SOUND STAGE SCREEN

2/1

Spring 2022

ISSN 2784-8949

Sound Stage Screen (*SSS*) is a biannual peer-reviewed journal devoted to historical and theoretical research into the relations between music, performance, and media. An open-access journal published in English by the University of Milan (Italy), *SSS* addresses a wide range of phenomena, practices, and objects pertaining to sound and music in light of the interconnections between performing traditions and media archaeologies.

Cover: Arthur Kleiner performs music for a silent film. B/W photograph from the Arthur Kleiner Collection of Silent Movie Music, University of Minnesota Libraries, Special Collections and Rare Books.

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Callas and the Hologram: A Live Concert with a Dead Diva*

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Writing about *Callas in Concert* during the COVID-19 pandemic brings with it a strange feeling. Premiered in 2018, the show employs holographic digital and laser technology to bring the legendary diva back to the stage almost 50 years after her death. It is a technically and artistically savvy spectacle that reflects the spirit of the times with a tinge of nostalgia. At the same time, as so many other live shows, especially those that are meant to go on tour, *Callas in Concert* was severely impacted by the pandemic and its restrictions. Lockdowns, quarantines, and curfews, leading to a wave of cancelations, brought the project's career to a standstill.

Due to the phantom-like apparition of Callas, the show itself—which I had the opportunity to attend in Barcelona on November 7, 2019—is already somewhat uncanny. But the present circumstances provide an additional layer of strangeness to my memory of it. The experience feels distant, but also—thanks to the technological complexity of the concert—strangely familiar. To recognize the intersection of these two layers of unease is crucial for understanding the purpose of this article. In fact, while examining this recent instance of the Callas myth, my aim is to understand what it tells us about the present situation of opera, in a moment when it becomes apparent that the pandemic has not only *accelerated* but also *revealed* changes that were already underway over the past two decades.[1]

* I am grateful to the two anonymous readers who provided critical observations and detailed suggestions. This work is funded by national funds through the FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., under the Norma Transitória – DL 57/2016/CP1453/CT0059.

1 For a philosophical reflection on how the pandemic—having accelerated the digital revolution and brought awareness to its ethical, social, and political consequences—transformed not only the way we imagine the arts, especially the performing arts, but also our experiences of love, travel, and study, see my recent book *The Digital Pandemic: Imagination in Times of Isolation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Spring 2022), pp. 5–29, ISSN 2784-8949. DOI: 10.54103/sss18310.

I decided to focus on this show for still another reason. Maria Callas, it should not be forgotten, is not only opera's prototypical diva, but also a dead singer whose cult has outlived her and, in some ways, even intensified in recent years. For this reason, *Callas in Concert*—a show in which the artist resurrects from the spirit of technology, as it were—provides an invaluable opportunity to examine how closely the interplay of opera and new media has evolved against the backdrop of latent anxieties about the alleged death of opera. It is this mixture of technological and artistic innovation, on the one hand, and recurrent concerns about opera's survival in a media-saturated culture, on the other hand, that I try to disentangle in this article.

1. Resurrecting the Diva

Callas in Concert was launched by BASE Hologram in 2018.[2] A branch of BASE Entertainment, the new live entertainment company aims to introduce "a revolutionary new form of live entertainment artistry that fuses extraordinary theatrical stagecraft with innovative digital and laser technology to bring true music legends back to the global stage in a state-of-the-art hologram infused theatrical experience."[3] Four shows have been presented so far: *In Dreams: Roy Orbison in Concert* (2018), *Callas in Concert* (2018), *Roy Orbison & Buddy Holly: The Rock 'n' Roll Dream Tour* (2019), and *An Evening with Whitney* [Houston] (2020). In 2019, the company was also working on a hologram of Amy Winehouse, but the show did not see the light of day.[4]

2 See "Maria Callas: *Callas in Concert*," Productions, BASE Hologram, accessed February 10, 2022, https://basehologram.com/productions/maria-callas.

3 "BASE Entertainment Announces New Cutting Edge Live Entertainment Company: BASE Hologram," News, BASE Hologram, posted January 11, 2018, https://basehologram.com/news/base-entertainment-announces-new-cutting-edge-live-entertainment-company-base-hologram.

4 It could be questioned whether it is accurate to say that BASE Hologram features a hologram of Maria Callas. The doubt is plausible not the least because, as I will explain below, the holographic apparition of the diva is based on the recording of an actress representing the soprano, rather than on the recording of any of Callas's performances. That having been said, for the purposes of this article, I'm less interested in discussing the definition of holography than in examining the phenomenology of the show—a show in which a 3D image of Maria Callas, synchronized with live and recorded music, appears and behaves on stage as a live performing artist.

One thing is certain, Maria Callas is not alone in providing the inspiration for these multimedia adventures where the so-called great divide between high art and popular culture seems to have very little relevance. In fact, it is significant that almost four decades after the heyday of the postmodern debate, these holographic shows have been equally successful regardless of whether the performer being emulated is a pop singer or an operatic soprano. This gives us a hint as to what the fans of Whitney Houston and Maria Callas might have in common—i.e., not only a fascination with the *unique* voices and *charismatic* presence of the two singers, but also a penchant to fall for the thrill of attending a *live* concert with a *dead* singer. Apparently, the blurring of the divide between high art and popular culture, which Andreas Huyssen celebrated in the 1980s, did not immediately entail the undermining of the ideological assumptions—namely those associated with the values of uniqueness, charisma, and authenticity—on which the edifice of high art stood.[5] On the contrary such values seem to persist in the imagination of audiences and practitioners, albeit in updated or disguised forms.

Similarly to other BASE hologram projects, *Callas in Concert* proposes a two-in-one experience in which "liveness" and "mediatization" are indelibly intertwined. Their relation, as Philip Auslander convincingly explains in seminal volume *Liveness*, is never of opposition. The very notion of liveness emerged due to the need to distinguish between recorded and live performances on the radio.[6] This conceptual and historical co-dependence finds in *Callas in Concert* a paradigmatic instance. From their seats in theatres and auditoriums around the globe, the spectators-listeners are given the opportunity of *seeing* the hologram of Maria Callas and *hearing* her recorded voice, while a live orchestra is performing on stage. Needless to say, neither the voice nor the body of the dead diva is entirely "real." Contrarily to the orchestra and the conductor, the singer is not there, either in space or in time, despite the fact that *Callas in Concert* is a live show. Yet in their posthumous appearances, the diva's voice and body are "unreal" in different ways. This distinction is not irrelevant and drawing attention to it allows me to better explain how the show was put together.[7]

5 Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

6 Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 59.

7 Here I use the terms "real" and "unreal" with the sole purpose of explaining how the show is constructed. On a more fundamental level, these elements—live performers, video

Compared to Callas's reproduced voice, her projected figure is "unreal" to the second degree: the movements of the hologram, though inspired by the soprano's bodily postures and gestures, are not hers. That is to say, the hologram is *not* a reproduction of any of Callas's performances, but a reproduction of someone else reenacting her body language on stage. The company hired Stephen Wadsworth from the Juilliard School, who worked closely with an actress so that she would move and behave like Maria Callas. "We worked on Callas' gestural language," he recalls, "how she held herself, her physical life, down to how and when her fingers moved, and her symbiotic relationship with her gown." The challenge, however, went beyond simply mimicking her gestures: "She [the actress] is three people up there," the director adds, "the private Callas; Callas the public figure; and Callas as the character she is embodying in any given aria."[8] The rehearsal process took twelve weeks, after which the double's performance was recorded. It was this recording that a team of experts manipulated using new digital and laser imaging, and Computer-Generated Imagery, so that the hologram would resemble Callas in terms of physical appearance as well (figure 1).

When it comes to the sonic part of the show, the creative process took a different path. We are actually listening to Callas's voice: that is to say, to remastered recordings of her performances. In fact, a partnership was established between Warner Classics—the company that owns the rights to Maria Callas's recorded legacy—and Base Hologram, thus allowing the show to be developed. Technology was crucial at this stage as well: the sound of the voice was carefully isolated from the sound of the orchestra, so that the original recordings of Callas's voice, dating from the 1950s and 1960s, could be paired with the sound of live performing orchestras today. In each performance, it is the job of the conductor to ensure that no temporal mismatch occurs.[9]

projections, or holographic images—are all, as components of a live performance, absolutely real and equally significant.

8 Stephen Wadsworth quoted in David Salazar, "Bringing Maria Callas Back to Life," *Opera Wire*, June 16, 2018, https://operawire.com/bringing-maria-callas-back-to-life-the-team-behind-callas-in-concert-on-creating-a-hologram-of-la-divina/.

9 For a preview of the show, see "*Callas in Concert*: The Hologram Tour," video trailer, uploaded on May 27, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zoVzGOA_84.

Fig. 1 The hologram of Maria Callas next to a live performing orchestra. (© Evan Agostini/Base Hologram)

2. Posthumous Collaborations

This is not the first time that a deceased Callas "performs" with living artists. Angela Gheorghiu's 2011 studio album *Homage to Maria Callas* gave online access to a video in which the two singers interpret the "Habanera" from Bizet's *Carmen* in a duet.[10] In "The Limits of Operatic Deadness," Carlo Cenciarelli rightly emphasizes that the dynamic of this "intermundane collaboration," following Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut, is less audacious than the announcement of a groundbreaking artistic project would suggest.[11] "The Habanera duet," he claims, "shows a cautious approach to the boundaries that separate the dead from the living. And it shows that, when

10 "Angela Gheorghiu & Maria Callas – Habanera," music video, uploaded on November 20, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeH-U8dQZMM.

11 Carlo Cenciarelli, "The Limits of Operatic Deadness: Bizet, 'Habanera' (Carmen), *Carmen*, Act I," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 28, vol. 2 (2016): 221–26; the reference is to Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut, "Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane," *TDR: The Drama Review* 54, no. 1 (2010): 14–38.

it comes to opera, such boundaries are heavily over-determined. … They protect the aesthetic identity of the popular aria, the memory of the immortal diva and the truth of the photographic image."[12]

An apparently anodyne detail about the video confirms this diagnosis, while also serving as a touchstone to compare this intermundane collaboration with the holographic concert: the use of color versus black-and-white footage. Freedom to travel in time is not equally distributed in the Habanera duet; Callas stays in the past, or at least her image does, whereas Gheorghiu occasionally joins Callas on the evening of her 4 November 1962 concert at Covent Garden.[13] In other words, whereas their voices mingle in the performance of the original "solo" aria—which only the fact of being sung by two voices, be it in sequence or in unison, allows us to distinguish it from a conventional rendering—the images of their bodies remain technically and stylistically distinct. Most of the time, we see Gheorghiu inside a pentagonal studio surrounded by screens projecting videos of Callas. At a certain point, however, we also see the two singers side by side, as if Gheorghiu had travelled to the black and white past in which Callas remains stuck (figure 2). This marks a fundamental difference between the time-travelling video and the holographic show, since the purpose of the latter is first and foremost to bring Callas's auratic presence to the present.

But there is a second, perhaps even more important, difference between the two projects: *Callas in Concert* happens live, whereas the duet of Gheorghiu and Callas is a video recording. As a live performance, what is unique about *Callas in Concert* is the fact that the live-recorded matrix pervades both the audio and visual dimensions of the spectacle. The situation is not as simple as when the image is live and the sound is recorded (in shows, for instance, where the singer is lip-syncing) or, conversely, when the image is recorded and the sound is live (when an orchestra accompanies a silent film or, to give a more concrete example, in Philip Glass's 1994 opera *La Belle et la Bête*, whose singularity consists in the fact that the instrumental

12 Cenciarelli, "The Limits of Operatic Deadness," 225. Cenciarelli's reflection culminates in the following observation: "the Habanera duet can be seen as a representation of what is at stake in the debate about opera and digital culture: not so much the survival of the operatic canon, its canonical performances and canonised performers, but rather the role that media will play in their afterlife" (225).

13 Although most of the footage used in the video is taken from this concert, the sound recording (of Callas's voice, not of the orchestra) originates in a studio performance with the Orchestre national de la radiodiffusion française, made for EMI between March 28, and April 5, 1961.

Fig. 2 Still frame from the "Gheorghiu-Callas 'Habanera' duet" video (EMI Classics Music Video. © 2011 EMI Records Ltd. All rights reserved).

and vocal parts were composed to match the pre-existing images of Jean Cocteau's 1946 film). In *Callas in Concert*, both the auditory and the visual dimensions of the concert are partially recorded and partially live.

True, this is also the case whenever a video is projected on stage during a performance. However, the three-dimensionality of the hologram, surrounded by flesh and blood musicians on stage, suggests physical presence in a way that no video does. While this fact illuminates the singularity and the appeal of *Callas in Concert*, it also complicates its description. More than any other mediatized performance, holographic shows rely on fiction. To understand the stakes of such fiction is crucial to interpret *Callas in Concert*.

3. Back to the Stage

Callas in Concert has been—or was, before the pandemic hit—a box-office success. After a preview concert on January 14, 2018, at the Rose Theater in New York, Callas's hologram went on tour in the United States, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Europe, and South America. People adhere to the concept of a live concert with the hologram of Callas because of their fascination with, interest in, or curiosity about the diva. I would argue, however, that

the reasons behind the popularity of the show are more complex than they seem at first glance. Is the opportunity of seeing and hearing "La Divina" the only and main trigger?

I think the answer to this question is twofold. On the one hand: yes, of course; people go to the show because they want to experience the art of Callas with their own eyes and ears. On the other hand: yes, but not quite. For one simple reason: the possibility of seeing and hearing Maria Callas is not new. Recordings of her voice have been widely disseminated for decades. They have been remastered and re-remastered several times.[14] Photos and videos of Callas are not hard to find either. They are everywhere online. Google, for instance, has nearly fifteen million entries on her name. In short, and despite the fact that video recordings of Callas's live performances are surprisingly scarce, opportunities to see and hear Callas on stage, backstage, performing, rehearsing, being interviewed, walking her dog in Paris, sunbathing on Onassis's yacht, starring as Medea in Pasolini's film, and so on, are not exactly rare.

What in any case is new, what this first-of-its-kind operatic show adds to all these instances of postmortem audio-visibility, is a "fiction of liveness" that none of the others possess. Although the artist is not physically present, the conductor interacts with the holographic double of Callas in front of the audience as if she was "really" there (figure 3). The spectators are also invited to suspend their disbelief. Indeed, most of them applaud at the end *as if* the singer—and not just the orchestra and the conductor—had performed live. In short, the whole point of the show is to bring Callas back: not to life, but rather to the stage—to resurrect Callas as a live performer.

Callas in Concert provides—and wants to be seen and heard as providing—a "drastic" experience. In fact, although only the orchestra and the conductor are physically present and performing live, the interaction between them and the pre-recorded, projected hologram happens *hic et nunc*. As always in a live performance, things can go wrong: the conductor might stumble; violin strings might snap; somebody in the audience might start singing; the diva's disembodied voice and image, if a power cut occurred, would vanish immediately, while the orchestral music would continue for at least a few seconds. Although the concept of drastic, as Carolyn Abbate formulated it in "Music—Drastic or Gnostic," refers first and foremost to

14 On Callas's recordings, see Giorgio Biancorosso, "Traccia, memoria e riscrittura. Le registrazioni," in Luca Aversano and Jacopo Pellegrini (eds), *Mille e una Callas. Voci e studi*, Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016, 293-306.

Fig. 3 The hologram of Maria Callas gesturing at the conductor and vice-versa. (©Evan Agostini/Base Hologram)

physical presence and bodily engagement, the facts of technological mediation do not as such contradict it. As long as the thrill of unpredictability and the charm of ephemerality are in place, the drastic experience might well escape the claws of gnostic voracity.[15]

In sum, and to answer the question I raised above, the charm of authenticity that is still perceived as a *sine qua non* component of a live performance must to be taken into account in understanding why people adhere to the show. It is because *Callas in Concert* responds to a double fascination—with Maria Callas, certainly, but then also, not less important, with liveness and all the characteristics it entails—that the show has also been so popular. I will now consider these two fascinations in turn—with Callas, considering the actuality and the genealogy of her cult, and with liveness—before I draw a few broader conclusions.

15 For a challenging reflection on Abbate's theory of the "drastic," see Martin Scherzinger, "Event or Ephemeron? Music's Sound, Performance, and Media (A Critical Reflection on the Thought of Carolyn Abbate)," *Sound Stage Screen* 1, no. 1 (2021): 145–92.

4. The Callas Cult Today

Callas in Concert is not an isolated phenomenon. In fact, the admiration for the diva seems to be once again (or perhaps it has never ceased to be) in the air. The hologram show appeared in 2018 and was only possible, as I mentioned before, thanks to a partnership with Warner Classics. The label had recently launched two lavish box sets of Callas live and studio recordings.[16] Around the same time, French filmmaker Tom Volf, a self-proclaimed newcomer to the cult of Callas, had already dedicated four years of his life (which, he claims, was transformed by the encounter with Callas) to gathering unique archival sources, including testimonies and audiovisual materials, many of which were still unpublished. His efforts eventually culminated in "Maria by Callas," a multi-object project including one documentary film, one exhibition, and three books.[17]

What is unique about this enterprise—or so a well-devised marketing strategy wants us to believe—is that for the first time it gives voice to Callas.[18] Needless to say, this is a well-worn—albeit still commercially-effective—cliché. At the same time, and despite the rhetoric of nostalgia and authenticity in which the project indulges, the fact that the documentary draws exclusively on words said or written by Callas does produce some interesting results. Acknowledging such merit is not meant to forget that no documentary is transparent. Although Callas's words provide a filter through which Volf's reading is conveyed, the film is the result of the filmmaker's own sensibility, thoughts, and decisions (from the choice of materials to the narrative thread, up to the editing process). His film will always be a "*Maria by Callas* by Tom Volf."[19]

16 *Maria Callas Remastered – The Complete Studio Recordings (1949–1969)*, Warner Classics, 0825646339914, 2014, box set (69 CDs, 1 CD-ROM); *Maria Callas Live – Remastered Recordings 1949–1964*, Warner Classics, 190295844707, 2017, box set (42 CDs, 3 BDs).

17 *Maria by Callas*, documentary directed by Tom Volf (Elephant Doc, Petit Dragon, and Unbeldi co-production, 2017); *Maria by Callas*, exhibition created and curated by Tom Volf (La Seine Musicale, Île Seguin, Boulogne-Billancourt, France, September 16–December 14, 2017); Tom Volf, *Maria by Callas: In Her Own Words* (New York: Assouline, 2017); Tom Volf, *Callas Confidential* (Paris: Éditions de La Martinière, 2017); Maria Callas, *Lettres & Mémoires*, ed. Tom Volf (Paris: Albin Michel, 2019).

18 On the director's personal website, a brief presentation of the documentary reads as follows: "Tom Volf's *Maria by Callas* is the first film to tell the life story of the legendary Greek/American opera singer completely in her own words." See "Tom Volf – Director, Producer, Photographer," accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.tomvolf.com.

19 For a brief analysis of *Maria by Callas*, see João Pedro Cachopo, "The Aura of Opera

To consider another recent example, Marina Abramović, after planning to consecrate a piece to Callas for a long time, has ultimately put her ideas into practice. After leaving behind different plans—including collaborating with several contemporary filmmakers—her *7 Deaths of Maria Callas*, a performance-like opera, premiered on September 1, 2020, at the Bayerische Staatsoper.[20] The opera should have taken on the stage in April 2020. However, due to the pandemic, these performances were postponed and a few adaptations—mainly regarding the distribution of the musicians in the theater—had to be made.

The production, which was live-streamed on the company's website on September 5, 2020, includes seven major scenes in which seven sopranos sing seven famous arias from seven well-known operas: Verdi's *La traviata*, Puccini's *Tosca*, Verdi's *Otello*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and Bellini's *Norma*. While each of these arias is performed live, a pre-recorded video by Nabil Elderkin is projected on the back of the stage. Marina Abramović stars in all of them, either alone or accompanied by William Dafoe, to incarnate the seven deaths of the above-mentioned characters under the sign of consumption, jumping, strangulation, hara-kiri, knifing, madness, and burning. But there's an eighth death at the end: the death of Maria Callas herself. In this epilogue, which fictionalizes the circumstances of the singer's death in 1977 in her Paris apartment, Marina—this time on stage, where she had been lying in a bed since the beginning of the performance—embodies Maria. It is also in this last scene that we have the chance to listen more to the music composed by Marko Nikodijević, who is also responsible for the composition of the prelude and the interludes between the scenes.[21]

Among other points of interest, Abramović's project explores the sensual and imaginary transitions between what happens on stage and what happens on screen. This peculiarity also invites us to briefly compare *Callas*

Reproduced: Phantasies and Traps in the Age of the Cinecast," *The Opera Quarterly* 34, no. 4: 271–72.

20 See "*7 Deaths of Maria Callas*," video trailer, Bayerische Staatsoper, uploaded on September 1, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQmfd_KZfFA.

21 For a "multivocal" examination of *7 Deaths of Maria Callas*, see "Review Colloquy: *7 Deaths of Maria Callas*, Live stream from the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, September 2020," ed. Nicholas Stevens, *The Opera Quarterly* 36, no. 1-2 (2020): 74–98. See also Jelena Novak, "The Curatorial Turn and Opera: On the Singing Deaths of Maria Callas. A Conversation with Marina Abramović and Marko Nikodijević," *Sound Stage Screen* 1, no. 2. (2021): 195–209.

in Concert and *7 Deaths of Maria Callas*. Both projects, unlike *Maria by Callas*, embrace fiction, yet while the former insists on the importance of liveness (for the price of giving up the corporeality of the performer), the latter seems to stake everything on presence (for the price of effacing both the voice and the image of Callas). Her voice is replaced by the voices of the singers. Her demeanor is reinvented by the postures and gestures of Abramović herself. This project, however, is not only a deeply personal homage to Callas in which the images of Marina and Maria are brought together as if not only their faces but also their personae were akin to each other—it is also an artistic experiment that questions the hegemony of presence and liveness. It does so, perhaps unintentionally, insofar as it makes it impossible to assign greater importance to the Marina on stage than to the Marina on screen. Since the same performer dominates the screen as much as the stage, the hierarchy between the two collapses (figure 4). In this sense, when it comes to the fiction of bringing the diva back to the stage, *Callas in Concert* is more literal. However ethereal and transparent, the hologram never ceases to appear as the real Callas performing on an actual stage.

Fig. 4 *7 Deaths of Maria Callas* (© Charles Duprat—OnP)

5. A Deadly Genealogy

In addition to an effervescent context, *Callas in Concert* also benefits from a long and complex genealogy. The Callas cult goes back to the years following the soprano's death and persists, manifesting itself in both research-driven and fiction-based projects to this day. In cinema, for instance, films as diverse as Tony Palmer's *Callas* (1978), Federico Fellini's *E la nave va* (*And the Ship Sails On*, 1983), and Franco Zeffirelli's *Callas Forever* (2002) embody quite different visions, although an element of veneration seems nonetheless pervasive in all of them. I will not consider this genealogy in depth, let alone delve into the consideration of what seems to be its seminal episode: the cremation of Callas's body and the scattering of her ashes to the sea.[22] Instead, I propose two hypotheses that may shed some light on how the Callas cult intersects with a broader debate on the contemporary fate of opera. The first concerns the connection between the historical and mythical dimensions of the Callas cult, while the second suggests that this cult has known two peaks since the death of the singer.

As Marco Beghelli claims, the importance of the singer and actress in the history of opera needs to be acknowledged beyond the myth. Callas opened the path to and provided the model for a new operatic subjectivity. "By affinity or sheer instinct," Callas became "the vocal and dramatic instrument for the rebirth of the *bel canto* tradition."[23] However, according to Beghelli, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Not only did Callas reconnect coloratura singing and dramatic truth—she also explored, with her "grainy," "uneven," and "ugly" voice, the ambivalence between female and male timbres as well as the transition between contralto and soprano registers. All this, and especially her capacity to reconcile "the personal need for reinterpretation and the faithful adherence to the composer's intention" made of Callas a model for the coming generations of singers.[24]

Following Beghelli, while also putting some pressure on his argument, it bears adding that it is impossible to completely excise myth from history when it comes to Callas. The terms used by Beghelli to capture the

22 For an exploration of this episode, in the context of an insightful reading of Fellini's *E la nave va*, see Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), chap. 6 "Fellini's Ashes," 131–52.

23 Marco Beghelli, "Maria Callas and the Achievement of an Operatic Vocal Subjectivity," in *The Female Voice in the Twentieth Century: Material, Symbolic and Aesthetic Dimensions*, ed. Serena Facci and Michela Garda (London: Routledge, 2021), 46.

24 Beghelli, "Maria Callas," 44.

singularity of Callas are telling in this regard, namely when he claims that "Callas proposed her own interpretation of *coloratura* as a completely individual outcome, having no living model from which to take her inspiration," something she did "instinctively."[25] This formulation is curiously reminiscent of Kant's definition of genius. As "the talent … which gives the rule to art," the genius has no model.[26] It corresponds to an innate creative aptitude, which they exercise instinctively, being unaware of what they do. Of course, when it comes to the performing arts, the notions of talent, genius, or creativity are as much a matter of creation/production as of recreation/reproduction. But, as long as the myth of the genius survives, the values of originality and singularity persist, despite the need to negotiate an alliance between the "genius of the composer" and the "genius of the performer." The question, however, arises whether identifying the "historical modernity" and "everlasting relevance" of a performer with their capacity to put their subjectivity at the service of the "objectification of the score" is not itself another myth.[27]

This interrogation paves the way for my second hypothesis. In fact, looking at the previous decades without forgetting the inextricability between the mythical Callas and historical Callas, there seems to have been two golden ages in the Callas cult: the 1980s and 2010s, that is to say, the two decades in which the subgenre of opera film, in the first case, and the cinecast phenomenon, in the second case, reached their peaks of popularity.[28] I don't think this is a coincidence. Could the obsession with the diva's death not be seen as a symptom of the broader preoccupation with the demise of the genre? This would explain why the cult of the diva reemerges each time the debate about the genre's survival, and the media fuss around it, is on everybody's lips.

Beyond these two hypotheses, one thing is certain: today, whenever the promoters, critics, spectators, fans, or detractors of *Callas in Concert* talk or write about it, the metaphor of "resurrection" consistently emerges. Fur-

25 Beghelli, 48.

26 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 46, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 136.

27 Beghelli, 57.

28 On the opera film debate, see Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); on the cinecast phenomenon, see James Steichen, "The Metropolitan Opera Goes Public: Peter Gelb and the Institutional Dramaturgy of *The Met: Live in HD*," *Music and the Moving Image* 2, no. 2 (2009): 24–30 and "Opera at the Multiplex," ed. Christopher Morris and Joseph Attard, special issue, *The Opera Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (2018).

thermore, this metaphor seems to be all the more effective when it presupposes a symbiosis between the artist (Callas) and the genre (opera). One says "diva," yet one also means "opera," and vice versa. "Many are already resigned to watching old videos or listening to old recordings," David Salazar comments in the *Opera Wire*, "but there are some that have different ideas. In fact, their ideas involve bringing her back."[29] Of all critics, Anthony Tommasini has been the most explicit in emphasizing how closely the admiration for the artist and the concern with the genre intertwine, while also acknowledging the uncanny mixture of attraction and repulsion triggered by the spectacle:

> It was amazing, yet also absurd; strangely captivating, yet also campy and ridiculous. And in a way, it made the most sense of any of the musical holograms produced so far. More than rock or hip-hop fans—and even more, you could say, than fans of instrumental classical music—opera lovers dwell in the past. We are known for our obsessive devotion to dead divas and old recordings; it can sometimes seem like an element of necrophilia, even, drives the most fanatical buffs.[30]

This association of opera to death, murder, and suicide is far from being an anodyne feature of the genre. In *Temple of the Scapegoat*, Alexander Kluge follows the threads of various stories of sacrifice punctuating the history of the genre. These include anecdotes, such as the death of baritone Leonard Warren, while passionately interpreting Don Carlo in Verdi's *La forza del destino* on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House in 1960, which for Kluge emblematizes "Warren's total commitment—his readiness to sacrifice his own life;"[31] or an episode during the Nazi occupation of Paris, when the entire cast of a production of Beethoven's *Fidelio* got trapped in underground rehearsal rooms of the Palais Garnier, where they kept working nonetheless. "Busy with their rehearsals," Kluge comments, "these lost souls in the opera's bowels were blind to the desperate nature of

29 Salazar, "Bringing Maria Callas Back to Life."

30 Anthony Tommasini, "What a Hologram of Maria Callas Can Teach Us About Opera," *New York Times*, January 15, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/15/arts/music/maria-callas-hologram-opera.html.

31 Alexander Kluge, *Temple of the Scapegoat*, trans. Isabel Fargo Cole, Donna Stonecipher, and others (New York: New Directions Books, 2018), 4.

their situation. Their bread and water were as tightly rationed as in a Spanish prison at the actual time the opera was set."[32]

Seen from the perspective of gender, the problematic nature of such "sacrifice mania" boils down to the following perplexity: why does the soprano have to die in the end? Why always (or almost always) the soprano? Why is the price of tragic enjoyment to be paid by the female protagonist? In *Opera, or The Undoing of Women*, Catherine Clément explores this issue with insightful vehemence:

> Opera concerns women. No, there is no feminist version; no, there is no liberation. Quite the contrary: they suffer, they cry, they die. Singing and wasting your breath can be the same thing. Glowing with tears, their decolletés cut to the heart, they expose themselves to the gaze of those who come to take pleasure in their pretend agonies. Not one of them escapes with her life, or very few of them do.[33]

Clément's book has been widely debated and contested. Abbate, for instance, was unconvinced by Clément's focus on the libretto, and agreed with Paul Robinson in claiming that when it comes to pondering the fate of these operatic heroines, their vocal triumph cannot be downplayed, let alone ignored.[34] There may be other ways of putting pressure on Clément's reading that do not rely on the dichotomy of music and text—the text itself, in which the undoing of women becomes explicit, is prone to multiple interpretations. In any case, from Catherine Clément to Marina Abramović—but also to Christophe Honoré, who directed a production of *Tosca* for the 2019 Aix-en-Provence festival, focused on the figure of the diva—the entanglement of adulation and violence that impregnates opera's attitude toward women, both in fiction and in reality, remains a most debated topic among scholars, critics, and artists, one on which *Callas in Concert* also takes a stand.

As I mentioned before, Stephen Wadsworth's curatorial work went beyond choreographing the actress. It also involved devising a script reflecting the story of Maria Callas. In this regard, it is significant—and a sign

32 Kluge, *Temple of the Scapegoat*, 14.

33 Catherine Clément, *Opera, or The Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 11.

34 Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), ix; Paul Robinson, "It's Not over until the Soprano Dies," *New York Times*, January 1, 1989.

that *Callas in Concert* is not only a business-oriented, but also an artistic endeavor—that in some versions of the concert the program kicked off with "Je veux vivre" (from Charles Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*) and wraps up with the monologue "Suicidio!" (from Amilcare Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*), as if suggesting that, at least in her afterlife as a hologram, Callas regains power over her destiny.[35] She wants to live, and it is by expressing such a desire that her posthumous show begins. It will not end before she decides, in hopes perhaps of holding those who rejected and betrayed her to account, to commit suicide. Would there be an alternative way to put an end to the show? This question remains in the air.

6. To applaud or not to applaud

The "Suicidio!" may well be the last piece announced in the program. But will it be the last aria performed? Will the hologram of Callas not sing an encore? How willing will she be to take the audience's wishes into account in making such a decision? These questions lead us back to the topic of liveness. It may, however, come as disappointing news for many spectators that the holographic diva, albeit keen to sing encores, will not be able, regardless of the audience's reactions and wishes, to improvise her decisions. After all, technology has its limits—limits that one may either lament (while looking forward to new developments) or commemorate (as a proof that the gimmick has its flaws).

The question of whether the hologram of Callas will play an encore or not leads me to the consideration of a *Live in HD* broadcast of Donizetti's *La fille du régiment* in 2019. In her introductory remarks, soprano Nadine Sierra announced that for the first time in the history of *The Met: Live in HD* series an encore during the performance might indeed happen. She had in mind Javier Camarena's delivery of "Ah! Mes amis," which in previous evenings had triggered the applause of the audience to the point of encouraging the tenor to resume the aria from the beginning. Her prediction turned out to be exact and Camarena did sing the number twice.[36]

35 This was the case for the performance of September 7, 2019, at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. See *Maria Callas in Concert*, program notes, September 7, 2019, Lyric Opera House, Chicago, https://www.lyricopera.org/learn-engage/audience-programs/opera-program-books/maria-callas-in-concert-program/.

36 See The Metropolitan Opera, "On opening night of the 2019 revival of Donizetti's *La Fille du Régiment*, tenor Javier Camarena made history by becoming one of only a handful

I recall this episode because I think it bears interesting similarities with the pre-planned encores of *Callas in Concert*. Of course, there are many differences between a hologram show and a live cinecast. However, in light of their analogous treatment of the encore, they both seem to lay bare the oscillation between predictability and unpredictability that characterizes a great number of live-mediatized performances today. I find this convergence symptomatic of how intricate and tense the marriage of operatic tradition and technological innovation has become in recent years. In fact, whether the drastic element is reconcilable with audiovisual remediation is a question to which both enthusiasts and detractors of technological innovation are far from being indifferent.

Now, I would like to turn the discussion to the audience's perspective by considering a brief reportage after the Paris concert at the Salle Pleyel in which several spectators share their impressions on the show. Here are some statements worth considering:

> – It's pretty powerful. You really feel like she's there. I don't know how it's possible.
> – She's there, she's present. It's an exceptional vibrato.
> – Callas has always touched me, and here she didn't. And that's a shame.
> – She comes on like a diva, waiting for everyone to stand up and scream … and there's some timid applause. People are wondering "is this art? is it serious? do I get on board or not?" And we're captivated. It's scary.[37]

To applaud, or not to applaud, that is (also) the question. The responses, as the previous pronouncements show, vary significantly between excitement and disappointment. However, there seems to be something in common between those who applaud and those who do not applaud, between those who are excited and those who are disappointed: the idea that a spectacle with the hologram of Callas, much like a live concert featuring her, is meant to move the audience, to making it feel "touched." In fact, what the gentleman who says that "you really feel like she's there" and the young lady who corroborates "she's there […], it's an exceptional vibrato" share with the Callas admirer who laments "Callas has always touched me [*m'a toujours*

of soloists to give an encore on the Met stage," Facebook, June 29, 2020, https://fb.watch/cG5P-Wg5EM/.

37 N. Handel, A. Mesange, R. Moussaoui, "Astonishment as hologram, live orchestra put Callas back onstage," AFP News Agency, post-show video reportage, Salle Pleyel, Paris, uploaded on November 29, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieTsKYg1_Qo.

fait vibrer], and here she didn't" is the assumption that "making you vibrate" is the gauge on which a judgment about *Callas in Concert* should be made. They differ as to *whether* the show achieves the goal. Yet they all agree about *what* the goal is: namely, nothing less than reproducing the sense of uniqueness, exceptionality, and authenticity associated with attending a live performance of Maria Callas.

Could we then conclude that reproducing the aura of Maria Callas as a live performer is what *Callas in Concert* is all about? As I suggested above, the fascination with the diva's charismatic presence and the fascination with the charm of liveness are the two ingredients behind the success of *Callas in Concert*. However, since Maria Callas is not physically present on stage (nor is an actress embodying her, as is the case with Abramović in *7 Deaths of Maria Callas*), it is not the aura" of the *performer* (the "originality" of their bodily presence) that is being reproduced. What is being reproduced, evoked, emulated is the aura of the *performance* (the "originality" of a live event happening *hic et nunc*).[38] And yet, Callas remains the *raison d'être* of the show. In order to avoid this somewhat paradoxical formulation, we could perhaps say that what is being reproduced in *Callas in Concert* is the *persona*—not the *aura*—of Maria Callas as a live performer.

In his recent book *In Concert: Performing Musical Persona*, Philip Auslander returns to the notion of "persona" to discuss the identity of musical performers.[39] Instead of thinking of the musical performer as a real person who may or may not—depending on whether they are portraying fictional entities (as singers sometimes do)—embody different personae, Auslander argues that the identity of all and every performer consists of a persona. Whenever they play or sing for an audience, performers, however modest

38 It is a complex question how the notion of aura, and the very dichotomy of original and copy, can be applied to the performing arts. In any case, if we address this question in light of Benjamin's theory of technological reproducibility, it becomes clear that, when it comes to the performing arts, the experience of the aura is associated not so much with the contact with an artwork as with the attendance of a performance: the performance—in its uniqueness and ephemerality—is the original that can be reproduced. Meanwhile, as there is no performance without performers, the fact that performers and audiences are co-present in time and space is also part and parcel of that sense of originality.

39 Philip Auslander, *In Concert: Performing Musical Persona* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021). See also "Musical Personae," *TDR/The Drama Review* 50, no. 1 (2006): 100–119, "On the Concept of Persona in Performance," *Kunstlicht*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2015): 63–64, and "'Musical Personae' Revisited," in *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections*, ed. Gianmario Borio, Giovanni Giuriati, Alessandro Cecchi, and Marco Lutzu (London: Routledge, 2020), 41–55.

or self-effacing their playing or singing might be, are immediately performing their own identity (which is not the same as expressing themselves). In making this claim, Auslander emphasizes that, no matter the genre, style, aesthetic, idiosyncrasy, character, race or gender, the identity of the performer, to the extent that it is socially and culturally constructed, is always already, to a certain extent, a fiction.

While Auslander does not intend to undervalue the importance of corporeality in musical performance, he nonetheless notes that he has in mind "all instances in which musicians play for an audience, including on recordings."[40] Therefore, to the extent that it applies to live and recorded performances alike and stresses the fictional dimension of musical identity, the concept of "persona" also sheds light on how a show that turns around the admiration for an absent, long-dead artist can be so effective. Moreover, since the hologram of Maria Callas portrays different characters in this concert, while at the same time never ceasing to behave as Maria Callas on stage, it seems adequate to claim that the "persona" of Maria Callas—notwithstanding her disembodied, technically reproducible substance (which is incompatible with the intimation of bodily presence that the notion of "aura" entails)—is indeed the core of *Callas in Concert*.

7. Dreaming into the future

The fiction of a live concert with a dead diva sets boundaries to the imagination that some critics, consciously or not, were eager to police. As I conclude, instead of looking at complaints about how the spectacle fails in its attempt to emulate a live concert with Maria Callas, I want to briefly consider reactions that go in the opposite direction.

Wondering about what the future could bring, critic Richard Fairman speculates: "At the speed technology is advancing, just imagine where this could lead. We could have operas starring imaginary casts from the past. How about Verdi's *La traviata* with Callas and Enrico Caruso? Or Nellie Melba and Luciano Pavarotti? Neither pair was alive at the same time, but that will not matter any more."[41] In the same vein, but going even further,

40 Auslander, *In Concert*, 91

41 Richard Fairman, "The Immortal (Hologram) Maria Callas," *Financial Times*, November 2, 2018, https://www.ft.com/content/ee8c37c2-d872-11e8-ab8e-6beodcf18713.

media theorist Tien-Tien Jong wrote (after attending the show at the Lyric Opera in Chicago in September 2019):

> Maybe it's because our seats were way up in the balcony, and I spent most of the evening squinting down at the stage, but I kept thinking: why not use a skyscraper-sized Maria Callas, looming like a Godzilla monster over the Lyric orchestra? […] And why does the fantasy to recreate one of her concerts mean investing so much effort in constructing a strange deepfake of Callas to realistically lip-sync along to old recordings […] instead of revolutionizing concert technology in a different way, like giving the audience really great headphones and a video headset to imitate attending an intimate chamber recital with Callas instead?[42]

Although a Godzilla-sized hologram of Callas might seem a bit over the top, I find these questions thought provoking. Richard Fairman's "imaginary casts" underline that the hologram technology virtually effaces spatiotemporal boundaries, yet he does not question the assumption that everything should look like a regular live concert. That's exactly what Tien-Tien Jong's more radical fantasy does in suggesting that, along with spatiotemporal coordinates, realistic conventions and audiovisual habits can also be challenged. Following such a line of inquiry opens up a much more interesting discussion. When we look back at the tradition of opera films, we bump into works such as Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *The Tales of Hofmann* (1951) and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Parsifal* (1982), which not only defied lip-syncing protocols but also played with ontological boundaries, such as the human/machine and the male/female divides.[43] *A priori*, there is no reason for a hologram spectacle to shy away from exploring experimental paths along similar lines.

In practice, it would perhaps be naive to expect such a project to risk disappointing traditional operagoers even further. Some of Callas's fans were quite taken aback already. Be that as it may, it would be inaccurate to say that *Callas in Concert* fully complies with the principles of realism. The scene with the playing cards falling in slow motion is a noticeable exception and stands out as one of the most suggestive moments of the concert

42 Tien-Tien Jong, "Maybe it's because our seats were way up in the balcony," Facebook, September 23, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/tientien.jong/posts/10217127834202181.

43 See Citron, *Opera on Screen*, chap. 4 "Cinema and the Power of Fantasy: Powell and Pressburger's *Tales of Hoffmann* and Syberberg's *Parsifal*," 112–60.

(figure 5).[44] It contains a seed of fantasy that contrasts with the otherwise conventional tricks of the show. It also occurs at a significant moment—i.e., when the "card scene" from Bizet's *Carmen* transitions into the "sleepwalking scene" of Verdi's *Macbeth*. As soon as the cards, on which the future can be read, are thrown into the air, time is out of joint. The image slows down while the sound keeps its pace. It is as if we have entered a dream.

