

**The Ecological and the Existential:
Sound and Subjectivity in the Works of Salvatore Sciarrino and
Helmut Lachenmann**

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Abstract

This thesis demonstrates the ways in which sound and sonic procedures represent the Self and its crisis in the works of Salvatore Sciarrino (b. 1947) and Helmut Lachenmann (b. 1935)—two composers who write music that involves extensive use of extended instrumental and vocal techniques. It also interrogates how the musical representation of the subject reflects the condition of human subjectivity as it was considered in contemporary intellectual discourse. This thesis begins with a conceptualization of the commonality in the musical poetics of the two composers and a theorization of a reception perspective that facilitates a fruitful interpretation of their music—based on the constellational and ecological approaches. The five chapters that follow analyse specific musical techniques in the light of some of their key aesthetic notions, exploring the condition of subjectivity through hermeneutic reading and philosophical reflection. Chapter 2 considers Sciarrino’s mimetic gestures and the ideas of naturalism and organic music, arguing that Sciarrino’s music calls forth a post-humanist biotic aesthetics that at the same time embraces and negates classical organicism. Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to two of Sciarrino’s operas. The former explores *Luci mie traditrici* through the idea of the semanticization of musical form, demonstrating that a Lacanian barred subject underlies the opera’s portrayal of troubled intersubjective relationships. The latter analyses the ecological significance of the multi-dimensional space-time in *Lohengrin* and revisits Sciarrino’s mimesis through the concept of becoming; it argues that the opera’s representation of a Proteus-like subjectivity enriches Sciarrino’s sonic mimesis. Chapter 5 deals with the relationship between nature and structure in Lachenmann’s *musique concrète instrumentale*, using the notion of aura to shed light on the way in which a self-reflexive listening subject comes into being in “...zwei Gefühle...”. Chapter 6 probes the entanglement of sound, image, and text in Lachenmann’s *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* through an investigation of the compositional procedure; the analysis demonstrates that the music’s articulation of a subjective voice is embedded in a sonic procedure that requires the deciphering work of an ideal listener.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Aims and Approach

This thesis examines ideas of sound and listening and the question of subjectivity in relation to the music of Salvatore Sciarrino (b. 1947) and Helmut Lachenmann (b. 1935). To elucidate some fundamental similarities underlying the sonic aesthetics of the two composers, this thesis brings together the understanding of their compositional approaches to sound with the ecological theory of the perception of musical meaning. The ecological perspective, as this thesis demonstrates, provides theoretical grounding for a compositional approach that takes listening and perception as its starting points, and, at the same time, can serve as a resource for developing a fruitful reception method for what is often referred to as sound composition. One key contribution of the present study is that, in light of ecological theory, it addresses the presence of the physical world in the two composers' music by producing a discourse centered around a cluster of interconnected topics, including organicism and chaos, naturalism and mimesis, the mediation of nature in art, and the ideas of aura and auratic alterity. This discourse helps to shed light on both composers' concerns with the tension between autonomous and heteronomous tendencies within the post-war avant-garde. Another key contribution of the thesis lies in its argument that the coupling with ecological theory facilitates an understanding of why the place of the self is a matter of importance in this musical idiom—a standpoint that can also be gleaned from both composers' reflections on their own musical thinking. Furthermore, by drawing from analytical perspectives informed by ecological theory, it explores how sounds and sonic procedures afford various ways of sensing the self in music—the self as heightened in special moments, becoming porous, or in a bind.

A pressing question arises from the musical idiom of Sciarrino and Lachenmann, a synecdoche of which is Lachenmann's self-coined *musique concrète instrumentale*: after melodic and harmonic richness are eschewed and clean tones are shattered into debris, what does this music have to offer in terms of a

projection of the contemporary condition of human subjectivity? Trent Leipert argues that difficult issues surrounding the late modern subject are manifested in various forms of musical mediation in the compositions of European new music since the late 1960s.¹ After what has been described by intellectual discourses as the constitutional crises of the subject or “the crumbling of the Cartesian cogito”, Leipert claims, the composition of the subject—as a philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic problem of late modernity—has become a subject of musical composition.² Following Leipert’s enquiry, the present study focuses especially on works involving the voice of which are operatic or theatrical in nature. In order to provide a hermeneutic reading of the emerging images of the self in relation to these works, this thesis set out its dual purposes: firstly, it analyzes specific musical procedures and formal devices or aspects that potentially serve as perceptual “vantage points” for reaching musical meanings; secondly, it tries to mine prominent theories of the self and subjectivity from the fields of philosophy and psychoanalysis as interpretive

This thesis’s engagement with theories of a wide disciplinary range is tailored for the multiple lines of inquiry that it explores. Theories examined include ecological psychology (James J. Gibson and Eric F. Clarke), the Marxist aesthetics of Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, and accounts of the figuration of the subject in the works of Jacques Lacan and of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Gibson’s work on an ecological theory of perception, from which Clarke draws a series of fundamental concepts and assumptions to develop his ecological theory of listening, is central to this thesis’s conceptualization of the two composers’ approaches to sound and listening. Later in this chapter, it will be shown how Clarke’s theory enters into an interesting dialogue with a perception-oriented theory of analysis for new music proposed by Cosima Linke. Regarding Lachenmann’s music as a paradigmatic example that urgently drives the search for such a theory, Linke’s approach, like Clarke’s, addresses methodological issues related to the study of musical meaning from the standpoint of listening. Adorno’s constellation model for the representation of ideas, which was initially proposed by Benjamin, is essential to Linke’s approach, and the idea of constellation is based on Adorno’s dialectic of identity and non-identity.

¹ Trent Leipert, *Feeling in the Cracks: Subjective Binds in Contemporary European Composition*, Doctoral Thesis, The University of Chicago, 2014.

² Leipert 2014, 2.

Applying this to the reception of music, Linke argues that analytical representations of music are likewise characterized by a constellational subject–object relationship—that is, the relationship between the listener and the sound perceived. As this chapter aims to show, this constellational relationship, which underlies a current, perceptually meaningful listening experience, is remarkably similar to the subject–object mutualism that characterizes the ecological concept of affordance.

Besides the reference to ecological psychology and Linke’s adaptation of the constellation model, it is necessary to clarify the broad principles of the application of other theories and the overall interpretative standpoint that this thesis adopts. The ideas from the above-mentioned thinkers are explored in the current study for the manner in which they provide models of subjectivity or notions about the subject that potentially serve as precedents for our understanding of the portrayal of the self in each musical work considered. The connections drawn between these theories and the images of the self as projected in the music—as my analysis of the sonic structures and procedures seeks to delineate—are not always the result of a purely speculative interpretation. The ideas and works of most of the thinkers discussed in the thesis can be found cited in the writings and the musical works of Sciarrino and Lachenmann. Sciarrino’s familiarity with Lacan, for example, is manifested in his direct citation of passages from Lacan’s work in the libretto of *Cailles en Sarcophage* (1979–80), one of Sciarrino’s earliest music theatre works, and in his multiple allusions to quintessential Lacanian symbols such as mirror and anamorphosis.³ In comparison, Lachenmann’s affinity with ideas from the Frankfurt school thinkers, such as Adorno, Benjamin, Lukács, and Marcuse, is much more well-known to scholarship, and such familiarity is readily traceable in *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung*, a complete edition of Lachenmann’s writings from 1966 to 1995.⁴ Adorno’s work—and, above all, his dialectical predisposition—is central to the formation of Lachenmann’s music philosophy, as is evident in many of Lachenmann’s original formulations that are constituted by dialectical oppositions, such as “art as magic mastered by spirit” (*Kunst als vom Geist beherrschte Magie*) and dialectical structuralism—

³ For an insightful discussion of relations between Sciarrino’s music and Lacanian thinking, see Carratelli 2006a and Leipert 2014. In his work, Carratelli cites René Magritte’s *La reproduction interdite* (1937), a painting that plays with the idea of the impossibility of reproduction, to illustrate Sciarrino’s fascination with the Lacanian notion of mirror and the idea of a self-deflectionary subject that it is associated with. See Carratelli 2006a, 330–34. In a rather comparable way, Leipert refers to *The Ambassadors* (1533) by Hans Holbein the Younger, a famous painting that has received in-depth discussion in Lacan’s *Seminar XI*, in relation to the concept of anamorphosis. Symbolizing the distortion of a self-image, this concept constitutes the core of a Lacanian model of the subject. See Leipert 2014, 127–29, 150–57.

⁴ General remarks on Lachenmann’s reception of the Frankfurt school thinkers can be found in works including Hockings 1995, Heathcote 2003, Williams 2013, and de Assis 2018.

meaning, structure mediated by aura. Chapter 5 involves a comparison between Lachenmann's understanding of the art-nature relationship and the Adornian idea of nature. The discussion in Chapters 5 and 6 also draws from Lachenmann's reception of Adorno's notions such as "false consciousness" and "speechlessness", as well as Benjamin's concept of aura and Lukács's "man-made-whole". Importantly, the discussion goes beyond the enterprise of illuminating the convergences between philosophical ideas and music aesthetics to serve the central hermeneutic purpose of the thesis, that is, to read particular structural procedures or musical moments as affording the perception of the different conditions related to the subject, including situations in which a voice of the self comes into being.

Apart from sources derived directly from the composers, Chapter 4 explores the concept of becoming within the larger context of ideas offered in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). Since around 2000, a large number of publications have revealed connections between music and the philosophical writings of Deleuze and Guattari, and considered the possible application of Deleuzian concepts to musicological research.⁵ Although references to Deleuze do not appear in the published works of Sciarrino and Lachenmann, there are scholarly precedents which seek to realize a connection between the philosopher and the two composers.⁶ The rationale behind the reference to Deleuze in the current study, analogous to its engagement with other philosophers, is to enable an encounter between the model of subjectivity implied in Deleuze's extended ideas on becoming—becoming-animal, becoming-insect, and becoming-imperceptible, *et cetera*—and emergent characters of subjectivity in Sciarrino's sonic writing in general but, in particular, the portrayal of a porous, protean expression of self in *Lobengrin*, *azione invisibile* (1982–84). Specific concepts discussed by Deleuze and Guattari, as this thesis attempts to demonstrate, offer compelling conceptualizations of what the subject—key to the understanding of Western classical music—has gone through in the works of Sciarrino.

⁵ Some examples of the works in question are: Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*, London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003; Ian Buchanan *et al.*, *Deleuze and Music*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004; Brian Clarence Hulse and Nick Nesbitt, *Sounding the Virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the Theory and Philosophy of Music*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010; Edward Campbell, *Music after Deleuze*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

⁶ See works such as Nicholas Till, "A New Glimmer of Light: Opera, Metaphysics and Mimesis." in Dominic Symonds and Pamela Karantonis eds., *The Legacy of Opera: Reading Music Theatre as Experience and Performance*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2013, 39–64, and Paulo de Assis, "The Conditions of Creation and the Haecceity of Musical Material: Philosophical-Aesthetic Convergences between Helmut Lachenmann and Gilles Deleuze", in Paulo de Assis, *Logic of Experimentation: Rethinking Music Performance through Artistic Research*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018, 225–244.

To summarize, through its investigation of a constellation of tightly interconnected issues—ideas of sound and listening, ecological theory, and the sonic representation of human subjectivity, this thesis pursues two central arguments: first, that the music of Sciarrino and Lachenmann epitomizes a compositional approach that prioritizes the role of listening and the perception of the self in relation to its environment; second, that the particular approaches to sound and listening as shaped by this body of music give rise to particular images of subjectivity. The purpose of this introductory chapter is hence to weave a context for the multiple components that make up the subject of the thesis, twisting these strands together rather than treating them as discrete topics. The chapter starts with a contextualization of the music of Sciarrino and Lachenmann as leading a contemporary compositional trend that predominantly uses the “unconventional” sounds of acoustic instruments as its basic material, referring to Nono and Stockhausen as major nodes in this stylistic genealogy. This is followed by a substantial introduction to some fundamental aspects of the two composers’ compositional approaches. The central part of this chapter appraises the relevance of the ecological (or constellational) approach to the perception of musical meaning and explores the relevance of bringing reception-oriented theories and compositional aesthetics into conversation for an understanding of the place of subjectivity within this music. After introducing possible ways of addressing subjectivity in compositions purely based on “sound”, and pre-existing scholarship on the operatic subjectivity and intersubjectivity of the twentieth century, the chapter sets out the aims and approaches of each of the remaining chapters.

Musical Material, Sound Composition, and Listening **after Nono and Stockhausen**

In 2016, in the context of the IRCAM-Centre Pompidou-based festival ManiFeste, the musical works of Lachenmann and Sciarrino, among those of others like Beat Furrer (b. 1954) and Gérard Pesson (b. 1958), were presented under the theme of the year—*Arte Povera* (“poor art”). Along with miscellaneous concert pieces, an eponymous retrospective exhibition was held at Pompidou. The issue at the heart of the festival was directly translated from *Arte Povera*, the Italian guerilla and anti-consumerist art movement that was active in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The word “poor” refers to the movement’s signature exploration

of natural and meagre or throwaway materials and to its intention of making art without the constraints of certain traditional values and conceptions.

How is it that this historical art movement remains a phenomenon pertinent to today's contemporary art music, and furthermore, how may the notion of "poverty" potentially offer a point of reference for the claim that the music of Sciarrino and Lachenmann share fundamental similarities in important aspects? One thing that links all of these composers to the theme of the festival is that they all use "sound" as their direct compositional material—sound in this context referring to a range of sonic material that is broader in scope than tones or pitches and, more specifically, produced mainly on acoustic instruments with extensive use of "abnormal" or extended instrumental techniques.⁷ Harnessing unconventional sound production at the limits of perceptibility or technical possibility, these composers also attach importance to the corporeal and tactile dimensions in music-making and listening. Numerous points of correspondence may be made between these compositional strands and some major concepts of *Arte Povera*, for example, reduced material, the belief that everyday objects and messages are meaningful, an interest in traces of nature and industry, and the idea that the work gives shape to energy and dynamism. Sciarrino has been significantly influenced by proto-*Arte Povera* artists like Alberto Burri and Lucio Fontana, and this is manifested in Sciarrino's discussion of materiality and the emblematic expression of space in the works of the two artists.⁸ Sciarrino scholars like Jörn Peter Hiekel has drawn attention to this connection, pointing to the resemblance between the strategy of compression in Sciarrino's theatrical music, such as *Infinito nero* (1998) and the construction of form in the reductionist artworks of Jannis Kounellis (**Figure 1.1**). In the works of both, background structure is often reduced to a dim, restrained, and highly uniform continuum that is punctuated by cuts letting in new lights or counterpointed by elements in a lighter shade.⁹ Another common trend shared by the aforementioned composer group is that they tend to blend in their works

⁷ It is worth clarifying that the sonic material that the thesis deals with tends to be conventionally categorized as "non-musical" or "noises" in the scope of classical art music. This thesis adopts the term sound for two reasons: first, Sciarrino and Lachenmann usually use terms like *suono* or *Klang* in their writings, both meaning "sound" in a generic sense; second, this thesis does not touch upon the discourse of noise that is potentially linked to this body of musical works. For studies that engage with the noise concept and discourse, see, for example, Joseph Kay, *Noise, Resistance, and Intertext in Helmut Lachenmann's Dal niente (Interieur III) and Accanto*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford, 2019.

⁸ Sciarrino discusses the works of these two artists in his *Le figure della musica: da Beethoven a oggi*. His work *Omaggio a Burri* (1995) was written in honor of Alberto Burri.

⁹ Jörn Peter Hiekel, "Brodelnder Reduktionismus: Salvatore Sciarrinos Musiktheaterstücke *Luci mie traditrici* und *Infinito nero*", in *Salvatore Sciarrino: Musik-Konzepte Sonderband*, ed. Ulrich Tadday, München: Edition Text + Kritik, 2019, 34.

sonorities of everyday objects with the music of the past as “objects” of cultural heritage. The pre-existing material of Western classical music, be it conventional genre or topos, specific tunes or rhythmic structures, is normally represented in unfamiliar contexts as “relics” or “ghosts”. The purpose of this particular way of engaging with the past is to rejuvenate listeners’ perception of them, at least partially, as “raw” or fresh.



Figure 1.1: *Untitled*, sculpture by Jannis Kounellis (iron, glass), 2013

Sciarrino and Lachenmann share the view that to compose means to reflect upon the modern conditions of listening. Both of them seek to prime musical perception in composition, calling for a re-sensitization of listening via their novel conceptions of sound. They are known for the many original ideas related to sound and listening that they have put forward in the extensive writings they have produced so far.¹⁰ By drawing from pre-existing music examples of an extremely wide scope, both have established

¹⁰ Most of Lachenmann’s writings in German are collected in his *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung* (1996) and *Kunst als vom Geist beherrschte Magie* (2021). Some of his most important articles have been translated into English in the past few decades. Sciarrino has published three monographs: two on his own music and musical thinking—*Carte da suono (1981-2001)* (2001) and *Origine des idées subtiles* (2012), and one treatise devoted to ideas of musical form: *La figura della musica da Beethoven ad oggi* (1998).

typologies of sound-archetypes or sonic-process-archetypes that have become influential among composers of younger generations. Remarkably, both have also proposed a phenomenology of listening, which constitutes the kernel of their aesthetics. Indeed, a comparative study of the concepts they have developed around their understanding of sound and listening—encapsulated in Lachenmann’s maxim, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung* (hereafter *MaeE*) and Sciarrino’s “ecology of sound” (*ecologia del suono*) or “ecology of listening” (*ecologia dell’ascolto*)—provides the initial motivation of this project. Jointly, these ideas envisage a type of music or, as the thesis seeks to argue, an ideal mode of reception that brings to the fore the listener’s perception of the self and the environmental information that is available to them—be it material or cultural, physical or virtual.

Upon first consideration, there seems to be a large discrepancy between Lachenmann’s and Sciarrino’s musical styles, compositional approaches and artistic pursuits in general. This impression, however, may obscure various meaningful connections that can be drawn between the two. The purpose of this section is to weave a context for the commonality between Sciarrino and Lachenmann by letting another pair of composers enter the picture—Nono and Stockhausen. As important influences, these two figures serve as a nodal point for conceptualizing the link between Sciarrino and Lachenmann.

