<sup>76</sup> John Vervaeke, Leo Ferraro, and Arianne Herrera-Bennett give an account of flow as an insight cascade, “a highly dynamic and complex phenomenon that creates a stage whereupon the individual can more deeply engage and learn, yet in an effortless manner”.<sup>77</sup> They continue that the “powerfully gratifying experience that accompanies flowing is an evolutionary marker that indicates heightened relevance in processing – the deep sense of doing precisely the right thing at the right time in the right way”.

This notion of “doing precisely the right thing at the right time in the right way” is productively – and perhaps intentionally – ambiguous. On one interpretation, it suggests correctly coordinating one’s actions with the affordances of one’s environment at a given time to achieve a specific goal, say, to play in tune. On another interpretation, it is the “doing” itself, the responding to the affordances of the moment, that becomes meaningful. This second interpretation perhaps better reflects the depth noted by Vervaeke, Ferraro, and Herrera-Bennett. It also points to something more central. If the flow experience is isomorphic with an experience of doing something meaningful, then the pursuit of flow is a pursuit of meaningful, not blissful, experience. On this view, Cochrane’s notion of group flow takes on a different meaning, and it may be more accurate to say that the individual radically defers their intentions, not to a musical project, but to a teleological project aiming at collective, meaningful experience.<sup>78</sup>

67 MEISTER ECKHART 2008.

68 SUZUKI 1957.

69 NISHITANI 1983.

70 STOCKHAUSEN 1958: 65.

71 DIDERIKSEN 2024.

72 Colin Quigley and others have developed a theoretical and methodological framework around what they describe as “(ethno-)choreomusicology” (e. g. QUIGLEY 2016; QUIGLEY and MÆLAND 2020). While some of what I describe here may fall under the purview of that framework, I first and foremost use “choreomusical” to refer to the cultural music-dance assemblage.

73 E. g. CSÍKSZENTMIHÁLYI 1991; 1996; VERVAEKE et al. 2018; MONETA 2004.

74 See e. g. LEMAN 2007; LESAFFRE et al. (eds.) 2017.

75 BLÄSING 2023; BURGER and TOIVIAINEN 2023; COCHRANE 2017; JENSENIUS 2023; PAKES 2023.

76 COCHRANE 2017.

77 VERVAEKE et al. 2018: 24.

78 There is an additional argument here which, at the time of writing, remains inchoate. It concerns the authority and status of the project to which a collective of individuals willingly defer their intentions, and the aesthetic value of the collective flow experience. To command such deference, either the collectively meaningful experience possesses an ethical authority – it is good – or the concrete project itself – a symphony, a rave, a chain-dance – carries great cultural value. In either case, the resulting group flow transcends the authority of the project to become an experience of aesthetic pleasure, beauty, par excellence: “Schön ist, was ohne Begriff als Gegenstand eines notwendigen Wohlgefallens erkannt wird” (KANT 1974 [1790], 124).

Scholars studying rave culture repeatedly describe how flow-like experiences create and strengthen feelings of belonging to a group. Walter J. Freeman describes music and dance as “the biotechnology of group formation”,<sup>79</sup> and when Bryan Rill notes that “[a]t raves the egocentric self is replaced by an experiential model wherein the ‘I’ is superseded [sic] by ‘We’ and thinking is second to feeling”<sup>80</sup> he is describing an experience that is similar to, if not isomorphic with, the experience of (group) flow.<sup>81</sup> Michael Winkelmann suggests that modern raves should be understood as an expression of the same biogenic structures that gave rise to shamanic rituals across cultures.<sup>82</sup> In doing so, he points out how dance has the capacity to alter the dancer’s state of consciousness by releasing opioids, producing rhythmic stimulation and the brain, and inducing exhaustion.<sup>83</sup>

Winkelmann’s characteristics are not unique to rave music, but can likewise be found in traditional music and dance across cultures. Most of these musics share some rhythmic characteristics: extended durations of repetitive rhythms highly conducive to entrainment. A particularly striking example is the playing of Polish fiddler Józef Zaráś. Born in the Przysucha province of the central Polish region Radom, Zaráś grew up in the 1930s and 40s. In his early years he would regularly leave his hometown Nieznamierowice to stay with and learn from the fiddler Jan Bogusz in Kamienna Wola, some fifty kilometres away.<sup>84</sup> Starting in his early teens and continuing until his death in 1998, Zaráś played at weddings, village parties, and competitions, recorded for the national radio, and, later, performed at the “Houses of Dance” (Dom Tańca) organised by the 1990’s folk music revival.<sup>85</sup>

Zaráś’ music and the Radom style of dancing mazurek and oberek appear as if designed to afford entrainment and facilitate states of flow: both music and dance are based on the same short rhythms which are repeated over long periods of time and the repertoire consists of short melodies that are likewise repeated over and over. Despite its repetitive nature, however, variation plays a crucial role, especially in the rhythmic features of both music and dance, forcing musicians and dancers to continuously adapt and respond to changes in the choreomusical environment. Moreover, the constant variation scales with an individual’s skill level: as an individual becomes attuned to the rhythmic features of a particular player’s or dancer’s style, more and more nuances become salient, maintaining the dynamic match between skill and situational demands necessary to achieve and sustain flow.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, the fast, spinning movement of mazurek and oberek blurs the visual field, thereby driving attention to auditory and proprioceptive perception and supporting an embodied experience of the situation. The varied actions of participants in the choreomusical situation thus not only afford but reinforce states of flow and group flow.

In the liner notes to *Józef Zaráś z Nieznamierowic*,<sup>87</sup> a collection of recordings featuring Zaráś published by Polskie Radio, Piotr Dahlig emphasises that music – and more importantly musicking<sup>88</sup> – of the kind Zaráś engaged in played a crucial social role in Polish village life at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>89</sup> Dances (“spinning parties”) brought together otherwise isolated village communities and provided respite from long, arduous days in the fields. Moreover, the choreomusical practices may well have served to generate shared and emergent sense-making in a way that verbal dialogue could not. Emic descriptions of the music, musicians, and musicking likewise suggest a spiritual component. Speaking to musicians and dancers from the region, I have heard some fiddlers described as quasi-sha-

79 FREEMAN 2000.

80 RILL 2010: 145.

81 Cf. VERVAEKE et al. 2018; Cochrane 2017.

82 WINKELMAN 2015.

83 WINKELMAN 2013; 2015.

84 See the text by Piotr Dahlig in ZARAŚ 2020.

85 See the text by Dahlig in ZARAŚ 2020.

86 Cf. VERVAEKE et al. 2018.

87 ZARAŚ 2020.

88 Cf. SMALL 1998.

89 See the text by Dahlig in ZARAŚ 2020.

manic figures, both in their ability to enter altered states of consciousness (flow), and in their ability to facilitate transformative meaning-making experiences for their community. These descriptions often draw on motifs from the spiritual and religious framework of Catholicism, describing fiddlers as either “playing to the heavens” (“granie do nieba”) or colluding with “the one below”.

In twentieth-century rural Poland, much like medieval Christianity, twentieth-century Buddhist philosophy, and 2000s rave culture, the experience of an eternal space in time is not only described as a sublime personal experience, but as a site of meaning-making for an individual as well as a community.

## Conclusion

I began by examining the idea of spatialised time as it has been discussed by philosophers, mystics, and music theorists. I then considered the notion of musical time, and I claimed that an experience of musical time is an experience of spatialised time. To support this claim, I examined four distinct species of spatialised musical time. First, the vertical dimension that distinguishes rhythm from duration; second, the explosion of a duration-less point into a space on the horizontal plane afforded by microrhythm; third, the Bergsonian *durée* afforded by musical form; fourth, the experience of a “timeless now” or an “eternity in time”, especially as it may result from the experience of flow states in choreomusical situations. I also examined the meaning-making function ascribed to these experiences in various cultural contexts. Undoubtedly, each of these species are qualitatively distinct, and describing them all as spatialised time may well be a generalisation based purely on the similarity of their metaphors. Nonetheless, it is telling that phenomena as dissimilar as rhythm, form, and flow states afford similar spatial metaphors.

At the time of writing, I remain unsure of the metaphysical status of these temporal “spaces”. Are they spatial in the same way that the physical world is spatial? Probably not, but that does little to detract from the promise held by these spatial metaphors to enable a more nuanced understanding of time in music and music in time.

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# Balancing Time: Seeing the past, present, future and other time in the productions of Siamsa Tíre, the National Folk Theatre of Ireland

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**Abstract:** For over five decades, Siamsa Tíre, the National Folk Theatre of Ireland sought to balance a sense of past, present and future in their work as part of an effort to preserve local traditions and remain relevant to contemporary theatre audiences. Although early productions from the 1960s such as *Fadó Fadó* (1968) focused on the representation of rural Irish life, akin to much of the early twentieth century Irish drama influenced by cultural nationalism, developments from the 1980s in particular sought a greater balance between remembering past practices of intangible cultural heritage and seeking to devise and develop new work that incorporates influences from changes in society and arts practice. Many of the productions utilized a sense of time as a narrative device, inviting audiences back in time or into another realm, as a method to engage a contemporary audience. Reflecting on developments on- and off-stage, in this paper I identify three aspects of time in the work of Siamsa Tíre: the narrative device that invites the audience 'back in time', the representation of the passage of time in mythological stories, and the responsiveness of the company to the time in which it exists.

## Introduction

Siamsa Tíre [ˈʃiːəmsə ˈtiːrə], the National Folk Theatre of Ireland, developed from community initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s led by Fr Pat Ahern (b.1932), pioneering a theatrical artform that foregrounded Irish traditional music, song and dance.<sup>2</sup> Critically reflecting on the relevance and representation of time in the performances by the company, I focus on six productions, namely *Fadó Fadó* (1968), *Ding Dong Dederó* (1991), *Clann Lir* (1999), *Oisín* (2000), *Samhain* (2001) and *Oileán* (2003), with an emphasis on the presentation of music and dance and the relationship between what was performed on stage and contemporaneous developments in Ireland and the Irish arts scene. Ahern, the founding Artistic Director of Siamsa Tíre, devised the earlier productions with musicians, singers and dancers from the local community. He was succeeded by American director John Sheehan, who had a background in opera and musicals. Sheehan devised *Clann Lir* with a creative team that involved local and external members, drawing on one of the best-known Irish mythological tales rather than local folklore or lived experience for the subject matter. Oliver Hurley, who had been a member of the company since childhood and a founding member of Siamsa Tíre's professional core company in 1985, devised and directed *Oisín*, *Samhain* and *Oileán*. These productions draw on both mythological and folkloric themes. In all of these productions, a sense of time is central to the structure and narrative but their development is also influenced by contemporaneous changes in Irish society and musical practice. These productions were integrated into the repertoire of the

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<sup>2</sup> AHERN 2022; MOTHERWAY and O'CONNELL 2022; KEARNEY 2013.

company and staged recurrently as part of a summer season of performances, primarily for audiences comprised of tourists to the southwest of Ireland, until 2023.<sup>3</sup>

In this article I demonstrate how Siamsa Tíre represented various aspects of time in its productions, critically considering how the company progressed from early productions focused on rural Irish life to devising new work that incorporates influences from changes in Irish society and arts practice, balancing the remembrance of past intangible cultural heritage and developing new material in response to changes in Irish society. This includes exploring the complex interplay of different temporalities, such as the time represented on stage and the real time of production and consumption, the recurring reference to religious beliefs in an increasingly secular Ireland, and the influence of a growing international commercial market for Irish traditional music. I draw on the work of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) on rhythm analysis,<sup>4</sup> highlighting various rhythms inherent in and external to the company and its productions.

Although *Fadó Fadó* was staged from the late 1960s, the focus of this paper is on performances between 1990 and 2005, drawing on my personal experiences as a performer with the company. I performed in each of the productions examined herein and was involved to varying degrees in the devising or musical arrangement, an experience that informs my examination of the productions. My reflections on this period are augmented by detailed notes taken during my appointment as Summer Season Director in 2012 and examination of scores and recordings.<sup>5</sup> In Lefebvrian terms, I was present.<sup>6</sup>

The representation of the rhythms of life in rural Ireland, the staging of the productions in the summertime as part of the rhythms of tourism, and the increase in new productions at a moment when Irish culture was foregrounded on both the national and international stage, reflect a multiplicity of engagement with time. This reflects Stuart Elden's introduction to the work of Lefebvre, where he states: "Rhythm, for Lefebvre, is something inseparable from understandings of time, in particular repetition. It is found in the workings of our towns and cities, in urban live and movement through space [...] the analysis of rhythms provides a privileged insight into the question of everyday life."<sup>7</sup> Achieving a balance between an often-romanticized representation of the past and engaging with contemporary arts practice, aesthetics and audiences is a challenge. Carolyn Swift and Christopher Morash have described Siamsa Tíre as "[t]he most traditional and, at the same time, original Irish theatre performance of which music and dance are an integral part",<sup>8</sup> reflecting an inherent conflict between the old and new in the work of Siamsa Tíre.

The 1960s and 1990s reflect Lefebvrian moments, "when existing orthodoxies are open to challenge, when things have the potential to be overturned or radically altered".<sup>9</sup> These two moments of artistic development provide context for understanding Siamsa Tíre's presence in time; the former as part of an international folk music "revival",<sup>10</sup> and the latter dominated by the intensified globalisation and commercialisation of Irish traditional music as epitomised by the success of *Riverdance* (1994).<sup>11</sup> While scholarship including "The Riverdance Effect: Culture Industries and Global Irishness",<sup>12</sup> and "The Riverdance Moment"<sup>13</sup> implicitly echo Lefebvrian ideas, as Wulff and others have demonstrated, the forms of Irish dancing were changing prior to the development of *Riverdance*, which is often critiqued as

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3 KEARNEY 2023.

4 LEFEBVRE 2004.

5 SIAMSA TÍRE 2001; 2004.

6 LEFEBVRE 2004.

7 ELDEN 2004: viii.

8 SWIFT and MORASH 2014: 482.

9 ELDEN 2004: x.

10 WILLIAMS 2020: 230.

11 Ó CINNÉIDE 2002.

12 O'CONNOR 2013.

13 WULFF 2007.

“an instance of commodification in the global marketplace”.<sup>14</sup> This article considers what came before and the resonances that were evident in contemporaneous productions.

### **An Invitation Back in Time**

I remember, I remember,  
The house where I was born,  
The little window where the sun  
Came peeping in at morn;<sup>15</sup>

Dressed in the style of a farmer in the early twentieth century, an actor emerged from a thatched cottage to the strains of the tune “Fáinne Geal an Lae” (“The Dawning of the Day”) on tin whistle. As the lights brightened, he began to recite this verse from English poet, Thomas Hood, which suggest a nostalgic reflection on an idealised past and invite the audience to step back in time with the character. So began the production *Fadó Fadó* by Siamsa Tíre in the 1990s. It is amongst my earliest memories of the company; by then I had auditioned and begun training with the company and would later perform in over a hundred performances of this production as a musician, singer and dancer. For me, a young boy growing up in the town of Tralee, the production created a link to an earlier generation – my grandfather had grown up on a farm in the same area as Ahern.

The production of *Fadó Fadó* that I first saw and later performed in was developed from the earliest performances by the company in the 1960s. Revised several times with elements added and removed, it was always a representation of life in rural Ireland in the early to mid-twentieth century. It was shaped by the memories of those involved in the early productions, none more so than Ahern and his close friend, dancer Liam Tarrant.<sup>16</sup> These memories inspired generations of performers in the southwest of Ireland and their performances entertained international audiences for over fifty years. While the productions reflect a particular place, they also reflect the role of nostalgia in shaping both the cultural product and an understanding of time. As Svetlana Boym states: “At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time.”<sup>17</sup>

Time provided a narrative structure for *Fadó Fadó*, as the production followed the cycle of the calendar year on a small farm in early twentieth century Ireland. The cast transitioned from the awakening of spring and the young animals, through *Bealtaine* (1 May) and the summer tasks of thatching, before moving indoors for the winter. While much of the production is stylized realism, incorporating song and dance into scenes depicting rural life, it also includes references to the otherworld and superstitions. The presence of supernatural creatures suggesting an alternate realm disrupts the linear, albeit cyclical nature of time; the cycles interrupted by emigration, which disrupts the “joy in the village” motifs typical of twentieth century folk dance ensembles.<sup>18</sup> In contrast with some of these companies, which Ahern has acknowledged as influential in the development of Siamsa Tíre, *Fadó Fadó* and future productions sought to develop greater narrative structure rather than a focus on the exhibition of dance.

The opening of a new theatre in 1991 and the production *Ding Dong Dederó* represents the climax of Ahern’s leadership of the company a starting point for new productions, although creative development from the early 1980s, particularly following the establishment of a fulltime core company in 1985, inspired some of the material.<sup>19</sup> Devised by Ahern in collaboration with the core company, the production takes inspiration from the North Kerry dancing master Jeremiah Molyneux (1883–1965), better

<sup>14</sup> WULFF 2007: 121.

<sup>15</sup> ROSSETTI 1873.

<sup>16</sup> PHELAN 2014: 142; KEARNEY 2021a.

<sup>17</sup> BOYM 2001: xv.

<sup>18</sup> SHAY 2002.

<sup>19</sup> SEAVOR 2005.

known as Munnix, from whom Ahern himself learned to dance. After an opening dance sequence set in a blacksmith's forge, a character of a Sage or older man sings to the audience "Fadó, fadó, nuair a bhí mé óg" ("Long, long ago when I was young"). As with the earlier production, there is an invitation to the audience to come back in time or engage with a memory. The production again reflects on Irish rural life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but extends the timeline to the present, seeking to represent Molyneaux's legacy. The production presented an opportunity for the company to place an emphasis on a regional dance style, which became the kinaesthetic marker for the company over the subsequent two decades.<sup>20</sup> A central tenet of the production is the concept of tradition and transmission, with the older dancing master handing on his art to a new generation, who will continue to shape and evolve it. The production concludes with the sung lines in the Irish language:

Roinnimís bhur saibhreas  
Caomhnaimís bhur noidhreacht  
Is bímis choice 'g rince  
Is aoibhinn linn gach céim  
("Let's share our riches  
Guard our heritage  
Forever dancing  
Cherishing every step")

The extension of an invitation is repeated in the production *Oileán*, a production inspired by the heritage and folklore of the Blasket Islands, a place particularly associated with linguistic heritage.<sup>21</sup> In this instance it is the gesture of dance that creates the invitation, as a single dancer undertakes a journey to another place and time, reflecting Boym's assertion that "[m]odern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values".<sup>22</sup> The show opens with a contemporary and mechanical soundscape with dancers dressed in modern black clothing moving with speed and rigidity across the stage. One dancer is drawn out of the angular movements and eventually finds themselves alone as the gauze rises to reveal an island community from another era. While still incorporating "joy in the village" scenarios that echo the earlier *Fadó Fadó*, the production does not completely ignore the harsher aspects of life. There is an "Irish wake" for a young girl emigrating, reflecting a sense of loss felt when Irish people travelled to the USA, often never to return. As with Lefebvre's reflections, the representation of sacred music and ritual is marked by a slow rhythm, in contrast with the profane music of the dances.<sup>23</sup> During the dance sequence, while the music continues in tempo, the dancers slow during certain sections during which the emigrating girl steps out of the dance, with a brief, recurring suspension of time as she gets her coat, then her suitcase, and finally embraces her mother. The production reaches a climax with the death of a young boy while his father desperately tries to reach the mainland to seek help during a storm. The intensity of the storm, represented by the performance of a fast-paced reel with crashing percussion, contrasts with the near silence of the funeral sequence and the lamentations of the women. It is as if time stops and the death, both in the production and in the lived experience of the islanders, marked a transition. The islanders left the island, many of them settling abroad. The audience return to the present with the return of the black clad dancers but, in the final scene, they are released from the rigid rhythms of the mechanical opening and, revealing an element of island costume previously hidden in their black clothing, become free to dance with the abandon of islanders whose culture can be incorporated into modern life. There is a sense that the past is present as the entire cast sing together, representing a sense of tradition and

20 FOLEY 2013: 226.

21 KEARNEY 2017.

22 BOYM 2001: 8.

23 LEFEBVRE 2004: 59.

heritage that extends beyond lived time. As Lefebvre argues with reference to Van Gogh, the artists on stage in *Siamsa Tíre* create presence and evoke a time for the audience.<sup>24</sup>

### “Idir Eatarthu, Idir Dhá Linn” (“Between Worlds, Between Time”)

He got this air out of the night.  
Strange noises were heard  
By others who followed, bits of a tune  
Coming in on loud weather  
Though nothing like melody.<sup>25</sup>

Séamus Heaney’s poem “The Given Note” is based on a folktale about the melody “Port na bPucaí”, believed to have been heard by a man living on the Blasket Islands. The tale is represented in *Oileán*, when a fiddle player performs the air on stage as dancers represent the waves below. In several of the productions, there is an interruption in the time-space continuum, not only inviting audiences “back in time”, sometimes into another time or realm. There is a suggestion of the *alltar*, another realm that exists simultaneously with the *ceantar*, the place or locality in which physical bodies are present.<sup>26</sup> In *Fadó Fadó*, the co-existence of two realms is represented by a dance to the tune “The King of the Fairies”. The thatcher falls asleep atop a ladder while fixing the roof and is surrounded by dancers in straw costumes, reflecting the traditions of the wrenboys. The thatcher sings the song “An Poc ar Buille” (“The Mad Goat”), a song about a man going home who meets a mad goat on his way home from work, jumps on his back and is brought to Daingean Uí Chúis in west Kerry, where they encounter the parish priest who suggests that the goat is the devil. The use of a dreamlike sequence disrupts the sense of time in the production but is suggestive of another realm, as well as hinting at conflict between pagan folk and popular Christian belief systems.<sup>27</sup>

As with *Fadó Fadó*, creatures from another realm interrupt the time-space continuum in a dream sequence, suggesting an otherworldly inspiration for Molyneaux’s art, a familiar trope in Irish folklore. For example, at the end of the first act, creatures emerge from the forge’s large fire and dance around the young boy. Although performing in a contemporary dance style, they are the muses that gift the steps or abilities to the young boy, who shapes this into a percussive dance style that he will teach later in life. In the second act, he is the teacher, and his students are seen to further innovate, incorporating different dance styles into the sequence “Bímís Ag Rince” (“Let’s dance”). In another scene, the boy is viewed away from his community who are reciting ‘The Lord’s Prayer’, as if at mass, while he taps out the rhythms with his feet on the anvil. This imbues the dance with a sense of spirituality.<sup>28</sup> The interconnections between folk culture and Christian practices reflect Ahern’s vocation as a Catholic priest and the faith of many of the performers but is contemporaneous with an increasingly secular society with falling church attendances.<sup>29</sup>

Based on one of the most popular Irish myths and legends,<sup>30</sup> *Clann Lir* represents the legend of the Children of Lir primarily through dance and Irish-language song. The audience is introduced to the character of Lir, his wife and four children, whose dance reflects happiness. The mood changes with the death of Lir’s wife and his subsequent remarriage. The new wife does not connect in the dance

24 LEFEBVRE 2004: 24.

25 HEANEY 1969.

26 MAGAN 2020.

27 For more on the representation of supernatural beings, encounters, and occurrences in Irish song and music see Uí ÓGÁIN and SHERLOCK 2012.

28 KEARNEY 2021a; 2021b.

29 INGLIS 2017.

30 There are four cycles of Irish mythology: the Mythological Cycle concerning the Tuatha Dé Danann; the Ulster Cycle focusing on a warrior group known as the Red Branch Knights that includes the hero Cúchulain; the Fenian Cycle focusing on another warrior group known as the Fianna and their leader Fionn MacCumhaill, father of Oisín; and the Cycle of Kings.

and appears to be jealous of the children. She leads them away before casting a spell on them, turning them into swans. As swans the children return to their broken-hearted father, who transforms his new wife into a dark bird before spending time with his children, communicating through dance. Soon the time comes for them to leave and spend three hundred years in different locations, battling storms and maintaining their unity. At the climax of *Clann Lir*, the characters of the four swans are transformed back into human form, performed by the same child actors whose physical appearance is aged. Ciara Ní Bhroin states that “The transformation of the beautiful swans into ancient human beings, in most versions of the tale, is somehow more horrific than the original enchantment placed upon the children, perhaps because it is a sudden and therefore shocking reminder of the inevitability of old age and death”.<sup>31</sup> The transformation takes place at the sounding of a bell. A Christian figure, nominally St Patrick, blesses the children before they die, providing Christian symbolism in a pre-Christian myth. In this way, the story crosses from ancient to modern times and again reflects the interconnection between folklore and religion in twentieth century Ireland.

The trope of the passage of an extended period of time is again to the fore in the production *Oisín*. The narrative draws on the legend of *Tír na nÓg* (“Land of Youth”) from the Fenian Cycle of Irish mythology. The audience are introduced to the Fianna, Ireland’s ancient warrior group led by Fionn MacCumhaill. On a hunting trip. Oisín, the young warrior son of Fionn, encounters a beautiful young woman, Niamh Cinn Óir (“Niamh of the Golden Hair”) who invites him to travel with her to the land of eternal youth. Time in *Tír na nÓg* does not match time in Ireland and Oisín spends three-hundred years in his new home. He misses his comrades and wishes to return. When he does, all is changed and, when he touches Irish soil, he is transformed, appearing to the audience as an old man with the use of a mask and wig. This reflects Joseph Campbell’s identification of the “crisis of the threshold of the return”.<sup>32</sup> In some retellings of the legend, Oisín tells his stories to St Patrick before dying, again revealing a Christianising of the mythology that reflects Irish society’s transition from pagan to Christian practices. In the production, the use of a song motif composed by Hurley seeks to evoke the early calls of the Fianna suggest an inheritance of folk culture from generations long since passed.

The 2001 production *Samhain* explores aspects of folklore surrounding the festival of Halloween, an occasion when time is suspended and the boundary between the *alltar* and *ceantar* opened.<sup>33</sup> The production begins in the present, focusing on a group of young adults who experience different aspects of Samhain (Halloween) traditions out of time. Scenes include encounters with fairies, Celtic deities, druids, a witch and the deceased. This veritable mish-mash of Halloween customs reflects the commercialised postmodern festival whose roots remain connected to folklore and traditions of the past. The production represents lingering beliefs in fairies and superstitions in Irish culture,<sup>34</sup> and seeks to engage the audience by demonstrating the relevance of folklore in contemporary life, reflecting Lefebvre’s consideration of the impact of ritualisation and rites on the rhythms of everyday life.<sup>35</sup>

## The Given Note

So whether he calls it spirit music  
Or not, I don’t care. He took it  
Out of wind off mid-Atlantic.  
Still he maintains, from nowhere.<sup>36</sup>

31 NÍ BHROIN 2011: 11.

32 CAMPBELL 1993: 207.

33 KEARNEY 2016.

34 Ó GIOLLÁIN 2001.

35 LEFEBVRE 2004: 94.

36 HEANEY 1996: 34.

The inspiration and source material for these productions reflects the music scene and changing aesthetics in Irish traditional music, drawing on songs and tunes already performed by the community and incorporating music from commercial recordings. The productions selected for this paper reflect the work of different musical directors and while drawing on history, mythology and folklore. Musically, each of these productions provides insights into musical developments in Irish traditional music that are to the fore discourse on the tradition in the 1990s, a period dominated by the dance show *Riverdance* and various spin-off productions, Mícheál Ó Suilleabháin's television series *River of Sound* (1995), and the Crossroads Conference.<sup>37</sup> Although former General Manager of Siamsa Tíre, Martin Whelan (1950–2002) rejected suggestions that Siamsa Tíre should follow the model of production developed by *Riverdance*,<sup>38</sup> the music for productions from the mid-1990s reflect changes in the aesthetics of Irish traditional music, as well as foregrounding new compositions in a traditional idiom. For Lefebvre, creative activity “proceeds from the liberty and individuality that unfurl only in conditions that are external [to them]”.<sup>39</sup>

It was pianist and composer Professor Mícheál Ó Suilleabháin (1950–2018) who recommended Kerry-born saxophonist, percussionist and pianist Eoin McQuinn as musical director for *Clann Lir*. Ó Suilleabháin worked with Siamsa Tíre earlier in the decade, notably in relation to his composition “Idir Eatarthu” (“Between Worlds”) and McQuinn had recently completed his MA in Ethnomusicology at the University of Limerick. The piano dominates the score for *Clann Lir*, which incorporates old and new musical material. Performed initially by McQuinn, it has a strong rhythmic role, anchoring the ensemble. The score incorporates versions of mostly traditional tunes or accompaniment to traditional song airs, for which Terrence McQuinn provided new lyrics. Particular melodies feature as recurring leitmotifs. The Ballydesmond Polkas, part of a canon of tunes learned by many young Irish traditional musicians, sound journey sequences. Song airs include “Eamonn a’Chnoic”, an 18th century song about an outlaw attributed to Éamonn Ó Riain (d.c.1724), and “Eanach Chúin”, an early 19th century composition by the poet Antoine Ó Raifteirí (1779-1835), both of which are often taught to children and have a significant degree of familiarity for Irish audiences. The singers dressed in long robes, evocative of druids or monks, stand in front of eight-foot-high representations of ogham stones, monuments that are marked with an alphabetic script dating from the 4th century AD. The lack of distinction between pagan and Christian eras is important in the context of how Irish folklore becomes imbued with Christian symbolism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but also creates a sense of timelessness for the story.

While music was always integral to productions, it was not until the early 2000s that Siamsa Tíre appointed a full-time Musical Director. Tom Hanafin from Tralee, a long-time performer with the company, filled the role for more than two decades and he composed new material for several productions. Hanafin composed most of the instrumental music for *Oisín*. As with *Clann Lir*, old airs were paired with new lyrics by Muiris Ó Laoire, a lecturer on the BA Folk Theatre programme. An air composed in 1907 by Peadar Ó Dubhda (1881–1971) for the Ulster song “Úr Chnoc Chéin Mhic” Cáinte by Peadar Ó Doirín (c.1700–1769) is used as a recurring theme. The ensemble comprised button accordions, tin whistle, flute, fiddle and keyboard, as was typical of many Siamsa Tíre productions. In contrast with the largely traditional sounds of the previous productions, the music for *Oisín* also utilized a synthesizer to represent the land of eternal youth, reflecting the instruments increasing presence in commercial recordings of Irish traditional music at that time.

Musically, *Samhain* followed a similar pattern to that established in *Oisín* by incorporating new melodies by Hanafin with tunes from the tradition, expanding the instrumentation to include the double bass.

<sup>37</sup> VALLELY et al. 1999.

<sup>38</sup> Ó CINNÉIDE 2001: 51.

<sup>39</sup> LEFEBVRE 2004: 43.

*Samhain* included some hummed SATB vocal harmonies arranged by Listowel native Colm O'Brien, best known as an exponent of ragtime and stride piano. Despite the limited inclusion of song in the production, Noel McAulliffe and Seán Ahern provided exemplary performances of new material in a sean nós style. The approach to composition and sound design in *Oisín* and *Samhain*, which moves beyond the performance of traditional music and song, is again present in *Oileán*. The opening scene of *Oileán* utilised an industrial-like percussive soundscape to signify the present. This is quickly replaced by traditional music, informed by research on the music of west Kerry and the involvement of singer and musician Máire Begley. In addition to incorporating traditional songs and tunes, for *Oileán*, Ó Laoire provided lyrics to airs by Hanafin, which were arranged for SATB choir by O'Brien. This creates a greater balance between the components of music, song, dance and mime or gesture, identified by Ahern as the four pillars of folk theatre.

### In the Moment, of its Time

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past<sup>40</sup>

Siamsa Tíre began developing productions based on Irish folklore and mythology in the 1950s, identified as a period of transition,<sup>41</sup> an in-between time “which is altogether determined by things which are no longer and by things which are not yet”.<sup>42</sup> Changes in rural lifestyles and developments in Irish traditional music influenced its development. There were fears for the intangible cultural heritage of rural Ireland and greater diversification of the soundscape of Irish traditional music, influenced by pivotal figures including Seán Ó Riada (1931–1972). Like Ó Riada, Ahern expanded the modes of and contexts for presenting Irish traditional music, particularly in the context of theatre.<sup>43</sup> Successive directors continued to develop Ahern’s vision and approach but each of the productions reflected contemporaneous developments in terms of music and dance, as well as the influence of external collaborators.

Time is a central trope in *Fadó Fadó* but the engagement of the company with folklore and mythology was also a disruption of the rhythms of social and cultural development. The company developed at a time of intense change, when the isolationist policies of earlier Irish governments were being replaced by the outward looking policies of economist T.K. Whitaker.<sup>44</sup> Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973; this is preceded by Siamsa Tíre’s first international tour, to Bavaria in 1971, and precedes a major tour of the USA in 1976 at the same time as other international folk dance groups including the Ballet Folklorico de Mexico. The first contributed to the awarding of the 1974 European Prize for Folk-Art, with an emphasis on groups preserving cultural heritage, while the second was part funded by Fáilte Ireland and contributed to efforts at promoting tourism to Ireland.<sup>45</sup> It is notable that this is also a period identified as the revival of Irish traditional music and The Chieftains were amongst the first ensembles to embark on a full-time professional career in an international commercial music scene.<sup>46</sup> Siamsa Tíre was well-received in the USA but the writing of critics a decade later, notably Colm Tóibín in advance of a tour to Australia in 1988, suggest that the production was of its time and, for critics like Tóibín, represented an outdated portrayal of rural Ireland.<sup>47</sup> Despite the establishment of a small

40 ELLIOTT 1979 [1944]: 13.

41 KEARNEY 1988.

42 ARENDT 1954.

43 KEARNEY 2022a.

44 FERRITER 2005.

45 KEARNEY 2022b.

46 KEARNEY and COMMINS 2023.

47 TÓIBÍN 1987.

professional company in 1985, which contributed to the development of new repertoire and creative exploration, *Fadó Fadó* remained an ever-present production in annual performances by the company until 2010, before returning again in 2014 as part of the fortieth anniversary season. Anniversaries were a prominent trope in Ireland, which celebrated a state-sponsored Decade of Centenaries (2012–2023) around this time, reflecting an aspect of cyclical time involving commemoration that punctuates everydayness.<sup>48</sup>

Siamsa Tíre established a fulltime professional cast in 1985, creating greater opportunities for collaboration and artistic development. This is an important period for dance in Ireland and, reflecting on her experiences between 1984 and 1992, dance critic Diane Theodores argues that there was a proliferation of dance practice in the country.<sup>49</sup> In 1990, she suggested that Siamsa Tíre was “poised for the possibility of transforming into a major theatre dance company of Ireland”. They collaborated with Anne Courtney for choreography to Ó Suilleabháin’s “Idir Eatarthu” (“Between Worlds”) in 1990, with Theodores stating: “The dance exposes some scintillating possibilities for a new ethnically relevant theatre dance”.<sup>50</sup> Although aspiring to create an authentic representation of native culture as experienced in rural Ireland during the early twentieth century, we might draw comparisons with Luke Gibbons’ assertion about memory that recognises two registers: “one that is contained and legitimised within the confines of the monument and the museum, and the other having to do with endangered traces of collective memory, as transmitted by popular culture, folklore, ballads, and so on”.<sup>51</sup>

Despite an emphasis on tradition, Siamsa Tíre was pioneering a new form of representation that attracted audiences beyond the Irish diaspora. As Lefebvre noted:

Social times disclose diverse contradictory possibilities: delays and early arrivals, reappearances (repetitions) of an (apparently) rich past, and revolutions that brusquely introduce a new content and sometimes change the form of society [...] Occasionally, a long time after the action, one sees the emergence of a novelty.<sup>52</sup>

Siamsa Tíre was a novel development that has an important place in an understanding of developments in Irish theatre, music and dance. The production *Riverdance* (1994) changed the international perception of Irish music and dance later in the decade but the creative developments of Siamsa Tíre contributed to the cultural milieu from which *Riverdance* emerged.<sup>53</sup>

The 1990s was a period of increased commercialisation in Irish traditional music, epitomised by *Riverdance* and its various spin-off productions. Writing about Irish mythology and literature, Ní Bhroin also states: “this period saw a proliferation of glossy, lavishly illustrated Irish myth and legend collections for children, partly aimed at a tourist market, as well as the growth of a genre of fantasy incorporating Irish mythology”.<sup>54</sup> Reflecting increased provision for the study of Irish traditional arts elsewhere in Ireland through this period and enhanced employment opportunities,<sup>55</sup> by the early 2000s the Institute of Technology in Tralee offered a BA degree in Folk Theatre Studies, taught in collaboration with Siamsa Tíre. It offered a pathway for younger cast members to gain qualifications while also attracting talent from further afield who augmented the local cast. Collaboration with contemporary dance choreographers including Mary Nunan and Cindy Cummings demonstrate the desire of the company to develop their artistic practice in line with contemporary activity beyond Irish

48 LEFEBVRE 2004: 94.

49 THEODORES 1996.

50 THEODORES 1996.

51 GIBBONS 1996: 172.

52 LEFEBVRE 2004: 14, 15.

53 Ó CINNÉIDE 2001; Whelan 2022.