Fig. 5: The playing cards scene in *Callas in Concert*. (© Evan Agostini/Base Hologram)

This dream is not only a reminder that the show boils down to an illusion (this is, in a sense, the Brechtian moment of the show, in which the "fiction" of the hologram denounces itself in front of the audience). It is also an allegory of our time's fears and desires. In fact, I think that this scene, considering the mix of perplexity and fascination it may cause, shows how strongly the fear of losing presence and liveness acts in the opera world. Would the essence of opera, as a live performing art, not be damaged by these losses? The question may sound obsolete today, as we acknowledge that not only technology and opera are inseparable, but also that the notion

44 The scene is featured at the end of the official video trailer (see note 9).

of liveness can only make sense in a highly mediatized culture. As Karen Henson argues, following Auslander and Jonathan Sterne, "the very idea of opera's essence being live and technologically unmediated singing is a product of technology, for one cannot have an ideal of unmediated singing unless one is in a profoundly technological environment."[45]

However obsolete it may be, the question also expresses an anxiety that intensified during the pandemic as a defensive mechanism against the boom of online events. Luckily, the resulting rhetoric that reserves the label of "operatic" to performances in which the physical copresence of singers, musicians, and audiences is preserved does not have the last word. In fact, the scene of the flying cards also suggests how radically new technologies can stimulate and enliven operatic imagination to the point of challenging the genre's most ingrained musical and theatrical conventions. When we wake up from the dream, reality won't be the same.

45 Karen Henson, "Introduction: Of Modern Operatic Mythologies and Technologies," in *Technology and the Diva: Sopranos, Opera, and Media from Romanticism to the Digital Age*, ed. Karen Henson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 22.

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Abstract

In this paper, I investigate *Callas in Concert*, a multimedia show that employs holographic digital and laser technology to bring the legendary diva back to the stage almost 50 years after her death. The aim of the spectacle, which bears witness to the persistence of the Callas cult to the present day, is to allow audiences to see and listen to a digitally manipulated reproduction of the dead singer's body and voice. At the same time, *Callas in Concert* is a live concert, where an orchestra performs in front of an audience. My interest lies in two interrelated issues. The first concerns the question as to whether the visual or the aural dimension takes the lead in the attempt to fictionally resurrect a dead singer as a live performer. The second revolves around the paradox inherent in the use of digital technologies of reproduction and remediation to emphasize the peerless uniqueness of Maria Callas's artistry. In bringing together these two issues, my ultimate goal is to shed light on the artistic nuances and ideological assumptions that pervade the fascination with operatic liveness today.

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ARTICLES

Folkloric Voices in Neorealist Cinema: The Case of Giuseppe De Santis*

Giuliano Danieli

In 1952, the screenwriter and film theorist Cesare Zavattini (1902–1989) published "Alcune idee sul cinema" (Some Ideas on the Cinema), which is generally regarded as the retrospective manifesto of neorealism. The article extolled the "factual" nature of the new Italian cinema, notably its quasi-documentary approach to the harsh reality of poor people living at the periphery of the Nation, the use of nonprofessional actors playing themselves, the adoption of dialect, and the abolition of the cinematic apparatus. However, Zavattini failed to acknowledge that the music and voices of subaltern subjects also merited consideration, if their world was to be faithfully captured on screen.[1] Antonella Sisto, among many others, has ascribed this inattention to sound to the supposed "lack of audiophilia" of neorealism, deriving from its "monosensory, visual foundation."[2]

* I want to express my gratitude to the staff of the Biblioteca Chiarini at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Rome), who allowed me to study the archival documents kept at the Fondo Giuseppe De Santis. All translations from Italian (including the original scripts from the director's archive) are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

1 Cesare Zavattini, "Some Ideas on the Cinema," *Sight and Sound* 23, no. 2 (1953): 64–69; originally published as "Alcune idee sul cinema," *Rivista del cinema italiano* 1, no. 2 (1952): 5–19. For an overview of the history and theory of neorealism, see: Mark Shiel, *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006); Gian Piero Brunetta, *Il cinema neorealista italiano: storia economica, politica e culturale* (Bari: Laterza, 2009); Torunn Haaland, *Italian Neorealist Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

2 Antonella Sisto, *Film Sound in Italy: Listening to the Screen* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 83. In the fourth chapter of her book ("The Soundtrack after Fascism: The Neorealist Play Without Sound") Sisto links the "lack of audiophilia" with neorealism's passive acceptance of dubbing practices deriving from Fascist cinema, and with the directors' resistance against technologies of direct sound recording. However, this does not necessarily mean that neorealist filmmakers had no interest in sound as such, nor that their fabricated soundtracks played ancillary roles. The case of De Santis's rural films explored in this article demonstrates quite the opposite.

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Spring 2022), pp. 31–70, ISSN 2784-8949. DOI: 10.54103/sss16776.

This formulation of the problem surely contains a degree of truth—in his article, for instance, Zavattini adopts a language that refers almost exclusively to the semantic field of "seeing"—, but it relies too much on the dubious polarization "image vs. sound," which may be unhelpful for a more nuanced understanding of neorealist filmmaking. Zavattini's inattention to sound derives not so much from the supposed hierarchical superiority of the image as from the absolute precedence given to the broader concepts of plot, narrative, and characters. Thus, it would be more accurate to introduce the issue of music and sound in neorealist film from the perspective adopted by Richard Dyer in his pivotal article "Music, people and reality," where he noted that a discrepancy existed between the plots, situations, and environments portrayed by neorealism—"a movement presumed to be about creating a cinema genuinely expressive of ordinary people's reality"—and their seemingly conventional soundtracks.[3] In other terms, Richard Dyer has observed that neorealism often relied on well-established norms of film-scoring practices, despite the fact that, on *every* other level, it wanted to overcome cinematic convention. The soundtracks were the work of composers such as Alessandro Cicognini, Mario Nascimbene, Goffredo Petrassi, Giuseppe Rosati, and Renzo Rossellini. Their late-romantic or modernist symphonic style clearly contradicted the purported aim of providing a transparent recording of the reality of the films' protagonists—sub-proletarians, disadvantaged workers, beggars, peasants, fishermen, and so forth. In fact, the "music of the people" (folk tunes, popular and military songs, religious chants) featured in only a small minority of neorealist works, most often as source music. A fundamental incongruity lurked behind the fact that while neorealism's ambition was to reduce "the distance between the films and their protagonists", its typical subjects "cannot speak for themselves: music is needed to speak for them. But that music will not be their music."[4] Neorealist soundtracks, notes Dyer, established an implicit hierarchy: the point of view on narrated events, usually expressed by non-diegetic music, was entrusted to a musical idiom that was foreign to the cultural world of the subjects portrayed; as such, their voices risked being drowned out and disempowered by the voices of the filmmakers.

3 Richard Dyer, "Music, People and Reality: The Case of Italian Neo-Realism," in *European Film Music*, ed. Miguel Mera and David Burnand (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 28–40: 28.

4 Dyer, "Music, People and Reality," 28. See also: Sergio Bassetti, "Continuità e innovazione nella musica per il cinema," in *Storia del cinema italiano*, vol. 8, *1949–1953*, ed. Luciano De Giusti (Venice: Marsilio, 2003), 325–35.

While agreeing with Dyer's general observation, I think that the assertion that neorealist films were oftentimes deaf to the music and voice of the people portrayed deserves further thought. The case of Giuseppe De Santis (1917–1997), one of the leading figures of Italian postwar cinema, helps complicate Dyer's account.[5] De Santis allocated a special place to folk songs and melodies, which were often the vehicle through which he allowed his protagonists—peasants and proletarians—to express a socialist worldview (one that he himself shared). In 1953, De Santis even planned to make a film entitled *Canti e danze popolari in Italia* (Folk Songs and Dances in Italy). The project, rejected by Goffredo Lombardo, head of the film production company Titanus, was conceived as a celebration of folk culture and music through the cinematic representation of traditional songs and dances from various parts of Italy as collected, recorded, studied, and edited by the director and his assistants.[6] The rationale of *Canti e danze* showed analogies with the ethnographic and ethnomusicological field research that was being carried out across Italy around this time. In 1948, ethnomusicologist Giorgio Nataletti founded the CNSMP (Centro Nazionale di Studi di Musica Popolare, currently known as the Archivi di Etnomusicologia) at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, which promoted fieldwork campaigns that made it possible to record and study an unprecedented amount of folk music. The most famous of these expeditions was the one with Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella (1954–55), who travelled backwards and forwards between South and North Italy, collecting thousands of folk songs and drawing an extensive map of Italian musical folklore, which ignited a growing interest in this multifarious repertoire, especially among leftist intellectuals. A few years earlier, Carpitella had joined Ernesto De Martino's team expeditions to Basilicata, Calabria, and Apulia. Such experiences were informed by the idea that the cultural (and musical) world of the folk deserved to be studied and rescued from imminent extinction, not least

5 Dyer mentions De Santis's films in his article and devotes part of his discussion to *Riso amaro*. However, his method and questions are partly dissimilar from mine, as I shall clarify in the following pages.

6 A copy of the thirteen-page project of *Canti e danze* and a letter attesting Goffredo Lombardo's feedback on the film proposal are held at the director's archive (Giuseppe De Santis, "*Canti e danze popolari in Italia*," SCENEG 00 09796, Sceneggiature Soggetto 1950–1960, Fondo Giuseppe De Santis, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Rome). For a transcription of *Canti e danze* (without the related correspondence with Lombardo), see Antonio Vitti, ed., *Peppe De Santis secondo se stesso: conferenze, conversazioni e sogni nel cassetto di uno scomodo regista di campagna* (Pesaro: Metauro, 2006), 491–95.

because it was considered the bearer of positive values that the hegemonic capitalist system was obliterating.[7] The ideology and concerns of these campaigns had much in common with De Santis's *Canti e danze* and, more generally, with his rural cinema. As I will show in this article, De Santis's films proved important agents in the process of elaboration and popularization of discourses about folk music in postwar Italy, and the director attempted to empower voices that until then had remained unheard. The undeniable fact that this process was all but unambiguous makes it even more urgent to study it in depth.

In keeping with this tenet, this article listens to, and looks at, the folkloric voices in De Santis's *Caccia tragica* (*Tragic Hunt*, 1947).[8] This film—as the others De Santis made in the following years, such as *Riso amaro* (*Bitter Rice*, 1949) and *Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi* (*No Peace Under the Olive Tree*, 1950)—focuses on the cultural and political conflict between peasant communities and rapacious oppressors—the former group representing anti-hegemonic socialist values, the latter being symbolic of capitalist individualism. In the first part of the paper, I consider how music in *Caccia tragica* provides De

7 On the organization of the expedition, and the development of ethnomusicology in postwar Italy, see: Diego Carpitella, ed., *L'etnomusicologia in Italia: primo convegno sugli studi etnomusicologici in Italia* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1975); Alan Lomax, *L'anno più felice della mia vita: un viaggio in Italia 1954–1955*, ed. Goffredo Plastino (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2008); Francesco Giannattasio, "Etnomusicologia, 'musica popolare' e *folk revival* in Italia: il futuro non è più quello di una volta," *AAA – TAC* 8 (2011): 65–85; Maurizio Agamennone, ed., *Musica e tradizione orale nel Salento: le registrazioni di Alan Lomax e Diego Carpitella (agosto 1954)* (Rome: Squilibri, 2017). On the figure of Ernesto De Martino, his work and his collaboration with Diego Carpitella, see: Ernesto De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale nel mondo antico: dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria*, ed. Marcello Massenzio (Turin: Einaudi, 2021; first. ed. 1958); De Martino, *La terra del rimorso: contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2020; first ed. 1961); Diego Carpitella, "L'esperienza di ricerca con Ernesto De Martino," in *Conversazioni sulla musica (1955–1990): lezioni, conferenze, trasmissioni radiofoniche* (Florence: Ponte alle Grazie, 1992), 26–34; George R. Saunders, "'Critical Ethnocentrism' and the Ethnology of Ernesto De Martino," *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 4 (1993): 875–93; Maurizio Agamennone, ed., *Musiche tradizionali del Salento: le registrazioni di Diego Carpitella ed Ernesto de Martino (1959, 1960)* (Rome: Squilibri, 2008); Giorgio Adamo, ed., *Musiche tradizionali in Basilicata: le registrazioni di Diego Carpitella ed Ernesto De Martino (1952)* (Rome: Squilibri, 2012).

8 I fully agree with Michel Chion's notion of "audio-vision," which implies a re-evaluation of the intertwined nature of all the components of audiovisual media. See Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, 2nd ed., trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019). In this article I attempt to show parallelisms and contrasts between sound, montage, and framing in film, for these elements complement each other and all are fundamental for the emergence of discourses on folklore.

Santis with a fruitful means of establishing the dichotomy "folk culture vs. capitalism" that was to become a trope between postwar Italian Marxist intellectuals, ethnographers, and ethnomusicologists who proclaimed the subversive power of the folk. Not only did De Santis's representation of folk music sanction such discursive divide; as I shall show, at certain key junctures De Santis's films short-circuit the relationship between folk music and capitalism. I therefore ask whether blurring the boundaries between these two opposite poles might help to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which folk music was perceived in 1950s Italy. By posing this question, my contribution resonates with Maurizio Corbella's recent article on the musicscape of *Riso amaro*, which "unintentionally reveal[s] fields of tension between the cultural values, hierarchies, and divides" in postwar Italian culture, notably the precarious position occupied by popular music.[9]

The second part of my study stretches beyond music alone by considering the broader folkloric soundscape invented by De Santis. In particular, I claim that the sounds of bells, whistles, and clapping are just as important as music in constructing the anti-hegemonic values and force of De Santis's protagonists. Dyer's point on music in neorealist films—his implicit question about the disempowerment of the Other's voice—is complicated by this more comprehensive scrutiny of De Santis's soundtracks, which testifies to the director's attempt to empower the subaltern through a number of sonic elements that would become characteristic of folkloric soundscapes in Italian film. To substantiate my analyses of music and sound in *Caccia tragica*, I do not limit the discussion to the released version of the film, but I also look at archival documents that shed light on De Santis's and his collaborators' creative process. Furthermore, I complement the discussion of this film with the examination of the unpublished script of *Noi che facciamo crescere il grano* (*We Who Grow Grain*, ca. 1953), which I could study at the Fondo De Santis of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Rome. This unfinished project proves not less crucial to understand De Santis's construction of the folkloric voice.[10]

9 Maurizio Corbella, "Which People's Music? Witnessing the Popular in the Musicscape of Giuseppe De Santis's *Riso amaro* (1949, *Bitter Rice*)," in *Music, Collective Memory, Trauma, and Nostalgia in European Cinema After the Second World War*, ed. Michael Baumgartner and Ewelina Boczkowska (New York: Routledge, 2020), 45–69: 47. See also Francesco Pitassio, "Popular Tradition, American Madness and Some Opera: Music and Songs in Italian Neo-Realist Cinema," *Cinéma & Cie* 11, nos. 16/17 (2011): 141–46.

10 For reasons of space, this paper does not take into account *Riso amaro* and *Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi*. Nevertheless, it is my intention to devote a future article to the discussion of folk

Folk Music in De Santis's Caccia tragica

De Santis always demonstrated a marked interest in folklore and peasant culture.[11] Between 1947 and 1950, he shot the so-called *Trilogia della terra* (*Trilogy of the Land*), comprising three films set in rural areas of northern and central Italy (the minefields and paddies of the Po Valley and the Ciociarian mountains) which focused on farming communities and their stories of solidarity and resistance (*Caccia tragica*, *Riso amaro* and *Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi*). In some ways, De Santis's works can be seen as a continuation of the rural strand that, under the Fascist regime, had resulted in films such as Alessandro Blasetti's *Sole* (*Sun*, 1929) and *Terra madre* (*Mother Earth*, 1931). Yet, whereas Fascist cinema generally portrayed field workers in an idyllic fashion, exploiting their alleged authentic rural traditions to reinvigorate a sense of national pride, De Santis's was a cinema of crisis that aimed to delve into the open wounds of postwar Italy, notably by criticizing the *status quo* from the perspective of subaltern people and by extracting socialist messages from his rural exempla.[12]

De Santis's cinematic output seems both to be informed by and act as a precursor to principles that resemble the Gramscian notion of "*nazional-popolare*," which became a common theme in Italian intellectual debates during the 1950s. Mention could be made of a few essays by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*, published in 1950: for example, "Osservazioni sul folklore" ("Observations on Folklore") encouraged the critical study of folk culture as a historical, subaltern "conception of the world," one which was autonomous and in opposition to hegemonic culture.[13] In notebook 21 on popular literature, Gramsci introduced the concepts of "national-popular" art and that of the "organic intellectual." He claimed that "a national-popular literature, narrative and other kinds, has always been lacking in Italy and still is" because of the gulf that existed between the worlds of

music, sound, and audiovisual strategies in these films (particularly on the less-studied *Non c'è pace*), which will enable me to expand on some of the points examined here.

11 For an overview of De Santis's cinema, see: Antonio Vitti, *Giuseppe De Santis and Postwar Italian Cinema* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Marco Grossi, ed., *Giuseppe De Santis: la trasfigurazione della realtà / The Transfiguration of Reality* (Rome: Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, 2007).

12 Pepa Sparti, ed., *Cinema e mondo contadino: due esperienze a confronto: Italia e Francia* (Venice: Marsilio, 1982); Michele Guerra, *Gli ultimi fuochi: cinema italiano e mondo contadino dal fascismo agli anni Settanta* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2010).

13 Antonio Gramsci, "Observations on Folklore," in *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935*, ed. David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 360.

intellectuals and ordinary people; an "organic intellectual" should arrive and finally bridge the gap between these universes, so as to guide (and be guided by) the folk towards higher levels of self-awareness and socio-political agency.[14]

Although De Santis was unaware of Gramsci's vision, his work was not far from it, given that he wanted to make a national-popular cinema that could give voice to and empower the subaltern.[15] However, as many scholars have noted, his films do not offer an entirely straightforward rendition of the world in which his characters move. De Santis's was a "poetic realism," a re-elaboration of reality that enabled a number of questions about society to emerge in a quasi-Brechtian way.[16] The director himself defined his films as an instance of hybridity: "hybridization of genres is, in my opinion, the key to my cinema".[17] Thus, while narrating stories of peasants, he adopted a cinematic language that was also informed by American popular movies and Russian cinema.[18] His poetics of hybridity often blurred the line be-

14 Gramsci, "Concept of 'National-Popular'," in *The Gramsci Reader,* 368.

15 On this topic, see: Vitti, *Peppe De Santis secondo se stesso*, 189, 231 and 235. Revealing of some connections between De Santis and Gramsci's thought are also the director's reflections in "Cinema e Narrativa," *Film d'oggi* 1, no. 21 (1945): 3.

16 See Joseph Luzzi, *A Cinema of Poetry: Aesthetics of the Italian Art Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

17 The translated passage is quoted in Corbella, "Which People's Music?", 48.

18 One point that triggered harsh criticism and that appears to have been a source of anxiety for De Santis himself is the director's ambivalent attitude towards American culture. De Santis was strongly influenced by American film, but at the same time he criticized American capitalism and its articulation through mass-media; see Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Ungar, 1983), 82-85. De Santis never denied his admiration for the literature of the New Deal era, which he considered one of neorealism's sources of inspiration, and for American Western and Musical films. Nevertheless, De Santis's reactions to interviewers' and critics' comments sometimes betrayed an anxious need to establish some distance between his cinema and the American models. In an exchange with Antonio Vitti, for instance, he bypassed this intuitive remark of the interviewer: "I've always wondered why you feel bothered when critics notice elements in your films coming from American Westerns" (see *Peppe De Santis secondo se stesso*, 189; see also, in the same volume, Vitti's interviews with De Santis at pages 61, 66 and 170–73, and Vitti's article "L'influenza della letteratura americana sul neorealismo", 21–36). Moreover, while De Santis declared on several occasions his respect for American democracy, he also took a stance against the consumerist side of American culture, symbolized by "*boogie-woogie, chewing gum*, easy money"—elements that are nevertheless extremely seductive in his films; quoted in Francesco Pitassio, *Neorealist Film Culture, 1945–1954. Rome, Open Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 40. On the ambiguous cultural politics and ideologies that informed postwar Italian leftist circles, see Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and*

tween established cultural divides, such as the one that saw folk culture as essentially opposed to the capitalist universe.

Such ambivalences speak of the director's own contradictory impulses, and leave a permanent mark on his films. This also applies to their music, the soundtracks interspersing preexisting folk repertoire (or, better, what at the time was considered to be "*musica popolare*" [folk music]), popular music, and newly composed film scores in symphonic style. In the pages that follow, I ask what values were attached to these musical repertoires (especially folk music and popular music) and explore what they reveal about the different ways in which postwar Italian culture listened to the folkloric voice. Given the space available here, I limit my discussion to *Caccia tragica*, the first chapter of the *Trilogia della terra*.

Caccia tragica takes place in the Po Valley immediately after the Second World War. It is a parable of national reconstruction and class solidarity after years of devastation caused by the conflict, a story of desperate veterans returning from the front and poor peasants trying to unite to start a new communal life built on socialist values. There are four main protagonists. Giovanna and Michele are peasants working in a cooperative and, along with the community of field workers, they represent the film's positive pole; representing the bad side of human nature is another couple, Daniela and Alberto, who are bandits. At the beginning of the film, the latter couple commits a robbery, stealing the money needed by the cooperative to lease land and agricultural machineries, and kidnapping Giovanna (Michele's wife), whom they take as a hostage. Daniela and Alberto embody individualist and consumerist values, posing a threat to the peasant community's peace and unity. Yet Alberto is an ambiguous villain: although Daniela, his lover, has convinced him to become a bandit, he had actually been Michele's comrade during the war, sharing the shocking experience of the German concentration camps with him. As such, there is an unspoken bond between Alberto and Michele, preventing the former from being totally subsumed by an individualist vision of the world. Indeed, as the film unfolds, we witness Alberto's gradual repentance. Although he initially supports Daniela and tries to flee with her from the community, who "hunt" them down to retrieve the money and rescue Giovanna, he ultimately gets tired of his criminal life, sabotaging his partner's evil plans and freeing their hostage before then embracing the cooperative's socialist values.

Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943–1991 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

The soundtrack for *Caccia tragica* includes several popular songs and folk melodies as sung and heard by members of the farming community ("*canti popolari*," as the director often calls them in the script). These pieces are associated with various rural traditions, as well as political songs heard and sung by the portrayed farmworkers. Alongside these, several cues composed by Giuseppe Rosati also punctuate the action. Rather than having a mere denotative role, popular music is here infused with values that help define the characters and develop the sociopolitical message that De Santis had in mind. He typically associates folk music with the good characters, while reserving the use of popular music—the voice of capitalism, of mass culture—for the villains. In so doing, he contributed to the musical articulation of the "folk music vs. capitalism" dichotomy, which, as noted above, was becoming fashionable at the time. Yet the boundary between these two poles is not always as clear-cut as one might imagine.

The film's central scene provides a good example of how De Santis creates a link between popular music and the villains. At minute 00:41:07,[19] we see the bandits with their hostage Giovanna in a country villa, a secret refuge where they have gathered to discuss their criminal plans. The place is filled with visual references to consumerism, such as advertisements, a bottle of champagne, and a radio (see figure 1). We hear the broadcast of a series of well-known wartime songs: the swing tune "Begin the Beguine," the patriotic American march *Stars and Stripes Forever* by John Philip Sousa, a partisan song ("Avanti siam ribelli"), and the Nazi-tainted tune "Lili Marleen" (which had become popular during the war both in Germany and among its enemies). As Guido Michelone has observed, De Santis here wants to "narrate and explain, through the music, the Italian situation at the time" by drawing attention to the increasing "intrusion of Americanism at the level of mass culture, a model that was replacing both the Fascist rhetoric and genuine folk culture."[20] As in De Santis's other films (such

19 I refer here to the streaming file available online: "Caccia tragica (Giuseppe de Santis) 1947," YouTube, uploaded on October 12, 2021, https://youtu.be/M6KN5wpV4TU. The film has never been distributed on DVD, but, to my knowledge, some VHS copies were released in the 1990s by Gruppo Editoriale Bramante – Pantmedia, Mondadori Video and VideoClub Luce – VideoRai.

20 "Raccontare e spiegare, attraverso la sola musica, la situazione in cui versava l'Italia di allora," "un'invadenza americana a livello di cultura di massa che ha sostituito sia la retorica fascista sia la genuinità popolaresca." Guido Michelone, "Dal boogie al neorealismo: musiche e colonna sonora in *Caccia tragica*," in *Caccia tragica: un inizio strepitoso*, ed. Marco Grossi and Virginio Palazzo (Fondi: Quaderni dell'Associazione Giuseppe De Santis, 2000), 29.

Fig. 1 Giuseppe De Santis, *Caccia tragica* (1947). Still frame at minute 00:42:19 (see note 19)

as *Riso amaro*), the presence of musical reproduction devices (such as the radio or the gramophone) symbolizes the threat posed by mass culture, particularly American popular culture.[21] In this scene, the radio seems to commodify American music, war, and resistance songs by featuring them in a continuous stream that reduces all music into mere objects of aesthetic consumption.

Daniela, the antihero of *Caccia tragica*, is passionately fond of the radio. As she talks to Alberto about their crimes and future aspirations, she expresses her individualist vision of the world and desire to become famous like a star ("today everyone is thinking about us [because of our robbery]", she exclaims). This moment is accompanied by "Lili Marleen," which she is particularly fond of (indeed, "Lili Marleen" is her nickname). Daniela is thus linked with a tune that, although appropriated in the 1940s by the Allied troops, also had strong Nazi connotations.[22] More importantly, she is associated with the world of popular music as epitomized by the radio.

21 See Corbella, "Which People's Music?", 58.

22 In the film, these connections are indirectly reinforced by the fact that "Lili Marleen" is heard immediately after the end of "Avanti siam ribelli".

Fig. 2 De Santis, *Caccia tragica.* Still frame at minute 00:47:40 (see note 19)

Alberto's position towards "Lili Marleen" and the radio, by contrast, is somewhat different. When the song starts, he tries to turn the device off (figure 2), yet Daniela insists the song be allowed to play on. These simple gestures clearly signal the gap between the two protagonists and their cultural models. Alberto oscillates between Daniela's individualism and the allure of capitalist culture on the one hand, and the more traditional values of solidarity embodied by Giovanna and Michele on the other. The parable of sin and repentance that ultimately leads him to embrace the cooperative's communal life at the film's ending is therefore prefigured in this scene on a musical level—i.e., as an attempt by Alberto to reject popular music (and the radio) along with the values which are implicitly attached to it.

While Daniela is unequivocally associated with "Lili Marleen," Alberto is here musically characterized by the partisan song "Avanti siam ribelli." It is surely not coincidental that this music—which obviously had a positive connotation for De Santis as well as, most likely, much of his audience—begins to play just as Alberto tells Giovanna of his guilt over his immoral life. As observed above, Alberto is not a real villain and Daniela's dangerous appeal proves for him to be only a temporary departure from the good

values associated with his rural upbringing. The allure of capitalism brings him to the verge of losing contact with the "genuine folk"—i.e., the peasant community. The scene thus seems to represent Alberto's unsettled and confused state of mind through a musical analogy. "Avanti siam ribelli" is a reminder of the folk's revolutionary power, and yet its juxtaposition on the radio to American popular music and "Lili Marleen" suggests that it has been commodified. In linking "Avanti siam ribelli" with Alberto's remorse, De Santis talks of the positive values embodied by this music; at the same time, he imagines a scenario in which the partisan song could be corrupted (just like Alberto when he embraces Daniela's values), becoming an object of mere aesthetic consumption as it enters the domain of popular music mediatized by the radio.

In other scenes in the film, folk music serves as a powerful agent of moral development and solidarity. In the sequence that precedes his final repentance (01:07:33), we see Alberto fighting an irate Michele who wants revenge for the kidnapping of his wife by his former comrade. Michele hits Alberto, calling him a "coward" and a "traitor." While this happens, we hear the utterances of some veterans in the background; they are speaking at a meeting for the creation of the National Popular Front, which is taking place nearby. Ironically, their speech is all about solidarity, peace, and mutual support ("no discord, no divisions between us"); yet the two fighters—particularly Michele—seem oblivious to these words. It is only when one of the veterans' chants is heard (01:09:17) that Michele stops hitting Alberto and forgives him for his crimes, thereby enabling him to be readmitted into the community. Folk music thus acts as a cohesive agent: it provides the most effective expression of a mutually supportive community, the vehicle through which the sinner (Alberto) can be pardoned and reject his individualistic ambitions.

The fact that folk music in *Caccia tragica* is imbued with socialist values and poses a serious threat to those who represent capitalism is also suggested by a scene in the original script that was ultimately deleted from the final cut:[23]

23 "*Caccia tragica – Sul fiume c'è ancora la guerra*," SCENEG 00 09691, Sceneggiature 1946–1947, Fondo Giuseppe De Santis, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Rome. De Santis erased a few sentences in the original script, as reflected in my transcription (see Appendix, document 1).

Scene 81

… On the boat, Giovanna looks scared and discouraged. Daniela stands up and moves towards the boatman, an old man who seems to be drunk. He is whistling cheerfully whilst rowing. Daniela looks at him and says:

Daniela: "Stay in the middle, don't go near the riverbanks!"

The old man does not listen to her and continues to whistle. Daniela looks around and on one of the banks … she sees…

Songs – Voices

… a festive crowd, with flags and signs; they are walking and singing on the bank. Many people are riding bikes, some are on carriages and others are just walking. They are clearly heading towards a people's assembly.

Daniela grabs the boatman from behind and shakes him.

~~Daniela: "Move away from the banks, I told you! Listen to me, stay in the middle of the river!"~~

Giovanna follows with her eyes the cortege of the people going to the assembly from a distance. She then stands up and shouts from the boat, waiving her arms:

~~Songs sound nearer~~

~~Giovanna: "Hey!! Hey!!!!"~~

Daniela looks at Giovanna and then towards the riverbank.

People from the riverbank gesticulate to greet Giovanna: they clearly misunderstood the meaning of her shouts. Then they start singing again, making the voice of Giovanna inaudible.

~~Giovanna (off-screen): "Help me! Help me!"~~

~~Song and unintelligible shouts of Giovanna~~

Giovanna sits down, disappointed.

Daniela looks mockingly at Giovanna. Then she bursts out laughing. The old man keeps rowing and whistling.

~~Song of the people~~

Daniela is on a boat with the hostage Giovanna. While they are rowing down a river, the singing of the veterans heading towards their meeting resounds from one of the riverbanks. The scene's physical, political, and moral space is defined through music. Daniela wants to remain in the middle of the river because the song, which threatens her individualist conception of the world, grows louder when the boatman gets closer to the banks. Folk music is perceived by the villain as a powerful and haunting presence.

From what has been said above, it is apparent that De Santis generally adheres to a straightforward binary opposition between folk and popular music, respectively, as the repositories of revolutionary/progressive values on the one hand and regressive/consumerist principles on the other. Nevertheless, certain moments in *Caccia tragica* complicate this rather simplistic, black-and-white divide. I have already noted how the use of "Avanti siam ribelli" in the radio scene touches on this problematic dichotomy. At other points in the film, we find folk music accompanying the emergence of reactionary values. A good example occurs at the beginning of the film. Here, the field workers are being forced by some of their despotic landowner's henchmen to return the lands and agricultural machinery that they have been leasing; at the same time, a smaller group of peasants who have just arrived on some carriages help the henchmen to execute the landowner's orders. The local community is thus internally divided, and the mercenaries mock the other peasants by singing the "Osterie,"—i.e., certain well-known sarcastic folk songs (00:09:22). Here, folk music becomes a divisive element rather than a tool that encourages social solidarity.

The broader idea that the folk, as a revolutionary force, is immune to and rejects hegemonic culture is questioned in certain scenes within this film as well as in others that De Santis directed. There are moments in which the peasants are shown to be enjoying the morally equivocal sounds of capitalism. The complex scene with the veterans' train is a case in point (00:58:32). In this instance, some of the villains (Alberto and a few black market dealers) and the peasants share the same physical and sonic space, since they are both on a train where a band is playing a "boogie-woogie" (see figure 3). While the performance is a musical index of deleterious Americanism, the peasants nevertheless seem to be enjoying it. In the original script, De Santis indicated that he wanted a folk tune to be performed here, whereas in the film's final version the voice of the peasants has been erased and replaced by American music. Of course, this might be read as the director's critique of the risks of cultural contamination. On the other hand, this musical choice could also be interpreted as indicating the director's penchant

for hybridization, which informs at least part of the soundtrack and enables unexpected exchanges to emerge between folk culture and mass-mediated culture.

The above examples show that different values are associated with folk music in De Santis's *Caccia tragica*. Even if its connection with the positive characters generally seems to prevail, folk music can also be entrusted to negative characters that are driven by individualist interests. Moreover, members of the folk community seem at times to be allured by the sounds of consumerism. These short circuits certainly add complexity to the simplistic dichotomy "folk music vs. capitalism" (which is nevertheless at work in many scenes) and point to a broader tension that characterized postwar Italian culture at large. Indeed, the wave of folklorism that emerged in the wake of the publication of Gramsci's "Osservazioni sul folklore" in 1950—a wave which found its immediate outlet in the aforementioned ethnographic and ethnomusicological expeditions, and culminated with the folk music revival movement in the 1960s and 1970s—was plagued with latent and unavoidable contradictions. In an article published in 1978, Diego Carpitella denounced the "false ideology" that informed the rediscovery

Fig. 3 De Santis, *Caccia tragica*. Still frame at minute 00:58:56 (see note 19)

of musical folklore. In his view, questionable paternalism and essentialism often lurked behind the revivalists' attitude towards folk culture, depriving it of its agency. Furthermore, Carpitella noted that the call for "authenticity" by those who wanted to popularize folk music was in fact leading to a commodification of the repertoire, which was almost always decontextualized and spectacularized. Such inconsistencies in the "ideology of folklore" were the result of the impossible attempt to deny the dialectical relationship existing between the revived folk music and the (capitalist) cultural system into which it was being introduced.[24] I contend that these insightful reflections—especially the point on the dialectic between folk music and capitalism—can be fruitfully applied to the representation of folk music in De Santis's soundtracks, for they appear to foreshadow questions that would become burning in the following decades.

The Power of the Peasants' Soundscape: Whistles and Bells.

There are other productive ways to explore De Santis's approach to the voice of the portrayed folkloric communities, and to address Dyer's questions about hierarchies and sonic representation of the subalterns. One such way is to abandon a music-centered perspective and focus instead on sound effects. Elena Mosconi has claimed that neorealism was characterized by a new sensibility towards sounds and noises. Indeed, many Italian postwar films portrayed not only landscapes, but also soundscapes "that were neglected by previous cinema."[25] These soundscapes, I would add, were invested with cultural, ideological, and political values. This is particularly true for De Santis's films, where recurring sonic elements characterize and tend to empower the represented subaltern communities and their space. In the following pages, I shift my attention from traditional musical values

24 See Diego Carpitella, "Le false ideologie sul folklore musicale," in Diego Carpitella, Gino Castaldo, Giaime Pintor et al., *La musica in Italia: l'ideologia, la cultura, le vicende del jazz, del rock, del pop, della canzonetta, della musica popolare dal dopoguerra ad oggi* (Rome: Savelli, 1978), 207–39; Diego Carpitella, "Etnomusicologica. Considerazioni sul folk-revival", in *Conversazioni sulla musica*, 52-64. See also: Goffredo Plastino, "Introduzione" and Marcello Sorce Keller, "Piccola filosofia del revival", in *La musica folk: storie, protagonisti e documenti del revival in Italia*, ed. Goffredo Plastino (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2016).

25 Elena Mosconi, "Per un paesaggio (sonoro) italiano: ri-ascoltare il neorealismo," in *Invenzioni dal vero: discorsi sul neorealismo*, ed. Michele Guerra (Parma: Diabasis, 2015), 239–54: 246.

Fig. 4 De Santis, *Caccia tragica*. Still frame at minute 00:53:33 (see note 19)

to a consideration of the complex folkloric soundscape in *Caccia tragica*. I discuss, in particular, the crucial role played by whistles and bells.[26] While I acknowledge that these sounds belong to different fields of human expression, discussing them together enables me to show how they achieve similar communicative and political functions in *Caccia tragica*, and how they both provide the represented people with means to threaten the film's villains and their values.

The act of whistling pervades a scene in *Caccia tragica* which follows the aforementioned "radio" episode. At 00:52:25, we see the bandits leaving their refuge, which has been discovered and put under siege by Michele and his fellow companions. Daniela, Alberto, and their accomplices make their way through the surrounding crowd by using Giovanna, their hostage, as a human shield. However, their escape is soon transformed into a walk of shame. One of the peasants starts whistling, and the gesture is repeated by his companions (see figure 4). A choir of whistles subsequently accompanies the bandits. Daniela is the only one who shows indifference, while Al-

26 In this article I must limit my discussion to *Caccia tragica*, but other Italian postwar films feature whistles and bells as distinctive elements of rural/folkloric soundscapes. Some examples are mentioned in notes 27, 32, and 35.

berto looks nervous and frightened. Whistling simultaneously empowers the peasants whilst also weakening the bandits.

Whistling is a sonic signifier of peasants and proletarians in many Italian films.[27] A systematic examination of the role of whistling in narrative cinema is long overdue. Here I will limit myself to a few general observations. Whistling is often connected with ideas of difference and excess. In fact, with its potential noisiness and its distance from verbal language, whistling occupies a disreputable position. People have always whistled, but this sonic act inhabits the fringes of official culture, as testified by the difficulty of finding studies that explore its history, and by the rarity, in the musical realm, of professional whistlers.[28] Whistling is often associated with the lowest classes and their supposedly rude behavior. It is not surprising, then, that well-mannered bourgeois rarely whistles in Italian postwar films; this act is generally associated with people living on the edge of society, in particular peasants, miners, rascals, proletarians, and protesters. Whistling implies the violent emission of high-pitched sounds, which defy the rationale, measured logic of verbal discourse, the dominant norm of *logos*. A good way of thinking about whistling—or at least some forms of whistling, which can be heard and seen in Italian films portraying folk com-

27 Like *Caccia tragica*, some films use the subalterns' whistles in a non-musical way. This is the case of the whistling boys in the last scene of *Roma città aperta* (dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1945): the noisy sound they produce can be intended as an expression of solidarity to Don Pietro and protest against his execution. In many other Italian films—especially from the 1960s and the 1970s—whistles acquire musical value; nevertheless, they are almost always associated with folkloric, rural, and exotic contexts—i.e., with ideas of spatial and cultural otherness. Pier Paolo Pasolini's films abound in scenes where the "sub-proletarian" protagonists whistle folk tunes (e.g., Ninetto Davoli in *Decameron*, 1971, and *Canterbury Tales*, 1972). Other films adopt the whistle as an element of the extradiegetic score: particularly famous are the whistles of Alessandro Alessandroni that resonate in the music by Ennio Morricone for Lina Wertmüller's *I basilischi* (1963) or for Sergio Leone's western films.

28 There is scant literature on whistling. The most recent and comprehensive study is *A Brief History of Whistling*, by John Lucas and Allan Chatburn (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2013). See also: Peter F. Ostwald, "When People Whistle," *Language & Speech* 2, no. 3 (1959): 137–45; A.V. van Stekelenburg, "Whistling in Antiquity," *Akroterion* 45 (2000): 65–74. The reflections by Steven Connor in *Beyond Words: Sobs, Hums, Stutters and other Vocalizations* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014) might also prove useful to make sense of the act of whistling and its communicative values. Connor focuses on "the world of sound events beyond articulate speech" (10); whistling does not feature in his analysis, but Connor's idea that "the [non-articulated, non-verbal] noises of the voice" (10) can have semantic, political, and cultural values might be productively applied to an ethnography or a history of whistling (both in cinema and beyond).

munities—is by drawing a parallel with Nadia Seremetakis's definition of "the screaming" (*klama*) in her ethnography of women's mourning practices in Inner Mani, Greece. Seremetakis understands screaming in women's laments as a bodily, excessive acoustic utterance that, for its violence and distance from the hegemonic acoustics based on low voices and "rational" sounds related with language, retains a certain degree of "transgression." She argues that Inner Mani women "disseminate the signs of transgression through screaming. Screaming is tied to the condition of *anastatosi*, disorder and inversion."[29] For its excess, screaming participates in "dangerous" and "contagious" threatening attitudes against dominant powers, and it "demarcates and encloses a collectivity of subjects in exile."[30]

In a similar vein, we can read whistling as a marker of cultural, social, and political difference, which may be why Italian directors frequently link it with folkloric or peripheral worlds that are believed to resist the hegemonic realm. As with *klama*, the excessive, abnormal whistling can represent a threatening and transgressive sound. This emerges with clarity if we go back to the aforementioned scene in *Caccia tragica*. While the peasants are holding rifles, they cannot use these against the villains because a gunfight would potentially harm Giovanna, the hostage. Whistling, then, offers an alternative form of resistance. One of the peasants starts whistling and is immediately followed by the others as a sort of vocal ensemble that submerges the bandits—an effect that is visually reinforced by the dolly shot of the whistling people, and the shot/countershot showing the reaction of the villains. The idea of a threatening choral sound that stems from the initiative of an individual is a strong metaphor of solidarity, and the *crescendo* effect that is obtained through this process of sonic accumulation is a particularly effective way to show the overwhelming power of the folk's whistling.[31]

The sound of bells, like whistling, is another index of the folkloric space. In *Caccia tragica*, bell sounds provide an additional way of symbolizing the peasants' power.[32] If one thinks of the historical significance of bells

29 Nadia Seremetakis, *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 72.

30 Seremetakis, *The Last Word*, 101.

31 The use of sonic *crescendos* associated with the folkloric world will become a trope in De Santis's films (for instance, in *Riso amaro* and *Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi*) and was also employed by other postwar Italian directors (e.g., Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Seta), a topic I will discuss in another article.