Despite the well-known ideological polarization between the two gurus of the first generation of post-war avant-garde, Lachenmann and Sciarrino both had a close personal relationship with Nono and were both deeply inspired by Stockhausen early in their careers.¹² Often described as an autodidact, Sciarrino started his musical path under the influence of the music of Nono and Stockhausen.¹³ As compatriots, Nono and Sciarrino worked extensively within a specific circle of Italian new music virtuosi and developed a body of works in collaboration with musicians including Roberto Fabbricani, Maurizio Pollini and Claudio Abbado. The influence of Nono’s pointillism and, particularly, his late style featuring soft dynamics, contrasting extremes, poetic serenity and “noisy”, aleatory elements is, generally speaking, more eloquently

¹² Records about a profound friendship between Nono and Sciarrino can be found in both composers’ own writings. Stockhausen, together with Franco Evangelisti, is considered by Sciarrino as a major influence, an artistic father-figure. Lachenmann participated in Stockhausen’s courses at Cologne in 1963 and 1964, but a connection between the two may have already been developed before that.

¹³ In an interview, Sciarrino states that what initially sparked his interest in music was a house “filled with music” and a collection of LPs brought home by his elder brother, among which, Sciarrino states, there were “a few recording of contemporary music that turned out to be fundamental for me: the collected works of Webern, Stockhausen’s *Kontra-Punkte*, and Nono’s *Incontri*”. See “Salvatore Sciarrino with Alessandro Cassin”, <https://brooklynrail.org/2010/10/music/salvatore-sciarrino-with-alessandro-cassin>, accessed on 2 March 2020.

reflected in Sciarrino's music than in Lachenmann's.¹⁴ The personal overlap between Nono and Lachenmann is more widely-known. Lachenmann, who received orthodox music education from the beginning of his career, was first a student at Nono's course on Schoenberg and serial technique at Darmstadt in July 1957. Lachenmann then studied and worked with Nono between 1958 and 1960 in the latter's residence in the then largely communist-occupied Giudecca in Venice.¹⁵ Lachenmann's decades-long engagement with serial technique and the idea of foregrounding the historical dimension of music in composition are both indebted to Nono's approach. The influence of late Nono is, too, significant for Lachenmann. Many affinities in styles and poetics can be perceived in works such as *Serynade* for piano (1997/98): overall form that is built on a fragmented succession of sections, clearly differentiable vertical sound-aggregates interspersed with gaps of silence filled with resonances, and crucially, a dialogue with historical genres as a matter of concern for composition. Above all, Lachenmann's ideological outlook can be seen as essentially Nono-ian. Although the two diverged when Nono projected his Marxist convictions into overtly communist work agendas, both were critical of capitalism, commercialism and the culture of the bourgeoisie, sharing common beliefs in exploring the uncharted possibilities of the liberation of personal spirit.¹⁶

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide an exhaustive account of how Stockhausen's exploration of the physicality of sound production and the dynamism emerging from the interaction of timbre and structure set important models for Lachenmann's and Sciarrino's development of their languages within the idiom of *musique concrète instrumentale*.¹⁷ It is however useful to point out some particular affinities. For Sciarrino, Stockhausen's unique pictorial language for expressing compositional ideas and his figurative approach to musical shapes provided a fertile source.¹⁸ Claiming that he is not attracted to a

¹⁴ For discussions of the influence of Nono's late style on Sciarrino, see Nicholas Hodges, "A volcano viewed from afar": the Music of Salvatore Sciarrino' *Tempo*, 1995(194), 22–4, and Brendan P. McConville: 'Reconnoitering the Sonic Spectrum of Salvatore Sciarrino in "All'aura in una lontananza"', *Tempo*, 2011(225), 31–44.

¹⁵ For a comprehensive account of Lachenmann's personal relationship with Nono and the correspondence between the two, see Rainer Nonnenmann, *Angebot durch Verweigerung: Die Ästhetik instrumentalkonkreten Klangkomponierens in Helmut Lachenmanns Orchesterwerken*, Mainz: Schott, 2000 and Jonathan Impett, *Routledge Handbook to Luigi Nono and Musical Thought*, Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2018.

¹⁶ On the issue of Lachenmann and Nono's political positions, see Richard Toop "Concept and Context: A Historiographic Consideration of Lachenmann's Orchestral Works", *Contemporary Music Review*, 2004, Vol.23(3-4), 125–43. Also see Helmut Lachenmann, "Touched by Nono", *Contemporary Music Review*, 1999, Vol.18(1), 17–30.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the influence of Stockhausen's music on Lachenmann, See Richard Toop 2004, 128–9, 130–1.

¹⁸ In Sciarrino's illustration-loaded musical treatise *Le figure della musica da Beethoven ad oggi*, multiple musical examples are cited from Stockhausen to demonstrate a range of local-scale musical forms, labeled with visually-spatially-

figurative or picturesque language, Lachenmann however has been drawn to what may be characterized as a tendency towards totality (*Totalität*) or holistic synthesis in Stockhausen's aesthetic. Born of the cross-modal figurative thinking, such a penchant is best demonstrated in works like *Harlekin* (1975), music-theatre works like *Musik im Bauch* (1975) and *Originale* (1961), and the operatic cycle *LICHT* (1977–2003). On the making of his own operatic work, Lachenmann comments:

It was Stockhausen, not Nono, whom I would have thought capable of taking the step towards “opera without compromise”... He wrote epoch-making works in his time, but they suggested to him such a sense of power over the means that he subsequently believed himself capable of grasping all senses and levels of experience beyond the auditory, right down to the sense of taste and smell. His development was aimed at something like a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, even if the term is probably not correct. His claim to totality (*Totalitätsanspruch*) seemed to me as crazy as it was fascinating.¹⁹

Although, even with his theatrical works, Lachenmann emphasizes that his sound material should be defined as a “not less autonomously oriented compositional concept”, we will see in Chapter 6 that an implicit connection can be perceived between Stockhausen's daring claim to artistic totality and Lachenmann's operatic concept *Musik mit Bildern*.²⁰ As is made obvious in the analysis of Lachenmann's compositional procedure in Chapter 6, the entanglement of sounds with images, physical feelings, actions, and texts attests to this multimedia or cross-media notion of theatre-making. In his works with text, Lachenmann, following in the steps of Nono and Stockhausen, continues to search for a word-setting technique that put the semantic and the phonetic into a new relationship. That sound has a latent scenic aspect and sound is in the meantime “action-accompanying signal” is also key to Sciarrino's operatic concept *azione invisibile*. But a minimalist and less provocative approach to opera as a historical genre separates Sciarrino from the two German composers that he admires.²² Another significant influence from Nono and Stockhausen in terms of Lachenmann's composition of music with texts is the two predecessors'

associated metaphors including “accumulation” (with example drawn from *Gruppen*), “Little Bang” (*Kontra-Punkte*) and *Kontakte*) and “Window Forms” (*Hymnen, Momente*, in addition to Lachenmann's *Salut für Caudwell*).

¹⁹ All the English translations from texts originally in German, French, and Italian are my own, unless otherwise stated in the reference. “Nicht Nono, sondern Stockhausen, hätte ich den Schritt zur „Oper ohne Kompromisse“ zugetraut...Er hat seinerzeit epochale Werke geschrieben, die ihm allerdings ein solches Machtgefühl über die Mittel suggeriert haben, dass er sich in der Folge zutraute, über Auditive hinaus alle Sinne und Erfahrungsebenen erfassen zu können, bis hin zu den Geschmacks- und Geruchsnerven. Seine Entwicklung zielte auf so etwas wie ein „Gesamtkunstwerk“, auch wenn der Begriff so nicht stimmen dürfte. Sein Totalitätsanspruch schien mir so verrückt wie faszinierend.” Lachenmann: „Klänge sind Naturereignisse: Helmut Lachenmann im Gespräch mit Klaus Zehelein und Hans Thomalla“, Programme book (Stuttgart 2001), 24.

²⁰ Ibid. 26–7.

²² Reference to Lachenmann often appears in Sciarrino's writings.

important theoretical essays on text-music relationships.²³ He looked back to works such as *la terra e la campagna* (1958) and *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1955–56) for conceptual topics and formal ideas about how to create new possibilities, influenced by Stockhausen’s idea of establishing continua (or, “a homogenous sound-family”, in Stockhausen’s terms) between instrumental or electronic gestures and speech patterns or phonemes.²⁴ As the analysis of the text-music relationship in Chapters 5 and 6 will show, this idea provides a direct source for Lachenmann’s concept of “sound-family”.

Sciarrino’s and Lachenmann’s preoccupation with the role of listening is, arguably, associated with Nono’s ideas of perception and listening developed through his late period starting after*sofferte onde serene...* (1976). Music of this period explores silence and a sense of inwardness that invite heightened states of listening, perception and reflection. Lachenmann commented in his tribute to his teacher: “the silence into which Nono’s late works lead us is a *fortissimo* of agitated perception”.²⁵ Nono believes that perception and listening can “greatly liberate the ears from almost ‘ritually’ unidirectional, visualized and selective habits, compared to the very rich variety of acoustic life that constantly accompanies us”.²⁶ Particularly, Nono puts forward the idea that perception of form should be foregrounded in the sonic surface. Lachenmann notices that there was a growing tendency in Nono’s composition no longer to “create” or “fix” structures, but, by “creating elemental preconditions for structures”, to draw attention to the anatomy or the inherently structured nature of sound itself.²⁷ As we will see, this idea has proved a direct inspiration for Lachenmann’s concept of sound that incorporates structure. The idea of enabling structuredness to be perceived in the foreground finds an echo in Sciarrino’s music. As Nicholas Hodge has noted, the textures of Sciarrino’s music often provide clues to explicit, meaningful formal reference, not for reference’s sake, but to make a point about perception.²⁸ Nono’s concept of sound and listening, like that of Sciarrino’s and Lachenmann’s, is less about expanding the sound palette than about diversifying perceptual dimensions. Listening hence becomes a demanding process, as listeners may be confronted with challenges which lead them to

²³ Nono’s “Text-Musik-Gesang” (1960) and Stockhausen’s “Music and Speech” (1959) both had a profound influence on Lachenmann’s own practice. For an in-depth discussion of this, see Trent Leipert, “Lachenmann’s Silent Voices (and the Speechless Echoes of Nono and Stockhausen)”, *Twentieth-century Music* 16, no. 3 (2019), 589–619.

²⁴ See Leipert 2019, 596–8.

²⁵ Lachenmann 1999, 27.

²⁶ Nono, *Nostalgia for the future: Luigi Nono’s Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. Angela Ida De Benedictis and Veniero Rizzardi, Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018, 243.

²⁷ Lachenmann 1999, 25–6.

²⁸ Hodge, 1995, 22–4.

frustration, or alternatively, makes them adjust or refine their listening. In other words, listeners encounter their own capacity (or incapacity) in listening. Drawing on his experience of facilitating the sound projection for Nono's *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* (1988), Sciarrino writes: "Nono later discovered sound as an all-encompassing experience of perceiving. All his works must be conducted within this conception, and not return to the inhospitable objectivity of 1950".²⁹ Arguably, the idea of sound as an "all-encompassing" auditory phenomenon that can possibly cure the "inhospitable objectivity" of modernism is pregnant with core aspects of ecological thinking.

The aim of sensitizing listening encourages the exploration of sound in its extreme or liminal conditions. And this also brings to the fore the manifestation of space in the perception of sound. The realization of Nono's *Prometeo* (1981–84) in an "ark", a special stage structure designed by Renzo Piano, is a quintessential example. Lachenmann comments on how Nono's music creates "spaces for perception", real and virtual, and cultivates "an awareness of structure as a space made up of spaces".³⁰ Sciarrino's term "mental space", which will be discussed in Chapter 4, shows a direct connection with Lachenmann's understanding of Nono's construction of virtual space. Sciarrino suggests that Nono's inclination towards the borderline state of sound was an inspiration of nature. He recalls that, during the time they worked collaboratively on *La lontananza*, he observed Nono's growing "passion for wind" and thus breathy sounds in composition, to the point where the melody of the violin in *La lontananza* "gives way to the hoarse, ambiguous tone of a natural instrument".³¹ Such an aesthetic of sound has, arguably, left imprints in Sciarrino's music. As I will demonstrate through specific examples, space-conscious exploration of the phenomenology of sound takes different forms in Lachenmann's and Sciarrino's compositions but enjoys a significance in both cases.

In encouraging listeners to embark on a journey that leads to unknown territory, Nono prompts in music a recognition or a re-evaluation of subjectivity. Using Jacques Rancière's concept of a redistribution of the sensible as a point of reference, Paulo de Assis argues that Nono's music after 1975 offers listeners

²⁹ "Nono ha scoperto tardi il suono come esperienza totalizzante del percepire. Entro tale concezione occorre condurre tutte le sue opere, e non tornare all'insospitale oggettività del 1950." Sciarrino, "Testimonianze su *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura*", *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* CD booklet, Kairos, 2001, Catalogue No.: 0012102KAI. The piece was dedicated to Sciarrino, with its title paying tribute to Sciarrino's *All'aura in una lontananza*.

³⁰ Lachenmann, 1999, 26.

³¹ Sciarrino, "Testimonianze su *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura*", 2001.

an opportunity to feel the urgency of finding new balances and new arrangements in one's perception, and, hence, an invitation to rediscover one's identity and find courage for change.³² This attitude has an intrinsically political dimension, in that it destabilizes a pre-established system of sense perception, seeking to propose new aesthetic assemblages. This perpetual quest for the unknown is continued by Sciarrino who believes that, when listening, by creating "a vacuum" inside us, we "leave our space for another that we do not know".³³ The quasi-existentialist underpinning of Nono's notion of listening, however, finds a fuller and deeper echo in Lachenmann. Expounding on what "renewal" means in Nono music, Lachenmann writes: "the formulation of the structures is perhaps not completed in his last works, cannot be, because a landscape has opened up whose mode of encounter is not yet known and for which no one yet has the vehicle to get in and out again unscathed. But that is precisely what I call renewal".³⁴

Sound, Syntax, Structure

Lachenmann and Sciarrino tend to adopt the term sound when describing their primary compositional material. Sciarrino claims that his compositional approach embodies Schoenberg's *Klangfarbenmelodie*, but at the same time surpasses it by downplaying the melodic component in it which denotes, in the original Schoenbergian sense, a "logical succession".³⁵ The same could be said, writes Sciarrino, of some fellow composers of his times including Luigi Nono, Gérard Grisey and Helmut Lachenmann.³⁶ Timbre, articulation, figure, space, and colour become entangled in Sciarrino's approach to composing with sound:

...we can move to a composition where the timbre is everything, and not just because this component is preponderant to listening. The timbre here determines the compositional articulations

³² Paulo de Assis, "Revisiting Luigi Nono's *Suffered, Serene Waves*", in *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*, ed. Darla Crispin and Bob Gilmore, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014, 204.

³³ "Purifier son esprit signifie donc apprendre à faire le vide en soi, laisser de l'espace à l'autre que l'on ne connaît pas." Sciarrino: "Notes pour un journal parisien", in Feneyrou 2013, 27.

³⁴ "Die Formulierung der Strukturen ist in seinen letzten Werken vielleicht nicht abgeschlossen, kann es nicht sein, weil sich eine Landschaft geöffnet hat, deren Begehungsmodus man noch nicht kennt und für die noch keiner das Vehikel hat, um ungeschoren hinein- und wieder herauszukommen. Aber eben das nenne ich Erneuerung." Lachenmann, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung*, Josef Häusler ed., Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 215.

³⁵ Sciarrino, "La couleur du son", in Feneyrou 2013, 45.

³⁶ Ibid. 45.

and each sound event becomes like an apparition in a field of perception now spatialised. The carrier element is a changing colour scheme.³⁷

Sciarrino diminishes the role of melody and metrical rhythms as “first parameters”, turning instead to the more holistic “sound figure” which articulates all the parameters of musical language in a more organic way.³⁸ Jonathan Harvey resorts to words like “ambiguity” and “insubstantiality” when he tries to theorize the contemporary trend of composing with sound, particularly the idiom of *musique concrète instrumentale* as represented by Lachenmann and Sciarrino.³⁹ What Harvey means by ambiguity and insubstantiality refers to the replacement of “clean tones” with refined, etherealized and volatile sounds in such composition.⁴⁰ This music, argues Harvey, trades sonic stability for an elaborate system of rhythmic spatialization, and this system, crucially, serves a syntactical function. In other words, rhythmic spatialization becomes a deep structural feature of the music, instead of some sort of embellishment added on to the existing musical syntax.

Sciarrino and Lachenmann’s interest in inventing novel sonorities is bound to new visions of musical structure and syntax, and, noticeably, in the compositional thoughts of both, the concepts of sound, structure and syntax tend to merge. Sciarrino, who is especially concerned with creating multidimensional space and time in music, states that structure and sound event arise from the same needs, and grow from or tend to a common perspective, to a new image.⁴¹ This may be understood in the context that Sciarrino’s notion of sound and structure is predominantly figure- or gestalt-oriented. In its own idiosyncratic way, Sciarrino’s formal approach is capable of exemplifying a formal notion proposed by Nicholas Cook which heals the rift between form as a theorist studies it in the score and as an ongoing perceptual effect.⁴² Form in this sense not only represents a horizon of expectations within which listening takes place, it becomes

³⁷ “Nous pouvons passer à une composition où le timbre est tout, et pas seulement parce que cette composante est prépondérante à l’écoute. Le timbre détermine ici les articulations compositionnelles et chaque événement sonore devient comme une apparition dans un champ de perception désormais spatialisé. L’Élément porteur est un accord changeant de couleurs”. Ibid. 45.

³⁸ Ibid. 45.

³⁹ Jonathan Harvey, “Music, Ambiguity, Buddhism: A Composer’s Perspective”, in *Contemporary Music: Theory and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Max Paddison and Irène Deliège, Oxford/New York: Routledge, 2016, 279.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 279–93.

⁴¹ “Qui struttura ed evento sonoro sorgono dalle medesime esigenze e crescono o tendono a una prospettiva comune, a una nuova immagine.” Sciarrino, Commentary on *L’opera per flauto I*, Ricordi, 1990, <http://salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/ita/41.html>, accessed on 2 May 2020.

⁴² Nicholas Cook, “Form and Syntax: A Tale of Two Terms”, in *Music, Performance, Meaning: Selected Essays*, Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2007.