54 NÍ BHROIN 2011: 8.

55 FOLEY 2021.

traditional music, song and dance. Writing in a broader context of dance in Ireland, Aoife McGrath has noted the important role of Siamsa Tíre as an influence on creative approaches in contemporary Irish dance practice by other performers.<sup>56</sup> As Kearney states: “By creatively reinterpreting the past, narrative can serve to release new, and hitherto concealed, possibilities of understanding one’s history; and by critically scrutinizing the past it can wrest tradition away from the conformism that is always threatening to overpower it”.<sup>57</sup> The balance between past, present and future is thus critical to the creative development of the company.

The complexity of memory is further complicated when the linear sense of past, present and future is augmented by the representation of an otherworld. Inviting the audience back in time with the cast and demonstrating how elements of the past remain in the present, through placenames and cultural practices challenges a linear understanding of time. Corresponding with the work of Henri Bergson, memories cannot be confined to the past but exist in the present.<sup>58</sup> In *Oileán*, the often-romanticised representation of island life is presented as an alternative to the intensity of contemporary lifestyles. Christopher Morash and Shaun Richards develop Bergson’s theories in their study of space and place in Irish theatre, recognising that “space occupied in the present is also the active site of memories of the past, and anticipations of the future”.<sup>59</sup> In all outputs by Siamsa Tíre, including *Oileán*, there is a balance between innovation and tradition, constantly drawing on the past for inspiration while simultaneously drawing on external artistic influences. Jonathon Kelliher, the original lead dancer in *Oileán* who succeeded Oliver Hurley as Artistic Director of the Company has stated:

As the National Folk Theatre of Ireland our remit is to portray our traditions. We are trying to keep our traditions, but still move them forward into the twenty-first century – without stagnating. We don’t want to be like most folk groups in other European countries. We keep our traditional dance as it is. We haven’t strayed and gone with the modernization of the Irish dance. We’ve kept it, and developed it in its own way. Being the National Folk Theatre – folk being the people – we try to tell the stories of the people.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

The productions of Siamsa Tíre examined in this article reflect the centrality of time to the company’s performances. By inviting the audience back in time, presenting material that represents several centuries of tradition, and performing representations of the intangible cultural heritage of rural Ireland, the company is serving a particular function of preservation. An aspect of this intangible cultural heritage is the belief in another realm or the ability to experience time in different ways. The performance of myths and folktales that relate to otherworldly creatures or the passage of extended periods of time serve particular narrative devices but challenge the audience to appreciate how heritage and traditions remain relevant in the present. In the context of music, the belief that some of this repertoire is inspired or gifted from another time or realm imbues the melodies with an additional value. While the theatre stage presents an opportunity for an unveiling of the past in the present, the representation through music and dance also creates an inversion, drawing on contemporary artistic practice. The representation of time past is performed through the incorporation of traditional songs, as well as the reworking of older dance steps with reference to agricultural and maritime tasks but sometimes to newly composed music with greater incorporation of other dance styles and approaches to song that are out of time. Thus, the past is situated in the present as part of an attempt to protect its memory and practices for

56 McGRATH 2012; 2016.

57 KEARNEY 1988: 272.

58 BERGSON 1988.

59 MORASH and RICHARDS 2013: 86.

60 Cited in MULROONEY 2003: 53.

the future. Simultaneously, the performances are developed in response to the aesthetic demands of contemporary audiences and changes within the traditional music soundscape.

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# Tiefenzeit. Anton Bruckner als Gegenstand der energetischen Musikbetrachtung

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**Keywords:** Anton Bruckner, August Halm, Ernst Kurth, deep time, historicism, structural history

**Abstract:** *This paper attempts to establish and develop the concept of deep time in historical musicology. The idea of deep time, primarily mapped by Stephen Jay Gould, refers to the geological discovery of earth's history in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and considers its far-reaching implications for the relativization and dynamization of human concepts of time. Recent general historical research has also shown its significance for the establishment of modern historical consciousness and concepts of structural history. A musicological exploration of the idea has not yet materialized, however, proves to be a desideratum, particularly regarding 19th century music. Based on a general foundation of the concept of musical deep time, this paper demonstrates the pre-conceptual presence of deep time thinking in the Bruckner monographs of August Halm and Ernst Kurth. With a view to both formal theory under the sign of geological metaphors and structural-historical ideas, Halm's and Kurth's image of Bruckner is considered an exponent of musical deep time from the perspective of music theory and aesthetics as well as music historiography.*

Schwarz und stumm lag das Flöz, speicherte unvorstellbare Zeitmassen; jetzt nagten Bagger an dieser Zeit, zermalmten den Boden, der unsere Vergangenheit war. [...] Am hellichten Tag, in erleuchteter Nacht, pausenlos wurde Erdgeschichte vernichtet. Die Grube erstreckte sich bis zum Horizont, und sie rückte in der Fläche bedrohlich vor. O daß mein Sinn ein Abgrund wär. Und meine Seel' ein weites Meer. Daß ich dich möchte fassen.<sup>2</sup>

Beziehungsreich in Richtung des protestantischen Kirchenliedes *Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier* knüpfen jene Sätze aus Marion Poschmanns Roman *Die Sonnenposition* an der Vorstellung einer geologischen Tiefenzeit an. Es sind Erdschichten, Kohleflöze, in denen sich die per se so immateriellen, ungreifbaren „Zeitmassen“ von Jahrmillionen konserviert, zu Materie verdichtet finden. Geschichte tritt im Wortsinn als Schichtung zutage; Zeit wird als Sediment sichtbar. Wenn der in die Zukunft gerichtete Zweck, wirtschaftlichen Nutzen aus der abgebauten Kohle zu schlagen, schliesslich als Vernichtung der Vergangenheit selbst verbalisiert wird, fallen auf Ebene der literarischen Darstellung Zeit und Ort zusammen. Der Tagebau wird zum martialischen Zerrbild des Thomas Mann'schen „Brunnen[s] der Vergangenheit“;<sup>3</sup> in beide Abgründe lässt Marion Poschmann den Ich-Erzähler Altfried Janich, seines Zeichens Psychiater, bald erhellend, bald verschattend blicken. Es ist die Kraft der Erinnerung, der Introspektion, die innerhalb des Romans den „lineare[n], de[n] zielfixierte[n], nicht umkehrbare[n] Zynismus der Zeit“ herausfordert.<sup>4</sup>

Dass die literarische Konstellation aus geologischem Sujet und Reflexionen über das Wesen der Zeit die zentralen Begriffsdimensionen von Tiefenzeit paradigmatisch auslotet, wird mit Blick auf die Wis-

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2 POSCHMANN 2017 [2013]: 87.

3 MANN 2025 [1933]: IX.

4 POSCHMANN 2017 [2013]: 215.

sens- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte deutlich. Der aus der Paläontologie stammende Begriff der *deep time* trägt insbesondere der immensen ideengeschichtlichen Ausstrahlung der auf das späte 18. sowie die erste Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts datierenden Entdeckung einer Jahrmillionen zurückreichenden Erdgeschichte Rechnung. Vor allem Stephen Jay Goulds breit rezipierte Studie *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle. Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time* hat das wechselseitige Verhältnis zwischen geologischer und ideengeschichtlicher Entdeckung ausgelotet. Der von Sigmund Freud geprägten Trias einschneidender „Kränkungen“ des Menschen, zunächst der Kopernikanischen Wende, hierauf Darwins Evolutionstheorie sowie Freuds eigener Psychoanalyse, gesellt Gould „die Entdeckung der ‚Tiefenzeit‘“ bei, denn was könnte bedrohlicher sein als „die Vorstellung von einer schier unbegreiflichen Unermeßlichkeit, in der sich das menschliche Erdendasein [...] auf eine Millimikrosekunde beschränkt!“<sup>5</sup> Ebenjene „Unermeßlichkeit“ der Tiefenzeit limitiere, so Gould, letztlich die Vorstellbarkeit der Vorstellung selbst; die „Tiefenzeit ist etwas so Fremdes, daß wir sie wirklich nur als Metapher begreifen können“.<sup>6</sup>

Eine gewisse Metaphernbedürftigkeit wohnt der Verbalisierung von Zeitvorstellungen a priori inne. Ein eindrückliches Begriffspaar erwählt der Autor selbst, wenn er die sukzessive Entdeckung der Tiefenzeit bei den britischen Geologen Thomas Burnet, James Hutton und Charles Lyell mit den einander widerstrebenden Bildern von Pfeil und Kreis engführt. Die Metapher des Zeitpfeils, „Urmetapher der biblischen Geschichte“, beschreibt Geschichte dabei als „eine irreversible Abfolge unwiederholbarer Ereignisse“.<sup>7</sup> Diejenige des Zeitkreises stellt die teleologische Vorstellung, Ereignisse seien „deutlich abgegrenzte Episoden mit kausaler Wirkung auf eine kontingente Geschichte“, dagegen in Frage; sie fokussiert „der Zeit immanent[e]“ Zustände und kulminiert in der Antithese, dass die Zeit „keine Richtung“ habe.<sup>8</sup> Bei Burnet, Hutton und Lyell erkennt Gould Präferenzen für die Vorstellung vom Zeitkreis und postuliert gar, „daß Huttons und Lyells Vorliebe für die Tiefenzeit in erster Linie von ihrer ungewohnten Vorstellung vom Zeitkreis herrührte und sich nicht (wie es der geologische Mythos will) der überlegenen Kenntnis des Gesteins im Gelände verdankte“.<sup>9</sup> Wissen wird als Produkt zugrundeliegender Denkfiguren modelliert.

Schon mit Blick auf die unleugbare ontologische Bestimmung von „Musik als ‚Zeitkunst par excellence‘“<sup>10</sup> verwundert es, dass eine musikwissenschaftliche Reflexion des Konzepts der Tiefenzeit – im Gegensatz etwa zu seiner Behandlung in der Literaturwissenschaft<sup>11</sup> – bislang weitestgehend ausgeblieben ist.<sup>12</sup> Gerade insofern die Metaphern des Zeitpfeils und des Zeitkreises spätestens seit Karol Bergers einschlägiger Studie über Johann Sebastian Bach und Wolfgang Amadé Mozart<sup>13</sup> als terminologisches Instrumentarium an der Schnittstelle zwischen kulturgeschichtlicher und werkanalytischer Musikbetrachtung etabliert sind, erweist sich deren Evaluation unter den Vorzeichen der geschilderten Entdeckung der Tiefenzeit – sprich innerhalb der Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts – als Desiderat der Musikwissenschaft.

Im Ausgang der von Rudolf Schäfke unter dem Begriff der „Energetik“ gefassten<sup>14</sup> Monographien Ernst Kurths und August Halms<sup>15</sup> rückt insbesondere Anton Bruckner in den Fokus tiefenzeitlicher Betrachtungen. Wird Bruckner bei August Halm nicht zuletzt unter rhetorischer Verwendung geologischer Metaphern zum Exponenten einer vertieften Zeitwahrnehmung und Zeitgestaltung erkoren, findet sich die musiktheoretische und ästhetische Herleitung einer freilich vorbegrifflich gefassten Tiefenzeit bei

5 GOULD 1990 [1987]: 13–14, Zitat 14.

6 GOULD 1990 [1987]: 15.

7 GOULD 1990 [1987]: 27, 26.

8 GOULD 1990 [1987]: 27.

9 GOULD 1990 [1987]: 33.

10 MAHRENHOLZ 2016 [1998].

11 Vgl. vor allem den Sammelband SCHNYDER 2020.

12 Vgl. am Rande lediglich IRVINE 2018 sowie die später genauer zu betrachteten Ansätze bei HEISTER 2016 und KRAMER 2022.

13 BERGER 2007.

14 SCHÄFKE 1964 [1934]: bes. 396–397.

15 KURTH 1925; HALM 1914.

Ernst Kurth um die bei Halm weitestgehend ausgesparte musikhistorische Dimension erweitert. Kurths ferner in allgemeine Überlegungen zur Musikhistoriographie mündende Ausführungen zum Zeitphänomen Bruckner schlagen dabei den Bogen zur modernen Strukturgeschichte und beleuchten die etwa von Carl Dahlhaus und Manfred Angerer nahegelegte, für die energetische Musikbetrachtung wesentliche Verflechtung von Musiktheorie und Musikgeschichte.<sup>16</sup> Im Sinne eines Doppelwegs zwischen Allgemeinem und Besonderem widmet sich die vorliegende Studie zunächst der allgemeinen Grundlegung des Konzepts der Tiefenzeit sowie seiner Erschliessung für die historische Musikwissenschaft, um anschliessend in einem close reading der Bruckner-Monographien Halms und Kurths die vorbegriffliche Präsenz jener Idee nachzuweisen.

### Tiefenzeit und Geschichtsschreibung

Das eingangs literarisch aufgerufene Bild des Tagebaus, das den synoptischen Anblick diachron um Erdzeitalter entfernter, räumlich jedoch vergleichsweise eng gestaffelter Boden- und Gesteinshorizonte gewährt, führt Geschichte im wahrsten Sinne als Schichtungsphänomen vor Augen. Der in der deutschen Sprache bereits etymologisch begreifliche Zusammenhang zwischen sichtbaren geologischen Schichten und der unsichtbaren Schichtung historischer Zeiten legt dabei nicht zufällig strukturgeschichtliche Überlegungen nahe, wie sie vor allem die französische *École des Annales* auf die Universalgeschichte appliziert hat.<sup>17</sup> Anknüpfend an Goulds Befunde hat etwa der Historiker David Schulz den ideengeschichtlichen Konnex zwischen der Entdeckung der Tiefenzeit, der Vertiefung eines modernen Zeitempfindens und der Etablierung einer modernen Historik herausgestellt. So ging die geologische Zeitreflexion zunächst mit „der Emanzipation von theologischen Zeitkonzeptionen“ einher; dem ehernen Primat der *historia sacra* trat die „empirisch zugänglich[e]“ geologische Zeitvorstellung gegenüber, woraus eine erhebliche Relativierung „menschliche[r] Zeitmaße“ und eine „immense[]“ Steigerung des Bewusstseins für die eigene Geschichtlichkeit“ resultierten.<sup>18</sup> Durch die „Dynamisierung der sicher geglaubten Dimensionen von Raum und Zeit“ wurde Zeit einerseits „als Bewegungsbegriff erfahrbar“, als „Akteur, welcher geschichtlichen Wandel in die Wege leitete“.<sup>19</sup> Andererseits wurde die „vermeintlich so ungreifbare Zeit“ im Bild geologischer Horizonte „anschaulich, (er)fassbar und (be)greifbar“, was einer räumlich-pluralen Vorstellung von Zeit als Schichtung Vorschub leisten und den Grundstein zu einer differenzierten strukturgeschichtlichen Modellierung legen sollte: „Die Formierung von Zeit in Schichten bedeutet [...] eine zum linearen Charakter der Zeit komplementäre Repräsentation: Was in der Zeit nacheinander stattgefunden hat, liegt im Raum, als ‚Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen‘, übereinander.“<sup>20</sup>

Schon Reinhart Koselleck konstatiert in seiner Schrift *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik*, dass das Wort „Zeitschichten“ [...] auf geologische Formationen“ verweist, „die sich im Laufe der sogenannten Erdgeschichte mit verschiedenen Geschwindigkeiten verändert und voneinander abgehoben haben“, und unterstreicht die ins 18. Jahrhundert zurückreichende Genealogie der strukturgeschichtlichen Metaphorik: „Wir verwenden [...] eine Metapher, die erst seit dem achtzehnten Jahrhundert sagbar geworden ist, nachdem die alte statische Naturkunde, die ‚*historia naturalis*‘, verzeitlicht und damit historisiert worden war.“<sup>21</sup> Es ist die geologische Metapher von geschichteter, sedimentierter Zeit, die auf dem Weg der Verräumlichung zeitliche Ferne in räumliche, damit kausale Nähe rückt und ein plurales, im wahrsten Sinne vielschichtiges Bild von Geschichte entwerfen lässt. Gleichzeitig macht Kosellecks dis-

16 Vgl. DAHLHAUS 2002 [1984]; ANGERER 1989: 54.

17 Als Exemplum classicum sei an Fernand Braudels berühmte Studie über *Das Mittelmeer und die mediterrane Welt in der Epoche Philipps II.* erinnert, die selbst unter anderem physisch-geographische Einflüsse als grundlegende Prozesse einer *longue durée* behandelt. BRAUDEL 2001 [1949].

18 SCHULZ 2020: 288, 283.

19 SCHULZ 2020: 283, 288, 289.

20 SCHULZ 2020: 286.

21 KOSELLECK 2003 [2000]: 19.

tanzierendes Sprechen von der *historia naturalis* als „sogenannte[r] Erdgeschichte“ deutlich, dass Geschichte im primären Sinne eines Erfahrungssubjektes bedarf – dass die Geschichtswissenschaft als „die Erfahrungswissenschaft schlechthin“ angesehen und per definitionem von Menschen geschrieben werden muss.<sup>22</sup> Nimmt man in diesem Sinne die von Wilhelm von Humboldt pointierte historiographische Prämisse ernst, dass Geschichte eben mehr sei als das bloße „Gerippe der Begebenheit“, vielmehr der Geschichtsschreibung notwendig bedürfe,<sup>23</sup> hängt der Status der Erdgeschichte als *historia* nicht zuletzt von deren Erzählbarkeit ab – eine Bedingung, die die Literatur des ausgehenden 18. und des 19. Jahrhunderts aufgriff, um mit Werken wie etwa Annette von Droste-Hülshoffs *Mergelgrube* eine künstlerische Reflexion der Tiefenzeit anzustossen.<sup>24</sup>

### Spuren musikalischer Tiefenzeit

Versuche, neben der literarischen auch einer musikalischen Präsenz von Tiefenzeit wissenschaftlich nachzuspüren, sind bisher nur in Ansätzen unternommen worden. Vermeintlich am distinktesten benennt Lawrence Kramer innerhalb eines Artikels im *Oxford Handbook of Time in Music* das Konzept der *deep time* als gegenläufige Tendenz zu einer im 19. Jahrhundert parallel zu beobachtenden Beschleunigung der Zeitwahrnehmung. Kramers Gleichsetzung musikalischer *deep time* mit der wachsenden zeitlichen Ausdehnung symphonischer Werke, einer „symphonic expansiveness“,<sup>25</sup> greift allerdings zu kurz, zumal seine knappe, auf formale Symmetrien rekurrierende Analyse von César Francks d-Moll-Symphonie die ideengeschichtliche Tragweite des Konzepts vielmehr streift als analytisch aufzeigt.<sup>26</sup> Jenseits der Franck-Symphonie nennt der Autor eine durchaus heterogen anmutende, weitgehend unkommentierte Reihe kanonischer Beispiele, deren Tertium er darin sieht, „[that] the music is in continuous evolution, usually, though not always, across multiple movements“.<sup>27</sup> Auf den erstaunlichen Umstand, dass Bruckner trotz inhaltlicher Passung in seiner Auflistung fehlt, weist Kramer selbst hin, wobei er rechtfertigend postuliert, Bruckners Symphonien seien stärker an statisch-religiöse Zeitvorstellungen geknüpft.<sup>28</sup> Da das Konzept der Tiefenzeit nach Gould jedoch gerade an der Vorstellung vom Zeitkreis orientiert, darüber hinaus eben nicht mit der schieren Expansion von Zeit gleichzusetzen ist, muss nach alternativen Parametern musikalischer Tiefenzeit gesucht werden.

Konkreter widmet sich Hanns-Werner Heister im Rahmen des Sammelbandes *Schichten, Geschichte, System. Geologische Metaphern und Denkformen in den Kunstwissenschaften* der Frage nach der Anwendbarkeit geologischer Konzepte auf den Gegenstand Musik. Die Idee tiefenzeitlicher Schichtung bildet hier einen Angelpunkt.<sup>29</sup> Vor allem die ihr inhärenten Prinzipien von Verräumlichung und Dynamisierung werden von Heister aufgenommen und in einem Dreischritt auf die Betrachtung der Musikgeschichte, des Phänomens Musik sowie des „Musikprozesses“ übertragen. Zunächst wird die aus der Geologie herkommende „Lagerungsregel“ eingeführt: „Das Obere („Hangende“) ist im Prinzip später als das Untere („Liegende“).“<sup>30</sup> Entständen in diesem „statigraphischen“ Modell zwischen den Schichten sowohl „Konkordanzen“ als auch „Diskordanzen“, erweise es sich, so Heister, als besonders geeignet, um die Heterogenität des jeweiligen Gegenstandes als „Textur“ oder „Gefüge[]“ zu modellieren.<sup>31</sup> Gerade

22 KOSELLECK 2003 [2000]: 20. Hervorhebung original.

23 HUMBOLDT 1841 [1822]: 2–3.

24 Vgl. SCHNYDER 2020.

25 KRAMER 2022: 42.

26 Vgl. KRAMER 2022: 49.

27 KRAMER 2022: 47.

28 Vgl. KRAMER 2022: 49.

29 Auch Heister betont die strukturgeschichtlichen Implikationen des Konzepts: „S.J. Goulds Begriff der *Tiefenzeit* ergänzt den ‚strukturgeschichtlichen‘ Begriff der *longue durée* aus der *Annales*-Schule und erweitert die zeitliche Erstreckung von menschheitsgeschichtlichen Zeiträumen in naturgeschichtlich-geologische.“ HEISTER 2016: 35. Hervorhebungen original.

30 HEISTER 2016: 13.

31 HEISTER 2016: 13–14, Zitat 14.

für die Analyse des Phänomens Musik ergeben sich instruktive Schlussfolgerungen; sind „[i]n jedem Musikstück (wie in jedem Kunstwerk überhaupt) [...] Elemente verschiedenen Alters beieinander, als Gemenge, konkret ‚versintert‘ und mit ‚Einschlüssen‘“,<sup>32</sup> wird der Notentext selbst als vertikale Zeitschichtung lesbar.<sup>33</sup>

Weniger an geologische Konzepte als vielmehr an die Metaphern von Zeitfeil und Zeitkreis knüpft Karol Bergers Monographie *Bach's cycle, Mozart's arrow* an. Klammert Berger die ursprüngliche Verortung der Begriffe im tiefenzeitlichen Kontext aus, vollzieht sich die Anknüpfung an Gould vorwiegend auf Ebene jener Denkfiguren: „I would like to concentrate on a change in the shape of musical time, on the demotion of what might be called, now with a nod to Stephen Jay Gould, ‚time's cycle‘ in favor of ‚time's arrow.‘“<sup>34</sup> Markant erscheint, dass sich der von Berger für die zweite Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts beschriebene Wandel hin zu einer linearen Zeitvorstellung auf den ersten Blick gegenläufig zu der von Gould attestierten Hinwendung zu einem stärker zyklischen Zeitverständnis im Kontext der geologischen Entdeckungen jener Jahre verhält. Auf den zweiten Blick offenbart sich jedoch, dass Gould und Berger strukturgeschichtlich verschiedentlich lokalisierte, selbst durchaus ungleichzeitige Phänomene betrachten. Während Gould primär eine Vertiefung der allgemeinen Zeitvorstellung herausstellt, die, wie nachfolgend zu zeigen ist, in der Musik wohl erst deutlich im 19. Jahrhundert zu verorten wäre, nimmt Berger die historisch vorgelagerte Entstehung einer modernen Zeitwahrnehmung als solche in den Blick und attestiert im Anschluss an Kosellecks Konzept der Sattelzeit, dass sich Modernität am Parameter allgemeiner Beschleunigung messe.<sup>35</sup> Dahingehend wird Bachs an der christlich geprägten Idee des Zeitkreises orientierte Musik derjenigen Mozarts gegenübergestellt, die im Sinne einer aufklärerischen „emancipation of humanity“ vor allem die Linearität der „menschlichen“ Zeit betone.<sup>36</sup> Der Blick ins spätere 19. Jahrhundert und mit ihm die Frage nach der musikalischen Tiefenzeit wird jedoch ausgeklammert.

Im Ausgang von Berger und Heister bleibt festzuhalten, dass die Suche nach einer musikalischen Tiefenzeit sowohl nach der Anverwandlung geologischer Modelle wie demjenigen der Zeitschichtung – etwa nach der Simultanität ungleichzeitiger musikalischer Prozesse – fragen muss als auch nach der „weltanschaulichen“<sup>37</sup> Relativierung der sattelzeitlichen Denkfigur des Zeitpfeils durch die Idee des Zeitkreises. Als Komponist symphonischer Werke, deren Betrachtung gleichermassen zur Verwendung geologischer Metaphern wie zur Reflexion über die musikalische und historische Zeit einlädt, erweist sich gerade Anton Bruckner als geeigneter Forschungsgegenstand. Wie nachzuweisen ist, bezeugt insbesondere das aus heutiger Sicht freilich selbst der Fach- und Rezeptionsgeschichte zugehörige Bruckner-Bild August Halms und Ernst Kurths gleichermassen den musikanalytischen wie den musikhistoriographischen Niederschlag von Tiefenzeit und liefert Ansätze zu einer Neuevaluierung historischen Bewusstseins in der Musik des ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts.

### Bruckner und die Tiefenzeit

Am 6. Januar 1927 bekundete Ernst Kurth brieflich gegenüber August Halm: „Alle Welt erkennt bereits unsere Zusammengehörigkeit und wir beide sahen uns nur zweimal im Leben, u. z. ganz kurz.“<sup>38</sup> Jenem heute lexikalisierten Eindruck leisteten nicht zuletzt die Bruckner-Monographien beider Autoren Vorschub. In erster Auflage 1914 erschienen, jedoch vor allem in der zweiten Auflage von 1923 breiter

32 HEISTER 2016: 24.

33 Hinsichtlich der konzeptuellen Nähe zur Idee des Palimpsestes vgl. HEISTER 2016: 25–26; HEISTER 2015.

34 BERGER 2007: 7.

35 Vgl. BERGER 2007: 175–176.

36 BERGER 2007: 288, 198.

37 Auch Berger betont die Relevanz einer „history of the represented world views“. BERGER 2007: 24.

38 Brief von Ernst Kurth an August Halm, 6. Januar 1927, zit. nach: SCHADER 1998: 22.

rezipiert,<sup>39</sup> schlug Halms Schrift *Die Symphonie Anton Bruckners* einem Bild des Komponisten Bahn, das dem verbreiteten Rezeptionsklischee von Formlosigkeit die These von Bruckners „Form als lebenerzeugende[m] Gesetz“ entgegenstellte.<sup>40</sup> Betont Halm, ein Buch vorzulegen, „das überhaupt nicht historisch orientiert“ sei, dafür jedoch im Sinne einer Formenlehre die Absicht verfolge, „die Aesthetik der Musik zu fundamentieren“,<sup>41</sup> so ist es Kurths 1925 erschienene zweibändige Monographie, die Halms Andeutung, Bruckners Musik sei ein „Ereignis von höchstem Wert in der Geistesgeschichte“,<sup>42</sup> im Gebiet der Musikgeschichtsschreibung ausformuliert. An Halms analytische und ästhetische Befunde anknüpfend, sie zu einer historiographischen Deutung erweiternd, lässt sich Kurths Bruckner-Buch mit Carl Dahlhaus' These, bei Kurth sei das „Verhältnis der Historie zur Theorie [...] gewissermaßen ins Gegenteil verkehrt“, komplementär auf Halms Monographie beziehen: „Statt daß von einem Historiker eine Theoriesprache entliehen wurde, war es die Theoriesprache selbst, die Geschichtsschreibung konstituierte [...]“.<sup>43</sup> Wirft der Gegenstand Bruckner bei beiden Autoren Fragen nach der Zeitlichkeit auf – bei Halm vorwiegend nach der zeitlichen Gestaltung, nach der Formung von Musik, bei Kurth zusätzlich nach dem Wesen historischer Zeit, nach Grundproblemen der Geschichtsschreibung –, sollen beide Schriften nachfolgend einer gesonderten Betrachtung unterzogen werden.

### **Landschaft – Struktur – Ereignis. August Halms Die Symphonie Anton Bruckners**

Dunkelheit denken: nicht wie ein Berg,  
eher wie ein negatives Gebirge, wie Berge aus  
Wind, die auf dekorative Logik verzichten.<sup>44</sup>

Was sein Bruckner-Buch sei oder besser: was es eben nicht sei, vermittelt August Halm in aller Deutlichkeit: „Ich schreibe hier keine Musikgeschichte, [...] sondern nehme gewisse einzelne Exemplare von Form, um von ihnen über die Gesinnung, aus der sie erzeugt wurden, Aufschluss zu erhalten [...]“.<sup>45</sup> Der an anderer Stelle attestierten „Mutlosigkeit und Denkfaulheit“ des Historikers<sup>46</sup> setzt Halm eine phänomenologische Perspektive entgegen.<sup>47</sup> Das Bewusstsein der historischen Dimension bleibt seiner Musikbetrachtung dennoch eingeschrieben; so knüpfen zum einen die von Halm verwendeten Begriffe der „Gesinnung“ und des „künstlerischen Wollens“<sup>48</sup> an die Sprache der Geistes- und Stilgeschichtsschreibung an, zum anderen firmiert Bruckner selbst als geistesgeschichtliches Ereignis.<sup>49</sup> Während die bisherige Forschung zu Halms Musikästhetik die Idee des Organischen sowie die Verwendung biologischer Metaphern in den Fokus gerückt hat,<sup>50</sup> nimmt die nachfolgende Lektüre die Präsenz geologischen und geographischen Vokabulars in den Blick. Dass dieses im Sinne der Idee der Tiefenzeit in enger Verbindung mit Phänomenen der Zeitlichkeit steht, zeigt grundlegend bereits die folgende Passage aus dem „zweiten Stück“ von Halms Bruckner-Monographie auf:

Er [Bruckner] hat [im Gegensatz zu Beethoven] nicht die eine entschlossene Linie, er führt durch mehr Charaktere musikalischer Landschaft – und schliesslich entsteht ein Erdteil und eine Welt von Musik. Wir kön-

39 Vgl. HINRICHSSEN 2021: 339.

40 HALM 1914: 31; vgl. HINRICHSSEN 2021: 337–339.

41 HALM 1914: XIII, XVI.

42 HALM 1914: 192.

43 DAHLHAUS 2002 [1984]: 395.

44 POSCHMANN 2020: V. 68–70.

45 HALM 1914: 12; vgl. hierzu SCHMALZRIEDT 1978: 37

46 HALM 1921: 87.

47 Zum Begriff der Phänomenologie vgl. SCHMALZRIEDT 1978, der betont, dass die Begriffsverwendung bei Halm weder der Definition Hegels (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*) noch der Husserls (*Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*) entspricht; vgl. HALM 1919: 301.

48 HALM 1914: XIII.

49 Siehe Anm. 42.

50 Vgl. BORIO 2011; KÖHLER 1996; REHDING 2001; ROTHFARB 2005/06; SCHMIDT 1990.

nen nunmehr ohne Gleichnis davon reden. In Bruckners Werk, dem urmusikalischen, differenziert sich das Zeitliche durch die musikalische Erscheinung.<sup>51</sup>

Es ist das Bild „musikalischer Landschaft“, das als räumliches Äquivalent zur Theorie der Sonatenform bei Bruckner fungiert und Halms Idee von den „Zeiten der Hauptform“ bildlich fasst.<sup>52</sup> Kenne Beethovens Musik eine teleologische Richtung, fächere sich diejenige Bruckners dagegen in diverse Höhenkämme, Täler und Plateaus auf und lasse je nach Betrachtungsposition eben nicht nur die eine Lesart, sondern mannigfaltige Sichtweisen zu:

Für sich und von nahem betrachtet, lässt sie [die Durchführung des Kopfsatzes von Bruckners Vierter Symphonie] zwei Gipfel ersehen; im grossen Zusammenhang erscheint sie mehr wie eine Hochebene mit differenzierter Höhenkurve: nach dem ersten Gipfel ein jäher, doch kleiner Abfall der Linie, die sogleich wieder ansteigt und sich zu einer zweiten Kuppe emporschwingt; diese letztere von kleinerer Fläche, aber noch höher, freier gelegen, intensiver von der Harmonie bestrahlt [...].<sup>53</sup>

Die Auswahl der Gebirgsszenerie scheint dabei zugleich weltanschaulich grundiert, kann sie doch als Verweis auf das Erhabene, das Mystisch-Spirituelle gelten und mit einer Passage aus Arthur Schopenhauers Hauptwerk *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* enggeführt werden, die die kathartische Wirkung des Gebirgsanblicks beschreibt.<sup>54</sup> Weitergehend treten in Halms Darstellung wiederum von Schopenhauer herkommende Bezüge zu asiatischen Philosophien und Religionen zutage.<sup>55</sup> So wird der Übergang zwischen der Reprise – mit Halms selbst schon buddhistisch anmutendem Begriff zu sprechen: der „Wiederkehr“ – und dem Epilog mit dem Blick „über einen See Nirwana“ verglichen, ferner der „wahrhaft fruchtbare Dualismus“ zwischen dem „Naturgeist der Form“ und dem „Geist der Melodie“ als „Weg zur Einheit“, als „Tao der Musik“ bezeichnet.<sup>56</sup> Bruckners Symphonik wird in diesem Sinne „geschaut“, nicht bloss gehört;<sup>57</sup> das Bild „musikalischer Landschaft“ ist zugleich an jenen mystischen Rezeptionsmodus geknüpft, der den Bedingungen der ästhetischen Situation selbst, d. h. der musikalischen Zeit unterliegt.

Wird Zeit als Landschaft modelliert, fungiert der Notentext als eine Art Landkarte. Der bei Bruckner obligatorische Doppelstrich zwischen Exposition und Durchführung wird als Grenzlinie aufgefasst.<sup>58</sup> Doch bleibt es nicht beim Blick auf jenes vermeintlich statische kartographische Element; vielmehr tritt die Idee relativer Zeitlichkeit hervor:

Die musikalische Form begreifen heisst: die Zeitkunst begreifen. Vermögen wir das, erkennen wir, dass die Zeit nicht nur der Tummelplatz für die Musik, sondern ein Hauptfaktor, ja gewissermassen ihr Inhalt ist, so werden uns die scheinbar ganz äusserlichen Bestimmungen mit einemmal wesentlich und lebensvoll. [...] so gilt es jetzt zu lernen, dass jenes ‚nach dem Doppelstrich‘ wirklich viel zu sagen hat. Es wäre musikalisch äusserlich, wenn es nur den Ort anzeigte; es ist gehaltvoll, sobald wir an die Zeit denken.<sup>59</sup>

Die Zeit als den eigentlichen „Inhalt“ der Musik zu begreifen, führt zu einem tieferen Verständnis der notierten Zeichenoberfläche. Form wird als Formung von Zeit, Musik als Ereigniskunst verstanden; das „äussere[] Zeichen“ des Doppelstrichs markiert „ein inneres Ereignis“.<sup>60</sup> Nicht eben beiläufig klingt avant la lettre eine moderne strukturgegeschichtliche Denkfigur an, die Halms Analysen der Bruckner'schen Kopf-

51 HALM 1914: 47.

52 Vgl. ferner die Rezeption des Bildes „musikalischer Landschaft“ in Theodor W. Adornos Schubert-Aufsatz. ADORNO 1982 [1928]: 20–21; vgl. HINRICHSSEN 2021: 348.

53 HALM 1914: 33–34.

54 Vgl. SCHOPENHAUER 1961a [1844]: 520.

55 Zu Schopenhauers wirkmächtiger Rezeption der ostasiatischen Philosophie vgl. SCHOPENHAUER 1961b [1854]: 459–471 (Kap. „Sinologie“); APP 2018 [2014]: 186–191.

56 HALM 1914: 54, 216.

57 Vgl. HALM 1914: 34–35, 126–127 und passim.

58 „Begnügen wir uns also vorerst mit der äusserlich kartographischen Bestimmung: ‚der Durchführungsteil der Hauptform ist das, was nach dem Doppelstrich kommt‘ [...]“ HALM 1914: 18.