32 In "Per un paesaggio (sonoro) italiano," Mosconi examines the presence and role of

in rural communities, this comes as no surprise. In his seminal study *Village Bells*, Alain Corbin discusses several values with which bells have been connected throughout different periods of European history, and he shows how they have been fundamental in shaping social time and space (one that is physical, spiritual, and political). Indeed, before the advent of industrialization, bells were one of the most important sounds, and although their centrality and power declined with the onset of metropolitan soundscapes, they nonetheless retained a certain degree of relevance in the "peripheries" (i.e., towns and rural villages), hence their connection with the folkloric soundscape.[33] Steven Feld, who has also devoted himself to studying and recording bells, has reflected on how they can "signal both authority and disruption"—that is, they are invested with power in certain historical and social contexts.[34]

Caccia tragica is only one of many Italian films in which bells are used to define the folkloric world.[35] What is interesting, here, is that the peasants' bells exhibit a powerful agency of their own, an acoustical force that stands in opposition to the capitalist world. They can be heard at many points in the film, notably when the peasants ring them to mobilize the whole community in chasing the bandits (00:29:02: "Sound the alarm with town bells, too!"). Beyond this narrative circumstance, however, it is the quasi-expressionist treatment of their sound which makes them such a powerful signifier of the peasants' antagonism. By using this acoustic device, De Santis tends to blur the lines between the diegetic and the non-diegetic, and to play with our sense of space: indeed, in many scenes, the villains' voices are drowned out by loud bell ringing, which seems to come from nowhere. For example, the bandits' refuge is clearly located in an isolated area, and yet bells invade and pervade this space, often disrupting the communication between the villains in a way that reinforces the idea of folk as representing a haunting, controlling presence. At 00:39:40, Daniela is shown entering a

bells in various neorealist films. As an example of bells used by peasant communities to resist the oppressors, she mentions the case of *Vivere in pace* (*To Live in Peace*, 1947, dir. Luigi Zampa). Mosconi's article does not provide close readings but proves a stimulating starting point for further analyses.

33 Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-Century French Countryside*, trans. Martin Thom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). See also: Luc Rombouts, *Singing Bronze: A History of Carillon Music* (Leuven: Lipsius Leuven, 2014).

34 Steve Feld and Donald Brenneis, "Doing Anthropology in Sound," *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 4 (2004): 469.

35 See, for instance, the opening of Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* (1948) and Cecilia Mangini's *Stendalì* (1960).

room to meet some of her accomplices. When she opens the door, the bells suddenly fill the air. The unnaturalness of the sync-point somehow empowers their sound by making it seem abnormal, strange, and unexpectedly spectral. Later in this scene (00:45:40), Daniela enters another room: the bells, which had stopped ringing, now invade her space once again. One of the accomplices hears them and makes an ironic comment about the peasants' uprising (00:45:53); Daniela will do the same while talking to Alberto only a couple of minutes later in the film (00:47:47). This seems to contradict the idea that the bells occupy a non-diegetic space, but the sync-points prepared by De Santis and the anomalous volume create an expressionistic effect of estrangement that would not be possible without the ambiguous blending of the diegetic and the non-diegetic. Elsewhere (00:32:26–00:33:11) De Santis opts for more traditional sonic bridges: different scenes and spaces in the film are connected through the bells' sound—something which gives the impression that the bells (and by extension the peasants and their voices) are everywhere.

Sounds on Paper: Noi che facciamo crescere il grano

Before concluding, it is worth devoting a few words to an unfinished film project which De Santis conceived in relation to the *Trilogy of the Land*. The script for the film in question, entitled *Noi che facciamo crescere il grano* (*We Who Grow Grain*), is kept at the CSC archive, and it was written in the 1950s by the director himself, in collaboration with Corrado Alvaro and Basilio Franchina. The aim of the authors was to narrate the precarious conditions of farm laborers in Calabria in the years following the Second World War, where latifundism, unemployment, and poverty were long-standing problems. Drawing on real events that took place in Corvino, near Crotone, the film aimed to focus on peasant resistance against the exploitative system enjoyed by the landowners. Folk music and sounds would have played a crucial role in relaying this conflict and in conveying the film's progressive message.

The film's main protagonists are Annibale Zappalà and his family. With the aid of the town's schoolteacher, who somehow epitomizes the Gramscian "organic intellectual," Annibale tries to obtain the usufruct of the fief of San Donato—an area of uncultivated land which figures among the territories managed by the authoritarian Don Carmelo Zampa on behalf of the latifundist Baron Balsamo—from the Crotone authorities. Annibale

convinces the community to rebel against Don Carmelo and sign a petition to obtain the fief, to which the peasants had legal rights. This consequently triggers a violent conflict between the peasant community and Don Carmelo. Arrested by corrupt policemen, Annibale is then released; he subsequently goes on to lead a peasant revolt which culminates in their reclaiming of these lands, Don Carmelo's defeat, and ultimately Annibale's death, through which he becomes a sort of martyr.

Since the project was never completed, it is impossible to ascertain whether De Santis planned to accompany this film with an orchestral score, as he had done in his previous productions. Nevertheless, the script's draft provides an insight into the role that sound and *musica popolare* would have played in the film. Apart from decorative, atmospheric moments where folk music would have primarily added a touch of local color to the events portrayed, there are several other scenes in which this repertoire fulfills a crucial dramatic and ideological role.[36] A notable example occurs halfway through the film. After his initial attempts to occupy the lands and return them to the peasant community, Annibale is arrested and imprisoned in La Castella, a fortress built on a small island. Tragic events follow: a landslide hits the village of Corvino and causes the death of Titta, one of Annibale's sons. Out of despair, Assunta secretly goes to the prison where her husband is confined and breaks the terrible news to him. In order to circumvent the jailers' control, she improvises a dirge beneath the fortress' walls.

36 The first scenes are full of references to "joyful" folk songs and instrumental pieces for mouth harp and accordion, which help construct the idea of a folkloric environment. See, for instance, scene 2: "nell'aria il suono sottile e struggente di uno scacciapensieri" (in the air, the thin, heartbreaking sound of a mouth harp); "[Paolo, one of Zappala's sons] suonando allegramente il suo scacciapensieri" (cheerfully playing his mouth harp); scene 3: "ogni tanto una fisarmonica fa sentire la sua stanca musica" (every now and then, you could hear some weary music coming out of an accordion); scene 5: "[Paolo] canticchia allegramente" (sings merrily); see "*Noi che facciamo crescere il grano*," SCENEG 00 09686, Sceneggiature 1949, Fondo Giuseppe De Santis, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Rome (see Appendix, document 2).

[**Scene 91**: Sea, the cliffs of Punta delle Castella. Annibale's prison can be seen in the background]	
Medium shot (MS) – Assunta … starts singing an improvised dirge.	
	Assunta: "Close your ears, prisoner. I bring bad news. I will cause you great pain, prisoner."
MS – Castle-Prison window. Behind the grate, the ghost-like face of Annibale appears; he has recognized his wife's voice.	
	Assunta's voice (off-screen): "I will cause you great pain, prisoner."
MS – At the sight of her husband, Assunta lingers for a moment, then resumes her dirge:	
	Assunta: "Our Titta has passed away, he is now lying underneath the waves. We were given such a torment by our Lord."
MS – On hearing these words, Annibale holds the grate, almost as if he is falling down. He purses his lips to muffle a scream. His sobs almost suffocate him … (…)	Assunta's voice (off-screen): "We were given such a torment by our Lord." (…)
Assunta continues her dirge in desperation:	Assunta: "Come back home, prisoner. A life has been taken. What can we do, beloved husband?"
MS – Annibale cries like a baby upon hearing Assunta's invocation.	
	Assunta (off-screen): "What can we do, beloved husband?"

Assunta performs her funeral lament from a boat, just below the cliff where Annibale's prison is located, and her song conceals the act of informative and emotional exchange that is happening between the pair. Folk music thereby serves as a powerful way to transgress the oppressors' control. A similar thing happens in *Riso amaro*, where one of the *mondine* (rice weeders) explains to one of the protagonists, Francesca, that "they [the landowners] don't let us talk; if you have anything to say, sing it."[37] An even more striking connection with *Noi che facciamo* can be found in Vittorio De Si-

37 See Corbella, "Which People's Music?," 52–56.

ca's *Ieri, oggi, domani* (*Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, 1963).[38] In the film's first episode (*Adelina*, set in Naples), the protagonist (a cigarette smuggler) is put in jail. One night, her husband Carmine manages to reach the prison walls where he begins to sing a serenade under her window. Carmine's song provides a means to bypass the guard's control and inform Adelina of the mercy petition that has just been submitted. As this example reveals, the trope of using folk music to express subversive power seemingly had a long life in Italian film.

But, once again, it is especially through sound that De Santis seeks to empower the folk's voice. Even in the case of *Noi che facciamo*, the folkloric soundscape is not composed exclusively of songs, for it also includes numerous non-verbal signals that seeks to undermine the capitalist oppressors' order. The first attempt by Don Carmelo and the police to disband the peasants fails. In this instance, the weapon used by the community against their enemies is the sound of clapping. This scene thus invites comparison with the one discussed earlier in *Caccia tragica* that makes use of whistling. In both cases, whistles and clapping are used in a *crescendo* that goes from individual to group performance, and from low volume to high.

[**Scene 67**] Long Shot (LS) – The ridge of a hill at the margins of the occupied land, where the marshal and two *carabinieri* immediately appear. They stop and look at…

LS – … the field, crowded with peasants standing still.
Full Shot (FS) – the marshal looks carefully towards the peasants. Closely behind his group, Don Carmelo and his people can be seen. … The marshall starts moving forward… then stops again and looks around.
FS – Together with his sons and Genio, Annibale looks carefully around. Then, with a sudden insight, he starts clapping his hands. CLAPPING HANDS

38 For a comprehensive overview of this film, see Gualtiero De Santi and Manuel De Sica, eds., "*Ieri, oggi, domani" di Vittorio De Sica: testimonianze, interventi, sceneggiatura* (Rome: Associazione Amici di Vittorio De Sica, 2002).

FS – Other peasants, gathered in group, glance at each other with puzzled looks. Amid them, Giosuè starts clapping. Behind him, Peppe follows suit.

CLAPPING

FS – Two women and one boy start clapping as well.

CLAPPING

Medium shot (MS) – The marshal on horseback observes the scene, bewildered.
LS – Now all the peasants—men, women, elders, children—are joining in a heavy, incessant applause.

CLAPPING

MS – The marshal is increasingly worried. Don Carmelo arrives and tells him:

Don Carmelo: "What should we do, marshal? They are doing it on purpose, to trick you."

The marshal, without looking at him, recommends that he:

Marshall: "Keep calm. Don't interfere."

He starts moving forward again on horseback. … While he approaches, the clapping grows louder and stronger (off-screen).

CLAPPING

LS – Peasants clapping more and more frantically.

CLAPPING

MS, Reverse Tracking Shot – The marshal moves forward while the applause grows louder and louder.
MS – The marshal moves forward on horseback and the applause continues to grow stronger. He takes his hat off and wipes his sweat, shaking his head. Don Carmelo goes near to him again and, with his finger, points at…

Don Carmelo: "There he is. That's Annibale Zappalà."

MS – … Annibale and his group, who are desperately clapping their hands.

CLAPPING

MS – The marshal puts his hat on again and says to Don Carmelo:

Marshal: "You'd better go back to the village. I know what to do with them. Responding now would be pointless. Let's meet later."

Then the marshal turns his horse and goes away, followed by his men. Don Carmelo leaves, too, but in the opposite direction, after giving a hostile look to the peasants. … The peasants' applause keeps filling the air.[39]

Steven Connor has provided an insightful ethnography of clapping, noting how the principle of "adversity"—an impact of things, namely hands—is a precondition of this gesture. As he explains, "clapping retains its associations with violence, functioning as an emblematic display on the body of the aggressor of what may be in the offing for his victim."[40] Of course, this violent, oppositional understanding of clapping is just one of many possible cultural interpretations of this gesture. Connor acknowledges, for example, that clapping can also be linked to magical actions, therapy, and celebration, among other things. Yet this reading fits perfectly with the situation relayed by the script of *Noi che facciamo*. What is more, Connor highlights how clapping "makes you aware of yourself" and facilitates a "circulation of energies" between the clapping subjects, which is precisely the same kind of empowerment that De Santis's peasants seem to experience.[41]

The last fight between the peasants and the landowners is also accompanied by a complex audiovisual dramaturgy—one that is not dissimilar from the strategies that De Santis had already employed in *Caccia tragica*, with its alternation of villain and peasant sounds. Here, the opposition is between a sowers' song initiated by Annibale and imitated by all the peasants, and the sound of the trotting horses of Don Carmelo's henchmen.

39 See Appendix, document 3.

40 Steven Connor, "The Help of Your Good Hands: Reports on Clapping," in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, ed. Michael Bull and Les Back (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2003), 68.

41 Connor, 72–73.

[**Scene 137**] Extreme Close Up – Happily and smiling, Annibale loudly sings a joyful and ancient folk song for sowing grain. Reverse Tracking Shot – Behind and beside him, there is a long queue of sowers, among which Addolorata, Teresina, Paolo, Bastiano, and Genio can be seen. They are intent on scattering seeds in the furrows, with sweeping gestures.
Another Reverse Tracking Shot shows groups of peasants in the background, descending the slope with their loaded mules; women are going down with them, carrying heavy sacks on their heads. Other groups of peasants are already at the land border (…). They all start following Annibale and intone his song. The valley resounds with the song, infinitely amplifying it.

SOWERS' SONG

[**Scene 138**] Sunrise. Don Carmelo's studio. Extreme Long Shot (ELS) – The room in the dark.
The sowers' song fills the room, as loudly as it had previously in the fields. The song is like the voice of the nightmare that had compelled Don Carmelo, Antonio and Delaida to remain together during the sleepless night.

SOWERS' SONG

They are distant from each other, as if kept apart by a secret resentment. Don Carmelo walks around the room with heavy, slow steps. Antonio is sitting, smoking nervously, and there are many cigarette butts scattered on the ground. Delaida, down the corridor, is sitting on the first step of the staircase, resting her head against the wall. The sowers' song seems to overpower and control them. Slow Forward Tracking Shot, which excludes Don Carmelo and Delaida, leading to a close-up (ECU) of Antonio. At this moment, the sowers' song ends abruptly; it is suddenly replaced by the sound of horses trotting, first heard from a distance, and then increasingly close by. Antonio raises his head to hear them.

HORSES TROT

ECU – Don Carmelo and Delaida do the same.

HORSES TROT

Now it seems that the sound of the horses' hooves fills the room with its echo, as it had happened before with the sowers' song.
Medium shot (MS) – Antonio rushes towards the opened window. Delaida follows him.
(…)

[**Scene 141** – Sunrise. Road near Zappalà's house.]
Long shot (LS) – Another desolate and squalid road in Corvino at dawn. In a remote corner some kids are playing innocently. The three horsemen enter, trotting. They scare the kids, who run away. (…) Rapid PANNING – Zappalà's house, the door open. Assunta rushes to the door from the back of the room. Very quick Forward Tracking Shot – Assunta feels lost. When the camera focuses on her face, the sowers' song starts again, replacing the sound of the horses trotting.

HORSES TROT

SOWERS' SONG

[**Scene 142** – Outdoor. Sunrise. The San Donato estate.]
Full shot (FS) – Annibale sows and moves forward while singing. Behind him, Giosuè, Peppe, and others are also sowing and singing.
FS – Addolorata and Teresina are singing along a group of girls, while sowing.
FS – Paolo, Genio, and Bastiano, amidst a group of boys, sing together while sowing.

SOWERS' SONG

[**Scene 143** – Outdoor. Sunrise. Countryside. Narrow paths.]
LS – The three horsemen gallop across the paths on the irregular slopes of the barren countryside. They kick up clouds of dust. Rather than the clatter of the horses, the sowers' song is heard, echoing all around.
(…)

SOWERS' SONG

[**Scene 146** – Estate.]
The mass of peasants sow and move forward while singing. Suddenly, the song ceases, replaced by the abrupt sound of the horses racing. The mass of peasants stops sowing, listening carefully to the clatter of hooves. The clatter grows louder, filling the valley. Now the clatter stops abruptly, giving way to a long, threatening silence that overwhelms everything and everyone.[42]

SOWERS' SONG

HORSES TROT

42 See Appendix, document 4.

This scene occurs immediately before the end of the film. The land has been reoccupied by the peasants following the authorization on behalf of the Crotone committee. Yet Don Carmelo refuses to capitulate and sends instead three horsemen to kill Annibale and convince the peasants to vacate the property. While Don Carmelo's plan ultimately fails, Annibale does indeed get killed, in a portrayal of the villain's last atrocity before the final triumph of the community of peasants. The conflicting groups are sonically characterized by the opposition between the sewers' song, which becomes a threatening weapon that invades the villains' space through a few sound bridges, and the trotting horses, whose noise periodically emerges and occasionally drowns out the other sounds. The juxtaposition of these two auditory elements creates the necessary counterpoint to enhance the underlying tension of this climactic scene. In keeping with the socialist ideal, we witness a shift from the individual singer to the singing community, and from a fleeting solo voice to the full-bodied chant of a whole group, magnified by the choral reprise of Annibale's song after his death, at the end of the planned film.

Conclusion

In the script of *Noi che facciamo crescere il grano*, folk music functions as a repository of anti-capitalist values, a socially-binding agent that inspires the peasants to rebel against the oppressors and their individualistic mentality. The discourse on folk music that emerges from this film, then, seemingly fits in well with the "folk culture vs. capitalism" dichotomy outlined by many leftist intellectuals and folk music rediscoverers at around the same time. Such a dichotomy became even more marked during the 1960s, when the use of folk music became increasingly political, the surrounding debates displaying an obsessive concern about its alleged separation from consumerist, bourgeois society. De Santis's films are prescient in that they anticipate the tenor of these debates whilst also offering a complex picture of their subject. In *Caccia tragica* the border between folk and capitalist culture is sometimes blurred. Admittedly, short-circuits in this discursive divide are quite exceptional in De Santis, but such exceptions are of particular interest, not least because they highlight ongoing tensions in Italian society that cannot be addressed by black-and-white narratives that enshrine folk music as an antidote to capitalist culture. The seeming contradictions in De Santis's soundtracks show that a simplistic view of folk

music (i.e., as repository of anti-capitalist values) in fact belies a more complex, dialectic reality. Hence the importance of studying the representation of folk music in neorealist films, in spite of (or maybe *because of*) Dyer's observation that their soundtracks were inconsistent with the aims of this kind of cinema.

The case of De Santis's films also shows that the claim about neorealism as being indifferent to the voices of subaltern groups is not entirely accurate. A study of the soundscapes constructed by De Santis in his rural films gives a vivid impression of the director's attempt to empower—literally and metaphorically—the voice of the folk (albeit through the inevitably artificial means and conventions of narrative cinema). The "resonance" given to bells, whistles, and clapping in *Caccia tragica* and *Noi che facciamo* endows the peasants with a strong, haunting sonic presence that poses a serious, tangible threat to their enemies. In this respect, the sonic strategies adopted by De Santis to characterize his protagonists appear to be less ambiguous and more robust than his musical choices. Mapping the folkloric soundscapes in other films by De Santis and his contemporaries is the next step of a research—to my mind long overdue—aimed at exploring in a nuanced fashion the modus operandi and cultural politics that underpin the construction of subaltern voices in postwar Italian cinema.

Appendix

Transcriptions of the original scripts in the Fondo Giuseppe De Santis, Biblioteca Luigi Chiarini, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Rome.

Doc. 1: Excerpt from *Caccia tragica*. Sezione Sceneggiature, Sceneggiatura 1946–1947, SCENEG 00 09691. 292 unbound pages, A4; typescript with autograph annotations.

Scena 81: Esterno – Giorno. Argine del Fiume

… Sulla barca Giovanna ha un'espressione di spaurito scoraggiamento. Daniela si alza in piedi, va verso il barcaiolo. Questo è un vecchio che ha tutta l'aria di essere ubriaco. Fischietta allegramente mentre rema. Daniela lo guarda un attimo, poi dice:

Daniela: "Stai nel mezzo, non andare vicino agli argini!"

Il vecchio non le dà ascolto, continua a fischiare. Daniela guarda verso terra, e sulla riva … vede…

Canti – Voci

… della folla festosa, con bandiere e cartelli procede sulla riva, cantando. Molti sono in bicicletta, altri in biroccini e calessi, altri ancora a piedi. Si dirigono evidentemente verso un comizio popolare

Daniela afferra un vecchio barcaiolo per le spalle e lo scuote

~~Daniela: "Allontanati dalla riva, ti ho detto! Stai nel mezzo, come te lo devo dire!"~~

Giovanna segue con gli occhi il passaggio sulla riva dei comizianti. Ad un tratto si alza in piedi sulla barca e agitando le braccia, grida:

~~I canti sempre più vicino~~

~~Giovanna: "Oooooh! Oooooh! Oooooh!"~~

Daniela si volta alle sue spalle a guardare Giovanna che grida, poi verso la riva.

I comizianti sulla riva fanno dei gesti di saluto all'indirizzo di Giovanna, evidentemente non avendo compreso il significato delle sue grida. Poi riprendono a cantare; soffocando così la voce di Giovanna.	~~Giovanna (fuori campo): "Aiuto! Aiuto!"~~ ~~Canto e grida indistinte di Giovanna~~
Giovanna si accascia delusa a sedere	
Daniela guarda Giovanna con espressione ironica. Poi scoppia in una fragorosa risata. Il vecchio continua a remare fischiettando.	~~Canto~~

Doc. 2: Excerpt from *Noi che facciamo crescere il grano*. Sezione Sceneggiature, Sceneggiatura 1949, SCENEG 00 09686. Bound volume, A4; typescript with autograph corrections.

Scena 91: Mare presso scogliera Punta delle Castella. E si vede su sfondo la prigione di Annibale	
PA (piano americano) – Assunta ha il volto reclinato, gli occhi dolenti fissi in un punto lontano, la bocca leggermente dischiusa. Inizia il canto d'una nenia improvvisata.	Assunta: "Chiudi gli orecchi, carcerato mala notizia t'ho portato. O carcerato, che pena ti debbo dar."
PA – Una finestra del castello-carcere. All'inferriata appare fantomatico il volto scarno di Annibale che ha riconosciuto la voce della propria donna.	Voce di Assunta f.c. (fuori campo): "O carcerato che pena ti debbo dar!"
PA – Assunta che scorge il marito e indugia un attimo, poi riprende la sua nenia.	Assunta: "Titta nostro ci ha lasciato, in fondo al mare è sotterrato. O che castigo Dio ci ha voluto dar!"
PA – Annibale a queste parole poggia le mani aperte contro l'inferriata, quasi per non crollare. Stringe la labbra per trattenere un grido. I singhiozzi lo soffocano.	Voce di Assunta f.c.: "O che castigo Dio ci ha voluto dar!"

(…)	(…)
PA – Assunta che con disperazione continua il suo lamento.	Assunta: "Torna a casa, o carcerato, che la vita s'è spezzata. Marito mio, come possiamo far!"
PA – Annibale ha piegato la fronte sulle sbarre e piange come un bambino all'invocazione di Assunta.	Voce di Assunta f.c.: "Marito mio, come possiamo far!"

Doc. 3: Excerpt from *Noi che facciamo crescere il grano*.

Scena 67: CL (campo lungo)– Il crinale della collina ai margini della terra occupata, su cui spuntano il maresciallo e subito i due carabinieri. Il gruppo si arresta e guarda verso…	
CL – … Il campo cosparso di contadini immobili, in attesa. FI (figura intera) – Il maresciallo guarda attentamente verso i contadini. Dietro il suo gruppo, a poca distanza, si scorgono Don Carmelo e i suoi. Facendo un gesto a tutti quelli che sono dietro di lui, per dire di non muoversi, il maresciallo comincia ad avanzare, preceduto dal CARR., e si ferma nuovamente a guardare.	
FI – Annibale, insieme ai suoi figli e a Genio, guarda attentamente. Poi, illuminandosi, comincia a battere le mani.	Battere di mani
FI – Un altro gruppetto di contadini che si scambiano occhiate interrogative. In mezzo ad essi, Giosuè comincia a battere le mani. Dietro di lui è Peppe che lo imita.	Applausi Applausi
FI – Due donne e un ragazzo cominciano anche loro ad applaudire…	Applausi
PA – Il maresciallo, a cavallo, osserva, perplesso, la scena.	

CL – Ora tutti i contadini, uomini, donne, vecchi, bambini sono uniti in un fitto e continuo applauso.

PA – Il maresciallo, sempre più pensoso. Arriva trafelato Don Carmelo, che gli dice:

Don Carmelo: "che facciamo maresciallo? Lo fanno apposta per imbrogliarvi..."

Il maresciallo, senza guardarlo, gli raccomanda:

Maresciallo: "Calma, calma. Voi non c'entrate."

e comincia nuovamente ad avanzare, sul suo cavallo, preceduto dal CARR. Man mano che avanza, gli applausi crescono sempre più fragorosi, e intensi, da f.c.

Applausi

CL – Contadini che applaudono sempre più freneticamente…

Applausi

PA e CARR. INDIETRO – Il maresciallo avanza ancora e l'applauso sale sempre più alto

PA – Il maresciallo avanza ancora sul suo cavallo e l'applauso sale sempre più alto. Egli si toglie il berretto e si asciuga il sudore, scrollando il capo. Nuovamente gli si avvicina Don Carmelo.

E indica con un dito verso…

Don Carmelo: "Eccolo là… è quello Annibale Zappalà".

PA – …Annibale e il suo gruppo che si spellano le mani dal gran battere.

Applausi

PA – Il maresciallo rimettendosi il berretto dice a Don Carmelo:

Maresciallo: "Voi tornate in paese… Lo so io come bisogna agire con loro. È inutile muoversi adesso. Ci vediamo più tardi."

Poi il maresciallo volta il cavallo e si avvia seguito dai suoi uomini. Don Carmelo si avvia anche lui, ma in direzione opposta, dopo aver rivolto uno sguardo collerico in direzione della folla. Il massaro e i tre giovinastri si muovono con lui. Gli applausi dei contadini continuano a risuonare nell'aria.

Doc. 4: Excerpts from *Noi che facciamo crescere il grano*.

Scena 137:

PPP (primissimo piano) – Annibale felice e sorridente canta a squarciagola una canzone di gioia, antico motivo popolare della semina. CARR. indietro che scopre alle spalle e di fianco ad Annibale, una lunga fila di seminatori, tra i quali in primo piano riconosciamo Addolorata, Teresina, Paolo, Bastiano, Genio, intenti anch'essi a spargere con gesti larghi il seme nei solchi.
Indietreggiando sempre più il CARR scopre ancora nel fondo gruppi di contadini che coi loro asini carichi di sacchi stanno scendendo la china, insieme ad essi scendono le donne con sacchi gonfi sul capo. Altri gruppi di contadini sono già ai margini del Feudo e scaricano i sacchi dagli asini e le donne che si sono liberate del loro carico li aiutano. Altri contadini sono già sparsi per il campo e si muovono buttando il seme nei solchi. Tutti in coro prendono la canzone intonata da Annibale. La vallata riecheggia il canto ampliandolo all'infinito.

Scena 138: Alba. Studio di Don Carmelo.

TOTALE – La stanza nella penombra dell'alba. Il canto dei seminatori risuona nell'ambiente alla stessa altezza sonora udita poc'anzi nel Feudo. Il canto è come una voce dell'incubo che per tutta la notte insonne ha costretto a stare insieme Don Carmelo, Antonio e Delaida. — Canto dei seminatori
I tre sono distanti l'uno dall'altro, quasi li separasse un rancore segreto. Don Carmelo misura a passi lenti e pesanti la stanza; Antonio, seduto, fuma nervosamente, molte cicche sono sparse ai suoi piedi; Delaida, nel fondo del corridoio, sta seduta sul primo gradino della scala, la testa reclinata sulla parete. Il canto dei seminatori pare quasi che li sovrasti e li domini. — Canto dei seminatori
Inizia un lentto CARR:; escludendo Don Carmelo e Delaida, arriva sino al PPP di Antonio. È qui che improvvisamente il canto dei mietitori si tace. E a questo, improvvisamente, si sostituisce prima lontano, poi sempre più vicino, un incalzare di cavalli al trotto. — Trotto dei cavalli
Antonio solleva il volto ad ascoltare.
PPP – Don Carmelo anche.
PPP – Delaida anche. — Trotto dei cavalli
Sembra ora che lo scalpitio dei cavalli ricolmi della sua eco la stanza, così come poco prima l'aveva colmata il canto dei seminatori.

Scena 141: Alba. Strada di vicinanza casa Zappalà.

CL – Ancora una strada di Corvino deserta e squallida nell'alba. Soltanto in un angolo remoto, ancora alcuni bambini che giocano innocenti. — Trotto dei cavalli
Entrano in C. i tre cavalieri al trotto, trascorrono allarmando di nuovo i bambini che fuggono al loro passaggio. Rapida PAN. a ventaglio sulla porta di casa Zappalà aperta, nel fondo della stanza Assunta che accorre. Rapidissimo CARR. avanti. Assunta smarrita. Sul volto della donna riprende l'effetto sonoro del canto dei seminatori, sostituendosi al trotto incalzante dei cavalieri. — Canto dei seminatori

Scena 142: Esterno. Alba. Feudo San Donato.

FI – Annibale che semina, cantando, avanza. Dietro di lui Giosuè, Peppe e altri che cantano anch'essi spargendo il seme. — Canto dei seminatori
FI – Addolorata e Teresina che cantano insieme a un gruppo di ragazze, intente anch'esse a seminare.
FI – Paolo, Genio e Bastiano, in mezzo a un gruppo di giovanotti, cantano tutti mentre buttano il seme nei solchi.

Scena 143: Esterno. Alba. Campagna, Viottoli

CL – I tre cavalieri al galoppo per viottoli lungo le chine aspre della campagna desolata. Al loro trascorrere la polvere si solleva in nuvolette, invece del frastuono del galoppo si ode spiegato il canto dei seminatori che diffonde lunghi echi intorno. — Canto dei seminatori
FI – Su un'altra strada anche Antonio galoppa sul suo cavallo.

…

Scena 146: Feudo

CL – La massa dei contadini che seminano e avanzano cantando. All'improvviso il canto si tace, sostituendosi ad esso il galoppare dei cavalli altrettanto improvviso. La massa dei contadini si ferma nel gesto di seminare, attentissima al rumore del galoppo. Il galoppo incalza riempiendo del suo scalpitio la vallata. Ora quel galoppo si interrompe bruscamente, dando luogo a un silenzio minaccioso che sovrasta uomini e cose. — Canto dei seminatori / Trotto dei cavalli

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Abstract

Scholars agree that a fundamental incongruity lies at the core of neorealism's "lack of audiophilia" (Sisto 2014). While neorealist directors aimed to bridge the gap between their films and the portrayed protagonists—notably marginalized, subaltern people—the music and voices of the latter tended to be muted and disempowered by soundtracks that relied on well-established norms of film-scoring practices (Dyer 2006). This remark applies to several postwar Italian films, but the case of Giuseppe De Santis seems to complicate it. Through audiovisual analysis and the study of archival sources, this article examines how the director participated in the wave of rediscovery of folklore in postwar Italy, and how he contributed to the creation of (ambiguous) discourses about the voice of the Folk, which leftist intellectuals regarded as the repository of anti-capitalist values.

Firstly, I explore internal tensions in De Santis's cinematic representation of folk music. My analysis of the values attached to this repertoire in the rural film *Caccia tragica* (1947) shows that De Santis tended at once to affirm the "folk music vs. capitalism" dichotomy, and to blur the lines of such divide through several (involuntary?) short-circuits. The examination of these discursive fractures helps provide a nuanced understanding of the position occupied by folk music in postwar Italian cultural politics.

Secondly, I claim that a comprehensive approach to film soundtracks may call into question the idea of neorealism's indifference to the subalterns' voice. Indeed, sound—more than music—proved essential for the director to try and empower the portrayed folkloric communities. I demonstrate the point by analyzing the construction of folkloric soundscapes in *Caccia tragica*, where resonance is given to bells, whistles, and clapping that subvert the hegemonic world of the film's villains. My account is complemented by a discussion of music and sound in *Noi che facciamo crescere il grano* (ca. 1953), one of De Santis's unfinished projects.

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ARTICLES

The Afterlife of a Lost Art: On the Work and Legacy of Silent Film Pianist Arthur Kleiner*

Anna Katharina Windisch

Audiences attending the silent film screenings at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City between 1939 and 1967 most certainly witnessed the live piano accompaniment of a Viennese-born emigrant: Arthur Kleiner. For decades Kleiner embodied the "lost art" of silent film accompaniment, which had slowly come to an end with the commercial introduction of the technically synchronized sound film in the late 1920s. Beyond the affectionate, honorary title as the "world's only full-time silent movie pianist,"[1] his job entailed the research, composition, compilation, and performance of piano scores for hundreds of silent films during his twenty-eight-year tenure at the MoMA until he left New York City in 1967. In the remaining thirteen years of his life, which he spent with his family in Hopkins, Minnesota, he devoted himself to touring, teaching, filmmaking, and researching, as well as to the writing of a monograph on film music, which remained unfinished. One year after his death in 1980, his wife Lorraine Kleiner donated his extensive library of music scores (printed scores and manuscripts for nearly 700 silent films), sheet music, books, tapes, broadcasts, and other material to the University of Minnesota. Today, it forms the

* Research for this article at the Arthur Kleiner Movie Music Collection at the University of Minnesota was funded by the Botstiber Foundation, which I thank for their kind support. I am grateful to Timothy Johnson and Cheryll Fong for their kind hospitality when I visited the collection. I sincerely thank Erik and Ann Kleiner for taking the time to correspond and meet with me, and for sharing not only documents and photos but also memories of their father (in law) Arthur Kleiner. Finally, I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of my article for their insightful comments which greatly helped me develop my argument and the article overall.

1 The Museum of Modern Art, "Arthur Kleiner, who has been composing, arranging and playing the piano accompaniments for silent films at The Museum for 28 years to retire," press release, March 28, 1967, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/3871/releases/MOMA_1967_Jan-June_0045_32.pdf.

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Spring 2022), pp. 71–105, ISSN 2784-8949. DOI: 10.54103/sss17494.

Arthur Kleiner Collection of Silent Movie Music, which serves as an invaluable resource for the research on silent film music practices and stands as a testimony of the influence and accomplishments of Kleiner as an artist. In spite of the fact that Kleiner, ironically, embodied the most persistent cliché of silent film music—the lonely pianist—he dedicated his career to restoring and performing original orchestral scores and to teaching the wide array of musical practices that once characterized the live music played in cinemas during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Thus, for historians of film culture, Kleiner remains an essential point of reference to reconstruct and discuss the status of silent cinema music during the sound era, particularly during a time when silent films were being presented in complete silence in some film preservation institutions and the music performed for silent films was frequently reduced to trivial clichés. It was not until the revival of silent cinema in the 1970s that original scores and music for silent films regained broader attention as part of the "elevated cultural status that relatively recently has become associated with silent films."[2] Kleiner's career could thus be summed up as that of a pioneer who attempted to assert (silent) film music's place in music history and to reestablish film music as a legitimate artistic medium.

I begin my article by providing some historical context regarding the establishment of the Film Library at the Museum of Modern Art in 1935 and by tracing the prevalent tendencies of exhibiting silent cinema in a museum context in the mid-twentieth century. I then examine Kleiner's artistic background and his career as a pianist, dance, and theater accompanist, composer, and conductor in Europe, which emerge as influential aspects in shaping his creative methods and his approach to film music research as well as his attitude to representing silent cinema in general. After that, I deemed appropriate to insert a brief discussion of the meaning of the term "synchronization" with regard to silent film music. Rather than providing a chronological account of Kleiner's career milestones and activities, the remainder of my article looks at three key roles Kleiner assumed during his career as silent film pianist: first, as a historian and musicologist who saved and reconstructed historical material; second, as a composer and compiler who produced new material for this lost art; and finally, as a performer who

2 Ann-Kristin Wallengren and Kevin J. Donnelly, "Music and the Resurfacing of Silent Film: A General Introduction", in *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films: Making Music for Silent Cinema*, ed. Kevin J. Donnelly and Ann-Kristin Wallengren (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1.

offered his dramatic interpretation of the films and publicly epitomized the image of the silent film pianist. Concluding my observations is a close analysis of a documentary about Hollywood film composers written by Kleiner in 1972. Highlighting Kleiner's self-perception as an artist by drawing on Philip Auslander's concept of "musical persona," I argue that he tried to position himself *in-between* Europe's musical heritage and (American) musical modernism, not least as a means of artistic self-actualization.

Preserving a Lost Art: Silent Film Exhibition during the Sound Film Era

The Museum of Modern Art, founded in 1929, played a major role as a public institution in defining and navigating the perception of film as a genuine American art form and of American culture more broadly. MoMA was not the first cultural institution to include film as a key expressive form worth preserving: in 1915, Columbia University had started its first film program; ten years later, Harvard University not only established films as part of their curriculum (most notably in Paul J. Sachs' celebrated Museum Course) but also discussed the establishment of a film library.[3] Although the latter did not come to fruition, the influence of these interferences with the film industry reverberated, as Harvard graduates—among them, future MoMA director Alfred Barr—"went on to found MoMA's Film Library and define the class of film experts who moved fluidly between film production, government work, and arts administration,"[4] as Peter Decherney asserts. Barr considered film "the only great art form peculiar to the twentieth century" and thus worth preserving and collecting.[5]

The Museum's Film Library, established in 1935 thanks to the efforts of British film critic Iris Barry, its first curator, fulfilled the functions of a *cinémathèque* in the classical sense by presenting a canonized selection of works in their cycles and retrospectives, and from the outset oriented itself towards educational aims of presenting cinema history and the medium's development as an art form. The Film Library was not merely an alternative exhibition space, but rather a cultural force that, through collaborating with both Hollywood studios and government agencies,

3 See Peter Decherney, *Hollywood and the Culture Elite: How the Movies Became American* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 6.

4 Decherney, 8.

5 Steven Higgins, *Still Moving: The Film and Media Collections of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2006), 8.

impacted the national film industry and film culture, and most of all the popular conception of American cinema through canonization and an eclectic programming structure. As far as the musical accompaniment of the silent films presented at the Film Library's cinema was concerned, Barry was convinced that only in recreating the historical viewing conditions would the filmic experience lead to a proper appreciation of silent films, as she stated in the inaugural program: "It is the aim of the Film Library to approximate as nearly as possible the contemporary musical settings of the films it will show on its programs."[6] Barry was sensitive to the fact that music was an integral part of silent film exhibition and in her regular communiqué to the Museum's members she addressed aspects of the historical development of film accompaniment such as the emergence of film music tropes in conjunction with cinema stock music libraries.

> In the Mary Pickford picture, *The New York Hat*, Miss Beach has overlaid the thematic strain with "gossip" music which simulates the sound of gossipy voices, feminine and masculine. This is in true movie tradition, for as musical accompaniment grew with the motion picture it developed into distinct types known as "love music," "hurry music," "battle music," "mysterioso music," and so on.[7]

Barry's comments suggest that not only was film considered a historical object to be presented in a museum context, but that cinema music, as part of this exhibition model, was in itself a tradition worth preserving.

This approach to reconstructing the historical musical accompaniment of silent films cannot be taken for granted for institutions preserving and exhibiting silent cinema in the post-silent film era. On the contrary, the Cinémathèque française, established in Paris in the mid-1930s around the same time as MoMA's Film Library, famously screened silent films in complete silence and elevated what might have partly resulted from a lack of economic resources to an aesthetic paradigm, which considered films as historical objects that should be beheld without any distraction, musical or otherwise. Other institutions followed suit. In Vienna, the Österreichische

6 The Museum of Modern Art, "Initial Showing of First Program of Motion Pictures," press release, January 4, 1936, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/305/releases/MOMA_1936_0001.pdf.

7 The Museum of Modern Art, "Theme Music for Movies Being Written by Music Dept. of Film Library," press release, February 13, 1936, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/309/releases/MOMA_1936_0005_1936-02-13_21336-B.pdf.

Filmmuseum (Austrian Film Museum), founded in 1964 by Peter Kubelka and Peter Konlechner, showed foreign films in their original language without subtitles and rejected any kind of introductory lectures or musical accompaniment for silent films, explicitly citing the work of Henri Langlois, co-founder and director of the Cinémathèque, as their example.

Another film preservation center famously adopted this notion only a few years later: the Anthology Film Archives (AFA). The key personalities involved in the foundation of AFA in 1969, whose initial idea dates back to the early 1960s, were Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas, Peter Kubelka, Jerome Hill, and P. Adams Sitney. A significant transatlantic connection emerges when looking at the histories of AFA in New York and the Austrian Film Museum: AFA's exhibition space, the so-called "Invisible Cinema," was designed by Austrian filmmaker Peter Kubelka and it became the paradigm of modern film exhibition in avant-garde and cinephile circles. Kubelka's design essentially evoked the individual experience of the peephole show by minimizing any visual or sonic distraction during the viewing process. Kubelka added "large black hoods on each seat to reduce the awareness of other audience members."[8] The entire theater was draped in black, and the viewer had no "sense of the presence of walls or the size of the auditorium. He should have only the white screen, isolated in darkness as his guide to scale and distance."[9] The idea of screening silent films without musical accompaniment was publicly championed as early as 1915 in American poet Vachel Lindsay's famous treatise *The Art of the Moving Picture*, in which he stressed the sociological potency of cinemas as communal spaces and suggested to eliminate musical accompaniment so that patrons were "encouraged to discuss the picture."[10] Around five decades later, film intellectuals and avant-garde filmmakers cited aesthetical reasons for dispensing with the musical accompaniment. They elevated silence as the only true accompaniment of silent films as historical objects. Eszter Kondor observes: "The respect for the film—as artifact and projection experience—was the principal concern for Konlechner and Kubelka."[11] The argument went that since the manifold forms of musical accompaniment during the silent period had not been part of a director's vision, they

8 Decherney, *Hollywood and the Culture Elite*, 199.

9 P. Adams Sitney, *The Essential Cinema* (New York: Anthology Film Archives and New York University Press, 1975), vii.

10 Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), 197.