“fully internalized within the experience of sonic process”, and “indistinguishable from the patterning of sonic events along the surface of the music”.⁴³ In the case of Lachenmann, the precise differentiation of the shape and tactility of the sonority of his music, which is manifested in his own language used for theorization, is based on the presupposition that even the shortest sound object has structural potential. Similar to Sciarrino, Lachenmann’s graphical illustration of his archetypical sound combinations implies a vision-based approach, and this too leads to a blurring between sound, syntax, and structure. In *MaeE*, Lachenmann reiterates that a renewal of listening necessitates a willingness to react to new syntactic approaches, and it is in this process that certain taboos that preserved old ways of listening can be left aside.⁴⁴

What does reacting to new syntax mean? And how is it related to structure? In Lachenmann’s theoretical writing, the concept of structure has complex meanings. In some cases the two terms—structure and syntax—seem interchangeable; in others, they are used to denote disparate aspects of music. Lachenmann has not devoted as much theorization to syntax as he has to structure. But in various contexts, the former is used to denote low-level, local relational structures developed in the stream of sound objects in real time.⁴⁵ The two terms are clearly differentiated from each other when Lachenmann touches upon the idea that perceiving new syntax is not the same thing as perceiving the “art of structuring” underlying the expressive content.⁴⁶ What Lachenmann means by syntax seems to be closely intertwined with another term he has adopted in *MaeE*—continuum (*Kontinuum*) or the sound-time-continuum (*Klang-Zeit-Kontinuum*). While the term syntax seems to reduce music to an atemporal and abstract entity, the idea of continuum better captures the phenomenological dimension of music listening by locating its essence in time and in a

⁴³ Ibid. 250.

⁴⁴ See Lachenmann and Mosch, ‘Musik als existentielle Erfahrung: Gespräch mit Ulrich Bosch’, in *MaeE*, 213.

⁴⁵ Although the term syntax has been commonly used in musical discourse, music theorists have argued that the linguistic framework of analysis, of which syntactic analysis constitutes a part, translates with difficulty to music. Cook, for example, argues that music has syntax only in a metaphorical sense, and much can be said about it through the metaphorical language of form, a concept that is coextensive with syntax. See Cook 2007, 257–9. The difficulty has also to do with an impossible clear-cut differentiation between syntax and semantics, especially in the case of new music. Swain and Clarke, for example, point out that the transfer of the original distinction between syntax and semantics in generative linguistics into music theory is much more suppressed or decomposed in the realm of new music than in that of tonal music. See Joseph P. Swain, “The Concept of Musical Syntax”, *The Musical Quarterly*, 1995 (79/2), 281–308, and Eric F. Clarke, “Issues in Language and Music”, *Contemporary Music Review* 4, no. 1 (1989): 9–22.

⁴⁶ When demonstrating his views on renewing listening, Lachenmann repeatedly refers to serialism, arguing that observing whatever particular musical parameters or becoming aware of the underlying serial orders does not guarantee a renewal of perception.

subject-object relationship. Perceiving music as a continuum means the conscious projecting of a snippet of sound as “an undivided phenomenon”.⁴⁷ Sonic objects combined into a continuum thanks to a “magnetic effect”, and this hints at an “insistence” in the broadest sense, which ensures coherence.⁴⁸ Crucially, Lachenmann suggests that in listening for such continuum, the listener keeps his or her sensorium live, open and active. It is for this reason that he sees the search for a new syntactical approach as the starting point for a renewal of listening.

The adoption of the term continuum reveals Lachenmann’s sensitivity to the idea of phenomenological intentionality. In the passage quoted below, Lachenmann makes it clear that a continuum is perceived neither by purely acoustic nor purely abstract principles. Instead, he draws attention to the phenomenological connotation of the concept and especially the role of intuition in perceiving a continuum:

...But at the latest since the experience of Cage, this kind of continuum [the notion of continuum as in tonal music] becomes dubious. If I do not know that a piece is a chance-oriented piece, for example, if I do not know that the 4’33” is non-music, and when I sit there and only perceive what is happening “one after the other” (*daneben*), then I myself am the continuum. And if the composer places objects next to each other in a completely unrelated way, the only thing that binds them together then is that they occur one after the other at the command of a single will. This is then not an random setting, but the continuum that is thereby scanned (*abgetastet*) can neither be grasped by an acoustic nor by an abstract principle. What is important is that the continuum that shines through is not a contrived (*gebastelt*) one, but that it represents something like an affectedness (*Betroffenheit*) and, in this sense, can be imagined, hallucinated, “looked at”, and that it arises from existential experiences that are then conveyed through my creative will.⁴⁹

Although what Lachenmann means by the composer’s “will” and “an affectedness” upon the listener remain somewhat impenetrable in the context of this quote, he makes a crucial point: continuum is conceived as something resulting from a communication—based on collective “existential experience”—

⁴⁷ Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 219.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 218–9.

⁴⁹ “Aber spätestens seit der Erfahrung Cage ist es mit dieser Art von Kontinuum nicht mehr geheuer. Wenn ich nicht weiß, daß ein Stück ein zufalls-orientiertes Stück ist, wenn ich zum Beispiel nicht weiß, daß die 4’33” Nicht-Musik sind, und wenn ich dasitze und nur wahrnehme, was „daneben“ passiert, dann bin ich selbst das Kontinuum. Und wenn der Komponist völlig unzusammenhängend Objekte nebeneinander setzt, die scheinbar nichts miteinander zu tun haben, dann ist das einzige, was sie verbindet, daß sie auf Befehl eines einzigen Willens nacheinander vorkommen. Das ist dann keine zufällige Setzung, aber das Kontinuum, welches damit abgetastet wird, läßt sich weder durch ein akustisches noch durch ein abstraktes Prinzip erfassen. Wichtig ist, daß das durchscheinende Kontinuum nicht ein gebasteltes ist, sondern daß es so etwas wie eine Betroffenheit repräsentiert und in diesem Sinn imaginiert, halluziniert, „geschaut“ werden kann, und daß es existentielle Erfahrungen sind, die sich dann über meinen kreativen Willen vermitteln.” Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 219. Explanation in brackets added.

between the composer's and the recipient's ends. The word *abtasten*, commonly translated by Lachenmann scholars as "scan" or "feel out", is a keyword that recurs in Lachenmann's writing. The word also has the meaning of "palpate" or "sample" which directly concerns the body as an instrument of perception. Lachenmann's choice of the term accentuates the intention and initiative of the listening subject in searching for meaningful sound configurations. The term *Abtastprozeß*, translated literally as "scanning-process" or "process of tactile discovery" according to Christian Utz, is one of Lachenmann's favourite tropes.⁵⁰ For Lachenmann, perceiving a sound continuum should ideally resemble a scanning-process in which listeners "feel out" the new syntactical relations, and this, importantly, sheds light on the underlying structural gradation contained in the continuum and even in the whole musical work. The metaphor implicitly posits a notion of structure that foregrounds the role of perception, which is the key to understanding Lachenmann's ideal listening subjectivity to which I will return in Chapter 5.

The discussion around continuum demonstrates the fluidity between the concepts of sound, syntax and structure in Lachenmann's music and theory. The chiasmus in Lachenmann's self-coined *Klangstruktur* ("sound structure") and *Strukturklang* ("structural sound"), a pair of terms originally set forth in the trailblazing essay "Sound-Types of New Music" (1966), provides another example where structure and syntax appear to be interchangeable. Recurrently in his writings, Lachenmann elaborates on a specific notion of structure:

Structure is a framework of arrangements, whereby each of these arrangements represents the temporal projection of a sound aspect, in other words: the scattering of characteristic variants of a sounding character, some of which differ widely from one another.⁵¹

Based on this definition of structure, *Klangstruktur* means the "framework of arrangements" itself. *Strukturklang*, accordingly, denotes a continuum or a constellation of sound whose components are

⁵⁰ See Utz, "Time-Space Experience in Works for Solo Cello by Lachenmann, Xenakis and Ferneyhough: a Performance-Sensitive Approach to Morphosyntactic Musical Analysis", *Music Analysis*, 2017(36/ii), 8. Perceptual scanning, a basic concept studied under the framework of ecological psychology by James Gibson, may provide a reference point for accounting Lachenmann's "scanning-process" and other issues related to the perception of sound continuum in time and space. Gibson argues that in visual and haptic perceptions, the apprehension of ambient information—via a direct "picking-up" of the information—are achieved through an act of scanning. This scanning process sequentially samples the information and grasp them "in simultaneity". For more, see James J. Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual System*, Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1983, 252–3.

⁵¹ "Struktur ist Gefüge von Anordnungen, wobei jede dieser Anordnungen die zeitliche Projektion eines Klangaspekts, anders gesagt: die Streuung von charakteristischen, zum Teil weit voneinander verschiedenen Varianten eines klingenden Charakters darstellt". Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 121.

assembled in a series of polyphonically overlapping orders. Serial thinking—understood in a broad sense—is inherent in *Strukturklang*, as the concept is closely intertwined with Lachenmann’s understanding of structure as “a polyphony of disposition” or “a polyphony of relationship”.⁵² Lachenmann considers *Strukturklang* as his ideal sound type, for the reason that:

...in such a sound structure, not only do the properties of the detailed sounds achieve their original effect, but these details are functions of an order and members of precise arrangements, and, as such, an immediately effective richness of kinship and graded contrasting relationships unfolds among these details, and they communicate and get on with each other in a completely new way in such a context...⁵³

Strukturklang, in other words, entails an exploratory attempt to map out a sound typology in listening. It places individual sound objects in an immediate context which makes these very sound objects appear perceptually “refreshing” and striking. The incorporation of multiple gradations in a *Strukturklang* is in a way comparable to Sciarrino’s stratified or multi-dimensional space-time, although, compared with Sciarrino’s figure- and gestalt-oriented approach, *Strukturklang* seems to require a more abstract and cerebrally-demanding process of constructing on the listener’s part.

Interestingly, Lachenmann’s approach to structure is perceived as highly idiosyncratic by composers who hold a particular attitude towards structuralism—one that provides the basis for the style of “New Complexity”. Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, for example, notes that Lachenmann’s self-understanding of *Strukturklang* is predicated on a colossal shift from the standard notion of structure.⁵⁴ He argues that Lachenmann’s sound constellation only lays claim to a “factual structure” (*faktische Struktur*), just as “any existent has a structure”.⁵⁵ What Mahnkopf means by “factual structure” may be translated as the minimal structural affordance that any given combination of sonic objects can have. For Mahnkopf, a definition of structure as such deviates from what the term normally denotes. He writes:

⁵² This description of musical structure can be found in a number of Lachenmann’s articles including “Klangtypen der Neuen Musik”, “Hearing [Hören] is Defenseless—without Listening [Hören]” and “On Structuralism”.

⁵³ “...in solcher Klang-Struktur nicht bloß die Eigenschaften der Detail-Klänge zu ihrer angestammten Wirkung kommen, sondern daß diese Details Funktionen einer Ordnung und Glieder präziser An-Ordnungen sind und als solche einen unmittelbar wirksamen Reichtum von Verwandtschafts- und abgestuften Kontrastbeziehungen untereinander entfalten und sich aus solchem Zusammenhang ganz neu verstehen und mitteilen.” Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 18.

⁵⁴ Mahnkopf, “Zwei Versuche zu Helmut Lachenmann”, in *Auf (-) und Zuhören: 14 essayistische Reflexionen über die Musik und die Person Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. Hans-Peter Jahn, Hofheim am Taunus: Wolke, 2005, 18.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 18.

The structure of Lachenmann's works, however, is the result, not the alien layer of sound and phenomenon against which musical construction, and sometimes musical semantics, must assert itself. Only when structure appears as a counterpart to *mise-en-musique* and becomes audible—or at least perceptible—as an opponent can one meaningfully speak of structuralism.⁵⁶

What characterizes Mahnkopf's understanding of structuralism is the idea that structure is understood as a preformed framework, implemented via a top-down approach, and still external to and even exerting an oppositional “force” on the sounding events. The notion of structure as implied by *Strukturklang*, too, has the meaning of framework, but it differs from Mahnkopf's understanding in that it gives more importance to the idea that structure is to a certain extent intrinsic to or pre-existent in sonic information. *Strukturklang* implies that structure becomes a synonym for perceived potentials or possibilities for constructing patterns and relationships. Furthermore, Lachenmann's intention to prioritize the mutual relationship between listeners and sounding objects becomes ever clearer when he introduces elements of “existential experience” into the centre of his composition. These elements are expected to serve as “cues” which give hints about what can be found about the sonic objects and present a prompt to how listeners might receive and interact with the music. As I will show later, the concept of affordance as proposed by ecological psychologists might inform many aspects of a compositional and a listening aesthetic in which the “existential experience” plays a central role. The same can be said of Sciarrino's ecological approach to sound and listening.

Mahnkopf's definition of structure, however, seems congruent with Lachenmann's discussion of the concept in a context that concerns musical organization on a global scale. A clearer line of demarcation can be drawn between structure, sound and syntax in this context. The fact that Lachenmann tends to differentiate serial structure from the actually perceptible syntactical structure of music in listening attests to this. In the preliminary stage of creation, Lachenmann relies heavily on serial technique which provides structural preconditioning for the arrangement of sound material. Lachenmann's sketches often include matrices which outline possible permutations of a predetermined number sequence. This serves as the

⁵⁶ “Die Struktur der Lachenmannschen Werke ist aber Ergebnis, nicht jene klang- und phänomen fremde Schicht, gegen die die musikalische Konstruktion, mitunter auch die musikalische Semantik sich behaupten muss. Nur wenn Struktur als Widerpart der *mise-en-musique* auftritt und als Opponent hörbar—oder doch zumindest spürbar—wird, kann sinnvollerweise von Strukturalismus gesprochen werden”. Ibid. 18.

foundation of a customized and highly developed serial procedure whose function is to generate what Lachenmann calls the “structural grid” or “time-net” of the works. This numerical procedure is coupled with a typology of major sound types, or what Lachenmann terms “sound families”. Each of these families embraces an array of seemingly incommensurable sonic objects, often bonded by a series of overlapping similarities rather than by one single superficial feature that is common to all of the sound material.⁵⁷ Under this principle, a violent Bartók pizzicato and a timpani stroke, for example, are to be perceived as members of the same family. The time-net determines the entry points of multiple sound families and the pace of their polyphonic unfolding in time among other temporal aspects, thereby shaping the formal skeleton of a work on the most basic level. In a study based on extensive research on Lachenmann’s serial matrices and diagrams, Pietro Cavallotti “deciphers” the major routines involved in Lachenmann’s application of time-nets in actual music, with a particular focus on those places where the composer deviates from, breaks or mutes the rules he pre-sets himself to maximize the creative freedom in the choice of material.⁵⁸ Cavallotti suggests that structure nets are introduced mainly as an intersubjective system for composing. While they regulate the time disposition of multiple parameters, they, crucially, offer no real structural interrelation to their musical content. Unlike the historical or classical modes of serial construction in its heyday in the twentieth century, argues Cavallotti, Lachenmann’s serial procedures support the fundamental pre-formation of structure, but shift the actual beginning of creative activity to the phase of his (free) selection of sonic material.⁵⁹ Cavallotti’s conclusion brings us back to a point that has been made previously: for Lachenmann, there exists a distinction between those schematized serial structures with whose help a sense of coherence may be created, but more evident at the composer’s end, and those arrangements to be “scanned” and thus made conscious at the listener’s end. It is the latter that discloses the characteristic musical vision at work in Lachenmann’s serially-mediated sound-structure continuum.

⁵⁷ Lachenmann’s “sound family” was originally developed from the idea of the “family resemblance” (*Familienähnlichkeit*) character of general concepts, a philosophical contribution from Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein’s basic idea is that some general concepts, for example, the concept “game”, apply in virtue of multiple features which not all their instances share and which defy capture in one definition. These concepts usually apply in virtue of features that are shared only by sub-sets of their instances in a “criss-crossing” or “overlapping” manner.

⁵⁸ Pietro Cavallotti, “Präformation des Materials und kreative Freiheit: Die Funktion des Strukturnetzes am Beispiel von *Mouvement* (- vor der Erstarrung)”, in *Nachgedachte Musik. Studien zum Werk von Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. Jörn Peter Hiekel and Siegfried Mauser, Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2005, 145–170.

⁵⁹ Cavallotti, 2005, 170.

Perception of Musical Meaning: The Constellational and the Ecological Approaches

Sciarrino once claimed, “I do not write music. I write psychological experience. My music belongs to the area of psychoacoustics”.⁶⁰ These words reveal the increasing demand in contemporary new music for a consideration of sonic phenomena from a reception perspective. Despite a defensive stance towards modernist structuralism, Lachenmann is similarly concerned with perceptual intensity and, more importantly, intuition, as something of paramount importance in music listening. “When composing”, he claims, “I do not just follow private freedoms, rather, I also have the feeling that I am doing something vicariously, in relation to collective experiences, to excitations, and in communication with nature”.⁶¹ What he means by “existential experience” has to do with things that touch our current and at the same time “timeless experiences”, “needs” (*Bedürfnissen*) and “longings” (*Sehnsüchten*).⁶² These experiences are *a priori* within us, and when they are intuitively touched upon in perception, listeners are likely to reflect on them as something both shocking and familiar. Apart from the new sound idiom that the music of Lachenmann and Sciarrino has collectively shaped, it is predominantly in this intuitive aspect of listening that I see a striking similitude between the aesthetic underlying Lachenmann’s *MCI* and Sciarrino’s ecology of music and listening.

A perception-based or a phenomenological perspective serves to orient this thesis’s close examination of the sound, form, structure and hermeneutic potential that arises from them in the works of Sciarrino and Lachenmann. When reflecting on the fundamental challenge to the analysis of form in new music in general, Cosima Linke, using Lachenmann’s *Schreiben* as her case study, notes that the difficulty mainly stems from, first, the absence of a framework of reference that transcends the single phenomenon and the consequent pervasive indeterminacy of the aesthetic object; and second, the dissociation between the compositional pre-organization of musical material and the sounding phenomena.⁶³ Recent music-

⁶⁰ “Ich schreibe keine Musik, ich schreibe eine psychologische Erfahrung. Meine Musik liegt im Bereich der Psychoakustik”. Salvatore Sciarrino, “«ich schreibe keine musik, ich schreibe eine psychologische erfahrung»: Maria Kostakeva im Gespräch mit dem Komponisten Salvatore Sciarrino”, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 2009 (170/4), 32.

⁶¹ “Ich folge beim Komponieren nicht bloß privaten Freiheiten, sondern ich habe auch das Gefühl, etwas stellvertretend zu machen, und zwar in bezug auf kollektive Erfahrungen, auf Erregungen und in Kommunikation mit der Natur.” Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 214.

⁶² *Ibid.* 214.