59 HALM 1914: 19.

60 HALM 1914: 38.

sätze wesentlich grundiert. Indem Halm wiederum anhand der Vierten Symphonie attestiert, dass sich Bruckners „Formenwelt“ durch die Entgegensetzung von musikalischen Ereignissen ausgestellter Zeitlichkeit und musikalischen Strukturen ausgestellter Unzeitlichkeit konstituiert, lassen sich Bruckners symphonische Beginne als sukzessive Übergänge von Struktur zu Ereignis modellieren:

Zum erstenmal bei Bruckner empfinden wir ganz die Heiligkeit des Ursprünglichen; etwas wie Schöpfungsluft glauben wir einzuatmen [...]. Wir spüren es: hier beginnt nicht ein Musikstück, sondern die Musik selbst hebt an. [...] Vor Bruckner gab es, bildlich gesprochen, Dramen, Szenen, Anekdoten, Erzählungen, Geschichten aus der Geschichte; Bruckner fängt mit dem an, was geschehen musste, damit es Geschichte gäbe.<sup>61</sup>

Vermochten es die „Klassiker“ bloss, „in das jeweilige einzelne Musikstück einzuführen“,<sup>62</sup> eröffnet Bruckners Symphonik hingegen eine tiefenzeitliche Dimension und stellt das Werden gleichwie das Sein und Vergehen musikalischer Ereignisse aus. Das „Zeitliche“ selbst wird zum relativen „Faktor“ musikalischen Geschehens.<sup>63</sup> Zeit wird im Sinne tiefenzeitlicher Implikationen „als Bewegungsbegriff erfahrbar“.<sup>64</sup>

### **Historik – Romantik – Mystik. Ernst Kurths Bruckner**

Schattental. Teeschale. Unfaßbar schwarz. Eisen-Asche-  
Glaser, Setoguro, ein regloser Fluß, in den ich  
so lange schaute, der sich den Außenraum  
Innenraum als Aufgabe stellt.<sup>65</sup>

„Bruckner als Mystiker“, so lautet das erste Unterkapitel von Ernst Kurths zweibändiger Monographie. Es eröffnet die im ersten Grosskapitel vorgenommenen Betrachtungen zu Bruckners „Geschichtliche[r] Umwelt“. Bruckner in die geistesgeschichtliche Strömung der Mystik einzuordnen, schlägt einerseits die Brücke zu den musikästhetischen Befunden August Halms, dient der ins Psychologische erweiterten energetischen Analyse als historisches Fundament. Andererseits birgt der zunächst sonderbar scheinende Ansatz ein historiographisches Problem, das Kurth zu grundsätzlichen Reflexionen über das Wesen der Geschichtsschreibung veranlasst. Quasi als Reaktion auf das Paradox, dass sich der Mystiker Bruckner am „Urschoß“ der Dinge selbst<sup>66</sup> und damit gleichsam fern von der äusseren, geschichtlichen Welt bewegt habe, etabliert Kurth eine differenzierte Geschichtserzählung, die sich aus heutiger Sicht strukturgeschichtlich ausnimmt.<sup>67</sup>

Geradezu selbst als mystische Beschwörung anmutend, hebt Kurth mit dem irritierenden Bekenntnis an: „Große Geister umfassen auch das Dunkel, nicht die Helle allein. Schon im Denken ist es so, vollends in der Kunst.“<sup>68</sup> Das bereits bei Halm vorgezeichnete Bild des verkannten, weltabgewandten Künstlers wird nun an das antike Konzept des poeta vates, des „mystisch begabten Genies“, zurückgebunden, das auch „den Sinnen abliegende Lebensbereiche nicht mit verstandesmäßigem[,] sondern mystischem Erschauen“ durchdringt.<sup>69</sup> Die von Halm herkommende Idee des Erschauens überträgt Kurth hierbei von der Rezeptions- auf die Produktions- respektive Inspirationsseite einer Kunstform, die als „Entfaltung“ eines schöpferischen „Urerlebnisses“ verstanden wird, „das aus geheimer Empfängnis erst an die Verstandes- und Sinnenwelt ausbricht, alle Sinnesempfindung überhaupt erst zeitigt und in

61 HALM 1914: 42; Zitat aus dem früheren Aufsatz HALM 1909/10: 64–65. Hervorhebungen original.

62 HALM 1914: 42.

63 Vgl. HALM 1914: 64.

64 Siehe Anm. 19.

65 POSCHMANN 2020: V. 7–10.

66 KURTH 1925: 3.

67 Dass zudem biologische Metaphern Kurths Geschichtsauffassung und -erzählung prägen, sei mit Verweis auf BARTSCH 2014 erwähnt.

68 KURTH 1925: 3.

69 KURTH 1925: 3.

Bildgestalt zwingt“.<sup>70</sup> Im Sinne des von Halm postulierten „urmusikalischen“ Charakters setzt das Genie Bruckner an den „schöpferischen Kräfte[n] selbst“ an und damit an den bereits in den *Grundlagen des linearen Kontrapunkts* beschriebenen psychischen „Urvorgänge[n] des musikalischen Gestaltens“.<sup>71</sup>

Dass Bruckner somit als „selbstleuchtender Mensch“<sup>72</sup> gelten könne, strahlt nicht nur in ästhetischer Hinsicht aus, sondern wird zur Crux der historiographischen Betrachtung. Deutlich geht dies aus Kurths Diskussion der zeitgenössisch gängigen Einordnung des Komponisten in die musikalische Romantik hervor.<sup>73</sup> Auch wenn „die romantischen Merkmale [...] bei Bruckners Musik [...] so ausgeprägt und so vollkräftig“ seien, „daß seine von außen blickende Zeit nur die wahrnahm und man ihn bis heute zu den Hauptvertretern der Romantik in einer wiederum viel zu schematischen Weise zählt“, pocht Kurth auf eine komplexere Darstellung, die der „eigenen Dämonik“ des Komponisten gehorcht.<sup>74</sup> An die, auch auf Ricarda Huch zurückgehenden,<sup>75</sup> historiographischen Ausführungen seiner *Romantischen Harmonik* anknüpfend,<sup>76</sup> entwirft Kurth ein strukturgeschichtlich anmutendes Konzept von Romantik, indem er differenzierend von verschiedenen „Strömungen der Romantik“ spricht und deren Abkunft aus dem Klassizismus betont.<sup>77</sup> Aus der „klarste[n] Helle“ des Klassizismus herkommend, hätten die Romantiker nicht deren Gegenteil, das Dunkel selbst, vielmehr „eine Region des Zwiellichts“ erschlossen, die „Helle und Dunkel in bestimmter, eigentümlicher Weise verbindet; von ihr aus nun schweiften sie gegen Volldunkel und Vollhelle“.<sup>78</sup> Diese „Region des Zwiellichts“ kenne auch Bruckner; dennoch „durchwirkt [er] sie in anderer, genau umgekehrter Erlebnisrichtung“: „Er kommt nicht vom Klassizismus, der sinnlichen Welt erfassung und verstandesmäßigen Weltbeziehung, noch kommt er von irgendeinem Teilstand der Romantik: er steigt als mittelalterlicher Mystiker in die Romantik auf.“<sup>79</sup> Bruckner wird zur historischen „Bewegungsstörung“, verkörpert zwar den Fluchtpunkt romantischer Strebung, romantischen Sehns, vollzieht aber die Strebung selbst nicht mit: „Mochte um ihn die Romantik eine blühend naturhafte Schönheitsfülle treiben, er war die Naturkraft selbst.“<sup>80</sup> Es ist die Energie eines „gewaltige[n] geschichtliche[n] Gefühl[s]“,<sup>81</sup> die Bruckner Einfühlung nicht nur in die Kunst seiner Zeit, sondern gleichermaßen in die musikalische Vergangenheit verschafft. Instinktiv sind dem Mystiker Bruckner tiefenzeitliche Dimensionen zugänglich; dezidiert spricht Kurth von der „geschichtliche[n] Tiefenstaffelung“, in der sich die Zeit dem Erschauen Bruckners darbietet:

Bruckner ist ein Mensch, der nicht allein Welt und Natur aus seinem tiefen Eigengefühl umfaßte, sondern ebenso die ganzen abendländischen Geistes- und Gefühlswege mit einer hellseherischen Kraft wie kaum ein zweiter Künstler; seine Macht beruht in einer Alldurchdringung nach Raum und Zeit, nach Ausbreitung und geschichtlicher Tiefenstaffelung, aber stets aus der Urkraft und Eigenausstrahlung seines durch und durch mystischen Empfindens.<sup>82</sup>

Wenn sich in Bruckner schliesslich „ein unendlich weiter Zeitennachklang“ verdichtet, sein Schaffen folglich unter dem „Tiefendruck“ immenser Zeitschichten entsteht,<sup>83</sup> wird Bruckners Musik avant la lettre als tiefenzeitliches Phänomen modelliert. Andererseits wird der historiographische Gegenstand

70 KURTH 1925: 3.

71 KURTH 1922 [1917]: 3.

72 KURTH 1925: 5.

73 Kurth selbst spricht davon, „daß es überhaupt mit einigem Recht erlaubt ist“, vom 19. Jahrhundert als dem „romantischen ‚Jahrhundert‘ zu sprechen“. KURTH 1925: 47, Anm. 1.

74 KURTH 1925: 8, 6.

75 Vgl. HUCH 1899 und 1902. Vgl. auch die Erwähnung von Ricarda Huch als „große[r] Ausdeuterin“ der Romantiker in KURTH 1923 [1920]: 23–24.

76 Vgl. KURTH 1923 [1920]: 14–43.

77 KURTH 1925: 9.

78 KURTH 1925: 9. Hervorhebungen original.

79 KURTH 1925: 10. Hervorhebungen original.

80 KURTH 1925: 11, 12.

81 KURTH 1925: 12.

82 KURTH 1925: 9.

83 KURTH 1925: 13, 69.

Bruckner zu einem Präzedenzfall der Geschichtsschreibung. Gerade weil bei Bruckner die „Einheit von persönlicher Lebensgeschichte und umgebender Welt“ fehle, sieht sich Kurth vorbegrifflich zu einer Aufwertung strukturgeschichtlicher gegenüber rein ereignisgeschichtlichen Methodiken veranlasst: „Wer Geschehnisse als Ergebnis, in ihren verborgenen Untergründen aber das Wirkende sieht, dem schließt sich Bruckner in seine Zeit und Umwelt ein [...]“.<sup>84</sup> Der Fall Bruckner zeige, dass die diachrone, „bloß zeitliche Schichtung“ von Epochenbegriffen einer gleichsam räumlichen, synchronen Schichtung von Strömungen weichen müsse:

Es gab [...] in jedem Zeitalter mystische, romantische, rationalistische Charaktere, Renaissancemenschen, früh- und spätgotische wie antikisch durchhauchte oder auch von außereuropäischen Geisteszeichen durchsetzte Naturen, mochten sie auch in anderer Weltumgebung vielfach nur verhüllt und gebrochen zum Ausdruck kommen. Geistesgeschichte ist kein Formschema, ist ewig wirkende Formmöglichkeit.<sup>85</sup>

Wenngleich zu ihr querständig, wird Bruckner zum Symptom der Romantik als einer „Zeit der Wunder und Widersprüche“, deren Geschichtsschreibung eben nicht dem „Grundirrtum der Geschichtsdarstellung bis auf den heutigen Tag“ verfallen dürfe – den unhinterfragten „lieben Einkettungen“ von Einzelereignissen in teleologische „Kettenlinien“.<sup>86</sup>

### Ausblick. Historismus und Moderne

Ich aber ziehe meine Schleppe nach, Last der Erinnerung, die sich in Falten legt wie die Müllsäcke, massiger und schwerer wird. Ich aber gehe weiter, kein Bleiben im Reiche des Fleisches – aßen wir nicht das ganze Barock, das komplette Rokoko, aßen alles auf, die Schleppen und Wülste, hängenden Brüste, die müde Haut und die süßen Zweifel, die Zuckerhüte und schließlich die Teller ... fremde Last, die ich mitziehe, doch, denke ich, doch du, meine Seele, nimm nicht die Last von mir, denn ich bin die Last.<sup>87</sup>

Die Präsenz der Idee einer musikalischen Tiefenzeit in August Halms und Ernst Kurths Bruckner-Monographien lässt einen doppelten Ausblick zu, der – ohne an dieser Stelle eine umfassende Evaluation und Reflexion der im close reading betrachteten Aspekte vornehmen zu können – einerseits das musikanalytische, andererseits das musikhistoriographische Potential des Konzepts aufzeigt. Halms Ansatz, Musik mithilfe geologischer Metaphern als Phänomen relativer Zeitlichkeit zu kartieren, dem – etwa mit Blick auf Bruckners Konzeption symphonischen Beginns – komplexe Schichtungen im Sinne einer „Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen“ sowie Übergänge von Struktur zu Ereignis nicht fremd sind, lässt sich als Vorläufer moderner Analysezugänge auffassen, wie sie etwa Hanns-Werner Heister beschreibt. Das Nachleben von Halms Ideen innerhalb der Bruckner-Forschung belegt exemplarisch ein 2010 publizierter Essay Hans Zenders. In seiner Analyse der Fünften Symphonie stellt Zender das „konzeptuelle Zusammenwirken aller drei Modi der Zeit“ heraus, von Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft, die ihrerseits geologisch als „Kontinente“, „durch Abgründe voneinander getrennt“, versinnbildlicht werden, und attestiert, dass bei Bruckner „in nuce Zeit als ‚Geschichte‘ – gegenüber der ‚Naturzeit‘ Wagners – entworfen“ werde.<sup>88</sup> Gerade aus der für das Finale der Fünften grundlegenden „paradoxe[n] Zusammen-spannung“ des „evolutiven‘ Sonatendenkens“ mit der „neugewonnene[n] Signifikanz der polyphonen Tradition“ ergebe sich schliesslich „eine neue Zeitgestaltung“, die den Weg in die musikalische Moderne bereite:

Aus der Quadratur des Kreises, der dialektischen ‚Durchführung‘ von kreisender Seins-Zeit und fliehender Werde-Zeit, wird in einer gewaltigen Explosion die neue Komplexitätsebene geboren werden, auf der sich die Zeit der musikalischen Moderne zeigt, wie immer zersplittert in tausend Bruchstücke oder sich zu un-

84 KURTH 1925: 14.

85 KURTH 1925: 57–58, Anm. 1, 8.

86 KURTH 1925: 52, 70–71, 73.

87 POSCHMANN 2017 [2013]: 333.

88 ZENDER 2010: 92, 89, 92. Vgl. die Parallele zu Halm, siehe Anm. 61.

geahnten neuen metamorphotischen Riesenformen ballend. Ihre Vielgestaltigkeit zu beschreiben ist neue Musik seither beschäftigt.<sup>89</sup>

Auch ohne direkten Verweis auf Halm oder Kurth liest sich Zenders Essay als Hommage an die Konzepte der „Kraftwelle“<sup>90</sup> und der „Zeiten der Hauptform“.<sup>91</sup>

Ebenfalls in Richtung Modernität weisen Kurths historiographische Ausführungen. Indem sich in Bruckners Symphonik Musikgeschichte gleichsam synchron verdichtet findet, der Komponist darüber hinaus selbst zum Indikator einer vielschichtigen Zeit wird, sich teleologischen Geschichtsmodellen als „Störfaktor“ widersetzt, dabei den historiographischen Einbezug strukturgeschichtlicher Überlegungen notwendig macht, erscheint Bruckner als Exponent einer historistischen Moderne,<sup>92</sup> deren Konturen sich etwa im Rückgriff auf Ernst Blochs *Geist der Utopie* umreißen lassen.<sup>93</sup> Auch für Bloch gilt Bruckner – neben Johannes Brahms – als Markstein einer notwendigen Abkehr vom „totschlägerischen Nacheinander“ der blossen Ereignisgeschichtsschreibung.<sup>94</sup> Dem Befund entsprechend, dass in der Musik des ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts „die sinnlose Turbulenz des Fortschrittmäßigen [...] verschwunden“ sei, wird Bruckner zum Gewährsmann einer neuen, vertieften Zeitkonzeption, die die „rastlose Neuheit mitsamt der schlechten Unendlichkeit ihrer geraden Linie zum Bogen“ windet und ein „periodische[s] System von Formen der Musik“ anstrebt.<sup>95</sup>

Was Bloch als „utopische[s] Weiterdenken“<sup>96</sup> charakterisiert, ist schliesslich nichts anderes als die musikalische Erscheinungsform von Tiefenzeit. Zumal die mit der Entdeckung derselben einhergehende Relativierung „menschliche[r] Zeitmaße“<sup>97</sup> als Entstehungsbedingung des Historismus gelten muss, erweist sich die Zeitkunst Musik nicht nur für den Philosophen Bloch als Seismograph neuartiger Zeitvorstellungen. Auch die Bruckner-Monographien Halms und Kurths unterstreichen den Stellenwert von Tiefenzeit für die „Genealogie“ einer musikalischen Moderne,<sup>98</sup> die sich dem Primat der teleologischen Zeit dezidiert entzieht. Der Dualismus von *Bach's cycle* und *Mozart's arrow* wird um eine dritte, synthetische Vorstellung musikalischer Zeit erweitert: Bruckner's deep time.

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89 ZENDER 2010: 89.

90 KURTH 1925: 249.

91 HALM 1914: 38.

92 Zum hier zugrunde gelegten Begriff des musikalischen Historismus vgl. DAHLHAUS 2000a [1966] und 2000b [1973].

93 Zum Verhältnis zwischen Bloch und Halm vgl. KABISCH 2016.

94 BLOCH 1918: 37.

95 BLOCH 1918: 96, 97.

96 BLOCH 1918: 97.

97 Siehe Anm. 18.

98 JANZ 2014.

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# Remembering Imperfectly: Bridging the Past and Future Through Yiddish-American Folk Song Recordings

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**Abstract:** *In the liner notes for the 1957 Folkways Records release Jewish Children’s Songs and Games ethnomusicologist and performer Ruth Rubin explains that Yiddish songs offer a vehicle for visiting the Old World of the Ashkenazi nineteenth century, an evocative claim that reveals mid-twentieth century American investments in the Yiddish folk song tradition. This article investigates the role of Yiddish-American folk song recordings in mediating the music of the past for future generations of listeners. I argue that ethnographic recordings and commercially released folk LPs in the mid-twentieth century United States represent the preservationist impulses of the period, which themselves colour and shape the performances on the recordings.*

## Introduction

Zol zayn, az ikh boy in der luft mayne shleser,  
Zol zayn, az mayn got iz in gantsn nito,  
In troyrn iz mir heler, in troyrn iz mir beser,  
In kholem der himl iz bloyer fun blo.

(“Maybe I am building castles in the air  
Maybe my God does not exist at all  
But in my dream things are brighter and better for me  
And the sky is bluer than blue”.)<sup>2</sup>

So sings Michael Fox, the son of Yiddish speaking Holocaust survivors, while strumming a nylon string guitar as part of a field recording session with ethnomusicologist Ruth Rubin. The note on the tape log reads, “World War II. Papernikov. With his guitar. Learned from his mother. Remembers imperfectly; sings it again, and remembers”.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Ruth Rubin coaches Fox through his singing and also through his memory, prompting “I wanted you to go back further in your memory, I wanted you to go back to see whether you remember anything from your early, early childhood [...]”. On the tape, Rubin acknowledges her relationship with Fox, whom she taught in a class on folk culture, recalling that the last time they attempted to record his performance, ‘traffic noises’ cluttered the sonic capacity of the tape, making necessary their present recording session.

This moment of performance, of remembering, of dreaming, of connecting to past generations while preserving musical heritage for the future directs us to think about the affordances of sound recording within the realm of mid-twentieth century Yiddish-American folk song.<sup>4</sup> This article investigates the

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2 MLOTEK 1972.

3 Fox 1967.

4 LEVINE 2024. I have previously mobilized the construction “Yiddish-American folk song” to draw attention to the character of Yiddish language folk song in the twentieth century United States. While Yiddish-American folk song may include songs

role of sound recording technologies in mediating between the past and present, between memory and nostalgic imagination, and between Yiddish culture and the American Folk Revival, focusing on both ethnographic field recordings and commercially released LPs, which each represented efforts to preserve Yiddish musical folk culture in the mid-twentieth century United States. I argue that these Yiddish-American folk song recordings present a sonic portrait of the Yiddish past that was coloured and shaped by literary and theatrical imagination, prevailing standards of folkloric authenticity, and the unreliability of memory. The ethnographic and commercial recordings that emerged in this period, then, reveal not merely a corpus of Yiddish language folk songs, but a set of attitudes and beliefs surrounding Yiddish culture and its transmission from the past to the future.<sup>5</sup>

At first glance, academic folklore and the recorded music industry may appear at odds. After all, ethnomusicological initiatives sought to record supposedly authentic examples of folk singing, attempting to preserve music and sound that was unmarred by the polluting influence of industrial modernity. Commercially released Yiddish folk song LPs in the twentieth century United States, on the other hand, leaned heavily on instrumental and vocal conventions borrowed from the popular Yiddish theatre as well as the guitar-centred aesthetic standard of the American Folk Revival. However, I contend that these two strains were consistently entwined, forging a Yiddish-American folk song tradition indebted to a range of folkloric, theatrical, literary, and ideological influences.

The present discussion focuses on the specific context of the post-WWII period in the United States, during which the form and function of Yiddish morphed quickly as a result of the Holocaust, upward mobility and assimilation among American Jews, and the burgeoning influence of the State of Israel and the Hebrew language.<sup>6</sup> The evolution of Yiddish in the mid-twentieth century United States accompanied broader trends in the Jewish-American re-imagining of the past and positing visions of the future. Among the landmark contributions to the resulting corpus was Elizabeth Herzog and Mark Zborowski's 1952 *Life is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl*, which sought to describe the daily life of Eastern European Jews living in a pre-modern *shtetl*.<sup>7</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, in her introduction to the fifth edition of *Life Is With People*, describes the book as "a turning point in the relationship of American Jews to their Eastern European past".<sup>8</sup> She notes, however, "several vexing problems, among them the identification of East European Jewish culture with the *shtetl*," challenging the romanticized and imprecise definition of the *shtetl* furnished by Zborowski and Herzog, specifically the imagined "isolation, self-containment, and homogeneity," of the *shtetl*.<sup>9</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett provides a model for a critical evaluation of mid-twentieth century reflections on the Ashkenazi Jewish past, showing how these projects were informed by the historical context in which they were created.

Sheila Jelen echoes this approach in her investigation of post-war literary ethnographies, which she describes as "salvage poetics." Jelen defines, "salvage poetics are a series of framing devices wherein primary cultural materials in the form of text or image are mediated, translated, explicated, personalized, and/or valorised in an effort to create an accessible description of a lost culture. Salvage poetics represents a marriage of aesthetic and ethnographic impulses".<sup>10</sup> I draw on these valuable frameworks and perspectives, considering how the preservationist ethos of Yiddish-American folk song was situ-

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derived from Eastern Europe, I focus on the ways in which these songs were understood, interpreted, and performed in the American context.

5 SCHRIRE 2016. Dani Schrire's compelling reflection on Jewish ethnography similarly interrogates the relationship between modernity and the past, folklore and literature, and technology and memory.

6 SHANDLER 2008: 13–27. Jeffrey Shandler describes a turn to "postvernacular Yiddish", in which Yiddish took on a predominantly symbolic role, particularly in Jewish-American culture.

7 HERZOG and ZBOROWSKI 1952: 22–27. The authors of the book describe the methodology of their study as including both interviews with informants who migrated from Eastern Europe to New York City, and films, literature, and other cultural creations.

8 KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT 1995: ix.

9 KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT 1995: xii–xiii.

10 JELEN 2020: 1. Jelen explains: "What I do in this study is try to understand the role played by a variety of different hybrid texts—or texts that exist on the border between the literary and the ethnographic." (JELEN 2020: xvii).

ated within the larger cultural sphere of mid-twentieth century Jewish-American culture. This period coincided with the advent of the long-playing record in 1949, which afforded unprecedented curation of musical materials not only through longer track listings, but by pairing sound recordings with artwork and liner notes. In sound, text, and visual art, LPs portrayed an undifferentiated “Yiddish folk song” that signified the supposedly lost world of the pre-modern Eastern European *shtetl*. As Abigail Wood notes, “the first principal change in general attitudes to Yiddish song after the Holocaust was the consensual expansion of the ‘folk’ represented by the Yiddish song canon to include the full compass of the Yiddish cultural world and all examples of Yiddish song”.<sup>11</sup> Long playing records, then, not only reflect mid-twentieth century technological innovation, but the evolving concept of Yiddish folk song in this period.

This article is centred around the figure of Ruth Rubin, a leading folklorist and collector of Yiddish language folk songs as well as a performer of Yiddish songs in the twentieth century. Through Rubin, I argue that intergenerational cultural transmission is shaped by both imagined and historical understandings of the past as well as the opportunity for preservation afforded by sound reproduction. Rubin’s field recordings from 1946-1970, motivated by notions of authentic folklore in vogue during the twentieth century, preserved an impressive corpus of songs, the investigation of which yields insights on the ethnographic process in this period. I pivot, through Rubin, to commercially produced Yiddish language folk LPs. Rubin recorded several of these herself, and maintained an intimate connection with both the Folkways record label and the larger American Folk Revival scene.<sup>12</sup>

While there are many other notable ethnographers who engaged with Yiddish folk song, among them I.L. Cahan, Joel Engel, Moshe Beregovsky, and Sofia Magid, Ruth Rubin is unique as both a folklorist and prolific song interpreter and performer. Likewise, Rubin is unique among performers of Yiddish folk song, merging her extensive field work with her performance practice, both on stage and on recordings. Rubin emerges, then, as a particularly vital figure in the history of mid-twentieth century Yiddish-American folk song whose life and career embody the entwined enterprises of Yiddish musical ethnography and folk song performance on record.

I bolster the discussion of Rubin’s work with several other examples of Yiddish folk song recordings from the 1950s and ‘60s which further amplify the entangled impulses of folkloric authenticity and literary imagination. Ultimately, this article seeks to draw together the swirl of temporalities engaged by sound recording technologies, underscoring the ways in which the full scope of Yiddish-American folk song in the critical period of the 1950s and ‘60s mediated the past, present, and future.

### Sound Recording and Yiddish Ethnography

Yiddish folklore in the twentieth century was facilitated by novel technological innovations, including sound reproduction technologies which allowed ethnographers to record the speech and song of their interlocutors. Jonathan Sterne has theorized the sociological and historical underpinnings of sound reproduction in this period, seeking to uncover how the development of recording technologies around the turn of the twentieth century was “shot through with the tensions, tendencies, and currents of the culture from which they emerged, right on down to their most basic mechanical functions”.<sup>13</sup> Sterne provides a compelling analytical lens that highlights the technological medium itself within ethnographic initiatives. In particular, he describes how sound reproduction devices as technologies of preservation

11 WOOD 2013: 53. Where scholars such as LUKIN 2022 and KHAZDAN 2022 have meticulously outlined the minute distinctions between Yiddish song genres, as well as folklorists’ conception of these genre distinctions, in this article I largely accept Wood’s contention that the received tradition of Yiddish folk song downplayed these details, particularly in the case of “Yiddish folk song” LPs.

12 Rubin wrote several articles for the American Folk Revival publications *People’s Songs* and *Sing Out!* For further perspectives on the ideological, musical, cultural, and social context of the American Folk Revival, see COHEN 2022; FILENE 2000; LIEBERMAN 1989; REUSS 2000.

13 STERNE 2003: 8.

became central to anthropological and folkloric studies at the turn of the twentieth century, identifying, “the American anthropologists who first used sound recording in their work often explicitly justified it in terms of the phonograph’s potential to preserve the voices of dying *cultures*”.<sup>14</sup> Sterne enters into the discussion the concept of the “resonant tomb,” arguing that one primary affordance of sound recording is the ability for sonic preservation beyond the death of the utterer.<sup>15</sup> Here, sound recording allows the voice to transcend individual or community death, available to be heard by future generations of listeners.<sup>16</sup>

Extending Sterne’s approach to the field of Yiddish ethnography in Eastern Europe in the first years of the twentieth century, one notes that the scientific exactness afforded by sound recording is tied to the recognition of disappearing traditional folkways in Eastern Europe, which was bound up with anxieties about modernity and the cosmopolitan influence on supposedly pure folk traditions. Sh. An-sky is among the best-known ethnographers of Ashkenazi lifeways, dedicating himself to not only to documenting folklore during his ethnographic expeditions in provincial Ukraine from 1912 to 1914, but to transforming his findings into evocative fiction.<sup>17</sup> Though Sh. An-sky was not the first ethnographer of rural Ashkenazi life, the scope of his ethnography, as well as his later reflection on and use of folklore materials in his literary work offers a productive entry into the sphere of European ethnography of Yiddish language folk materials at the turn of the twentieth century. An-sky’s conjuring of a space “*tsvishn tsvey veltn*” (“Between Two Worlds”) the original title of his play *The Dybbuk*, evokes the potential for transgressing accepted boundaries of time and space.<sup>18</sup> For An-sky, the timing was crucial. He noticed waves of emigration from traditional Ashkenazi homes, as state violence against Jewish communities grew, and as economic opportunities in Russia were stripped by the government. Gabriella Safran identifies An-sky’s clear motivations, as he wrote:

There is no people that has talked about itself as much and knows itself as little as the Jews, [that] for many years now there have been endless debates and passionate fights about the essence of Jewishness, folk culture, nationalism, the great spiritual heritage [...] but still in fact one encounters among Jews neither serious interest in Jewish culture, not concern about its preservation and further development, nor any conscious striving to study the national worldview and the national particularities of the Jewish people.<sup>19</sup>

An-sky’s ethnography, then, amplifies Jonathan Sterne’s thesis within a particular context, highlighting the role of sound technology as bound up with a range of societal and historical tensions surrounding the fate of Eastern European Jewish culture. An-sky’s ideological mission, spanning folklore and left-wing politics, is facilitated by the contemporary ability to technologically freeze tradition for future use. Crucially, however, Gabriella Safran observes, “When he wrote about studying the peasants, An-sky spoke for methods that preserved their stories in a maximally authentic form, but when he produced his own folkloric stylization, he had no compunction about borrowing from any available source.”<sup>20</sup> An-sky’s dual role as an ethnographer and as a writer introduces the tension between folkloric preservation and generative imagination that echoed through the twentieth century.

14 STERNE 2003: 311.

15 STERNE 2003: 287.

16 While Jonathan Sterne’s framework is particularly vital for its tying together sound reproduction technology and folklore, with particular attention to intergenerational transmission, and thus centred in this discussion, there is a substantial body of scholarship surrounding the advent of sound reproduction technology. See CHANAN 1995; GITELMAN 2006; KITTLER 1999 [1986]; WEHLIYE 2005.

17 See RECHTMAN 2021 [1958]; WALDEN 2009; SAFRAN et al. 2006; SAFRAN 2010; DEUTSCH 2016; BRONNER 2022 for more details about Sh. An-sky, including his political activism, his ethnography, and his writing. For an analysis of the wider field of Yiddish ethnography at the turn of the twentieth century, see GOTTESMAN 2003.

18 An-sky’s fascination with traditional folk belief inspired this seminal work, in which two fated lovers find themselves entwined when the would-be groom dies and assumes the form of a *dybbuk*, a wandering soul that inhabits the body of his beloved. The play was adapted in a number of different forms across a number of languages.

19 SAFRAN 2010: 192 (quoting An-sky).

20 SAFRAN 2010: 112.

## Ruth Rubin

Ruth Rubin was born Rivke Rosenblatt in Montreal in 1906. She grew up in a multilingual environment, speaking Yiddish in the home and French and English in school. She supplemented her public-school education as a student in the I.L. Peretz Folk Schule, where she was exposed to the richness of modern Yiddish culture, including a visit from noted Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem shortly before his death. Rubin moved to New York City in the 1920s, where she continued to surround herself with key figures in the Yiddish linguistic and cultural movement, including Chaim Zhitlowsky and Max Weinreich. While she was immersed in the dynamism of contemporary Yiddish culture, Irene Heskes notes in her short biography of Rubin, “from the beginning, Ruth Rubin’s approach had always been that of an American folklorist”, involved with American Folklore Society and counting figures such as Paul Robeson and Pete Seeger as colleagues.<sup>21</sup> Assessing Rubin’s characterization as an American folklorist dedicated to Yiddish folk song reveals her crucial position in this discussion, pointing to Rubin’s role in conceptualizing, recording, and performing a distinctly Yiddish-American folk song tradition.

Through her lectures, books, and recordings, Ruth Rubin demonstrates a commitment to the lullaby as a symbol of the intergenerational transmission of cultural values. In her landmark *Voices of a People*, Rubin writes passionately:

During the nineteenth century, however, there was no dearth of lullabies, both as spontaneous expressions in the simplest structure, created at the cradle side, and as poetic creations of more literary origin, current among the folk. These modern cradle songs include a variety of forms, motifs, and moods and sincerely reflect the patterns of life which were prevalent at the time.<sup>22</sup>

She frames the genre historically, explaining, “it may be that the chapter of anonymous Yiddish lullabies ended with the close of the nineteenth century. Yiddish cradle songs, however, continue to be written by Jewish poets and composers during the twentieth century, both in Eastern Europe and America, and wherever Yiddish speaking Jews settled”.<sup>23</sup> Note that Rubin’s attention to the lullaby engages the relationship between the lived experience of pre-twentieth century Ashkenazi communities and the literary creations that crafted a particular image of those communities.

Writing in the American Folk Revival publication *Sing Out!*, she describes the lullaby within the musical folk process, detailing the origins of the song “Shlof Mayn Kind”. She identifies the author as the “Father” of modern Yiddish literature Sholem Aleichem. Despite the literary origins of the song, she asserts, “his lullaby ‘Shlof Mayn Kind’ is known to every Yiddish-speaking community in the world and became a folksong before it became known that Sholem Aleichem was the author”.<sup>24</sup> Rubin’s clarification points to an understanding of folk song as communal cultural property, regardless of provenance. Sholem Aleichem, in addition to penning a number of iconic and lasting works, was a creative and ideological supporter of Mark Warshawsky, a songwriter whose works resonated throughout the twentieth century, but who received pushback for the seemingly artificial nature of his songwriting. Upon the release of Warshawsky’s first songbook, Sholem Aleichem engaged in a series of published debates with Joel Engel—the ethnomusicologist and musical interpreter who accompanied Sh. An-sky on his folkloric expeditions. Ruth Rubin summarizes Engel’s approach to folklore:

Defining folk songs as ‘the songs which the people sing and which have come down to us either from unknown authors of long ago or which have been created before our very eyes (anonymously) but have become popular thanks to their folk character both in tune and text,’ Engel maintained that Warshawsky’s songs did not fulfill either of the above conditions.<sup>25</sup>

21 HESKES n.d.

22 RUBIN 1973 [1963]: 29.

23 RUBIN 1973 [1963]: 42.

24 RUBIN 1959: 21.

25 RUBIN 1959: 22.

Rubin reprints a great deal of this tense historical exchange in her *Sing Out!* article, highlighting the opposed positions of literature and ethnography.<sup>26</sup> She describes:

generations have grown up on Warshawsky's "Oyfn Pripetshek Brent a Fayer!" [sic] [...]. Hardly a Yiddish songster appearing during the past 59 years, but included several of his songs. And still the battle of 'folk-songs vs. popular songs vs. songs of literary origin vs. songs in folk style' rages on [...]. In defending the creative efforts of his close friend, Sholem Aleichem was also defending Warshawsky's natural optimism, his earthiness, his lilting tunefulness, his true interpretation of various moods of his people. In Engel's arguments, Sholem Aleichem saw the cold position of the 'objective' scholar, who in reality removed himself from the real life and suffering of the people.<sup>27</sup>

James Loeffler outlines the intergenerational impact of Warshawsky's works, concluding, "more than mere calculated imitations of children's music, songs such as "Oyfn pripetshik" functioned as mediation devices between past and present, conjuring up musical reveries in which a lost place (the traditional *shtetl*) was conflated with a lost time (the early years of childhood)".<sup>28</sup> Rubin's article is revealing, outlining a debate on Yiddish folk song authenticity while offering a gesture of reconciliation: the literary and ethnographic spheres need oppose each other; the public, as receivers of literary culture, fold literary creations into community practice, resulting in a dynamic folk musical process. Yiddish folk song, then, is continually shaped by the prevailing desires of those that receive the tradition. That Rubin stages this tension around the lullaby—an expression of memory and intergenerational exchange—affirms a sense in which the stakes of folk song are nothing less than the fate of a people's culture through history.

### Memory on Tape

For Ruth Rubin, the intergenerational communication facilitated through folk song emerges as one of its great powers. Rubin's archive of field recordings, digitized in 2018 by YIVO, affords an intimate listening to the very moment of musical memory being committed to tape. In various instances, Rubin's interlocutors, singing songs recollected from their childhood years, stumble and search for the right word or the correct melody. This scene marks a particularly important aspect of the Yiddish-American folk song movement. Where ethnographers like An-sky, Y.L. Cahan, and later Moshe Beregovsky rooted their folklore in Eastern Europe, Rubin's ethnography is invested in North American Yiddish speakers reaching to the past to recall Yiddish songs of their youth. Situated in the immigrant experience, these recordings preserve not only the musical and textual details of a wide corpus of Yiddish folk songs, but also the relationship of mid-twentieth century American Yiddish speakers to the past, present, and future of Yiddish culture.

For example, Sol Reinstein, recorded in New York in 1962, introduces a performance of the song "In Yor zeks un zibetsik" ("In the Year '67") by explaining, "this song must be about a hundred and thirty odd years old, it was one of the songs I heard from my mother as a baby, and that was almost sixty years ago. Where she picked it up, I don't know, but this was one of the lullabies..."<sup>29</sup> In this recording, Reinstein enacts a memory of his childhood, committing to tape a psychic reach across time. Here, it is important to note that Rubin's rather rigid criteria for folk authenticity, and her authoritative position as ethnographer, were internalized by her interlocutors, as Michael Fox, the singer and songwriter who introduces this essay, recalls.<sup>30</sup> In Sol Reinstein's testimony and performance, we hear not only the act

26 Though this exchange has been analyzed by scholars such as Abigail WOOD 2013 and Itzik GOTTESMAN 2003, I cite Rubin's text not only to go directly to her perspective on folklore, but specifically to frame that perspective within the cultural apparatus of the American Folk Revival.

27 RUBIN 1959: 26.

28 LOEFFLER 2010: 165.

29 REINSTEIN 1962.

30 FOX 1967.

of memory, but specifically an act of memory mediated by both the position of the recording technology and the recording ethnographer.