11 Eszter Kondor, *Aufbrechen. Die Gründung des* Österreichischen *Filmmuseums* (Wien: Österreichisches Filmmuseum – Synema, 2014), 130. Translation by the author.

bore no historical relevance on the films.[12] This assumption, however, is easily challenged if we look at the diligence and degree of involvement with which some early film directors (particularly D.W. Griffith) approached and controlled the musical accompaniment of their films, or when we consider the array of original scores that were composed for feature films between 1915 and 1927. Regarded as the "cinephile mode of viewing silent films"—which considered the presence of music a distraction from the film's status as an aesthetic and historical object—this exhibition mode contributed to the notion of the hierarchy of images over sound in cinema, a paradigm that shaped the perception of silent cinema for generations. Carried out both in film museums and university classrooms, this historically dubious practice of projecting silent films without any accompaniment was hardly user-friendly and had profound consequences for the reputation of silent cinema among the general public.

MoMA's Film Library opened its doors less than a decade after sound films had replaced silent films in movie theaters, a phenomenon which had instantly changed perceptions of silent cinema. Film audiences readily absorbed the reception conventions of the sound film and silent films became a curiosity, old-fashioned, and even uncanny. Mary Ann Doane observed in 1980:

> The absent voice re-emerges in gestures and the contortions of the face – it is spread over the body of the actor. The uncanny effect of the silent film in the era of sound is in part linked to the separation, by means of intertitles, of an actor's speech from the image of his/her body.[13]

Charles L. Turner recalled the initial silent film screenings at MoMA in January 1936 as awkward experiences for filmgoers:

> People coming in didn't know how to react to silent films. This was something from the past. They were uncomfortable, a little nervous about it. Perhaps some didn't want to be thought stupid. The reaction of some was to laugh at anything that wasn't absolutely current in style or performance.[14]

12 Kondor, 130.

13 Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 33.

14 Ronald S. Magliozzi and Charles L. Turner, "Witnessing the Development of Independent Film Culture in New York: An Interview with Charles L. Turner," *Film History* 12, no. 1 (2000): 78.

Live music was particularly crucial to the suddenly silent screen, after viewers had become accustomed to (often uninterrupted) musical underscoring and most significantly to hearing the actors' voices in sound films. It would take another three years after the founding of the MoMA Film Library until an emigrant from Vienna would enter the projection room for the first time to help breathe new life into the moving yet mute images.

From Europe's Theater Stages to MoMA's Film Library

Arthur Kleiner was born on March 20, 1903, into a bourgeois Jewish family in Vienna. His family background was a musical one and his parents associated in intellectual and artistic circles. Kleiner was hailed as a child prodigy for his talents on the piano and one of his earliest acquaintances studying music as a young boy was Erich W. Korngold, who was six years his senior.[15] In 1921 Kleiner graduated from the Academy of Music and Performing Arts and soon took engagements as piano accompanist for different dance and theater groups between 1920 and 1925, touring Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, and other Eastern European countries, besides performing recitals as organ soloist at the Wiener Konzerthaus and at the Musikvereinssaal.

In the 1920s, Kleiner absorbed the artistic and intellectual life of Berlin with its liberal social attitudes and exuberant creativity while working as accompanist for one of the most scandalous dancers of the Weimar Republic: Anita Berber. Kleiner reminisced about Berlin during the "Golden Twenties":

> Berlin was a fantastic place to be in the 20's too, when I was there: drug sellers of cocaine, right on the street, the immorality was terrible, the crime worse than Chicago at the same time because Chicago's only involved murder and gangsters. Berlin's corruption involved civilians and was worse than murder, somehow, more insidious. … I played piano accompaniment then for Anita Berber, the famous nude dancer of the time in night clubs, who always had some scandal attached to her name … it was quite a place, Berlin.[16]

15 Interview by Arthur Kleiner with Hugo Friedhofer, Cassette label: Aug 12, 1974, Hugo Friedhofer in his home. Preserved at the Arthur Kleiner Collection of Silent Movie Music (hereafter AKC), Special Collections and Rare Books, Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

16 Gretchen Weinberg, "The Backroom Boys," *Film Culture* 41, Summer (1966): 84. Be-

Clearly impressed by his experiences in the German capital, Kleiner returned to Vienna in the late 1920s and taught stage music and chorus at the renowned acting school Max Reinhardt Seminar. Besides teaching music to aspiring actors, Kleiner wrote stage music for the Seminar's plays given at the Schönbrunner Schlosstheater. He continued his collaboration with the school's famous namesake director on several stage productions and in 1933 Kleiner conducted the Mozarteum Orchestra in a production of Felix Mendelssohn's *Ein Sommernachtstraum* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) under Reinhardt's stage direction at the Salzburg Festival. Two years earlier, the Wiener Symphoniker had performed Kleiner's original ballet *Birthday of the Infanta*, based on Oscar Wilde's short story, at the Konzerthaus in Vienna.

While Kleiner was immersed in Vienna's musico-theatrical scene, the Austrian film industry began its transition to sound film around 1930. Curiously enough, film did not attract his attention yet in these years, and his first encounters with silent cinema (music) had been rather sobering:

> I remember seeing Eisenstein's *Potemkin* in a small town outside Vienna for the first time, with piano accompaniment (Sousa marches, etc.) and it was the first time I saw a pianist accompanying a film. I had no leanings towards this myself, however. … I was theatre crazy, all Vienna was theatre crazy.[17]

By the late 1930s Kleiner's Jewish heritage threatened his existence in Vienna. Thus, at thirty-five years of age and looking back at an eighteen-year-long career as composer, arranger, performer, and conductor for modern dance and theater groups throughout European capitals, the political situation forced him to leave the country. After arranging the transport of his beloved Bösendorfer grand piano, he arrived in the United States via London in the fall of 1938. Working with such luminaries as Reinhardt in Europe may have paved the way for Kleiner to seamlessly resume his career after arriving in the United States, where he collaborated with another stage coryphaeus: George Balanchine, one of the most influential choreographers of the twentieth century and among the founding fathers of the

tween 1925 and 1938, Kleiner was the accompanist (organ, piano, harpsichord) and composer for a number of dance companies and solo dancers. He played for Valeria Kratina and Rosalia Chladek of the Hellerau-Laxenburg dance school on their tours in Sweden, Estonia, and Latvia. Other famous collaborators were Marta Wiesenthal (sister of Austrian dancer Grete Wiesenthal) as well as Claire Bauroff, who was chiefly known for her artistic nude dance performances and her support of the nudism movement.

17 Weinberg, "The Backroom Boys," 84.

American ballet. Kleiner soon learnt to appreciate also the musical skills of the famous dancer who "would often sit and play four-hands" with him during rehearsal breaks.[18] Kleiner's stint as rehearsal accompanist with Balanchine lasted only a few months—likely because Balanchine was about to relocate to the West Coast to pursue his touring company American Ballet Caravan. Around the same time, Kleiner began collaborating with dancer and choreographer Agnes De Mille.

The exact circumstances as to how Kleiner ended up at the Museum of Modern Art in 1939 remain lost to history. One of Balanchine's associates claims that he told Kleiner about a temporary position at the Museum to accompany silent films and that, intrigued by this prospect, Kleiner went to see Barry, who is known to have "helped many Jewish filmmakers find employment in America."[19] Another version in which Barry sought out Kleiner is recounted in an interview on the occasion of Kleiner's retirement:

> In 1939 when he was approached by Iris Barry, first Curator of the Museum's Department of Film, to play for the Museum's screenings, she asked him if he could play ragtime. He recalls, "I said 'yes,' even though the only ragtime I knew, as the music meant nothing to me, was the rag by Stravinsky."[20]

Kleiner's tongue-in-cheek claim that the only rag he knew was Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (1918) for small chamber orchestra, hints not only at his personal musical preferences, but foreshadows his struggle for artistic self-actualization within the commercialized image of the film industry, an inner conflict that would accompany Kleiner throughout his life. In whichever way the first contact was established, Kleiner was faced with a challenge that was different than anything he had ever done before. He was hired on the spot for a three-month trial period which did not entail ragtime, as he did not miss the chance to mention in subsequent interviews, but instead turned into a twenty-eight-year long engagement as music director of the Museum of Modern Art's Film Library. Dance and theater fan Kleiner thus entered one of the world's foremost institutions for promoting

18 Alan M. Kreigsman, "A Forte Virtuoso Hides Behind a Pianissimo Image," *Washington Post*, January 25, 1970.

19 Decherney, *Hollywood and the Culture Elite*, 138.

20 The Museum of Modern Art, "Arthur Kleiner, who has been composing, arranging and playing the piano accompaniments for silent films at The Museum for 28 years to retire," press release, March, 28, 1967, https://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/3871/releases/MOMA_1967_Jan-June_0045_32.pdf.

cinema, and silent cinema in particular, as an art form—a conviction which Kleiner fostered and that would penetrate his own sensibilities when he declared his personal preference for silent over sound films. He had, however, personal reasons not to dismiss the latter: "I am grateful to the talking pictures for one thing. When I first came over I went to the talkies every spare minute I had. And that's how I learned to speak English."[21]

Synchronization in Silent Film, Dance, and Pantomime

Before I delve into details about Kleiner's work as a researcher and about his process of fitting music to images, it seems appropriate to spend some time clarifying what the term "synchronization" actually meant in the broader context of silent film accompaniment. A general assumption exists, certainly in public but it continues to linger among scholars as well, that the synchronization of images and sound in cinema only came to fruition with the introduction of sound film technologies in the late 1920s. There is, however, ample evidence to suggest that the precise matching of images to music was of great concern and very often achieved during the silent film era.[22] Granted, elaborately synchronized musical scores were subject to financial considerations and largely limited to metropolitan, deluxe picture palaces, but the absence of the spoken voice in most silent films did not preclude a very carefully designed musical score meant to run in synchrony with the images.

In an article that traces the contiguous developments of music for pantomime and cinema, leaning on Carlo Piccardi's 2004 study "Pierrot al cinema,"[23] musicologist and conductor Gillian Anderson eloquently lays out the connections between composing for pantomime and ballet and the techniques used in silent film scoring, stressing that "there was synchronized sound before the advent of talking pictures,"[24] a notion which Kleiner's work palpably demonstrates. Anderson notes: "The word 'synchronization' appeared often to describe the moving parts of a machine, but it came to

21 Bernard Krisher, "Pianist in the Dark," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 24, 1955.

22 For a compelling argument about synchronized music in the silent period, see Gillian B. Anderson, "Synchronized Music: The Influence of Pantomime on Moving Pictures," *Music and the Moving Image* 8, no. 3 (2015): 3–39.

23 See Carlo Piccardi, "Pierrot al cinema. Il denominatore musicale dalla pantomima al film," *Civiltà musicale* 19, no. 51/52 (2004): 35–139.

24 Anderson, "Synchronized Music," 4.

be used to designate the *matching* of sound with mechanized moving images."[25] The process of matching sound and images was facilitated via cues notated in the score for the appropriate synchronization with the moving images. In silent film accompaniment these cues are generally connected to intertitles or changes in the mood, time, or place of the screen action. Hollywood film music practitioners, as well as present-day silent film musicians such as Anderson or Frank Strobel, use the term "sync points" when describing such cues. In his seminal study on film music, Sergio Miceli distinguishes between explicit and implicit sync points (*sincroni espliciti*, *sincroni impliciti*) of music/sound and moving images.

> An explicit sync point is the exact and unambiguous correspondence between a filmic and a sonic/musical event: at times, the music 'doubles' the sound by superimposition, and imitates it. An implicit sync point is a more subtle conjunction: this category comprises changes in timbre, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, the beginning or conclusion of a melodic fragment and any musical event/parameter as long as it is linked to something as nuanced happening on screen.[26]

Although first and foremost applied to the analysis of sound films, the distinction also holds up for music performed for silent films. Akin to Miceli's definition, Anderson characterizes the sound-image *synchronicity* as the tangible attachment of aural changes to visual events, observing that "ideally the music had to catch or ground the physical gestures of the mimes or actors. There were, therefore, many implicit or explicit synch points."[27]

Naturally, the degree of synchronization and the use of sync points differed depending on whether a score was composed explicitly for a film or whether preexisting music was compiled as film accompaniment. However, in compilation scores, too, music and images corresponded to a remarkable degree—not only at explicit sync points—as the music can establish incidental connections with the image or what Michel Chion would refer to as "synchresis": "the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular sound event and a particular visual event when they occur at the

25 Anderson, 4. Emphasis mine.

26 Sergio Miceli "Leone, Morricone and the Italian Way to Revisionist Westerns", in *The Cambridge Companion to Film Music*, ed. Mervyn Cooke and Fiona Ford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 290.

27 Anderson, 18.

same time."[28] Anderson further highlights the correspondence of musical phrasing with the action and the filmic pace, the matching of a music cue to beginnings and endings of scenes and gestures:

> If in what follows we find evidence of stop watches or numbers of seconds being used to coordinate music and image so that music starts when a scene begins and concludes when the scene ends, we have an example of synchronization. If we find evidence of precise timing of music with the initiation and termination of a gesture, we have synchronization.[29]

Such obsessive timekeeping can also be found in the work of Kleiner, who valued precision and accuracy ("you must know [the film] almost frame by frame")[30] both when composing and compiling. As Anderson concludes in her investigation of the analogies between pantomime music and cinema music, "music was considered essential to both genres, and the similar nature and structure of the two called forth similar solutions."[31]

This strong connection between music for dance/pantomime and music for silent films gains significance with regard to Kleiner's background. Famous dancer and choreographer Agnes De Mille, with whom Kleiner worked in the 1940s through 1950s, considered her art closer to acting and pantomime than classical dance.[32] In a similar vein, the performances of Russian prima ballerina Anna Pavlova (1881–1931) were viewed as "pantomime ballet," telling stories through movement, gestures, and facial expressions. In ballet and pantomime, music was cued to a dancer's/actor's movements. In order to transpose the physical sync points into musical notation, "foot positions instead of notes were put on musical score paper."[33] It is worth noting that Kleiner regularly used drawings instead of verbal cues to designate sync points in the drafts for his scores (see figure 1). Such drawings might have been merely a shortcut used during a spotting session in order to not have to write out a visual action, but it nonetheless was

28 Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, 2nd ed., trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 64.

29 Anderson, 4.

30 "Composer Becomes Piano Player For Museum's Old-Time Movies", *New York Times*, September 17, 1952.

31 Anderson, 19.

32 See Judy L. Hasday, *Agnes de Mille* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 66–67.

33 Anderson, 16.

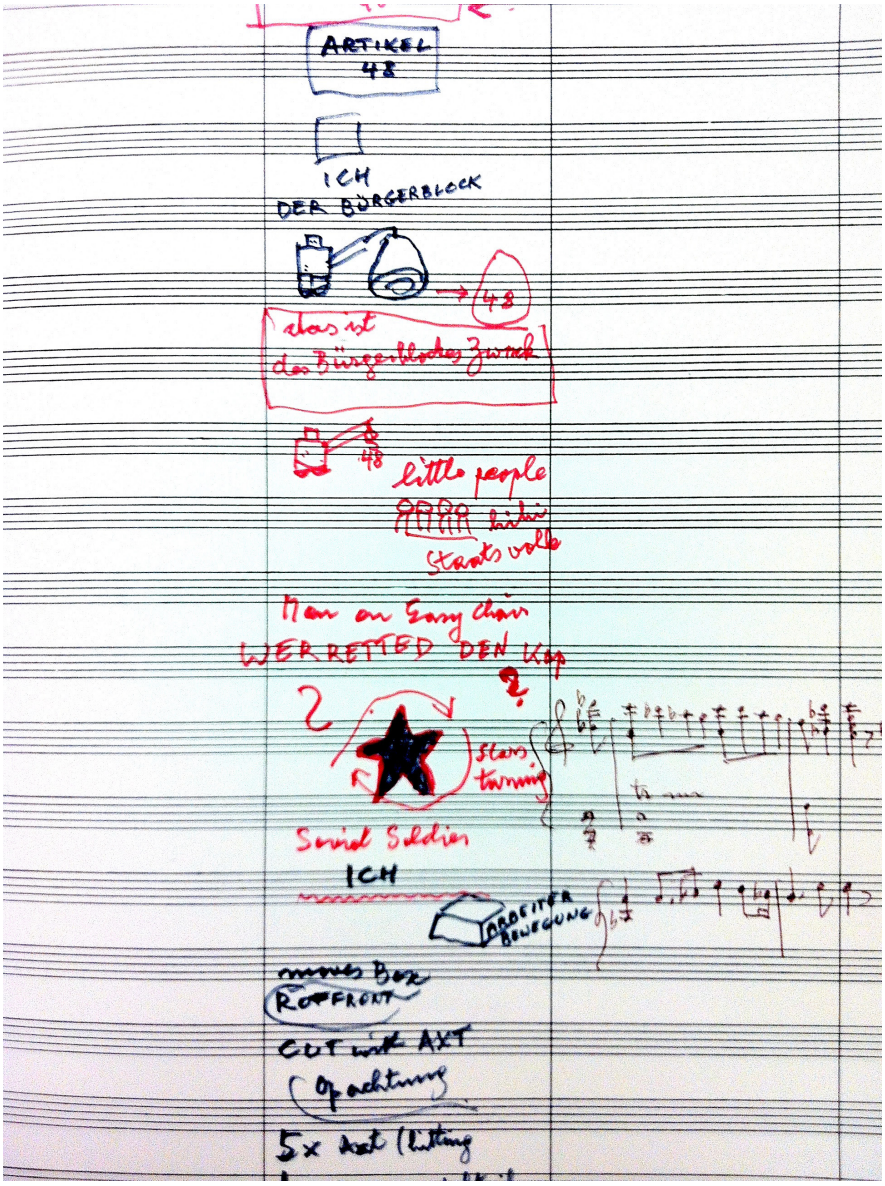

Fig. 1 Sketch for the score to the short film *Dem Deutschen Volke*, including visual cues (Arthur Kleiner Collection of Silent Movie Music, Films, DE-DR, Box 5, University of Minnesota Libraries)

a practice diffused in dance theater, ballet, and pantomime, representing yet another allusion to the influence of Kleiner's dance accompanist background on his work. As such, Kleiner was used to observing movements of dancers and to adapt his playing (tempo, rhythm, dynamics) to the live performance on the stage. Knowing much of the music by heart allowed Kleiner to follow performances on stage as well as on the screen with remarkable precision: "Most of it is in my head."[34]

It is worth noting that Kleiner's fondness for dance led to his scoring of some rather unique footage. Douglas Fairbanks' film material gifted to the Film Library contained a series of dance sequences by famous Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, allegedly shot by Fairbanks himself during the filming of *The Thief of Bagdad*, when Pavlova visited the set.

> The sequences are charming, but their film quality is ragged and there were no titles or notes on the dances. Kleiner spent weeks tracking down people who'd known Pavlova, personally or professionally, and finally got some of her old souvenir programs from Agnes de Mille. The programs had pictures of Pavlova in costume, which he was able to match with the film sequences to identify the dances, and they also specified the music played. Then, "working like a tailor," Kleiner cut the music to fit the half-minute sequences, finding the speed of the melodies through Pavlova's footwork, and timing them together.[35]

Undoubtedly, his long-lasting experiences as accompanist and as composer of stage music aided his proficiency in this kind of detailed synchronizing of music to the images. Kleiner's reconstruction of the scores to the Pavlova dance films demonstrate the meticulousness with which he approached the scoring process and the locating of historical sources. Four years later, Kleiner wrote, produced, and edited a documentary on Pavlova, which included this very footage.[36]

Another earlier incident shows in a curious way how Kleiner's work for the stage and the screen overlapped. In 1953, the theatrical company Renaud-Barrault made its American debut in New York City and needed a musical

34 Kreigsman, "A Forte Virtuoso."

35 Joanne Stang, "Making Music – Silent Style," *New York Times Magazine*, October 23, 1960: 83–86, at 84–86.

36 In 1964 Kleiner wrote, produced and scored a film about the dancer, supported by the MoMA. The 20-minute documentary *Anna Pavlova* is preserved at the Library of Congress. Kleiner was also working on a documentary about Russian dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, but it was never realized.

ensemble for a live performance of the iconic pantomime scene from the French epic *Children of Paradise* (*Les Enfants du Paradis*, 1945), starring actor and mime Jean-Louis Barrault. The film had been Kleiner's favorite movie for years and when asked to accompany the performance on the piano he did not hesitate to say yes. One day after a rehearsal for the pantomime scene, Barrault walked up to Kleiner and said: "I notice you never look at your score when you play for me." Kleiner responded: "I have seen your film, *Children of Paradise* so often, I don't need any score; I know it by heart!"[37]

During his extensive experience as accompanist for dance groups, Kleiner had acquired a set of specific skills that would benefit his future activities in film accompaniment: the ability to concentrate on a (live) performance while playing the piano, a broad knowledge of musical repertories, and a sensibility for (bodily) movement in concurrence with music. This particular artistic background provided a fertile ground for his passion for silent film music.

Kleiner as Musicologist: Historical Sensibility as Leading Concept

As an experienced pianist for modern dance and stage plays, Kleiner might just as well have relied entirely on his broad knowledge of popular and classical repertoire, using improvisation whenever he did not find anything fitting for the silent films he played almost every day. Instead, he sought to recreate a historically sensitive musical accompaniment that reflected the contemporary musical setting of a film. Kevin Donnelly proposes to conceive of present-day approaches to silent film accompaniment as a spectrum flanked by two poles—i.e., historically-accurate versions as opposed to novel, radical ones. Kleiner's work can be confidently situated on the former side of the spectrum, as he seemingly pioneered the historically-accurate approach:

> The "historically-accurate" version retains a traditional character to the score, often guided by knowledge of an "original version." The approach is scholarly and the processes often follow those of historical research, with the music as an outcome of archival work. These films are often presented at dedicated silent film festivals attended by aficionados and might be seen as *film-musical manifestation of museum culture*.[38]

37 Weinberg, "The Backroom Boys," 86.

38 Kevin J. Donnelly, "How Far Can Too Far Go? Radical Approaches to Silent Film Music," in Donnelly and Wallengren, *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films*, 13. Emphasis mine.

Kleiner's methodological approach at the MoMA was thus very much in line with Barry's vision of silent film exhibition—that is, a historically informed film accompaniment based on original sources such as scores and cue sheets, and on additional information about the musical accompaniment that could be gleaned from secondary sources such as film reviews, advertisements, and so on. His endeavor to present silent films in a historically sensitive fashion is related to his view of film exhibition as a historical tradition rather than film as a purely aesthetic object. Unlike the purist approach that led to the exhibition of films in complete silence, Kleiner regarded silent film's *performances* as objects worthy of reconstruction.

Soon, Kleiner began his search for historical film music material—a search "as frenetic as any of the Keystone chases."[39] Besides scores and cue sheets by composers and music directors active during the silent period, Kleiner was eager to get his hands on handbooks and manuals for cinema musicians, too, as they featured musical suggestions and other practical instructions.[40] His initial research did not yield as much material as he had hoped. Nevertheless, in 1952 he was rewarded when Paul Norman, a former silent film pianist who had turned to organ and mainly liturgical music once the sound film burst on the scene, introduced himself to Kleiner after attending a silent film screening at the museum. After becoming a regular at the silent film screenings, Norman donated his extensive collection of old scores and cue sheets to the museum; over the subsequent years he substituted for Kleiner whenever he was unavailable.[41] Over the years, Kleiner's reputation as pianist and silent film music specialist spread, and film producers and directors, who had saved some of their materials, donated scores to the museum's library.

Kleiner's musicological perspective and his awareness about the historicity of silent film music had a lasting effect on the way in which this historical practice was perceived as well as on the preservation, restoration, and rediscovery of music used in silent film accompaniment. As musical director of the film library he took on the role of a cultural mediator in which he applied his aesthetic preferences paired with his knowledge of music and

39 Stang, "Making Music," 83.

40 Thematic music cue sheets were widespread devices of musical suggestions during the silent film era since the mid-1910s, peaking in the 1920s. Cue sheets were usually compiled by composers or arrangers on behalf of music publishers and sometimes commissioned by film producers. A typical cue sheet contained a numbered list of music suggestions (cues) timed to aid in the synchronization of music to a specific film.

41 "Composer Becomes Piano Player."

film history, thus influencing the silent film music (and film) holdings of the museum. When Kleiner retired, the MoMA's film library was in possession of "seventy-five to one hundred original scores from silent movies," owing to Kleiner's extensive research.[42] Of those, he considered the scores for *The King of Kings* (1927, Cecil B. DeMille, score by Hugo Riesenfeld and Josiah Zuro), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1927, Harry A. Pollard, score by Hugo Riesenfeld), *Ben Hur* (1925, Fred Niblo, rereleased with a score by William Axt and David Mendoza in 1931), and *The Iron Horse* (1924, John Ford, score by Erno Rapee) to be "of special merit."[43]

In 1972, Kleiner completed one of his most notable accomplishments, as he claimed: the reconstruction of Edmund Meisel's original score for *Battleship Potemkin* (1926, Sergei Eisenstein), a score that had been believed lost during the Nazi invasion of Russia for many years and which Kleiner recalled as "one of the most powerful experiences" of his life when he had witnessed its performance as a young man in Europe.[44] Incidentally, Kleiner's first original composition for the MoMA in 1940 had been a new score for *Potemkin*, since Meisel's original was considered lost at that time. Scoring the Soviet epic was an artistic milestone for Kleiner and even entailed pecuniary benefits. "The score [for *Potemkin*] was such a hit with the museum that I got a $5 raise," Kleiner recounts in 1967.[45] For his composition, Kleiner reworked Russian folk themes and used a steady basso ostinato for the famous Odessa steps sequence, not unlike what Meisel had employed for the same scene.[46] Kleiner's score was used for screenings of *Potemkin* at the MoMA several times until in 1970 American filmmaker and historian Jay Leyda discovered a complete set of parts of Meisel's score in the Eisenstein Archive in Leningrad and sent a microfilm copy of the

42 The Museum of Modern Art, "Charles Hofmann to Lecture on Musical Accompaniment to Silent Films," press release, January 23, 1970, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/4412/releases/MOMA_1970_Jan-June_0009_9.pdf.

43 Arthur Kleiner, "New Yorker Arthur Kleiner writes about Film Scores," *Sight and Sound* 13, no. 52 (1945): 103–4.

44 John Rockwell, "Search for 'Potemkin' Lost Score," *Los Angeles Times*, March 23, 1972.

45 Howard Thompson, "Museum Losing Sound of Silents," *New York Times*, March 25, 1967.

46 "Meisel made use of a percussive ostinato, barbaric and unstoppable in its strut, as an acoustic correspondence to the murderous squad of Cossacks in the massacre scene." Francesco Finocchiaro, "Sergei Eisenstein and the Music of Landscape: The 'Mists' of *Potemkin* between Metaphor and Illustration," in *The Sounds of Silent Films: New Perspectives on History, Theory and Practice*, ed. Claus Tieber and Anna K. Windisch (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 185.

score to Kleiner. With the help of a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts, Kleiner began to restore and arrange the score to fit the film version held by the MoMA at that time, acquired by Barry on a trip to Europe in the 1930s. He recorded the score in 1972 with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and it was broadcast the same year on KCET Television as part of their Film Odyssey series.[47] The following years, the film with the restored score was distributed internationally (BBC 2) and shown at various film festivals.

Kleiner's research concerning the history of silent film music and his quest for original scores were characterized by a distinct musicological drive, as corroborated by his private library, which contains a large number of musicological books, as well as by his broad interest in historical film accompaniment practices. Most significantly, Kleiner had begun drafting a monograph on the development of cinema music—a project that remained unfinished. Yet the volume's draft and notes reveal Kleiner's intention of writing a comprehensive history of film accompaniment from mechanical instruments to original scores. Timothy Johnson, librarian at the University of Minnesota and curator of the Arthur Kleiner Collection,[48] confirms this observation: "What you notice with Arthur Kleiner's music is, he is somebody who is a well-trained musician and knows musicology, music across a number of artists and periods."[49] This scholarly interest made him consider an original score, such as by Dmitri Shostakovich, Camille Saint-Saëns, or Edmund Meisel, "as interesting and important as the film itself."[50]

47 Kleiner copyrighted the conductor's score ("revised and edited by Kleiner") in August 1971.

48 One year after his death in 1980, Kleiner's wife Lorraine Kleiner donated his extensive library of music scores (printed scores and manuscripts for nearly 700 silent films), sheet music, books, tapes, broadcasts, and other material to the University of Minnesota, where it is now preserved in the AKC. Much of the material is digitized and forms a rich source for silent film history and music research.

49 Timothy Johnson, interviewed by Susan Gray, "Kleiner Silent Film Music Collection," PRX, uploaded on August 2010, https://beta.prx.org/stories/51949.

50 "Composer Becomes Piano Player."

Kleiner as Compiler and Composer:
"Paper and a pencil, coffee and cigarettes"

Kleiner oscillated between using original scores or compilation scores based on cue sheets and compiling or composing his own accompaniment. "If I cannot find the score, I try to find music in the style of the time the film deals in. Everything must be historically correct."[51] If time allowed, he would watch the films in the projection room on the museum's fourth floor, and jot down the intertitles and actions for each reel working with a stopwatch. "I'd stay up all night in my museum office, using paper and a pencil, coffee and cigarettes. When the museum did its three-month Griffith cycle, that came to 21 sleepless nights."[52] When time was plentiful, he would take a few weeks for the task but, especially with foreign films which often arrived at the museum a few days before a screening due to shipment delays, he had to work fast. In that case, a film's first performance, which was usually in the morning when fewer people attended, was a sort of dress rehearsal. The evening screening would go relatively well, and, if the film was held over for some weeks, things would run smoothly. The issue of limited rehearsal time was also a key problem for Kleiner's colleagues during the silent period. Particularly small and rural venues faced the same difficulties, with the result that they too handled the daily performances in the way Kleiner had—i.e., considering the first performance as a rehearsal. According to the *New York Times*, Kleiner composed 250 original scores for silent films throughout his life, some of which are preserved at the Library of Congress. In preparation for an upcoming film, Kleiner collected film reviews, mainly by *New York Times* film critic Mordaunt Hall, which he meticulously pasted into his score books, underlining and circling passages that might impart relevant information for the compilation of the music, such as the film's period, genre, or geographical setting. This practice recalls what some of Kleiner's colleagues had done decades earlier, using information about the film in the form of a synopsis supplied by the producer in order to familiarize themselves with the story, especially if there was no opportunity to watch the film before its first public performance.

Kleiner took issue with the overuse and repetition of popular ballads, some of which had become clichés of silent film music. For example, when scoring Griffith's *Home Sweet Home* (1914), Kleiner was faced with musical

51 Weinberg, "The Backroom Boys," 86.
52 Thompson, "Museum Losing Sound of Silents."

repetition implied by the film images: "The film is only fifty minutes long, but Griffith had some little old man play 'Home Sweet Home' on a violin twenty times during that fifty minutes. Do you know what it's like to write twenty variations on 'Home Sweet Home'?"[53] In order to avoid ceaseless repeats of the popular song, he used musical variations that evoked the ballad whenever it was clearly indicated in the film images. The delicate balancing of repeating music in a leitmotific sense with variations was a key aesthetic principle in silent film scoring and compilation with which composers sought to create a cohesive musical structure for the score while avoiding tiresome repetition. Naturally, the choices for varying a musical theme were considerably more limited for a pianist compared to a symphony orchestra, so Kleiner had to contend with the means at his disposal—i.e., tempo, pitch, harmonic density, and dynamics.

The sketchbooks preserved at the Arthur Kleiner Collection provide scholars with compelling information about Kleiner's creative process, comprising detailed synopses that include a film's plot details, exits, entrances, key images, and dialogue titles. Generally written on music paper, verbal or visual cues were jotted down in one column, while music titles or fragments were noted to the side(s) (see figure 2). These scribbled music incipits acted as mnemonic devices and contained excerpts from preexisting music as well as Kleiner's own compositions. On these synopses, for which he occasionally used his mother tongue (especially for German film productions), Kleiner also highlighted diegetic sounds and onscreen performances, such as dancing, singing, or a band playing. Films containing musical performances provided further information for Kleiner, functioning as "embedded cue sheets."[54] In his accompaniment, he would pay special attention to these on-screen musical performance scenes and aim for the music to coincide with the start (and end) of the filmed musical performance, as discussed above with regard to synchronization. For example, in his notes for the film *The Eagle* (1925, Clarence Brown), based on the novel *Dubrovsky* by Alexander Pushkin and taking place in the Russian army during the late eighteenth century, Kleiner scribbled a brief music incipit to

53 Stang, "Making Music," 83.

54 When studied carefully it becomes clear that silent films reveal a variety of implied musical cues in the form of filmed music performances, inserts of sheet music, songs mentioned in intertitles and more, which again points to the idea that synchronization was not an afterthought during the silent era, but a concern of filmmakers as well. See Claus Tieber, "Filme als Cue Sheets: Musikfilme, Kinomusik und diegetische Musik, Wien 1908–1918," *Kieler Beiträge zur Filmmusikforschung* 9 (2013): 26–45.

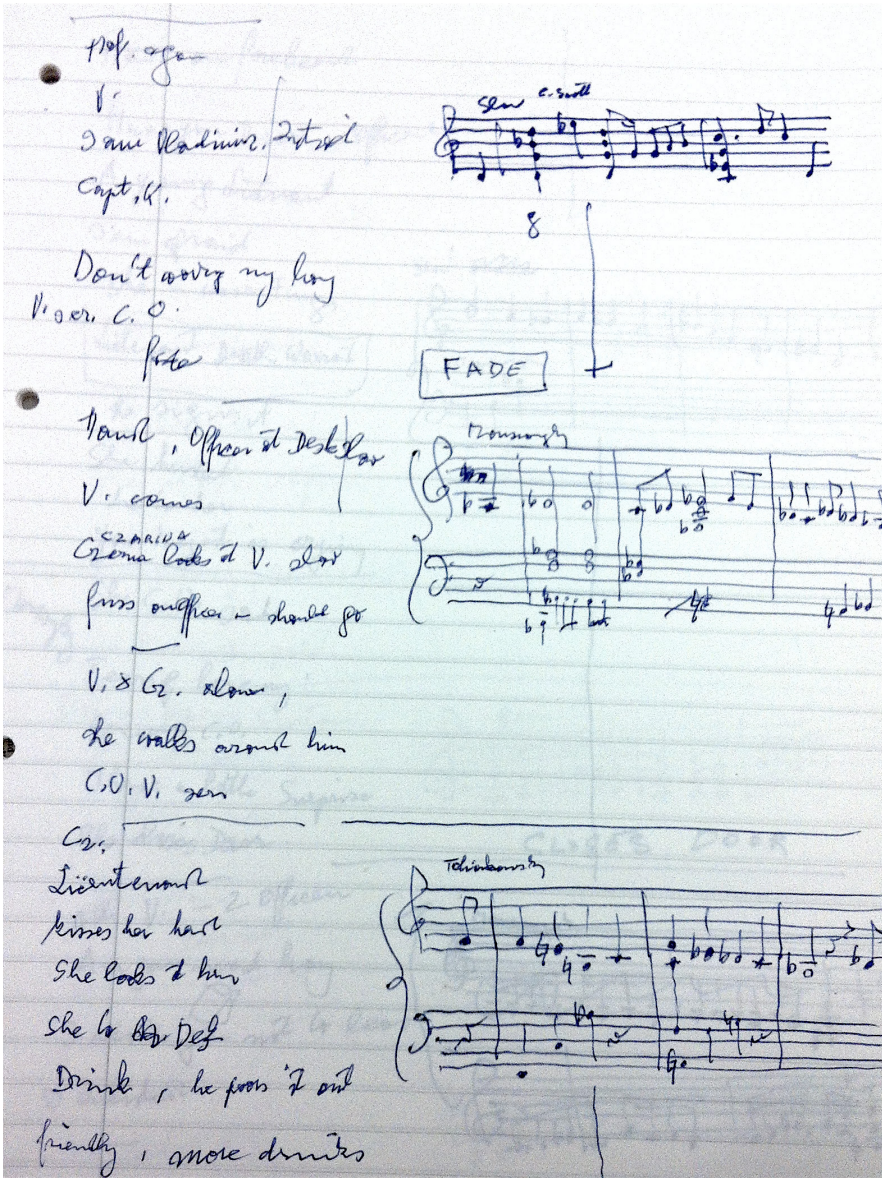

Fig. 2 Spotting session notes for *The Eagle* (1925) including music incipits (Arthur Kleiner Collection of Silent Movie Music, Films, EA-FI, Box 6, University of Minnesota Libraries)

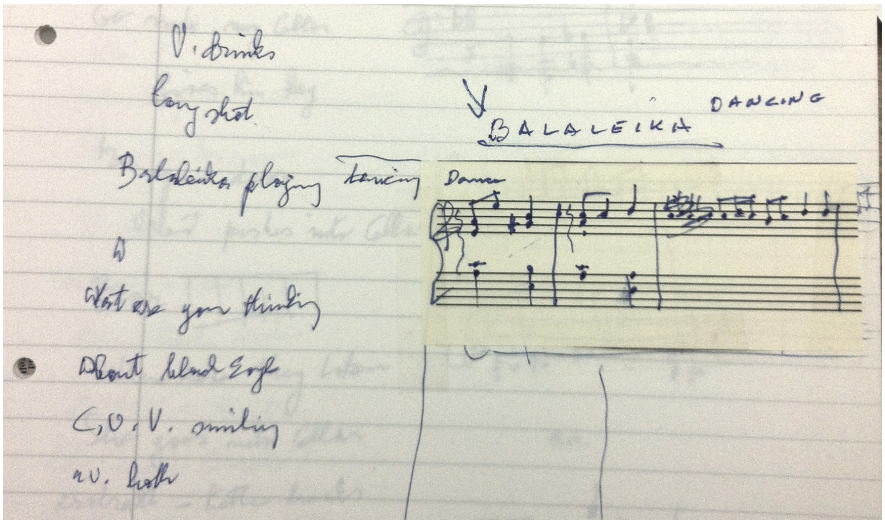

Fig. 3 Notes with incipit for the Balaleika dance number in the 1925 film *The Eagle* (Arthur Kleiner Collection of Silent Movie Music, Films, EA-FI, Box 6, University of Minnesota Libraries)

correspond with the scene depicting a Balalaika band and an ensuing folk dance scene (see figure 3). In the same accompaniment, he inserted another music incipit entitled "Zorro"; undoubtedly a reference to the Douglas Fairbanks swashbuckler *The Mark of Zorro* from 1920. Kleiner cued this melodic fragment (a short ascending chromatic line with semitones; enough to evoke what would have been categorized as "sinister" or "foreboding" in 1920s cinema music libraries) at the first appearance of Rudolph Valentino as "The Black Eagle," a masked Robin Hood-like character which did not exist in the original novel and was instead inspired by Fairbanks's "Zorro."

Kleiner as Performer: "Unnoticed but Noteworthy"

> "Are you primarily a musician?"
> "Yes."
> "Who by bad luck got into movies?"
> "That's right!" [*Kleiner laughs*][55]
> (Arthur Kleiner and Bronisław Kaper, 1975)

55 Interview with Bronisław Kaper, July 23, 1974, Beverly Hills, 02:25, Kleiner_C002_Kaper_Side1, AKC.

Kleiner's passion for original scores by established composers might have been partly responsible for his loyalty to his occupation as silent film pianist, as he hinted in an interview at the Berlinale in 1979:

> I really became interested when I discovered that many great composers had written scores for silent films. Did you know that Saint-Saëns wrote one as early as 1908? Or Richard Strauss the music for the "silent" version of *Der Rosenkavalier*? In fact, some of them played for silent movies when they were young: Shostakovich did it in Russia to earn extra money before he wrote his first symphony.[56]

It is these and similar comments by Kleiner — some of which have to be read between the lines, while he is much more explicit in others — that stirred my interested in his personal attitude towards his occupation and in the way in which he reconciled his own artistic ambitions with his public persona. Despite a certain admiration among film aficionados and silent film buffs, being a silent film pianist was hardly well regarded at the time by serious composers whom Kleiner considered his peers. The subtext of some of Kleiner's comments conveys his concern for being *demoted* to movie music, even worse, film accompaniment, where he usually performed other people's compositions.

In a series of writings stemming from a seminal 2006 article, Philip Auslander has articulated the notion that musicians enact personae in their performances: "What musicians perform first and foremost is not music, but their own identities as musicians, their musical personae."[57] In the case of Kleiner, it is particularly useful to stretch the definition of performance to include any public appearance and representation; in other words, as Auslander also suggests, a musician's performance does not finish with the last note she sang or played on her instrument, but "to be a musician is to perform an identity in a social realm that is defined in relation to the realm."[58] Auslander's performer-centered concept of the musical persona offers a useful framework for interpreting Kleiner's self-perception as an

56 "Accompanist Extraordinary", *berlinale-tip*, March 3, 1979, 12.