⁶³ Cosima Linke, *Konstellationen—Form in neuer Musik und ästhetische Erfahrung im Ausgang von Adorno: Eine musikphilosophische und analytische Untersuchung am Beispiel von Lachenmanns »Schreiben. Musik für Orchester*, Mainz: Schott Campus, 2018, 31.

analytical discourse and methodology on new music, Linke suggests, witnessed an “aesthetic turn”, and such a swerve was particularly propelled by directions like musical phenomenology, musical hermeneutics and sign-theoretical approaches, all of which are explicitly interested in the reception relationship between music and the listener.⁶⁴ This methodological turn is quintessentially manifested in studies of the repertoire that this thesis is concerned with. Writing on Sciarrino, Aaron Helgeson points out that there has been a growing discussion of emerging contemporary musical practices that purport to be “phenomenological”.⁶⁵ And as has often been the case in situations where such labels are applied, the word was adopted primarily from the perspective of observers rather than practitioners. Such compositional praxis is closely related to non-traditional instrumental sounds. Names of composers who have contributed to this trend in Helgeson’s list include Pierluigi Billone, Chaya Czernowin, Helmut Lachenmann and Rebecca Saunders. But, for Helgeson, the “phenomenological” trait has made its most conspicuous appearances in the music of Sciarrino.⁶⁶ Mahnkopf warns that analytical study of Lachenmann’s music should not mistakenly adopt the composer’s alleged structuralist stance.⁶⁷ The appropriate research approach, Mahnkopf suggests, would be phenomenology—“the minutest exploration of what is in the score, and above all, what that sounds like concretely”. In a nutshell, “score study and listening analysis”.⁶⁸

A host of writings in the current Lachenmann and Sciarrino scholarship are devoted to the perception of time and space in their music.⁶⁹ Interests in these topics, arguably, cannot bypass the attention given to the relationship between musical form or structure and how it is perceived by the listener as an aesthetic experience. The analytical-hermeneutic approach that this thesis adopts benefits significantly from two projects that attempt to address the broader methodological, analytical, and theoretical issues related to the study of musical meaning from the standpoint of listening. One of them is Cosima Linke’s work which includes an analysis of Lachenmann’s orchestral piece *Schreiben* (2002–05) as a case study.⁷⁰ The work

⁶⁴ Ibid, 23.

⁶⁵ Aaron Helgeson, “What is Phenomenological Music, and What Does It Have to Do with Salvatore Sciarrino?”, *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Summer 2013), 4–d36.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 4.

⁶⁷ Mahnkopf 2005, 17.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 17.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Utz (2019, 2017), Boyle (2020, 2018), Linke (2018, 2016), Helgeson (2013), and Leydon (2010). These works, particularly those of Utz, Boyle and Linke, have significantly informed my approach to the topic of space-time in Chapter 4.

⁷⁰ Cosima Linke, *Konstellationen – Form in neuer Musik und ästhetische Erfahrung im Ausgang von Adorno: Eine musikphilosophische und analytische Untersuchung am Beispiel von Lachenmanns »Schreiben. Musik für Orchester«*, Mainz, Schott Campus, 2018.

represents an exemplary music-analytical complement to the framework theory for a perception-oriented analysis of new music that Linke develops based on Theodor Adorno's model of constellation or constellative thinking. For Linke, Lachenmann's music, in particular, makes the relationship between musical form and aesthetic experience a pressing and challenging issue for its listeners.

By means of Adorno's notion of constellations, Linke's work provides philosophical grounding for the idea that aesthetic experience, specifically listening experience, should be regarded as a starting point and a reference point for the analysis of forms, especially those of post-tonal music after 1950. Talk of constellations arises out of Walter Benjamin and Adorno's account of the philosophical representation (*Darstellung*) of Idea. This representation has its origin in discontinuity and fragmentation, instead of totality and the "integral unity in the essence of truth", as seen in the "uninterrupted deductive concinnity" and the "systematic closure" of modern science.⁷¹ The term constellation was originally adopted by Benjamin as a metaphor for a theory of reading and, fundamentally, an epistemology. Benjamin posits that,

[I]deas are to objects as constellations are to stars...they are neither their concepts nor their laws... Whereas phenomena determine the scope and content of the concepts which encompass them, by their existence, by what they have in common, and by their differences, their relationship to ideas is the opposite of this inasmuch as the idea, the objective interpretation of phenomena—or rather their elements—determines their relationship to each other...[I]deas are timeless constellations, and by virtue of the elements' being seen as points in such constellations, phenomena are subdivided and at the same time redeemed.⁷²

The Idea, according to Fredric Jameson, is simply "the 'system' of concepts, the relationship between a group of concepts".⁷⁴ With reference to the astronomical phenomenon, the term constellation points towards an interpretive procedure in which the reader becomes an observer in relation to an investigative object that is continually shifting.⁷⁵ The notion thus exposes a process of "object-formation": it accentuates the constellating practice of interpretation that draws specific attention to the unstable conditions of this interpretation and the inaccessible order of its object.⁷⁶

⁷¹ For a full account of the notion, see Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic*, London: Verso, 1990 and Andrea Krauss, "Constellations: A Brief Introduction", *Modern Language Notes*, 126, no. 3 (2011): 439–45.

⁷² Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, London; New York: Verso, 1998, 34.

⁷⁴ Jameson 1990, 54.

⁷⁵ Krauss 2011, 439–45.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 439–40.

Constellation represents Adorno's endeavour to develop an aesthetic dimension in his thought as a legitimate extension to the traditional philosophical discourse. By seeing philosophical texts as aesthetic entities, Adorno seeks to free philosophy from the limits of discursive logic, rationality and speculation.⁷⁷ For Adorno, "the underlying functions and operation of the production and reception of philosophical texts perform in a way similar to the aesthetic experience of genuine art, by inducing flashes of insight, provoking moments of recognition, and engendering expressions of the unsayable".⁷⁸ Constellation may be more fruitfully understood in the light of Adorno's concern with philosophers' engagement with the non-conceptual and the non-identical. Max Paddison notes that constellation is Adorno's own term for "the principle through which each of his texts finds its unique form in relation to its 'object'".⁷⁹ In the model of constellations, concepts are "fluid, taking their meanings from their relationship to other concepts, and interacting constantly", and this supposedly contrasts with a system wherein "concepts have fixed positions and function as 'invariants' or ontological absolutes".⁸⁰ When working with constellations, Paddison further explains, concepts are to be understood as "inherently contradictory", "constantly needing renegotiation in relation to the object they attempt to grasp, but which they ultimately fail to 'identify'".⁸¹ This, Paddison summarizes, is the kernel of Adorno's dialectic of identity and non-identity. Furthermore, Adorno sees art and the structural mode of aesthetic experience as the epitome of the non-conceptual and non-identical. The interpretation of musical works, particularly, runs up against "the problem of conceptualizing the non-conceptual, of 'identifying the non-identical', in its most extreme form".⁸² Following this sentiment, Linke proposes a reception model that brings into a constellational dynamic the objective construction of the musical form itself, its associated contexts, and the listener's contingent modes of aesthetic experience.

Elaborating on the model of constellation, Adorno tellingly suggests that:

I believe only in those who have once—and I would almost think: in their childhood—realized that, the expression "this evening is melancholy" does not refer to a mood of the observer, but rather

⁷⁷ Karin Bauer, *Adorno's Nietzschean Narratives: Critiques of Ideology, Readings of Wagner*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, 195.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 195.

⁷⁹ Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 14.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 14.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 14–5.

⁸² *Ibid.* 15.

means that the evening itself—in a constellational relationship with the viewer—is melancholy. Those who have not had this decisive experience, this “freedom to the object”, as it were, this experience of self-forgetfulness in relation to the object, do not know at all what a work of art is.⁸³

Thinking in constellations, put simply, enables us to perceive relations between objects, while at the same time being conscious of the “positions” that we, as the observing subjects, take to construct the image of these relations and the presuppositions underlying such construction. Because it draws attention to the discursive production of objects of knowledge, the model of constellation has a self-reflective dimension. This self-reflection on the relationship between the observer and the object observed, crucially, brings Adorno’s concept and Lachenmann and Sciarrino’s perception perspective into conversation. Linke reaffirms Adorno’s notion that aesthetic experience requires a special form of activity on the part of the subject in the sense of “a mental or imaginary compliance (*Mitvollziehens*)” with “what the aesthetic object (potentially) holds in store in its sensual appearance for the aesthetic experience”.⁸⁴

Situating the notion of constellation in music analysis, Linke argues that a constellational subject–object relationship is embodied in a form of analytical representation. Making sense of the sensory, material qualities and the self-referential properties of musical signs, Linke emphasizes, should not be detached from a current, perceptually-meaningful listening experience. Such experience is immanently afforded by the work in focus but at the same time also transcends it. Crucially, the presence of a heightened temporally-, perspectivally-specific element in this representing process is accentuated. A dynamic, constellational subject–object relationship allows more perspectival contingencies in representing ideas. A pragmatic extension of the notion of constellation is Linke’s coinage of the term “sound constellation”. The term designates sound events and sequences that are captured and experienced as belonging to each other as a unit in real-time listening experience. The temporal dimension that characterizes the term is drawn from Husserl’s “time window” or “time field” which refers to a continuum shaped by the retention-present-protection formula. Arguably, the phenomenological underpinning of Linke’s concept has a strong

⁸³ “Ich glaube, nur wem einmal—and ich würde beinahe denken: in seiner Kindheit—aufgegangen ist, daß, wenn man sagt, dieser Abend ist schwermütig, das nicht eine Stimmung des Betrachters ist, sondern daß dann, *freilich in einer Konstellation mit dem Betrachter*, der Abend selber schwermütig ist, —daß jemand, der diese entscheidende Erfahrung, gewissermaßen diese »Freiheit zum Objekt, nicht gemacht hat, jene Erfahrung der Selbstvergessenheit gegenüber dem Gegenstand, allerdings überhaupt nicht weiß, was ein Kunstwerk ist.” Adorno, as cited in Linke 2018, 142.

⁸⁴ “...eines geistigen bzw. imaginären Mitvollziehens dessen, was das ästhetische Objekt in seiner sinnlichen Erscheinung (potentiell) für die ästhetische Erfahrung bereithält”. Linke 2018, 140.

resonance with presumptions about listening made manifest in Lachenmann's own terminology like "continuum".

Proposed as a methodology for the study of new music, Linke's constellation model in many ways echoes the ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning proposed by Eric Clarke.⁸⁵ Clarke's approach examines the innumerable subjective experiences and meanings that music in a broad sense affords. Like Linke in her constellational approach, Clarke puts himself at the centre of the interpretations he presents, and particularly, the approach accentuates the perspective of present-day listeners, especially those enculturated in Western traditions with formal music training. Compared with other recent theories of musical meaning that foreground the contingency and the active role of the listener, such as Kofi Agawu's topics, Lawrence Kramer's hermeneutics and Robert Hatten's semiotics, the ecological approach is unique in that it is concerned with how meaning is perceived in the act of listening by subjects who are essentially considered as sentient organisms. Rooted in evolutionary biology and the ecological psychology of James J. Gibson, the approach draws attention to the physical grounding of auditory perception and the mutual influence between sensory stimulus and the listener; also, the approach considers musical listening as an embodied experience. Linke's musical adaptation of the constellational approach shares Clarke's central concern—how listeners perceive musical meaning—and the focus on the physical and temporal aspects of the act of listening.

The listening or perception-centered position of the ecological approach is manifest in two of its fundamental premises. The first is about the direct link between listeners and their reception of environmental information which is thought to be inherently highly structured. Ecological psychologists argue that organisms do not dispassionately gather neutral, discrete sensory information for passive processing. Instead, that information directly specifies sources in the environment. This directness in the perceiver-environment relationship is not an inexplicable magic, but, as Clarke has argued, following Gibson, the consequence of the collaboration of two factors: an organism's constant adapting to its environment through perceptual learning, and the interdependence of perception and action. The second premise is about the reciprocity between listeners' needs and capacities and environmental opportunities.

⁸⁵ Eric Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

This idea, sometimes referred to as mutualism, is encapsulated in a key concept of the theory—affordance, a property of an event or object, relative to an organism (more on this shortly). The ecological approach accentuates the “essentially exploratory and orienting function of perception in the life of an organism”.⁸⁶ Organisms actively seek out the “functionally significant properties”, that is, the affordances of the environment, and acting upon them based on their own needs.⁸⁷ What does this mean for human beings acting in an auditory or musical environment? A listening subject similarly specifies music’s events as “sources” of information, for instance, about where they might come from, be for, or do. Crucially, hearing sounds as the “sounds *of*”, argues Clarke, contributes to an understanding of what sounds mean. Concomitantly, the listening subject seeks to act upon or make use of the musical meaning in his or her own interest—dance to it, feel motivated or nostalgic, verbally interpret it, exploit its cultural relevance, and so forth.

The ecological approach plays a twofold role in this thesis. First and foremost, it serves as a musicological-theoretical foil to the aesthetic outlined jointly by Sciarrino and Lachenmann, and in a way provides a fruitful reception perspective for their music. Sciarrino’s choice of the same term “ecology” as his key concept, as this thesis aims to show, is by no means a superficial coincidence. It is equally testable in various dimensions of Lachenmann’s aesthetic thinking, including the notions of *MCI* and *aura*, which will be addressed briefly later and more in-depth in Chapter 5. The ecological approach, in brief, offers a reception method that not only resonates strongly with, but also lends theoretical strength to a contemporary compositional praxis that is preoccupied with the issue of listening and perception. Secondly, on a methodological and pragmatic level, Clarke’s detailed analysis of his musical examples in *Ways of Listening* provides a range of concepts introduced as useful tools that open up “hermeneutic windows” for examining musical meanings based on subjective experiences. Clarke’s analysis seeks to demonstrate that these concepts, including gesture, motion (or self-motion), space, subject-position, virtual agency and environment, and so on, account for musical events or situations that are straightforwardly perceptual phenomena. These concepts, which inform and inspire the ways I listen to and analyze my musical examples

⁸⁶ Clarke 2005, 15.

⁸⁷ Harry Heft, Michael Richardson, Entry on “Ecological Psychology”, *Oxford Bibliographies*, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199828340/obo-9780199828340-0072.xml>, accessed on 14 October 2020. For a full account of the relevance of affordance to music, see W. Luke Windsor and Christophe de Bézenac, “Music and Affordances”, *Musicae Scientiae*, 16, no. 1 (2012): 102–20.

in the subsequent chapters, together facilitate this thesis's interrogation of traces of subjective agents in the music of the two composers.

Both Linke and Clarke propose an essentially relational connection between the subject and the object, or perceivers and their environments. Commenting on in what sense listener's perception serves as a starting point for his composition, Lachenmann notes, "I cannot somehow dictate to people what kind of antennas they have to use now. Every human being has a structure. And what happens is that the structure of the piece rubs against the structure of the listener".⁸⁸ Arguably, this statement demonstrates an idea strikingly similar to the Gibsonian concept of affordance. The notion of affordance is predicated on the idea that structure is inherent in the environment. The affordances of an environment are "what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill".⁸⁹ The implication of this for music reception is that affordance justifies inter-subjective understanding. As Clarke notes, affordance explains "why interpretations do not just spread unchecked in every possible direction".⁹⁰ In turn, for perceivers, affordance means the opportunities, functions and values they detect in an environment.⁹¹ An affordance, argues Gibson, is "equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior"; "it is both physical and psychical, yet neither"; "an affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer".⁹² Echoing Lachenmann's statement above, Clarke argues that the world is in fact a "highly structured environment subject to both the forces of nature...and the profound impact of human beings and their cultures; and that in a reciprocal fashion perceivers are highly structured organisms that are adapted to that environment".⁹³ When applied to aesthetic interpretation, the notion of affordance helps to cut across the dichotomy of subject-object that persists in almost any aesthetic experience. It, on the one hand, posits an autonomy of the perceived sonic objects, and, on the other hand, allows us to treat meaningfully the contingencies in the ways listeners engage with music—that is, their divergent sensitivities, capabilities, interests, intentions, and practical needs. This reciprocity between the subjective and the objective, as

⁸⁸ "Ich kann nicht den Leuten irgendwie vorschreiben, welche Antennen sie jetzt ausfahren müssen. Jeder Mensch hat ebenso eine Struktur. *De facto* was passiert ist, die Struktur des Stücks reibt sich mit der Struktur dessen der hört." Lachenmann's words in "Moritz Winkelmann–Beethoven Lachenmann" (official album trailer), 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmvBQC_xXw8&ab_channel=MoritzWinkelmann

⁸⁹ James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Psychology Press Classic Editions. New York; Hove, England, 2015, 119.

⁹⁰ Clarke, William, Reynolds 2018, 271.

⁹¹ Clarke, William, Reynolds, 2018, 271.

⁹² Gibson 2015, 121.

⁹³ Clarke 2005, 17.

previously indicated, is also at the heart of constellations as a metaphor. Ian Buchanan gives a vivid explanation: “[t]he stars in the night sky are where they are regardless of how we look at them and there is something in how they are positioned above us that suggests the image we construct of them. But having said that, the names we use for constellations are embedded in history, tradition and myth. So the constellation is simultaneously subjective and objective in nature”.⁹⁴ In the same way, for Linke, musical form is to be understood neither as a mere object property of the sonic phenomenon nor as a pure category of experience.

Affordance also helps to ease the confrontation between inherent (autonomous) and socially constructed (heteronomous) theories of meaning in music created by approaches based on a binary-mode of thinking. Clarke’s main argument about this—made in the last two chapters of *Ways of Listening* devoted to music that is most closely associated with the “autonomous tradition”—is that sounds directly specify sources to listeners that are not only in a real everyday environment but also the symbolic-cultural environment in which they reside. “Environment” in the case of the latter refers to a virtual world composed of sonic events. Clarke proposes that absolute music itself provides an “autonomous musical environment” in which sounds specify the invariants of musical event structures at a variety of levels—“from single pitches, to motifs, themes, scale structure, metrical structures, rhythmic gestures, tonal regions, and much more”.⁹⁵ Structural listening can therefore be understood as “the perception of musical event structures specified by sound”.⁹⁶ Following the principle of affordance, listening in either an “autonomous” or a “heteronomous” way would reflect and delineate possibilities of interpretation offered by the other.

Interestingly, a tension between ways of listening underpinned by autonomous and heteronomous principles lurks in both Sciarrino’s and Lachenmann’s own musical discourses. Sciarrino claims that the perception of his musical form is based on an “ordering of relationship”—an expression strongly resonating with Lachenmann’s “polyphony of relationship” which implies elements of structural listening.⁹⁷ Both formulations seem at first glance at odds with the concreteness that the music of *MCI* aims to exhibit as well as Sciarrino’s figure-based formal archetypes which are very much embedded in our everyday

⁹⁴ Ian Buchanan, Entry on “constellation”, in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (2 ed.), Oxford, 2018, online accessed.

⁹⁵ Clarke 2005, 134.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 133.