Among the highlights of Ruth Rubin's field work are the many performances of "Unter Kind's Vigele", known by a variety of other names, which each allude to a child's crib, under which, in most versions, sits a "klor-vays tsigele", a pure white goat. For Rubin, this song more than any other highlights the folklore process. She touted the song, emblematic of the lullaby generally, as expressing the intimate concerns of Ashkenazi folk life.<sup>31</sup> In a 1978 lecture-recital, Rubin introduces the song "nisht nor a viglid, es shpiglt op a lebn—an alt lebn—fun yorhunderter... ikh vel zingen mayn varianten ir kent zingen ayer variant" ("Not simply a lullaby, but a reflection of a life—an old life—from centuries ago... I will sing my variant, you can sing your variant").<sup>32</sup> Rubin's preamble is illuminative. Not only does she hold this song up as a model case of Yiddish folk song, but she invites the audience to search their memories for their connection to this song, and to celebrate the variety of versions that underscore the organic folk process.

Recorded at a family summer camp in Patterson, NY in 1956, Pauline Cohen performs her version of the song, titled "Oy, unter mayn kinds vigele" ("oh, under my child's crib").<sup>33</sup> Twenty-three seconds into the one-minute recording, Cohen pauses an otherwise confident take, and mumbles "let's see if I can get it right [...]". The performance of Cohen's song retains the meaning and melody consistent with most versions. However, the pause at 0:23 captures an important moment of acknowledgement. Cohen, understanding that the recording freezes her performance in perpetuity, collects her memory to "get it right." The recording as time capsule demands, in Cohen's estimation, the correct performance. Pauline Cohen's performance affirms Jonathan Sterne's assertion that,

Sound recording is understood as an extension of the art of oratory—a set of practices that depended heavily on the persona and style of the speaker and relations between speaker and audience. But, in this oratory, the construct of audience undergoes a wild permutation—the medium itself is the audience. Phonography marks both a sociospatial network and a sociotemporal network, where one time could potentially speak to (if not with) another.<sup>34</sup>

In another example, Basya Axelbank performs her recollection of the song along with her brother Lazar. In their "Intern kinds vigele" ("under the child's crib") the siblings play off each other's memories of childhood.<sup>35</sup> Around the thirty-seven second mark, the two begin to stumble, cobbling their performance until it reaches an organic conclusion. In the final seconds of the recording, Basya says "ikh hob fargesn, ikh farges" ("I have forgotten, I forget.") In another revealing moment, the process of memory—and of forgetting—is preserved on tape. These instances of recorded memory—or lack thereof—shine a spotlight on the mediating role of technology and ethnography in the intergenerational exchange of musical tradition. This highlights the role of sound reproduction technology, which interrupts the dynamism associated with the folk process by committing an authoritative sonic statement to tape.

### Recording Ruth Rubin

In addition to her work as an ethnographer, Ruth Rubin sang as a recording artist on both the Oriole and Folkways record labels. Examining the relationship between Rubin's field recordings and her albums opens up the relationship between aesthetics, authenticity, and the chain of musical transmission

31 See LUKIN 2019 for an analysis of the Ashkenazi lullaby, including an analysis of the "klor vays tsigele" trope. METZGER 1984 identifies that this lullaby was popularized by Avrom Goldfaden in his 1880 operetta *Shulamis*, pointing to the ongoing exchange between folklore and the theatre stage.

32 RUBIN 1978.

33 COHEN 1956.

34 STERNE 2003: 308. Here, Sterne posits the role of ethnographer and technology in dictating the form of the recorded performance.

35 AXELBANK 1957.

that characterize the intervening role of sound preservation and reproduction technologies within the folk music industry. Extolling Rubin's 1950 songbook and accompanying Oriole Records release, Betty Sanders writes in *Sing Out!*: "To help the material really come alive, Miss Rubin has also released two albums of songs on records that lift the songs from the printed page and transform them into something real. Thus we are given a glimpse of the true style that is inherently Jewish folk song".<sup>36</sup> Sanders' claim reflects a prevailing sentiment in the American folk scene that searched for and privileged 'authentic' interpretations and performances.<sup>37</sup> Here, Rubin's commercial folk LPs are received and transmitted as authentic and true reflections of the Yiddish folk song tradition, without acknowledgement of the ways in which Rubin's performance was itself shaped by the social, political, and cultural context of the mid-twentieth century United States. Crucially, however, Sanders' highlights the vitality of Rubin's folkloric ethos. If recording technologies afforded a "resonant tomb", in Jonathan Sterne's formulation, Ruth Rubin insists that Yiddish culture is not dead but remains consistently living through continual re-imagination and re-interpretation.

In 1957, Ruth Rubin collaborated on an LP of children's songs with Pete Seeger, a central figure in the American Folk Revival. In the album's liner notes Rubin concludes that, "[w]ith the gradual disappearance of Yiddish as a living tongue, among Jewish communities of East European origin in the Western Hemisphere, these children's songs of a century ago are a vivid reminder of a way of life that is no more".<sup>38</sup> This revealing sentiment echoes not only an appeal to the past, but a sobering reminder of the absences of the present. Aesthetically, the album encourages a distinctively Yiddish-American folk musical listening. By pairing Yiddish language songs with accompaniment on banjo and acoustic guitar, Rubin and Seeger present a musical-aesthetic vision of Yiddish-American folk song. The images and values of the past are not transmitted as they were originally expressed, but within a distinctly Yiddish-American mode. Crucially, however, Rubin describes the function of the record, explaining that "many Jewish children have grandparents who came from the old country. The Yiddish songs on this record were sung by such grandmothers and grandfathers when they were children in Eastern Europe. When we sing them now, it is as if we were paying a visit to the little town or village where they were born, in the old country." Despite the modern aesthetic of the performance, the songs serve as psychic transportation out of the contemporary moment and to the imagined *shtetl* of generations ago.

Rubin was not alone in her commitment to folk song as a vehicle for intergenerational transmission. Raasche's 1960 Folkways album *Jewish Folk Songs of Europe* addresses the notion of authenticity, while also evincing a forward looking approach. She writes, in the liner notes,

The thing most difficult of accomplishment in dealing with Jewish Folk Songs is the adoption of a purist viewpoint. Many songs which we consider without question as being wholly and entirely Jewish both in origin and flavour stem originally from the widest variety of peoples and places... In all their migrations Jews have taken with them their beliefs, their heritage and their way of life, and together with these, their songs and stories. Through the years the songs were tempered by the languages and mores in the locales to which they were brought. [...] The interpretation of the songs contained in this recording is strictly in keeping with the way they were taught to me and the way I have always sung them. [...] One can probably find without great effort scores of listeners who will dispute the Jewishness of these tunes. [...] No matter, our parents and grandparents grew up with them just as we did and we think of them as Jewish.<sup>39</sup>

Here, Raasche frames her performance with a frank and intimate reflection on folk song as facilitating intergenerational communion. The recording itself comes to stand in as a link in the broken chain of cultural transmission across generations.

36 SANDERS 1951: 11.

37 Members of the American Folk Revival community continually debated definitions of "authentic folk song", as well as the acceptable practices of singing these songs. Rubin's approach to folkloric authenticity is tied to her participation in this community. For a published collection of these debates, see DETURK and POULIN 1968.

38 RUBIN 1957.

39 RAASCHE 1960.

## Beyond Folkways Records

Folkways was not the only record label to produce and record Yiddish language folk LPs during the 1950s and '60s.<sup>40</sup> Benedict and Helen Stambler's Jewish Collector's Guild, for example, offers a fascinating case study in the relationship between ethnography and imagination. The Jewish Collectors Guild released sixty-six LPs of Jewish music, in genres ranging from cantorial and liturgical, folk song, and theatre music. The Stambler's archive reveals a dedication to field recordings that allowed for the study of the minutia of musical performance, suggesting an ethnographic impulse.<sup>41</sup> In this regard, the Jewish Collector's Guild is a fascinating case study, representing an effort to translate both the content and ideology of ethnographic recordings to the realm of commercial LPs.<sup>42</sup>

Consider, for example, the 1961 LP *Mordecai Hershman Sings Folk Songs of the Shtetl*, a curated collection of singles originally released in the 1930s. Through the LP track listing, liner notes, and album artwork Hershman is marketed as an authentic link to pre-modern Ashkenazi folk life. In the liner notes to this Collector's Guild release, Benedict Stambler evokes: "The special essence of the *shtetl*, the little Jewish village of pre-war east Europe, comes to life in this group songs, *for it is the folk song that mirrors the soul of the people*" (Italics mine). "No nature images will be found here, for these are songs that grow out of centuries of life divorced from contact with the soil. The songs do not go back earlier than the beginning of the nineteenth century; three are art songs in folk style that were written in the early years of the twentieth century".<sup>43</sup> Note that Stambler frames the *shtetl* in terms of its orientation not only to modernity, but specifically to a life before the rupture of the Second World War. This is furthered by the album artwork: "This scene from *shtetl* life in the cover picture by Jules Halfant illustrates an incident from Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye der Milkhiger*". Here, the relationship between actual and imagined folk life is elided, presenting the album in both its ethnographic as well a symbolic orientation.

The 1960 release *Isa Kremer Sings Yiddish Folk Songs*, another collection of previously released singles, focuses on the perspective of young women in the imagined *shtetl*, playing out dramas of romance, tradition, and child-rearing across the LP's fifteen songs. Despite the suggestion of distance from the realm of art music, these albums share a performance aesthetic rooted in the Yiddish theatre. In each case, the vocalists' performance is accompanied by highly arranged instrumental textures. Though there exists a suggestion of primitivism, the presence of art music links these performances to the dominant mode pre-War Yiddish-American folk performance, as well as suggesting the continued influence of Yiddish theatre. I pause to consider the gendered aspect of these album performances. It is consistent with the Stambler's fascination with cantorial and Hasidic music that Mordecai Hershman, a cantor, would be held as a bearer of traditional Eastern European religious life—emerging as a direct descendant of the old-world liturgical presence. Kremer, on the other hand, is positioned in the role of mother, responsible for transmitting the songs of her female forebears to her children and grandchildren.

Another actor in the field of Yiddish-American folk song was Vanguard Records, and particularly the *Music for Connoisseurs* imprint. Martha Schlamme, a vibrant figure in the American Folk Revival, recorded several albums of Yiddish folk songs for Vanguard, in addition to folk records performed in a number of other languages. Schlamme's second album of Jewish folksongs for Vanguard was released twice, once as *Martha Schlamme Sings Jewish Folk Songs, Vol. 2* and as *Raisins and Almonds, and Other Jew-*

40 Among the most prolific performers of Yiddish language folk song in this period was Theodore Bikel, who was also a key figure in the American Folk Revival. While there is not adequate space here to evaluate Bikel's contribution to mid-twentieth century folk singing in the United States, see LEVINE 2024: 174–202 for a protracted discussion of Bikel's performance practice and relationship to Yiddish folk song.

41 Benedict and Helen Stambler Collection (RG1014), YIVO.

42 KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT 2002: 149. "The liner notes [by Benedict Stambler] however, also suggest an emerging preservationist sensibility."

43 STAMBLER 1961.

*ish Folk Songs*. The liner notes and performance are identical, the only difference is the album artwork. On *Raisins and Almonds*, released not for “connoisseurs” but for the Vanguard “Everyman” series, an illustrated Schlamme looks down upon a crudely drawn *shtetl*. “Connoisseurs” are treated to a high-resolution photograph of Schlamme singing to two children, with a simple hearth in the background. Taken together, the album artwork confirms Schlamme’s symbolic function as a singer of Yiddish language folk songs. She stands not only to evoke the imagery of the *shtetl*, but specifically is positioned, like Isa Kremer, in a ‘motherly’ role. In this presentation, the intergenerational power of the lullaby is visualized in the album’s artwork.

## Conclusion

Yiddish folk song in the mid-twentieth century United States carried the heavy burden of transmitting Yiddish musical culture of the past to future generations. The example of Yiddish provides a dramatic case study, as the stakes of musical preservation were amplified by the decimation of Yiddish language and culture in the wake of the Holocaust, the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, and the pressures of assimilation and acculturation. Yiddish-American folk song in this critical historical moment was fuelled and shaped by the urgent need for cultural preservation and methods of intergenerational transmission. While a previous generation of folklorists had approached Yiddish folk song with a similar urgency, the technological affordances of tape and the LP, along with social and cultural pressures from the broader Jewish-American community and the American Folk Revival, conditioned the way that Yiddish folk song was recorded, thereby shaping the materials available for future generations. In the wake of contributions from figures such as Ruth Rubin, efforts to revitalize, reimagine, and recontextualize Yiddish culture blossomed in the second half of the twentieth century, and continue to the present day.<sup>44</sup> I intend the present article to draw attention to the entwined roles of technology, imagination, folklore, and the commercial music industry in shaping the ways that Yiddish folk song is transmitted across generations.

While rooted in the specific context of Yiddish-American culture, this article also gestures towards the broader challenge of engaging with the sonic past. As this discussion has highlighted, the mediative process of bridging temporalities itself determines the cultural inheritance transmitted to future generations of listeners. What we receive as folk music is conditioned by the social, historical, ideological, and aesthetic *zeitgeist* within which recordings were made. Because the process of sound reproduction represents a freezing of time, archives of both ethnographic field recordings and commercial LPs provide vital evidence for understanding the mechanisms by which the past, present, and future communicate.

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<sup>44</sup> In addition to the proliferation of Yiddish instrumental and vocal musical festivals, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s “Yiddish Folksong Project,” produced for YIVO, and Itzik Gottesman’s “Yiddish Song of the Week,” as examples of ethnographic and folkloric projects that followed Rubin. See: SLOBIN 2003; WOOD 2013; ALEXANDER 2021 for analyses of Yiddish instrumental and vocal performance from the 1960s through the present, in both the United States and Europe.

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# Disrupted and Stretched Linearity in Stephen Sondheim's *Company*

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This article analyses Stephen Sondheim's treatment of time in his seminal 1970-musical *Company*. I argue that his score presents two distinct temporal modes: disrupted linearity, whereby goal-directed motion is interrupted; and stretched linearity, whereby goal-directed motion is extended. These novel temporal categories are illuminated with respect to a range of songs from the show, with explanation as to how different musical parameters contribute to these experiences of time. I conclude by suggesting that this approach to time forms a backdrop to the unconventional narrative structure and thematic material, both of which resist chronological and linear characteristics.

## Introduction: "Company" and the Structuring of Time

I begin this paper with an excerpt from "Company", the titular song from Stephen Sondheim's much-lauded 1970-musical, *Company*.<sup>2</sup> The number launches the "story" of the show (more on this point below) and comes as Robert, the New York bachelor and central character, blows out the candles on his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday. Readers are encouraged to listen to the version of the song from the Original Broadway Cast Recording<sup>3</sup> and note the following features of bars 3–24 (from 0:49):

1. The rigid and insistent rhythmic groove, established through the marked crotchet pulse in the middle register, which is countered by the fluctuations in metre, shifting between 6/4 and 4/4 to match the scansion of his friend's declamatory remarks
2. The predominance of oscillating harmonic patterns, two bars at a time; the initial pattern can be interpreted as Ab<sup>(6/b9)</sup>–Gb/Ab; in bar 13, this changes to A<sup>6</sup>/B–Gb/Ab; at bar 21, there is a further shift to a new pattern, Ebm<sup>11</sup>–Fm<sup>11</sup>
3. The cumulative processes in vocal layering – the song opens with fragmented utterances of "Bobby"; characters then take turns at singing a full line above repeated interjections of "Bobby", "Robert", "Bobby, honey"; finally, their multiple pleas to Bobby overlap, enhancing the *moto perpetuo* rhythmic character of this section

Taken together, there is a clear sense of the song building in harmonic, dramatic and textural intensity. Notwithstanding the chromatic harmonic and melodic inflections (e.g. the presence of *A-natural* and *G-natural*), the bass pedals and vocal lines intimate an impending turn towards D-flat major. A partial sense of resolution occurs at bar 25 (1:35), though in an unexpected way. On the one hand, the orchestral texture expands significantly and the characters abandon their polyphony in favour of a singular command sung in a glorious three-part harmony, "Bobby come on over for dinner, we'll be so glad to see you"; on the other hand, the hitherto rising bass line (*E-flat*–*F*) takes a further step upwards to *G*, not towards the anticipated *D-flat*. Having achieved this apparent breakthrough, the song's harmony sits on a *G* pedal for the next 15 bars, above which a new oscillating pattern unfolds (*F/G*–*Em*<sup>7</sup>/*G*). The moment

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2 *Company* is a show with multiple cast recordings, as well as different score versions. None of the analytical points I make are contingent on one particular version of the show, however, some readers may notice reference to, say, different keys. Where useful I will provide timecodes, which refer to tracks from the Original Broadway Cast Recording album.

3 SONDHEIM 1970.

of release, texturally and vocally, is played off against the harmonic accompaniment folding back onto itself – a deceptive resolution that restarts a new anticipatory pattern. The ensemble sing to Bobby, “we love you”, holding “love” for six bars, “you” for one bar, over the extended dominant chord, before Bobby finally begins his verse, now in the key of C major (1:59).

There are numerous discrete musical elements of interest here – harmony, to be sure, but also form, melodic phrasing, rhythmic articulation, instrumental and vocal texture. Yet, more importantly, this analytical vignette showcases Sondheim’s idiosyncratic confluence and sequencing of musical events: this evokes a distinct manner of structuring our experience of time in music. The excerpt reveals two modes of related temporality, what I term *disrupted linearity* and *stretched linearity*. Disrupted linearity refers to a sense of motion towards a musical goal, which is then interrupted or diverted (e.g. the unexpected shift from D-flat major to C major); stretched linearity refers to a sense of motion towards a musical goal, which is drawn out, calling into question whether such a goal will be realised (e.g. the use of pedal notes and broadening texture). In this paper, I argue that these two forms of temporality pervade the score of *Company*, which is appropriate given the musical’s thematic exploration of life and relationship trajectories. These variations on linear time emerge through a range of techniques: obscuring of tonic chords; stylistic and/or formal juxtapositions; slow harmonic rhythm (often set against rapid surface rhythms); and elongated passages of cadential expectation. I explore each type of linearity with respect to a range of songs from *Company*, before discussing in greater depth how these temporal features align with the show’s narrative structure and content. Before proceeding to the analysis, however, it is necessary to examine the conceptual basis of time in music and musical theatre.

### Time in Musicals; Musical Time

Notions and explorations of time are recurring themes in the literature on musical theatre.<sup>4</sup> This should be expected: on the one hand, it is a temporal art form; on the other, it is an art form that is frequently preoccupied with its own articulation of temporality. It is of no further surprise that time is a dominant theme in much of the academic and critical commentary around Stephen Sondheim.<sup>5</sup> A number of his shows explore unconventional relationships between temporality and narrative – such as the reverse chronology of *Merrily We Roll Along*; or utilise older musical styles to transport characters and audiences through time – such as the jazz age pastiches of *Follies*.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Sondheim’s treatment of melody, harmony and form is often aligned with the unfolding dramaturgical content. Lovensheimer, for instance, addresses the repetition and reprisals of material across a show, connecting such developments of music with changes in a character or dramatic situation.<sup>7</sup> Other studies, predominantly from a music theory perspective, map harmonic processes in individual songs against lyrical and dramatic content.<sup>8</sup> Hudlow analyses “The Ballad of Giteau” from *Assassins* and argues that the modulatory scheme of Giteau’s verses (rising in key with each repetition) reflects the character’s actions as he slowly climbs to the gallows. Purin, on the other hand, explores songs of self-discovery in *Into the Woods*, and relates characters’ moments of transformation to ebbs and flows in harmonic dissonance, ambiguity and prolongation of functional melodic movement.

These studies reflect two approaches that have predominated in the analysis of time in musical theatre: one that considers temporality across separate points over a longer duration (e. g. between songs of a show); and one that considers temporality within a shorter duration (e. g. in a song). In both cases, temporality is explored primarily through *narrative* – that is, the focus is on the changes of char-

4 ELLIS 2011, 2022; McMILLIN 2006; KNAPP and KNAPP 2017. See also SIROPOULOS 2011.

5 GORDON 2019.

6 See SMITH 1998.

7 LOVENSHEIMER 2023.

8 PURIN 2011; HUDLOW 2013.

acters and plot action through time; the musical content is then placed in homological alignment with these aspects of the story. While both approaches have fostered rich analytical insights, there is space for considering how to understand temporality when there is *not* such an explicit relationship between music and plot at a given moment, or when the repetition and variation of material does not reveal much about the characters and their journeys. As my opening analytical notes intimated, there is a third approach that is more concerned with the passage of time *in music* as distinct from the immediate narrative context. I propose that the broader concept of “musical time” facilitates this alternative analytical pathway, which, in turn, may lead to further observations about musical theatre compositional practices, as well as their relationship to dramatic narratives.

The notion of “musical time” draws principally from the work of Jonathan Kramer, who in *The Time of Music*<sup>9</sup> laid out a categorical framework for the different temporalities evoked in Western musical forms. At its heart is the distinction between linear time and non-linear time, each of which breaks down into further sub-categories, such as directed and non-directed linear time, multiply-directed time, and so forth. Much like the aim of this paper, many analysts have utilised these categories to make sense of distinct or unusual musical structures and patterns in classical works<sup>10</sup> and popular songs.<sup>11</sup>

These authors demonstrate how different musical elements may contribute to a particular temporal state or flow – often harmonic patterns and structural repetition/difference shape our experience of time; but melody, texture, dynamics and rhythm may also bear responsibility for influencing an interpretation. Moreover, Kramer’s categories serve usefully as a methodological model, which then allows writers to illuminate how a given example conforms to or negates the criteria of a temporal condition, precisely as I seek to do here. My article focuses on *Company* primarily on account of the rich and inventive musical score, as well as its dramatic conceit of passing time, however, it should be emphasised that this case study also serves as explication of certain analytical tools, ripe to be used in other musical (theatre) contexts.

### Linearity and Sondheim

As a final precursor to the novel temporal categories – disrupted and stretched linearity – it is necessary to address the fundamental premise of my argument: that the score of *Company* is founded on musical devices that evoke *linear* temporal structures. Kramer defines linear time as “the determination of some characteristic(s) of music in accordance with implications that arise from earlier events of the piece”.<sup>12</sup> That is to say, when we hear certain musical events, expectations arise as to what will follow; and, equally, our understanding of later musical events is shaped by what has occurred earlier. The practices of tonal harmony, and its influence on other musical parameters (such as melody), are the most familiar manifestation of these ideas: when a piece begins on a tonic harmony in a certain key, it establishes an air of anticipation for a return to this point of rest; if and when a dominant chord arrives prior to the tonic return, we recognise its significance because of what had previously happened (i.e. the opening appearance of a tonic harmony). The same might be said at a structural level, where we recognise a thematic recapitulation or the final chorus of a song as completing a structural journey that had started with the initial presentation of that musical material. As Kramer notes, “Linearity is intimately linked to the *progression* of a composition”,<sup>13</sup> although, crucially, “*progression*” does not mean that every musical expectation must be fulfilled; it is the *establishment* of goal-direction and anticipation that is crucial, with the composer then having the option of realising, delaying or denying the achievement of this goal.

9 KRAMER 1988.

10 KLEIN 2004; TAYLOR 2016.

11 HOLM-HUDSON 2002; DANIELSEN 2006; MALAWAY 2010; MALAWAY 2011; OSBORN 2013; MERCER-TAYLOR 2013; SMITH 2014; BRAAE 2021.

12 KRAMER 1988: 20.

13 KRAMER 1988: 21; italics added.

At first glance, Sondheim's music may seem to resist the characteristics of linear temporality. Indeed, when one combines the highly chromatic harmonic language with the angular melodic lines and the fractured, *style brisé* instrumental textures, it can be difficult to ascertain the requisite sense of forward musical motion. Yet these complex musical surfaces frequently belie goal-directed musical foundations in his songs. In part, this can be observed in the use of conventional structural templates (e.g. AABA form and related variations) that allow for a processional journey away from and back towards the initial section. In part, also, the underlying harmonic structures of Sondheim's songs are tonally-grounded. As Drew Nobile details, even at his most chromatic, such as in *Sweeney Todd*, beneath the jagged sonorities are functional tonal practices: "Sondheim's compositional framework allows striking dissonance to pervade the harmonic layer without obscuring listeners' sense of key".<sup>14</sup> With the songs grounded in tonality and overarching goal-directed formal templates, we can identify an underlying linear impetus. The point of analytical interest, then, is how these expectations are treated as they come to the musical surface in different dramatic contexts.

### Disrupting Linearity: Emergent, Absent and Fragile Tonics

In the opening excerpt from "Company", the promise of linear musical motion emerges, for the most part, from the harmonic sonorities – notably, the Gb/Ab chord, which has frequently been referred to as the "soul dominant" in popular music literature.<sup>15</sup> Yet at no point is there the forceful articulation of the intimated D-flat major key. The initial harmonic content, in tandem with the subsequent textural growth, is evoking a state of linear time – suggesting movement towards a goal – but it is disrupted by the lack of arrival. This particular disruption is short-lived, as "Company" slips into C major; although, as noted earlier, it still takes 15 bars for this tonic chord to be emphatically stated with Bobby's entrance. It is pertinent to refer here to Mark Spicer's three-part typology of examples where tonic harmonies do not appear with structural prominence. The start of "Company" is an example of an "absent" tonic: one that is promised but never materialises. As the song progresses and we come to hear C major as the tonic chord, we would likely term this an "emergent" tonic: one which is "initially absent yet deliberately saved" for a moment of structural importance, in this case, Bobby's first vocal line.<sup>16</sup> Now, we can recognise that the earlier expectations have been realised – the build-up in dramatic and musical intensity has led us somewhere – but this linear process has been characterised by a sense of possible uncertainty as to the destination.

A more pronounced example of an absent tonic occurs in "Barcelona". This is a duet sung by Bobby and one of his girlfriends, April, the morning after a night of romance. The pair awkwardly lie in bed, stumbling their way through a stilted conversation about where April (a flight attendant) is travelling to next (Barcelona). Bobby implores her to stay; the sub-text is that this request is borne out of perceived politeness and nothing more. The verse of "Barcelona" spends much of its time rocking between a Gm chord in first inversion and an Fm<sup>7(add4)</sup> chord. Already, there is a lack of harmonic directionality. One interpretation is that we are in the B-flat Mixolydian mode with the progression oscillating between altered tonic (I<sup>6</sup>) and dominant (v<sup>7/add4</sup>). Another reading is that we are in E-flat major. Bobby and April's main vocal melodies start on *B-flat* and fall to *G* and then *F* in each phrase, as if trying to enact a descent through the tonic triad. In this context, both harmonies can be heard as weak dominant chords (V<sup>6</sup>–V<sup>7sus4</sup>/F), but which never resolve. After sixteen bars (0:44), there is a turn towards flat-side harmonies (Db<sup>maj7</sup>–Gb<sup>maj7</sup>–Cb<sup>maj7</sup>–Fb<sup>maj7</sup>). It might be expected that this more expansive chordal palette should lead to a cadence that would harmonically ground the song. But it is not to be. At the end of this four-chord sequence, the song drops back into the original pattern, which continues until it simply stops.

14 NOBILE 2023: 36.

15 SPICER 2017: [3].

16 SPICER 2017: [1].

The bridge further adds to this state of disrupted and halting progress: both the melodic line and accompaniment become more expansive and flowing, yet never reach a destination. Ironically, this section begins on an E-flat major chord, but with a flattened seventh, signalling a turn towards A-flat major (1:03). When this chord *does* arrive after 24 bars (with decorative major seventh and ninths; 1:27), the sense of A-flat major has been overridden by the sliding chromatic bass line and the melodic trajectory, extending upwards and coming to rest on an *F*. In the subsequent bars, the underlying chords slip to an embellished  $F^7$  harmony, suggesting a move to B-flat major; this sonority duly appears over the barline, but only in the weakened form of the verse pattern (i.e. the altered  $Bb^6$ ) and the ambivalence recommences. Thus, throughout the song, the harmonic and melodic material is consistently suggesting movement towards certain goals, without ever reaching them in an emphatic or unambiguous manner. The textural design is important in fostering this impression. In the bridge, the accompaniment pattern heightens in rhythmic activity, as well as dynamic range, crescendoing to the orchestral climax at  $Ab^{maj9}$  chord, 24 bars into the section. This instrumental growth suggests motion towards a goal, which is duly undercut by the unexpected harmonic and melodic trajectories. On the other hand, the verse, with its anticipatory setup of E-flat major, is countered by a static and constrained accompaniment: repeating rhythmic figures on the acoustic guitar and sustained strings and “lute” organ. There is no dynamism here. The net effect is that of movement, to be sure, but in a stilted and directionless manner.

Finally, the disrupted linear temporality also comes about through the presence of “fragile” tonics, those which are present but substantially underplayed in their hierarchical status. This aligns well with “Someone is Waiting”, which flirts with both E major and B major, the melody and harmony often playing off against each. The opening vocal phrase, for example, sounds like it is in E major, but the harmonic pattern appears to begin off-tonic in B. As the verse builds, through swelling orchestral textures and ascending melodic contours, an *A-sharp* is finally incorporated into the vocal line, perhaps signalling a comparatively definitive turn towards B major. Yet the conclusion of the verse four bars later has Robert leaping to a high *E* under which the orchestra supports him with lush B dominant chords. We have turned back, as it were, to E major. In the final phrase of the song, Robert’s vocal melody begins to descend *E-D-sharp-C-sharp*, clearly marching towards a *B* tonic note, but it ends stranded on the second scale degree; the chords again fall into a two-bar rocking motion,  $E-F\#/E$ , with no resolution. On balance, it would seem most logical to describe “Someone is Waiting” as in B major, yet the lacking structural prominence of this chord hints at its fragility. This fragility engenders a quality of grasping and searching for a goal, without it ever being securely reached.

### Structural Ruptures

As a piece of music progresses, a sense of smooth linear temporality can be felt at a structural level, in part through the expected sequence of sections (e.g. the return of “A” material), and in part through the transitions from one idea to the next. Linear time implies a journey – which thus allows for new destinations to emerge, yet with an understanding as to *how* we have reached certain points along the way. In a number of songs, the overall linear movement is disrupted through structural ruptures<sup>17</sup>: sharp sectional changes in style, tempo and/or key that instantaneously and rapidly transport the song into a different musical space. “Getting Married Today” presents the most striking example of this feature. In the song, Amy, a friend of Bobby’s, is due to be marrying Paul. Struck down by an acute case of cold feet, Amy rapidly runs through all the reasons why she is not getting married today, which is set against Paul’s effusive praises of his bride-to-be. The song divides into three broad sections: a chorale pastiche sung by the “choir girl”, which sets the “blessed” tone for the day; Paul’s aria-like interludes; and the verbose patter of Amy’s panicked verses. What is noticeable is that there are no real transitions between these

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17 SMITH 2014.

stylistic worlds. On occasion, the final word of one section overlaps with the start of the new section (e.g. from Paul's first interlude into the patter; it is also in the same key), but there is no preparation for such a drastic shift in tempo or accompaniment type. The juxtaposition is even more noticeable between the patter and chorale sections on account of the textural change: from oscillating chromatic quavers on the piano and mid-register strings to sustained notes on the church organ and reed instruments. More striking again is the transition between these sections for the second time (2:53) – Amy's patter singing ends in G-flat major, there is a slight pause, and the chorale begins in D major. While there is the common-tone of *F-sharp/G-flat* between the two keys, this note is not emphasised within the instrumental or vocal texture, and thus there is no sense of continuity. The same occurs in reverse at the end of this section, which has now modulated to B major (3:24). Paul provides the vocal upbeat over a B dominant harmony, yet this does not lead anywhere, so much as become the first chord of the final patter verse (reinterpreted as C-flat major), and the song duly picks up in tempo once more.

What is crucial here is that the adjacent sections present their own internal musical logic and goal-directed motion – we are sitting in a linear temporal mode, but this flow through the song as a whole is broken and halted at each sectional marker. In other instances, such linear motion is disrupted via unprepared and unexpected modulations across sectional barlines. Thus, in “Marry Me a Little”, Bobby ends the first A section with a glorious proclamation, “I'm ready [to be married] now”, over a long-held dominant harmony; his melody line comes to rest on 7 (*A-sharp*), ready to resolve up to the *B* tonic. However, when he sings “now” on the leading-note, there is a shift in the harmony underneath to VII<sup>sus4</sup> (*A#sus4*). After a fermata, the song picks up from this suspended chord and resolves into a new tonic – *B-flat* (harmonically reinterpreted from the preceding section). Without any preparation, the song has slipped down a semitone, and the B section takes off in this new tonal space.

There is a reverse trajectory in “Another Hundred People”. In this instance, the A section is in C major, while the B section begins in C-sharp minor, albeit with some very subtle harmonic preparation. After 19 bars, the A section moves drives to its cadence point via a secondary dominant of V (an altered D<sup>7</sup> chord; 0:28). Two bars later, the treble pattern remains in place (emphasising *C, E, A, F-sharp*), but the bass slips to *B*. This gives us a highly embellished B dominant chord (e.g. Am<sup>6</sup>/B), which deceptively resolves to C-sharp minor (i.e. vi of E). Concurrently, Marta's vocal line concludes the A section on *A* and starts the B section on *G-sharp*, offering an effective 4-3 resolution over the barline (0:35). It is clearly possible to identify the melodic and harmonic logic underpinning this sectional transition, but such processual elements are offset by the obscure and unexpected harmonic movement (i.e. the initial bass shift from *D* to *B*; the interrupted cadential resolution), and more so, by the sharp instrumental change. Immediately into the B section, the bass completely drops out of the rich orchestral texture, leaving muted horns, pizzicato cello (in its high register), sparkling woodwinds and violins. While there is a crescendo leading into the sectional shift, the transformation of the texture is sudden and dramatic. Any continuity at a deeper tonal level is thus overshadowed by the discontinuities in surface harmonies and timbral profile. As with the previous two examples, we find the same effect of the forwards motion of one section being ruptured briefly, before picking up again and resuming its course.

### **Stretched Linearity: Phrase Rhythm, Harmonic Pacing and Prolonged Cadences**

As alluded to above, the varied forms of disruptions to linearity can create a temporal flow marked by jolts and halting momentum or a sense of wandering without direction. Throughout *Company*, we can observe other means through which Sondheim toys with linear time. Let us return to the beginning of “Another Hundred People”. The *moto perpetuo* accompaniment is characterised by broken chords split between left and right hand. The dual voices in the bass register outline a syncopated rhythm over two bars: quavers grouped into a 3+3+3+3+2+2 (i.e. double tresillo) pattern. When Marta starts singing, her

opening line, “Another hundred people just got off of the train and came up through the ground”, does not fit into these two bars. There is an extra bar, therefore, tacked on to the end of this pattern, creating an asymmetric and unusual grouping of accents of three bars (3+3+3+3+2+2 // +3+3+2). After a repeat of these three bars, there is further variation in the second phrase: here the “extra” bar (with its 3+3+2 grouping) is heard three times to accommodate the list form of the lyrics.

While these unusual phrase lengths could be interpreted as disrupting the directional movement of the section, it feels more like a flexing of the temporal progression – as if the accompaniment reaches the end of the phrase before Marta and thus sits in its state of “almost progressing” for a little longer to stay aligned with the singer. The linear motion is thus stretched before continuing. Central to this particular conception of stretched linearity is the juxtaposition of harmonic directionality and continuous surface rhythm – both of which create a sense of propulsion – alongside the inconsistent sense of pacing – in this case evoked through the extension of the phrase beyond its expected length of two bars. This is similar to what we experience in the opening number, where, as noted earlier, the fluctuations between 6/4 and 4/4 time signatures create a gentle unevenness in phrase continuity.

Elsewhere, the temporal extensions come about through glacial harmonic rhythm. In “Getting Married Today”, the patter section is characterised by intense quaver motion in the inner voices, yet it takes 12 bars to move away from the tonic, before moving through a ii–V pattern over six bars. In tandem with the rising melodic contours and introduction of the refrain lyric, there is a clear sense of progression through the verse, but after a long wait for the structural motion to begin. The same can be said about “Marry Me a Little” – again, the harmonic movement through the verse is conventional, directional (following the initial tonic, a circle-of-fifths pattern) and slow. The song sits on the tonic for eight bars, before a change in chord every two bars thereafter. Because of the continuous quavers in the accompaniment, the song’s temporal flow is never halted, so much as feeling as if we are moving steadily at a drawn-out pace.

Thus far, the examples of stretched linearity primarily pertain to the *initiation* of motion within a section; that is, the manner in which the linear journey commences from the tonic harmony. At the opposite end of this trajectory – where the motion comes to a close – Sondheim’s cadences are an equally rich site for exploring stretched linearity. Indeed, as William Caplin notes, a cadence, in Western musical forms, is the “device that most readily expresses musical closure” and thus experimentation in this realm will consequently shape our experience of temporality.<sup>18</sup> Consider “Sorry - Grateful”, the early number in which Bobby’s friends explore the contradictory impulses of being married. The vocal line for much of the song is built on a short, syncopated motif, the contours of which rise in the opening half of each phrase and fall to the tonic, *D*, at its conclusion. In the final section of the verse (0:59), the initiating phrase (mostly sitting in a tonic space) is countered by a cadential phrase (1:11), which lasts four bars – already there is a sense of stretching by virtue of this lengthy timeframe to achieve closure. Through these four bars, the closing melodic gesture (the descent to the tonic) simply repeats, ready to conclude but without the support of the chordal pattern. It remains on *V* for two bars, falls back to the supertonic minor, before a final dominant chord and resolution. Further underscoring this flexibility of time is the change in time signature: out of the song’s 6/4 and into 4/4 for the final two bars. Here, the elision of two beats from the phrase provides a slight push in the pacing, hurrying along the final movement into the cadence, having been resting in the state of anticipation previously. What this example shows is Sondheim’s willingness to toy with the addentant temporal expectations that emerge from cadences.