57 Philip Auslander, "Musical Personae," *TDR/The Drama Review* 50, no. 1 (2006): 102. See also his "'Musical Personae' Revisited," in *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections*, ed. Gianmario Borio, Giovanni Giuriati, Alessandro Cecchi, and Marco Lutzu (London: Routledge, 2020), 41–55, and *In Concert: Performing Musical Persona* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021), chap. 5 "Musical Personae," 87–128.

58 Auslander, *In Concert*, 88.

artist, both while performing music as well as in public appearances such as interviews and other (print and video) footage. In turn, Kleiner's "performance" of the social identity of a silent film pianist (active during the sound era), drawing on a specific image of high culture, has shaped public understanding of silent film sound through the sophistication and cultural air that Kleiner personified through his mediatized public presence.

Leaning on Erving Goffman's sociological perspective regarding the concept of self-presentation, Auslander borrows the term "front" to delineate "the means a performer uses to foster an impression."[59] Dividing this notion further in "personal front" (manner and appearance) and "setting" (the physical performance context), these means include "the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance."[60] The setting of Kleiner's type of performance as a silent film pianist comes with predefined conventions for both the audience and the performer. The pianist is sat at a piano in front of the screen in a darkened movie theater, sometimes on a stage, other times in an orchestra pit. The screening of a silent film is not centered on the musical performance as such. Albeit live music has a certain allure, particularly for today's audiences, the music nevertheless recedes into the background during the screening experience due to the narrative absorption of the audience into the film. And while Kleiner's contribution was without doubt crucial to a film's successful showing, his music was usually not at the center of attention during the actual performance.[61] From a performer's perspective, the darkened physical space and the connotation of providing "only background music," to use hyperbole, did not align with some of Kleiner's previous performance contexts in which he was viewed more as a classical musician and as belonging to a stage ensemble.

Kleiner's "personal front" is even more intriguing when viewed through the lens of the concept of musical persona. In this regard, his early socialization is crucial for understanding some of his mannerisms and character-

59 Auslander, *In Concert*, 100.

60 Auslander, *In Concert*, 100–101, quoting Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 22.

61 I would argue that this particular state of audience reception is debatable for some present-day screenings of silent films, especially when the musical accompaniment is rendered by a well-known music ensemble (e.g. Alloy Orchestra) or a symphony orchestra. At these events, the musical accompaniment seems to retain or continually regain the audience's attention during the screening and the musicians remain a very visible and central focus of the live performance.

Fig. 4 Kleiner, wearing a bowtie, at the recording session for *Battleship Potemkin* in 1972. From the private collection of Erik Kleiner

istics. For example, he never lost his strong Austrian accent when speaking English, although, as his son Erik Kleiner affirmed, he did not speak German at home either.[62] Described as an "extremely soft-spoken, polite and precise gentleman" by the *New York Times*,[63] his way of dressing, speaking, and performing conveyed a highly formal and exclusive attitude, to the point that some of his behaviors and even his attire were at odds with his social surroundings later in life, as his son confirms:

> You know, he wasn't your standard dad, growing up in Minneapolis or Hopkins. Dads were taking their kids to the ballgame, and my dad was in his black raincoat with his hat, going to the University to play the piano. He didn't drive, he took the bus. He never had his license. … He was a different kind of dad… and he was older, too.[64]

62 I had the chance to interview Erik and Ann Kleiner during my research visit at the University of Minnesota in 2015. The interview was held at an off-campus coffee shop on March 22, 2015.

63 Stang, "Making Music."

64 Erik Kleiner, author interview.

Another interviewer stressed Kleiner's apparent unobtrusiveness:

> His name means "little one." He presents the sort of appearance that causes receptionists to look up after several oblivious moments and murmur in embarrassment, "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't see you standing there." He speaks in an undertone rendered even softer by the gentle sibilance of a Viennese accent.[65]

A curious fashion artifact stands out when sorting through photographs of Kleiner: he often wore a bowtie when performing or attending official events (see figure 4). The bow tie, a fashion accessory reminiscent of the *Wiener Klassik* (the First Viennese School) style, as well as of classical musicianship, might have served as a commemorative "tie" to his native land and to his artistic home as a musician.

In 1966, one year before retiring from MoMA at age 63, Kleiner gave a particularly revealing interview regarding his transfer from Europe to the United States, in which he implicitly addressed the perceived superiority of "absolute" or concert hall music over the musical accompaniment of silent films as "functional music," a notion Kleiner grappled with throughout his life and career. The interview was conducted by Gretchen Weinberg for the magazine *Film Culture*, a publication whose target audience would have been familiar with avant-garde cultural trends (both cinematic and musical). Kleiner's awareness of such specific readership potentially shaped his choices about what to disclose and in which way. The article was published in the form of a monologue in the regular column "The Backroom Boys." Weinberg opened her article with the preamble: "The first part of a series featuring interviews with individuals whose place in the history of film is often *unnoticed* but in many cases is *noteworthy*."[66] In the article, Kleiner contemplates his career choices, expressing an equivocal view about committing as thoroughly to silent film music as he had done.

> "There is so much I wanted to do here [at the MoMA]… hold concerts for full orchestra of some of the film scores … Mortimer Wilson's scores for Douglas Fairbanks' *The Thief Of Baghdad* and *The Black Pirate* are wonderful; he was a pupil of Max Reger, the German composer, Wilson; a real musician, not like so many others … but there's no time for that, they tell me … a concert like

65 Kreigsman, "A Forte Virtuoso."
66 Weinberg, "The Backroom Boys," 83. Emphasis mine.

> that's very expensive … it needs rehearsals … it's an unrealized dream. .. I have only unrealized dreams … Schönberg's Film-Music, Erik Satie's for René Clair's *Entr'acte*, Saint-Saëns' for *The Assassination Of The Duc De Guise*. Darius Milhaud's music to accompany a Charlie Chaplin film and for Renoir's *The Little Match-Girl*, Richard Strauss' Music for an Imaginary Movie. …
> I don't know much about films … but I think it's an art, too … it's sort of a sad reputation, don't you think? Musical accompanist … I wasn't always one, you know, I used to compose … but the composing I do for the films here, it's so unimportant, actually … I only do it if I can't find music; then I have to, if there's no other way out … the Museum audiences only notice if you miss a cue or play it wrong, and sometimes not even then … they don't really listen … I'd like to be known as a composer, I think, I don't know … maybe the composing I used to do … it's only good if you compose with inspiration, an opera or symphony or sonata … but playing for the films … like a stock music library in Hollywood … it's measured, like you measure cloth for a dress … or like a train conductor whistle-stops for the different stations: at 3:04, you have to be in a certain station at a certain time, on cue … and so it goes … not really, but almost… like a trip … to nowhere …"[67]

Kleiner's poignant admissions touch the core of his personal struggles regarding his life and career choices. The foregrounding of his classical music education and the reference to his most revered composers show a desire for a highbrow artistic lineage and an alignment with the cultural sphere associated with his native Vienna at the time. Having identified some aspects of Kleiner's self-image as a performer and as a representative of a particular musical heritage, the following analysis of a documentary written by Kleiner will offer an interpretation of how these aspects of his musical persona manifested in his work.

Sophistication by Association – Hollywood's Musical Moods (1973)

In the years before leaving New York City, Kleiner worked as pianist for television (NBC, CBS, ABC) on a freelance basis, and was involved with the documentary genre through his work on Anna Pavlova among others. In 1972/73, he wrote and presented the documentary *Hollywood's Musical Moods*, an hour-long portrayal of the film composers from Hollywood's

67 Weinberg, 86–87.

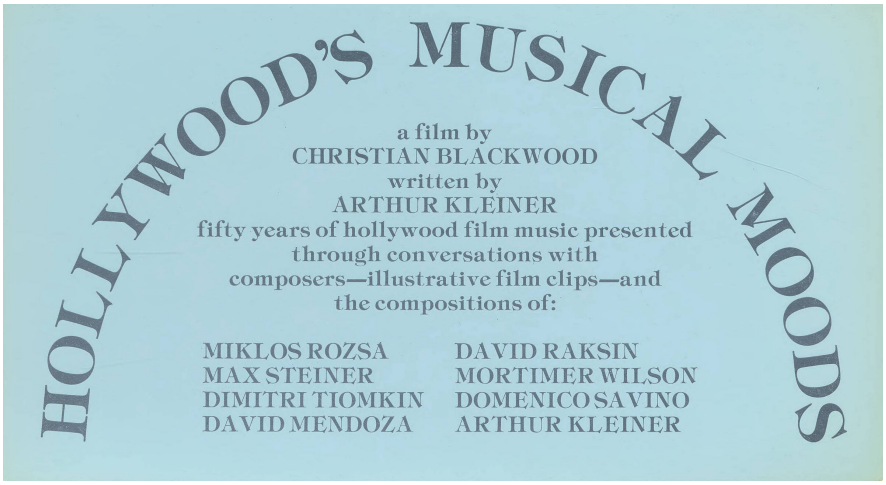

Fig. 5 Postcard advertising *Hollywood's Musical Moods* (Arthur Kleiner Collection of Silent Movie Music, University of Minnesota Libraries, https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/item/p16022coll406:110)

"Golden Age" in the 1930s to the 1950s in which Kleiner narrates and plays film music excerpts on the piano as he interviews David Raksin, Max Steiner, Dimitri Tiomkin, Miklós Rózsa, and Domenico Savino.[68] Dissecting Kleiner's role in the genesis of this film reveals different layers of how he dealt with this topic as a historian, filmmaker, and classically trained musician. It also sheds light on the personal ambition that might have inspired this project. An advertisement for the documentary alludes to how Kleiner would have liked to be perceived: *en par* with composers such as Steiner, Raksin, and Tiomkin, who to this day embody the foundational creators of the classical Hollywood sound (see figure 5).[69]

The material preserved at the AKC contains a six-page document that appears to be an early draft of the script for *Hollywood's Musical Moods*, which allows us to trace and compare two stages in the development of this documentary. Kleiner's script is entitled "History of American Film Music.

68 *Hollywood's Musical Moods*, directed by Christian Blackwood (Michael Blackwood Productions, 1972).

69 Budget constraints during production were cited as the reason for omitting the work by Erich W. Korngold in the film, as clips from the films he scored would have been too expensive to include. See William K. Everson, "A Description of Hollywood's Musical Moods by The New School," July 16, 1975, AKC, http://purl.umn.edu/142635.

1889–1952. Second draft" and dated January 1972.[70] The differences between this draft and the final film are significant and revealing. In short, Kleiner's original idea was to foreground film music's early connection to musical modernism as well as the existence of original silent film scores by notable composers. In the intended opening scene, composers Virgil Thomson, Aaron Copland, and Kleiner would be seen watching *Ballet Mécanique*, the well-known 1924 Dadaist art film co-directed by Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, while listening to George Antheil's "pianola roll[s]" by the same name played by Thomson himself.[71] The script reads on: "Would this picture loose its continuity without any music? It certainly would," and proceeds demonstrating this argument by showing the film without music, only to conclude: "Musical background was used from the very beginning. Movies were never performed in silence."

Let us linger on this scenario for a moment. We have silent film pianist Arthur Kleiner with two key figures of American modern music who also worked in film sitting in Thomson's apartment (as per Kleiner's script). Their subject of discussion is the now well-regarded concert piece *Ballet Mécanique* by Antheil, whom Kleiner had known as a young man in Vienna. The idea of using this specific example bears a certain irony, as this is precisely an instance of film and music eventually not ending up together. It is important to note that although Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique* was supposed to accompany the 1924 namesake film, the filmmakers and the composer dropped the idea during the production process. When completed, the film had a running time of nineteen minutes, while the music piece was about ten minutes longer. The first public premiere of *Ballet Mécanique* in Paris in June 1926 turned into a contentious concert, and the piece became one of the hallmarks of musical modernism. Kleiner's choice of starting a documentary about film music history with this constellation of people discussing avant-garde music and film—and above all with a piece that, despite the original intentions, is technically not film music—is curious but not surprising. It is instead very much in line with his understanding of film music as a sophisticated, artistic medium of high cultural status, which is precisely what *Ballet Mécanique* represented. Besides reflecting Kleiner's personal musical preferences, the setting echoes Kleiner's affinity with an aesthetic tradition and cultural lineage that leaned heavily on European

70 Arthur Kleiner, "History of American Film Music," script, second draft, January 1972, AKC, http://purl.umn.edu/142420.

71 Kleiner, "History of American Film Music," 1.

roots (Copland, Thomson, and Antheil studied and worked in Europe, mainly in Paris) while establishing a strong connection to modern music. Moreover, Kleiner intended to interview both Copland and Thomson about their work in documentary film scoring— not exactly a mainstream genre in American film history.

Kleiner's vision of embedding his narration about the development of film music within American musical modernism did not materialize. Instead, *Hollywood's Musical Moods* starts with a scene from the Douglas Fairbanks picture *The Black Pirate* (1926, Albert Parker) with the original score by Mortimer Wilson played by Kleiner on the piano. Deprived of his intended opening, Kleiner tried to "balance" the images of a Hollywood swashbuckler adventure by pointing out that Wilson "studied composition under Max Reger and has written five symphonies, conducted major orchestras including the New York Philharmonic," thus instilling a concert (i.e., serious) music affiliation.[72]

The final page of the draft contains a section entitled "Hollywood Film Composers. (Not confirmed yet)," listing Max Steiner, Franz Waxman, and Dimitri Tiomkin as potential candidates for interviews. Eventually, the documentary featured interviews with Raksin, Tiomkin, Rózsa, and Savino conducted by Kleiner in person and with Steiner via phone. The film clips discussed include scenes from *Spellbound* (1945, Alfred Hitchcock), *Laura* (1944, Otto Preminger), and *High Noon* (1952, Fred Zinnemann) inserted in the interviews with the respective composers. It is possible that at an early stage of developing the script, Kleiner was not yet certain whether he would be able to interview Hollywood's most celebrated film composers. When the planned interviews were confirmed during the production process, he substituted the intended segments with Thomson and Copland with conversations with Raksin, Waxmann, Steiner, and consorts.[73]

In the interviews Kleiner conducted with film music composers in preparation for the documentary as well as for his book project, he frequently referred to "serious" composers like Arnold Schönberg, Paul Hindemith, or Franz Schreker, as well as music critics Eduard Hanslick and Julius Korngold, injecting his own competences in music history, analysis, and

72 *Hollywood's Musical Moods*, at 00:01:56 – 00:02:09.

73 It is difficult to determine the extent to which the documentary was actually distributed. It was presented at the summer festival of the New School in New York City in 1975, was shown at several film festivals over the years, and was probably most recently screened at a film workshop in Katoomba, Australia, in 2013.

theory into the dialogues with his peers.[74] For example, with Hugo Friedhofer, Kleiner discusses twelve-tone technique, serial music, and twentieth-century atonal compositions. Coming from a social sphere in which music was highly codified to emphasize class differences, and in which rigid distinctions between light music (*Unterhaltungsmusik*) and art music (*Kunstmusik*) divided film music composers from their opera and concert hall composer colleagues, Kleiner insisted on highlighting the renowned figures of music history who contributed to silent film music. One of the guiding principles in his various roles was to emphasize the ties between silent film music and so-called "serious" composers. It is not difficult to imagine that at times Kleiner felt underrated as a musician and artist, working in a musical métier that was (and still is, to some extent) largely associated with a limited repertoire of staple pieces of popular music, which is why he tried to distance himself so vehemently from certain clichés such as "ragtime music" or popular ballads (he referred to the song "Hearts and Flowers" as "a perfectly dreadful piece") and everything these numbers stood for in connection with silent film music.[75]

Although successful composers of film music were well regarded in their own circles, film music was still struggling for recognition and acceptance in the art music world and within academia during Kleiner's lifetime. Thus, an underlying aim of Kleiner's documentary could have been an effort to inscribe his own work in silent film music into the broader history of film music, which was emerging as an academic discipline during the late 1970s and 1980s. Having composed music for ballet and stage plays, and having worked with major personalities in those realms, Kleiner might have dreaded the thought of his legacy to be judged solely by his piano playing in a darkened room, and thus sought to legitimize his status as a professional musician and composer.

Conclusion

Less than two months after his final trip to Europe in early 1980, Arthur Kleiner died of a heart attack after battling cancer at the age of 77 in his home in Hopkins, Minnesota. Two weeks earlier, he had performed at a large silent film exhibition at the Walker Center of the Arts in Minneapo-

74 Tapes of these interviews are now part of the AKC.
75 Stang, "Making Music."

lis, where he played his original score for *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928, Carl Theodor Dreyer), and a score to Abel Gance's *Napoleon* (1927), in the presence of the French director. After the event, 90-year-old Abel Gance handed Kleiner a handwritten note in which he personally thanked Kleiner and acknowledged his skill on the piano.

His self-doubts aside, Kleiner was responsible for helping shape the image and reputation of silent cinema and film accompaniment in many people's eyes for generations. His activities at the MoMA, at international film festivals and workshops, in university classrooms, and at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis kept the art of silent film accompaniment alive for decades after the last mute images had lit up screens in Western commercial cinemas in the early 1930s. In his various significant roles—as a historian, a composer/compiler, and as a performer—he was influenced by his cultural background and sensibilities, by his desire for an affiliation with Europe's cultural and musical heritage, as well as by his affinities for musical modernism. His persistent emphasizing of the links between silent film music and serious composers, by invoking original film scores by established artists, is to be seen in a similar vein as the original draft for his documentary, in that he was looking to elevate his field of occupation by associating it with a prestigious musical tradition that centered around the composer as the author of a work of art. In this sense, his efforts at reconstructing and preserving historical silent film scores by renowned composer can be viewed as efforts at self-preservation for an artist who had too many "unrealized dreams."

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Abstract

This article examines the life and work of Arthur Kleiner, an Austrian composer, conductor, and pianist who, although relatively unknown, can be considered one of the most influential practitioners of silent film music during the sound era. Significantly, he was active during a time when the musical accompaniment of silent films could not be taken for granted in film preservation institutions and also before the revival of silent cinema in the 1980s.

Kleiner's contributions to the persistent existence of silent film music can be broken down into three key roles: as historian and researcher, as creator of original and compilation scores, and as performer who not only offered his interpretative frame to hundreds of silent films, but who, through his mediatized, public persona, shaped the idea of what it meant to be a silent film pianist.

I argue that Kleiner's work as well as his "musical persona" (Auslander) were strongly influenced by his Viennese bourgoise background and by his early career as dance and theater musician. Finally, an analysis of a documentary written and narrated by Kleiner in 1972 serves to trace how certain aspects of his musical persona shaped his conception of this lost art.

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Music Criticism in the Age of Digital Media

with two contributions by Benjamin MiNiMuM/Angèle Cossée, and Peter Uehling

Klaus Georg Koch

Among the many notions between God and humanity lately declared "dead," neither music critics nor music criticism have been spared. There are numerous articles, YouTube-videos, round-table discussions, and books featuring "the death of the music critic," claiming that "music criticism is dead," or pursuing a manhunt for the persons having "Killed Classical Music." The threat of extermination looms even where hope is nurtured, as others ask: "How can music journalism survive digitalization?"[1]

It may be wise from the beginning to put the death of-topos in perspective as a stratagem to affirm the life of the persons using it. After all, living means to bear witness to things, people, institutions, ideas, and convictions pass away. As we perceive something is ending, something different may come into existence, as Hegel argues where he explains his reasons for the "end of art."[2] The topos seems to express the dark side of moderni-

1 See as examples Norman Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music? Maestros, Managers, and Corporate Politics* (Secaucus: Birch Lane Press, 1997); see also Michael Kaiser, "The Death of Criticism or Everyone Is a Critic," *HuffPost*, The Blog, November 14, 2011, updated January 14, 2012, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-death-of-criticism-or_b_1092125; *The Death of the Critic? A Roundtable on the Future of Music Criticism in the Digital Age*, moderated by Ann Powers, transcripts of the roundtable at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, September 24, 2008, https://learcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/DeathoftheCritic2.pdf; Bhanuj Kappal, "OFF THE RECORD: Does music criticism have a future?" *Mumbai Mirror*, updated October 6, 2019, https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/others/leisure/off-the-record-does-music-criticism-have-a-future/articleshow/71461447.cms; Janosch Troehler, „Wie Musikjournalismus die Digitalisierung überleben kann," *Medium*, uploaded August 22, 2018, https://janoschtroehler.medium.com/wie-musikjournalismus-die-digitalisierung-%C3%BCberleben-kann-4b79607f6603.

2 See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* [1717–1738], ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfürt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970); Eng. trans. *Aesthetics. Lectures of Fine Art*, 2 voll., trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Spring 2022), pp. 107–160, ISSN 2784-8949. DOI: 10.54103/sss18439.

sation, and to mark the losses in a Schumpeterian process of "creative destruction," a concept that originates in economics but is implicitly based on a philosophy of life that features the mother of all proclaimed deaths, that of God.[3]

Yet, where a sense of loss prevails, something is likely to be disappearing. Music criticism as both a practice and institution, and the critic as a role model and profession, have come under strain. Figuring for more than a century as part of generalist newspapers' offerings predominantly in the European west, as well as a key feature in specialist magazines, music criticism has become a casualty of the seemingly secular decline in audience and revenues.[4] Permanent full-time jobs have been cut, many of the remaining critics carry on in precarious labour relations. With the advent of social media, arts organisations have begun to elude intermediation by established media and to communicate with their public directly. In this understanding of disintermediation, contributions by music critics are on the downgrade as "secondhand opinions."[5]

Is music criticism getting allotted a place in the museum of obliterated practices and deserted discourses? Can it prevail by inserting its proven contents and manners of operating into new media techniques and formats, as Christopher Dingle and Dominic McHugh seem to assume?[6] Is there a path of adaptation or innovation discernible in the proceedings of the digitally formatted discourse on music?

3 Conspicuously close to Nietzsche's formulations, Schumpeter—in his *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle*, trans. Redvers Opie (London: Transaction Books, 1983), 84—depicts the entrepreneur as a creative destructor, someone combining the characteristics both of a creator and a *Führer*. Previously, Nietzsche had formulated in view of his "transvaluation of all values," e.g. in *Ecce Homo*: „und wer ein Schöpfer sein will im Guten und Bösen, der muß ein Vernichter erst sein und Werte zerbrechen" ("and whoever wants to be a creator in good and evil: verily, he must first be an annihilator and shatter values"); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* [1888], in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe VI:3,* ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montanari (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 363–64; Eng. trans. *Ecce Homo: How to Become What You Are*, trans. Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 88–89.

4 See Christopher Dingle and Dominic McHugh, "Stop the Press? The Changing Media of Music Criticism," in *The Cambridge History of Music Criticism*, ed. Christopher Dingle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 695.

5 As Drew Crocker puts it: "Music criticism is dead … Why consider secondhand opinions when you can hear directly from creators about their own writing processes?" ("Music Criticism Is Changing Its Tune—and That's a Good Thing," *This*, October 25, 2018, https://this.org/2018/10/25/music-criticism-is-changing-its-tune-and-thats-a-good-thing/).

6 Dingle and McHugh, "Changing Media of Music Criticism," 695–99.

These are the questions this text will try to help elucidate. Rather than applying a fixed framework, I will seek to find out what the main forces behind present transformational processes affecting music criticism are. The general perspective is that of media change, whereby "media" are understood as dispositives entailing technological apparatuses, communication structures, discourse practices, role models, and their institutionalisation. The products generated in media systems shall be understood, following Siegfried J. Schmidt, as "social instruments for the structural linking of cognition and communication, thus for the linking of actants, organisations, institutions, and enterprises in the symbolic space."[7] Media change, for its part, will be considered within a larger prospect of a history of ideas. While these definitions may appear rather broad, they steer clear of the kind of technological determinism often found in debates about "the future of music criticism." Through them I will attempt to counter any short-termism in the appraisal of technological innovation and the resulting changes in the mediascape fed by a widespread perception of "the rapid development of new digital media."[8]

Metaphors of Depth

In pursuing such a program, this text focuses on a "German" conception of music criticism. The reference to Kantian, Hegelian and, as we will see, post-Hegelian perspectives is being chosen because it can help explain present strains on music criticism not primarily dependent on media change. Irony will help keeping national stereotypes at bay, similarly to the irony adopted by composer, conductor, and writer Ferdinand Hiller in 1884 when comparing contemporary music culture in Italy with practices then understood as typically German. Not only did he mention the obsession with "founding one musical newspaper after another" and writing "critical-aesthetical" articles, but he also referred to "German depth" in musical discourse.[9]

7 Siegfried J. Schmidt, „Der Medienkompaktbegriff," in *Was ist ein Medium?* ed. Stefan Münker and Alexander Roesler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 152. English translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

8 Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 5.

9 „die Italiener es sich angelegen sein lassen, germanisch-harmonischen Spuren zu folgen. Nicht allein, daß sie durch Orchesterconcerte die deutsche Instrumentalmusik zu ver-

As Holly Watkins has shown, metaphors of depth pervade German reasoning from Wackenroder's early romanticism to Arnold Schönberg's musical thinking.[10] Arguing with Albrecht Koschorke's theory of the emergence of a new topology of subjectivity towards the end of the eighteenth century, "depth" may be considered as one of the terms expressing a shift of their frame of reference "from transcendental subjectivity towards the empirical-psychological individuum."[11] "Depth" was assigned a function in the dichotomy between "profound" and "superficial." It also marked a position on a vertical axis ranging from the chthonic to the transcendental, as opposed to "breadth."

Since the end of the eighteenth century, music criticism has not only tried to assess "depth" in musical works,[12] it has also aimed to be profound itself. If music is understood as the semiosis of a "hidden dimension where nature, man, and spirit intersect," as per Watkins' summary of Wackenroder's theory of musical art,[13] music critics have been trying to capture through language what would otherwise fade away without entering the sphere of discourse. Until the invention of Charles Cros's *paléophone* and Thomas Alva Edison's *phonograph* in 1877, "deep" music criticism was therefore an invocation of the ephemerality of everything said, sung, and played. It was an objectivisation via written language, a transmediation instituting music-centered public discourse.

If "breadth" in discourse about music does not seem to be a problem today—news about "who is doing what" in musical life are being announced, told, reported, posted, and retweeted through all channels and in all manner of media—the pursuit of "depth" is perceived as a losing proposition. This, in the last analysis, is the reason behind many critics' grief and dismay, and Peter Uehling's contribution to this subject (see Appendix 1) may be read as a critic's document of the sensation of being marooned or outcast

breiten suchen, Oratorien aufzuführen beginnen, sogar mit Wagner und Goldmark auf der Bühne experimentiren—sie schreiben kritisch-ästhetische Zeitungsartikel mit deutscher Tiefe, setzen Preise aus auf Kammer und Kirchenmusiken—gründen eine musicalische Zeitung nach der andern." Ferdinand Hiller, *Erinnerungsblätter* (Köln: DuMont-Schauberg, 1884), 69.

10 See Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E.T.A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

11 „von der transzendentalen Subjektivität auf das empirisch-psychologische Individuum." Albrecht Koschorke, *Die Geschichte des Horizonts. Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung in literarischen Landschaftsbildern* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 242.

12 See Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth*, 37–44.

13 Watkins, 33.

by changing discursive and media practices. Uehling's *Wutrede* (rage address) reminds us of the fact that "change" in cultural matters is always embodied, and that changing media practices entail a revaluation of human capital as well as changes in the quality of communicative relationships.

Invocation and discursivation find themselves intertwined in Theodor W. Adorno's influential conception of music criticism. On the one side, the musical artwork itself is seen by Adorno as being in need of critical discursivation. On the other side, both musical experience and reflection on music are needed for the project of emancipation—and more emphatically: constitution—of the modern subject. Adorno understands musical artworks as processes that unfold their essence "in the time," as he puts it. This unfolding of art (to use the botanical metaphor) is realised through "the medium of commentary and critique."[14] Therefore, music criticism is not just "a means of communication." Adorno understands it as an activity and a form of discourse in its own right that complements the artwork.[15] In this process of transmediation—or more emphatically: transubstantiation—the critic exercises what according to Adorno is the essence of musicality: "to think with one's ears the unfolding of what becomes sound in its necessity."[16] Music itself may both express and influence the "deep" instances of human existence. Music criticism then subjects sound to linguistic reason. Within its sphere of duties, defined by the post-Hegelian teleology of the subject, it has to enhance the level of awareness of a public less familiar with musical artworks.[17]

14 „Kunstwerke selbst sind ein Prozeß und sie entfalten ihr Wesen in der Zeit. Es ist prozessual. Medien dieser Kunstentfaltung sind Kommentar und Kritik." Theodor W. Adorno, „Reflexionen über Musikkritik (1968)," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 19, *Musikalische Schriften VI*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 574–75.

15 Adorno, „Reflexionen," 573–74. Adorno opposes his concept of music-oriented discourse to the concept of "music appreciation" (or as we would say today: mediation and outreach) found "in the Anglo-Saxon language sphere" and being guilty of "adapting [musical] works to its adversaries": „Aber die Funktion der *music appreciation* in Amerika, die in Europa ihre eifrigen Nachfolger findet, ist so peinlich wie die Obertöne des deutschen Wortes. Schuld ist das institutionell und gesellschaftlich diktierte Streben, Kunst Kunstfremden zu erschließen, ohne deren Bewußtsein zu verändern. Dadurch werden die Werke ihren Widersachern angepasst." Adorno, „Die gewürdigte Musik (1963)," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 15, *Komposition für den Film—Der getreue Korrepetitor*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 163.

16 „sondern die Entfaltung des Erklingenden in ihrer Notwendigkeit mit den Ohren denken." Adorno, „Die gewürdigte Musik," 184.

17 See Klaus Georg Koch, *Innovation in Kulturorganisationen: Die Entfaltung unternehmerischen Handelns und die Kunst des Überlebens* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014), 164–65.

Adorno set the standards for public discourse on music in the German-speaking countries of the West for several decades following the end of World War II. When currently speaking of a retreat, resignation, or replacement of music criticism, we mean music criticism realising Adornoian-type ideals. The debate that caused Adornoian-style theorising to lose its high ground was, by contrast, pursued in the musicological community. It may well be argued that culturally-turned reasoning about music on the one side, and a structural understanding of the artwork as "a self-enclosed and internally consistent formal unity" do not have to be irreconcilable.[18] However, even plausible arguments cannot turn back time in a history of ideas. The idea of a "breakdown of music as a discrete concept" has historicised and ultimately delegitimised any attempt to position music on a vertical axis ranging, as defined above, from the chthonic to the transcendental.[19]

Dahlhaus and the Decline of the Großkritiker

Without forgetting the belletristic vocation of one strain of music criticism and the role composers played as critical experts, a closer look at the relation between music criticism and musicology may elucidate cultural change processes affecting the role of music criticism. Musicologists also working as music critics have influenced the debate on music in many national cultures. One thinks of Boris de Schloezer, Armand Machabey, Henry Prunières, and Léon Vallas in France, for example,[20] and Ernest Newman, Edward J. Dent and Donald Francis Tovey in Britain.[21] In the German-speaking countries, Carl Dahlhaus may be considered the last great musicologist also working as a music critic. As a culture editor at the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* between September 1960 and November 1962, he pub-

18 Martin Scherzinger, "The Return of the Aesthetic: Musical Formalism and Its Place in Political Critique," in *Beyond Structural Listening? Postmodern Modes of Hearing*, ed. Andrew Dell'Antonio (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 253.

19 Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), xx.

20 See Michel Duchesneau, "Music Criticism and Aesthetics During the Interwar Period: Fewer Crimes and More Punishments," in *Music Criticism in France, 1918–1939: Authority, Advocacy, Legacy*, ed. Barbara L. Kelly and Christopher Moore (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018), 17–42.

21 Karen Arrandale, "The Scholar as Critic: Edward J. Dent," in *British Musical Criticism and Intellectual Thought, 1850–1950*, ed. Jeremy Dibble and Julian Horton (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018), 154–73.

lished a total of 108 concert, opera, and recordings reviews. Miriam Roner has shown to what extent Dahlhaus's work as a critic was based on the concept of the musical artwork. Given that the musical scores can be seen as underdetermined, and the musical performance, by contrast, as overdetermined, Roner states that "the work as an intentional entity has to be identified through the coaction of several different actors."[22] Here again, as with Adorno, the musical artwork needs discourse to become fully discernible. It is in this sense that Dahlhaus aims at the "constitution of the artwork" (Roner) through his reviews.

Dahlhaus wrote his reviews from a position of supreme power. His texts let readers understand that the critic was in possession of a higher level of insight than both the musicians and the ordinary public, superior perhaps even to historical composers who in their time couldn't have any cognizance of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, the history of reception and interpretation of their compositions as they became transformed into "works." With a precise linguistic strategy, Dahlhaus shifts his reviews from the realm of "opinion" to what since Plato (*politeia* VII, 534a-c) has been considered the superior category: "knowledge." The grammatical subject of his texts is neither "I," nor "you"; there is no opening towards dialogue. Instead, Dahlhaus uses "one" as a subject, the German *man*, a generic subject assuming and presuming universal rationality and validity.[23]

While shedding light on Dahlhaus's self-perception, the critic's chosen role was far from being idiosyncratic. Twenty-five years later, Zygmunt Bauman would historicize it:

> The typically modern strategy of intellectual work is one best characterized by the metaphor of the "legislator" role. It consists of making authoritative statements which arbitrate in controversies of opinions. … The authority to

22 „das Werk ist ein ‚intentionales' Gebilde, das erst im Akt des Tätigwerdens, des Zusammenwirkens unterschiedlicher Personen, identifiziert werden kann." Miriam Roner, „Carl Dahlhaus als Musikkritiker: Über die Leistungsfähigkeit des Werkbegriffs in der Konzertberichterstattung," *Die Musikforschung* 70, no. 1 (2017): 42.

23 To illustrate the case, I quote Dahlhaus' review of a Beethoven-recital by Rudolf Serkin from November 2, 1961, out of Roner's text: „daß man Beethoven-Sonaten wie Rudolf Serkin spielen müsse, schien, während man ihm zuhörte, so selbstverständlich zu sein, daß man nicht einmal aufatmete, weil es anders war als gewöhnlich, sondern glaubte, so habe man Beethoven schon immer verstanden. Die Vorstellung von der »Appassionata« oder der »Hammerklavier-Sonate« wird künftig, auch wenn man nicht an Serkin denkt, von seiner Interpretation geprägt sein, gerade weil sie keine Interpretation war, sondern die Sache selbst." (Roner, "Carl Dahlhaus als Musikkritiker," 44).

> arbitrate is in this case legitimized by superior (objective) knowledge to which intellectuals have a better access than the non-intellectual part of society.[24]

Bauman identifies "to civilize" as the leading motive of modernity, an "effort to transform the human being through education and instruction."[25] Nowhere else, following Bauman, has the educating and legislating role of intellectuals been so dominant as in the domain of art and art criticism, and nowhere else "[has] the authority of the intellectuals [been] so complete and indubitable."[26] Although music is based on sensory experience, there is little evidence for many assertions forming music-related discourse. One way of resolving (or sugarcoating) the problem is to transform music criticism into a belletristic undertaking. Another solution consists in amplifying the role of the critic as a legislator. In this sense, leading *Großkritiker* (grand critics) have also been called *Kritiker-Päpste* (critic-popes) in the German-speaking countries. In synchrony with the paradigm shift from "modern" theorising, based on universalist assumptions, to "postmodern" ones, the use of the term *Kritiker-Papst* peaks in 1975 and falls into disuse after the year 2000.[27]

The (D)Evolving Role of the Intellectual

In opposition to the *prima pratica* of the "legislator," Bauman posits the postmodern role of the "interpreter": "With pluralism irreversible, a world-scale consensus on world-views and values unlikely, and all extant *Weltanschauungen* firmly grounded in their respective cultural traditions, … communication across traditions becomes the major problem of our time."[28] Within Adornoian theory, Herder's and Rousseau's ideals of a common language for an inclusive mankind are still echoing, thus music and subsequently critical discourse is seen as addressing the whole of mankind, now understood as the self-emancipating subject of history. Conversely, the postmodern world outlined by Bauman is constituted by languages and

24 Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 4.

25 Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*, 92.

26 Bauman, 140.

27 See the distribution graph of the term „Kritiker-Papst" in the DWDS, Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, https://www.dwds.de/?q=Kritiker-Papst&from=wb.

28 Bauman, 143.

groups. "What remains for the intellectuals to do," in Bauman's words, "is to interpret such meanings for the benefit of those who are not of the community which stands behind the meanings; to mediate the communication between 'finite provinces' or 'communities of meaning.'"[29]

To understand the changing conditions of music criticism it is not sufficient to view universalist claims only as an intellectual problem. After all, Adorno's Critical Theory was committed to building a new and better society.[30] Concerning poetry and song as living art forms, singer Thomas Hampson has drawn attention to what he, as a performer, perceives as an erosion of its humanist foundations. Assuming that the genre of song features the complexity of "being human," Hampson deplores that "we do no longer understand the arts as a day-book or a textbook of existence," and that "we" do not recognise "our vision of the world, our *Bildungsprozess* [formation/education/personal growth], our own self" in lyric art anymore.[31]

Clearly, the role model of the "legislator" had a structural affinity with the auctorial, one-to-many approach of what during the twentieth century was understood as mass media.[32] At the same time, "legislating"—i.e., making judgments on the basis of universal humanist assumptions—was at the heart of both the *ethos* and *pathos* of music criticism. The reasons negotiated in critical discourse on music were assumed to concern every person reading a general information newspaper, irrespective of their personal interests, just as political reporting, analysis, and comment are believed to concern every citizen. In many cases, "legislative" music criticism fulfilled functions similar to what Bauman, in line with the postmodern paradigm, called "mediation" and "interpretation." Yet, this endeavour of

29 Bauman, 197.

30 See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* [1947] (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1991), 142, 150, and 158; Eng. trans. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 95, 102, and 108–9.

31 Michael Stallknecht, „Ich kann niemanden überreden, die Winterreise super zu finden," interview with Thomas Hampson, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 25, 2011. Hampson's account of the substance of lyric art is reminiscent of Hegel's emblematic definition of poetry as a form in which "in his subjective inner life the man becomes a work of art himself." See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, vol. 3, 427; Eng. trans. *Aesthetics*, II, 1120.

32 See Habermas's critique of a process of "refeudalization" as he perceived it in the public sphere shaped by mass media. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* [1962] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 335; Eng. trans. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 231–32.

promoting the understanding and appreciation of music continued to dwell and flourish on the assumption of artworks being an exemplary instance of the "self-encounter of man."[33] Deprived of this assumption, or deprived of "man" ("Mensch") as a category deemed to be of relevance, music criticism turned into a service for special interest groups or Bauman's "communities of meaning." Auctorial music criticism lost prestige and legitimacy in twentieth-century-type mass media and became subjected to the quantitative logics of audience share.

The Demise of Traditional Media

As effective as it might appear at this point to indulge in a narrative in which "the before" and "the after," "the modern" and "the postmodern," "old media" and "new media" appear as discernible entities, we will rather opt for distinctions made on a spectrum of differences, and attempt to account for the iterative, sometimes nonlinear and even contradictory changes in behaviour that in aggregate constitute what we interpret as cultural change.

Concerning the complex of media practices registering a loss of actors, we have to include the decreasing use of the medium in which music criticism has thrived in the first place. In 1936, Adorno described how "countless readers" resorted to their newspapers every morning wishing "to regulate their opinion" on what they had listened to the night before. According to Adorno, this behaviour was a normality, albeit an endangered one.[34] If we look at Germany today, the reach of printed newspapers and magazines has fallen from 60% in 2005 to 22% in 2020.[35] This tendency is confirmed by the European Commission's statistics for the countries forming the European Union in the period from 2010 to 2019: the use of the older mass media such as television, radio, and most markedly the written press has been declining while internet-based media are on the rise.[36]

33 „Die Selbstbegegnung des Menschen in den Werken der Kunst." Hans-Georg Gadamer with reference to Hegel in *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr und Siebeck, 1986), 64; Eng. trans. *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004), 51.

34 See Theodor W. Adorno, „Zur Krisis der Musikkritik," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 20-2, *Vermischte Schriften II*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 746–55.

35 As a rule, the data base is the German-speaking population over the age of 10.

36 See "Massenkommunikation," ARD/ZDF website, 2021, https://www.ard-zdf-mas-

This widening use of internet-based digital media affects much of present music journalism, and the text on the evolution of French world-music journalism by Benjamin MiNiMuM and Angèle Cossée (see Appendix 2) may be read as a document for the iterative and often nonlinear adaptation and appropriation process in which "old" and "digital" media usages are interwoven, while innovative publishing strategies are increasingly pursued on the internet. Music journalism in digital media is mostly dedicated to the representation of musicians, musical activities, and products, in line with an understanding of the internet as an inclusive medium, characterised by "low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement," a belief that "contributions matter," and by a sense of "social connection."[37]

MiNiMuM and Cossée's work is one telling example of the representation of music cultures formerly outside the focus of music criticism in established media. Another example is Music in Africa (musicinafrica.net). The platform, founded in 2013 and "reaching millions of people every year,"[38] structures the representation and self-representation of musicians, producers, and cultural managers across the African continent. It features products and events, informs about technological developments and business opportunities, and offers reflections upon political and social conditions of musical practice. It also dedicates a whole section to the presence of women in African Music, discusses questions of music education, and proposes solutions for problems like those arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Evidently this is a major shift in the evolution of the mediatic presence of music-related discourse on this continent. Music in Africa performs a bundle of tasks previously unserved by mass media. In creating networks and channels of communication, it connects professionals and the interested public throughout the world. The platform establishes and facilitates

senkommunikation.de; European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, *Media use in the European Union: Report* (European Union, 2020), page 6, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/80086. To put the German numbers into relation: within the European context Germany is one of the countries featuring a relatively high rate of people using the printed press on a daily base (position 7 out of 30). See European commission, *Media Use*, 14.