⁹⁷ For discussion of Sciarrino’s “ordering of relationship”, see Grazia Giaco, *La notion de figure chez Salvatore Sciarrino*, Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001.

experience of perceiving shapes, gestures, contours and motions. The concept of affordance offers a useful theoretical framework here to help us cut across the boundary between structural listening and the listening in which the specification of meanings goes beyond the scope of music itself. The ecological approach holds a holistic view of musical meaning. For Clarke, cultures, emotions and ideologies are expressed through material forms (including musical sounds) to which perceivers can be attuned; information that tends to be thought as “abstract” or of higher orders—styles and genres, cultural traditions, social functions, emotional states and ideological allegiances—are equally conceived as sources, of which perceivers can be cognizant. Lachenmann shares a similar view in this regard. The notion of *MCI* is predominantly concerned with sound as a “‘natural’ event”, as a “message conveyed from its own mechanical origin” and thus as “experience of energy”.⁹⁸ Through a vivid example, Lachenmann proposes that *MCI* is about observing an acoustic event from the perspective of “what happened”:

This way of perception is normal in everyday life. If I hear two cars crashing—each against the other—I hear maybe some rhythms or some frequencies, but I do not say “Oh, what interesting sounds!” I say, “What happened?”.⁹⁹

What is given an emphasis here is what Lachenmann refers to as “the naturalistic, trivial aspect” of (musical) sound. For Lachenmann, the kinds of meaning that we are used to attributing to a sound are often characterized by a certain degree of naivety. The perception of sound, be it a car crashing or a plucked open G string, often points to a semantic referent. Sounds are, as Lachenmann puts it, often “labelled and assigned through superficial standards”.¹⁰⁰ This sentiment leads us to Lachenmann’s embracing of the Benjaminian idea of aura, which receives detailed discussion in Chapter 5. The idea of aura further extends some basic assumptions of *MCI* by suggesting that in every sound resides a realm of association, a repository preserving the cultural, social and historical reality of music. As we will see in Chapter 5, Lachenmann’s theorization of aura—especially in terms of its relationship with the material concreteness of the language

⁹⁸ Expressions similar to these appear repeatedly in a host of interviews with Lachenmann. See, for example, David Ryan 1999, 20–5 and Abigail Heathcote, “Sound Structures, Transformations, and Broken Magic: An Interview with Helmut Lachenmann”, in Max Paddison & Irène Deliège (ed.), *Contemporary Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010: 334–5.

⁹⁹ Paul Steenhuisen, “Interview with Helmut Lachenmann - Toronto, 2003”, *Contemporary Music Review* 23, no. 3–4 (2004), 10.

¹⁰⁰ “Aber auf jeden Fall sind die Klänge durch solche geradezu oberflächliche Standards etikettiert und zugeordnet...” Lachenmann: “Klänge sind Naturereignisse”, in *Programme book* Stuttgart, 2001, 33.

of *MCI* and its relationship with *Strukturklang*—represents a clear intention to remove the wedge between the “musical” and everyday reality, the concrete and the symbolic. Equally relevant to this issue is the analysis presented in Chapter 6 which tries to exemplify how such a production tension can offer particular perceptual opportunities, challenges and types of subjective experience.

How to Do Things with “Sounds”:

The Perception of the Self, Musical Subjectivity, and Recent Operatic (Inter)Subjectivity

The Co-Perception of the World and the Self

The subject–object mutualism underlying both the ecological and the constellational approaches makes a case that, as Clarke puts it, “a listener’s sense of meaning in music is powerfully bound up with his or her experience of being subjectively engaged (or alienated) by the music, and with the varieties of subjective states that music can afford”.¹⁰¹ This leads to a question of practical significance—what kinds of analytical perspectives do these theories lend to our study of music as a technical apparatus in the service of making sense of this music? Through close engagement with Lachenmann’s and Sciarrino’s writings in this regard, this thesis seeks to assemble a body of “interpretational tools” for understanding the perception of musical meaning that is committed to the listener’s subjective position—not only the perception of the musical environment, but also his or her self-perception. A reception method as such produces reflective thoughts on a musical or a listening subjectivity in relation to particular aspects of the music. Such an approach also attempts to grasp musical details as they are perceived in real-time listening.

Through a diverse selection of musical examples, Clarke sets forth in *Ways of Listening* a range of concepts as “vantage points” for yielding fruitful analytical-hermeneutical interpretations. These concepts include agency, gesture, motion (and self-motion), direction, space, and based on these fundamental ones,

¹⁰¹ Clarke 2005, 90.

more elaborated notions such as subject-position (or listening perspective).¹⁰² Although these concepts all represent perceptual experience (not solely auditory ones) from the real world, in Clarke's work they are predominantly used to denote musical events or phenomena in a fictional or virtual world. Significantly, for Clarke, an important component of a subjective engagement with music is its corporeal, proprioceptive and motional quality, which may sometimes paradoxically provide listeners with experiences of a virtual reality.¹⁰³ Musical sounds can specify movements and gestures of a virtual environment that both abides by and stretches or defies the normal laws of physics.¹⁰⁴ The perception of motion in music, for example, creates for listeners the sense of being an agent among, or observing, other agents (more on this momentarily). This argument receives an echo in Robert Hatten's 2018 work which examines virtual agency as it is projected by music and perceived by listeners.¹⁰⁵ Like Clarke, Hatten is concerned with the phenomenon that "we as listeners are predisposed to engage with a kind of subjective identification whenever we listen to music".¹⁰⁶ His theory, likewise, conceives virtual agency as a hermeneutic tool from perspectives such as movement, gesture, and embodiment.

The relationship between listeners' perception of themselves and the perception of their environments is highlighted in Clarke's approach, and this is a direct extension of a fundamental idea in ecological theory—that is, to perceive the world is to co-perceive oneself.¹⁰⁷ Gibson has suggested that proprioception, which can be understood as sensitivity to the self, and exteroception, that is, the perception of environment, are essentially inseparable and complementary.¹⁰⁸ All the perceptual systems are propriosensitive in that, Gibson writes, "the observer's movements usually produce sights and sounds and impressions on the skin along with stimulation of the muscles, the joints, and the inner ear".¹⁰⁹ Importantly, he stresses that it is

¹⁰² The idea of subject-position accounts for the intersubjective relationship between the perceived virtual source and the listener who authentically identifies with or critically observes this source. See Clarke 2005, 91–125 and Clarke in Born 2013, 100. Edward T. Cone and Robert Hatten have proposed ideas very similar to Clarke's subject-positions. Both authors try to categorize listeners' attitudes in terms of their subjective relationship with the virtual agent. A listener can, for example, become, identify with the virtual agent, or, by keep certain distance, empathize/sympathize/antipathize with it. See Hatten 2018, 136–7, and Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, Berkeley; London, 1974.

¹⁰³ Clarke 2005, 90. For an elaboration on the notion of virtual agency, see Clarke 2005, 75–88.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 69–70.

¹⁰⁵ Robert S. Hatten, *A Theory of Virtual Agency for Western Art Music*, Bloomington, Indiana, 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 170.

¹⁰⁷ Gibson 2015, 132–3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 108–9, 132–2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 108.

one's body *in relation to* the ground that is what gets attention.¹¹⁰ Auditory perception, for example, serves a host of survival-driven functions by providing information for the self as well as its relationship with the environment. It allows organisms “to pick up the direction of an event, permitting orientation to it, and the nature of an event, permitting identification of it”.¹¹¹ It provides cues, such as motion, direction, distance or depth, and space related to a specific source of force, that are important for organisms to locate, move in an environment, and to identify or discriminate objects and events. All these exteroceptions are accompanied by proprioceptions that make them become aware of the activities and the relative positions of their own bodies.¹¹²

Correspondences can be made between Gibson's argument and Sciarrino's observation that, in perceiving sonic intensities, the listening subject builds a connection with an imagined space. Sciarrino argues that intensity has its roots in spatiality by pointing to the connection between intensity and the bodily sensations it stimulates: “[a] loud sound puts our body on physical and mental alert... a loud sound reaches out to touch us, threatens us, seizes us; a soft sound recedes and our pulsations slow down. Our music has made its own, through a millennium-old process, the illusion of proximity and distance, that is to say of space”.¹¹³ This observation of the function of intensity as a “stimulus” for spatial awareness demonstrates Sciarrino's ecological leaning. It affirms the exploratory nature of organism's activity in its econiche; the concurrent perception of the self and the imagined space (“the illusion of proximity and distance”) also exemplifies Gibson's idea that proprioception and exteroception go hand in hand.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 149. For discussion of the perception of space in an information-based theory of perception, see Gibson, “Events are Perceivable But Time Is Not”, in J. T. Fraser and Nathaniel M. Lawrence, *The Study of Time II: Proceedings of the Second Conference of the International Society for the Study of Time, Lake Yamanaka, Japan*, Berlin; New York: Springer-Verlag, 1975, 295–301.

¹¹¹ Gibson 1983, 75–6.

¹¹² Gibson maintains that the supposedly separate realms of the subjective and the objective are “actually only poles of attention”, and he goes as far as to suggest that such a view defies dualism in any form, either mind-matter or mind-body dualism. Gibson 2015, 108, 132–3.

¹¹³ “Un son *forte* met notre corps en état d'alerte physique et psychique... un son *forte* se tend jusqu'à nous toucher, nous menace, nous saisit; un son piano s'éloigne et nos pulsations ralentissent. Notre musique a fait sienne, à travers un processus millénaire, l'illusion de la proximité et du lointain, c'est-à-dire de l'espace”. Sciarrino, “L'espace dans l'esprit”, in Feneyrou 2013, 94.

Approaching Musical Subjectivity

Music's affordance for sensing the self makes possible the perception and recognition of a virtual subjectivity in music. Clarke and Hatten both consider this virtual subjectivity to represent an agential source—often composite in its nature—at the potentially highest level of a narrativity-and-drama-driven reading of a work.¹¹⁴ A host of scholars have dealt with questions of subjectivity in music, and their approaches have covered a wide spectrum ranging from the semiotic to the sociological and methods concerned with cultural-historical contextualization. To slightly adjust Clarke's wording, the agenda of this scholarship can be described as mapping a perceptual experience of auditorily specified subject-like attributes onto the target domain of the psyche.¹¹⁵ In this flourishing discourse, the meaning of the term subjectivity is productively entangled with such ideas as self, selfhood, interiority and inwardness. Subjectivity encompasses widely varied aspects about the Self including its feeling, desire, intention, awareness, and multifarious subject-related attributes (affective, expressive, formal, cultural, historical, social, and so on).

Methodologically, the engagement of this thesis with the topic is shaped by two important facets of the current scholarship. One of them is the interest in the ways subjectivities are formed or imaginable in music's materiality via technical-compositional means. Put differently, it is about the matter of how "the music itself" is active in the constitution of subjectivity and self-identity.¹¹⁶ The other is the tendency to situate the notion of subjectivity in a broader philosophical and socio-cultural context, and this is typical in the works of New Musicologists including Susan McClary, Lawrence Kramer and Gary Tomlinson. Exemplary of the former direction are Hatten's 2018 work and Naomi Cumming's *The Sonic Self*, both interrogating how and which semiotic elements are offered by music for the articulation of subjectivity. Within theoretical frameworks that are highly comparable and complementary, both are ideologically

¹¹⁴ See Eric Clarke, "Music, Space and Subjectivity", in *Music, Sound and Space: Transformations of Public and Private Experience*, edited by Georgina Born, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 90–110. Earlier notions like Cone's "composer's voice" and Seth Monahan's "work-persona" are closely related to both Clarke's and Hatten's developments of the idea of virtual subjectivities.

¹¹⁵ Clarke in Born 2013, 103. In his study on a studio-produced repertoire, Clarke proposes a range of communicative, expressive qualities as related to the configuration of musical subjectivities. These include intimacy, naivety, ecstasy, suspense, fear, pressure, aggression, secrecy, emptiness/disengagement, and bitterness/vulnerability. See Clarke in Born 2013, 90–110, and Clarke 2005, 91–125.

¹¹⁶ Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 66.

committed to the idea that all listening is “hearing as”—an assumption consistent with the ecological approach. Hatten’s central argument is that virtual agency can be inferred by the listener from the perceived gestures, actions, movements of musical sounds as in interaction with virtual environmental forces. Starting with a demonstration of the most basic attributions of sources for perceived energies in music (musical actants as agential), Hatten explores the human embodiment in virtual agency, which corroborates a fictionalizing of actorial continuity and virtual identity in dramatic, narrative or lyric trajectories. Hatten further argues that our engagement with the transformations of virtual agency is part of a larger consciousness or subjectivity negotiated by each (stylistically competent) listener’s personal experience. Although proposed and customized principally for tonal music of the common practice period, Hatten’s theory constitutes a heuristic device for the approach in this thesis to musical analysis, which deals with sound in energetic terms and, concomitantly, is based on the principle that our perception of sound is grounded in physical reality.¹¹⁷ Hatten’s elaboration of the concept of gesture and his extension of Steve Larson’s theorization of the mirroring of physical forces—such as gravity, magnetism and inertia, being mutually supportive or counteractive with each other—in the formation of continuities in melodic and rhythmic patterning are particularly useful in this regard.¹¹⁸

The ideas of gesture and motion play an important role in the analytical approach of this thesis. Both Hatten and Cumming regard gesture and motion (willful or willed) as two key concepts for constructing musical subjectivity. Cumming proposes a tripartite model of the source of subjectivity which encompasses (1) voice-related qualities perceived in timbre, (2) gesture perceived like events in melody, and (3) heard qualities of willful motion of tonal music. Hatten’s earlier work on musical gesture offer a solid grounding of the concept of gesture that is further pursued in the 2018 work.¹¹⁹ Hatten opts for a definition of gesture

¹¹⁷ Several authors writing on Lachenmann and Sciarrino have incorporated agential thinking in various ways in their analyses. The agential perspective in this sense traces musical events based on such concepts as shape, contour, figure and gesture. Linke, too, talks about the arising of “acting subjects” that feature a consistent virtual identity in the listening experience of Lachenmann’s *Schreiben*. See Linke, “Schreiben als Differenz von Stille und Klang: Aspekte der musikalischen Form in Helmut Lachenmanns Schreiben. Musik für Orchester”, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie*, 13/1 (2016), digital access: <https://doi.org/10.31751/876>. Two other important works on Sciarrino that adopt an analytical approach directly relevant to the notions of gestalt, contour and agential behaviour are McConville 2001 and Francesco Giomi and Marco Ligabue 1998. Common to all these studies is the intention to do justice to perception and listening, thereby to different extents ushering in a phenomenological method of analysis, like the one adopted by Helgeson mentioned previously.

¹¹⁸ See Hatten 2018, 47–64.

¹¹⁹ See Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, and Hatten, “Performance and Analysis—Or Synthesis: Theorizing Gesture, Topics, and Tropes in Chopin’s F-Minor Ballade”, *Indiana Theory Review* 28, no. 1/2 (2010): 45–66.

as “the energetic shaping of motion through time into significant events with unique expressive force.”¹²⁰ For him, the metaphorical idea of virtual agent, crucially, embodies this very fusion of action and expression.¹²¹ Similarly to Cumming, Hatten advances the idea by arguing that lying at the heart of the ascription of human agency in music is the detection of the degree of a conscious intent, a sense of willfulness that suggests freedom and sufficient strength to act, on the part of an agent.¹²² An agential action signalling such willfulness marks the musical moment as highly expressive and, importantly, evocative of reflective consciousness. Lachenmann’s and Sciarrino’s structural approaches, as previously indicated, both show a penchant for imagining sound from the perspective of gesture and gestalt. As subsequent chapters demonstrate, analyses of sonic gestures and speculations about their potential “agential wills” have the advantage of treating structures as objects of perception. The ecological stance underlying such analysis, to repeat again, is evident.

Authors including Cumming, Clarke and Hatten identify subjectivities in multiple loci, differentiating the subjectivity of the music (“work persona”)—or, what Cumming terms specifically as “musical subjectivity”—from the performer’s and the listener’s subjectivities.¹²⁵ These subjectivities, Hatten suggests, are brought into dialogue and negotiation with each other. Hence, in listening to Beethoven, the agential trace of a generic heroic subjectivity is transformed into a more multidimensional, richly textured human subjectivity.¹²⁶ A significant contribution of Cumming’s work is its more systematic account of the performing and the listening self. Her nuanced notion of the listening “I”—as an emergent sense of self mediated by the musical subjectivity—lends important insight into the issue of subjectivity central to Lachenmann’s composition, especially the question of why a change in ways of listening is tantamount to a change in our selves. The most important insight of Cumming’s work, as Jairo Moreno suggests, is the

¹²⁰ Anthony Gritten & Elaine King (ed.), *Music and Gesture*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006, xxi.

¹²¹ Hatten 2018, 61.

¹²² Crucially, for Hatten, this willfulness is subject to open interpretation but is also a product of intersubjective understanding. Ecological theorists may see a theory of musical subjectivity based solely on the idea of virtual agency as problematic in that it is insensitive or even indifferent to the listener’s intention or spontaneity, which could lead to the moral and political danger of an abdication of human responsibility in interpreting music. Hatten, however, is indeed aware of the fact that “musical styles provide endless affordances” and often takes care to underscore how a listener’s transformative inferences are afforded and implied by, instead of inherent in, musical events. See Hatten 2018, 151.

¹²⁵ A common assumption underlying these authors’ account of subjectivity is that the musical subjectivity they envision is endorsed only by listeners within a certain cultural convention who are willingly engaged and stylistically capable. The discussion of musical and listening subjectivities in this thesis is based on a similar presumption.

¹²⁶ Hatten 2018, 154–9.

way musical signification and subjectivity are framed by “folding esthesis into poiesis—the self makes (analyzes, performs) music and music makes the self”.¹²⁷ This folding, writes Moreno, “renders self and music as dynamic, open-ended entities; neither ‘Same’ (self, *ipse*) nor ‘Other’ (music, *alius*) exists unto itself”.¹²⁸ Cumming demonstrates that the “sonic self” is not the neutral “I” as the subject of any perceptual act, undifferentiated and uninflected.¹²⁹ Rather, it is thrown into relief through “negative” means. Cumming specifies modes of awareness in listening in which an individual musical self can appear. The experience of violated expectation, shock, startle, or an awareness of sound as strange or “other”, may bring the self-as-perceiver quickly into view and make its “limits” knowable.¹³⁰ Such “frustrated” experience, however, can preface a productive phase which involves “an attempt to revise categories of sound or their signification, having become aware of the inadequacy of familiar ways of understanding”.¹³¹ Attentive listening may now incorporate an element of “analytical disengagement”, as the self-as-listener comes to realize the “archaic assumptions” previously upheld, self-consciously monitoring his or her response.¹³² In Cumming’s word, this self is a “highly fallible” one, open to adjustment by new information.¹³³ Informed by this model of the “sonic self”, Chapter 5 of this thesis explores Lachenmann’s self-conscious construction of a merging of the musical and the (ideal) listening subjectivities in moments that prompt self-reflection.