Other examples are comparatively straightforward in elongating linear time. We have already observed in “Company” the extended dominant harmonies at the ends of various phrases and sections, which steadily build anticipation towards the impending release (which is both realised and denied on different occasions). This strategy of lengthening the perfect cadences is found in a number of other

18 CAPLIN 2024: xiii

songs, with the stretching of time getting more prominent through a song. Thus after the first verse of “Getting Married Today”, the subsequent section-ending dominant chords (as part of the ii–V cadential motion) are extended to eight bars in length. In “Marry Me a Little”, the first perfect cadence in the verse lasts four bars, the second lasts six bars, the third (occurring in the verse section after the bridge) lasts for eight bars. These extensions of the cadence align with Robert’s extra lyrics, one line each time – “I’m ready // I’m ready // I’m ready now!” – as if he is willing himself more and more towards marriage.

The most striking instance of this feature occurs in finale of *Company*, “Being Alive”, in which Robert finally sees the virtues of opening himself up emotionally to a long-term relationship (maybe...more on this interpretation below). The verses of “Being Alive” are underpinned by an accompaniment with busy surface rhythm and a slow harmonic rhythm, creating the same drawn-out sense of motion heard earlier in the show. At the end of phrases, the song pauses on a richly-embellished dominant chord. The first three appearances of this pattern have the V chord held for four or eight bars, underscoring the dialogue between Robert and his friends. On the subsequent iteration of this pattern, Robert sings the title lyric four times as the chord lasts six bars (2:10). Immediately after this verse, there is a key change up a semitone – the emotional intensity ramps up accordingly. The subsequent cadential phrases follow similar patterns of a repeating dominant chord with its churning textural pattern and a lyric repetition (or similar – for instance, “Being alive, make me alive...”). In sequential phrases, these moments last for four bars, six bars and then a glorious ten bars out of the bridge to lead into the final verse (3:46). The relentless nature of the accompaniment adds to overwhelming build of tension, until the moment when Robert finally asks for “someone to crowd me with love”. There is an apparent breakthrough, which comes after the song’s temporal motion has been stretched seemingly to its limits.

### **Conclusion: The Temporal Backdrop of *Company***

The analytical vignettes of this paper present the varied methods by which Sondheim experiments with linear temporal states in *Company*. Such techniques are more widespread in the musical than is outlined here: absent and fragile tonics are also characteristic of “Another Hundred People” (in the bridge section), as well as through “Have I Got a Girl For You”; “The Ladies Who Lunch” typifies the slow harmonic motion at the outset of sections and is also notable for its prolongation of the tonic chord *after* the song’s final perfect cadence; and there are several songs in which constrained textural growth disrupts or obscures an overall sense of trajectory through the song, as with “Barcelona” (e.g. “Sorry Grateful”, “The Little Things You Do Together”, “The Ladies Who Lunch”). Disrupted and stretched forms of linear time are thus rife throughout Sondheim’s striking and original musical score.

This paper has offered a new conceptual basis for understanding musical temporality, not only in the context of Sondheim’s works, but in the broader analytical study of musical theatre. The application and extension of Kramer’s notion of “musical time” have illuminated the idiosyncratic nature of the harmonic, melodic, rhythmic and textural features of *Company*; this should provide a prompt for further analytical explorations in a theatrical context to understand how other composers shape our experiences of time onstage. In particular, there is much to glean from analysing the inter-relationships between musical time, as songs unfold, and narrative time, as the overarching story unfolds – particularly in instances (as is so often the case with Sondheim) where the latter dismantles linear chronologies.

This leads me to reflection on the broader significance of the analytical findings in the context of *Company*. As per the work of Purin (2011) and Hudlow (2013), there are instances in which the particular temporal mode can be interpreted in neat alignment with the immediate narrative context. “Being Alive” is surely the most pronounced example – the extended cadential moments embodying Robert’s final struggles, but ultimate emotional breakthrough vis-a-vis commitment and relationships.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, the overplayed tonic prolongation at the end of “The Ladies Who Lunch” (as Joanna incessantly

<sup>19</sup> BANFIELD 1993: 172 offers further intriguing layers to this interpretation – that while there is an apparent moment of self-realisation, the repetitive and cyclic nature of the song, perhaps, paints this transformation as somewhat artificial and contrived.

repeats the word “rise”) captures her cynical view of the upper-class Manhattan socialites. Alternatively, again, the absent tonics and halting momentum of “Barcelona” reflect the stilted and awkward interactions between Robert and April, and, in particular, *her* desire to progress their relationship and *his* resistance to this idea.

But beyond such examples, I am less certain that the varied forms of linear temporality map precisely onto the lyrical and plot details. I would argue instead that all of the disruptions and extensions of linear time create a broader temporal backdrop to the unconventional narrative structure of *Company*. It is well-stated that *Company* was a pioneering “concept” musical, one feature of which was a “linear plot [being] abandoned or downgraded in favour of vignettes”.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, there is general ambiguity over the chronological sequencing of these vignettes – there is a recurring scene of Robert’s birthday, suggesting that the other scenes are either imagined or have taken place in the past, and implying, also, that clock time does not pass through the duration of the show. The composer himself, on the other hand, revealed that “Bobby is not so linear that he does not *learn* from the episodes in *Company*”.<sup>21</sup> This, then, implies that there is some degree of development and progression within the narrative. The very structural fabric of *Company* presents aspects of linearity (Robert “learning”), while also disrupting the corollaries to this temporal state (i.e. a sequence of events). As also befits the “concept” nature of the show, the musical temporality, with its fluctuations of momentum, speak to the questioning of a life progression – Robert is unsure about “moving forward”, his friends offer ambivalent advice on the matter, but we are left thinking that he (probably – or maybe) has made a choice to pursue the linear pathway foisted upon him by society. In identifying and analysing the stretching and disrupting of linear musical time, it does not necessarily provide us with an “answer” to the narrative conundrums of *Company*, but we can better understand how Sondheim’s structuring and manipulation of time may resonate with the characters and their actions onstage.

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<sup>20</sup> BANFIELD 1993: 147.

<sup>21</sup> BANFIELD 1993: 148; italic stresses are from the original.

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# Bruyantes mécaniques du temps repassé : l'orgue de foire et ses instaurations

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**Keywords:** Fairground organ, Mechanical music, Time, Agency, Repetition

**Abstract:** *Time in music, although often approached from the perspectives of composition, performance and listening, is less frequently considered as an issue that could fall within the scope of organology. This essay challenges such a stance by addressing the important role mechanical organs played in the establishment of temporal conventions from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. My focus lies on the ability of some instruments to mechanically reproduce and repeat musical sequences – an ability that helped instituting specific occasions, new modes of cultural consumption, and historical self-awareness. The article analyses in particular how such a technical feature influenced the appearance of funfairs in Western Europe and the development of the showpeople profession. Examining closely the “tool” quality of fairground organs, I argue that the music storage and replicability the instruments made possible were also a matter of time, as they took an active part both in the formatting process of pieces, in terms of length, and in the sonic signaling of funfairs’ duration and recurrence. This paper thus links the instruments’ agency with the important social transformations taking place during the so-called Belle Époque. It concludes by demonstrating that the construction of such a chrononym relied on a blend of technological, aesthetic and political concerns, into which fairground organs continue to offer precious and undervalued insights.*

## Turner en boucle : où ? comment ?

Le 12 janvier 1850, la *Neue Zuger Zeitung* consacre l'intégralité de sa première page aux élections législatives ayant eu lieu six jours plus tôt dans le canton. La victoire nette du parti conservateur sur les libéraux, renversant la majorité établie deux ans auparavant, lors de la création de cette institution<sup>2</sup>, y est relatée, non sans ironie. En effet, après une introduction évoquant le « fürchterlich verschrobenen Ton »<sup>3</sup> adopté par la *Zugerisches Kantonsblatt* lorsque cette rédaction concurrente, d'obédience libérale, traite de la période électorale en train de s'achever, l'article relève le danger qu'encourt un groupe au pouvoir à clamer trop fort – et trop longtemps – les raisons de son succès et ce qui l'oppose à ses adversaires. Ainsi, une fois fait le récit du déroulement du vote dans le chef-lieu du canton, la ou le journaliste propose

[...] einige Betrachtungen. Hätte sie die liberale Parthei von Anfang an den Grundsass der Versöhnung, der Beruhigung der aufgeregten Gemüther festgehalten, ihr Prinzip wäre nicht [...] 'zerrissen' worden. Allein statt dessen, was hat man gethan? Wahrhaftig, es widert uns an, all' die fulminanten Artikel unsers Regierungsorgans in der Erinnerung aufzufrischen, – die interessanten Charakteristiken unserer Gemeinden, - die sichtbare Vorliebe, mit der man Allem nachspähte, was auf die konservativen Führer ein nachtheiliges Licht werfen konnte, – das ewig und ewig wie eine Jahrmarktsorgel sich wiederholende Geleier von der 'Morethat des

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2 MOROSOLI 2019.

3 *Neue Zuger Zeitung* 1850: 1.

*Sonderbundes'*, – kurz, man hat die Saite zu straff gespannt – sie musste springen! Hüten sich die neuen Behörden daher, in den nämlichen Fehler zu fallen.<sup>4</sup>

Outre qu'elle sert à tourner en dérision un certain emploi de la parole politique, la mention faite ici de l'orgue de foire – la première, à ma connaissance, dans la presse suisse – donne lieu à une remarquable association. Celle-ci comporte trois éléments, d'ordres différents : le premier est une temporalité, l'idée d'une sempiternelle répétition (« *ewig und ewig* ») ; le second est l'instrument de musique lui-même, l'orgue mis en action au moyen d'une manivelle, laquelle permet la rotation d'un cylindre où se trouve programmée la succession des notes entendues ; le troisième chaînon de cette association est le contenu musical joué par cet orgue et plus précisément un genre de pièce particulier, celui de la *Moritat*.<sup>5</sup> L'image ainsi convoquée est celle d'une littérature à visée moralisante, dont le modèle typique consiste à enchaîner des strophes rimées qui seront chantées sur une mélodie récurrente, chaque couplet correspondant à une révolution opérée par le cylindre de l'orgue.<sup>6</sup> C'est donc à la pratique du *Bänkelsang* que sont assimilés les contenus publiés par la presse libérale, soit à un type de spectacle de rue dans lequel les artistes s'adressaient à leur public en lui présentant une histoire au contenu souvent macabre ou catastrophique et dont il était attendu qu'en soit tirée une prescription morale, à la fois claire, conventionnelle et normative.<sup>7</sup> Dans l'article cité ici, l'entreprise sécessionniste du Sonderbund, menée entre 1845 et 1847 par les cantons catholiques conservateurs, dont Zoug, fait office de récit édifiant dans lequel seraient ressassés à plaisir – voire à outrance – les torts des partisans de l'alliance.

Que ces trois éléments – répétition *ad nauseam*, orgue, *Moritat* – fassent le fond d'une allusion parodique, au sein d'un commentaire sur l'exercice électoral, montre que leur association était bien établie dans l'esprit de la personne ayant rédigé l'article – et sans doute aussi dans celui de ses lectrices et lecteurs. Quant à la manière dont est écrite la métaphore, cependant, deux observations peuvent être faites : premièrement, l'exécution de la mélodie de la *Moritat* est celle de l'orgue, de l'instrument uniquement et non pas celle d'une ou d'un interprète, chanteuse ou chanteur, dont la figure est absente. Ensuite, le choix de nommer cet instrument *Jahrmarktsorgel* – alors que l'allemand dispose d'un autre mot, *Drehorgel*,<sup>8</sup> largement plus courant quand il s'agit de le désigner – pose question. En effet, *Jahrmarktsorgel* finira bien par se rapporter à une variété spécifique d'orgue automatique, expressément destinée à un usage forain, mais dont l'apparition ne se fera qu'une vingtaine d'années après la parution de l'article.<sup>9</sup> Ce que nous indique la terminologie choisie ici, c'est donc, d'une part, la présence, de longue date et déjà connue par l'iconographie,<sup>10</sup> d'orgues à manivelle, aux dimensions modestes, sur les champs de foire, en Suisse comme dans le reste de l'Europe. D'autre part, elle nous suggère que l'on fait mieux comprendre de quel instrument on parle en référant celui-ci à son lieu d'usage, plutôt qu'à son principe de fonctionnement.<sup>11</sup>

Dans cette contribution, la mise en avant d'un instrument dit d'accompagnement et la prise en considération de l'un des contextes principaux où il est employé me serviront à revenir au premier élément

4 *Neue Zuger Zeitung* 1850: 1. C'est moi qui souligne.

5 Il est fréquent de voir « *Moritat* » traduite en français par « complainte » mais on pourrait aussi, dans ce cas, le rendre par « rengaine ». Néanmoins, ne trouvant aucun équivalent satisfaisant, je conserverai le mot original dans la suite de cet article.

6 DE WAARD 1967 [1961]: 55.

7 BRAUNGART 2016: s. p. [« III. Texte »].

8 Généralement traduit en français par « orgue de barbarie ». Si la première trace écrite du mot allemand est datée de 1732 (HOCKER 2016: s. p. [« I.1. Drehorgel »]), le type organologique et ses caractéristiques techniques sont bien plus anciens.

9 HOCKER 2016: s. p. [« I.4. Karussell- und Jahrmarktorgel »].

10 COCAKYNE 1970: 174.

11 La souplesse avec laquelle étaient désignées des variétés d'instruments aujourd'hui clairement distinctes se vérifie aussi par l'absence de termes pour les nommer. Ainsi, en français comme en anglais, la première mention publiée de l'orgue de foire (respectivement *fairground organ*) ne remonte qu'à 1889 (*Le Petit Républicain de l'Aube* 1889: 3 ; *The Warrington & Mid-Cheshire Examiner* 1889: 8). En outre, et même plus tard, l'emploi fréquent de termes alternatifs, tout en se référant à des instruments spécifiquement conçus pour la fête foraine (orchestron, orgue de barbarie, *Walzenorgel*, *street organ*) démontre qu'au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les classifications faites aujourd'hui n'avaient probablement que peu de pertinence pour les personnes concernées.

de la métaphore : la répétition continuelle, la temporalité particulière d'une réitération potentiellement illimitée. Quel présent produit-on par ce *repassage* du temps, par le fait de rejouer ce qui a déjà été entendu ? Ma proposition est d'aborder les rôles joués par l'orgue mécanique – comme instrument au sens large du terme – et par la foire – comme lieu propice à l'expérimentation – dans la conception non pas du temps en général, mais au contraire de ce qui est jugé hors du temps. Par une approche de la fête foraine en tant qu'espace musical, je souhaite donner une idée des possibilités qui y ont été et qui y sont encore ouvertes afin de constituer le moment de la foire comme un territoire spatial et temporel demeurant à part, distinct de la réalité quotidienne et de la vie ordinaire. Il s'agira de montrer en quoi l'énonciation du temps qui est celle des orgues mécaniques participe de ce processus. À travers les liens entre arts vivants et culture scientifique, itinérance des interprètes et encodage matériel du son, c'est la capacité de ces instruments à instaurer et à faire circuler leur temporalité propre qui se veut au centre de ma réflexion.

### Les cadrans de l'inouï

La science ne fait pas disparaître le temps, mais ajoute plusieurs espaces et temps au monde en provoquant sans arrêt des changements d'échelle, de longueurs, d'unités, au sein des lieux bizarres que sont les laboratoires, les instituts et les archives [...].<sup>12</sup>

Dans le texte de cette conférence, dédiée à nos façons de penser le temps, le philosophe Bruno Latour invite à renoncer à la distinction de nature – pourtant couramment appliquée – entre un temps qui serait « vécu », intérieur ou subjectif, et celui qui serait « réel », extérieur ou objectif. Sans entrer dans le détail de l'argumentation, il suffit ici de relever que, d'après Latour, c'est par une multiplicité d'interactions diverses et locales que s'effectue la production du temps. Celui-ci variera donc, non pas en fonction d'une essence préalablement fixée – perceptuelle *versus* factuelle – mais selon ce qui aura été fait pour le ressentir ou pour en rendre compte.<sup>13</sup> Prenant l'exemple de la somme d'objets, de normes et de protocoles requis pour l'établissement d'une standardisation de la mesure du temps, Latour insiste sur la nécessité de disposer à la fois des instruments et des « lieux bizarres » qui servent à réaliser une telle mesure.

À la liste de ces lieux, justement, on peut sans hésiter ajouter le champ de foire et ce, d'autant plus facilement qu'il est question de science. En effet, ainsi que la recherche sur la diffusion des savoirs scientifiques l'a abondamment démontré,<sup>14</sup> la performance publique a été, dès le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, un relais majeur pour la popularisation de notions et de connaissances issues des sciences naturelles et expérimentales. Cependant, l'enjeu ne réside pas seulement – et peut-être même pas nécessairement – dans la transmission d'un enseignement, mais surtout dans la manifestation d'une autorité véhiculée par les marques de l'expertise : vocabulaire spécialisé, manipulations habiles, décors, vêtements et instruments improbables.<sup>15</sup> Comme l'écrit Nic Ulmi,

[...] le champ de foire se situe quelque part dans une zone intermédiaire entre le laboratoire du savant et l'implantation dans la vie quotidienne des larges couches de la population. [...] Loin d'être un simple reflet, le champ de foire est ainsi un des lieux où s'élabore, sous le signe du jeu, de l'émerveillement, du plaisir et de l'illusion, l'usage contemporain des sciences et des techniques.<sup>16</sup>

De fait, c'est l'acte de démonstration qui fait converger les intérêts des scientifiques désirant promouvoir leur discipline et ceux des spécialistes du divertissement<sup>17</sup>. L'essor pris par la science dite populaire

12 LATOUR 2017 [1997]: 77.

13 LATOUR 2017 [1997]: 74 et passim.

14 Voir par exemple BENSUADE-VINCENT et BLONDEL 2008 ; FYFE et LIGHTMAN 2007 ; KEMBER et al. 2012 et WILLIS 2016.

15 DA ROCHA GONÇALVES 2020: 882.

16 ULM 1995: 156.

17 WYNANTS 2022: 78–79 et passim.

coïncide en outre avec la transformation de la foire, au sein de laquelle le négoce, le change de devises et l'approvisionnement se voient progressivement supplantés par la commercialisation de prestations récréatives et didactiques.<sup>18</sup> Un sensationnalisme croissant accompagne le développement des attractions : la recherche de l'insolite, la même qui conduit à faire l'expérience de phénomènes physiques surprenants à l'aide d'appareils mystérieux, sous-tend le phénomène de l'exotisation et la construction d'altérités de genre, de corps et de race. La dynamique commune motivant l'instruction des foules et l'excitation d'un regard fasciné est aussi celle qui mène à l'exhibition de « femmes colosses »<sup>19</sup>, d'« hommes-éléphants »<sup>20</sup> ou de « villages nègres ».<sup>21</sup> Que la tâche de satisfaire à cette « volonté de savoir » incombe à l'activité *foraine* – dont la condition première, nominale et irrémédiable, est de « n'être pas d'ici »<sup>22</sup> – indique assez bien comment les sociétés sédentaires ont tenté de se dédouaner de leurs propre curiosité trouble, sinon de leurs obsessions.

L'orgue mécanique et portatif est à placer au cœur du dispositif spectaculaire développé sur le champ de foire, parce qu'il en fait jouer à la fois la prétention scientifique et la production d'altérités. L'orgue à cylindre s'inscrit en effet parmi une myriade d'inventions et de développements techniques aboutissant à la création d'objets capables de produire des séquences musicales sous une impulsion mécanique simple.<sup>23</sup> Or, les savoir-faire nécessaires à leur réalisation sont aussi ceux qui ont rendu possible la graduation matérielle du temps. Boîtes à musique, oiseaux automates et androïdes sortent des mêmes ateliers que les pendules, les montres et autres chronomètres.<sup>24</sup> Outre qu'elle concrétise les préoccupations grandissantes, à partir de la fin de l'Ancien Régime, à l'égard de l'exactitude et de la précision – tant dans le domaine de la recherche<sup>25</sup> que de la performance musicale<sup>26</sup> – la sophistication de ces mécanismes en fait des objets d'apparat et d'exposition, qui entrent en contact avec de nouveaux publics, selon le processus évoqué plus haut.

Par ailleurs, l'usage de l'orgue mécanique est indissociable des phénomènes migratoires qui marquent l'Europe du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Parmi ceux-ci, l'importante circulation de personnes en provenance d'Italie, due entre autres à l'économie saisonnière des régions alpines,<sup>27</sup> provoque l'arrivée dans les centres urbains du nord de l'Europe – puis, plus tard, des États-Unis – non seulement d'une main d'œuvre employée dans divers secteurs marchands, mais aussi d'artistes de divertissement, dont le statut varie en fonction de leur degré de professionnalisation.<sup>28</sup> Pour celles et ceux ne disposant que de peu de moyens et de compétences, l'orgue à cylindre se présente comme l'outil de travail le plus adéquat. Ce recours pragmatique à l'instrument se verra distordu et réinterprété sur la longue durée par le stéréotype du « Savoyard », vagabond musicien, dont la présence envahissante sur la voie publique est dénoncée avant tout en raison du son qu'il produit.<sup>29</sup> D'une figure qui résulte de la xénophobie des classes moyennes, propriétaires et bourgeoises,<sup>30</sup> l'orgue portatif hérite ainsi de connotations qu'il

18 ANDERSEN 2024: 66.

19 *L'Industriel forain suisse* 1898: 1.

20 ESCUDIER 1875: 163–165.

21 BLANCHARD et al. 2004: 69. Voir également: CANADÉ SAUTMAN 2010 et JEAN 2022.

22 Le *Trésor de la langue française informatisé* indique que le mot provient du latin *foris* (« dehors »). Son usage pour désigner les marchands étrangers lors de foires a mené à un rapprochement entre ces deux mots, sans base étymologique – « foire » étant issu du latin *feriae*, désignant les jours de fêtes lors desquelles se tenaient les marchés.

23 L'étude des instruments de musique mécanique est demeurée jusqu'à aujourd'hui l'apanage presque exclusif de spécialistes travaillant hors du champ universitaire. La plupart des ouvrages issus de leurs recherches – et parfois de leurs collections – tendent à offrir une vue générale et chronologique des multiples types d'instruments ayant été développés entre la Renaissance et le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (BUCHNER 1959 ; DE WAARD 1967 [1961] et BONHÔTE et BAUD 1972). Les monographies les plus importantes consacrées à l'orgue de foire sont celles de COCKAYNE 1970 ; RAMBACH et WERNET 1984 et JÜTTEMANN 1993.

24 DE WAARD 1967 [1961]: 43 et passim. Voir également: VOSKUHL 2013.

25 JACKSON 2006: 183 et passim.

26 CYPRESS 2017.

27 NOURSE 2014: 51.

28 RUNEFELT 2022: 305–306.

29 RUNEFELT 2022: 305–306 ; LADD 2025: 400, 405 (note 64) ; McALLISTER 2013: 309.

30 McALLISTER 2013: 291 et passim.

conservera, comme on le verra, sur le champ de foire. Là, il devient lui-même un marqueur d'allochtonie et de différence, structurant le regard et la façon de considérer ses instrumentistes ou ses propriétaires.

La combinaison du caractère métrologique de l'orgue à cylindre – le liant à l'industrie naissante des instruments de haute précision<sup>31</sup> – et du mode d'action itinérant qu'il en vient à représenter s'illustre bien dans un parcours individuel : celui de Ludovico Gavioli (1807–1875). En tant que facteur d'instruments, mais aussi en tant que migrant, fondateur et chef d'entreprise, Gavioli tient en effet un rôle central dans l'évolution de ce qui deviendra, à proprement parler, l'orgue de foire. Dans un article récent, Marco Ladd a mis en lumière les différentes étapes de la carrière de ce fils d'horloger modénais.<sup>32</sup> Il rapporte ainsi l'intérêt porté par la société locale des sciences, des lettres et des arts au premier modèle d'orgue mécanique développé par Gavioli. La qualité principale qu'on lui reconnaît alors est de pouvoir générer une variété de timbres – du fait de la quantité et de la diversité d'éléments sonores (tuyaux et peut-être percussions) déclenchés par la rotation de ses cylindres – et imiter ainsi un véritable orchestre.<sup>33</sup> De manière significative, c'est dans la rue que seront présentées les versions ultérieures développées par Gavioli, dont on trouve mention dès les années 1840 dans des publications britanniques et françaises<sup>34</sup>. Définitivement établi à Paris en 1853, il y collaborera avec d'autres facteurs d'instruments tout en développant sa propre firme.<sup>35</sup> Parmi la quantité de modèles fabriqués par l'entreprise<sup>36</sup> – qui sera transmise aux descendants de Ludovico jusqu'à sa liquidation en 1912 – l'orgue mécanique à usage forain émerge progressivement comme un produit phare. Sous l'impulsion de la firme – et de ses concurrentes – l'orchestre artificiel quitte ainsi les salons et le cercle des sociétés savantes pour devenir l'avatar principal de ce qu'on continue de nommer en français « orgue de barbarie ». En témoigne cette mention dans l'étude proto-ethnographique consacrée aux « saltimbanques » par Gaston Escudier :

[...] un orgue de dimension véritablement colossale est mis en mouvement par un chien qui tourne dans une immense roue de bois. Une courroie de transmission met en jeu le mécanisme de l'instrument, qui exécute des airs, des fantaisies et des soli d'instruments, avec une grande netteté. Cet orgue sort des ateliers de M. Gavioli. C'est une véritable merveille de construction.<sup>37</sup>

Les qualificatifs choisis par Escudier nous renvoient clairement au triple effet d'ampleur, d'ingéniosité et de précision qui nourrit l'attractivité d'un métier<sup>38</sup> forain – sans parler du décalage induit par le chien, promu au rôle d'opérateur ! Si une telle description nous aide à saisir et à synthétiser le potentiel démonstratif mis à profit avec l'orgue mécanique, il nous reste à comprendre plus précisément comment celui-ci est lié au temps. Dans la dernière partie de cet article, j'examinerai donc de quelle façon l'instrument structure la période de la foire et vient à en manifester les propriétés temporelles.

### Confier son temps aux plis du son

Occupant l'espace public, l'entreprise foraine est soumise à des contraintes d'emplacement mais peut-être avant tout d'horaires. En effet, les jeux, les attractions et les spectacles, lorsqu'ils se déroulent sur un lieu de passage ou qu'ils avoisinent les différents secteurs de la vie urbaine, courent sans cesse le

31 Lesquels ne sont d'ailleurs pas forcément liés à la mesure du temps. NOURSE (2014: 51–52) évoque ainsi la probabilité d'une connexion et d'échanges de services entre organistes et fabricant-es de baromètres parmi la diaspora italienne de Londres.

32 LADD 2025. Voir également: VAN OOST 2006.

33 LADD 2025: 396–398. Gavioli suit ici une tendance organologique attestée en Europe, près d'un demi-siècle avant l'invention de son modèle. Le nom même de l'instrument (*panarmonico*) est ainsi déjà employé par Joseph Gurk pour son propre appareil en 1810 (DOLAN 2003: 13–14 et passim).

34 LADD 2025: 399–400 ; *L'Impartial du Nord*, 1851: 2.

35 LADD 2025: 398 ; VAN OOST 2006: 7–8.

36 *L'annuaire-almanach de l'industrie* de 1862 décrit l'entreprise comme « manufacture d'instruments de musique à cylindres et à touches ; orgues-mécaniques à claviers, pianos et claviflûtes pour salon, orgues portatives avec panorama mécanique, orgues à trombonne [*sic*], harmoniflûtes, melotons, etc., etc. » (971).

37 ESCUDIER 1875: 142.

38 « Métier » est à entendre ici au sens d'attraction ou d'établissement géré individuellement ou par une famille.

risque d'interférer avec d'autres activités. Ces interférences se caractérisent alors principalement par le moment auquel elles surviennent. « The duration of the fair », écrit Ian Trowell, « disrupts both the allocated functions of spaces [...] and the rhythms of normality associated with those spaces. »<sup>39</sup> Temps de travail<sup>40</sup>, temps de sommeil<sup>41</sup>, temps religieux<sup>42</sup>, selon la valeur sociale qui leur est accordée, sont considérés comme perturbés, sinon attaqués, par la prestation foraine. Or, ce qui fait directement irruption dans l'accomplissement de tâches quotidiennes et ordinaires, c'est le bruit de cette prestation. Parce qu'il menace l'usage du temps des adversaires de l'activité foraine, mais aussi parce qu'il génère – ou, pour reprendre le terme de Latour, « ajoute » – un temps possible pour des groupes n'ayant pas accès à d'autres formes de loisir, le bruit est l'objet principal de controverses nombreuses et prolongées.<sup>43</sup>

Les liens entre le déploiement des attractions, des performances qui les accompagnent et leur empreinte – ou atteinte – sonore ont notamment été étudiés par Agnès Curel, qui suggère, à juste titre, de « considérer ce tumulte comme un trait constitutif, voire une condition *sine qua non* du spectacle continu qu'est la foire. »<sup>44</sup> Dans les comptes-rendus de presse qu'a collecté Ulmi, la description du coup d'envoi de la fête se focalise en effet sur l'apparition d'un bruit composite – à la fois « concert » et « tintamarre », deux mots récurrents<sup>45</sup> – dans lequel se mélangent, à un volume souvent jugé assourdissant, tous les sons humains, animaux et mécaniques du champ de foire. Parmi eux, l'orgue est régulièrement cité comme l'émetteur principal du halo sonore irradié par l'évènement – notamment du fait de sa démultiplication à travers le périmètre occupé.<sup>46</sup> La période durant laquelle se propage un ensemble de bruits – non-coordonnés mais instaurant entre eux un espace commun – correspond donc à la fête en elle-même. Pour détailler la construction de ce temps, il est utile de reconsidérer l'orgue mécanique comme instrument non « seulement » de musique, mais aussi des « changements d'échelle, de longueurs, d'unités » dont résulte ce « strangely scaled environment inserted within, yet cut off from, familiar surroundings. »<sup>47</sup> À partir des transformations accomplies par l'instrument forain, c'est au rythme propre de cette scène diffuse et provisoire de que nous aboutissons.

Car l'orgue de foire est bien riche de médiations, d'établissement de circuits et de seuils divers. La conversion du mouvement en son y trouve probablement une de ses applications les plus complexes et les plus intensément ouvragées. Au fil du temps, il s'est agi, pour celles et ceux qui ont conçu, repris, modifié, augmenté les différentes variétés de l'instrument, de confier à certains matériaux, selon certaines formes et certains assemblages, l'essentiel des paramètres d'une exécution musicale. Le processus de délégation se voit déjà poussé à un point extrême avec la serinette, forme primitive de l'instrument censée n'être utilisée qu'afin d'apprendre les airs qu'elle contient à des oiseaux domestiques.<sup>48</sup> La mise en continuité de la mécanique musicale avec une agentivité animale a été constatée plus haut et se rencontre ailleurs : qu'elle soit confiée à un chien ou à un éléphant,<sup>49</sup> l'impulsion motrice élémentaire, qui animera les soufflets et le cylindre, apparaît en tous les cas comme le trait essentiel et le point nodal déterminant l'action de l'orgue. C'est par ce mouvement circulaire caractéristique qu'il s'articule avec ses instrumentistes, ainsi qu'avec les données technologiques et sociales d'une vie foraine en mutation. Généralisée dans la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, par l'emploi de la vapeur et de l'électricité,

39 TROWELL 2017: 210.

40 RUNEFELT 2022: 315.

41 MCALLISTER 2013: 298.

42 BUISSON 1937: 135.

43 L'importance de ces enjeux se traduit par les campagnes de presse et les pétitions organisées par les « pro- » et les « antiforains », telles qu'à Genève (ULMI 1995: 138–144) ou à Paris (CUREL 2015: 64–65), dans les deux dernières décennies du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

44 CUREL 2015: 62.

45 ULMI 1995: 173–174.

46 Les articles cités par Ulmi (1995: 174) et Curel (2015: 64) dénombrent, respectivement, « 29 orgues » sur la plaine de Plainpalais en janvier 1895 et « cent orgues de Barbarie (grand modèle, s'il vous plaît) » sur la place de Clichy en novembre 1888.

47 WALKER 2018: 26.

48 HOCKER 2016: s. p. [« I.2. Serinette »]

49 *Gil Blas* 1880: s. p. [4].

la motorisation connecte ainsi les manèges avec leur dispositif musical, tributaires d'une même source d'énergie.<sup>50</sup> Le fonctionnement symbiotique du son avec les autres expériences sensorielles proposées sur le champ de foire participe de la conception progressive de celui-ci en tant que système complet et entité véritablement *organique*. Par sa rationalisation, au gré des rapports fonctionnels instaurés entre ses divers actants, la foire s'affirme du même coup, presque soudainement, comme un lieu de travail. En témoigne la création, entre les années 1880 et 1890, et dans l'Europe entière, de nombreux syndicats destinés à structurer la profession foraine, à défendre son image et à faire valoir ses droits auprès des institutions.<sup>51</sup> S'il est peut-être exagéré de prétendre que l'orgue mécanique est à l'origine de ce nouveau statut d'*industriel forain*, dont se réclament les membres de ces unions, l'instrument en est en tout cas un emblème important. On le trouvera ainsi généralement placé au centre et au premier plan des architectures monumentales que constituent carrousels, toboggans, voltigeurs ou façades de cinématographes.

S'il doit être vu, l'orgue doit surtout être entendu – par conséquent, être en mesure de jouer fort et longtemps. Le bruit de la foire est paradoxal, dans la mesure où il réalise un phénomène collectif, ne valant que par la proximité, presque compacte, de ses prestataires, mais aussi où il doit distinguer ces derniers, par la compétition commerciale qui les oppose. De ce point de vue, l'orgue se voit assigner un rôle analogue à celui du bonimenteur, mis en lumière par CUREL et qui « attire donc le spectateur, fait la promotion de son spectacle, mais crée également les conditions nécessaires – le bruit – pour que le spectacle puisse advenir. »<sup>52</sup> L'instrument, quoiqu'il ne verbalise pas, a néanmoins l'avantage de pouvoir répéter son contenu autant de fois que désiré. Cette particularité, collatérale au principe d'entraînement circulaire de l'orgue, est alors exploitée à son maximum, avec pour effet de fondre indistinctement la musique des uns avec celle des autres. Le « refrain monotone et la cacophonie des orgues mécaniques »,<sup>53</sup> le « chant monotone des orgues de barbarie »<sup>54</sup> ou leur « endless grinding symphony »,<sup>55</sup> évoqués avec constance pour décrire le paysage sonore de la foire, résultent pourtant – là encore, paradoxalement – d'un travail soutenu mené sur les capacités de l'instrument afin de le démarquer de ses concurrents.

Le formatage d'un répertoire préexistant, destiné à faire tenir une pièce de musique sur une étendue limitée en termes de temps et de notes disponibles – il est en effet rare que les orgues mécaniques comportent un registre chromatique – constitue l'un des champs de compétence essentiels des manufactures.<sup>56</sup> L'usage d'une musique qui soit la plus familière possible à l'oreille du public s'était avéré dès les premiers temps du *Bänkelsang*, genre dans lequel le chant d'un texte sur un air connu favorise l'attractivité de la performance et la mémorisation des paroles.<sup>57</sup> Suivant une logique similaire, les orgues spécifiquement conçues à l'intention des métiers forains et annoncées dans les pages de publicité des journaux spécialisés doivent être à même de reproduire des « concerts militaires ». <sup>58</sup> Ces instruments se diffusent en effet dans le dernier quart du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, à une époque où les fanfares et les harmonies sont sans doute le premier vecteur de popularisation de la musique.<sup>59</sup> Parce que ces ensembles symbolisent, là encore, la dynamique de rationalisation du loisir qui a cours à cette période,<sup>60</sup>

50 COCKAYNE 1970: 44–46.

51 ANDERSEN 2024: 67–69 et passim.

52 CUREL 2015: 62.

53 *Le Mercure aptésien* 1896: 3.

54 *L'Écho d'Oran* 1869: s. p. [2].

55 TROWELL 2017: 216 (citant PRIESTLEY 1934: 148).

56 COCKAYNE 1970: 13.

57 BRAUNGART 2016: s. p. [« V. Musik »].

58 *Le Voyageur forain* 1883: 4. Dans le texte publicitaire placé là par Gavioli, le terme « concert militaire » est employé par synecdoque pour parler de l'instrument lui-même. Cette association forte, entre le groupe musical et l'appareil mécanique, ne semble cependant pas avoir été promue par toutes les entreprises concurrentes, notamment en Allemagne (JÜTTEMANN 1993: 85–86).

59 HERBERT 2024: 231–232.

60 MUSSAT 2001: s. p.

l'opportunité de répliquer, à l'échelle de l'orgue, les marches, valse, quadrilles et ouvertures joués par de tels ensembles suscite alors un intérêt marqué. En attestent les nombreux brevets déposés par les entreprises constructrices, jalons d'une course à la reproductibilité du temps et du timbre à travers lesquels passe l'exécution.