37 Henry Jenkins, "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century," MacArthur Foundation website, October 19, 2006, page 3, https://www.macfound.org/press/grantee-publications/white-paper-confronting-the-challenges-of-participatory-culture-media-education-for-the-21st-century-by-henry-jenkins.

38 "Music in Africa Portal," Music in Africa official website, https://www.musicinafrica.net/about/music-africa-portal.

information structures that transcend existing social structures anchored in local, regional, ethnic, or national communities.[39]

Internet and the Public Sphere

When it comes to music criticism *stricto sensu*, it may be asked whether the developments highlighted in the examples above merely represent a migration of practices and content from an older medium to a newer one, or whether there is a structural change under way that may alter the very definitions of music criticism. One might argue that the construction of the platforms is the expression of a target-group orientation and not much else. As an increasing number of people use the internet instead of print media, critics place their content there. Nevertheless, "target-group orientation" could also be interpreted as the result of a cultural shift from a "scholarly" stance to a "managerial" one,[40] and correspondingly a shift away from critics' traditional role of custodians of artworks and associated values. In any case, the critical spaces presented in this issue of *Sound Stage Screen* have characteristic voids where more expert-based, "legislative" forms of discourse on music might be imagined. Reviews are mostly empathetic descriptions of what musicians produce, or statements about their self-perceptions, intentions, and public acclaim. In addition, the platforms feature factual information and explanatory texts about musical practices and local traditions. The reviews fall, however, short of the requirements traditionally associated with music criticism consisting of aesthetic judgments based on criteria. The explanatory texts for their part do not appear to be up to par with the standards of humanities research.

While print-based music criticism took part in what was conceived as "the public sphere," multi-platform music journalism relates to something different that might be tentatively conceptualised as "specialised public

39 The concept stems from Scott Lash's and John Urry's early postmodern "Economies of Signs and Space." There, processes of a "replacement of social structures by information structures" appear as the structural prerequisite for the "networking" of "economies of signs and space." Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space* (London: Sage, 1994), 111.

40 In the neighbouring field of cultural production, this process has been explained by Victoria D. Alexander, "Pictures at an Exhibition: Conflicting Pressures in Museums and the Display of Art," *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 4 (1996): 831. In Alexander's presentation, "scholarly" and "managerial" represent different role models for arts managers, the former being oriented towards discourse on art, the latter towards a broader public.

spheres." Why does that matter for music criticism? Bauman, while putting forward the idea of intellectuals as "interpreters," does not seem to be concerned about the mediated nature of these new forms of engagement. His "communication across traditions" seems to presuppose a comprehensive communicative space in which processes of mediation between groups take place.[41] Lash and Urry later conceptualised the question in a multidimensional space. In this space the level of reflexivity is augmented by the proliferation of communication networks on the side of the structures, and by individualisation processes following the "retrocession of social structures" on the side of the actants.[42]

Both expectations were formulated at the very beginning of the rise of internet-based digital media. Today, there is an ongoing discussion whether we are witnessing the emergence of a worldwide participative and inclusive communicative space, or rather the fabrication of disruptive public spheres, and as to how far an expansion of meaningful reflexivity is taking place. Since conceptions of the public sphere depend on normative assumptions, every valuation here is literally a function of values. In this respect, Hans-Jörg Trenz has drawn attention to the tradition of thought leading from Kant's programme of universal enlightenment to Habermas's notion of a public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*) that "unfolds in the individual and societal practices of reason" and therefore is "the method of enlightenment."[43]

Habermas himself recently undertook an assessment of the change in media culture in light of his earlier theory, particularly *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* dating back to 1962. Habermas's understanding of the public sphere as a field where the "peculiarly unforced force of the better argument" plays out,[44] and as an "inclusive space dedicated to a possible discursive clarification of competing claims on truth" may seem to have anticipated early ideas of an emancipatory internet.[45] Given the high

41 Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*, 143.

42 Lash and Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space*, 111.

43 „Öffentlichkeit entfaltet sich vielmehr in den individuellen und gesellschaftlichen Praktiken des Gebrauchs von Vernunft. Sie ist die Methode der Aufklärung." Hans-Jörg Trenz, „Öffentlichkeitstheorie als Erkenntnistheorie moderner Gesellschaft," in *Ein neuer Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit?* ed. Martin Seeliger and Sebastian Sevignani (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2021), 390.

44 Der „eigentümlich zwanglose Zwang des besseren Argumentes." Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, 4th rev. ed., vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1987), 47; Eng. trans. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 24.

45 „als inklusiver Raum für eine mögliche diskursive Klärung konkurrierender

stakes, Habermas, however, comes to "utterly ambivalent" findings today.[46] First of all, the blurring of the distinction between the "private" and the "public" produced by social media eliminates the inclusive character of a public sphere that used to be distinct from the private realm and thus favoured mediation between the single citizens and the system of politics.[47] The resulting fragmented, rather plebiscitary than deliberative „*demi*-public spheres" (*Halböffentlichkeiten*) often compete against others, producing "uninhibited discourses, shielded against dissonant opinions and critical comment."[48]

It is true that Habermas is specifically interested in the political function of *Öffentlichkeit*, where citizens mediate between private interests and the common good, and reason emerges from cooperative deliberation. What makes Habermas's theory of the public sphere relevant for music criticism is the fact that the aesthetic judgement, the judgement of taste in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, is of an equally public nature. If, following Kant, judgement "is the faculty of thinking the particular as contained under the universal," the judgement of taste "with its attendant consciousness of detachment from all [individual] interest, must involve a claim to validity for all men. … There must be coupled with it a claim to subjective universality."[49] Kant, in the middle of his abstractions, describes the act of the aesthetic judgement as a practice: "if upon so doing, we call the object beautiful, we believe ourselves to be speaking with a universal voice, and lay claim to the concurrence of every one."[50] Carl Dahlhaus remarked that the judgement of artworks involves more than only Kantian judgements of

Ansprüche auf Wahrheitsgeltung." Jürgen Habermas, „Überlegungen und Hypothesen zu einem erneuten Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit," in Seeliger and Sevignani, *Ein neuer Strukturwandel*, 497.

46 „höchst ambivalente." Habermas, „Überlegungen und Hypothesen," 487.

47 See Habermas, „Überlegungen und Hypothesen," 479.

48 „der enthemmten, gegen dissonante Meinungen und Kritik abgeschirmten Diskurse." Habermas, „Überlegungen und Hypothesen," 489.

49 „Folglich muß dem Geschmacksurtheile mit dem Bewußtsein der Absonderung in demselben von allem Interesse ein Anspruch auf Gültigkeit für jedermann ohne auf Objecte gestellte Allgemeinheit anhängen, d. i. es muß damit ein Anspruch auf subjective Allgemeinheit verbunden sein." Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* [1790], part I, book 1, §6, 18, in Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 5 (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1913), 212; Eng. trans. *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), 51.

50 Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, part I, book 1, §8, 18, in Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, 216; Eng. trans. *Critique of Judgement*, 56.

taste.[51] But if we account for the moral judgements Dahlhaus includes in the judgement of artworks, the reference to a sphere of universal claims turns out to be further strengthened. One could therefore deduce that the disruptive effects of internet-based media on the efficiency of "the public sphere" as well as an insufficient "discursive quality" of contributions will affect the grounds and the development-paths of music criticism.[52]

Narratives of Cultural Change

At this point (if not before) it becomes apparent that argumentations based on historical grounds of music criticism have a tendency to become self-reinforcing if not circular. Music criticism has developed in institutional contexts and within dispositives based on assumptions about truth-conditions as well as the human condition. It has been integrated in narratives, inscribed in media systems, and incorporated in role-models that do only partially find their expression in the culture of internet-based digital media. As the historical resources erode, music criticism is on the wane. On the other hand, the impression that "Things Fall Apart" (Chinua Achebe) has been pervading the self-perception of modernity in the *longue durée*. It is not exclusively the expression of a transition from "modern" to "postmodern," or from "old media" to "new media." Friedrich Schlegel in his late essay "Signature of the Age" (1820) already deplored the "chaotic flood of opinions flying past."[53] Hugo von Hofmannsthal in his *Letter of Lord Chandos* (1902) recounts deconstruction as an existential experience. Chandos discloses his state as "[having] lost completely the ability to think or speak of anything coherently. … For me everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts; no longer would anything let itself be encompassed by one idea. Single words floated round me."[54] And Adorno

51 Carl Dahlhaus, *Analyse und Werturteil* (Mainz: Schott, 1970), 26; Eng. trans. *Analysis and Value Judgement*, trans. Siegmund Levarie (New York: Pendragon Press, 1983), 17–18.

52 „der diskursiven Qualität der Beiträge." Habermas, „Überlegungen und Hypothesen," 478.

53 „chaotischen Flut vorüberfliehender Meinungen." Friedrich Schlegel, „Signatur des Zeitalters," in Friedrich Schlegel. *Kritische Schriften und Fragmente*. Vol. 4, *1812–1823*, ed. Ernst Behler and Hans Eichner (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1988), 259.

54 „Mein Fall ist in Kürze dieser: Es ist mir völlig die Fähigkeit abhanden gekommen, über irgend etwas zusammenhängend zu denken oder zu sprechen. […] Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen. Die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich." Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Ein Brief* [1902], in

begins his *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) with the statement that "it is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident anymore, not its inner life, not its relation to the world, not even its right to exist."[55]

In order to contemplate alternative concepts not entangled in the legitimatory compulsions resulting from dichotomies between "the old" and "the new," "tradition" and "progress," "inertia" and "innovation," we might choose to frame change as a continuum. Susan C. Herring, for example, has proposed to understand the evolution of media and genres as relationships shifting "along a continuum from reproduced [or familiar] to adapted to emergent."[56] We could thus draw a line from the "familiar" text format of critical reviews to the "adapted" format of blogs. Blogs change their material manifestation as digital media simulate features of print. Otherwise, they continue to comply with the conditions of textuality. They continue trying to be coherent, cohesive, and consistent. They apply rhetoric strategies. "Adapted," formerly "familiar" texts could then become "emergent" in the form of transmedia storytelling coalescing in multimodal digital artifacts.

Most of the debate on the "death" of music criticism is based on the dichotomic paradigm, such as William Deresiewicz's recent lament about "the eclipse of expert opinion and the rise of populist alternatives: blogs, ratings, comment threads, audience reviews; Twitter, Facebook, YouTube."[57] In contrast, theories based on the continuum paradigm may still be infused

Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, *Erzählungen, erfundene Gespräche und Briefe, Reisen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979), 9; Eng. trans. *The Letter of Lord Chandos*, in *The Whole Difference: Selected Writings of Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, ed. J. D. McClatchy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 73–74.

55 „Zur Selbstverständlichkeit wurde, daß nichts, was die Kunst betrifft, mehr selbstverständlich ist. Weder in ihr noch in ihrem Verhältnis zum Ganzen, nicht einmal ihr Existenzrecht." Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 9; Eng. trans. *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, new trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 1997), 1.

56 Susan C. Herring, "Discourse in Web 2.0: Familiar, Reconfigured, and Emergent," in *Discourse 2.0: Language and New Media*, ed. Deborah Tannen and Anna Marie Trester (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 7. Herring's scheme is based on the slightly simpler one elaborated by Kevin Crowston and Marie Williams, "Reproduced and Emergent Genres of Communication on the World-Wide Web," *The Information Society* 16, no. 3 (2000): 201–15.

57 William Deresiewicz, *The Death of the Artist. How Creators are Struggling to Survive in the Age of Billionaires and Big Tech* (New York: Henry Holt, 2019), 258.

with disruption anxiety, but "death" does now appear as a transfiguration ranging from "remediation" (Bolter and Grusin) to "demediation" (Stewart). This paradigm accommodates most of the discussion about a "future" of music criticism.[58]

Singularised Actants and the Grounds of Judgement

With all its inherent wisdom, however, a theorising continuously mutating identities and practices is good at differentiating but not very effective with regard to distinction. Another aspect of the phenomenon becomes discernible if we think change in the mediality of music criticism as a disruption. Firstly, as a disruption in terms of intellectual history. Here we might put into practice what Jean-François Lyotard stated in *The Postmodern Condition*: "abandon the idealist and humanist narratives," increase the distance to the "obsolete … principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from the training (*Bildung*) of minds, or even of individuals."[59] This mostly concerns the sociological perspectives of media theory. Secondly, from a technological point of view, networked digital media may not be understood as "new media" adding new functionalities to existing media, but as an emergent phenomenon, as categorically distinct "hypermedia." These hypermedia may simulate and thus preserve prior physical media. Beyond that they also give rise to "a number of new computational media that have no physical precedents,"[60] thereby generating modes of reflection that prior to their emergence did not exist.

Concerning the sociological dimension of media disruption, Elizabeth Dubois and William H. Dutton conceptualised the emergent entity as a "Fifth Estate":

58 See Garrett Stewart, "Bookwork as Demediation," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 3 (2010): 410-457. For further discussion see also Jan Baetens and Domingo Sánchez-Mesa, "A Note on 'Demediation:' From Book Art to Transmedia Storytelling," *Leonardo* 52, no. 3 (2019): 275–78.

59 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 46 and 4.

60 Lev Manovich, *Software Takes Command* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 110. See also Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 38: "In hypermedia, the multimedia elements making a document are connected through hyperlinks. Thus the elements and the structure are independent of each other—rather than hard-wired together, as in traditional media."

> As such, the Fifth Estate is not simply a new media [*sic*], such as an adjunct to the news media, but a distributed array of networked individuals who use the Internet as a platform to source and distribute information to be used to challenge the media and play a potentially important political role, without the institutional foundations of the Fourth Estate.[61]

Who are these "individuals" acting on the platforms? It can be doubted whether they coincide with the citizens Habermas has in mind as communicators in the discoursive public sphere. Nor do they correspond to the emancipatory subject Adorno evokes when reflecting upon music criticism. Digitally networked individuals fall short of enacting the dialectics between the particular and the general, the individual and the universal, or the subjective and the objective as implied in Adorno's warning against a deterioration of criticism induced "by the shrinkage of a subjectivity that mistakes itself for objectivity."[62]

These "individuals" populate the platforms and make use of their single-agent broadcasting (webcasting) capabilities. What is more, they appear as products of the platforms themselves and of their underlying algorithms. Crispin Thurlow criticises that "the affordances and typical uses of social media foster a microcelebrity mindset of extreme self-referentiality."[63] Andreas Reckwitz has integrated observations of this kind with pre-internet discussions about "Modernity and Self-Identity" developing a comprehensive theory of the "late-modern self" and its systemic collocation in a "post-industrial economy of singularities."[64] In this economy, digital tech-

61 Elizabeth Dubois and William H. Dutton, "Empowering Citizens of the Internet Age: The Role of a Fifth Estate," in *Society and the Internet*, ed. Mark Graham and William H. Dutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 239.

62 „Der Verfall von Kritik als eines Agens der musikalischen öffentlichen Meinung offenbart sich nicht durch Subjektivismus, sondern durch Schrumpfung von Subjektivität, die sich als Objektivität verkennt." Adorno, *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie* [1967], in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 14, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 34; Eng. trans. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 148.

63 Crispin Thurlow, "Fakebook: Synthetic Media, Pseudo-sociality, and the Rhetorics of Web 2.0," in *Discourse 2.0: Language and New Media*, ed. Deborah Tannen and Anna Marie Trester (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 245.

64 „Die postindustrielle Ökonomie der Singularitäten." Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten: Zum Strukturwandel der Moderne*, 5th ed. (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2021), 111. The reference is to Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

nologies gain significance as a "general infrastructure for the fabrication of singularities."[65] This singularisation is at once a product of the interaction between persons, between persons and machines, and—in the computational deep structure of the platforms—of interactions between machines. Social media "with their profiles are one of the central arenas where the elaboration of singularity takes place."[66]

For the one thing, this "singularity" is a performative category. "Singularity" is the (ephemeral) quality of communicative artefacts that prove successful on "attention markets."[67] This, incidentally, might help explain how trending topics unseat canon. At the same time, "singularisation" is an ongoing process of predications, judgements, and negotiations of judgements. Formally, these judgements—Reckwitz calls them "valorisations"—put the particular or "the idiosyncratic" into a relationship with schemata of the general.[68] In linguistic practice, these judgements rather look like assignments of subtopics to superordinate terms. To generalise, Reckwitz states that in late-modern societies a structural transformation is taking place that causes "the social logic of the general to lose its supremacy to the social logic of the particular."[69]

As "subjective universality" ceases to serve as the reference point of judgements, Kant's "judgement of taste" loses its base. Opinions on the aesthetic value of objects and performances evidently continue to be expressed in the "postindustrial economy of singularities." On social platforms they are proliferating. But from a Kantian perspective they are just that: private opinions about the effect of aesthetic artefacts "upon my state so far as affected by such an object."[70] In a Kantian world, private opinions of

65 „einer allgemeinen Infrastruktur zur Fabrikation von Singularitäten." Reckwitz, *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten*, 229.

66 „mit ihren Profilen sind eine der zentralen Arenen dieser Arbeit an der Besonderheit." Reckwitz, 9.

67 „Auf den kulturellen Märkten stehen die … Güter im Wettbewerb darum, sichtbar zu werden und die Aufmerksamkeit des Publikums auf sich zu ziehen." Reckwitz, 149. For the definition of „Performanz" as a „Publikumsrelation" see Reckwitz, 220.

68 Reckwitz, 48–50.

69 „In der Spätmoderne findet ein gesellschaftlicher Strukturwandel statt, der darin besteht, dass die soziale Logik des Allgemeinen ihre Vorherrschaft verliert an die soziale Logik des Besonderen." Reckwitz, 11.

70 „Daß nun mein Urtheil über einen Gegenstand, wodurch ich ihn für angenehm erkläre, ein Interesse an demselben ausdrücke, ist daraus schon klar, daß es durch Empfindung eine Begierde nach dergleichen Gegenstande rege macht, mithin das Wohlgefallen nicht das bloße Urtheil über ihn, sondern die Beziehung seiner Existenz auf meinen Zustand,

the above kind do not contribute to public discourse; in this sense they are insignificant. Can this result in anything else than the liquidation of music criticism defined as a contribution to a public discourse based on arguments that can be discussed in turn? Hartmut Rosa still distinguishes between the "public opinion" (based on deliberation), and the preliminary realm of "private opinions" made public trough their aggregation in surveys and polls.[71] In a world, however, where "likes" are structurally integrated in the interface of digital media, expressions of personal pleasure or displeasure do not only have an effect on public opinion, but they also constitute it in a non-argumentative, stochastic way.

Strange enough, the authorities of the late bourgeois world of "legislators," the ones declared historically obsolete by Lyotard and Bauman, are now reappearing on our digital media stages in the shape of "creatives" and influencers. Their audiences accept them as "experts" on the base of attributions and identification, less so on the base of acquired professional or academic competence. Yet that may, on closer inspection, also be said about some of the former "grand critics." And possibly there is more continuity than might be expected considering the change in the fundamentals of critical practice. During the preparation of this article, I found little evidence of a significant shift in critics' practices. Traditional critics embracing digital media mostly seem to limit themselves to moving their analogue texts to the equally textual blog, all the while continuing to make the "personal" perspective of their judgements more marked. Instead of using the collective subject "one," dear at one time to Dahlhaus as a music critic, they now write "I." Established music critics proved disinclined to give an account of their attitudes, practices, and experiences with digital media. Managers of major European concert houses, asked whether they could recommend younger content creators advancing discourse on music in digital media, replied, "tell me, should you find one."

It may be understandably difficult for reasons of professional identity to move from one role model to another, or to give up the role model of a competence-based author in order to become a performance-oriented content creator. Few will manage to embody both roles. On the other hand, there

sofern er durch ein solches Object afficirt wird, voraussetzt." Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 207; Eng. trans. *Critique of Judgement*, 45.

71 See Hartmut Rosa, „Demokratischer Begegnungsraum oder lebensweltliche Filterblase? Resonanztheoretische Überlegungen zum Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit im 21. Jahrhundert," in *Ein neuer Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit?* ed. Martin Seeliger and Sebastian Sevignani (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2021), 255.

are examples in neighbouring disciplines suggesting that new forms of singularising or singularised judgements can work for specific, potentially vast audiences. BookTok, the fast-expanding submarket of TikTok dedicated to appraisals (rather than reviews) of books, could be an example of a new form of criticism. Invent OperaTok.[72] Finally, the appearance of "grandfluencers," senior netizens who gain audience as influencers presenting their mature singularities, proves that there is no age limit to the appropriation of role models developed through digital media.[73]

The Knowledge of Hypermedia

Hypermedia have disrupted the mediatic conditions for traditional music criticism. Differently from our everyday interpretation of change as bringing something "new," both adding to and opposing the "old," the concept of hypermedia theorises networked digital media as emergent, thus not incremental and not prefigured in existing media. If in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries media were "defined by the techniques and representational capacities of particular tools and machines" (materials could be added), digital media on networked computers now become simulated through algorithms and programmes.[74] This not only leads to multimodality, the merger of semiotic resources and modal affordances through a unifying code allowing for new modes of signification. It also makes the creation of meaning possible through the code (or "software") itself. "Turning everything into data, and using algorithms to analyse it changes," in Manovich's words, "what it means to know something." This emergent "software epistemology" implies the generation of knowledge and of "additional meanings" through the analysis of old data derived from analogue sources and of specifically generated data, and the fusion of separate information sources.[75]

Reckwitz mentions comparison technologies as part of the digital infrastructure of singularisation.[76] Applied to our case, this could mean programming portals able to automatise and edit the comparison of perfor-

72 As much as this may look like a business case, take into account that opera productions are to a lesser extent universally available commodities than books.

73 See Charley Locke, "A Twilight Filled With Followers and Fun—'Grandfluencers' Are Sharing a New Vision of Old Age," *New York Times*, May 26, 2022.

74 Manovich, *Software Takes Command*, 340.

75 Manovich, *Software Takes Command*, 337–41.

76 Reckwitz, *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten*, 54.

mances, a central genre of twentieth-century music criticism. Once successfully working on the base of recorded data, an application of this kind could also analyse live performances and thus create real-time reviews of musical performances based on objectifiable and negotiable criteria. Such a machine would certainly adopt known interpretation parameters, but the logic of data analytics implies it would also generate new criteria and parameters, new modes of reflection beyond our familiar semantic patterns of interpretation, beyond subjective experience coupled—deepened—with reflection.[77] Either way, the traditional sequence of a sonic event followed by a reflection in written form is no longer imperative from a technological standpoint. The very institution of the author, constructed in parallel with the figure of the composer, has been made optional by technological change. Given that texts are collectively shareable, why shouldn't they be edited collectively for the purposes of debate? And do we need authors when it will be possible to link analytic software with automated social actors such as bots?[78]

Multimodality alters the conditions of language as the medium—in the large sense—of music criticism, while data analytics will influence the questions asked and the issues addressed. Network theoreticians have begun to look back on printed language as a kind of historical medium useful for some sort of pleasurable expression but fraught with capacity constraints.[79] While Habermas hopes users of social media may yet familiarise themselves with the role of authors and learn how to communicate in constructive ways,[80] these users already explore the ludic discursive prac-

77 With regard to the relationship between IT as a "technology for producing ideas," the secular stagnation debate, and creative destruction see Philippe Aghion, Céline Antonin, and Simon Bunel, *The Power of Creative Destruction: Economic Upheaval and the Wealth of Nations*, trans. Jodie Cohen-Tanugi (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2021), chap. 6.

78 See Nicholas Diakopoulos, *Automating the News: How Algorithms are Rewriting the Media* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 147–48.

79 "When visual images could not be easily stored and transmitted, before film, the major medium was print. The print medium generated extraordinarily subtle works—novels, poems, all aimed at creating images in the imagination—using the compressed, bit-parsimonious technology of the written word. The human mind had to supply much of the processing and imagination." Eli M. Noam, "Next-Generation Content for Next-Generation Networks," in *Society and the Internet*, ed. Mark Graham and William H. Dutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 328–29.

80 „Auch die Autorenrolle muss gelernt werden." Habermas, „Überlegungen und Hypothesen," 489.

tices of social media. In our daily practice we adopt heteroglossia through a hybridisation of idioms of written and spoken language.[81] We create texts combining written language and iconic elements. This is a language change many people embrace.

"Extraordinary Words"

Instead of (by all means plausibly) interpreting present language change from the perspective of cultural conservatism as an instance of regression or decay, people wishing to express themselves on musical matters could embrace the creative potential offered by digital media. Charles Dill and Stephen Rose have pointed out to which extent the evolution of music-related discourse in France and in Germany during the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries was encouraged by a general interest in the cultivation of language. Vernacular languages, as opposed to Latin, then still the language of church and science, were further sharpened and refined as a means for sharing knowledge of musical practices and articulating aesthetic judgements, catering for a growing public seeking orientation through music-related discourse.[82] In essence, the much criticised "affective politics" of networked digital media,[83] their structural propensity to fuel antagonistic utterances and to polarize discourse, corresponds to a pattern that has structured a great part of critical discourse for well over 200 years, from the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns through the disputes between imitation of "outer" versus "inner nature," "melody" against "harmony," "Wagnerians" against "Brahmsians," "British" versus "continental," "tonal" against "atonal," up to "romantic" versus "historical" performance practice. Stephen Rose spoke of "the waspish nature of early musical criticism."[84] Today, networked digital media offer historically

81 See Jannis Androutsopoulos, "Participatory Culture and Metalinguistic Discourse: Performing and Negotiating German Dialects on YouTube," in *Discourse 2.0: Language and New Media*, ed. Deborah Tannen and Anna Marie Trester (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 50.

82 See Charles Dill, "Music Criticism in France before the Revolution" (76), and Stephen Rose, "German-Language Music Criticism before 1800" (106), in *The Cambridge History of Music Criticism*, ed. Christopher Dingle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

83 Megan Boler and Elizabeth Davis, "The Affective Politics of the 'Post-Truth' Era: Feeling Rules and Networked Subjectivity," *Emotion, Space and Society* 27 (2018): 76–78.

84 Rose, "German-Language Music Criticism," 112.

unprecedented structural opportunities for fruitful and unfruitful public debate, and where those media divide, they can also connect and federate.

It was the paradoxical passion of those who wrote reviews of musical performances to express in words that which resisted language through indeterminacy. Whether or not one believed that the essence of music should be *ineffable*, the horizon of what was currently expressible served as a "liminal figure of immanence." The effort itself to surpass the limit by writing a text constituted the critical subject, just as the perspective of subjectivity was already incorporated in the concept of horizon itself.[85] While it is possible to perpetuate this effort and experience, the language of the subjective—the language of the self-emancipating subject of history, the language of public oratory, all of which used to be music critics' preeminent medium—has lost its status of reference point for many users of digital media. Hence music criticism based on arguments—and heroically (and sensually) grappling with the limits of the expressible—has become a language game making use of what J. L. Austin once called "extraordinary words," not unlike the language games associated with wine tasting or spiritual epiphanies.[86]

What is lost, after accounting for possible exaggerations of retrospective idealisation, merits to be mourned. Eventually, the decomposition of a culture of deliberation or even the public sphere as a whole would endanger much more than just music criticism. However, Lyotard has defined Wittgenstein's invention of the language game precisely as an endpoint of a historical mourning process as it creates a kind of "legitimation not based on performativity." It relieves expression and communication from the onus to legitimate what cannot be universally legitimated through language anymore. This is a process of both unlearning and learning. Lyotard concludes: "Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative."[87]

Protracted Practices and the Communicative Space of Vital Issues

So does the question of music criticism in the age of networked digital media end up in a wilderness, in an inextricable entanglement of genesis and demise, progress and regression, assertion and oblivion? In the last

85 „als Limesfigur der Immanenz." Koschorke, *Die Geschichte des Horizonts*, 49.

86 "What holds of 'ordinary' words like 'red' or 'glows' must also hold of extraordinary words like 'real' or 'exists'." J. L. Austin, P. F. Strawson, and D. R. Cousin, "Symposium: Truth," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 24 (1950): 122.

87 Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, 41.

chapter of the *History of Music Criticism*, Christopher Dingle and Dominic McHugh claim that "music criticism will continue" almost no matter which changes affect its fundamentals and conditions: "Whenever and wherever music is made, in whatever genre, there will be those who wish to discuss, describe and debate it, argue, attack or advocate it, read, reflect and write about it in whatever medium is available."[88] This is probably true, and also a bit less than that, a truism. It integrates the psychological motives of music criticism into a cultural system of practices. As long as this system exists, opinions on music will be expressed and published howsoever. As long as there are children learning to play the guitar and the clarinet, as long as singers embody historical anthropologies, as long as someone attends concerts identifying herself with the musicians and their effort, as long as someone contemplates musical artefacts by listening or reading, discourse may follow. Viewed under this light, music criticism will not survive, rather it will continue to be. Music critics writing reviews will become an anthropological symbol just like musicians with their premodern bodily crafted modes of production. The achievements of networked digital media will guarantee the persistence of music criticism as we knew it, provided that the global databases fulfil their promise of storage and retrievability. Music criticism will find its place in the long tail of ideas.

What Dingle and McHugh do not account for is the institutional dimension of music criticism. This is, though, where the problems lie. While a history of music criticism as an institution has yet to be written, Stephen Rose, Mary Sue Morrow, and Charles Dill provide valuable information about the process of institutionalisation in Germany and France until about the year 1800. The overall impression is one of a vibrant, manifold debate, and of an effervescent will to go public with reflections on musical execution, expression, aesthetics, and taste. Morrow, however, has also raised the issue of "continuity and the critical mass of opinion necessary for the formation of a thought collective,"[89] problematising the fact that most publications encouraging and collecting critical contributions were short-lived. The problem seemed to have been resolved in the twentieth century. By then, music criticism held a secure spot in generalist one-to-many media that purported to cover the universe of topics of general interest. Today, as the emergence of networked digital media is lessening the importance

88 Dingle and McHugh, "Changing Media of Music Criticism," 705–6.

89 Mary Sue Morrow, *German Music Criticism in the Late Eighteenth Century: Aesthetic Issues in Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20.

of the older generalist media model and contributing to what is perceived as a fragmentation of the public sphere, Morrow's historical question of "continuity and the critical mass of opinion" is inverted. In the eighteenth century, the development of a federating media structure lagged behind the desire for a continuing public debate. Today, technological development may be too rapid to allow emergent media practices to become both common and entrenched.

Can music criticism thrive meaningfully in a fragmented public sphere with no medium to represent music-related discourse relevant for a general public? Does music criticism have to be an institution at all? Of course, it does not—who, after all, should request it? Resorting to the wisdoms of renunciation is always an option. However, certain questions open up one path out of the secular stagnation of the music-related generation of sense. It was the desire of a public to collectively know and discuss which constituted the unity of the multifaceted eighteenth-century reasoning on music, while the development of a federating ecology of media was still under way. The public's music-related-questions were of general interest, as Morrow, Rose, and Dill have shown. They were linked to personal growth and development, the right way of becoming a person of feeling, the right compositions to buy and study now that a fortepiano or a flute had been acquired for one's household. They were also questions about national character, questions of morality and taste. Common interest questions, rather than media, also constitute the discourse space in which Bauman's communication between groups and intellectuals acting as "interpreters" can take place, and sense can be produced along shared axes of relevance.

What are then the common-interest questions raised by music critics today? What new questions are emerging from the current music scenes? Can music be associated with vital issues, issues that bring together people from various walks of life? Can music-related discourse help construct one's singularity just as it served to develop people's subjectivity fifty years ago? What are the questions brought to the fore by social media? What will the questions generated by data analytics look like?

Should all our listening be in vain, should big questions related to music fall silent, the long tail of ideas will continue to offer a place for sumptuous remainders, rearguard battles, and special interest discussions. Should new questions make themselves heard, music criticism will survive, ceasing to continue to be what it was.

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At the *Berliner Zeitung* he headed the music department for ten years, before moving to the political analysis and opinion page. He was founding director of *Musikland Niedersachsen*, a country-wide project fostering modernisation processes within musical cultures, further training for cultural managers, and strategic communication at the behest of the Lower Saxony government. Part of the communication work consisted in the conception and realisation of a then innovative multimedia platform for the music-cultures of Lower Saxony. *Musikland-Niedersachsen.de* featured editorial content (including a video-series produced by an own film crew) as well as content generated by professional users and laypersons, and functioned as a hub for the networks created by the Musikland organisation.

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Appendix 1

The Spirit Lost: Music Criticism and the State of Art Music

Peter Uehling (Berlin)
(English translation by Klaus Georg Koch and Alexa Nieschlag)

Why do I still practise my profession as a music critic? Apart from obvious material reasons, I do not know. It is not necessary to exaggerate the question at stake the way music-philosopher Heinz-Klaus Metzger does, claiming the continued existence of humankind depend on us listening more to music from John Cage. However, the impression that serious music seems to be right about nothing anymore does look by all means like an apocalyptic mark on the horizon.

My perplexity is being raised and nourished by three elements. The first is part of the general crisis of education and cultural knowledge which, for its part, is a crisis of the primary text. People do not read any more. Even in university classes students do no longer study historical texts in an aesthetically adequate way. At best these texts deteriorate into information about past states of civilization and ideologies. More likely they do mutate into mere rumour following the fact that only their secondary meanings are being perceived. As far as music is concerned, this process of deterioration is somewhat different in that music is now only perceived in terms of personal pleasure and displeasure.

In both regards the result is the same: the canon disintegrates. The want for entertainment, rehearsed through hundreds of channels, first dissolves the propensity to perceive and then goes on creating petty idiosyncrasies, vulgo "filter bubbles," that finally become compacted by algorithms.

The second, more specifically musical of the three elements seems to contradict the first one. The quality of professional musical training and of practical skills is increasing, seemingly without any limits. More and more extremely skilled musicians appear on the stage, unhampered by technical difficulties. This has certainly made the work of orchestras more efficient, if we want to overcome the unease brought along by the use of a concept like "efficiency" in the context of the arts.

The effect of such an efficiency unhampered by technical limits is a distinctly strange emptiness. Practically every professional orchestra is now able to adequately perform works like Strawinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps or Alban Berg's Drei Orchesterstücke. Virtually every string quartet excels at dissolving the problems of consonance into mellifluous sound. Neither the piano works of Chopin, Liszt, or Rachmaninow nor Bach's pieces for violin solo pose any serious challenge to contemporary soloists. However, if all technical difficulties posed by musical works, by instrumentation or instrumental technique are resolved, then a formerly constitutive "frictional surface" is lacking, or perhaps an intermediate void calling the interpreter's mediation between what used to be utopically technical or technically utopian on the one side, and the meaning of a work on the other. Today, such mediation seems to be no longer necessary since the artwork is becoming entirely realized in its appearance. And yet something is missing. We might call it, boastfully and ineptly at the same time: Spirit.

What is lacking to the instrumentalists, and here I am approaching the last of the three perplexing elements, is the challenge that from the Baroque until the times of Strawinsky and Strauss used to be posed by contemporary music. Instead, a death certificate may be issued confidently for the contemporary music of our days. Contemporary music has disappeared from the public sphere of our concert halls only to be given artificial respiration in the intensive care stations of dedicated festivals. Any influence on the culture of our time has been lost. What is occasionally performed in subscription concerts serves the organisers as evidence they are taking their responsibility for the presence of "serious music," a music in which the very organisers do not believe any more.

There are no more composers left who would be present in both concert halls and specialized festivals. A first group of composers supplies symphony orchestras with dreary sound games whose modesty in terms of instrumental technique proves the fact that no musician and no concert-institution is willing to engage in extended rehearsals. The others have been stranded at conceptual work while striving for novelty in music. "Concept," unfortunately, is usually just another word for "free association," associations that do not require any aesthetic perception because in the end there will be a punchline suitable to be carried home as a certain insight. Here we are back to the general crisis of education and cultural knowledge mentioned before.

Serious music thus does not pose any challenge to the public sphere anymore, and it ceased influencing public discourse productively. It is being

rightly asked why society should spend any more money on this kind of cultural practise.

Making observations like these at a personal age over 50 one is well advised to critically ask oneself whether perceptions are not the result of any *déformation professionelle* or due to nostalgia. Perhaps the analysis presented above is based on standards and canons valid only 30 or 40 years ago?

To begin with, it isn't plausible either to assume youthful enthusiasm could provide more reliable insight than a thoroughly aged distanced view. And of course music continues to thrill me as a private person—as long as it isn't the music played in concert halls. Even if the parameters of my analysis should be "historical" by now: we are also dealing almost exclusively with historical art forms and historical institutions.

How should we value in this context the nomination of Kirill Petrenko as chief conductor of the Berliner Philharmoniker? Many claimed at the time this was meant as a kind of turn towards "art" after the era of Simon Rattle with its impact mainly on organisational matters. What would, however, "artistic turn" mean? Rattle had delivered his recording of Beethoven's symphonies pretty much in duty bound. Petrenko may be of a different caliber in terms of fanaticism and vivification, but this does not alter the fact that no one is actually longing for a new recording of Beethoven's symphonies. The same can be said about the symphonies of Josef Suk Petrenko is very interested in. It is not wrong to play these compositions but on the other hand playing them is an entirely irrelevant act, just as it doesn't make any difference whether an orchestra does play symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams or Bohuslav Martinů. Playing music like these has been an evasive maneuvre for more than half a century now, just as performing a new work of Jörg Widmann today is an evasive maneuvre meant to get around postwar modernism whose works are less handy to perform.

This is by no means to claim that our musical life receive a stimulating energetic impulse did music from Boulez, Stockhausen, and Nono regularly appear on our subscription concert programmes. Basically, this music is not performable and out of place on a concert stage, right as it would be the case with music of the Renaissance on the opposite side of history.

The reintroduction of works by Suk, Rachmaninow, Vaughan Williams, and their traditionalist colleagues tells us one thing: music from the twentieth century is by far not as atonal as the Second Viennese School's PR-departments were claiming. And the very transient effect of these restaged compositions is a proof of the fact that the artistic topicality of this concert-hall-music is actually a thing of the past. This out-of-dateness was ob-

scured by the Mahler-renaissance which did for one more time change our ideas about the concert repertoire. Yet Suk and the likes do not dispose of this very potential, and Mahler's has been depleted.

Our concert halls and symphony orchestras have reached the end of the line, and so has a splendid repertoire that went from Beethoven to Strauss. Modernity, which had got its bearings by the celebration of musical autonomy, croaked from that very idea or ideology. However, this idea of autonomy has always been belied by the fact that "autonomous" music did need a demand, a demand for national or highbrow middle-class self-assurance, for noble emotions as well as for scandals. A music free from any demand by listeners, musicians or institutions may be imaginable. Its fate is foreseeable as well. (The same can be said, by the way, of string quartets that have lifted the ideology of autonomy to tremendous heights. They now get broken by the very limited repertoire of always the same compositions by Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, and Bartók.)

To say it clearly: listening as a form of reception holding the same dignity as reading literary texts and looking at paintings, sculptures, and films has had its place within the concept of autonomy of music, nowhere else. The fact that only few were able to realise this kind of perception in its fullest sense has encumbered what had been called "absolute music" with misled respect and perverted it into those functions of distinction described by Pierre Bourdieu. It may be interesting in this context that the first concert being immediately sold out in the Berliner Philharmoniker's 2022/23 season was the one in which film composer John Williams directed his own works. This may be excused as an exception, and the public in this case was not the usual one. On the other side this programme worked very much the same way the usual symphonic programmes do. Revolving within and around themselves they are speculating on the same effect as the well-known film melodies. Listening on this level does mean to recognise. However, while John Williams is speculating on this effect legitimately, based also on the leitmotiv-effect accompanying a film, in the case of a Beethoven symphony recognition as a receptive attitude does mean a distortion of the composed matter. Here recognition of musical elements would have to be reflected upon their function in the course of the musical process. In other words: the emotional effect of recognition should be accompanied by perceptive insight.

Whereas in "absolute music" a historically unique high ground may have been reached, the according symphonic and chamber music is not the only

paradigm, and the contemplative combined with analytic listening is not the only valid reception mode. Looking at opera and music theatre the situation does not appear entirely daunting. Being linked with action on the stage, opera is at least free from the lie of autonomy. For the moment, German *Regietheater* is still rather self-referential but it can be expected that the mostly sacrosanct orders codified in the scores will be disbanded, and this is going to release a new boost of creativity allowing for new insights into the repertoire. Of course this prospect may be a frightening one as well.

First and foremost, the human being that sings will remain an unpredictable entity of ineradicable individuality and limited perfectibility, as opposed to the drilled instrumentalist. Her and his charisma extends as far as into a form in which reception and production mingle with each other: choral singing. Certainly, in this realm, too, pseudo-expert bigotry may be cultivated. However, in many cases choirs do create a bond with tradition which can then be carried forward into our present by committed choirmasters. There are, thus, semiprofessional choirs of astonishing musical quality singing surprisingly contemporary programmes. Even if their concept of contemporary music may comprise music different from the one performed by specialised formations for contemporary—"*Neue*"—music, they are connected to newer tendencies proclaiming the end of the development of musical material and the use of music that is already present. It is understood that due to the necessarily longer production cycles these semiprofessional choirs get into closer contact with their compositions, compared to specialised formations scheduling only one and a half rehearsal-units for a first release. Thanks already to the time invested, these works acquire more value than any of the world premieres produced by Ensemble modern. Perhaps "value" in this case is no longer attributed based on aspects of "autonomy" but this does only stress what music is more than anything else: a social life event.