It is necessary to point out that the visual aspect of live performance is, in principle, outside of the scope of this thesis. Similarly to Clarke’s and Hatten’s approaches, this thesis predominantly deals with musical works in their recorded sonic forms. This, however, does not mean that visual elements and, by extension, spatial and situational elements are excluded from the analysis presented in the thesis. Even focusing just on sound, analytical perspectives informed by ecological theory, which revolve around virtually perceived agencies in a virtual environment, draw substantially upon visual perception, as previously indicated. Listeners’ perceptions of virtual actants and agencies in sound are, arguably, likely to be mediated and complicated by visual aspects of site-specific live performance, including the performer’s bodily gestures, postures, facial expressions, and physical conditions of the sounding instruments, as well

¹²⁷ Jairo Moreno, “Review: Naomi Cumming, *The Sonic Self: Musical Subjectivity and Signification*”, *Music Theory Spectrum*, 27, no. 2 (2005): 301.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 301.

¹²⁹ Cumming, *The Sonic Self*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 56.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 55–61.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 61.

as the specific locations of listeners. Focusing on the aforementioned perceptual “analogues” in sound, however, has the advantage of enabling an understanding of what music as a primarily auditory art form affords—whether it be instrumental music, operatic or texted music. More importantly, a provisional concentration on what the sound of a musical work affords makes it possible to conceptualize the subtle differences and entanglements between what has been referred to as a musical subjectivity, an operatic subjectivity, as well as a performing subjectivity, and a listening subjectivity. This thesis’s discussions of *Lobengrin* in Chapters 2 and 4, for example, emphasize the different aspects of the work through the same ecological lens: in the former, the experience of virtual motion associated with a stable collection of sources in Sciarrino’s sonic organization built on micro-gestures sheds light on the environmental attributes that are key to the musical subjectivity of the work; in the latter, the analysis of the music’s projection of time-space consciousness from a virtual or the protagonist’s subject-position, coupled with the textual layer of the opera, lends insight to the operatic subjectivity as portrayed in the work.

There are, however, cases in the thesis where the visual—not only of live performance but also of visual sources used as para-textual reference—serves as an important element in supporting this thesis’s arguments about musical meaning, especially when the projection of subjectivity is the point at issue. Chapter 2, for example, appraises the physical, performative aspect of Sciarrino’s compositions that involve a mass of migrating instrumentalists, linking the flocking-behaviour-like spectacles in these works, among many other attributes, to an augmented notion of musical organicism in light of the study of chaos. And visual or spatial elements from particular opera productions play a role in the analyses in Chapters 3, 5, and 6: for example, a correspondence is drawn between Jürgen Flimm’s 2016 production of *Luci mie traditrici* and the projection of an image of the self that is in an abject, boundary-blurring situation. I also expound on the implicit relationship between Lachenmann’s metaphor of a mountain climber, including his self-portrayal as a mountain climber in the documentary *My Way* (2021), and his appearance as a performer on the stages of recent performances of “...zwei Gefühle...”, *Musik mit Leonardo* (1992) and operatic productions of *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (1990–96), assessing what implications this correlation may have for the question of subjectivity.

With special attention given to music with text, the works of Kramer (1998), Tomlinson (1999), Corse (2000), McClary (2004, 2006), Moreno (2004) and Steinberg (2004) have brought historical and cultural

dimensions into the study of subjectivity.¹³⁴ All these studies take up the challenge of finding ways of talking about music that, to borrow Kramer's words, bear "the impress of what music means to human subjects as thinking, feeling, struggling parts of a world".¹³⁵ They see the simulation of subjectivity in music as having an evolving trajectory and highlight repertoires that bear particular importance. McClary argues that a self-conscious performance of subjectivity, including dynamic representations of complex states of interiority, was moved to the fore—for the first time in the history of European music—in the composition of sixteenth-century Italian madrigals.¹³⁶ Experimenting with what McClary refers to as "neo-modality", this practice is considered as part of the wider cultural agenda of High Renaissance, a time that spawned Descartes's "Cogito" as well as modern political theory. That the dawn of modern subjectivity coincides with the germination of opera at the beginning of the seventeenth century is a widely accepted idea. Kramer and McClary further suggest that it was around Schubert's time that representation of the Self began to be prominent in the arts.¹³⁷ A striking common feature in Kramer's *Franz Schubert* and McClary's *Modal Subjectivities* (and work on Schubert of 2006) is the recognition that modern subjectivity marks the division between the outside, rationalized social-political world and the private, sometimes "unruly" interiority. Crucially, this subject of modernity is considered by both as divided, broken. The interior of a subject is a venue that witnesses the "extraordinary crisis of authority, knowledge, power, and identity" that anticipates the advent of modernity, and it is where those "uneasy ethical conditions" are secretly stored.¹³⁸ This subject sometimes displays the free will to resist or transgress the order of the rationalized world.¹³⁹

Two theoretical stances of this body of writing have been helpful to this thesis in addressing the questions of subjectivity. Using sexuality as his key metaphor, for example, Kramer opens his "hermeneutic window" on the music of Schubert by inviting into musical interpretation a network of contemporary

¹³⁴ A bunch of works can be said of having fostered the growing interest on the subject of "subjectivity" during the 1990s and early 2000s. New performance scholarship including Le Guin's manifesto of a "carnal musicology" (2005), the self-reflexive position and theorization of the "P" in feminist scholarship such as Cusick's 1994 work, and narratological study including Abbate's *Unsung Voices* (1991) all foreground a form of musical subjectivity.

¹³⁵ Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1995, 1.

¹³⁶ McClary, *Modal Subjectivities: Self-fashioning in the Italian Madrigal*, Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2004.

¹³⁷ McClary, "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music", in Philip Brett, et al. *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, 2nd ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006, 211. See also Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, and "The Schubert Lied: Romantic Form and Romantic Consciousness" in Kramer, Leppert, Bernhart, *Song Acts: Writings on Words and Music*, Leiden; Boston: Brill, Rodopi, 2017, 52–85.

¹³⁸ McClary 2004, 6, 41.

¹³⁹ See Kramer 1998, 29.

critical theories pertaining to the issue of subjectivity. Kramer draws from ideas such as Foucault's recalcitrant, aggressively inconsolable subject (or what Foucault calls "the care of the self"), Deleuze's psychoanalytic model of masochistic subjectivity, and the Freudian castration and the Lacanian "imaginary capture" with regard to their function of shaping or undoing the Self. By bridging the gap between musical subjectivity and the existent philosophical discourses on the human subject, Kramer shows how Schubert's experiments in subjectivity collaborate on equal terms with textual and sociocultural practices in the enterprise of the constitution of the modern self.¹⁴⁰ Conceivably, such an approach may prove even more powerful in a study that inquires into the contemporary condition of subjectivity in the operatic works of our times. As Richard Leppert has argued, this is not only because opera has long served as a principal site where "subjectivity could be staged, witnessed, and indeed celebrated both visually and aurally", but also because opera, and especially modernist opera, needed "the anxieties associated with subjectivity" for it to acquire the cultural force it enjoyed.¹⁴¹

The method of this thesis benefits from another common feature of this group of studies regarding the question of how to bridge the gap between the discourse of human subject and the aesthetic experience of a specific work by means of musical analysis. In his earlier works, Kramer proposed that "structural tropes", which, alongside "textual inclusions" and "citational inclusions", constitute his three types of "hermeneutic windows", are the most implicit yet most powerful tool for this purpose.¹⁴² The term refers to any structural procedure in music that functions as a typical expressive act within a certain cultural/historical framework.¹⁴³ Whether the trope is constructed and communicated via stylistic, rhetoric or representational means, it empowers an interpretive process by releasing the "illocutionary forces" of the musical processes in question.¹⁴⁴ Kramer's later development of "interpretive dramaturgy"—a notion

¹⁴⁰ Writings on subjectivity discussed in this chapter, frequently overlapping with the issue of sexuality, all draw extensively upon psychoanalytical theories. Similar to the Freudian-Lacanian orientation of Kramer's work, Richard Leppert's work also expresses an interest in unfulfilled desires from a psychoanalytical perspective and concerns the problematics of articulating the social and personal actuality of Freudian wounded subjectivities. See Leppert, *Aesthetic Technologies of Modernity, Subjectivity, and Nature: Opera, Orchestra, Phonograph, Film*, University of California Press, 2015. Trent Leibert theorizes a connection between the Lacanian model of the subject and the self-deflectionary, queer subjectivity in Sciarrino's music. See Leibert 2014.

¹⁴¹ Leppert 2015, 165.

¹⁴² Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900*, California: University of California Press, 1993, 10.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 10.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 9–13. A common source of Kramer's and McClary's hermeneutic methods for talking about subjectivity in music is J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts developed in his foundational *How to Do Things with Words*. In this work Austin outlines such key concepts as "performative utterances" and "illocutionary force", both central to the type of speech act that Austin draws most attention to—an act performed *in* saying something.

tailor-made to the genre of Lied—lends further insight into the dynamic interactions between music and words, score and performance that are fundamental to the study of music with text.¹⁴⁵ An idea worthy of attention is what Kramer refers to as “musical counterdiscourse” in Schubert’s song composition—a formal-narrative strategy in which subjective scoring operates.¹⁴⁶ Kramer argues that musical counterdiscourse is effective in projecting alternative discourse by presenting musical context that involves “dissonant or ambiguous formation” fitting under a normative frame structure. By running against the grain of the norm of musical form, such counter-structures create a breakdown in the transparency and determinacy of musical expression.¹⁴⁷

This sentiment is echoed by many writings that also focus upon the musical loci that display dramas of subjectivity. Authors including Abbate (1991), McClary (2004) and Leppert (2015) have in their own ways resorted to an interpretive agency based on notions such as distance, excess or extremis, incongruence, discursive space and idiosyncrasy. Subjectivity is thought to be voiced through situations ranging from subtle matters of emphasis to overt breaks with norms. Abbate’s much-cited “unsung voice”, which posits that musical narrative is a momentary phenomenon rather than linearly arranged event-sequences, serves as a primal point of reference that enlightens this thesis’s inquiry into the musical locus of subjective consciousness. To capture this unusual “voice”, suggests Abbate, one may hear it as a sonorous signal occurring at a discursive distance from the continuum that embeds it, and it is its special way of speaking, of manipulating time, of using figural language, of constituting events in that specific context of performance that activates the moment of narrating.¹⁵⁰ McClary similarly argues that the “voice” of subjectivity is sensed in certain moments as it escapes “rational” understanding—that is, the failing of the surrounding context to confirm its insight.¹⁵¹ On operatic subjectivity, Richard Leppert argues that “opera signifies on account of its excesses, and none is more foundational than its own logical ‘impossibility’”—its ignoring of “the rules of everyday expressive life”. Leppert continues, “[e]xcess on multiple fronts of signification is especially the case when the expression of subjectivity is at stake”.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ Kramer 1998, 9–26.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 38.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 48–9. For a critique of Kramer’s “interpretive dramaturgy”, see Suzannah Clark, “Schubert, Theory and Analysis”, *Music Analysis* 21, no. 2 (2002): 209–43.

¹⁵⁰ Abbate, *Unsung Voice: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, 3–29.

¹⁵¹ McClary 2004, 64.

¹⁵² Leppert 2015, 175.

It is necessary to emphasize at this point in the thesis that the urgency of raising questions about the musical and human subjectivities articulated in Lachenmann's and Sciarrino's works lies in the significant transformation or mutation that the condition of the subject has undergone during the twentieth century. One important existent study pertinent to this is Trent Leipert's investigation of different forms of subjective binds in the music of Lachenmann, Luigi Nono, Sciarrino and Fausto Romitelli.¹⁵³ In his case studies, Leipert situates each of these composers in a characteristic critical framework—established by an investigation of their special techniques and by drawing variously from the composers' writings as well as history, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and political theory. These analytical-theoretical configurations help Leipert to investigate these composers' difficulties with the notion of the Cartesian and transcendent conception of the subject. Leipert probes new visions of the Self as they emerge from these composers' music and the possibility of eventually abandoning the idea of the subject for affect. Lachenmann's development of the subjectivity-related trope of mountaineering and Sciarrino's engagement with Lacanian symbols and texts are central to Leipert's investigation of the construction of the subject in the two composers' works. These insights are particularly important for the discussion in Chapters 3 and 5 of this thesis.

To borrow McClary's formula "How to Do Things with Mode"—an allusion to J. L. Austin's theory of speech act—as a succinct summary of the practical goal of her project, the major goal of this thesis is to make inquiries about the kind of things that can be done with "sounds". The issue of subjectivity becomes a particularly intriguing one, either in Sciarrino's prolific opera output, the most significant area that the Italian composer has committed himself to, or in Lachenmann's only operatic practice, motivated by a sense of obligation as well as anxiety in terms of grappling with a genre with which many avant-garde precursors had a love-hate relationship. Furthermore, an interrogation of the contemporary conditions of human subjectivity is germane to a musical idiom that, through its extensive use of extended techniques as well as the musical past, calls for ways of listening, feeling, and thinking that elicit ecological awareness and existential experience.

¹⁵³ Leipert 2014.

Reflecting on last century's operatic output, Björn Heile contends that one prerequisite for creating operatic work today is to seriously question the nature of opera—"none of opera's forms and conventions could be taken for granted".¹⁵⁴ Referring to the perceived anachronism lurking in today's performance of traditional arias in which a singer pledges undying love to the accompaniment of a full orchestra, Heile argues that one of the major challenges that modernism has posed to opera since the twentieth century is the crisis of subjectivity. For Heile, traditional lyrical songs—bursting with sentiments and emotions to be taken as earnest and authentic—are grounded in a unified and integral notion of subjectivity, which, however, seems to clash with the alienated subjectivity of modernism.¹⁵⁵ Nicholas Till has similarly argued that the language of musical modernism no longer supports a subjectivity characterized by such criteria as uniqueness, boundedness, wholeness and autonomy. Many twentieth-century operas instead serve as a locus for demonstrating how aspirations to the consolations of humanist subjectivity are likely to fail. For Till, the negation of the pretensions to universal humanism of conventional opera has become the most influential trend in different strands of musical modernism.¹⁵⁶ The anti-humanist musical language of modernism has replaced the joined-up *bel canto* singing, which in conventional terms signifies interiority and self-presence, with stutters, glitches, and melodic cells trapped in loops, which do not assume any of that transcendental power that characterizes the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century operas.¹⁵⁷

Echoes of Heile and Till's view that the construction of operatic voice is bounded by particular modes of subjectivity can be found in important writings on operatic subjectivity including Gary Tomlinson's *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (1999) and Sandra Corse's *Operatic Subjects: The Evolution of Self in Modern Opera* (2000). Tomlinson's work is devoted to an archaeology of ideas that contribute to the birth and evolution of operatic subjectivity, contending that opera's history can be mapped and partitioned according to the various conceptions of human subjectivity at different times over the last four hundred years. Corse's

¹⁵⁴ Björn Heile, "The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera" (Book Review), *Music & Letters*, 2007(88/02), 347.

¹⁵⁵ Heile 2007, 347.

¹⁵⁶ Nicholas Till, "A New Glimmer of Light: Opera, Metaphysics and Mimesis", in Dominic Symonds and Karantonis Pamela, *The Legacy of Opera: Reading Music Theatre as Experience and Performance*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013, 39–64.

¹⁵⁷ See Till 2013, 55.

work is highly comparable in this aspect, and it similarly adopts a chronological narrative based on stylistic progression and draws correspondences between operatic expressions of subjectivity and contemporaneous philosophical, cultural attempts to define the self.¹⁵⁸ One crucial aspect that differentiates the two works is the authors' different ways of conceptualizing subjectivity. In the framework of Tomlinson's work, a major constitutive force of subjectivity is the way of conceiving the "hidden" realms of supersensible realities and its relationship with the human individual; the changing ways of representing the transcendental give rise to different models of subjectivity. Corse's theorization of the operatic subject, by contrast, is derived from a collection of miscellaneous notions related to subjectivity, including the interior self, the psyche, the unconscious, and a relational (socially-determined) model of the subject. Many observations offered by the two authors shed light on the central question that this thesis is concerned with: what is it that makes post-1900 operatic subjectivity an interesting issue with ongoing relevance? Both authors' diagnoses of opera's recent struggle with subjectivity and the expression of such struggle in various specific cases help to place Sciarrino and Lachenmann's practice in dialogue with some of the innovations as well as conundrums left by their predecessors.

In Tomlinson's account, since around 1800 and up until recently, opera has wrestled with the representation of the transcendental Kantian subject—that is, the presence in the understanding of innate conditions, prior to experience, that enables knowing.¹⁵⁹ In his analysis of opera works in the post-Wagnerian period, Tomlinson introduces two post-metaphysical models of subjectivity, both to be viewed as deviating from the Kantian subject. The first model is drawn from Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical project, specifically his reading of Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) as exemplifying a Dionysian notion of art. For Nietzsche, *Carmen* not only symbolizes a denial of the age-old division of body and soul, which characterizes human finitude, but also challenges the belief that music has the power to connect humans to the universal Will. Nietzsche celebrates in *Carmen* the material world as a flux of sensible appearances including bodily impulses. The world of *Carmen*, writes Tomlinson, stages "not the invisible soul and its myths, but the subject's embodiment of its most basic, forceful drives".¹⁶⁰ Drawing from Susan McClary's analysis of *Carmen*,

¹⁵⁸ Corse's theory of subjectivity draws widely from the conceptual frameworks of Descartes, Hegel, Nietzsche, Adorno, Žižek, and Francis Jacques.

¹⁵⁹ For Tomlinson's detailed discussion of the Kantian subject, see Tomlinson 1999, 73–108.

¹⁶⁰ Tomlinson 1999, 126.

Tomlinson contends that the promiscuity that characterizes Carmen's musical style and her way-of-being means that she can easily adapt herself to the languages of those around her, without revealing "herself".¹⁶¹ This chameleon-like façade of the self showcases "a play of bodily permeabilities and a communication through impulse and force, gestures and movement."¹⁶² Subjectivity is no longer something that fortifies the internal sovereignty of oneself; it is, instead, "opened out to the bodily movements around it that are the fullest—the only—expressions of other subjectivities".¹⁶³ Following Nietzsche, Tomlinson views this material-based, unbounded model of the self as a positive, healthy transformation of the Cartesian subject.