Dans cette course, le nom de Gavioli figure à nouveau en exergue puisqu'Anselmo (1828–1902) – fils aîné de Ludovico – déclarera sous sa propriété intellectuelle deux innovations, entre autres, qui redéfinissent l'expression sonore de l'orgue mécanique : le frein harmonique, permettant d'augmenter la pression d'air dans les tuyaux tout en les empêchant d'octaviser, et le système de notage linéaire sur carton perforé.<sup>61</sup> Grâce à ce dernier, les limites de durée imposées aux arrangements deviennent virtuellement nulles. Par ailleurs, sur un marché des arrangements musicaux où le prix d'une pièce est celui de son métrage, une telle technologie matérialise explicitement les liens entre économie de la foire, musique et temporalité. Plus puissant et doté d'un répertoire désormais aisé à accumuler, à renouveler et à calculer, l'instrument accroît ses connivences avec les codes et les pratiques d'une société soucieuse d'ordonner chacune de ses productions et représentations.<sup>62</sup> Si dès l'apparition des premiers cylindres, les orgues avaient été en mesure de mettre le temps en réserve et de le stocker au moyen d'une écriture programmatique, les orchestres automatiques du nouvel âge industriel vont jusqu'à subvertir les hiérarchies de la consommation musicale. Ils révèlent ainsi la nature construite de ces dernières, signalant du même coup la fête foraine comme l'un des chantiers où s'élaborent de telles hiérarchies. L'anecdote suivante, rapportée dans le *Gaulois* du 14 juillet 1900, le dit parfaitement :

Nous passions hier à proximité de la fête qui se tient en ce moment à Montmartre. Les musiques faisaient rage et notamment l'orgue monumental d'un étincelant 'manège' de voitures sur montagnes russes. Assourdi [*sic*] par les fanfares et les tambours de cet instrument magnifiquement bruyant, nous nous apprêtions à fuir quand la symphonie qu'il exhalait frappa nos oreilles de sonorités déjà entendues !... Savez-vous ce que jouait cet orgue de foire ? *Parsifal* ! mes amis, *Parsifal* ! Les montagnes étaient russes mais la musique allemande ! Combien moderne, n'est-ce pas, cette intrusion de musique savante dans le répertoire populaire ? *Beau Danube Bleu*, où es-tu ?<sup>63</sup>

Vrai ou pas, cet épisode en dit long sur ce qui, au tournant du siècle, peut devenir sensationnel : les dichotomies esthétiques, toutes rigides qu'elles paraissaient *a priori*, se relâchent étrangement, sous l'action même de dispositifs qui, élaborés à grand-peine, devaient en assurer la stabilité. Le « déjà entendu » qu'ils produisent, fondamental pour constituer une catégorie « populaire », frappe et stupéfie lorsqu'il joue ce qui n'est pas – encore – considéré comme tel. On constate alors que si des temps nouveaux s'instaurent, c'est moins par l'irruption de l'inconnu que par le repassage surprenant de certaines références. Sur le champ de foire, où tout doit concourir à rendre le futur familier, l'orgue mécanique tient sa partie par le jeu perturbant de ses reproductions sonores. Examinant l'impact culturel de telles reproductions, dans la pluralité de leurs techniques, David Suisman observait que « [...] the connection between music, machines, and modernity comes still further into focus if we take seriously the idea that musical instruments are tools for making something, even if in this case the 'something' is sound. »<sup>64</sup> Il ne nous reste qu'à ajouter : et même si ce « quelque chose » est du temps.

### Des machines à faire époque

Il convient pour terminer de remarquer que si, à mesure que s'est transformée la relation du public au spectacle de la musique populaire, l'orgue de foire est devenu rare lors des fêtes foraines, il n'en a pas pour autant perdu le pouvoir de générer du temps. Au contraire, ayant progressivement acquis une

61 ORD-HUME et OWEN 2001.

62 Sur la marchandisation de la musique, sa mise au service de l'ordre social et la polarisation des musiques savantes et populaires, voir SCOTT 2008.

63 *Le Gaulois* 1900: 1.

64 SUISMAN 2010: 20.

valeur patrimoniale, en devenant un objet de collection et de passion, autour duquel se sont constitués des cercles d'expertise et de partage de connaissances,<sup>65</sup> il est dorénavant employé « in order to recapture the old fair atmosphere. »<sup>66</sup> Le « re-passé » que mobilise l'instrument est même aujourd'hui plus évident à saisir, grâce à la distance qui nous séparerait de son contexte originel – et qu'il contribue pour partie à susciter. Souvent considérés comme des vestiges précieux, ayant échappé au démantèlement ou survécu à la négligence de leurs propriétaires, les orgues existant encore de nos jours participent en effet activement à la projection rétrospective d'une « belle époque » dont les imaginaires, tant contemporains de celle-ci qu'actuels, appellent à être examinés de manière critique.<sup>67</sup>

À cette fin et du fait des propriétés de l'instrument présentées ici, l'étude de l'orgue de foire dans sa matérialité, ainsi que celle des options adoptées – mais aussi écartées – par les personnes qui en ont eu et en ont toujours l'usage, réservent des voies de recherche et des pistes de réflexion toujours inédites. Par sa proximité avec l'instrumentation scientifique, les réseaux de savoir-faire dont il est issu, la dimension spectaculaire de son usage, sa propension à altérer êtres humains et musiques et celle, enfin, à périodiser, à faire nommer les espace-temps durant lesquels il se met en marche, l'orgue de foire apparaît comme un agrégateur de dynamiques sociales autant qu'une interface heuristique. Pourvu de nous souvenir de cette part active présente dans l'objet, il est probable qu'il offrira de nouveaux éclairages sur notre manière de nous lier à plus de deux siècles de musique mécanique.

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65 Citons par exemple, pour la Suisse, les Schweizer Freunde Mechanischer Musik et le Schweizer Drehorgel-Club.

66 DE WAARD 1967 [1961]: 241. Voir aussi TROWELL 2017: 215 (note 2).

67 JEAN 2022: 6-7.

*Le Voyageur forain*, 1/2, 01.10.1883, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k95463765> [10.02.2025].

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# Züri West, „Loch dür Zyt“. Eine Zeitreise zurück in die bewegten 1980er Jahre in Bern

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Abb. 1: Züri West 2023 im Restaurant Commerce, Bern. © Annette Boutellier

Am 24. November 2023 veröffentlichte die Berner Mundart-Rock-Band Züri West – nach einer Pause von sechs Jahren – auf den diversen Streaming-Plattformen erstmals wieder neues Material, konkret einen Song mit dem Titel „Loch dür Zyt“ („Loch durch die Zeit“). Dieser erfuhr im Kontext mit der gut zwei Jahre vorher bekannt gemachten Krankheit des Front-Sängers Kuno Lauener – bei ihm war 2017 Multiple Sklerose diagnostiziert worden<sup>2</sup> – besondere Aufmerksamkeit. Die Band hatte am 15. September 2018 ihren bislang letzten Auftritt;<sup>3</sup> der Arzt verbietet Lauener seither das Konzertieren.<sup>4</sup> Züri West wird daher wohl nie wieder live zu erleben sein. Der neue Song und das am 8. Dezember 2023 veröffentlichte gleichnamige Album mit weiteren neuen Liedern<sup>5</sup> waren unter solchen Umständen ein aussergewöhnliches Signal der Band. An dieser Stelle soll aufgezeigt werden, dass der Song „Loch dür Zyt“ durch

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2 HEBEISEN 2021.

3 LAUENER et al. 2024a: [535]. ZÜRI WEST 2024: 00:14:55–00:18:28.

4 HEBEISEN 2023b.

5 ZÜRI WEST 2023a.

die lyrische Retrospektion sowie die musikalische Sprache das Phänomen Zeit reflektiert. Die Band vermeidet überhöhte Sentimentalität, sie vermag im Gegenzug Vergänglichkeit subtil zu thematisieren. Dazu tragen nicht zuletzt auch das dazu gehörende Video<sup>6</sup> sowie die anderen Songs des Albums bei. Ende November 2024 wurde ein 986 Seiten starker Doppelband mit einer umfassenden Sammlung von Bildern und Songtexten aus 40 Jahren Bandgeschichte<sup>7</sup> samt Podcast<sup>8</sup> veröffentlicht, am 7. Dezember 2024 erhielt Kuno Lauener von der Universität Bern den Ehrendokortitel.<sup>9</sup> Diese Momente unterstreichen die Retrospektion der neuesten Musik von Züri West.

„Ein Song ohne Anfang und Happy End“<sup>10</sup> – so umschrieb der *Bund*-Kritiker Ane Hebeisen „Loch dür Zyt“ noch am Tag der Veröffentlichung. A und Ω: Mit dieser Assoziation sind verschiedene Momente verknüpft – einerseits der Abschied von der Bühne, andererseits die Referenz an die Anfangsjahre der Band (1984 bis 1987) und an den Songtext „Züri West“ („Zürich West“), bereits vor der Bandgründung im Frühling 1983 entstanden.<sup>11</sup> Dieser Text ist identisch mit demjenigen des 1987 veröffentlichten Songs „Z.W.“<sup>12</sup> und Grundlage für „Loch dür Zyt“. 2023 blicken Kuno Lauener und mit ihm seine Band also rund 40 Jahre zurück – in die Zeit der rebellierenden Jugend der 1980er Jahre, welche die stadtbernische Politik durchschüttelte, eine Zeit, in der Züri West nicht selten an unbewilligten Anlässen spielte<sup>13</sup> und dabei von der Bewegung phasenweise vereinnahmt wurde. Das Mundart-Rock-Urgestein Polo Hofer, ein Zeitzeuge von damals, beschrieb dies so: „Als Züri West auftauchten, herrschten eine Weile lang anarchische Zustände.“<sup>14</sup>

Der Song „Z.W.“ von 1983/87 beginnt mit folgenden Versen:

Mir frässe üs es Loch dür d'Zyt  
mit üsem Tag für Tag  
es Loch wo immer töiffer wird  
es ewigs uf und ab<sup>15</sup>

(„Wir fressen uns ein Loch durch die Zeit,  
mit unserem Tag für Tag,  
ein Loch, das immer tiefer wird,  
ein ewiges Auf und Ab“)

Träume vom blauen Schloss, vom grossen Geld, eine Modenschau auf dem Bärenplatz in Bern, die Hitze in der Stadt, Fernweh, Wachsein in der Nacht, Sorgen, offene Fragen, Einsamkeit in der Gesellschaft, als Ausbruch-Reflex fast jeden Abend Rock'n'Roll und zu viel Stimorol,<sup>16</sup> das sind Themen, welche die Befindlichkeit der jungen Generation im bewegten Bern widerspiegeln. Im Song „Loch dür Zyt“ sind einige davon weggefallen: die Modenschau, der Rock'n'Roll und die Kaugummis. Auch folgende Verse von 1983/87 finden 40 Jahre später keine Verwendung:

mängisch liessi schampar gärn  
aus la shtah und fieng vo vorne a<sup>17</sup>  
(„Manchmal liesse ich sehr gerne  
alles stehen und finge von vorne an“)

6 ZÜRI WEST 2023b.

7 LAUENER et al. 2024a, 2024b. SURY 2024.

8 ZÜRI WEST 2024.

9 UNIVERSITÄT BERN 2024 und FELLER 2024.

10 HEBEISEN 2023a.

11 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [11].

12 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [77]. Die Abkürzung steht für „Züri West“ („Zürich West“).

13 LAUENER et al. 2024a: [36–39; 72–80]

14 MUMENTHALER 2005: 222.

15 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [11] und [77].

16 Stimorol ist eine Kaugummi-Marke.

17 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [11] und [77].

### Der Refrain von 1983/87

u wenn'i z'BÄRN am Fänschter sctah  
 u d'Sunne grad im MEER versinkt  
 u mis einsame HÄRZ schmärzt so fescht  
 de dänken'i a üsi Zyt  
 u de dänken'i a di  
 u es zieht mi schwäär zu dir nach ZÜRI ★ WEST<sup>18</sup>

(„Und wenn ich in Bern am Fenster stehe  
 und die Sonne gerade im Meer versinkt  
 und mein einsames Herz so stark schmerzt,  
 denke ich an unsere Zeit,  
 und dann denke ich an dich,  
 und es zieht mich sehr zu dir nach Zürich West“)

wird 2023 wie folgt verdichtet:

u wenn'i z'Bärn am Fänschter sctah  
 u d'Sunne grad im Meer versinkt  
 u mis einsame Härz  
 wo chlopfet u chlopfet<sup>19</sup>

(„Und wenn ich in Bern am Fenster stehe  
 und die Sonne gerade im Meer versinkt  
 und mein einsames Herz,  
 das schlägt und schlägt“)

Erneut im Songtext zu finden sind 2023 Metaphern der Zeit, das Sich-Fressen durch den Alltag, in der Hoffnung, ein Paradies zu erreichen, die Gedanken an ein Früher – zentral ist das Herz, das nun nicht mehr schmerzt, aber durch das Pulsieren den Takt vorgibt für die Vanitas. „d'Zyt isch en auti Maschine wo louft u louft u louft“ („Die Zeit ist eine alte Maschine, die läuft und läuft und läuft“),<sup>20</sup> sang Kuno Lauener 1994, später wurde an Live-Auftritten die 'Zeit' durch 'Züri West' ersetzt.<sup>21</sup> Mitte der 1990er Jahre war Lauener „e haube Schritt em Blues voruus“ („dem Blues einen halben Schritt voraus“).<sup>22</sup> Ob das rund 30 Jahre später immer noch so ist, bleibt fraglich: Das Herz schlägt weiterhin.

In der Musik wird die Zeitreflexion ausdifferenziert: Stilistisch zeigt sich die Band in „Loch dür Zyt“ – ganz wie zu Beginn ihrer Karriere – minimalistisch, *straight* rockig und unsentimental. Der Beat versinnbildlicht das Ticken einer Uhr beziehungsweise das Versickern der Zeit, das Synthesizer-Pattern kann als Herzklopfen interpretiert werden:



Notenbsp. 1. Züri West, „Loch dür Zyt“, Synthesizer-Pattern

18 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [11] und [77]. Die letzte geographische Angabe ist ein ironisches Synonym für die Stadt Bern: In Zürich bezeichnete man in den 1980er Jahren die Schweizer Bundesstadt abwertend als Vorort der (grösseren) Stadt Zürich.

19 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [417].

20 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [157].

21 SURY 2024. Vgl. FURRER und BEGERT 2002: 01:17:45–01:17:55.

22 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [157].

Das hohe Tempo von „Z.W.“ mit 184 Schlägen pro Minute wird in „Loch dür Zyt“ auf deren 120 gedimmt – während die Band Mitte der 1980er Jahren buchstäblich ‘auf 180 ist’, herrscht rund 40 Jahre später also eine etwas gemächlichere Gangart. Die helle Tonart D-Dur von „Z.W.“ wird in „Loch dür Zyt“ durch c-Moll ersetzt – eine markante Trübung der Stimmung. Auf die Gliederung in Strophe und Refrain in „Z.W.“ wird in „Loch dür Zyt“ verzichtet, folgendes achttaktige Harmonieschema ist formprägend:

Cm	Cm	Ab	Ab
G <sup>sus4</sup>	G	Fm	Cm/Eb

Die Harmonik ist 2023 deutlich einfacher und geschlossener als rund 40 Jahre zuvor, das Formschema weist eine fallende harmonische Linie sowie Zirkularität auf; der achte Takt bedeutet jeweils nur scheinbar einen Abschluss, durch das *Es* im Bass wirkt er offen für weitere Durchgänge. Das Schema wird nur zweimal – durch ein *Interlude* sowie das *Outro* – abgelöst:

Ab	Fm	Cm	Cm
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Sowohl lyrisch wie auch musikalisch wirft Züri West in „Loch dür Zyt“ also einen langen Blick zurück in die Gründungszeit der Band (und darüber hinaus!). Die Wiederaufnahme des Songtexts von 1983 ist ein bewusster Entscheid: Kuno Lauener beschreibt diesen im Podcast *8424*, er will mit „Loch dür Zyt“ eine Klammer setzen, die besagte 40 Jahre umfasst und auch zurückgeht zum Song „Züri West“, der auf dem ersten Demo-Tape vom Sommer 1984 erschien,<sup>23</sup> von den Lokalradios in Bern sofort aufgegriffen und nach 1992 nur noch wenig live gespielt wurde.<sup>24</sup> Diese Klammerbildung, so offensichtlich sie ist, sollte aber relativiert werden. Bereits 2002 hielt Züri West anlässlich einer grundlegenden Umbesetzung innerhalb der Band und der damit verbundenen stilistischen Wandlung Rückschau: mit einem Bildband,<sup>25</sup> der durch Songzitate gegliedert wird, und in einem Film.<sup>26</sup> Im Bildband erscheint quasi als Motto über allem die erste Strophe des Songs „Z.W.“ – eine offensichtliche Klammerbildung zur Gründungszeit der Band.<sup>27</sup> Im Film werden zudem Aussagen gemacht, die um die Zukunft der Band kreisen.<sup>28</sup> Daraus folgt: Geschichtliche Reflexion war von Beginn weg Teil der DNA der Band, sie ist es bis heute geblieben.

Die Rückschau von 2023 wiederum wird im Video-Clip<sup>29</sup> von „Loch dür Zyt“ deutlich unterstrichen: Da erscheinen in rascher Bildfolge die gegenwärtigen und ehemalige Band- und Crewmitglieder, eigene und fremde Plattencovers, prominente Personen des kulturellen und politischen Lebens aus dem In- und Ausland sowie die Berner Young Boys. Im Zentrum steht aber eine Bildfolge von verschiedenen Tierherzen (1:20–1:25). Der Blick zurück ist im Video von 2023 extensiver als im Film von 2002 – der Doppelband *8424* potenziert dieses Moment. Auf dessen Hülle sowie auf dem Cover von *Loch dür Zyt* ist zudem das Pentagramm wieder präsent, welches in den ersten Jahren fester optischer Bestandteil von Covers und Plakaten gewesen war (siehe auch der Refrain von „Z.W.“ oben), nach 1992 aber wegfiel.

23 LAUENER et al. 2024a: [18 und 20]. Der Song ist fast identisch mit dem oben thematisierten «Z.W.» von 1987.

24 ZÜRI WEST 2024: 00:18:42–00:23:20. MUMENTHALER 2009: 117–119.

25 BOUTELLIER und LAUENER 2002.

26 FURRER und BEGERT 2002. Rückblick in die 1980er Jahre: 00:13:00–00:29:20.

27 BOUTELLIER und LAUENER 2002: [2]. Siehe oben, Fussnote 15.

28 FURRER und BEGERT 2002: 01:14:50–01:24:20.

29 ZÜRI WEST 2023b.



Abb. 2: Das Cover des Albums *Loch dür Zyt*. © Züri West

Die anderen Songs des Albums *Loch dür Zyt*, die um den Titelsong gruppiert sind, differenzieren den Blick zurück, brechen diesen teilweise auf humoristische Art. Das Spiel mit der Zeit wird vielschichtig ausgeführt, verträumt, heiter, (selbst-)ironisch, nachdenklich, tieftraurig schön – dabei ist das Moment des flüchtigen Augenblicks, des Beiläufigen weiterhin stilistisches Emblem der Band. In den Coverversionen zeigt Züri West 2023 erneut ihre Meisterschaft, englische Lyrics spielerisch leicht in ein stadtbernerisches Idiom zu verwandeln. Besonders eindrücklich gelingt dies in der Überarbeitung von Lou Reeds „Vanishing Act“:

wie schön eifach z'verschwinde  
 dür dä Näbu über d'Brügg  
 u niemer wo eim je würd finde  
 nie im Läbe wett i zrügg<sup>30</sup>

(„Wie schön einfach zu verschwinden,  
 durch diesen Nebel über die Brücke,  
 und niemand, der einen jemals finden würde,  
 nie im Leben möchte ich zurück [gehen]“)

Das entspricht bei Lou Reed folgenden Versen:

It must be nice to disappear  
 To have a vanishing act  
 To always be moving forward  
 And never looking back<sup>31</sup>

Hier werden Raum und Zeit transzendiert, der Song dringt in eine Sphäre ein, die im Berner Mundart-Rock bis dato unerreicht war. „Der Tod? Eine Hoffnung?“<sup>32</sup> fragt Ane Hebeisen – wohl einfach ein offenes Ende, könnte man erwidern. Im direkt anschliessenden *Winterhale* singt Lauener:

30 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [430].

31 REED 2003: Disc 2, Track 7 „Vanishing Act“, 00:00:44–00:01:06.

32 HEBEISEN 2023c.

u i louffe u i louffe  
u d'Chäuti schtieut mr schier dr Schnuuf  
aber chumm du nume du Jahr du Nöis  
no grad gieben i nid uf<sup>33</sup>

(„Und ich gehe und gehe,  
und die Kälte stiehlt mir fast den Atem,  
aber komm nur, du neues Jahr,  
noch gebe ich nicht auf“)

Die Band sieht die Zeit nach 2024 wie folgt: „So schloss sich ein Kreis. Wie es weiter geht, lassen wir offen.“<sup>34</sup> Auf die Frage, ob *Loch dür Zyt* das letzte Züri-West-Album sei, meint Lauener: „Vielleicht [...] nicht.“<sup>35</sup> Die offene Zukunft wird von Züri West mit einem Selbstzitat ironisch gebrochen: „Nüt wos git, git's für immer. („Nichts, was es gibt, gibt es für immer.“) Ausser Elvis, natürlich.“<sup>36</sup> Dieses Oxymoron unterstreicht: Die Band ist 'alive', auch ohne Live-Auftritte. Die Zeitreise kann weitergehen.

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33 LAUENER et al. 2024b: [433].

34 LAUENER et al. 2024a: [525].

35 HEER 2023.

36 LAUENER et al. 2024a: [525] Vgl. LAUENER et al. 2024b: [102].

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# The A-B-A' structure as a social 'return' in opera buffa

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In this short paper, I briefly explore the plots of three milestones of the *opera buffa* genre: *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), and *Così fan tutte* (1790). They share an extremely interesting dramaturgical aspect that, in my view, suggests a sociologically 'circular' reading of the stories that seem to ignore any internal running of time. This effect is related to the fact that all the characters of these operas consider a possible change in their lives, that however, does not really happen. Even if their emotions have been shaken for a certain time, all the characters will instead come back to their initial condition, ignoring every previous diversion. Events swirl like a spiral: at the end of the three stories, despite the time flowing, and although the characters move a step further gaining new awareness, each situation returns to its starting point. This is why I consider all three stories as 'tripartite', **A-B-A'**. Moreover, their 'happy ending' seems a true paradox.

The three plots have a similar structure to the tripartite *aria*, where the musical return (**A'**) is identical in text to the beginning **A**, although varied by the presence of musical ornaments. The dramaturgical sense of a Metastasian *aria* refers, in fact, to the characters' frequent hiding of emotions: feelings are rationally explained, and divided into sections **A** and **B**. The structure **A-B-A'** states the organization of a systematic thought rather than a sentimental impulse, and thanks to the return of **A** with variations, the emotional stability of the beginning is restored after the **B** diversion: feelings always reappear as they were at the beginning. In sum:

The *da capo* aria [...] provides a formal, orderly, and balanced framework even for the most turbulent passages [...]: the character states his/her sentiment through logical concepts and thus reveals rationality, that is man's greatest quality.<sup>2</sup>

It seems to me that the overall dramaturgical construction of the three *opere buffe* by Da Ponte and Mozart refers to a tripartite division that exactly matches the musical one just described, despite the fast running of time of events: the upheavals (**B**) due to the action working in the life of the characters (**A**) will be re-established at the end of the story thanks to the recreation of the initial social situation (**A'**). But this restoration will be only practical and social, not emotional! The action ends with the reappearance of the initial social environment, and, finally, the original order comes back perfectly intact after a lively game of misunderstandings. The result will show a picture of a vibrant and sparkling, but essentially static society, directed by aristocrats and avoiding any permanent social mixing. Even in comic operas, the nobles describe themselves by often using the typical *aria* structure **A-B-A'**, which is emotionally self-representative. The aristocrats confirm themselves as the ruling class by using a circular narrative scheme, and their adventures end with the recreation of the initial situation despite any intermediate adventures. In other words, the tripartite device **A-B-A'** works as a clear metaphor for reassuring a firm social stability:

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<sup>2</sup> BIANCONI 1993: 58–59: "L'aria col daccapo [...] assicura una cornice formale ordinata ed equilibrata anche agli affetti più tumultuosi [...]: il personaggio vi inquadra il proprio sentimento organizzandolo in concetti logici e rivelando dunque quella capacità di raziocinio ch'è, dell'uomo, la qualità precipua".

1. **A** describes the starting situation, inevitably expressing a socially accepted view: Figaro is about to marry Susanna, the Count is married to the Countess; Don Giovanni lives alone with his servant, Donna Anna seems happy with Don Ottavio, Zerlina and Masetto are almost married; Fiordiligi is engaged to Guglielmo, Dorabella to Ferrando.

2. **B** is the emotional upheaval of the characters happening during the plot: the Count interferes with the marriage plans of Figaro and Susanna; Don Giovanni kills a nobleman, acts fully as a libertine, and upsets everyone; the two couples in *Così fan tutte* understand that they are both mismatched.

3. **A'** restores the initial order, but only outwardly: again, Figaro and Susanna are to be married, the Count and Countess seem reconciled; Don Giovanni disappears and everything appears as if he had never existed (he leaves no known children, Leporello seeks another master, Donna Elvira enters a convent, Zerlina and Masetto make peace, Don Ottavio shows his closeness to Donna Anna); the infidelity of Fiordiligi and Dorabella will be 'punished' by marriage with their original *fiancés*, Despina and Don Alfonso confirm their practical view of life. But almost all the characters will carry with them the burden of experiences that have upset them deeply during the 'disordered' part of the opera. In fact, the Count's basic instincts have been forever shaken by the powerful fascination that Susanna's youth has exerted on him, the Countess understands that her marriage has become emotionally empty, Susanna realises that she is much smarter than her future husband; Donna Elvira and Donna Anna experienced with Don Giovanni pure sensuality for the first time in their lives, Zerlina has briefly felt like a noblewoman, Leporello lived in symbiosis with his master; Fiordiligi and Dorabella discovered love at first sight, and the same can be said for Guglielmo and Ferrando, because their mutual bet did *not* foresee that one should court the betrothed girl of the other.

As a logical consequence of the structure **A-B-A'**, the sensual emotion conveyed by **B** should disappear mercilessly in the recomposition of **A'**. The stable social statement reproduced in part **A** should confirm its validity by re-establishing the happy ending that restores the initial situation. The emotional charge of **B** should be nullified: nothing different should replace the ordered path of life already stated at the beginning of the opera, and the divergent emotional experiences should survive only as distant memories. In fact, inside our three operas, both emotion and instinct succumb, reduced to mere dreams that leave a bitter taste in the mouth. Dreams very often allow people to experience what is not morally permissible in real life: the effect of a dreamed-of fulfilled desire can be cathartic, but on other occasions, it could be rather destabilising.

In the three masterpieces by Da Ponte and Mozart, laughter greatly contributes to the achievement of the cathartic effect. The society defined by situation **A** comes out stronger because it 'overcomes' the emotional shakings of **B**, making them ridiculous, and returns to prevail in **A'** as the only efficient reorganization of lives. As a consequence, we get quite a clear picture:

**A** is real life, where everyone lives in a 'correct' place (which means that nobles love nobles, and peasants love peasants, without any social mixing).

**B** is the disruption of real life, where instinct prevails over rationality (this implies, as a consequence, a useless disorder, a sense of ridiculousness, and a possible social change). Members of the different social classes cut across each other through disguises, plotting together, and courtship, but this mixed social environment inevitably will stop.

**A'** leads all the story back to its starting point. The characters have not accepted the formal disorders derived from the emotional turmoils that happened in **B**. A full rationality comes back over their social landscape, which seems, at first sight, happily re-confirmed.

At this point, an interesting question arises: is the emotional 'happy ending' something real for the characters of these three *opere buffe*? Do they truly desire to re-establish their pre-turmoil situation? Are they able to forget their traumas or strong experiences, and start living again as if these diversions never happened? What happens with their emotions? It seems to me that the 'happy ending' of *opere buffe* marks a pure game of roles, a play within the play where characters *pretend* their final satisfaction. At the end of the stories, their feelings cannot be like the initial ones, because after **B** their previous relationships and emotions have been seriously challenged.

In conclusion, I think that, at least in the three *opere buffe* by Da Ponte and Mozart, the censorship of instinct shown in **B** for a long time is deliberate and consistent, reflecting the values of their conservative society. Instinct could not be considered as a value, undermining the perfect aristocratic social machine which relied on matrimonial arrangements without caring about real feelings. “The nobility is almost a bright lamp that [...] lights up and incites to virtue”, wrote Baldassarre Castiglione in his *Cortegiano* five centuries ago.<sup>3</sup> And, in fact, love, physical attraction, and emotional relationships between people of different social classes: all these matters would have been considered highly subversive, as they would have seriously challenged the foundations of the institution and privileges of the aristocratic families.<sup>4</sup>

In these three *opere buffe*, the attitude of the characters is very different from that implied in the Settecento *opera seria*, where they often act as spectators of themselves<sup>5</sup> and live in a condition of permanent dissatisfaction.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the happy ending (**A'**) settles events ‘back’, pushing to ignore any previous emotional upheaval (**B**). Frankly, at the end of the three Da Ponte and Mozart masterpieces, it is really hard to imagine that all the characters will live happily ever after without any regrets... Would it be perhaps possible to extend the same dramaturgical **A-B-A'** model to other contemporary *opere buffe*?

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3 CASTIGLIONE 2002: 31 [l.4.7]: “La nobiltà è quasi una chiara lampa che [...] accende e sprona alla virtù”.

4 TAROZZI 2003: 152. A similar social threat was felt in the second half of the twentieth century, when domestic devices were introduced into European middle-class homes: this equipment has been considered “a dangerous attack on the unity and strength of the family”.

5 JOLY 1983: LVII.

6 JOLY 1983: xxx–xxxi: “They compensate their inertia with an over-fertile imagination”, and they temper “the recklessness of their affections with the light of reason”.



# Une temporalité musicale non linéaire ?

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Bien qu'ayant reçu une formation classique en piano et en composition d'avant-garde, je me suis épris d'un instrument d'une culture musicale asiatique. En 1995, j'ai entrepris l'apprentissage du *shakuhachi* japonais, une flûte de bambou droite difficile à maîtriser.<sup>2</sup> Les œuvres solos pour cette flûte se distinguent par une temporalité que nous pourrions qualifier de non linéaire.

Ces pièces comprennent de courtes phrases, pouvant parfois n'avoir qu'un seul ton<sup>3</sup>, entrecoupées de respirations obligatoires, ces dernières générant des silences entre les phrases. La notation traditionnelle de cette musique, créée dans la deuxième moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle au Japon, peut dans certaines pièces indiquer une pulsation, qui est toutefois irrégulière. Cette notation très simple indique principalement les doigtés pour jouer les tons, les mouvements de tête, les ouvertures partielles des trous, les traits représentant la durée relative des tons, ainsi que les moments où il faut respirer (voir l'exemple ci-dessous). Ces pièces sont habituellement lentes. Elles sont même considérées par certains comme des pièces de méditation, du fait qu'elles ont été composées par les moines d'une secte bouddhiste qui aurait été affiliée au bouddhisme zen durant l'ère Edo (1603-1868) au Japon.<sup>4</sup> Le tempo est libre. Le musicien pourra jouer une pièce très lentement une journée, un peu plus rapidement le lendemain ; un autre musicien pourra la jouer plus rapidement encore. Aucune règle spécifique ne dicte la rapidité d'exécution, bien que ces pièces soient généralement lentes et posées. Même, une phrase pourra être rapide, la suivante lente, selon l'état d'esprit du musicien lors de l'exécution. Si une phrase n'a qu'un seul ton, celui-ci pourra être tenu très longuement, tout dépendant de l'école et de son style ou celui du flûtiste. Les répertoires modernes sont généralement plus rapides et virtuoses que les répertoires anciens, dont les mélodies sont souvent assez simples. En fait, nous ne savons pas comment ces moines exécutaient ces pièces à cette époque. Ce que je présente ici a trait à l'évolution actuelle du jeu du *shakuhachi*, ainsi qu'à ma compréhension personnelle de cette musique particulière.

Le cas des respirations obligatoires, générant des coupures dans le flot mélodique, et donc des silences entre les phrases, est fort intéressant. Elles ne sont indiquées que par un petit trait horizontal. Cependant, la durée de ces silences est laissée au libre arbitre du musicien. Elle ou il pourra faire durer le silence pendant une seconde entre deux phrases. Le silence après la seconde phrase pourra être de deux ou trois secondes, et parfois plus long, avant d'entreprendre la phrase suivante. Si une pièce est jouée rapidement, les silences pourront être courts ; si elle l'est très lentement, ils pourront être longs. La ou le flûtiste n'a aucune obligation de toujours jouer une pièce de la même façon, au même tempo, avec les mêmes durées des silences à chaque exécution. Certains styles préconisent des durées silencieuses courtes, d'autres plus ou moins expansives, d'autres longues. Certains musiciens peuvent

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2 Voir DESCHÊNES et EGUCHI 2018.

3 Les mélodies de ces pièces sont considérées par de nombreux maîtres japonais de mélodies de timbres et non de notes. Par exemple, cette assertion a été faite lors d'une classe de maître du flûtiste Kakizakai Kaoru à laquelle j'ai assisté à Chichibu, Japon, en novembre 2015.

4 Bannis en 1871, ces moines ne considéraient pas cette flûte comme un instrument de musique mais comme un outil spirituel. Le bannissement de cette secte a alors permis au *shakuhachi* de « devenir » un instrument de musique. Pour une histoire du *shakuhachi*, DESCHÊNES 2016.

préférer de longues durées, d'autres courtes. D'autres musiciens peuvent grouper quelques phrases par des respirations courtes, suivies d'une longue pause, avant de continuer.

L'exécution de ces pièces nécessite de ressentir une temporalité non linéaire, ce qui m'a pris de nombreuses années à mettre à exécution. Chaque phrase chemine dans un mode crescendo-decrescendo. Il ne faut habituellement pas commencer une phrase brusquement, bien qu'il y ait des pièces ou des styles dans lesquels une phrase peut débiter par un fortissimo. Il faut usuellement terminer une phrase par un decrescendo, même s'il peut être très court. Le silence, et donc la respiration, qui suivent une phrase servent alors à préparer la phrase qui va suivre. En ce sens, il faut « ressentir » ces silences, non pas dans leur durée, mais dans leur « expression » phénoménale. Ceux-ci font partie intégrante de l'esthétique de ces pièces. Il pourrait être suggéré que la phrase sort du silence et y retourne. Ce va-et-vient entre silences et tons ne doit pas être quantifié. Il doit être ressenti par la ou le flûtiste, les silences étant aussi importants que les phrases. Bien que des moments silencieux font partie intégrante de toute musique, ceux-ci sont la plupart du temps soit déterminés à l'avance, dictés par le compositeur, le style, le genre de musique, ou par les musiciens. Dans le cas des pièces solos pour *shakuhachi*, on ne peut les déterminer aussi clairement, sinon le jeu du musicien deviendrait machinal. La temporalité musicale de ces œuvres exige du musicien une certaine « flexibilité » temporelle tant dans la durée des silences que dans les phrases exécutées.

Le compositeur et historien Akira Tamba, dans un ouvrage sur l'esthétique musicale japonaise,<sup>5</sup> indique que, entre autres choses, la pensée japonaise, dès au moins le VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, concevait le temps comme un devenir. Il n'y aurait pas *le* temps, mais *des* temps, soit des moments temporels qui adviennent l'un à la suite de l'autre, toutefois sans être liés à une causalité temporelle. Le temps se déploie ainsi, non pas dans la sphère du savoir ou de l'action, mais dans celle du vécu phénoménal, tel qu'il advient. Le temps et l'espace sont jugés tributaires l'un de l'autre. Selon moi, cet aspect de la pensée traditionnelle japonaise s'applique à l'exécution des œuvres solos pour *shakuhachi*. Le silence initial qui commence l'œuvre amène la première phrase, qui se termine en silence, silence d'où émerge la phrase suivante, qui redevient ensuite du silence, et ainsi de suite. Le musicien doit faire advenir tant les phrases que les silences. Un silence n'est pas l'absence de son, mais un instant de l'exécution à partir duquel la phrase à venir naîtra.