How does now music criticism relate to all this, given that the genre did evolve alongside the ideology of autonomous music? Whereas music criticism in the perspective of autonomous music tried to make the heard understandable to the non-expert citizen, contemporary music critics will notice that they are writing for readers who are not driven by the desire to get music explained. Often enough they tediously remark the critic must have attended a different concert than their one, so the question may be raised: Why someone seemingly sure of their judgements do read a review at all?

Music criticism does not want to "know it better." Instead, it wants to widen readers' aesthetic criteria and perspectives. In this sense, music

criticism does not occupy any position of authority one might consider as "microaggressive." Whoever does attribute authoritarianism to it does not want to learn anything other than what he or she does—or does not—know. In other words, rejecting the mission of music criticism would mean abandoning the "culture of discourse" for a "culture of dispositions." According to Markus Metz and Georg Seeßlen,[1] in this identity-oriented culture the much-praised ambiguities distinguishing a "culture of discourse" do vanish.

Admittedly, it is no use stemming oneself against change in the field of aesthetics as if one could clamorously call back former states of things. Naming again and again the powers that unmade the past, lamenting the consequences would, in the long run, be tedious and insubstantial. On the other side, who would claim in earnest that advertising ever fresher virtuoso-meat might be anything more than to commercially exploit new faces? The few old virtuosos left aren't being dethroned by the young ones. The contrary is the case: Martha Argerich and Daniel Barenboim, to make two examples, seem to continue to ascend Mount Olympus, all the more so compared to the short-lived careers of their young counterparts. The farcicality of the business does, however, concern both camps. The felicitations and good wishes accompanying the emergence of new talents onto the scene is no less ridiculous than the apotheosis of a virtuoso featuring an absurdly shrunk repertoire or a conductor lacking any concept of interpretation that transcends brilliant, nineteenth-century-style "witchcraft." Both Argerich and Barenboim, differently from what can be supposed of the young virtuosos, still do have an idea of what "art" is, unfortunately rendering obvious the degree of helplessness a concept acquires once it has fallen out of time.

What is then left to be written? It seems astonishing and hardly understandable any longer which remarkable degree of status music criticism once could have and did have. In our days, the big questions of society pose themselves more immediately and urgently and perhaps request solutions in a more concrete way. This does change the climate not only for aesthetic reception but also for (re-)production. Every production must prove its relevance, on the lowest level (John Williams) its entertainment value, on a slightly higher level its societal wokeness (female composers, music forbidden by the Nazi regime etc.). But even if it may seem hard: music criticism

1 Markus Metz, Georg Seeßlen, *Apokalypse & Karneval. Neoliberalismus: Next Level* (Berlin: Bertz + Fischer, 2022), 8.

does not only have to make up the balance of what has been lost and long for better times.

Had it once to decipher what "autonomous art" did tell about and tell to society, the task is nowadays to explain in which ways socially-oriented artistic production might still be emphatically art. Back then, as well as today, the challenge is to sensitise and enhance aesthetic perception thus relating and linking art and world.

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Warum ich meinen Beruf als Musikkritker noch ausübe – von den offensichtlichen materiellen Gründen abgesehen –, weiß ich nicht. Man muss nicht gleich übertreiben wie der Musikphilosoph Heinz-Klaus Metzger, der behauptet hat, der Weiterbestand der menschlichen Zivilisation hinge davon ab, dass wir mehr Musik von John Cage hören. Aber dass es nun in der ernsten Musik tatsächlich um gar nichts mehr zu gehen scheint, hat durchaus etwas von einem apokalyptischen Zeichen am Horizont.

Drei Momente sind es, die meine Ratlosigkeit verursachen und nähren: Das erste bewegt sich im Rahmen der allgemeinen Bildungskrise, die eine Krise des primären Textes ist. Es wird nicht mehr gelesen, auch im Studium werden historische Texte nicht mehr in ästhetisch adäquater Art und Weise rezipiert, sie verkommen bestenfalls zu Informationen über vergangene Ideologien und Zivilisationsstände, wenn sie nicht zum Gerücht werden, weil nur noch der sekundäre Abhub wahrgenommen wird. In der Musik ist dieser Degenerationsprozess anders gelagert, indem sie nur noch einem krud-individuellen Ge- oder Missfallen nach wahrgenommen wird. Das Ergebnis ist in beiden Fällen das Gleiche: Der Kanon zerfällt, weil das durch hundert Kanäle eingeübte Unterhaltungsbedürfnis zuerst die Rezeptionsbereitschaft zersetzt und dann belanglose Idiosynkrasien – vulgo Filterbubbles – schafft, die der Algorithmus weiter verfestigt.

Das zweite Moment scheint dem ersten zu widersprechen und ist musikspezifischer: Die Qualität der Musiker-Ausbildung verbessert sich in technischer Hinsicht anscheinend ohne Grenzen. Immer mehr technisch höchstqualifizierte Musiker erscheinen auf der Bildfläche, für die es keine Schwierigkeiten mehr zu geben scheint. Das hat die Arbeit der Orchester effizienter gemacht. Vom Unbehagen, im Zusammenhang mit Künsten von „Effizienz" zu sprechen, abgesehen, entsteht dadurch ein ganz seltsames Vakuum. Wenn die technischen Schwierigkeiten eines Werks (wie des „Sacre du Printemps" oder der Drei Orchesterstücke von Berg), einer Be-

setzung (alle Streichquartette sind mittlerweile in der Lage, die klanglichen Probleme in reinen Wohllaut aufzulösen) oder eines Instruments (weder die Klavierwerke von Chopin, Liszt oder Rachmaninow noch die Violin-Soli von Bach bereiten heutigen Solisten ernsthafte Probleme) gelöst sind, dann fehlt eine Reibungsfläche, in die früher gewissermaßen der Interpret einsprang, um zwischen dem technisch Utopischen und dem Sinn eines Werks zu vermitteln. Heute ist derlei Vermittlung nicht nötig, wenn sich das Kunstwerk restlos in der Erscheinung realisiert – aber irgendwas fehlt dann doch; man könnte so großspurig wie unbeholfen sagen: der Geist.

Was den Instrumentalisten fehlt – und damit komme ich zum dritten Moment – ist die Herausforderung, wie sie in der Zeit vom Barock bis zu Strawinsky und Strauss die jeweils neue Musik darstellte. Unserer heutigen neuen Musik jedoch kann man getrost einen Totenschein ausstellen. Aus der Öffentlichkeit der Konzertsäle ist sie verschwunden und wird auf den Intensivstationen der Festivals künstlich beatmet. Einen Einfluss auf die Kultur hat sie nicht mehr. Was im Abonnement gelegentlich erklingt, dient dem Veranstalter zum Nachweis seiner Verantwortung für eine Gegenwart der „ernsten Musik", an die er selbst nicht glaubt. Es gibt keine Komponisten mehr, die zugleich auf Festivals und im Konzertsaal präsent sind. Die einen beliefern die Sinfonieorchester mit öde zu hörenden Klangspielen, deren technische Anspruchslosigkeit spiegelt, dass sich kein Musiker und keine Konzert-Institution wirklich dafür mit verstärktem Probenaufwand engagieren will. Die anderen sind auf der Suche nach dem Neuen beim Konzept gelandet, und „Konzept" ist in der Regel nur ein anderes Wort für freie Assoziationen, die, und damit schließt sich der Kreis zur Bildungskrise, keinerlei ästhetische Wahrnehmung erfordern, weil sich am Ende eine Pointe finden wird, die dem Hörer als eindeutige und gesicherte Erkenntnis auf den Heimweg mitgegeben wird.

Die „ernste Musik" stellt somit für die Öffentlichkeit keine Herausforderung mehr dar und wirkt daher nicht mehr produktiv in den Diskurs herein – zurecht wird daher immer vernehmlicher gefagt, warum man sich derlei Institutionen überhaupt noch leisten will. Wenn man so etwas als Mensch über 50 wahrnimmt, muss man sich immer skeptisch fragen lassen, ob man den Täuschungen einer déformation professionelle oder gar denen einer subjektiven Nostalgie unterliegt, ob man eventuell nach den Parametern von vor 30 oder gar 40 Jahren bewertet. Zunächst ist nicht einzusehen, warum jugendliche Begeisterung ein wahreres Bild der Verhältnisse transportieren soll als eine über die Jahre gewonnene Distanz; und natürlich begeistert mich privat Musik noch immer und tendenziell immer

mehr (allerdings kaum noch die Musik der Konzertsäle). Und selbst wenn die Parameter der Bewertung historische sind: wir sprechen ja auch mittlerweile ausschließlich über historische Kunstformen und Institutionen. Wie ist zum Beispiel die Besetzung des Chefdirigenten der Berliner Philharmoniker mit Kirill Petrenko zu bewerten? Es war zu lesen: Nach der vor allem in organisatorischer Hinsicht bedeutsamen Zeit mit Simon Rattle soll es jetzt wieder um die Kunst gehen. Was soll das genau heißen? Schon Rattle hat seine Beethoven-Gesamteinspielung eher pflichtschuldig abgeliefert. Petrenko mag da ein anderes Kaliber an Fanatismus und Belebung sein – aber das hilft ja nicht darüber hinweg, dass niemand mehr wirklich auf eine neue Beethoven-Gesamteinspielung wartet. Genauso wenig wartet man allerdings auf die Symphonien von Josef Suk, für die sich Petrenko interessiert. Es ist nicht verkehrt, diese Stücke zu spielen, aber irgendwie ist es auch vollkommen egal, ebenso wie es keinen Unterschied macht, ob man die Symphonien von Ralph Vaughan Williams oder Bohuslav Martinů spielt oder nicht spielt: Das sind seit mehr als einem halben Jahrhundert Ausweichmanöver vor der Nachkriegsmoderne, die eben nicht so flott aufzuführen ist wie ein neues Werk von Jörg Widmann.

Ich möchte nun keineswegs behaupten, dass das Musikleben einen belebenden Energiestoß empfinge, wenn die Musik von Boulez, Stockhausen und Nono regelmäßig auf den Spielplänen des Abonnements erschiene, denn im Grunde ist diese Musik im Konzertsaal bereits so fehl am Platz – und oft gar nicht aufführbar –, wie es auf der anderen Seite der Geschichte die Musik der Renaissance wäre. Die Wiederaufführung von Suk, Rachmaninow Vaughan Williams und ihrer traditionalistischen Kollegen lehrt eines: Das 20. Jahrhundert war längst nicht so atonal, wie es die PR-Abteilungen der Wiener Schule behaupteten. Und die sehr vorübergehende Wirkung dieser Wiederaufführungen ist der Beleg, dass die künstlerische Aktualität der Konzertsaal-Musik tatsächlich vorbei ist. Das wurde über ihre Zeit hinaus durch die Mahler-Renaissance verdeckt, die noch einmal unsere Begriffe des Repertoires verändert hat. Aber Suk und die anderen haben dieses Potenzial nicht, und das Mahlers ist ausgeschlachtet.

Die Konzertsäle, die Sinfonieorchester sind am Ende und mit ihnen ein stolzes Repertoire von Beethoven bis Strauss sowie eine Moderne, die sich an der hier zelebrierten Idee autonomer Musik orientiert hat und an dieser Idee oder Ideologie krepiert ist: Dass auch die „autonome“ Musik eine Nachfrage braucht – nach nationaler oder bildungsbürgerlicher Selbstwertversicherung, nach hehren Gefühlen, aber auch nach Skandalen – hat ihre Autonomie immer Lügen gestraft. Eine wirklich ohne jeden Bedarf von

Hörern, Institutionen oder Musikern hergestellte Musik ist vielleicht vorstellbar – aber ihr Schicksal ist absehbar. (Ähnliches gilt übrigens auch für das Streichquartett, das diese Autonomie-Ideologie in ungeahnte Höhen gesteigert hat. Die Ensembles gehen kaputt am ewig gleichen, sehr kleinen Repertoire von Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms und Bartók.) Um es deutlich zu sagen: Hören als Rezeptionsform gleicher Dignität wie Lesen und Sehen hat hier und nirgends sonst seinen Ort gehabt. Dass sie nur den wenigsten wirklich in vollster Form möglich war, hat das, was man „absolute" Musik nannte, immer schon mit falschem Respekt belastet und sie vielleicht zu jenen Distinktionsfunktionen pervertiert, die Pierre Bourdieu beschrieben hat. In der Saison 22/23 der Berliner Philharmoniker war übrigens das erste, sofort ausverkaufte Konzert jenes, in dem der Filmkomponist John Williams eigene Werke dirigierte. Man mag das als Ausnahme entschuldigen, und das Publikum war auch nicht dasselbe wie sonst. Aber es war auch im Betragen kein grundsätzlich anderes, und natürlich spekuliert die Rotation des immer gleichen symphonischen Repertoires auf den gleichen Effekt wie die sattsam bekannten Filmmelodien: Hören ist auf dieser Stufe Wiedererkennen. Während John Williams indes auf diesen Effekt spekuliert – schon aufgrund der leitmotivischen Verwendung im Film –, bedeutet er in einer Beethoven-Symphonie eine Verzerrung der komponierten Sache: Hier ist beim Wiedererkennen von Material immer dessen Funktion im Verlauf mitzubedenken, der emotionale Effekt des Erkennens soll begleitet werden von einer Erkenntnis.

Aber mag in der „absoluten Musik" auch eine historisch einzigartige Höhe des Komponierens erreicht sein, so ist dennoch die symphonische und Kammermusik bei weitem nicht die einzige und das kontemplative Hören nicht der einzig gültige Rezeptionsmodus. Schauen wir in die Oper, so sieht die Sache schon nicht ganz so hoffnungslos aus. Sie ist zumindest von der Autonomie-Lüge befreit, indem sie sich mehr oder weniger eng mit einer Bühnenhandlung verbindet. Zwar dreht sich das Regie-Theater immer mehr um sich selbst, aber es ist abzusehen, dass die meist noch sakrosankten, von der Partitur vorgegebenen Ordnungen künftig aufgelöst werden, was einen gewaltigen Kreativitätsschub auslösen dürfte, der endlich wahrhaft neue Ansichten des Repertoires erlaubt – davor kann man natürlich auch Angst haben.

Vor allem ist der singende Mensch im Unterschied zum gedrillten Instrumentalisten noch immer eine unberechenbare Instanz von begrenzter Perfektibilität und unausrottbarer Individualität. Seine Ausstrahlung reicht hinein bis in jene Form, in der sich Rezeption und Produktion mischen, in

den Chorgesang. Dass sich in Chören auch eine Form von pseudoexpertenhafter Borniertheit kultivieren kann, ist richtig. Allerdings entsteht hier eine Verbundenheit mit einer Tradition, die von einigen Chorleitern durchaus engagiert auch in die Gegenwart geführt werden kann. Es gibt Laien- und semiprofessionelle Chöre von erstaunlicher musikalischer Qualität, die erstaunlich zeitgenössische Programme singen und dabei natürlich unter „zeitgenössischer Musik" etwas anderes begreifen als die Spezialensembles für neue Musik, die aber doch mit neueren Tendenzen – dem erklärten Ende weiterer Materialerweiterung, dem Arbeiten mit vorhandener Musik – erstaunlich eng zusammenhängen. Und dass solche Chöre durch die zwangsläufig längere Arbeit an solchen Projekten enger mit den Stücken in Verbindung treten als Profiensembles, die für eine Uraufführung anderthalb Proben ansetzen, versteht sich von selbst: Schon durch die investierte Zeit in die Erarbeitung eines neuen Werks erhält dieses Werk einen höheren „Wert" als eine von zig Uraufführungen, die etwa die Musiker des Ensemble modern im Jahr spielen. „Wert" wird hier nun vielleicht nicht mehr aus „autonomen" Gesichtspunkten heraus zugeschrieben. Aber das betont nur, was Musik vor allem ist: eine soziale Angelegenheit.

Wie verhält sich nun Musikkritik dazu, die ja parallel zur Autonomie-Ideologie entstanden ist und immer die Aufgabe hatte, das Gehörte für den Bürger, der wenig davon verstand, aufzuschlüsseln? Dabei bemerkt man schnell, dass man oft genug für Leser schreibt, die sich gar nichts aufschlüsseln lassen wollen, sondern öde bemerken, man hätte offenbar ein anderes Konzert besucht als sie. Von Kritikerseite aus wäre zu fragen, warum jemand, der sich seines Urteils offenbar sicher ist, dann überhaupt eine Kritik liest? Kritik will nicht besserwissen, sondern die Kriterien und Perspektiven des Lesers erweitern. In diesem Sinne bezieht sie den Standpunkt einer Autorität, den man als „mikroaggressiv" empfinden kann – aber wer so empfindet, will wirklich gar nichts mehr wissen, sondern nur noch seine Identität (vulgo: Unbildung) verteidigen, man befindet sich nicht mehr in einer „Kultur des Diskurses", sondern in einer „Kultur des Dispositionen" (Markus Metz/Georg Seeßlen: Apokalypse & Karneval, Berlin 2022, S. 8). Und es ist unverständlich, warum eine im Punktesystem und diskursfrei dargestellte Empfehlung weniger autoritär sein soll.

Allerdings bringt es nichts, sich einer Veränderung des ästhetischen Feldes entgegenzustellen, als könnte man den vorigen Zustand herbeizetern. Die Gewalten, die ihn beseitigt haben, immer wieder zu benennen und deren Wirkungen zu beklagen, wäre auf die Dauer lästig und kraftlos. Dass die Ausrufung immer wieder neuen Virtuosen-Frischfleischs mehr wäre

als die kommerzielle Ausschlachtung neuer Gesichter – wer wollte derlei im Ernst behaupten? Die wenigen Alten, die noch übrig sind, werden von den Jungen keineswegs entthront, im Gegenteil: Martha Argerich und Daniel Barenboim entrücken angesichts der kurzfristigen Karrieren der Jugend in nachgerade olympische Sphären. Die Lachhaftigkeit des Betriebs steckt indes beide Lager an, die Zukunftsbeschwörung, mit der das Talent in den Ring geschickt wird, ist nicht weniger lächerlich als die Apotheose einer Pianistin mit absurd zusammengeschrumpften Repertoire und die eines Dirigenten, der keinen Begriff von Interpretation zu haben scheint, der über genialische Magie à la 19. Jahrhundert hinausreicht. Dass beide noch einen Begriff davon haben, was Kunst ist – womit bei den Jüngeren kaum noch zu rechnen ist –, zeigt, dass so ein Begriff leider auch hilflos wird, wenn er aus der Zeit fällt.

Was also bleibt zu schreiben übrig? Man wundert sich heute fast und versteht kaum noch, welchen Status Musikkritik einmal hatte, haben konnte. Die gesellschaftlichen Fragen stellen sich heute unmittelbarer, drängender und verlangen vielleicht auch konkreter nach Lösung. Derlei verändert das Klima nicht nur der Rezeption, sondern auch der (Re-) Produktion. Alles muss seine Relevanz nachweisen, auf der untersten Ebene (John Williams) seinen Unterhaltungswert, auf einer kaum höheren seine gesellschaftliche Wokeness (Komponistinnen, von den Nazis verbotene Musik usw.).

Auch wenn es schwerfällt: Musikkritik hat hier nicht nur die Verluste zu bilanzieren und sich nach besseren Zeiten zu sehnen. Hatte sie damals zu dechiffrieren, was an der „autonomen" Kunst von der Gesellschaft sprach, so heute, was an der sozial orientierten Kunst noch im emphatischen Sinne Kunst sein könnte. Damals wie heute geht es darum, die ästhetische Wahrnehmung zu sensibilisieren und zu bereichern und damit Kunst und Welt aufeinander zu beziehen.

Appendix 2

From Paper to the Web: The Evolution of French-Language Commentary on World Music in the Specialized Press, from the 1990s to the Present Day

Benjamin MiNiMuM, in collaboration with Angèle Cossée*
(English Translation by Helen Tooke)

French press specializing in musical diversity, "world music," first made its appearance in the 1990s. Over the past 30 years, following the emergence of the Internet, the major issues and the debate surrounding this music have evolved a great deal. A brief history of the media leaders in the sector, a broad outline of the development of technologies and practices in cyberspace and an idea as to how they were viewed by the music industry will allow us to better understand why.

Specialized Printed Press

At the end of the 1990s, the French music press was flourishing. One or more magazines were dedicated to each stylistic category, and there were even publications on each family of instruments, which easily gained themselves a loyal readership. The music industry was doing well, it was not tight-fisted with its advertising investments and did not hesitate to organize hugely expensive press trips to music events, which provided those involved with ample media coverage to promote all the news about their flagship artists.

A rather vague and eclectic category, World Music is neither a style nor an aesthetic.[1] It embraces a wide variety of musical expressions: from her-

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1 See the dossier published in 1996 by the ethnomusicology workshops (*Ateliers d'ethno-*

itage to contemporary, rural to urban, sacred to secular, intimate to collective. During the last decade of the twentieth century, after the successful productions of the Real World label, launched by Peter Gabriel, and the Cuban supergroups' Buena Vista Social Club, these musical genres began to count for something in the commercial landscape, arousing growing interest from music lovers and professionals.

The specialized press still provides a reference for music fans. A broad knowledge of societies, their histories and cultures, is required to fully comprehend multicultural music. Knowledge acquired in the field or through the consultation of reference works is supplemented by the critical thinking and writing skills of the journalists, who often specialize in one particular music style or region of the world.

Little by little, specialized publications began to appear in France (traditional European music and dances have had a reference magazine since 1988). *Trad'Mag* offered articles, reviews, and above all an almost exhaustive agenda of concerts, festivals, and traditional dance and other events. *Trad'Mag* was set up and run by enthusiasts, mostly volunteers, and opened up to non-European music in the early 1990s.

In Switzerland, the pioneer was *Swiss Vibes*. This local magazine first came out in 1991 and extended its influence to France the following year. *Swiss Vibes* is devoted to black music (funk, soul, jazz …) and "world music." It was published every two months before becoming monthly in 1998. To be noted is the outstanding quality of its texts, its photos, and its model.

World magazine, directed by a music journalist from *Libération*, appeared in March 1998, and ran for one year before resuming regular publication from 2003 to 2005.

In the spring of 1990, entertainment and record entrepreneurs and journalists founded the association Zone Franche,[2] with the aim of federating all those involved in the music of the French-speaking world, a mission that it still pursues today by readjusting its objectives in the light of the various developments in society and the professional sector.

As regards the construction of a professional database, the first works were of an editorial nature. In 1991, *Sans Visa*, the first Guide to Living

musicologie) in Geneva, dealing in particular with the issues and enquiry surrounding the collisions between traditional music and urban music and world music: "Nouveaux enjeux," *Cahiers de musiques traditionnelles/Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie* 9 (1996), https://journals.openedition.org/ethnomusicologie/1042.

2 https://www.zonefranche.com.

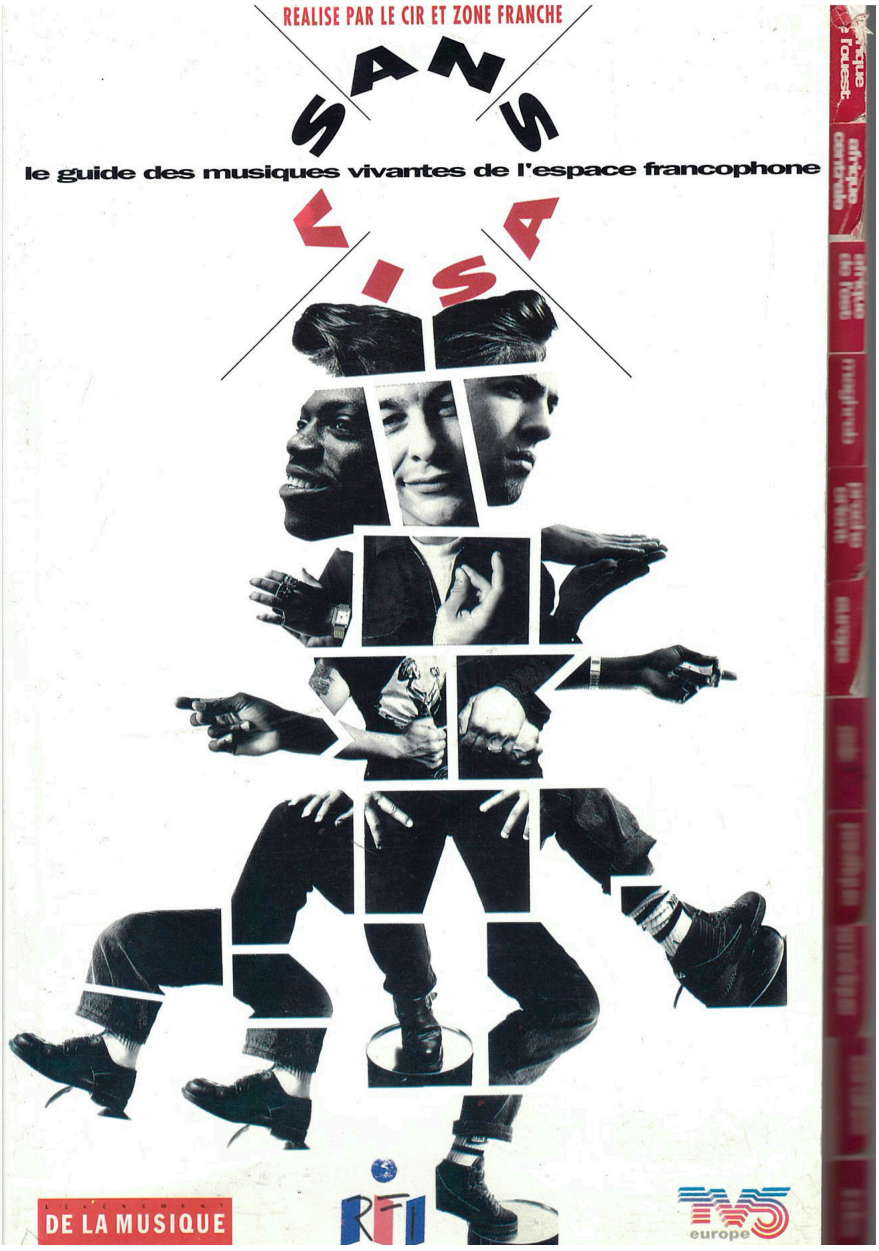

Fig. 1 The 1995 Guide to the Music of French Speakers and the Sans Visa World

Music in the French-speaking world, was released.[3] In 1992, the quarterly newsletter, *Visa Permanent*, was sent to its members by post. In 1993, Zone Franche adapted its business directory to a Minitel service. This typically French system of alphanumeric data exchanges, without images or sounds, preceded the use of the Internet on the territory. Minitel, which was available from 1980 to 2012, loaned and then rented to the user or provided free access in post offices. It was operated by means of a screen/keyboard terminal connected to the telephone network and offered access to the telephone directory, messaging, and mail order services.

Faced with the evolution of the World Wide Web, the Zone Franche association launched the first version of its website in 1995. This was also the year when the second *Sans Visa* guide came out, delivering a very broad professional base and offering a real mine of information on artists, events, and aesthetics related to non-European music. Zone Franche celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in September 2021. We will return to its evolution further on.

Specialized Editorial Sites

The end of the last decade of the twentieth century also saw the appearance of the first music websites designed for publishing purposes. In 1997, a couple of journalists of Algerian origin based in France, launched PlaNet DZ, a website that echoes the culture of their country and has a lot of space for music. The following year Radio France Internationale created RFI Musique, where articles devoted to French and international music news can be found.[4]

On March 21, 1998, the multimedia design studio Mondorondo launched Mondomix.org, the first French-language site entirely dedicated to traditional and contemporary music. Mondomix grew out of the realization that it was relevant to promote music from all five continents on the global network; its contributors were a mix of cyberspace adventurers and specialized journalists, mostly from the world of the printed press.

At the end of the 1990s, editorial development on the Internet was not yet standardized in its conception or in the way it presented content. This

3 *Sans visa: le guide des musiques vivantes de l'espace francophone*, ed. Centre d'information du rock et des variétés and Zone franche (Paris: CIR, 1991).

4 https://musique.rfi.fr/.

means of presenting, recommending, and sharing music was rejected by the major groups of the music industry, who failed to understand its intricacies and functions, and avoided it like the plague. In 1999, the Napster software, which allowed the free exchange of good quality digital music files between individuals (peer-to-peer), escaped the control of its rights holders, who equated this practice with piracy.[5] The big record companies fought Napster fiercely and, in 2001, succeeded in closing down its Peer-to-Peer service. At that time, they refused to collaborate with the parties involved in music promotion on the Internet.

Although imagination was then the ruling power among site and content designers, these were, however, held back by the technical limitations of the technological and communications environment. Connections were then made via a modem which transformed digital information into analog data so it could circulate on narrowband using the telephone network. Only texts and low-definition visuals could be published at the time. However, in 1995, a Seattle-based company made the RealAudio software available: this allowed music and videos to be streamed and listened to.[6] From then on, multimedia elements and, in particular, video were inseparable from musical discourse on the web.

The Mondomix Adventure

It was in this environment and with this technology that the Mondomix team evolved. The site offered new content on a weekly basis, while gradually building a database of artists that would become referential. There were record reviews, portraits, and editorials, often commissioned because the interest in these aesthetics of otherness goes hand in hand with social and political enquiry. In reaction to current events, these could reflect, for example, questions about postcolonialism or the lack of ethnic diversity in the French political class, observations on the role of the Internet in the fight against dictatorships, or the attempts of the powers to control the use of the global network.

In addition, each week a newsletter promoted its content and provided distilled additional information on those musical genres that did not appear on the site. The Mondomix journalists were committed to disseminat-

5 https://lu.napster.com.
6 http://www.real.com.

Fig. 2 Homepage of Mondomix.com (October 17, 2011)

ing reliable information, collected at the source by meeting the artists, via press releases or targeted research, which they wrote by carefully working the substance, polishing the form, and injecting their own enthusiasm.

Ignored by the big players, with the notable exception of Virgin, which still distributes the Real World label, Mondomix reported on the musical life of independent artists and selected concert halls and festivals with which they gradually created partnerships. In January 1999, at the Cabaret Sauvage (Paris), Mondomix offered a daily multimedia follow-up of the Femmes d'Algérie festival, which presented cultures and highly talented artists, threatened in their own country by radical Islamist movements. During the festival, the Mondomix journalists broadcast a daily report on evening events, excerpts from concerts and audio interviews, as well as photographs taken on the spot.

This webcast was followed by French and Algerian Internet users, whose enthusiasm was catching. The initiative also attracted other festivals which,

in turn, commissioned similar performances in exchange for visibility. This activity contributed to the reputation of the media, which soon offered original videos too.[7] Mondomix did not then directly generate revenue, but the mastery of new technologies and the Internet environment thus deployed brought business to the in-house multimedia creation studio.

In 2003, Mondomix also became a paper magazine, distributed free of charge in France through a network of cafés and cultural spaces or whenever partnership events took place. This new venture balanced its activities financially through the sale of spaces. As advertising prospects are based on the choices of the editorial staff and the proposals from advertisers are first validated by the former before being accepted, the team managed to ensure that the advertisers' interests did not interfere with the editorial line, which hinged on the artistic, ethical, and historical qualities of the subjects and the monitoring of new trends and aesthetic movements. The magazine attracted the collaboration of recognized journalists but also a new generation that included many talented authors. As the articles were remunerated, the editorial staff could ask its collaborators for precision in their search for information and the style of their papers, which were didactic, as well as sourced and committed through the convictions of their authors.

A complementary synergy started to develop between paper magazines and the Internet. The writings in the magazine were echoed and amplified by multimedia elements that could be consulted online. The creation of this widely circulated paper magazine, distributed throughout France, ended up attracting all the players in the sector. The website that became mondomix.com then had an English version and an embryonic Spanish version that allowed it to expand its audience of enthusiasts, amateurs and professionals, its partners, and its fields of investigation in Europe and other continents (Africa, South America, and Asia).

The popularity of the medium grew, but advertising revenues only partially managed to cover the expenses and salaries of the team which included several divisions, (writing, multimedia development, partnerships, and an advertising department).[8] The difficulty of finding a stable economic model in a changing environment remained, impelling the company to increase its skills and to multiply ancillary services (technological or expert

7 See the Mondomix YouTube page at https://www.youtube.com/c/mondomix.

8 In 2011 the site had 300000 individual visitors per month, and in 2013 the magazine ran 50000 copies.

advice, film creations, books and compilations etc.). These missions were most often disconnected from the editorial logic, with the exception of cultural objectives which were an extension of the medium's commitments.

The Turning Point in the Noughties

Record sales began to decline in 2003, which signaled a change in the way subscribers were listening. This crisis, which worsened over the years, had a direct impact on the health of the music press. Advertising investments were becoming more cautious and increasingly conditional on editorial counterparts.[9] In 2005, *World Magazine* ceased publication. In 2008 a new title, *World Sound*, arrived in the newsstands but it ran for only three years. In 2013, 14 years after its creation, *Vibration* filed for bankruptcy. In the summer of 2015, *Mondomix* ceased its activities. On July 31, 2017, *Trad'Mag* was officially placed in receivership.

From then on, the commentary on and presentation of multicultural music no longer had regular and dedicated critical support. The only sources of information were rare radio broadcasts, the number and recurrence of which were decreasing, and a few rare articles in the general press.

The Internet was no longer the experimental field that it had been at the end of the 1990s. The spirit of adventure had given way to the spirit of commercial competition, which imposed shorter and shorter timing for the dissemination of information, plus a greater number of publications. The response to these needs for quantity and speed of reaction often led to a decline in editorial quality and to neglect during the process of source checking.

With the evolution of technologies, the way music was accessed on the Internet also changed a great deal.[10] In the early 2000s, many platforms for selling mp3s online appeared, but this model did not take off and, in the middle of the decade, streaming gradually prevailed. The general public gradually lost the habit of paying for the music they listened to, preferring

9 See the article from the Media Observatory *Action – Critique – Média* (*Acrimed*): Émilie Laystary, "La presse musicale en mal de boussole éditoriale et de modèle économique," *Acrimed*, February 14, 2014, https://www.acrimed.org/La-presse-musicale-en-mal-de-boussole-editoriale-et-de-modele-economique.

10 See Gilles Rettel, "Musique et Internet," *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France* 47, no. 2 (2002): 45–50.

to invest in a subscription to access all the music without owning it, rather than paying for each song or album.

On the other hand, an increasing amount of music became available on online video platforms such as YouTube or Dailymotion. On these sites, information about the music is very limited. Advice on what to listen to is increasingly entrusted to sophisticated algorithms that make proposals based on the habits of users or music with the same tags—a series of generic keywords. Some rare platforms, such as Qobuz, offer their subscribers an editorial environment to relocate music in its historical context, through thematic texts or album reviews, which are generally positive and produced to complement the most visible projects. The mission of these sites is primarily of a commercial nature.

In 2017, *Pan African Music* was established within the fold of Idol, a digital distributor for independent music which provides many labels for streaming sites.[11] Led by a cultivated and competent editor-in-chief from Radio France, *PAM* offers quality and precise content.[12] It is written with care, by specialized authors. But as its name suggests, its exploratory field is limited to Afro-descendant music from the diaspora or the African continent.

Around that time, other independent web media were emerging and offering interesting content regarding the latest news on African music (Afrisson,[13] Afrik Musique),[14] the Maghreb and the Middle East (OnOrient),[15] tropical music (Tropicalités)[16] and so on.

The former editor-in-chief of *Trad'Mag* launched 5 planètes,[17] while the online magazine *4'33* wondered whether, independently of style, music could be ecological.[18] This ethical concern often intersects with diversity.

On the other hand, giving rise to a more personal, even intimate, form of communication, social networks have become a new source of musical discoveries and comments. Posts on these topics come either from professionals close to one or more artists, who most often present a project or event succinctly, or else from individuals who vent their feelings whilst rarely

11 https://idol.io/fr.
12 https://pan-african-music.com.
13 https://www.afrisson.com.
14 https://www.afrik-musique.com.
15 https://onorient.com.
16 https://tropicalites.world.
17 https://www.5planetes.com.
18 https://www.4-33mag.com.

Fig. 3 Still frame from the AuxSons.com presentation video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-6QirpIOmOw

caring about proffering educational components. Social networks have allowed many artists to address their audiences directly, and their projects to exist and be disseminated without necessarily attracting the attention of the press, who have traditionally served as an intermediary between artists and their audience. However, using this interesting promotional tool requires learning to master its codes.

Although their future was unclear when they were created, social networks have now become, above all, vast commercial enterprises. The direct link between the artist and the public is increasingly biased by the selection made by algorithms and by advertising campaigns. Finally, networks follow a logic similar to that of streaming platforms, which promote concentration: the larger the account, the more visible it will be. This logic means devoting amounts of time and financial resources that are not within everyone's reach.

Towards a New Model: #AuxSons, Collaborative and Militant Web Media

Zone Franche was created in 1990 on the associative model whereby the Administrative Committee is regularly renewed by members' vote. Now the organizations involved number over 180, together representing all the trades of the sector (festivals, halls, labels and publishers, artists' representatives, media, cultural associations, markets…) and the heterogene-

ous aesthetics, heritage, innovations, and philosophies that make up world music. The association owes its longevity to the ability of its members to unite around transversal issues and values relating to the defense of musical diversity, the promotion of aesthetics open to the discovery and recognition of multiple cultural identities, and the dialogue between them: a happy "creoleness." It also owes this longevity to the structuring and development of an economic sector in France around this music, thanks to the existing links with developing countries and the presence on our soil of diasporas from migratory waves, to the appetite of audiences for this music and to the progressive recognition of professional and public partners. And it owes it perhaps, above all, to the impetus of creativity, commitment, and the ability of artists, producers, and presenters to work with mutual understanding for over thirty years.

Zone Franche energizes and concretely supports the projects of its members and remains attentive to any new problems they may encounter. In 2009, Zone Franche set up the Visa Artists Committee, to provide concrete solutions to the growing difficulties related to the granting of visas encountered by professional bodies in the music sector who were working at an international level. In 2019, faced with the continuous decline in media presence of diversity aesthetics, the Zone Franche association decided to launch AuxSons.com.[19] With its innovative, creative, and militant spirit based on solidarity, AuxSons.com is both a participatory platform open to all and an editorialized medium presenting content entrusted to the care of journalists, researchers, musicologists, local agents, and artists.

A Collaborative Platform

AuxSons.com is a tool at the service of artists and professionals, to enhance the dissemination of their projects. Several sections are open to them:

- The "Agenda" allows members to announce professional event dates (festivals, concerts, showcases…)
- "News" allows feedback from the field (news, project launches or particular initiatives, clips…)
- "New Releases" is dedicated to record news.

19 https://www.auxsons.com/.

To feed these sections, the user creates an account on AuxSons.com. They can then write an article accompanied by multimedia links and visuals which, once revised by the editor, can be published and shared. Today the collaborative part involves over 400 contributors.

An Editorialized Medium

The main content produced by AuxSons.com is chosen by an editorial committee composed of volunteer members of the association. The editorial line focuses on two main axes:

- purely musical articles that address the heritage, the roots, the currents of contemporary music from the five continents, and their history;
- points of view and debates on the interweave between music and social and political struggles (ecology, anti-racism, migration, or gender equality).

Each month the editorial board decides on the proposals of the editorial staff, which is composed of an editorial coordinator plus a journalist-come-associate advisor. Each week AuxSons.com presents a "Focus" and some "Playlists":

- "Focus" comprises medium-length articles sometimes presented in a series of episodes on certain topics requiring further development. They are well paid for, which makes it possible to attract seasoned professionals and to obtain a good editorial quality presenting seriously sourced information, accompanied by relevant multimedia links.
- The "Playlists" are musical *carte blanches* entrusted to artists and iconic figures from the sector who share their top picks and influences.
- Finally, the "Must Read" section, concocted by the #AuxSons team, highlights the work of other interesting media outlets.

Being mainly financed by subsidies (Ministry of Culture, public or private companies),[20] by project aid, and by its members, the site AuxSons.com

20 The Zone Franche association is supported by the Ministry of Culture, the Centre National de la Musique, SACEM, SCPP, ADAMI, SPEDIDAM and La Culture Avec La Copie Privée.

is detached from the balance of power within the music industry. It does not submit to the dictates of commercial news sources and sets its own calendar.

To increase its presence and visibility and to alert members to its breaking news, AuxSons.com sends a weekly newsletter to its subscribers and presents its new content daily on social networks (Facebook and Instagram). The same information is thus summarized in several separate ways, in order to persuade the reader to consult the article in its entirety on the site.

On the other hand, each year, #AuxSons publishes a paper magazine, *Les Cahiers AuxSons*, which brings together its main published content ("Playlist" and "Focus") plus some newsflashes, which are sometimes rewritten to suit the formatting specificities of newsprint.

AuxSons.com is an atypical experience which aims to meet several types of needs. One is to appeal to a wide readership and thus offer content that meets current requirements in the technological environment: to be attractive, concise, and easily accessible. It also aims to satisfy the more demanding readers as concerns sometimes complex matters that require a broader and more thorough development. It is both the expression of a community that needs to communicate about its work and commitments, and also an attempt to reflect the issues and aesthetic experiments that this community and lovers of multicultural expressions encounter.

Little by little on French territory, and in an increasingly sustained manner, the rise of extreme right ideologies and the stranglehold on the influential media held by large groups devoted to the promotion of liberalism led the discourse on the music of diversity to become more and more political, reflecting an open and equality-minded societal commitment. This take on the future of the planet naturally intersects with ecological issues, and also the desire to take genders and sexual orientations, such as those of the cultural identities of minority groups or social or geographical origins, into equal account. This influences the topics as well as the vocabulary used, starting with the term World Music, whose post-colonial connotations are increasingly debated.[21]

21 For a debate report on the term "World Music" during the Belgian festival Voix de Femmes 2021, see Anouk Durocher, "Le monde c'est les autres? La World Music en débat," *Manifesto XXI*, December 10, 2021, https://manifesto-21.com/le-monde-cest-les-autres-la-world-music-en-debat/; see also Souria Cheurfi, "La musique du monde n'est pas un genre mais un terme fourre-tout eurocentré," *Vice*, July 23, 2020, https://www.vice.com/fr/article/akzn9z/musique-du-monde-terme-fourre-tout-eurocentre.