Departing from the model of a bounded, inward-turning self, questions surrounding intersubjectivity—formative social relations that constitute one pole in the subject's dialectic between the self and the other—move increasingly towards the centre of Tomlinson's investigation of operas from *Carmen* onwards. In contrast to the positivity attached to *Carmen*, Tomlinson's second proposition about late modern operatic subjectivity sheds light on an Adornian archetype that is thought to be caused by problematic intersubjective relationships in a world overflowing with commodification. This rather stark view of the subject sends a crucial message to this thesis's approach to the question of subjectivity, particularly in the context of Lachenmann, who has received significant influences from Adorno: as Lachenmann's output makes clear, individual subjectivity must struggle for definition in opera against objectifying forces that threaten to engulf or devalue it. Tomlinson's observation of an illusory, pseudo-Kantian subjectivity, as will become clear in Chapter 6 of this thesis, is arguably highly relatable to Lachenmann's basic attitude towards the issue of the subject—most evidently manifested in his absorption of the Adornian idea that the modern subject is trapped in a state between "false fluency" (*Sprachfertigkeit*) and "speechlessness" (*Sprachlosigkeit*).

Tomlinson's theorization of this particular notion of subjectivity has its direct source in Adorno's argument that the objective presence of capitalist commodities conceals the social forces of labour. The crux of Adorno's criticism of late capitalist subjectivity, put succinctly, is the concealment of human social relations by a society defined by commodification and exchange value. In order to escape the alienating control of commodification, Adorno argues, the subject attempts to recuperate from Enlightenment

¹⁶¹ Susan McClary, *Georges Bizet: Carmen*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 57–8. Also see Tomlinson 1999, 124–5.

¹⁶² Tomlinson 1999, 116.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 125.

ideology a claim to authenticity, to its own non-exchangeability. This pursuit of a retrospective autonomy, however, only affords an illusory sense of self and leads to a further obscuring of the individuality of the social, intersubjective formation of the subject. Adorno's criticism of this reified version of the Kantian subject fuels Tomlinson's reading of a cluster of operas that, at first glance, may appear to be very dissimilar from one another, including Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882), Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* (1932) and Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (1954). Tomlinson argues that twentieth-century operas are often associated with a failure to provide a revelation of the hidden intersubjective relations that define the subject's social constitution. This failure inevitably leads to a monadic subject who falsely holds on to a fetishized, autonomous sense of self, which is, in reality, nothing more than a phantom of the older mode of metaphysics. Such nostalgic assertions of autonomy, Tomlinson claims, "liken one subject to another in island-like monadic isolation", and this results in the production of an undifferentiated and reified image of the self—a subjectivity that cannot be perceived and shared by other subjects.¹⁶⁴

Tomlinson's observation about the occlusion of intersubjective relationships in twentieth-century operas echoes the key standpoint that Corse takes in her *Operatic Subjects*. Compared to Tomlinson's approach, which still treats the relationship between the subject and others as something external to the interior sense of the self, Corse presupposes intersubjective relationships and social experience as key components *a priori* in the formation of the self. Corse's approach draws upon the relational model of the subject developed by Francis Jacques in *Difference and Subjectivity* and G. W. F. Hegel's criticism of self-consciousness as acquired through the recognition of the other (including interpretations of Hegel by Adorno and Slavoj Žižek). For Corse, subjectivity is a self-consciousness created through mutual recognitions between the self and the other; the self is essentially dialogical, contingent upon interpersonal communication.¹⁶⁵ Much like Tomlinson's narrative, Corse's corpus, ranging from Wagner to Philip Glass and Olivier Messiaen, offers a collective portrayal of twentieth-century operatic subjects, signalling in an increasingly clear fashion a departure from Kant in terms of intersubjective constructs. Corse's analysis demonstrates that, since Strauss's *Elektra* (1909) modern opera has embarked on a new path that is concerned with the subject less as the container of a discrete, self-sufficient interiority, but more as

¹⁶⁴ Tomlinson 1999, 130.

¹⁶⁵ See Corse 2000, 21–5, 27–32.

something helplessly caught in troubled intersubjective relations. *Moses und Aron* and *Lulu* (1935), for example, both showcase the failure to ground the self in shared meanings and values due to hopeless intersubjective relationships.

Although there is scarcely a direct reference, Lacanian ideas are demonstrably an important source for Corse's hermeneutic reading of her numerous cases. The discussion based implicitly on Lacan's concepts such as desire, symbolic order, "the big Other" and "the little other" inspires this thesis's close engagement with the Lacanian model of the subject in Chapter 3. Reading the dramatic text of *Moses und Aron*, for example, Corse argues that the two leading characters, Moses and Aron, are associated with two types of otherness. Moses's unattainable God represents the unknowable Other—similar to Lacan's "big" or absolute Other—against which the subject defines himself. The pathway to Moses' ideal nation resides in every single person's creation of a new and open individuality through the inclusion of the Other in the self.¹⁶⁶ Aron, contrarily, represents another type of otherness—the intersubjective, multiple other, which invites an opening of the self to other people, an embrace of heterogeneity (like Lacan's "little other"). Corse's interpretation concludes with a diagnosis of Moses's failure to persuade his people. Such a failure, argues Corse, lies in Moses's rejection of a "presubjective communality".¹⁶⁷ The opera's depiction of the conflict between Moses and his people materializes the impossibility of the individual realigning itself against the community without compromising the very essence of individuality. For Corse, Moses's failure is thus synonymous with a failure of both individualism and intersubjective relationships.

More directly relevant to this thesis's interpretation of the Lacanian subject is Corse's analysis of *Lulu*. By means of a discussion of desire, symbol, and their connections to the subject, Corse makes her hidden Lacanian underpinning more pronounced. The opera is seen as a world in which the overwhelming force of desire is responsible for the disastrous intersubjective relationships and a feeble mode of subjectivity. Reduced to a symbol, an "empty signifier" or an "absent center", Lulu represents both communal hope and failure for the characters around her. Not only do the characters who desire Lulu fail to establish real intersubjective connection with her, but they themselves—equally lacking a substantial subjectivity—also seem to only interact superficially with each other or not at all.¹⁶⁸ Corse's adoption of Lacanian metaphors,

¹⁶⁶ Corse 2000, 158–9.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 158.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 145.

however, may seem a bit oversimplified due to a lack of theoretical reference, and the discussion leaves unanswered the question of how desire functions as a constitutive (or destructive) force in shaping the sense of self. The theoretical contextualization in the last section of Chapter 3 in this thesis helps to make up for this missing background by exploring Lacan's proposition that "man's desire is the desire of the Other".¹⁶⁹ Ultimately, the discussion aims to demonstrate how the subject, with the irreducible lack within itself where insatiable desire arises, serves as a simulacrum of the model of subjectivity as presented in Sciarrino's *Luci mie traditrici* (1998).

With an account of probing attempts at overcoming the subjective impasses caused by troubled intersubjective relations, the final chapter of *Operatic Subjects* point its readers in the direction of the future. Corse wraps up her narrative with a focus on Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* (1983). In this opera, Corse identifies a new way of being in terms of the subject–object relationship. By resorting to a pre-modern religious subject who recognizes its own incompleteness through empathetic acceptance of otherness, Corse argues, the opera rejects a unifying notion of humanist subjectivity and calls for a stronger development of heterogeneity as a postmodern ethical imperative.¹⁷⁰ Specifically, the opera's embracing of otherness is manifested in its rejection of teleological temporality and its absorption of the sound of nature and musical sources from other cultures. Corse's observation about the work's call for a heterogeneous openness informs this thesis's approach to operatic subjects, especially the discussion of Sciarrino's *Lohengrin* in Chapter 4. Intriguingly, many subtle overlaps can be observed between Corse's and my approaches. For instance, Corse argues that Messiaen's mimetic adaptation of real birdsong qualifies as "a conceptless aligning of the subject with the object", in the specific sense of Adorno's concept of mimesis.¹⁷¹ Mimesis is arguably a key topic running through this thesis, and Chapter 5, in particular, offers an account of Adorno's comments on the mimesis of nature in the arts. Furthermore, Corse's choice of Messiaen's work as her focus in an indirect way affirms the relevance of the Deleuzian idea of becoming in the scope of this thesis, for Deleuze and Guattari consider Messiaen's systematic use of birdsong to be paradigmatic instances of the deterritorializing process of "becoming-animal".

¹⁶⁹ See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Miller Jacques-Alain, trans. Alan Sheridan, London: Karnac, 2004, 235. Also see Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Routledge, 2001, 238.

¹⁷⁰ Corse 2000, 196–206.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 199–200.

Nicholas Till's critique of the operatic metaphysics that has haunted modern opera similarly leads him to consider the possibilities of post-human subjectivity for contemporary operas.¹⁷² He argues that a blurring of the subject and the object can be seen in the works of Lachenmann, Sciarrino, and Olga Neuwirth. For Till, both Lachenmann's and Sciarrino's operas seem to "present beings whose primary ontological relationship is with the material world (bodily or external) rather than with other human beings, existing within sonic envelopes that form (or sometimes assail) their subjectivity".¹⁷³ In Chapters 4 and 6, I will offer my response to Till's argument by at once extending and countering some of the ideas that he offers in his article.

Before moving onto chapter outlines, it is worth briefly commenting on the analytical methods adopted in the works discussed above. An important part of Tomlinson's and Corse's discussion is concerned with the role of music in shaping the voice of the operatic subject—often by confirming, mediating or contradicting the philosophical implications of the dramatic content. However, a weakness common to both works is that the analysis of the music is often reduced to generalized observations about the stylistic or formal features of the musical idiom in question, without much focus on musical details. Both authors' works are overly dependent on the dramatic text, which, at times, makes their works resemble literary criticism. An important goal that the remaining chapters of this thesis seek to achieve is that hermeneutic interpretation of operatic subjects has deep roots in the analysis of musical details at both global and local levels. More importantly, the analysis aims to capture the direct perceptual effect of the composers' sonic procedures and devices.

Chapter Outline

This introductory chapter has set up the main goals of the thesis and woven different strands of theoretical sources into a critical framework that is tailored to the central questions about the sound-based musical idiom, listening and perception, and the projection of subjectivities in relation

¹⁷² Till, 2013, 39–64.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 62.

to Sciarrino's and Lachenmann's works. Instead of setting out all the key terms and concepts encountered in the thesis, this preliminary chapter provides the theoretical foundation on which the arguments of later chapters are built. Consequently, key concepts that do not appear here are introduced over the course of the thesis as they become relevant to its argument. The five chapters that follow, two devoted to Sciarrino and three to Lachenmann, are structured around two tasks. The first is the analysis of Sciarrino's and Lachenmann's compositional techniques or ideas in the light of some of the composers' key aesthetic notions, particularly Sciarrino's "ecology of music/listening" and "organic music", and critical ideas surrounding Lachenmann's *musique concrète instrumentale* and dialectical structuralism. Chapter 2 is entirely devoted to this task, given that a thorough and aesthetically-sensitive account of Sciarrino's compositional approach is much needed in the current scholarship. In comparison, Lachenmann's compositional techniques have received much more discussion. The first half of Chapter 5 therefore concentrates only on aspects that are closely relevant to the argument about "auratic alterity", which affords articulation of the voice of the self. Crucially, concepts encountered in this line of enquiry, such as naturalism, mimesis, nature, aura, and *Musik mit Bildern*, are clearly interconnected with each other and are like different members of the same family; together, they are twisted into a covert yet critical thread running through the thesis, which tackles questions about materiality and the presence of nature or physical reality in general in Sciarrino and Lachenmann's sound composition. The discussion of technique-related approaches and notions prepares for the second task of these chapters, which is to explore how aspects, conditions, or traces of the subject are sonically projected and in what sense this participates in a dialogue with ideas about human subjectivity as they are presented in contemporary intellectual discourse.

Chapter 2 examines Sciarrino's mimetic micro-gestures through a more nuanced understanding of mimesis and the special perceptual effects of such gestures on the listener. Furthermore, it puts forward a more expanded notion of musical organicism through an analysis of the musical organization in Sciarrino's *Lohengrin* and various compositions involving migrating masses of instrumentalists. I

argue that Sciarrino's music calls forth a post-humanist biotic aesthetic that, at the same time, embraces and negates classical organicism.

The remaining chapters are each based around an operatic case study. Chapter 3 presents the first of the thesis's four case studies. It explores Sciarrino's *Luci mie traditrici* in terms of the idea of the "semanticization of musical form". By interpreting the symbolic meanings generated through Sciarrino's special musical device, which replicates the gestural *sillabazione scivolata* on different vocal and instrumental loci, the chapter argues that the opera's portrayal of troubled intersubjective relationships points to a model of the subject that is highly comparable to the Lacanian barred subject. Chapter 4 analyses the ecological significance of the multi-dimensional space-time in Sciarrino's *Lohengrin*. In the meantime, the protagonist's phenomenal application of sounds that constantly erase the boundary between music and everyday reality prompts a revisiting of Sciarrino's mimetic gestures. The result of this reconceptualization suggests that Sciarrino's music exemplifies the Deleuzian notion of becoming and that the opera's representation of a Proteus-like subjectivity further enhances the perception of becoming as a salient feature of Sciarrino's music.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn to two works with voices by Lachenmann. Chapter 5 offers a critique of the relationship between nature and structure in Lachenmann's *musique concrète instrumentale*. After a discussion of Lachenmann's reception of Benjamin's aura and an introduction to the extended notion of "auratic alterity", the chapter offers a musical analysis of "...zwei Gefühle...", *Musik mit Leonardo*, focusing on exceptional moments in which a self-reflexive listening subject comes into being, with the aid of the idea of aura as a hermeneutic tool. Chapter 6 begins with an exploration of the entanglement of sound, image, and text in the compositional procedure of Lachenmann's magnum opus *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*. Through an analysis of the opera's meta-referentiality and Lachenmann's distinctive text-setting techniques, the chapter argues that the music's articulation of a subjective voice is subject to the deciphering of a special sonic procedure that can be described as a continuum from

the environmental to the agential—a listening challenge set for Lachenmann’s ideal listener, who seeks to overcome “speechlessness” through this sonic experience.

Finally, a conclusion brings together the central claims of the thesis before considering once more the similarities and differences between Sciarrino’s and Lachenmann’s approaches along two discursive strands: a musical language’s commitment to the material world and the issue of musical expression and subjectivity.

Chapter Two

BEYOND ORGANICISM SCIARRINO'S MIMETIC GESTURES AND NOVEL FORMS

Introduction

When we listen to Sciarrino's *Lohengrin* or his music in general, to what exactly are we listening? Or, to put it another way, *for* what are we listening? A host of authors have pondered over the naturalistic disposition of this music. Self-consciously or not, they turn to a constellation of poetic metaphors inspired by the composer's own vocabulary in his extensive writings. This collection of metaphors encompasses natural or elemental substances like wind, stone, cloud, and water, as well as organs, bodily fluid, vital symptoms like breath, pulses and heartbeats, and physio-psychological sensations like thirst and hunger.

In a conversation with Marco Anguis and Oreste Bossini on the occasion of the 60th Biennale Musica 2016, Sciarrino claimed that his music has “always sought to manifest a soundscape”, a soundscape that “can even include monody in the absolute sense”.¹ Responding to this, Marco Anguis remarked on the persistent reference to “the world” and the “multiple realities” in Sciarrino's music, suggesting that “[i]t is as if it were no longer possible to make music with music...are we perceiving and listening to a living organism?”² Anguis further recalled a vivid example of hearing such “non-music” in the world premiere of the spectacular *Studi per l'intonazione del mare* (2000) at the cathedral of Città di Castello in the summer of 2000. Towards the end of the piece, a grandiose tide of percussive key strikes on hundreds of flutes and saxophones creates a spellbinding effect—it sounds so similar to raindrops tapping in gutters to the extent that, at some point, the audience could not tell the difference between the artificial “rain-falling” and the actual sound of raining coming from outside the cathedral. In Sciarrino's music, associations of such kind, as Anguis pointed out in that conversation, are not always as easy to pin down as in the example in question. One reason for this, conceivably, is that the unfamiliar extended techniques paradoxically create to some extent a bewildering acousmatic listening situation. Responding to Anguis's remarks, Sciarrino claimed that

¹ Video recording of this conversation, fully subtitled, is available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUpgUYzPVCk&t=1282s>, accessed on 10 March 2018.

² Anguis's words. See footnote 2.

it is that not everybody is capable of associating sound with its source that is rather surprising.³ Further, he suggested that to capture our attention in nature, the raindrop has its auditory significance. The association between “musical” sounds—however problematic the word “musical” may seem here—and their referential sources in the reality can be made through the perception of what Sciarrino calls a kind of “physical homogeneity”.⁴

The conversation brings out some of the main topics that run through this chapter, namely: a type of sonic mimesis that is unsettling in multiple senses, an ideal model of music which incorporates sound entities resembling “a living organism”, and most importantly, what do these aspects have to do with Sciarrino’s self-coined “the ecology of music” or “the ecology of listening”. This chapter approaches this ecological aesthetics from two dimensions that are closely intertwined. One is Sciarrino’s search for a novel, ideal vision of music based on a sound concept characterized by its embrace of the appearance of nature and everyday reality. The other, which offers guidelines for Sciarrino’s compositional approach, concerns a reception method that accentuates the correlation between the perception of music and the ways we interact with the world in general. Concomitant with an explication of this aesthetic is the question of to what extent this perception-oriented poetics can accommodate major principles of the ecological theory of musical perception, as discussed in Chapter 1. While this chapter deals with this issue more from the perspective of an investigation of Sciarrino’s compositional method, the two chapters that follow will explore this by showing how a reception method informed by the ecology of listening can facilitate fruitful interpretation of musical meaning in Sciarrino’s works.

Naturalism? Mimesis?

Terms like “realism”, “naturalism” and “referentiality” which have prevailed in the scholarly reception of Sciarrino are originally used by the composer himself in his extensive writings, such as the substantial introductory notes that accompany almost his every single piece. These terms together point to an assemblage of ideas that Sciarrino had developed over the years before they were boiled down to the

³ Sciarrino’s words, see footnote 2.

⁴ Ibid.

concept of ecology. Since the late 1970s when the term ecology appeared in the introductory note to the score of *Un'immagine di Arpocrate* (1979), the concept has become a synecdoche for Sciarrino's aesthetic reflection on various issues related to composition and listening, with an underlying interest in perception. Grazia Giacco suggests that the diversification of ecology-related ideas in Sciarrino's writings represents an evolution of the artist's language; the coming into being of the ecology maxim is a result of "a progressive elaboration and simplification of concepts—keys of his thought".⁵ Giacco summarizes that these ecology-related notions include elements from physiology, anthropology, the acoustic environment (more mental than real), the notion of globality and a holistic approach.⁶ A systematic discussion of the ecology of music and listening is absent from Sciarrino's writings. However, the notion becomes self-evident when it is repeatedly referred to in the contexts of more tangible topics such as musical organicism, silence, "mental space", the perception of a "polyphony of order", and a holistic approach to music that draws from sensibilities associated with sister arts.