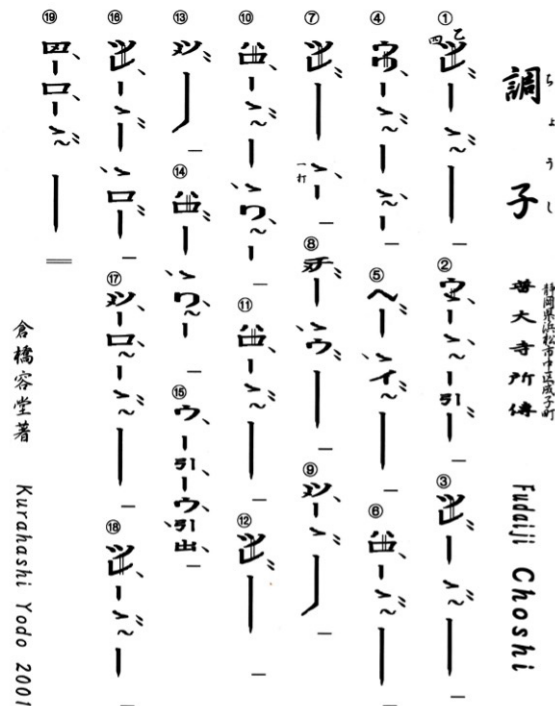
Une notion importante dans les arts japonais est la notion de *ma* (間). Ce terme évoque à la fois un espace physique et une durée, représentant l'espace séparant deux entités, ou l'écart temporel entre deux événements. Il fait ainsi référence à un entre-deux, un interstice existentiel spatiotemporel sans lequel les êtres, les choses et les phénomènes ne pourraient être liés phénoménalement entre eux. Dans la pensée japonaise, l'espace n'est pas un vide ou une étendue neutre où nous projetons le regard ou côtoyons les choses et les êtres, mais un milieu vécu temporellement dans sa phénoménalité. En ce sens, l'espace auquel le *ma* fait référence n'est aucunement un espace délimité et mesurable. Dans les arts de la scène, l'intervalle de temps générant un silence ou un arrêt ne concerne pas un temps chronométré auquel le musicien, l'acteur ou le danseur est assujéti, mais plutôt la façon dont celle-ci ou celui-ci le ressent. En musique, le *ma* désigne un silence entre deux phrases, alors qu'en danse ou en théâtre, il est une pause. Il ne s'agit pas d'un simple arrêt, mais d'un état esthétique sans mouvements imprégné de sens.<sup>6</sup>

En ce qui a trait aux œuvres solos pour *shakuhachi*, nous pourrions ainsi parler d'une temporalité musicale « hors temps ». C'est une exagération, bien sûr. Mon point est qu'aucune temporalité stricte n'est dictée à ces pièces (bien qu'elles soient généralement lentes), le musicien doit apprendre à générer sa propre temporalité qu'il fait résonner dans l'espace, tout en faisant fi du temps linéaire courant dans bien des musiques et dans la vie quotidienne. Chaque phrase est un moment, un temps, qui de-

5 TAMBA 1988.

6 Voir le 2<sup>e</sup> chapitre, DESCHÊNES 2018.

vient un temps silencieux, suivi d'un temps sonore, et ainsi de suite. La temporalité de ces œuvres n'est pas dans sa partition, dans sa notation, mais dans son exécution. Elle est phénoménalement tributaire de la temporalité que ressent le musicien au moment de l'exécution (ce qui n'est bien sûr pas unique à cette musique).



Exemple 1 : partition Chōshi (une mélodie de base). Elle se lit de droite à gauche, de haut en bas. Les petits traits horizontaux indiquent où respirer, donc à quel moment il y a silence. Avec la permission de Kurahashi Yōdō, mon maître de shakuhachi, résident à Kyōto, Japon.

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# Wladimir Vogel as a mediator: John Cage in Donaueschingen, Zurich, and Milan

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American composer John Cage travelled to Europe three times in the post-war period, in 1949, 1954, and 1958. These visits, which included concert tours and extended stays, have received significant scholarly attention due to their importance in the musical interactions between the United States and Europe after the war. Studies have focused on the reception of Cage's music and aspects of cross-fertilisation, with considerable effort put into rebuilding early contacts and their role in these processes.<sup>2</sup> Despite such extensive research, however, the connection between Cage and Russian-German composer Wladimir Vogel has remained overlooked. A letter from Cage to Vogel, dated 17 June 1954 and held at the Zentralbibliothek in Zurich, reveals that Vogel was amongst the earliest contacts that Cage established in Europe in 1949.<sup>3</sup> Building on the information disclosed in this document, this essay aims to shed light on the encounter between the two composers in Milan in 1949 and Vogel's subsequent role as a mediator for Cage's 1954 European tour.

Cage's visit to Europe in 1949 is well-known for his stay in Paris during the summer and his meeting with French composer Pierre Boulez. Before settling in Paris, however, Cage and his professional and life partner, dancer Merce Cunningham, travelled through Italy for three weeks between April and May. Composer and critic Virgil Thompson had arranged for Cage to cover the festival organised in Sicily by the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM) as a correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*. Cage's itinerary also included meeting with friends, composer Merton Brown, and the painter John ('Jack') Heliker, who had moved to Italy after receiving a *Prix de Rome* from the American Academy.<sup>4</sup> Two additional engagements came up during his stay. While in Sicily, Cage was invited to attend the First International Congress of Dodecaphonic Music, organised in Milan by Vogel and Italian composer Riccardo Malipiero.<sup>5</sup> And a concert of his works for prepared piano was arranged for him at the American Academy in Rome with the help of Heliker before he and Cunningham would leave for Paris in mid-May.<sup>6</sup>

Cage's invitation to the congress in Milan was to take part as a delegate, allowing him to attend private sessions in addition to those open to the public and concerts. The question of how Vogel and Malipiero came to invite Cage remains nonetheless unclear. Delegates were expected to be international exponents of the dodecaphonic technique. The list of American candidates, which was decided at a preparatory meeting in Orselina in December 1948, comprised Ernst Krenek, George Perle, Ben Weber, and Adolph Weiss.<sup>7</sup> After the meeting, Vogel tried to obtain their contacts from critic Willi Reich, but

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2 BEAL 2006; DECROUPET 1997; IDDON 2013; NATTIEZ 1994.

3 Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Nachlass Wladimir Vogel, Mus NL 116: Kc 2, letter from Cage to Vogel, 17.6.1954.

4 Archives of American Art, John Heliker Papers, Roll N70/41, frame 0390, letter from Cunningham to Brown, ca. 16.3.1949.

5 J. Cage, letter to parents, ca. 26.4.1949, in KUHN 2016: 93.

6 ROBERTS 1951: 16; VAUGHAN 1997: 50.

7 PICCARDI 1998: 218.

only managed to get Krenek's address in March.<sup>8</sup> Although the congress was scheduled for early May, it took almost a month for Krenek's invitation to be sent out, which did not allow him enough time to accept or find substitutes.<sup>9</sup> As a result, Vogel and Malipiero were still searching for American delegates at the end of April.<sup>10</sup> The scheduling of the congress immediately after the ISCM festival in Sicily proved providential. Cage was within their reach, and this is what most likely warranted his invitation, if only due to his nationality and the fortuitous timing.

Although Cage was not impressed by Vogel's *Thyl Claes* (1943–45) performance, the two men became friends during their time in Milan.<sup>11</sup> It seems clear from later correspondence that Vogel developed an interest in Cunningham's Dance Company.<sup>12</sup> He introduced Cage to his wife, and they exchanged addresses. After returning to the United States in the autumn, Cage received updates about Vogel through their mutual friend Barbara Hermann. Their acquaintance did not go unnoticed by Vogel's friend, Swiss composer Rolf Liebermann, who attended the congress. Four years later, when the director of the Donaueschinger Musiktage, Heinrich Strobel, decided to invite Cage to the festival, Liebermann advised that Vogel may have been in contact with the American. In November 1953, Strobel wrote to Vogel, who lived in Ascona: "Our mutual friend Liebermann tells me that you might have John Cage's address. I would be grateful if you could let me have it in the next few days".<sup>13</sup> Two weeks later, Vogel informed Strobel that Cage was living with Cunningham at 12 East 17th Street in New York City.<sup>14</sup>

In December, Strobel wrote directly to Cage to inform him of his intention to present his work at the Donaueschinger Musiktage the following year.<sup>15</sup> In response, Cage suggested that his musical collaborator and pianist of choice, David Tudor, accompany him.<sup>16</sup> He proposed three concerts that would showcase not only his own music but also works by Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, and Christian Wolff. After negotiating the programme, Strobel agreed to one 60-minute performance for October 17, 1954, featuring piano and tape music by Cage and his New York colleagues. Strobel's condition was that no other engagements should occur before the one at Donaueschingen, which would be Cage and Tudor's première European performance.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, considering their brief meeting in Milan, Vogel's involvement in Cage's tour went significantly further. Once the date in Donaueschingen was fixed and their honorarium covered the travel costs, Cage and Tudor pursued their European contacts to secure more engagements. By June 1954, when Cage wrote the letter to Vogel held at the Zentralbibliothek in Zurich, they had already arranged concerts in Cologne, Paris, and London, as well as radio broadcasts in Brussels, Hilversum, and Zurich. The purpose of contacting Vogel was to seek additional dates. After expressing his gratitude for the assistance with Strobel and fondly recalling their meeting in Milan, Cage informed Vogel of his tour and asked whether he could suggest other performance opportunities in Switzerland.

Although no further correspondence between them has apparently survived, there is substantial evidence of Vogel's efforts to help Cage. A letter to Italian composer Gino Negri, dated 11 October 1954, shows that Vogel travelled to Donaueschingen with the intent to arrange two concerts for Cage in

8 Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Nachlass Wladimir Vogel, Mus NL 116: Kr 199, letter from Vogel to Reich, 15.3.1949; Mus NL 116: Kr 305, letter from Reich to Vogel, 17.3.1949.

9 University of Bologna, Fondo René Leibowitz, M LEIB L 21, *I Pionieri della Dodecafonìa* (unpublished conference proceedings), Locarno, 23 February 1989, document no. 21, letter from Krenek to Malipiero, 21.4.1949.

10 University of Bologna, Fondo René Leibowitz, M LEIB L 21, *I Pionieri della Dodecafonìa* (unpublished conference proceedings), Locarno, 23 February 1989, document no. 20, letter from Koellreutter to Malipiero, 18.4.1949.

11 CAGE 1949: 32.

12 Although Cunningham was not with Cage in Milan, this can be inferred from a letter that Vogel wrote to Strobel in November 1953 and also from the one written by Cage to Vogel in June 1954.

13 H. Strobel, letter to Vogel, 12.11.1953, in NAUCK 2004: 187.

14 W. Vogel, letter to Strobel, 24.11.1953, in NAUCK 2004: 187.

15 H. Strobel, letter to Cage, 1.12.1953, in BEAL 2006: 65.

16 J. Cage, letter to Strobel, undated but probably December 1953, in BEAL 2006: 65–66.

17 IDDON 2013: 158.

Zurich and Milan.<sup>18</sup> In the case of Zurich, Vogel was plausibly acting on behalf of the local Kunstgewerbemuseum. On October 22, the week after the Donaueschinger Musiktage, the museum's curator, Willy Rotzler, invited Cage and Tudor to perform in their lecture hall.<sup>19</sup> The invitation was sent by letter, and three days later, Cage accepted via telegram from Paris.<sup>20</sup> Regarding the concert in Italy, it is unclear where the idea originated. It is worth noting that, apart from Negri, who handled the arrangements for the host institution, the concert also involved the collaboration of Malipiero, who had worked with Vogel in 1949 to organise the congress in Milan. This suggests that Vogel may have proposed the concert himself, possibly after hearing from Cage in June. Whatever the case, Vogel's intermediary role is evident in a letter from Negri to Cage dated 26 October, in which Negri states that he agrees with Vogel's conditions and provides details for Cage and Tudor's accommodation in Milan.<sup>21</sup>

On November 3, Cage and Tudor performed at the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Zurich, with an introductory speech by conductor and theatre director Hans Curjel. Their programme included Feldman's *Intersection 3* (1953) and *Extension 3* (1952), Brown's *Four Systems* (1954), Wolff's *For Piano* (1952), and Cage's *Water Music* (1952) and *34'46.776"* (1954) for two pianists. The following day, Tudor recorded Wolff's *For Piano II* (1953), Cage's *Music of Changes* (1951), and Boulez's *Second Piano Sonata* (1947–48) for Radio Zürich. Then, on November 5, Cage and Tudor played at Milan's Centro Culturale Pirelli, introduced by Malipiero.

Like most dates on their 1954 tour, these concerts proved crucial for Cage and Tudor to expand their European network. The contact details of Rotzler, Curjel, and the museum's director, Hans Fischli, were added to Tudor's address book under the heading 'Switzerland'.<sup>22</sup> In June 1956, while planning their next overseas tour, Cage and Tudor reconnected with Rotzler, who enthusiastically offered to arrange two performances in Zurich.<sup>23</sup> Although Cage himself ended up not coming to Europe in 1956, a concert by Tudor was held at the Kunstgewerbemuseum on 12 December, introduced by Curjel. In the summer of 1958, further contacts were made to arrange another date in the autumn of that year.<sup>24</sup> While there seems to be no substantial evidence confirming whether this concert eventually occurred, it is clear that, following Vogel's mediation in 1954, Cage and Tudor found an audience in Zurich that particularly valued their music, contrasting with the controversies that frequently surrounded their European concerts.

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# sieben gedichte

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## **am mozartbach**

erzherzogliche

hände streichen

unter wasser

über synkopen

aus achat

an der oberfläche

ihr dukatentanz

mit staunen

voller wärme

umfassen sie

die blinkenden

forellenschwärme

... *in memoriam* Maurizio Pollini

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***schweizer postkarte***

der geiger

vor der bäckerei

der akkordeonist

am flussufer

sie kennen jeden

in der räuberschlucht

das pärchen aus china

kauft sich die zeit

mit golddividenden

seevergessen

hechtet die rektorin

über das brücklein

der verschüttete

kaffee mäandert

im dialekt

durch das tal

**maipromenade**

eine vielfarbene fahne

hängt vom bürgenstock

ihr saum taucht ins wasser

zum marsch der wagnertubas

der berg ist unrasiert

verschleiert verwundert

am abend sieht er alle

farben ins tal gleiten

bis er gegessen hat

sind sie verschwunden

***morgen mit miles***

der fröhsommer  
schmiert butterbrote  
mein kaffee graumeliert  
ein trompetenhauch  
in der magengrube

ich lasse das telefon  
tagelang klingeln  
sobald es verstummt  
bleibt auf dem schirm  
nur der pilatusschatten

**freilicht**

swingklänge

schlängeln sich

durch die arkaden

die betagte dame

wirft die tasche

in die luft

und tänzelt

hinein ins saxofon

wir stehen am zaun

bestaunen schattige

getränkestände

und betretene

polizeistreifen

der sommerwind

unterschreibt

unsere entlassung

**mitfahrt**

seine stimme

aus bergamottöl

ich nehme sie mit

auf die zugfahrt

wird in es-moll

olten offenbart

will ich mit ihr

ins bahnhofbuffet

den kaffee studieren

das gipfeli diskutieren

die vokale elidieren

zwei seefischer

gestrandet auf einem

sofa aus karamel

**BOCCA DI CATTARO**

die mürrische fähre  
volltrunken und siegessicher  
schlummert sie und spricht  
mit sich selbst

ich stehe allein  
im olivblauen licht  
während die karstfelder  
ein vollbad nehmen

auf dem waffenplatz  
von cattaro pfeift  
der eisverkäufer  
vivaldi

(aus dem Zyklus *venèsia*)



# Resonances in the Realm of Intercultural Music Education: Insights from Multi-sited Fieldwork

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Resonance is a vibrational phenomenon that arises when an object is excited by an external drive matching its natural frequency.<sup>4</sup> According to sociologist Hartmut Rosa, resonance is an alternative responsive relationship to the world, one that is often oppressed or deviated, but that should contribute to a “good life”.<sup>5</sup> This short article by the RESONANCES project<sup>6</sup> research team explores the starting point of how, based on the first insights from multi-sited fieldwork, intercultural encounters through music education may create connectivity and meaningful shared experiences.<sup>7</sup> For eighteen months, this research project, funded by the Haute école de musique de Genève (HEM) and the Portuguese Instituto de Etnomusicologia - Centro de Estudos em Música e Dança (INET-md), is led by Ricardo Castro, with Alix Didier Sarrouy as scientific coordinator, and Maria Peres as research assistant.

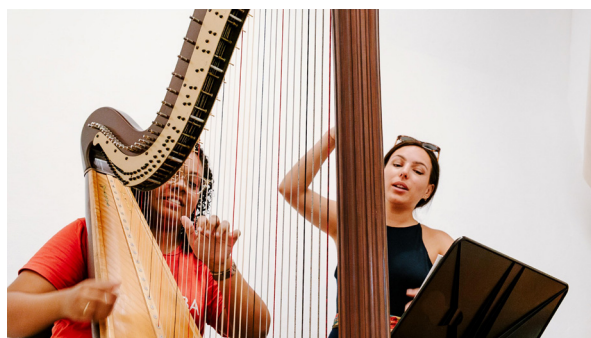


Fig. 1–2: Project’s logo and HEM student on exchange at NEOJIBA (Salvador da Bahia, Brazil), Logo by Maria Peres and photograph by Fran Marrocos, August 2024.

Education in the field of “classical music” is perceived by some of its practitioners and researchers as being based on Eurocentric methods, emphasizing the individual to the detriment of constructive group

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4 AUGOYARD and TORGUE 2011: 99.

5 ROSA 2019.

6 For a more detailed overview of RESONANCES research project, please visit <https://www.hesge.ch/hem/en/recherche/projets/resonances-des-echanges-interculturels>.

7 GARCIA 2020: 13.

interactions.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in the age of globalization and larger migration flows, there is a need to integrate multicultural perspectives, particularly concerning the relationships between teachers and students, but also considering repertoires, to foster intercultural understanding in the practice and teaching of music.<sup>9</sup> Most young musicians are attentive, connected and increasingly well-informed about these issues and the lack of adapted responses in music education. Furthermore, in a multicultural musical world that is growing ever more intercultural, the context of exchange in music education could reveal the common ground within diversity – the transcultural.<sup>10</sup>

RESONANCES is an in-depth exploration of the impact of international educational exchanges on music teaching. Its ethnographic multi-sited research is focused on the current and future directions of intercultural exchanges in music education. Through a qualitative methodology, it seeks to better understand the role of sharing experiences and information between young multicultural musicians on their practice and teaching methods.

By January 2025 and before our last stage of fieldwork at HEM in Geneva (February 2025), two international music education programmes served as case-studies for our research. Firstly, the Academy for Impact Through Music (AIM),<sup>11</sup> which develops a programme that brings together forty young music teachers from all over the world for fifteen months and focuses on training to enhance their ability to contribute to the personal and collective development of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. During the academic break, AIM organizes a residency, a face-to-face meeting over two weeks. Carcavelos, a city on the coast of Portugal, was the chosen place for the AIM residency in August 2024. The RESONANCES research team spent the two weeks on site applying ethnographic research methods on a daily basis. Secondly, the exchange programme between HEM and NEOJIBA<sup>12</sup> in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. For a decade now, this educational exchange programme has enabled students and young music teachers from both institutions to spend an intensive month in the city where the partner organization is based, taking part in classes, master classes, performances and all the social life that goes with it. Between August and September 2024, eight students from HEM went to Brazil to participate in this exchange. Our research team spent the whole exchange term in Salvador da Bahia with a regular day-to-day presence in nine *núcleos* (“schools”).

Concerning methodology, in addition to the field notes gathered through daily ethnographic observation, we recorded audio interviews on the immediate impact of the exchange period. Participants were encouraged to share thoughts on the experience and their teaching practice. The study involved seven voluntary participants from the AIM fellowship from six different countries and standpoints; eight HEM students of four different nationalities; five NEOJIBA music instructors from different ages and regions of Bahia, and various people involved in the programmes, such as coaches and educational managers, participated in these individual interviews. In the months following the encounters, we also organized focus-group interviews with all the exchange students from each programme and their respective directors.

In the first structured interviews, the young music teachers were encouraged to reflect on their classroom experiences through six interrelated topics: (1) their personal and musical backgrounds; (2) their current teaching contexts and pedagogical approaches; (3) the challenges and rewards of music teaching; (4) their evaluation of the exchange programmes; (5) the new opportunities for exchange created by these programmes; and (6) the broader significance of repertoire in music education.<sup>13</sup>

8 BAKER 2016; BOND 2017.

9 BARTON and RIDDLE 2022; HESS 2015; THUMLERT and NOLAN 2019.

10 RINKER 2011.

11 For a more detailed overview of AIM, please visit <https://www.aimpowers.com/>.

12 For a more detailed overview of NEOJIBA, please visit <https://neojiba.org/index.php?lang=en>.

13 YOUNG MUSIC TEACHERS 2024.

Multiculturality in shared spaces can become a crucial part of how we comprehend the field of music education, both on a global level and in a more neighbouring one. The process of understanding the resonance of experiences is not uniform, so how does that manifest in collective moments of dialogue? By sharing their experiences, young music teachers are given the chance to reflect on their commitment to a more inclusive and relational approach that music education is being called upon to fulfil.

Taking all this into consideration, one of the initiatives of our research was to include the young music teachers' perceptions in the process of data collection and analysis as we progressed through the different stages of our project, aligning with the Youth Participatory Action Research approach.<sup>14</sup> By bringing them together to discuss and deepen our pre-conclusions and by organizing seminars as a moment of discussion with the community, we opened up the space for contributions from everyone involved.

Our first seminar entitled “*RESSONÂNCIAS - O encontro entre culturas na educação musical*” took place on 17 August 2024, at NEOJIBA (Brazil). Then the second seminar followed on 25 February 2025 at the Haute école de musique de Genève, entitled “*RÉSONANCES - La rencontre des cultures dans l'éducation musicale*”, with the presence of ethnomusicologists Talia Bachir-Loopuyt and Angela Mancipe. Both seminars presented a unique opportunity to tackle the main concepts structuring this research, such as music education, inclusion, interculturality, and resonance.



Fig. 3–4: RESONANCES seminars' posters, made by NEOJIBA and HEM communication teams, August 2024 and February 2025.

At the conclusion of the 18-month multi-sited research project conducted in Portugal, Brazil, and Switzerland, the release and presentation of the RESONANCES Final Report were held at the Haute École de Musique de Genève on 3 December 2025. The event featured Dr Ailbhe Kenny, an internationally renowned researcher from Mary Immaculate College, Ireland, who delivered an expert review of the report.

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed overview of this approach, please visit <https://yparhub.berkeley.edu/why-ypar>.

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# «Wir brauchen Vorbilder und keine Kopien». Gespräch mit Noldi Alder über die neueren Entwicklungen der Appenzeller Musik. Urnäsch, November 2024

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Joshua Broger (JB) mit Noldi Alder (NA)



Abb. 1. Noldi Alder.

Arnold (Noldi) Alder (\* 1952 Urnäsch, Appenzell Ausserrhoden) prägt die Schweizer Volksmusik mit innovativen Projekten. Wie im übrigen Alpenraum gab es auch im Appenzellerland verschiedene Faktoren, die zur Entstehung der Neuen Volksmusik beitrugen. In unserem Gespräch beleuchtet Noldi Alder diese Entwicklungen und Veränderungen der traditionellen Appenzeller Musik und den damit verbundenen wichtigen Persönlichkeiten. Er berichtet über seine eigenen Projekte und reflektiert seine Erfahrungen über die letzten Jahrzehnte. Ein zentrales Thema dieses Interviews betrifft die Appenzeller

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Streichmusik, deren Besetzung traditionellerweise aus zwei Geigen, Cello, Kontrabass und Hackbrett, besteht. Das Interview wurde auf Schweizerdeutsch bei Noldi Alder zu Hause geführt.

**JB: Noldi, du bist seit vielen Jahren als Musiker, Komponist und Instrumentallehrer tätig, warst stark im Festival «Gonten da isch Musig»<sup>2</sup> involviert und bist ehemaliger Stiftungsrat des Roothuus Gonten. Welche Entwicklungen hast du in den vergangenen 20-30 Jahren in der Appenzeller Musik wahrgenommen?**

**NA:** Ich werde jetzt vor allem vom Kanton Appenzell Innerrhoden sprechen, da ich grösstenteils dort tätig war. Die Innerrhoder<sup>3</sup> haben generell immer ein offenes Ohr, wenn man eine gute musikalische Idee bringt. 1980 existierte aber in Innerrhoden mit Ausnahme von vielleicht einer Gruppe fast keine Streichmusik mehr. Jakob Alder,<sup>4</sup> mein Bruder Walter und ich haben angefangen, diese Musik zu unterrichten. Dabei haben wir und die anderen jungen Musiker lange das traditionelle Repertoire gepflegt. Auch wenn es damals bereits erste musikalische Experimente gab, ist das aus heutiger Sicht in meinen Augen immer noch absolut traditionelle Musik.

Die Explosion der neuen Projekte kam erst, als die Anzahl der guten Musiker und Lehrern stieg und die Auftrittsmöglichkeiten mehr wurden. Nicht zuletzt verdanken wir auch der Stiftung Pro Helvetia einen grossen Anteil der Entwicklung, die nun plötzlich möglich war. Die Pro Helvetia hat vermehrt die Volksmusik gefördert, weil sie in der Volksmusik das Potential sah. Neben den neuen Kompositionen ist aber bis 1995 nicht so viel geschehen. Eine Ausnahme bildet beispielsweise Töbi Tobler,<sup>5</sup> der schon immer experimentiert, «gegraben» und «gekrätztelt» hat. Er ist eine sehr wichtige Persönlichkeit für das Hackbrett und hat bereits in den 70er Jahren Dinge gemacht, die bis heute von niemandem so wiederholt worden sind. Er hat zwar auch traditionelle Stücke gespielt, war aber generell war er jemand, der die Leute unterhielt und Neues wagte. Ausserhalb der Ostschweiz gab es die Oberwalliser Spillit, die mich inspirierten. Das waren klassische Musiker, die enorm gut komponierten und spielten. Irgendwann habe ich ebenfalls angefangen, solche neuen Stücke zu schreiben, auch neue Naturjodel,<sup>6</sup> sprich «Zäuerli» Das waren Musikentwicklungen, die heute niemand mehr spielt und die früher niemand hören wollte.

Für mich stellt bis heute das Neue Original Appenzeller Streichmusik Projekt<sup>7</sup> den Höhepunkt dar. Wir waren so weit, dass wir am liebsten gar nicht mehr geprobt hätten und nur noch direkt auf die Bühne wollten, um dann dort wirklich frei zu spielen. Das hätte so natürlich zur Eskalation geführt und dann kommen sofort Kritiker und sagen «Halt! Das ist keine Appenzeller Musik mehr!». Hier stellt sich aber natürlich die Frage, was denn Appenzeller Musik überhaupt ist. Sind es die Leute? Ist es die Besetzung? Ist es die Musik? In meinen Augen ist das, was wir mit dem Neuen Original Appenzeller Streichmusik Projekt erschaffen haben, bis heute auf diese Art und Weise nicht mehr erreicht worden: Wir waren frech und taten Dinge während unserer Auftritte, die man auf CD gar nicht findet. Wir dachten, das würde die musikalische Entwicklung in der Region antreiben: Töbi Tobler – ein Spinner! Paul Giger<sup>8</sup>, mein Geigenlehrer – ein Spinner! Ich – ein Spinner! Fabian Müller<sup>9</sup> – ein bisschen ein braver Cellist und dann noch ein Bassist. Das ergab manchmal die verrücktesten Ergebnisse.

2 <https://www.facebook.com/GontenDalschMusig/> [14.02.2025].

3 Genderformen werden in der Transkription so übernommen, wie sie im Gespräch verwendet wurden.

4 Jakob (Alders Jock) Alder (1915-2004) war der Cousin von Noldi Alders Vater Ueli.

5 Töbi Tobler (\* 1953, Frauenfeld) wuchs in Eschlikon Thurgau auf und lebte später u.a. im Appenzellerland. <https://www.toebitobler.ch> [09.02.2025].

6 Soso-Zäuerli von Noldi Alder [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7zGWH63\\_gs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7zGWH63_gs) (aufgerufen am 9. Februar 2025).

7 Noldi Alder, Paul Giger (Violinen), Fabian Müller (Cello), Töbi Tobler (Hackbrett), Francisco Obieta (Kontrabass); CD: 2001 (musique suisses MGB CD 6174).

8 Paul Giger (\* 1952 in Herisau) war von 1980-1983 Konzertmeister des Sinfonieorchesters St. Gallen und ist als freischaffender Musiker tätig: <https://paul-giger.ch> [09.02.2025].

9 Fabian Müller (\* 1964 in Zürich) ist als Komponist, Cellist und Musikethnologe tätig: <https://www.swisscomposer.ch/index.php?m=30&lang=d> [09.02.2025].

**JB: Ein solches Projekt war also nur aufgrund der Kombination dieser Persönlichkeiten möglich?**

**NA:** Ja, das war der Zenit. Grundsätzlich hat sich in meinen Augen seit ca. 2010 aber nicht mehr viel Neues entwickelt. Ausgenommen von ein paar einzelnen Musikern. Manche versuchen etwas Innovatives zu machen, aber einen richtigen Schub nach vorne spüre ich nicht. Die Besetzung zu verändern oder die Musikanten auszutauschen ist für mich noch keine neue Musik. Man muss sich mit dem Geist in diese Musik setzen, mit der Einstellung aus Nichts etwas Neues zu erschaffen. Das Problem ist, dass es in der Schweiz sehr wenige Plattformen gibt, wo man gute Volksmusik spielen kann. Das sind Altdorf<sup>10</sup>, Zürich<sup>11</sup>, Sils<sup>12</sup> und ein paar andere Orte. Es fehlt uns an Auftritten, die uns animieren, zu sagen: «Halt! Hierhin gehen wir, um zu tun wie die Kälber!».

Bei allem Innovativem muss man jedoch auch aufpassen, dass man trotzdem auf dem Boden bleibt. Das Publikum braucht immer ein greifbares Element, beispielsweise den Rhythmus. Denn wenn die Hörer rhythmisch den Überblick verlieren, sind sie komplett überfordert. Wenn wir hingegen harmonische Veränderungen vornehmen, fällt dem Publikum der Zugang leichter. Ich sehe aber derzeit niemand, der heute eine derartige innovative Entwicklung komplett zu Ende- oder weiterführt. Immer wieder werde ich gefragt, was denn das Wichtigste sei, wenn man etwas Innovatives erschaffen möchte. Wir genießen es zwar alle vor vielen Zuhörern zu spielen, aber meine Antwort ist, dass man keine Angst davor haben darf, vor leeren Sälen zu spielen: Die Grösse eines Publikums sagt nichts über die Qualität der Musik aus.

**JB: Wenn wir zurück auf die Kompositionen kommen: Was zeichnet für dich eine gute traditionelle Appenzeller Komposition aus?**

**NA:** Es muss eine schöne gefällige Melodie sein und sie muss abwechslungsreiche Harmonien beinhalten. Wenn ich mich auf das Traditionelle beschränke, geht es hier nicht um major, erweiterte oder stellvertretende Akkorde, sondern um eine klare Stufe. Die Komposition soll auch modulieren und ein Teil soll sich anders als etwa in der «Berewegge-Polka»<sup>13</sup> verhalten, die zwar durchaus ein gutes Stück und eigentlich die Hymne der Appenzeller Musik ist, aber die eine stark vereinfachte Form eines traditionellen Stücks darstellt.

Für mich ist es wichtig, dass gegen Schluss eines Teils eine musikalische Entwicklung stattfindet, wie das auch in der klassischen Musik der Fall ist, zum Beispiel am Ende von Sätzen. Die alten Innerrhoder haben das unbewusst so gemacht, vermutlich haben sie diese Technik irgendwo gehört und festgestellt, dass eine solche Entwicklung das Stück musikalisch bereichert. Das Stück darf beispielsweise auch Anlehnungen an Wiener Unterhaltungsmusik beinhalten, wie das bei vielen älteren Stücken der Fall ist. Zusammengefasst könnte man sagen, gute Appenzeller Kompositionen benötigen eine schöne Melodie, muss spielbar sein (zum Beispiel für einen Musiker der 1950er Jahre) und sie soll schöne, gefällige Harmonien beinhalten.

**JB: Wie verhält es sich, wenn man sich in den Bereich der Neuen Volksmusik begibt und trotzdem den Bezug zur traditionellen Appenzeller Musik bewahren möchte?**

**NA:** Bei Kompositionen ist es eine Hilfe, wenn man das Traditionelle einbaut. Meistens werden heute traditionelle und neue Stile miteinander verbunden. Für mich ist es spannend, wenn man beispielsweise mit den Harmonien experimentiert, sich von der traditionellen Harmonie entfernt und sich dann ihr wie-

<sup>10</sup> <https://volksmusikfestival.ch> [09.02.2025].

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.stubeteamsee.ch> [09.02.2025].

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.stubeteamseesils.ch> [09.02.2025].

<sup>13</sup> Die „Berewegge-Polka“ wurde von Noldi Alders Vater Ueli komponiert: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKs1D1n6s24> [09.02.2025].

der annähert. Die Hujässler<sup>14</sup> waren eine der ersten Gruppen, die harmonische Experimente wagten. Um es ganz einfach zu erklären: statt C-Dur verwendet man z.B. A-Moll oder gar Es-Dur. Auch der Einsatz von erweiterten Akkorden ist spannend. Ein starkes Mittel ist, wenn man Stücke neu rhythmisiert. Das ist besonders dann wirkungsvoll, wenn das Publikum das Stück in seiner traditionellen Form bereits kennt. Alle diese Mittel kann man in ein Stück einführen und dann ein «heisses Bad» in einem traditionellen Teil nehmen.

**JB: Mit der Entstehung der Neuen Volksmusik hört man vermehrt Arten der Improvisation, wie sie auch im Jazz oder im Pop zu finden sind. Gerade in der traditionellen Appenzeller Musik hat die Improvisation aber in verschiedenen Formen ebenfalls eine lange Vergangenheit. Welche Veränderungen hast du hier wahrgenommen?**

**NA:** Generell wird in der traditionellen Appenzeller Musik nicht in der ersten, wohl aber in der zweiten Stimme improvisiert. Die Stimmen der zweiten Geige waren bei meinen ersten Auftritten aber bereits ziemlich genau definiert und nicht mehr ganz frei. Dafür wurden die Hackbrett-Begleitungen improvisiert. Emil Zimmermann<sup>15</sup>, mit dem ich häufig gespielt habe, war jedoch beispielsweise jemand, der mit seinen körperlichen Einschränkungen irgendwie umgehen musste und deswegen viele schöne Muster bewusst lernte, die er dann immer wieder neu kombinierte. Allgemein haben sich die technischen Fähigkeiten im Laufe der letzten 20-30 Jahre stark entwickelt, weswegen manche Hackbrettspieler heute deutlich virtuoser begleiten als früher.

Der Bass war früher eher einfach. Man spielte nur Grundbässe, was damit zu tun hat, dass man damals noch mit einem dreisaitigen Bass auftrat und demnach weniger leere Saiten nutzen konnte als das beim heutigen viersaitigen Bass der Fall ist. 1940 wurde der Wechselbass von Jakob Alder integriert, der musiktheoretisch gut ausgebildet war, und diesen ziemlich sicher von der Wiener Salonmusik übernahm. Die Spielweise mit Wechselbass tauchte im Appenzellerland auf, bevor sie beispielsweise die Innerschweizer erreichte. Wir achteten später ausserdem sehr darauf, dass der Bass in erster Linie der Musik dient. Das heisst, eine virtuose Spielweise war hier nicht erwünscht, und folglich gab es auch wenig Platz für improvisierte Momente.

Als Musiker müssen wir der Musik dienen, das ist ein sehr wichtiger Grundsatz. Dem Publikum sind wir meiner Meinung nach erst in zweiter Linie verpflichtet. Wenn man die Musik überzeugt präsentiert und auf der Bühne vollständig sich selbst bleibt, dann wird man auch gehört. Dann findet man sowohl ein Publikum und kann sich trotzdem selber treu bleiben. Was dabei für mich essenziell ist: Wir brauchen Vorbilder und keine Kopien.

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14 Die Gruppe besteht aus den Musikern Dani Häusler, Markus Flückiger, Reto Kamer und Sepp Huber und prägte den Begriff der Neuen Volksmusik: <https://www.hujgroup.com/hujaessler> [09.02.2025].

15 Emil Zimmermann (1910-1993) erkrankte als Kind an Kinderlähmung und hatte deswegen eine sehr schwache Arm-Muskulatur.

# Hommage an Marcel Cellier zum 100. Geburtstag. Gespräch mit Alexandre Cellier. Lavaux, Januar 2025

Lea Hagmann, Universität Bern<sup>1</sup>

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Lea Hagmann (LH) mit Alexandre Cellier (AC)



Marcel Cellier bei seiner Arbeit für Radio Suisse Romande, 1970. Foto: Catherine Cellier.