Since March 2020, the health crisis has led to worldwide upheaval for the global population and in all business sectors. It has interrupted the lives and/or careers of those in the music world who were diminished by their age or lack of professional anchorage. To hold out, others had to change their behavior and find new ways to connect. In this context, the importance of cooperation and the role of the Internet have increased at all levels (creation, production, dissemination, and visibility). This situation has strengthened the determination of the Zone Franche network and the Aux-Sons.com team to continue its struggles, to relay the voice of its sector loud and clear in order to convey its creativity and dynamism, whilst creating synergies and solidarity amongst those involved.

BOOK REVIEW-ESSAY

Sound Theory at Grand Theory's End

Julie Beth Napolin

Review of *Sound Objects*. Edited by James A. Steintrager and Rey Chow. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. 312 pp. ISBN 9781478001454 (paperback).

In an issue of *Feminist Media Histories* dedicated to genealogies, Roshanak Kheshti begins the entry on "sound studies" with an aside, one with enormous weight for the humanities and social sciences today: "The interdisciplinary 'studies' that formed on the margins of the traditional disciplines toward the latter part of the twentieth century—American/ethnic studies, cultural studies, film studies, gender/women's studies, performance studies—experienced feminist sound studies interventions."[1] The second part of this point, that feminist sound studies first emerged as an intervention in other studies, is preceptive enough, but the first part is tenacious in its critical importance: "studies" first appeared in marginal relation to the disciplinary, which is afforded master status. But if the "studies" are subordinate, struggling for recognition and autonomy, then what is at stake in the appellation "theories"?

Much ink has been poured over the question "what is sound studies," and in their recent collected volume *Sound Objects*, James Steintrager and Rey Chow sidestep this question to arrive somewhere in the middle of this already well-established transdisciplinary conversation. "The c ollective thrust of this volume is to make a multifaceted case for thinking the topic of sound objects theoretically," Steintrager and Chow write in the introduction (1). If the general object of sound studies is sound, then what kind of ob-

1 Roshanak Kheshti, "Sound Studies," *Feminist Media Histories* 4, no. 2 (2018): 179. Thank you to Amy Cimini, who shared this essay with me and helped me grasp its importance.

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Spring 2022), pp. 161–169, ISSN 2784-8949. DOI: 10.54103/sss18311.

ject is sound, particularly when the distinction between subject and object is one of the most entrenched distinctions in theory across the disciplines?

This volume is not the first in which Steintrager and Chow appear as a duo, the collection being the third installment of an "ongoing project and intellectual collaboration" (vii) that began in 2011 with a special double issue of *differences*.[2] The project, they say in the introduction, was motivated by the spirit of curiosity and without yet knowing that "sound studies was rapidly congealing into a field—if, thankfully, not quite a discipline" (vii). This spirit—curiosity around the not-yet congealed—guides the volume, both as a whole and in its individual contributions. The volume does not attempt to discipline sound studies in the way that an anthology or handbook might, nor does it strive for a shared lexicon, but it does reinforce a famous place of beginning (I hesitate to say "foundation"): French composer Pierre Schaeffer's term *objet sonore*, "usually translated into English as 'sound object,'" French film theorist Michel Chion writes in the book's opening chapter. It is a term that is "both one of the most frequently mentioned … and one of the most misunderstood" of Schaeffer's concepts, Chion continues (23).

I won't attempt to define it here; that is the purpose of the volume. I will only say that, as the editors also point out, the question of the sound object comes to the fore with sound recording technology—i.e., the possibilities afforded by isolating and repeating sounds without visual reference, which Schaeffer called the "acousmatic." These possibilities pressurize the imputed relationship between sound and source. The problem of (mis)understanding Schaeffer's concept is not one of translation but application, particularly because Schaeffer's research was meant to guide new compositional practices, and these applications—as the volume's contributors, ranging from comparative literature to communications and to musicology, demonstrate—far exceed what Schaeffer imagined or intended. The misunderstanding, but also reimagining, was compounded when Schaeffer's thought moved out of mid-century France into Anglophone contexts, but also into scholarly and artistic contexts almost totally unrelated to the compositional one in which Schaeffer found himself as an artist and researcher. With this, it is safe to say that *Sound Objects* is both about Schaeffer's thought and the transdisciplinary reverberations of his theory, and not about him at all.

2 Rey Chow and James A. Steintrager, eds., "The Sense of Sound," special issue, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 22, no. 2/3 (2011).

Steintrager and Chow's editorial beginning is a strategic one. Isolating Schaeffer's concept as they do, they seem to suggest that to do sound theory today is in some way to come up against, even indirectly or without intending to, the sound object theorized by Schaeffer. And this place of the beginning of sound theory is slippery. It's a point of contact—a relation, another term favored by many of the volume's essays—and not a foundation. It is important to say here that much of the thrust of the volume comes out in its brilliant groupings where themes emerge slowly over the time of reading and as a series of echoes and relations. If the volume is careful never to state exactly what sound theory is, then the claim nevertheless manifests in its collective refusal to "arrest a paradox," write contributors Jairo Moreno and Gavin Steingo (178). This refusal is one that many of the essays implicitly associate with the notion of sound as a peculiar kind of object. For example, Moreno and Steingo reserve a place in thought, in agreement with Chion, for "sound *qua* contradiction" (179). This claim is echoed by Georgina Born, who finds in sound "nothing but mediations—indeed, of nonlinear, recursive mediations of mediations" (196), and also by Veit Erlmann when he suggests that "sound is not an object but an abject" (159).

Returning to the misunderstood concept "sound object" introduces an ambiguity of aim that is never quite resolved in the volume, and with good reason. It would be incorrect to say that the book is dedicated to or is even a study of Schaeffer's thought, but Steintrager and Chow nevertheless position him as what one of the book's commentators, Dominic Pettman, calls a "pioneer" (and as Chion points out, he "invented" the book's central term). Schaeffer appears in the book as a primary text excerpted in interview with Chion in the book's opening section titled "Genealogies." Consider, in contrast, how excerpts from Schaeffer's opus *Traité des objets musicaux* (1966) are translated and reprinted in Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner's seminal volume *Audio Culture*—first published in 2004 and expanded and updated in 2017—where Schaeffer appeared amongst a wide group of other writers working under a similarly hybrid identity of artist-writer-theorist.[3] Cox and Warner presented Schaeffer as one of many, some preceding and postdating him, and also as part of a longer story about modernism. One does not walk away from *Audio Culture* thinking that Schaeffer is the progenitor

3 *Audio Culture Revised Edition: Readings in Modern Music*, ed. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017; fist. publ. New York: Continuum, 2004). See also Pierre Schaeffer, *Treatise on Musical Objects: Essays Across Disciplines*, trans. Christine North and John Dack (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017); orig. ed. *Traité des objets musicaux: essai interdisciplines* (Paris: Seuil, 1966).

of sound studies, and not only because Cox and Warner assembled their volume well before sound studies was a term.[4] Instead, Schaeffer appears in *Sound Objects* in a hitherto difficult-to-access interview that took place much later in his career with Chion (who might be called one of his chief inheritors), and not in print but over the radio. The remarkable interview is here newly assessed and reframed by Chion, who now finds himself redefined on the other side of a long career as a formidable figure (forefather) in "sound theory." In other words, the volume's very organization seems to say that to study a beginning of sound theory, you have to study what Jacques Derrida would call its dissemination, making Schaeffer something of a trace. Theory, as intellectual history, is traditionally revered as a story between fathers and their sons; and if the paternal metaphor is irksomely present at the beginning of the volume, it quickly gets deconstructed in practice. The editors' contrasting approach has something to do with the definition of sound theory as it mounts not directly but through its execution across the chapters.

In the interview with Chion, translated by Steintrager (also one of Chion's major translators in another intellectual history), Schaeffer reminds his audience of his first identity as a researcher in music theory, which was not yet the sound theory that, I suggest, Steintrager and Chow are arguing Schaeffer initiated not in himself but afterwards. What's more, many of the chapters could be thought without him, making Schaeffer a strange kind of progenitor. The book ends with an essay by David Toop and thus where the book began, at the point of contact between sound theory and sound practice, Toop sharing this hybrid identity. At the same time, the name Schaeffer is nowhere to be found in Toop's essay. In fact, he ends by declining to provide footnotes, wary of academizing his contribution, wary of the very status of sound theory. "I am loath to quote from academic works for fear this will be taken as supporting evidence for a proposition that is entirely personal and speculative," Toop writes of his moving diary about drawing as sound (255). He instead hopes to reckon artistically (theoretically?) with what he calls, quoting Julia Kelly, "'a temporal dynamic of the just-passed, of an ungraspable and unfixable lost moment'" (255).

4 In 1995, I was a teaching assistant in the class that launched the book, and the class was titled "Contemporary Music and Musical Discourse," signaling its distance in time from what we now call sound studies. Discourse, particularly in its Foucauldian valence, is a term that Steintrager and Chow claim as a central component of (sound) theory in the opening pages of their volume. Theory is a discourse whose sedimented enunciations must be historically and institutionally analyzed (1).

In these and other moments, I wondered if the book was not finding obliquely in sound what is left of theory after deconstruction. In the introduction, Steintrager and Chow remind readers of theory's resistance to the philosophical currents of existentialism and, more importantly for this volume, the visualism of phenomenology. The linguistic turn of structuralism and poststructuralism—in many cases redeemed by this volume for sound and, again, not directly, but through its practices—was a move from image to text. In any case, sound is, Steintrager and Chow write, "forever playing the role of the disruptor" of the visual (4). It is against this backdrop that Steintrager and Chow redefine Schaeffer as a (sound) theorist, one who was paying attention to the subject/object distinction differently. The mid-century research of Schaeffer coincides geographically and chronologically with the emergence of what John Mowitt summarizes as the tradition of "Grand Theory" instantiated by Marx and Freud (211). At the same time, Steintrager and Chow show, Schaeffer's work represented an investment in phenomenology while also revealing "deep structuralist affinities" (8). While Schaeffer began "to categorize sound objects in morphological and typological terms" (9), he could not help but coincide, if implicitly, with Foucault's poststructuralist project in *The Order of Things* (*Le mots et les choses*, 1966), appearing the same year at Schaeffer's *Treatise on Musical Objects*. In other words, Schaeffer is a theorist, part of the milieu of Foucault and Derrida, but those entanglements were never explicitly addressed or thought by his project. In this way, with the essays taken together, the volume picks up on Foucault's genealogical impulse to historicize what he called the "unthought" structures of prevailing schemata (9)—in this case the sound object and its guises.

Readers should not approach this volume hoping for an intellectual history. Instead, they will be prompted forward through the chapters by themes that, loosened from context, "resonate."[5] Reading across the chapters, we do learn about how the sound object was constitutive of the subject for Freud in the form of what Jean Laplanche, adapting Jacques Lacan, calls the "enigmatic signifier" (Mowitt's essay); about the thingliness of music and the instrument as reified objects (Jonathan Sterne's and Toop's essays); of the unstable status of evidence of the object outside of its perception (Steingo and Moreno's essay); how the subject/object binary introduces a tension between the human/nonhuman (Born's essay); of sound objects as

5 Here I mean to invoke the comparative mode of study described in my *The Fact of Resonance: Modernist Acoustics and Narrative Form* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020).

they lay bare the myth of the unified subject or collective (Michael Bull's essay). In each of these cases, the authors either invoke the older debate initiated by Schaeffer or move beyond it. Mowitt seems to summarize a collective view of the volume when he writes, "sound is precisely *not* what is retained. It is, instead, what leaks out, or 'whistles' between the limits of the Imaginary and the Symbolic as they frame the transcendental parameters of the speaking subject, of the human" (225). Here the sound object appears to be something like the force of theorization itself.

But what exactly is the relationship between sound theory and Grand Theory? The answer is not so clear, and readers have to attend to the ways that individual authors handle their material. In some moments, the answer seems to be that "sound" has always been a preoccupation of this tradition (Steintrager returns to Adorno, Mowitt to Freud, Erlmann to Julia Kristeva, for example). This preoccupation only became evident later or, more precisely, recognized as "sound." Mowitt, Bull, and Chow retrieve a series of sounds from the pages of Grand Theory, a premise that, had it been collectively urged for by the authors, *could* amount to a retelling of theory as proto-sound studies—but that would be to miss the point. After reading the volume, I nonetheless wondered to what extent theory has always been sound studies, particularly if we are to believe Martin Jay's thesis in *Downcast Eyes* (1993) that the history of theory is also the history of the denigration of vision.[6]

Steintrager and Chow are aware that "sound theory" is itself a visual locution, *theoria* being a Greek word for viewing. *For More Than One Voice* (2005), by Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero, a figure already established in ancient philosophy and feminist theory, was one of the first books to take as its object sound and to reassess the history of Western philosophy and theoretical descendants on its basis. Cavarero links *theoria* in Plato's lexicon to *scientia* as "seeing clearing after having sought to perceive."[7] One might well ask what is possible for sound theory given theory's origins in the discursive and linguistic turn? If theory is seeing clearly after having sought to perceive, a collection and division of objects into categories and classifications, then a theory based on sound would be based on the limits of theory itself, that is, hearing differently and ambiguously. At the very

6 See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

7 Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 36.

least, the question would have to remain open. Steintrager and Chow's volume does not address the question of why sound studies now: the introduction abruptly transitions from the claim "theory itself must also proceed otherwise, with sound" (6), with a new section titled "Sound Objects: The Problematic," that is, its summary of Schaeffer. But they do so without addressing the intellectual history in between. I asked myself, how did theory come to exhaust itself and find sound?

This brings me to the volume's importance in that it is the first to address (again, obliquely) the relationship between the linguistic turn and the sonic turn, and the tenuous relationship between sound studies' debt to Grand Theory, particularly its white male inheritors, and the "other" studies. Though Fred Moten's name nowhere appears in *Sound Objects*, it is worth recalling, for a consideration of the meaning and existence of sound theory, that his book—largely classified in African American studies, yet a major contribution to what is now sound studies—came out in the same year as Sterne's *The Audible Past* (2003) (another now-canonical book in the field, though for very different reasons).[8] In a section titled "Resistance of the Object," Moten begins his magisterial *In the Break* with a deconstruction of Saussure's suppression of sound, the scream of Aunt Hester, as a suppression of Blackness. Marx is not able to think through—or listen to, these two being intertwined in sound theory—"the commodity who speaks," an inability that Saussure inherits.[9] For Moten, at the point of Grand Theory's exhaustion, a Black sound becomes audible and legible, the entanglements between race and theory being difficult to overestimate.

Thus, I want to suggest that even though the majority of the contributors to *Sound Objects* are white men, the organization and framing of the book resists the patrilineal metaphor that shapes the tradition of Grand Theory because (and one senses Chow's role here) something of it is actually postcolonial in its force. The volume touches on the postcolonial *tout court* in the middle section, titled "Acousmatic Complications," where Chow and Pooja Rangan (also teacher and former student) appear side-by-side, making this section something like the heart of the book. For Chow, the acousmatic is compelling precisely to the extent that it supersedes the desire for the object (above all, the inner voice) to be "native" to its source. It turns

8 See Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), and Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

9 Moten, *In the Break*, 1–24.

out that when theory is thinking the subject and object relation, it is thinking acousmatically, Chow convincingly argues, making the sound object the transdisciplinary phenomenon par excellence. In Rangan's brilliant essay, which offers a close reading of two films (Julia Dash's *Illusions*, 1982, and Mounira Al Solh's *Paris Without a Sea*, 2007), she is careful to make a claim, in conclusion, on behalf of a series of terms coined by the essay. Again, obliquely through a series of rhetorical moves, Rangan wants to lay claim to or make legible an alternative intellectual history of sound theory, one where Chow is to be found along with two contemporary female figures within African American studies and sound studies, Nina Sun Eidsheim and Jennifer Lynn Stoever. This grouping does not share the paternal metaphor of lineage traditionally attributed to the genealogy that also orients Rangan's essay (in this case, Schaeffer, Chion, and Dolar).

When Rangan ends her close reading of two films by women of color directors, involving lip sync and colonized, racialized bodies both on-screen and acousmatically off-screen, she insists more than once that what she is proffering, by way of case study, is a series of "concepts," such as "ventriloqual listening" and "the skin of the voice." I am not sure it is correct to say these terms are concepts. The phrases enumerated seem to be something else, and this something else is important for the meaning of sound theory. For example, Rangan credits Eidsheim for conceptualizing "acousmatic blackness." But race is not a feature of Schaeffer's thought (I've argued elsewhere that it is implied, though not directly stated, by Chion's thinking of darkness).[10] To go further, the term, as Eidsheim uses it, is a citation and related to the academic writing of and Eidsheim's conversations with sound artist Mendi Obadike.[11] Not having published this writing, Obadike instead elaborates—theorizes?—acousmatic blackness in her work as a sound artist in the duo Mendi + Keith Obadike.[12] This matrix raises questions of theory and practice in sound, of the slipperiness of citation, inclusion, and exclusion, once the patrilineal model of theory and discourse has left the scene. Just in the way it becomes entirely appropriate for other essays in Steintra-

10 See Napolin, *The Fact of Resonance*, 20.

11 See Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019). See Mendi Obadike, "Low Fidelity: Stereotyped Blackness in the Field of Sound" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2005). This dissertation is cited in relationship to "acousmatic blackness" in Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 228–29n26.

12 For samples of projects, see the artists' website "Mendi + Keith Obadike," blacksoundart.com.

ger and Chow's volume to theorize the sound object without ever citing Schaeffer, sound theory here surfaces as a break from theory's abiding and paternal logic of inheritance. In a stunning move, Rangan shows us how the *ideological* inheritance of the theory of the sound object—whose beginning, Schaeffer posits, is the master listening sessions to Pythagoras behind a screen, notably a myth that Schaeffer's inheritors go on to repeat[13]—is the continued idealization of a source in its absence.

To be sure, there is a struggle going on in sound studies, as in any study, for conceptual status, a struggle to reach beyond the study and to take on the portability of the conceptual object. What the book leaves me with as a reader, as someone invested in theory's remains, is the sense that, in sound, we approach the limits of what Grand Theory is supposed to be in its transmissibility. In the end, Schaeffer—the forefather and master—gets loosened from the object of his thought for the "sound object" to live a much more interesting and varied life.

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13 See Kane, *Sound Unseen*, for a convincing study of how Schaeffer mythologizes Pythagoras.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW-ESSAY

"There's Something Missing Here…" Milo Rau, Opera, and the Search for the Real (Mozart)

Carlo Lanfossi

Review of *La clemenza di Tito*, music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, libretto by Caterino Mazzolà. Orchestre de la Suisse Romande conducted by Maxim Emelyanychev. Stage direction by Milo Rau. Live streaming on February 19, 2021, GTG Digital.

Creative team: Anton Lukas, set designer; Ottavia Castellotti, costume designer; Jürgen Kolb, light designer; Moritz von Dungern, videos; Clara Pons, dramaturg; Alan Woodbridge, choir director.

Cast: Bernard Richter, Tito; Serena Farnocchia, Vitellia; Anna Goryachova, Sesto; Cecilia Molinari, Annio; Marie Lys, Servilia; Justin Hopkins, Publio.

There's no such thing as *real* opera. Not that there is no ideal or genuine experience of opera. Or even that opera is not "real": of course it is, otherwise there would be no explanation for its stubborn persistence, against all financial odds, on the stages of every major opera house in the Western realm. Opera is very real for those who pay for it and for those who get paid for it. Mozart, for instance, called the new version of the libretto for *La clemenza di Tito*, which he set to music, a "vera opera". Not because it was (the) original: on the contrary, he thought it was "real" precisely because it was a heavily revised text which he believed would suit better his musico-dramaturgical taste. For Mozart, opera was real when it let go of its own past. So, when the digital curtain opened for the new production of *La clemenza di Tito* at the Grand Théâtre de Genève and there was no music, no singing, only a few people dressed as artists/performers claiming, in spoken Italian, that "there's something missing here…" ("qui manca qualcosa…"), I was not surprised.

For many reviewers of this new staging by Milo Rau, however, that was just the beginning of a series of traumatic lacks. There appeared to be defi-

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Spring 2022), pp. 171–182, ISSN 2784-8949. DOI: 10.54103/sss18446

Fig. 1 Serena Farnocchia/Vitellia and Bernard Richter/Tito at the beginning of the show. Still frame from the streamed performance on GTG Digital (February 19, 2021)

nitely something missing from this production of Mozart's *Clemenza*: Mozart himself. Caught off-guard by the unexplainable absence of a composer who has been dead for more than two centuries, critics have blamed Swiss-born, Belgian-based, Opera-virgin Milo Rau for a variety of sins:

> The Swiss theater artist ventured into Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* in Geneva and imposed on the opera whatever was in his head. Mozart is forgotten in the process.[1]

> With the approval of the young conductor Maxim Emelyanychev, Rau has drastically cut down Mozart's work: … a good part of the arias and a large part of the recitatives were replaced by spoken or on-screen biographical accounts.[2]

1 "Der Schweizer Theaterkünstler hat sich in Genf an Mozarts *La clemenza di Tito* gewagt und der Oper aufgesetzt, was in seinem Kopf schwirrte. Mozart geht dabei vergessen." Christian Berzins, "Milo Raus erste Opernregie: Ein Abend zum Vergessen," *Tagblatt*, February 21, 2021, https://www.tagblatt.ch/kultur/milo-raus-erste-opernregie-ein-abend-zum-vergessen-ld.2104910.

2 "Mit Zustimmung des jungen Dirigenten Maxim Emelyanychev hat Rau Mozarts Werk drastisch zusammengestrichen: … ein Gutteil der Arien und ein Großteil der Rezitative waren ersetzt durch gesprochene oder auf dem Bildschirm eingeblendete biographische Erzählungen." Peter Wolf-Dieter, "Anklage mit Mozart – „La Clemenza di Tito" als politische

> We also came hoping to see Mozart's opera, and we really only get a side view of that. This *Tito*—Mozart's one—is swamped in Rau's agitprop theatre: actually, you feel that maybe any text would have done for his purposes. … Of course, [Rau's interpretation] is *true*. It's just that, as Mozart might have said, it's not necessarily the slightly less teen-activist point [Rau] was trying to make.[3]

> But opera and classical music are also much more, something which Milo Rau has no feeling for, and perhaps he doesn't even want to.[4]

If we unpack the issues listed in this selection of digitally available reviews, the director is blamed for: cutting a good part of the opera's recitatives (true, even though they were not even written by Mozart);[5] cutting too many musical numbers (in truth, not a single musical number was cut, only a few *da capo* and small sections of the *accompagnati*, while the finale was featured twice and a bonus Fantasia in C minor K.475 was performed by the conductor at the beginning of Act 2, which amounts to the same or even more music than any other recent production of *Clemenza*);[6] having extensively reworked the different sections of the Metastasian libretto (spoiler alert: Metastasio was already dead by almost a decade when Mazzolà radically transformed the old 1734 libretto into a "*vera opera*", as Mozart himself noted);[7] finally, having no predilection toward opera and classical music (there

Attacke an der Oper Genf," *nmz online*, February 21, 2021, https://www.nmz.de/online/anklage-mit-mozart-la-clemenza-di-tito-als-politische-attacke-an-der-oper-genf.

3 Robert Thicknesse, "Moving Beyond the Text—'La clemenza di Tito,' Geneva," *The Critic,* March 17, 2021, https://thecritic.co.uk/moving-beyond-the-text/.

4 "Oper und Klassik aber sind auch noch etwas anderes, für das Milo Rau kein Gespür hat, vielleicht will er es auch nicht (wahr)haben." Reinhard J. Brembeck, "Kunstgeschwätz zwecks Machterhalt—Milo Raus Operndebüt als Stream," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 21, 2021, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/oper-mozart-milo-rau-1.5213030.

5 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *La clemenza di Tito*, critical edition by Franz Giegling, *Neue Mozart Ausgabe*, series II, *Works for the Stage*, work group 5, vol. 20, Foreword, x, https://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/nma/nmapub_srch.php?l=2.

6 For a complete list of the musical numbers performed during the 2021 production, see *La Clémence de Titus: Opéra de Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, program notes, February 19, 2021, Grand Théâtre de Genève, https://issuu.com/geneveopera/docs/2021_gtg_la_clemence_de_titus_programme, 22–23. The online streaming of the show (excluding the intermission) lasted ca. 2 hours and 25 minutes. René Jacobs's 2006 recording—"nothing short of revolutionary [… as] it rehabilitate[s] the original score in its entirety", claims the back cover—clocks in at 2 hours and 15 minutes (HMC 901923.24).

7 See Ruth Tatlow and Magnus Tessing Schneider, "'La clemenza di Tito:' Chronology

is no mention of the director's feelings towards theater, which—last time I checked—the operatic genre belongs to).

I believe this last issue to be not only at the very core of Milo Rau's staging of his first opera, but also one that has serious implications for the survival of the genre as such. For the common association of opera to classical music is the product of a category mistake. "Opera" is a genre of live theater inscribed through notation for future performances in which music plays a predominant (but not exclusive) dramaturgical role. "Classical music" is a discoursive formation referring to a variety of social practices and cultural ideologies which is not limited to a specific musical genre, and whose body of works, its canon of representative exemplars, is constantly re-negotiated and in flux. Thus, the problem is not whether Milo Rau cares or not about opera or "classical music" (whatever that is). The problem is that we care too much, to the point that we (European lovers of music from the past) are doing more damage than good.

There is no opera, as long as we keep thinking about it as a relic to be preserved intact in a museum of historical musical artifacts, and we find unconceivable to adjust its content to say something about us, today, and to entertain the generations to come. Which is what prose theater has always done and will: I don't see anyone pointing to the critical edition of *Hamlet* when it is staged in modern English with entire scenes and characters cut. For some reason, the same cannot be done with operas. The reasons put forward are many (historical relevancy, financial enormity, cultural distance, linguistic struggles, and so on). Yet none of them really explains such stubborn refusal to allow stage directors to use (yes, *use*) a theatrical genre such as opera to interpret the world we live in (task, I must add, for which not much time is left given the current climate circumstances). Such an obsession to keep opera free from what is presumed as "external" interference (stage directors coming from prose theater, dramaturgs coming from academia, artists coming from other musical cultures) is exactly that: an obsession, and as such it is in desperate need of analysis and consequently also a therapy.

Rau's staging of *La clemenza di Tito* makes brilliant use of the recent technological innovations of the Grand Théâtre de Genève's main stage, in particular the rotating system allowing a double-faced set to display two different planes of representation. The opening side is set as an art museum

and Documents," in *Mozart's "La clemenza di Tito:" A Reappraisal*, ed. Magnus Tessing Schneider and Ruth Tatlow, 1–32 (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2018): 13.

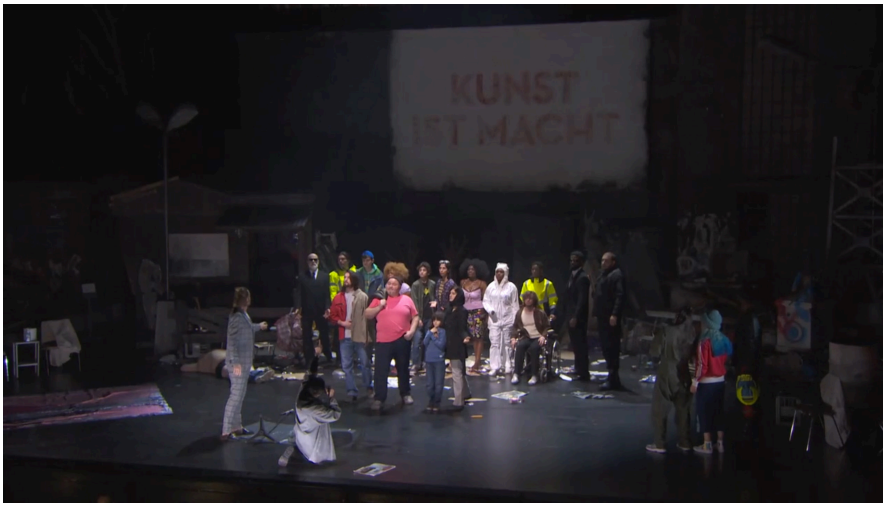


Fig. 2 Bernard Richter/Tito and Anna Goryachova/Sesto arranging a photocall while visiting the "Other" side of the stage (act I, scene 4). Still frame from the streamed performance on GTG Digital (February 19, 2021)

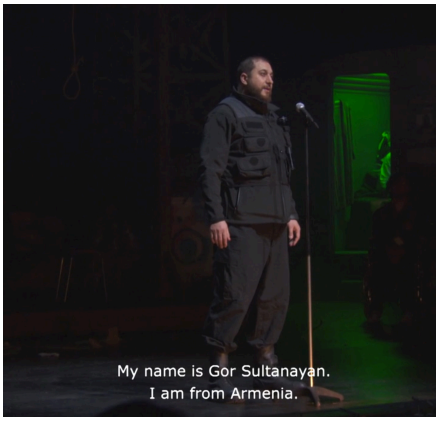
during a trendy vernissage (Rau himself explains that it should resemble the Haus der Kunst in Munich),[8] while the other side of the stage represents a dilapidated trailer park inhabited by marginalized communities struggling to survive after some post-apocalyptic disaster. Dressed à la Joseph Beuys (Tito), Marina Abramović (Vitellia), and Neo Rauch (Sesto), the protagonists of the play act as a posh-lib collective of artists whose leader, Tito, is on a political mission to help the people from the Other (side of the stage) by showing their desperate conditions with the aid of media coverage, philanthropy for the cameras, selfies complete with depictions of their misery, and artistic renditions of their everyday struggles, including dissent and a failed attempt at revolution.

In keeping with his previous works, and as a partial adaptation of the requests from his *Ghent Manifesto*,[9] Rau plays with the post-dramatic tradition of contemporary theater by providing the audience — through titles, surtitles and video projections — with details regarding the staging itself: from the biographical background of the company and the local actors/extras to the interpretation of the opera's late eighteenth-century historical context, and from the actor's comments on how they feel as they re-enact

8 *La Clémence de Titus*, program notes, 39.
9 https://www.ntgent.be/en/about/manifest.

traumatic gestures to the juxtaposition of different signifiers with similar signifieds (e.g., arias performed while screened interviews explore similar topics to those explored in the musical number). This relentless shifting of the dramatic planes, in which signified and signifier are constantly renegotiated and remediated (and whose *point de capiton*, to use a Lacanian term, never seems to materialize), can certainly be tiring for a production which was intended for a streamed digital event. On experiencing it in front of a screen, the feeling sometimes is that of an overwhelming proliferation of dramaturgical angles and medial frames, leading to a potential confusion over what is going on. I suspect, though, that this is mostly a projection coming from those who have previous knowledge of the opera and who, inevitably, are drawn to disentangle every moment of the show and its many layers. This hermeneutical tour de force would likely be more easily dealt with by coming to it free of preconceptions and expectations informed by tradition.

It cannot be denied that, at times, Mazzolà's and Mozart's *Clemenza* seems to stand in the way of Rau's project. But as should be clear by now, this is precisely the point: for a modern staging to interpret what it believes to be a relevant aspect of the play, worthy of modern reflection and critique, the historical frictions and the genealogical dispersions are unavoid-



Figg. 3 and 4 At the beginning of act II, the actor Gor Sultanyan, interpreting the leader of Tito's militia, introduces himself and his son as descendants of a survivor from the 1915 Armenian Genocide. When he had to "kill" his son at the end of act I (at this point, he stops in a moment of commotion), he says he just did it, like he would have done any other scene. The son crosses the stage and Gor holds out a hand to reach him, but the kid falls dead on the floor. Mozart's Fantasia in C minor K.475 stops, Gor comes back to the mic, and says: "This for me was the moment I understood my son's talent." He then proceeds with the hanging of the rebels, and the "opera" is restored. Still frame from the streamed performance on GTG Digital (February 19, 2021)

Fig. 5 Anna Goryachova/Sesto (act II, scene 10). Still frame from the streamed performance on GTG Digital (February 19, 2021)

able and even necessary. Such dramaturgical juxtaposition of apparently discordant narratives, a trademark of Rau's directorial style, is far from gratuitous. While on a superficial level it makes theater a political act, a representation of societal struggles which—even after centuries—are still at play, it also allows Rau to subject himself to a self-critique. The topic of human exploitation through artistic sublimation is obviously at stake when presenting your political views from the privileged stage of one of the most glamorous opera houses in one of the richest countries of the world: "Obviously, this is self-criticism," explains Rau in the official *Making of* video for the production, "so I asked myself, in the bourgeois system of the economy of feelings, and the real economy, is there a place for criticism? Or is criticism itself just the capitalization of what is criticized?"[10] On a more subtle level, the simultaneous presentation of the stories' inherent tensions—the constant feedback through which the present elaborates the past, *après-coup*—is what opera is (or at least should be): a visualization of the impos-

10 "Évidemment, c'est une autocritique. Je me suis demandé est-ce que dans le système bourgeois de l›économie des sentiments, est-ce qu'il y a là-dedans… et de l'économie réelle, y-a-t-il une place de la critique ? Ou la critique elle-même est juste la capitalisation de ce qui est critiqué pour vendre cela après ?" Grand Théâtre de Genève, "La Clémence de Titus – Making of," official video with interviews and backstage footage, uploaded February 18, 2021, 00:09:00–00:09:17, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jgu_7EsVp1g&t=586s.

sibility of the Real (there is no real history, no real life, no real language on an operatic stage), a vocal performance of the indivisible remainder, a sonic rendering of the fourth wall.

To be accurate, moreover, this is not Milo Rau's first encounter with opera. I can still feel in my body the emotional exhaustion and commotion I felt after attending his 2018 masterpiece *La reprise. Histoire(s) du théâtre (I)*. At the end of this play—a re-enactment of the April 2012 events and discourses surrounding the murder of Ihsane Jarfi, Muslim and gay, in Liege, but also a reflection on the role of re-enactment and theater in representing history and society—the actor impersonating the protagonist takes the stage alone to deliver Henry Purcell's so-called "Cold Song" from *King Arthur* ("What Power Art Thou?"). Performed over an electro-synth arrangement of the aria taken from the 1981 version by another tragic gay figure, Klaus Nomi, the actor's voice—with all its frailty and the almost unbearable weight of the several histories chained to those words and notes—delivered what I believe was an instance of opera of the Real, of the devastating impossibility for audiences to experience the same *jouissance* as the interpreter, and for the interpreter to experience the same *jouissance* as the interpreted. Behind such a powerful embodiment of quintessential theatricality, there is a deep understanding of the theoretical implications of modern re-enactment and genre adaptation for contemporary society. In this, Milo Rau is not alone. Directors coming from very different backgrounds such as Barry Kosky and Romeo Castellucci (not to mention Peter Brook), or companies such as the Wooster Group and Third World Bunfight, have all brilliantly demonstrated how "operatic" a show can be when deconstruction is explored to *bring to the fore* (rather than destroy) the core of a play. And Rau is someone who takes very seriously not only theater and politics, but critical theory, too, the very same one that helped me disentangle (and ultimately enjoy) his staging of *La clemenza di Tito*. Formed as a sociologist under the guidance of scholars such as Todorov and Bourdieu, the director has always been vocal and self-conscious about the mechanisms governing his approach to theater and the politics of realism (a particularly cogent one in the case of opera):

> Realism as an aesthetic method is a deficiency: namely, to accept you don't know how to do it, but you have to keep trying no matter what. … Realism is indeed something completely artificial, but also completely artistic. Realism does not mean something real will be represented, but that the representation

> is itself real. —That a situation arises that carries all the consequences of the real for those involved, which is morally, politically and existentially open.[11]

The tension between representation and the represented is explored by Rau with an explicit reference to psychoanalysis:

> Ultimately, what happens here [in theater] is the famous psychoanalytical phrase "Je sais bien, mais quand même…," or "I know, but still...". Thus, the main characteristic of human understanding is: "That everything is only an image, a play, and I am only an onlooker. But nevertheless…" … This "nevertheless" is, of course, the irrevocable, the *So-Sein*—the essence—of the REAL (in the Lacanian sense): these figures … fall out of the general symbolic agreement.[12]
>
> We were, of course, extremely relieved when the Rwandan spectators [of Rau's play *Hate Radio*, a reconstruction of a Rwandan radio broadcast, based on historical events] said, "It was exactly like that!" – although we didn't completely understand what they meant because it wasn't "exactly like that."[13]

Such a dramaturgical translation of the Freudian "fetishist disavowal" applies even more aptly to the operatic realm, as already noted by Slavoj Žižek in relation to Wagnerian metaphysics and psychoses.[14] Interviewed by Clara Pons, the dramaturg for his staging of *Clemenza*, Rau displayed an uncommonly deep understanding of opera's peculiar dramaturgy:

> MR: What struck me when I first saw [*La clemenza di Tito*] was that everything that is mentioned in it, everything that is talked about, none of it is in any way visible. There is talk of betrayals, disasters, putsch, and all these things are not in the opera at all. ... [In opera] being political means being explicit. To make implicit things explicit, to make the invisible visible. …
>
> I chose to represent the elite (i.e., the main characters of the opera) as artists. They are not only locked together in their own bubble, but they also literally feed on the misfortune of others to create an art out of which they can make a

11 Milo Rau, *Globaler Realismus/Global Realism*, trans. Lily Climenhaga (Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag, 2018), 176–77.

12 Rau, 172–73.

13 Rau, 158–59.

14 Mladen Dolar and Slavoj Žižek, *Opera's Second Death* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 114–17.

living. This staging is therefore a *mise en abyme* of this process, a meta-fraud! I would even say an auto-meta-fraud because I include myself in this process.

CP: *How do you translate this into staging?*

MR: We must make what happens on stage real and concrete. One of the characters has to kill his son; another is stripped and his heart exposed, while an artist captures the image of the hanged men in a painting à la Neo Rauch. … It is the dream of a bourgeoisie in an enlightened politics, the elitist dream of a post-political utopia. It is a dream from which we are slowly waking up, a dream that we are currently finishing dreaming. …

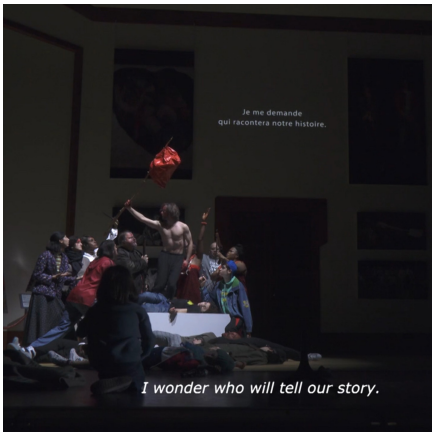
CP: *So, there is no way out of this paradox for you?*

MR: At least not at the Grand Théâtre de Genève or the Wiener Festwochen. Institutions are built on this paradox, including opera. There is obviously the very positive aspect of the sign of equality that is placed between the value of individuals and the beauty of art. But for me, as a newcomer to opera, this institution implies a negative work, in the Adornoian sense—i.e., that it represents the opposite of a utopia. …
Because of the very structure of opera, I have no elements to work with: I don't have the rhythm, the text, the music, to fight against this "negativity". I am the servant of the structure as it is, and I can only use this structure by showing something that is already in it, perhaps by showing what is false in it. But I cannot tell any other story than the one that the structure carries. This is what is "negative" in the process. Even if I deconstructed, I could not bring another truth. So, I try to understand what I have to tell. This music is over 200 years old. You can't transpose it or update it. … The choice of staging therefore thematizes the lie, the discrepancy between the discourse and the facts, in which we are fully involved.[15]

A product of negative dialectics and an act of therapeutical resistance, the 2021 production of *La clemenza di Tito* brings about much more than just a fresh take on eighteenth-century opera or the role of cultural politics and art in a postmodern (post-critical?) world. Milo Rau's Mozartian opera(-tion) is a deliberate exposure of the gaps and lacks inherent to the genre's production system, a re-enactment of its own constitutive deadlock. The

15 *La Clémence de Titus*, program notes, 39–41.

1791 *Clemenza*, as one was constantly reminded of throughout the Geneva production, came to light as an Enlightened musical drama celebrating the ruler's clemency at a time when a post-Enlightened society was ready to behead their own masters. It was an outdated musical project in the first place, and Mozart's music underlined such discrepancy with its beautiful, *passé* style. The 1791 *Clemenza* was "meta" long before Milo Rau's: Mozart and Mazzolà showed their own nervous, aristocratic patrons the end of the *opera seria* culture. Their *Clemenza* was a radical look back to the origins of opera and to the intellectual genealogy of Absolutism, which marked the genre's slow but inevitable shift from the stage of aristocratic theatre to the bourgeois museum of canonical works.[16] Given the deadliness of opera's historical trajectory, Rau's staging of *Clemenza* as a museum of realist art translates in Lacanian terms as an imaginary mausoleum of Real works, where the impossibility of the Real is an almost ironic representation of art that has not been symbolized yet, of opera before its discoursification—a dramaturgy that is still able to evade the "stage to page" paradigm. The explicit political urgency of any of Rau's staging is not only directed at questioning the artistic exploitation of everyday traumas by cultural institutions and discourses, but it also functions as a generational call to free opera from its own historical *impasse*, to defend it against its devotees.



Figg. 6 and 7 Final scene. Still frame from the streamed performance on GTG Digital (February 19, 2021)

16 The obvious reference is to Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992; rev. ed. 2007).

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