**LH: Alexandre Cellier,<sup>2</sup> am 29. Oktober 2025 jährte sich der Geburtstag ihres Vaters Marcel Cellier (1925-2013) zum 100. Mal. Ihr Vater – das darf man wahrscheinlich sagen – ist der Mann, der in Westeuropa und insbesondere in der Schweiz, die osteuropäische Musik zum ersten Mal hörbar gemacht hat. Gemeinsam mit seiner Frau Catherine Cellier (1931-2023) ist er in den 1960er und 70er Jahren, also zuzeiten des Kommunismus, unter schwierigsten Umständen in den Balkan gereist – vor allem nach Rumänien und Bulgarien – und hat dort verschiedene lokale Musiktraditionen aufgenommen. Anschliessend hat er aus diesen Aufnahmen Schallplatten produziert und hat diese für die damaligen**

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<sup>2</sup> Alexandre Cellier ist der jüngste der drei Söhne von Marcel und Catherine Cellier. Er ist Musiker und Multiinstrumentalist. <https://www.alexcellier.com>

**westlichen Ohren noch exotische Musik von 1960-1990 über das Radio Suisse Romande<sup>3</sup> verbreitet in seiner Sendung *De la Mer Noir à la Baltique*.<sup>4</sup> Wie sind Marcel Cellier und seine Frau Catherine auf diesen Reisen konkret vorgegangen?**

**AC:** Eigentlich hat das schon 1950 angefangen. Meine Eltern waren damals noch nicht verheiratet, aber sie waren sehr freiheitliebend und hatten grosse Lust auf spannende Reisen, auf Abenteuer und Begegnungen mit verschiedenen Kulturen. Und die ganz grosse Leidenschaft, die die beiden sich teilten, war die Musik. Sie hat sie immer miteinander verbunden. Meine Mutter kam eher von der Kunst her, sie interessierte sich besonders auch für die Wandmalereien in den Klöstern, für Trachten, Holzschnitzereien und Ikonen. Mein Vater war ganz besonders an der Musik interessiert, aber auch an gutem Essen und schönen Volksfesten.



*Marcel und Catherine Cellier auf ihren Reisen.*

Auf ihren Reisen haben meine Eltern immer möglichst schnell ein paar Wörter der jeweiligen Landessprachen gelernt, darin war meine Mutter besonders begabt. Mein Vater hatte ein sehr gutes Ohr, er konnte schnell lokale Musikstile erlernen und diese auf einer Flöte oder auf dem Klavier spielen und so die Musiker im Balkan begleiten. Dadurch hat mein Vater viele sehr gute Musiker kennen gelernt, die er dann auch im Westen bekannt machen wollte. Er lud sie zum Beispiel in die Schweiz ein und organisierte Konzerte für sie. Einige dieser Konzerte nahm er auch auf und produzierte daraus Schallplatten.

Später präsentierte er diese Musik in Radiosendungen beim Radio RTS der Öffentlichkeit. Es gab auch Vorträge, wo er über die Musik sprach und meine Mutter die Diapositive ihrer Reisen präsentierte. So konnten beide bei vielen Menschen ein grosses Interesse für diese Musik aus Osteuropa wecken.

<sup>3</sup> Das Radio Suisse Romande (RSR) schloss sich 2010 mit der Télévision Suisse Romande zur neuen Einheit Radio Télévision Suisse (RTS) zusammen. RTS ist der öffentlich-rechtliche Rundfunk (Radio und Fernsehen) für das französischsprachige Publikum in der Schweiz. Der Sender gehört zur Gruppe SRG SSR.

<sup>4</sup> Marcel Cellier hat zwischen 1960 und 1990 über 300 Beiträge in der Sendung *De la Mer Noire à la Baltique* produziert. Weitere Sendungen produzierte er für Radio Beromünster, Radio DRS, Radio France (ORTF), Radio Belge (RTBF), die BBC, den Bayerischen Rundfunk und den Westdeutschen Rundfunk.

**LH: Alexandre Cellier, Sie selber sind 1966 geboren, als jüngster von 3 Söhnen, mitten in der Zeit, in der Ihre Eltern ihre vielen Balkan-Musikreisen unternommen haben. Was sind Ihre ersten Erinnerungen an diese Expeditionen?**

**AC:** Meine beiden Brüder und ich hatten oft spezielle Ferien. Wir durften unsere Eltern auf ihren musikalischen Reisen begleiten, zu fünft im Auto. Oft begann diese Reise in Venedig, dann der dalmatischen Küste entlang, durch das damalige Jugoslawien bis hin nach Rumänien. Diese Reisen sind mir in toller Erinnerung geblieben.

Als ich etwa 6 Jahre alt war, fuhren wir zum Mont Gaina-Fest nach Rumänien. Das war ein Fest für die Mädchen, die im heiratsfähigen Alter waren. Für mich war das ein besonderes Erlebnis. Die Straßen waren damals noch in sehr einfachem Zustand, aber mein Vater hatte keine Angst. Er fuhr einfach durch die Felder und Wälder und suchte sich seinen Weg.

Die Musik an diesem Mont Gaina-Fest hat mich tief beeindruckt, sie war wunderschön! Voller Freude, Liebe und Grosszügigkeit... Unglaublich stark! Die Rumänen waren sehr gastfreundlich, wir durften mit ihnen essen, und überall um uns herum waren all diese Traditionen. Eine lebendige und stark verwurzelte Kultur war das. Für meine Brüder und mich war das ein prägendes Erlebnis, fast wie eine Initiation.



*Mont Gaina, Rumänien, 1974. Foto: Catherine Cellier.*

**LH: 1968 hat Marcel Cellier den Panflöten-Virtuosen Gheorghe Zamfir kennengelernt und mit ihm 2 Jahre später die erste Schallplatte aufgenommen mit Panflöte und Orgel. Ein riesiger Erfolg!**

**AC:** Ich glaube, es war das erste Mal überhaupt, dass ein Panflötenspieler je in einer Kirche gespielt hatte. Hier in Cully gibt es in der Kirche eine tolle Orgel, und mein Vater hatte die Idee, dass man diese Orgel mit der Panflöte verbinden könnte. Ich war erst etwa 5 oder 6 Jahre alt, aber ich erinnere mich, welche Freude Zamfir und mein Vater hatten, mit diesen Instrumenten musikalisch herumzuexperimentieren. Die tiefen Klänge der Orgel passten irgendwie perfekt, um die tiefen Streicherklänge einer

rumänischen Doina<sup>5</sup> zu imitieren. Nach einer ersten Probe, die bis spät abends dauerte, waren mein Vater und Gheorghe Zamfir äusserst enthusiastisch. Sie kamen mit einem Bärenhunger zu uns zurück, kochten sich rasch Spaghetti mit viel Knoblauch, und gingen danach wieder in die Kirche mit zwei Mikrofönen. Sie nahmen ihre 2. Probe direkt auf und so entstand ihre erste Schallplatte mit Panflöte und Orgel. Diese Schallplatte gewann später sogar einen Preis und wurde millionenfach verkauft. Es war wirklich nur eine Probeaufnahme, ohne Noten und ohne Hilfsmittel. Mein Vater hatte einfach ein gutes Ohr und konnte mit seinen Kenntnissen der rumänischen Musik Gheorghe Zamfir begleiten. Das war eine fantastische Zusammenarbeit.

**LH: Auch Sie spielen heute als eines ihrer zahlreichen Instrumente die Panflöte. Hat Gheorghe Zamfir Sie unterrichtet?**

**AC:** Es gibt ein schönes Foto, auf dem ich Zamfir mit seiner Panflöte anschau. Da war ich etwas 5. Ich habe ihn oft spielen gehört. Einmal erinnere ich mich, dass er mir etwas gezeigt hat, aber nur etwa 3 Minuten lang. Ich habe ihm ein kleines Stück vorgespielt und Gheorghe zeigte mir, wie ich das noch besser spielen könnte.



*Der fünfjährige Alexandre Cellier mit Gheorghe Zamfir, Lutry, 1971. Foto: Catherine Cellier.*

**LH: Ein anderer grosser Erfolg ihres Vaters war die Entdeckung der bulgarischen Polyphonie: allen voran des Frauenchors vom staatlichen bulgarischen Fernsehen, aber auch von weiteren Mädchenchören sowie bäuerlichen Duos und Trios. Diese wunderschönen mehrstimmigen Lieder hat er unter dem Titel *Le mystère des voix bulgares* weltweit bekannt gemacht, hat 4 Schallplatten herausgebracht und dafür 1990<sup>6</sup> sogar einen Grammy Award erhalten. Der Frauenchor des staatlichen bulgarischen**

5 Eine Doina ist eine freirhythmische, stark verzierte Improvisation in der rumänischen Volksmusik. Sie soll starke Emotionen wie Melancholie, Sehnsucht, Klagen, aber auch die Liebe zur Natur ausdrücken und die Seele erleichtern.

6 Der 1989 verliehene Grammy ehrte die 1988 erschienene 2. Schallplatte *Le mystère des voix bulgares*. Die Preisübergabe fand aber erst 1990 statt.

**Fernsehens hat damals traditionelle bulgarische Volksmusik vorwiegend als zeitgenössische Arrangements von modernen bulgarischen Komponisten der Avantgarde performt. Was hat diese Musik für Ihren Vater bedeutet und was bedeutet sie Ihnen?**

**AC:** Das ist eine unglaublich reiche und spezielle Musikkultur, eine Mischung aus einer stark verwurzelten Tradition, die historisch sehr weit zurückreicht. Die Geschichte von Bulgarien ist stark durch den Orient beeinflusst und das hört man in dieser Art von Musik, zum Beispiel bei den Verzierungen. Mein Vater hatte ursprünglich über den bulgarischen Frauenchor des staatlichen bulgarischen Fernsehens eine Radiosendung gemacht und diese trug den Titel: «Le mystère des voix bulgares», das war 1973. Danach produzierte er die ersten Schallplatten mit dieser Musik. Und das wiederum brachte die Chorleiterin des bulgarischen Frauenchors auf die Idee, den Namen «Le mystère des voix bulgares» für ihren Chor zu übernehmen.

Auf den Schallplatten sind allerdings mehrere verschiedene Chöre zu hören. Marcel Cellier hat damals mit der bulgarischen Musikethnologin Rumiana Tzintzarska zusammengearbeitet – sie lebt heute in Sofia – und sie hatte meinen Eltern geholfen, ein Vorsingen zu veranstalten, um die besten Chöre für Radioaufnahmen auszuwählen. Die ersten beiden Schallplatten sind nämlich nicht Aufnahmen meines Vaters, sondern es sind Aufnahmen vom Radio Sofia. Es gab insgesamt etwa 100 Aufnahmen, die seit den frühen 1950ern auf Magnettonbändern aufgenommen worden waren, zum Beispiel Aufnahmen des Filip Koutev-Chors.



*Le mystère des voix bulgares mit Catherine Cellier, Auftritt am Montreux Jazz Festival, 1991.*

Aus diesen 100 Aufnahmen haben Marcel und Catherine 13 Lieder für die erste Schallplatte ausgewählt. Die Auswahl erfolgte über eine Punktevergaben. Und lustigerweise waren sich meine Eltern fast überall mit ihrer Punktevergabe einig. Es wurden nur die allerbesten Aufnahmen ausgewählt, darum ist die Qualität dieser ersten beiden Schallplatten von *Le mystère* unglaublich gut. Meine Eltern hatten ein-

fach Glück, dass sie die ersten Nicht-Bulgaren waren, die sich für diese Musik interessierten. So hatten sie eine riesige Auswahl an wunderbaren Stücken.

Nachdem das 2. Album *Le mystère des voix bulgares* (1988) 1989 einen Grammy bekommen hatte, war die Nachfrage für diese Musik sehr gross. Ein drittes Volumen sollte her. Der Druck war gross. Deshalb beschloss ich, dass ich meine Eltern dabei unterstützen wollte. Ich reiste mit ihnen nach Bulgarien und half ihnen, weitere Chöre aufzunehmen. Ich war damals 25 Jahre alt. Die Gesänge der Bulgarinnen faszinierten mich. Und die Damen waren natürlich auch sehr charmant. Für mich als jungen Musiker war dieses Erlebnis inspirierend. Ich schrieb damals einige Kompositionen, und man hört dort sehr deutlich, dass mich die bulgarische Musik beeinflusst hat.

**LH: Alexandre Cellier, wenn Sie eine Zeitreise durch die Musik in Osteuropa machen würden, also von dem Zeitpunkt an, als Sie sie das erste Mal bewusst wahrgenommen haben bis heute: Wie hat sich die osteuropäische Musik aus Ihrer Perspektive verändert?**

**AC:** Es gibt im Balkan einige Familien, die ihre musikalischen Traditionen von Generation zu Generation weitergeben und sie so einerseits weiter kultivieren, aber natürlich auch verändern. Wenn ich heute nach Rumänien oder Bulgarien fahre, dann besuche ich jeweils diese Familien. Und dort habe ich dann die Gelegenheit die junge Generation der Musikerinnen und Musiker zu hören. Diese bringen die Tradition voran. Sie spielen die Stücke noch schneller oder unterlegen sie mit spannenden Akkorden und Harmonien. Manchmal sind sie auch durch andere Musikstile beeinflusst, wie den Jazz zum Beispiel. Das gefällt mir, denn das bedeutet, dass die Tradition lebendig ist und sich weiterentwickelt. Der leichte Zugang zum Internet hat aber zum Teil auch eine Kehrseite: manchmal verliert die Musik im Balkan an Komplexität und wird harmonisch oder rhythmisch vereinfacht. Das bringt zum Teil einen kommerziellen Erfolg, aber musikalisch ist das für mich eine Verflachung. Das empfinde ich als schade.

**LH: Was wünschen Sie sich für die Zukunft der Musik in Osteuropa?**

**AC:** Ich wünsche mir, dass die Familien im Balkan, die die Musik über Generationen hinweg gespielt und entwickelt haben, die das Herz und das Ohr für diese Musik haben, diese Traditionen weiterpflegen können und gleichzeitig offen für andere Musikstile sind, um sich auf musikalischen Austausch mit unterschiedlichen Menschen einzulassen, ohne dabei ihre Wurzeln zu verlieren.

# Zivile oder militärische Blasmusik? Ein Vertrag von 1822 zeigt deren Verflechtung

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Im Rahmen eines laufenden Forschungsprojekts zur Entstehung der Blasmusik in der Schweiz<sup>2</sup> werden Quellen zur frühen Blasmusik ausgewertet, darunter Statuten und Protokollbücher aus den 1820er Jahren.<sup>3</sup> Der Fokus der Forschung liegt auf ostschweizerischen Quellen, wobei – ausgehend vom sogenannten „Hundwil-Konvolut“ – die gesellschaftliche Rolle der Blasmusik in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts untersucht wird. Eine Forschungsfrage betrifft das Verhältnis zwischen zivilen und militärischen Blasmusikensembles.

Quellen aus dem Staatsarchiv St. Gallen ermöglichen, die Rekrutierung einer Militärmusik nachzuvollziehen. Dabei zeigt sich, dass diese durch einen Vertrag mit einer bereits bestehenden Musikgesellschaft entstand. Die Quellen geben Aufschluss über die Organisation der Militärmusik sowie über die Anforderungen, die die Militärbehörden an die Musiker stellten. Walter Biber beschreibt für diese Zeit einen „Wildwuchs“ der kantonalen Feldmusiken, der zunehmend reglementiert wurde.<sup>4</sup>

Das Besondere an der hier untersuchten Quelle liegt in den detaillierten Angaben zu den Musikern sowie in der Beschreibung der Kompetenzen innerhalb der Organisation einer Militärmusik. Im Kanton St. Gallen wurde die Militärmusik des 2. Infanterie-Bataillons im Jahr 1822 durch einen siebenjährigen Vertrag etabliert.

## Bildung einer Militärmusik im Toggenburg

Die Bildung einer Militärmusik im Milizwesen der Kantone in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts steht im Zusammenhang mit den systemischen Besonderheiten in der Schweiz. Im Unterschied zu ihren Nachbarländern verfügte die Schweiz nie über professionelle Militärmusikkorps. Bisher wurde kaum erforscht, wie sich die Formationen konstituierten und in welchem Verhältnis sie zu zivilen Musikgesellschaften standen. Mit dem Dokument zur Schaffung und Besetzung (Truppenstellungsvertrag, *Capitulation*) eines Musikkorps für das 2. Infanteriebataillon liegt ein Vertrag zwischen einem Militärkommandanten und einer Musikgesellschaft vor.<sup>5</sup> Dieser belegt einerseits, dass die Musikgesellschaft bereits vor dem Militärdienst bestand und somit aus einer zivilen Musikgesellschaft hervorging. Andererseits klärt das Dokument das Verhältnis zwischen Militärbehörden und Musikern: Letztere wurden vom Kanton, respektive dessen Militäradministration, berufen oder boten sich dieser an, um den Militärdienst zu leisten. Für die Kantone bildete der Unterhalt der immer stärker besetzten Harmonie-Feld-

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<sup>2</sup> Es handelt sich um: „Anno 1811 ist die jezige Musick=Gesellschaft zusammen getretten“ – Das Hundwil-Konvolut als Quelle für die Genese der Blasmusik in der Schweiz im frühen 19. Jahrhundert, vgl. dazu <https://www.hkb-interpretation.ch/projekte/hundwil> [08.02.2025].

<sup>3</sup> Vgl. VON STEIGER 2022; WEY (im Druck).

<sup>4</sup> BIBER 1995: 48–62.

<sup>5</sup> Die Musikgesellschaft wird nicht näher identifiziert, sie ist im Vertrag mit „Mitgliedern einer Musikgesellschaft für benanntes Corps“ erwähnt.

musikkorps eine finanzielle Belastung.<sup>6</sup> Der Vertrag, der viel Verantwortung an die Musiker delegiert, versteht sich möglicherweise als kosteneffiziente Lösung der in der Militärgesetzgebung von 1817 vorgeschriebenen Kontingente.

Genève Eidgenössischer 1.<sup>er</sup> Bundes Auszug.  
Canton St. Gallen      2.<sup>te</sup> Infanterie Bataillon.  
Capitulatio[n].

Zwiſchen Herrn Rudolf Brändlin Oberst Lieutenant & Commandant des 2.<sup>ten</sup> Bataillon  
 Infanterie Bataillon; und nachstehenden Mitgliedern einer Musikgesellschaft  
 für benanntes Corps, am 20. Februar 1823. abgepflogen als:

Hofmusik-Regiment der Mitglieder der benannten  
 Musikgesellschaft für benanntes Bataillon.

Pflanzung	Gepflanzt am Fünfzehnten	Geburtsort am Datum	Alter am 20. Febr. Geburtsort	Instrument	Bemerkungen
1.	Joh. Georg Bock.	Kappel... 207	207	Clarinete. Dis.	Capellmeister.
2.	Joh. Peter Kappeler.	Kappel... 248	248	Clarinete. Dis.	
3.	J. A. Lutter.	Nesslau... 188	188	Piccolo. Dis.	
4.	Abrah. Bräker.	Kappel... 258	258	Clarinete. B.	
5.	Ulrich Kurrer.	Nesslau. 192	192	Clarinete. B.	
6.	J. P. Böhl.	Nesslau. 22	22	Clarinete. B.	

Abbildung 1: Ausschnitt aus dem Vertrag zwischen Oberst Rudolf Brändlin und „nachstehenden Mitgliedern einer Musikgesellschaft für benanntes Corps“.<sup>7</sup>

### Wer waren die Mitglieder und wie organisierten sie sich?

In der *Capitulation* finden wir eine Liste aller Mitglieder mit Namen, Alter, Geburtsort, Wohnort und Instrument. Somit sehen wir hier erstmals die Altersstruktur einer Musikgesellschaft und Militärmusikbesetzung in dieser Zeit. Es handelte sich fast ohne Ausnahme um junge, erwachsene Männer von 18 bis 25 Jahren. Abraham Bräker, ein 40-jähriger Posaunist, bildet die Ausnahme. Die Wohnorte sind im Toggenburg weit zwischen Wattwil und dem über 20 km entfernten Alt St. Johann verteilt, was fraglich erscheinen lässt, wie regelmässig die Musikgesellschaft in dieser Besetzung zusammenkommen konnte. Ein Grossteil der Mitglieder kommt aus Nesslau und dem acht Kilometer entfernten Kappel, dem Herkunftsort des Kapellmeisters.

Als Besetzung werden 18 Musiker mit ihren Wohnorten und Instrumenten aufgelistet, dazu kommen separat sechs „Überzählige“. Dies passt zur Vorschrift im Militär-Reglement von 1817, welche gestattete,

6 BIBER 1986: 36.

7 Staatsarchiv St. Gallen (= StA SG), KA R.56A-4h.

„eine Feldmusik von höchstens 18 Mann mitzuführen“.<sup>8</sup> Darüber hinaus verdeutlicht diese Darstellung, dass sich die Blasmusik nicht für den Militärdienst neuformierte, sondern aus einer zivilen Musikgesellschaft bestand, die eben 24 Mitglieder zählte. Die Auswahl der Besetzung mit 18 Mann geschah augenscheinlich mit Blick auf die Instrumentierung, wobei der „chinesische Hut“ (Schellenbaum) und die Triangel nicht besetzt werden konnten.<sup>9</sup> Folgende Personen und Ämter bildeten die Organisation:

Rudolf Brändlin, Oberstleutnant: Vertritt den Kanton St. Gallen und nimmt die Musikgesellschaft unter Vertrag.

Oberleutnant Raschle: Hat die Leitung und Aufsicht über das Musik-Corps. Er ist für die Kasse verantwortlich sowie für das Einberufen von „Versammlungen“, worunter auch Proben fallen.

„Musik-Director“: Steht nicht namentlich im Vertrag und erscheint aber als Bindeglied zwischen Militärverwaltung und Musik. In seiner Verantwortung liegen: Unterricht der Musiker, Prüfung der musikalischen Fertigkeiten der Mitglieder.

Kapellmeister Johann Georg Roth: Ihm obliegt das Einberufen von Versammlungen (Proben), das Einziehen von Unterrichtsgeldern zuhanden des Musikdirektors<sup>10</sup> und die Prüfung der musikalischen Fertigkeiten der Mitglieder.

„Secretaire“ Johannes Kuhn: Seine Aufgaben werden im Vertrag nicht genauer erwähnt.

### Individueller Musikunterricht und gemeinschaftliche Finanzierung

Die *Bedingnisse der Capitulation* führen zwölf Paragraphen auf. Diese drehen sich um die Behandlung der Musikinstrumente sowie den Unterricht. Die Musikinstrumente wurden „gemeinschaftlich angekauft, so wie alle Ausgaben gemeinschaftlich bestritten werden“.<sup>11</sup> Die einzelnen Mitglieder verpflichteten sich, sie „gut und reinlich zu unterhalten“.<sup>12</sup> Nach sieben Dienstjahren oblag es der Gemeinschaft zu verfügen, ob im Falle eines Austritts das Instrument an den Musiker übergehen sollte. Die individuellen finanziellen Verpflichtungen waren dennoch signifikant, so galt es bei Eintritt eine „Einverleibungs-Gebühr“ von einem Gulden zu bezahlen. Darüber hinaus mussten die Mitglieder selbst bezahlten Musikunterricht besuchen.

Musikdirektor und Kapellmeister kam die Aufgabe zu, die Fähigkeiten der Mitglieder beim Lernen ihrer Instrumente zu prüfen, und die Mitglieder zum Unterricht anzubieten. Diesen Musikunterricht mussten offenbar sämtliche Musiker individuell bezahlen. Überdies sollten die „Schwächeren [...] so lange Neben-Lektionen empfangen“,<sup>13</sup> bis sie dem Niveau nach Einschätzung der beiden Leiter genügten. Der Musikdirektor konnte auf diesem Weg mit diesen vertraglich verordneten Lektionen für die Musiker Geld verdienen. Unklar bleibt, ob der Musikdirektor ebenfalls besoldet wurde oder es sich um einen Musiklehrer handelte, den die Musikgesellschaft für den Unterricht hinzuzog.

### Schlussfolgerungen

Die hier ausgewerteten Quellen zur St. Galler Militärmusik von 1822 zeigen diese als eine Institution mit Statuten, die insbesondere materielle Aspekte wie Instrumente und Musikalien regelten und die Mitglieder zu disziplinierter Teilnahme an den Zielen und Aktivitäten der Gesellschaft verpflichteten.

<sup>8</sup> StA SG, KA R.56A-4h, *Bedingnisse der Capitulation* (ohne Paginierung).

<sup>9</sup> Aus dieser nebensächlichen Notiz der beiden Vakanzen können wir aber ableiten, dass bei der Kapitulation der Militärmusik mehr Perkussionisten und ein grösseres „türkisches“ Instrumentarium vorgesehen waren, als es die toggenburgische Musikgesellschaft bieten konnte.

<sup>10</sup> Diese vertraglich festgelegte Rollenverteilung belegt uns nebenbei, dass es sich beim Musikdirektor und dem Kapellmeister nicht um die gleiche Person handelte.

<sup>11</sup> StA SG, KA R.56A-4h, *Bedingnisse der Capitulation* (ohne Paginierung).

<sup>12</sup> StA SG, KA R.56A-4h, *Bedingnisse der Capitulation* (ohne Paginierung).

<sup>13</sup> StA SG, KA R.56A-4h, *Bedingnisse der Capitulation* (ohne Paginierung).

Die Musiker spielten somit in einer zivilen Formation, die im Jahr 1822 durch das 2. Infanterie-Bataillon unter Vertrag genommen wurde. Dieser Vertrag regelte die Zuständigkeiten zwischen den militärischen Behörden und den Amtsträgern der Musikgesellschaft und enthielt Paragraphen zur musikalischen Qualitätssicherung.

Die Grösse und Altersstruktur des Ensembles sowie die geografische Verteilung der Mitglieder zeigen, dass die Musikgesellschaft über ein gewisses Einzugsgebiet verfügte, den Vorgaben der Militärgesetzgebung folgte und komplex organisiert war. Die finanzielle Struktur mit der gemeinschaftlichen Finanzierung von Instrumenten und dem individuellen Musikunterricht unterstreicht die Bedeutung der Musik als gemeinschaftliches Gut und die hohen Anforderungen, die an die Musiker gestellt wurden.

### **Nachklang: Der Brief des Kommandanten Ignazio Ledergerber von 1829**

Nach den sieben Jahren Vertragsdauer stellte sich die Frage einer erneuten siebenjährigen *Capitulation*. Dazu kommentierte aber der Kommandant Ledergerber am 27. Mai 1829, dass in jener Hälfte die Musiker, die bereits seit 1822 dabei waren, ein „unwilliger anmassender Geist“ herrsche.<sup>14</sup> Das bestätigt ein kurz zuvor übersandter Brief des Militärinspektors des Kantons St. Gallen, demnach sei die „Tendenz gewesen, dass sich Dienstpflichtige hinter solche Musikkorps verborgen haben um nichts zu thun und besonders um von Auszügen verschont zu bleiben“. Die Militärmusik als Ausweg aus einer unbeliebten Dienstpflicht? Nach sieben Jahren lag wie in vielen Blasmusiken, die als kurzlebige Institutionen bestanden, eine Neustrukturierung nahe.

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<sup>14</sup> StA SG, KA R.56A-4h, *Musik-Korps* (ohne Paginierung).



# The Concept of *Ma* in Western Art Music

## From Religious Architecture to the Interpretation of Time

Luca Marty

### *Ma* (間) as a Religio-Aesthetic Concept

At its core, the concept of *Ma* is deeply rooted in the Japanese indigenous religion of Shinto. It is closely connected to nature, and grounded in a unified, non-dualistic understanding of time and space. This concept is often expressed in Shinto architecture, i.e. in the *Himorogi* or the *Torii*, a traditional gate marking the entrance to a transcendental space. Japanese arts such as *Noh* theatre, reflect these aesthetics, thereby revealing the deep interconnection between religion, architecture and the performing arts.



Torii Gate (Pixabay, Public Domain)

### Aims and Methods

The aim of my research is to deepen our understanding of the aesthetic foundations of compositions by Japanese composers since 1945, particularly with regard to the interpretation of time through the concept of *Ma*. Therefore, I will employ methods of ethnomusicological and performance practice research, including interviews with Japanese artists, analyses of musical scores and discourse analysis.

### The Discourse of Timing in Post-1945 Compositions

A defining characteristic of Western contemporary art music since 1945 has been the emphasis on precise temporal control, which drastically limits the performers' interpretive flexibility. This aesthetic, largely shaped by the *Darmstadt School*, had emerged in response to the horrors of World War II. Its intention was to sever aesthetic ties to the past and to music resistant to ideological appropriation such as nationalist propaganda.



Marty, Luca. *Jo-Ha-Kyu* Original musical score, © Luca Marty, 2017.

In contrast to this West-European discourse, *Ma* offers a radically different understanding of musical time, by offering silence, space and temporal openness as tools for expression and improvisation. Japanese composers such as Tōru Takemitsu (1930–1996), were among the first to introduce these new aesthetic perspectives into Western art music.





**Anja Dreschke and Michaela Schäuble (2024): *Tarantism Revisited*.  
Produced by EMB – Ethnographic Mediaspace Bern and Petit à Petit  
Cologne. Italian voice-over, texts & credits english. colour, b/w. 145  
minutes (preliminary version).**

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*Tarantism Revisited* racconta un fenomeno molto conosciuto nell'antropologia ed etnomusicologia italiane, quello della meloterapia del tarantismo. Studiato e documentato negli anni Cinquanta da De Martino con un'équipe di ricerca multidisciplinare, e già osservato in letteratura fin dal Cinquecento, racconta di malessere e dolori persistenti provocati presumibilmente dal morso di una taranta e curabili con una terapia coreutico-musicale.

Gli studi di De Martino hanno ricondotto il fenomeno a quella che lo studioso definisce "crisi della presenza". Per De Martino (1961), la "presenza" è la condizione fondamentale dell'essere umano: è la capacità di esserci nel mondo, di agire, pensare, sentire e attribuire senso alla propria esperienza. Concetto esistenziale, ma anche culturale: ogni essere umano costruisce e protegge la propria presenza attraverso i simboli, i riti, il linguaggio e le istituzioni culturali. La crisi della presenza avviene quando questa capacità di esserci si incrina o rischia di venire meno. Essere tarantate voleva dire poter gridare la propria crisi ed essere al centro dell'attenzione quando il male colpiva e tornava nei giorni legati alla celebrazione di San Paolo. I complessi rituali melo-terapici (magistralmente descritti e analizzati negli aspetti cinetici, coreutici e musicali dall'etnomusicologo Diego Carpitella nel 1961) svolti in parte in casa in parte nella chiesa di San Paolo a Galatina, diventano strumenti per riattivare la presenza, reinserendo l'individuo nella comunità e nella vita quotidiana.

Il film gioca in modo coinvolgente con l'interpolazione continua tra documentazione storica e riprese contemporanee, costruendo una narrazione stratificata che riflette la complessità del tarantismo di ieri e di oggi. Non si tratta semplicemente di un confronto, ma di un dialogo fra tempi etnografici e cinematografici, che si intrecciano senza mai fondersi completamente, mantenendo una tensione critica. La fotografia, curatissima, contribuisce in modo decisivo a questa tessitura temporale e affettiva; il missaggio sapiente di suoni in presa diretta, di materiali d'archivio e di voci fuori campo crea un paesaggio acustico denso e ricco di significati.

L'impiego della voce fuori campo, con uno stile documentaristico d'antan (Marano 2011, D'Amico 2012), si rivela qui una scelta narrativa vincente. Non si tratta, infatti, di una voce narrante che guida lo spettatore attraverso una sceneggiatura scritta ad hoc, bensì di un montaggio sapiente di materiali eterogenei, in cui anche al documentario storico viene spesso sottratto il suono originale. Ne emerge una polifonia che mette in scena, letteralmente, le voci dei protagonisti del tarantismo e della sua documentazione.

Al centro di questo intricato tessuto sonoro si colloca la lettura ad alta voce delle *Lettere da una tarantata* indirizzate da Michela Margiotta, alias Anna, ad Annabella Rossi. Lettere autentiche, scritte tra

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gli anni Sessanta e Settanta da una donna che visse in prima persona l'esperienza del tarantismo e che mantenne un rapporto epistolare con l'antropologa, pubblicato da quest'ultima nel 1969. È attraverso la voce viva che queste lettere tornano a pulsare nel presente, diventando un filo narrativo che attraversa l'intero film e ne costituisce l'ossatura emotiva. Questa voce, così diversa dalle altre voci fuori campo per tono e intensità, introduce una dimensione intima e personale, che si discosta dalla ricostruzione teorica o dalla testimonianza etnografica e si avvicina piuttosto al registro della confidenza, della memoria interiore.

La scelta di accompagnare questi brani con immagini che spesso non corrispondono direttamente al contenuto – paesaggi contemporanei, riprese d'archivio spogliate della loro colonna sonora originale – contribuisce a creare una tensione tra parola e immagine, tra senso e significante, tra tempo storico e tempo emotivo. Questo dispositivo narrativo rimanda alla possibilità di una "memoria sonora" (Stanyek e Piekut 2010), assume un ruolo acustemologico (Feld 2017); distanzia lo sguardo da un'immediatezza descrittiva per aprire una riflessione più ampia sul fenomeno.

In questo gioco calibrato di voci che si fanno corpo e corpi che si fanno assenti, il film diventa un dispositivo riflessivo. Le autrici sembrano interrogare non solo il tarantismo in quanto fenomeno storico e culturale, ma anche le modalità con cui esso è stato e continua a essere osservato, narrato, rappresentato.

La ricchezza e la varietà della documentazione storica utilizzata costituiscono uno degli elementi di maggiore valore del film. Le fonti visive e sonore attingono a un repertorio ampio e stratificato: fotografie d'epoca, in stampa o ancora in pellicola; registrazioni audio provenienti da ricerche sul campo conservate in archivi pubblici<sup>2</sup>, collezioni private o fondi minori; filmati "demartiniani" (Marano 2007) insieme a girati privati, taccuini di appunti manoscritti di studiosi, frammenti di trasmissioni televisive in cui le ricerche venivano divulgate a un pubblico generalista, e che conservano la voce e il volto di figure chiave dell'antropologia culturale italiana.

A inizio film le immagini vengono definite "*moving images that move*": sono insieme testimonianza e costruzione, documento e interpretazione. Non sono immagini "neutre" di un passato oggettivo, ma materiali che continuano a parlare, a interrogare il presente, e che portano con sé tracce di un metodo di ricerca, di una postura epistemica e persino di una politica della rappresentazione. Portano lo spettatore a "guardare" l'archivio. Che cos'è un archivio, se non un montaggio soggettivo e politico di tempi e spazi che sopravvivono nel presente (Garcia 2017; Seeger 2014)?

Il film evidenzia l'asimmetria insita in molti dei materiali d'archivio prodotti dall'etnografia italiana del secondo Novecento: da un lato l'innovazione metodologica dell'équipe interdisciplinare sul campo, dall'altro la difficoltà di costruire un dialogo simmetrico con gli interlocutori della ricerca.

Le immagini d'epoca risultano per lo più distanzianti, non solo per il bianco e nero, ma anche per le inquadrature dall'alto, da lontano. Effetto rafforzato dalla scelta di sostituire l'audio originale con musiche contemporanee. Le riprese a colori, molto ravvicinate, delle tarantate di oggi durante la festa di San Paolo, sono invece di forte impatto. A bilanciare la forza di queste immagini sono la loro minore frequenza, la frammentarietà con cui sono presentate e la scelta di non usare subito il sonoro in presa diretta. Il film insiste sulla continuità, facendo uso della voce registrata di Carpitella per ricondurre i gesti delle tarantate di oggi a quei "modelli cinesici culturalizzati, tradizionalizzati e tramandati"<sup>3</sup>. Allo stesso tempo, però, indugia sull'avviso affisso nella chiesa di San Paolo da qualche tempo: "È assolutamente vietato danzare all'interno di questa chiesetta e/o arrampicarsi sull'altare. Qualsiasi *rievocazione storica dell'antico tarantismo* è possibile fuori." A far intendere che le tarantate di oggi non sono le tarantate di ieri.

2 Spiace che non venga correttamente citato nei titoli di coda l'Archivio di Etnomusicologia dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, ex Centro Nazionale Studi di Musiche Popolari fondato da Nataletti, di cui Carpitella fu animatore fondamentale. Dettaglio non indifferente per la storia dell'etnomusicologia italiana.

3 Citazione di Carpitella presa da uno dei frammenti del film.

Forse oggi come ieri è una forma rituale di denuncia, ma colpisce questa rifunzionalizzazione di un rito tanto complesso e legato a una crisi della presenza così profonda. Forse l'uso massiccio di documentazione storica vuol far intendere come questa mole documentaria influisca sulla nostra visione?

Questa costante presenza, anche non strettamente legata al tarantismo<sup>4</sup>, risulta alla fine preponderante e rischia di rendere incomplete le testimonianze delle tarantate di ieri e di oggi. Rimane poco chiaro il ruolo attuale del tarantismo, e rimane inesplorato il fenomeno al maschile, già a suo tempo poco indagato. La versione che io ho potuto vedere, però, è la versione preliminare, di 143 minuti. I metadati del canale Vimeo che mi è stato condiviso indicano che il film pubblicato dura 105 minuti. È probabile che questa asimmetria sia stata risolta. Nonostante questi appunti finali, resta una impressione totalmente positiva. Restituire un fenomeno in modo approfondito attraverso il mezzo audiovisivo non è semplice, ma l'uso di tutti i livelli comunicativi che esso offre è stato magistralmente condotto. Non a caso, nel 2024, il film ha già vinto il *Golden Dove for Best Documentary Feature* al 67° International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film ed è stato nominato come *Best Documentry Film* dalla Award of the German Film Critics.

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4 Anche il voler inserire a tutti i costi, in modo non sempre convincente, la documentazione storica sul fenomeno dell'epilessia e della devozione a San Donato e quello del lamento funebre in Basilicata, risulta poco convincente. Come a voler dare completezza alla narrazione della documentazione storica, a scapito della narrazione del presente.