Originally a branch of biology, ecology concerns organisms' interaction with one another and with their physical environment. Sciarrino observes that ecology has become a catchy word in many contemporary cultural discourses in recent decades; the concept would not have interested the work of artists, he claims, if it were limited only to the study of the environment.⁷ In what he calls the naturalistic approach, Sciarrino finds what ecology can mean for him artistically. This approach seeks to destabilize the conceptual differences between "musical sound" and sound of the everyday reality:

I proposed a naturalistic listening, an alternative at once personal and impersonal; this one leads the music beyond the music (in the sense that we usually hear it). When the boundaries between music and sound reality waver, the established schemas no longer work, any frame becomes problematic. Reference points may be located outside of the musical technique, in an interdisciplinary context.⁸

⁵ "Les déclinaisons écologiques constituent en effet une évolution du langage de Sciarrino – donc, une élaboration progressive et une simplification des concepts—clefs de sa pensée—plus qu'un changement de paradigme". See Grazia Giacco, "...un cielo notturno dalle bianche veloci nuvolette...: Salvatore Sciarrino et ses lieux d'écoute," in *Silences de l'oracle: Autour de l'œuvre de Salvatore Sciarrino*, ed. Laurent Feneyrou, Paris: Centre de documentation de la musique contemporaine, 2013, 20.

⁶ Giacco in Feneyrou 2013, 19.

⁷ Sciarrino, "Notes pour un journal parisien", in Feneyrou 2013, 27. Elsewhere, Sciarrino writes that "ecology is becoming one of the central topics in the debate of ideas and this makes it a trivial commodity" ("L'ecologia sta diventando uno degli argomenti centrali nel dibattito delle idee e ciò la rende merce banale"). Sciarrino, Introductory note to *Le stagioni artificiali, per violino e strumenti*, Rai trade, 2006.

⁸ Sciarrino, in Feneyrou 2013, 27.

One defining characteristic of so-called naturalistic listening is that it does not assume a fundamental discrepancy between the perception of the general auditory environment and the perception of music. In the introductory note to *Efebo con radio* (1988), Sciarrino makes the argument more explicit by drawing a comparison between music and painting and sculpture as different means of reproduction. To paraphrase his idea concisely: painting, even of the most realistic kind, reduces on its two-dimensional surface what cannot be reproduced in the two dimensions. While sculpture fully assumes the three-dimensionality of the visual world, it misses out the element of movement.⁹ Unlike the indispensable reduction of certain dimensions of visual perception in these two media, music itself constitutes an auditory world without compromise:

...music can most closely approach the phenomena of the surrounding sound life, and, in addition, with sounds alive in their own right, that is, not with different matter; there is no organic difference between natural and man-made sounds, and at a primary stage both stand on a single plane of perception.¹⁰

Such naturalistic listening, furthermore, encourages listeners to find “reference points” for meaning that are not confined to only musical ones but embrace broadly all sorts of information within the specific context of reception. For Sciarrino, a main object of aural perception is to discover what sounds are the sound *of*. It is in this proposition that an affinity between Sciarrino’s engagement with ecology and Clarke’s ecological theory starts to emerge. Likewise, ecological theory does not suppose an *a priori* disparity between the ways in which listeners interact with the general auditory environment and with a specific musical environment. It takes as its central principle the “relationship between environmentally available information and the capacities, sensitivities, and interests of a perceiver”.¹¹

The naturalistic approach brings to the fore the lasting significance of some concepts that have been shaping Western art music for centuries, namely: representation, imitation, and mimesis, be it Baroque rhetoric and word-painting, programmatic narration and topic theory or the emancipation of sounds of

⁹ Sciarrino 2001, 131.

¹⁰ “...la musica può maggiormente avvicinarsi ai fenomeni della vita sonora circostante, e in più con suoni vivi a loro volta, cioè non con materia diversa; non c’è differenza organica fra suoni naturali e suoni prodotti dall’uomo, e ad uno stadio primario entrambi si pongono su un unico piano di percezione.” Sciarrino, Introductory note on *Efebo con radio* (1981). <https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/ita/70.html>, accessed on 29 February 2019.

¹¹ Clarke 2005, 91.

daily life in the works of Cage, Varèse and Schaffer. The uncannily “realistic” sounds in Sciarrino’s music, arguably, are the most easily perceptible manifestation of his naturalism. These sounds, often disturbingly immediate and full of environmental and psychophysiological associations, can present a puzzle for listeners. Admittedly, not only within musical modernism, the history of Western art music has witnessed an antagonism towards discourse which locates the signification of sound outside of the realm of music “itself”. Nicolas Donin notes that most composers would tend to consider the referent inessential to musical meaning: “the piece’s musical qualities must be fully satisfying even if the referential dimension is missed”.¹² Sciarrino, in contrast, considers sound as “signals of communication” grounded in reality. Crucially, these sonic signals mean for Sciarrino a shift from self-centred subjective expression to the excitement of intersubjective or collective experiences. This notion, as the following quotation shows, comes into close proximity with what Lachenmann refers to as “existential experience”:

In Western culture, artistic language is supposed to express the artist’s subjectivity. He says: “This is what I feel, and I pass these feelings on to you”. But I see it differently. I do not say: “These are my sounds”, but rather: “These are sounds I find exciting. And you, what happens with you?” My sounds are not simply sounds but rather signals. They are signals of communication between people; they refer to the environment, to human activity, to day and even more to night—to reality in general.¹³

Laurent Feneyrou has made observations strongly echoing the composer, arguing that Sciarrino’s work “willingly welcomes the humming of the world” and endorses the idea of “sound as signal, in the almost animalistic sense of the term, which we share with the living world”.¹⁴ Curiously, the ghostly mimesis populating Sciarrino’s music has invited a number of scholars, including Marco Angius (2004), Carlo Carratelli (2006), John Croft (2009), Rebecca Leydon (2013), Gianfranco Vinay (2013), Christian Utz (2014), and James Denis Bunch (2016), to interpret the musical meaning of the recurring sound gestures in a manner that alludes to the Saussurean classification of signifier and signified. In their varied methods, these authors link specific sonic units with extroversive referents within the specific literary or dramatic context

¹² Nicolas Donin, “Sonic Imprints: Instrumental Resynthesis in Contemporary Composition”, in Gianmario Borio ed., *Musical Listening in the Age of Technological Reproduction*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2015, 336.

¹³ Sciarrino, *12 Madrigali* (liner note), Col legno WWE 2009 CD 20287, 2009, 23.

¹⁴ “L’œuvre de Salvatore Sciarrino accueille volontiers les rumeurs du monde...La musique, ce sont ces manifestations—le son comme signal, au sens presque animal du terme, que nous partageons avec le monde vivant.” Feneyrou, “Salvatore Sciarrino en ses bestiaires”, in Feneyrou 2013, 47.

of a work. These studies contribute to what Oreste Bossini has described as the existing “essential triad” for interpreting Sciarrino’s music: sound, gesture, and sign.¹⁵

Beyond this, some authors have tried to identify archetypes of mimetic gestures in Sciarrino’s oeuvre. John Croft identifies three different mimetic strands in Sciarrino’s work: environmental mimesis, bodily or visceral mimesis, and, based on an extended notion of mimesis, an imitation of musical past.¹⁶ Pertinent to the naturalist inclination discussed here are the former two categories.¹⁷ To develop a more elaborated definition of them based on this taxonomy, the first type links to sounds as if emanated from either inanimate or animalistic objects in an environment, often related to nature. Typically, these sounds are included as an element in a musical atmosphere that features emptiness, vastness, and, as Croft accurately describes it, nocturnal silence. Falling in this category include, for example, gestures played on woodwinds such as the bird-song-like distant ringing of harmonics, bestial snoring produced by breathy flutter-tonguing, and the quintessential breathy exhalation which encompasses a broad palette of timbral and expressive possibilities. One might name a radical example of this type in *Studi per l’intonazione del mare*, a piece referred to by Sciarrino as *musica ambientalista* (environmentalist music). At a climactic point of the music (bar 121), a percussionist literally drops a piece of earthenware; the explosive, crystalline sound that specifies a violent act is echoed by the singer’s words: “the violent roads of night”. Examples of Croft’s second type include gestures associated with vital signs: breathing, panting, pulsating, and heartbeating.¹⁸ The prevalence of these gestures has nurtured a set of physiology-related metaphors distinctive to the discourse of Sciarrino scholarship. Hans-Peter Jahn uses expressions like “the rotating swish of bodily streams, the scraping wheeze where arteries bend”.¹⁹ Nicholas Till comments on the music’s mimicry of “fluttering stomachs”, “rushing juices” and other acoustic amplification of the bodily symptoms that vividly transmit a “sexuo-

¹⁵ Bossini’s words from the conversation with Sciarrino and Angius on Biennale Musica 2016.

¹⁶ Croft, “Fields of Rubble: On the Poetics of Music after the Postmodern”, in *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music*, ed. Björn Heile, Farnham: Ashgate, 2009, 25–38.

¹⁷ Croft’s third type of mimesis relates to the imitation of the musical past. Although it is not a primary focus here, this kind of mimesis does play an important role in many of Sciarrino’s works. More importantly, it helps to theorize the affinity between Sciarrino and Lachenmann with regard to the haunting of musical past in both composers’ works, to which the two often react with divergent attitudes. For more on this topic, see Williams 2011, 2013, Wilson 2013.

¹⁸ On *Introduzione all’oscuro*, Sciarrino writes that “[i]n this composition the imitation or transmission of some vital sounds of internal physiology are clearly discernable—a kind of objectivation, a speechless dramatization of the heart and the breath”. <https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/ita/67.html>, accessed on 5 October 2021.

¹⁹ Hans-Peter Jahn, “Shade Eaters: Through the Deserts of Salvatore Sciarrino’s Music” (liner note), trans. C. Lindner, Salvatore Sciarrino, *Lo spazio inverso* (Kairos, 2000), CD no. 0012132KAI, 8.

somatic aura” linked to feelings of passion and fear.²⁰ In her listening-based study of the musical-dramatical narrative of *Infinito Nero*, Rebecca Leydon draws an isomorphic correspondence between the sonic morphology of the progressive variation of ostinato gestures—identified as the key structural principle of the piece—and a host of psycho-physiological signs. Variants of sonic figures are named according to how close they are to certain somatic sensations: “respiratory”, “pilomotoric”, “haemic”, “spiracular”. By modeling an embodied way of listening like this, Leydon argues that the music at times offers an opportunity for the listener to identify with the subjectivity of the heroine saint Maria Maddalena de’Pazzi who, in the course of a vague plotline, enters the state of trance.²¹ Gianfranco Vinay makes a generalizing observation that Sciarrino’s sonic gestures can be boiled down to two archetypes: the “wind” (*le vent*), characterized by a prolonged breath, and the “stone” (*la pierre*), characterized by dry, percussive sounds, short or continuous, regular or irregular.²² On a global scale, these two archetypes propagate a wide spectrum of derivatives that are realized through radically different instrumentations and are oriented towards divergent expressive functions.²³

Vinay’s and Croft’s taxonomies lead to the question of how *musique concrète instrumentale* and other musical languages under the influence of it respond to the mimesis tradition of Western art music—a tradition that was once resisted and suppressed in the heyday of post-WWII high modernists. A mimetic quality is inherent in Sciarrino’s sonorism. Characterized by perceptual immediacy and intensity, such a language is impregnated with a rich imaginary aura that constantly harks back to the experience of real life. Vinay’s “wind” and “stone” demonstrate that this is a type of music that is in some way restored to a primordial state: sonically it is barely anything more than quivering, rattling, slapping, scratching, rustling, whistling, and fluttering. Its evocation of acoustic daily life and, occasionally, familiar music fragments from

²⁰ Till 2013, 58.

²¹ Rebecca Leydon, “Narrativity, Descriptivity, and Secondary Parameters: Ecstasy Enacted in Salvatore Sciarrino’s *Infinito Nero*”, in *Music and Narrative since 1900*, ed. Michael Leslie Klein and Nicholas W. Reyland, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, 308–28.

²² Gianfranco Vinay, “...un nuage de vent et de pierre... : Écoté écologique et imaginaire musical dans les oeuvres dramatiques de Salvatore Sciarrino”, in Feneyrou, 2013, 85–92. Vinay’s designation of the two sound archetypes as “wind” and “stone” is inspired by Sciarrino’s own words in his text “Responsorio delle tenebre”: “Listening to reality with an insect ear and a giant ear, I try to restore it in a cloud of wind and stone. The listening experiences that, more than others, could be called ecological” (my translation). Sciarrino, *Carte da suono: 1981-2001*, Roma: Cidim; Palermo: Novecento, 2001, 202.

²³ For example, real pebbles are used in the “Immobile” movement of *Cantare con silenzio. Perseo e Andromeda* features an imitation of pebble and wind sounds by electronic means. The dry, percussive sounds produced by the tongue-striking technique on woodwinds—a sound type prevalent in Sciarrino’s music—is also a variation of the “stone” sound.

our cultural past makes the listeners become self-conscious about the act of listening *per se*—including the body involved and the myriads connections that the mind draws between sound and environment, physical or cultural. For Sciarrino, composing such sonic transparency is analogous to how the desert makes the physiognomy and the physiological traits of the land to emerge:

After abrogating the rhythm: sequence of events is created out of a polyphonic gravitation, like that of the signs in the sky—in the same way the horizon sums up multiple profiles of mountains. The desert allows physiology to emerge. Pulsating islands of sound crawl lakes of silence. Within this silence we find the sounds of the body and recognize them as our own. We listen to them, finally. Now we feel new even the slightest tensions of intervals. And gestures, emptied of their original drama, do not give themselves away as real, and their *intrinsic representativeness* shines through. ...Our mind is generous, to which this feeble music turns. Music is no longer made to lull the beasts to sleep. On the contrary, it also puts the beast, the instrument of knowledge, to sleep in us.²⁴

The notion of “intrinsic representativeness” is worth extra attention here, for it reveals something important about Sciarrino’s attitude towards mimesis as a concept with historical baggage. Hearing sounds as intrinsically representative points to Sciarrino’s special ontology of sound—that is, for him, the perception of sound is embedded in the perception of physical reality in general, and it cannot be uprooted from a material, somatic substrate. The idea of intrinsic representativeness thus cleverly circumvents the conventional discourse of mimesis which relies on a formula according to which music is often said to imitate or express something that is external to itself. Max Paddison’s distinguishing of a *transitive* notion of mimesis from an *intransitive* notion of mimesis is useful as a theoretical point of reference here to clarify what Sciarrino’s “intrinsic representativeness” may mean.²⁵ Because of its reliance on the formula of “music imitates something else”, the transitive notion of mimesis or the “imitation of” theory has been subject to criticism by gatekeepers of musical autonomy such as Hanslick.²⁶ Paddison’s take on mimesis is indebted to the anthropological theory of mimicking and miming from Roger Caillois and key aspects of mimesis in

²⁴ “Abolito il ritmo: la successione risulta da una gravitazione polifonica, come i segni nel cielo—allo stesso modo l’orizzonte somma profili molteplici di monti. Il deserto lascia affiorare la fisiologia. Isole pulsanti di suono strisciano laghi di silenzio, e nel silenzio ritroviamo i suoni del corpo e li riconosciamo nostri, li ascoltiamo, finalmente. Ora sentiamo nuove anche le minime tensioni degli intervalli. E i gesti, svuotati dell’originario dramma, non si danno per veri, e balugina la loro intrinseca rappresentatività. ... È generosa la nostra mente. Ad essa questa musica flebile si volge. Non più fatta per addormentare le fiere. Anzi ugualmente addormenta in noi la fiera, strumento di conoscenza.” Sciarrino, Introductory note on *Lo spazio inverso*, <https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/ita/94.html>, accessed on 3 August 2022. Emphasis added.

²⁵ See Paddison, “Mimesis and the Aesthetics of Musical Expression”, *Music Analysis* 29, no. 1-3 (2010): 126–48.

²⁶ For Hanslick’s criticism, see *ibid.* 132–3.

Benjamin's and Adorno's theories. Benjamin, asserting that man's gift for seeing similarities is "nothing but a weak rudiment of the once powerful compulsion to become similar and also to behave mimetically", proposed a mode of mimesis as identifying with rather than an imitation or representation of something.²⁷ Starting from this position, Paddison conceives mimesis as an *embodied impulse*, an inner impulse of biological and physiological origins. This unrationalized mimetic impulse operates within a force field as opposed to what Adorno has referred to as the rational aspects of musical construction. In contrast to the largely static and ahistorical understanding of mimesis as synonymous with concepts like representation or resemblance, Paddison's new connotation takes on a significant (pre)historical and anthropological dimension. Based on this concept of mimesis, Paddison further posits that the reception of music, including performance, is characterized by the mimetic impulse: listening to a musical work can be understood as a somatic adaptation to or identification with the movement of this music. For Adorno and Benjamin, this moment-to-moment experience incorporates a cognitive process of re-enacting the sonic forms.²⁸ Paddison's expansion of the concept of mimesis into the realm of music reception is particularly relevant here given Sciarrino's preoccupation with ecological thinking. Hearing musical gestures as intrinsically representative points to the embodied mimetic pulse in both the producer and the receiver of a sonic gesture. Crucially, this sentiment, echoing Adorno's argument about listeners' mimetic re-enactment of sonic forms, tacitly articulates an idea very close to an enactivist view of cognition. Highly comparable to the ecological approach to perception, this position understands cognition as "the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs".²⁹

Sciarrino's remark that his mimetic gestures "do not give themselves away as real" casts light on the semantic ambiguity of this sonic mimesis. It is important to note that what is prone to be explained away by the existing referential theories or taxonomies of Sciarrino's mimetic gestures is the intense expressiveness or psychological effects carried by these gestures, even when these feelings are not tied to specifiable causes or, in Sciarrino's terms, the "original drama". Regarding what his omnipresent and ominous "heartbeats" are referring to, Sciarrino suggests that the absence-presence relationship in

²⁷ Benjamin, "Doctrine of the Similar", cited in Paddison 2010, 136.

²⁸ Ibid. 141.

²⁹ Francisco J. Varela et al, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* [Revised Edition], Cumberland: MIT Press, 2017, 9.

perception and comprehension is replaced here by what feels spectral or uncanny.³⁰ He writes: “[w]hat it proclaims itself to be is not perceived: it remains merely a blind, enigmatic movement in the acceleration and deceleration of periodic pulsations”.³¹ Sciarrino’s words attest to the perception that the semantic ambiguity of his sonic mimesis often cuts across the boundaries between, for example, the somatic and the mental, the natural and the artificial, the concrete and the symbolic.

A good example demonstrating the productivity of such semantic ambiguity comes from Christian Utz’s study of *Luci mie traditrici*. Utz investigates how the basic sonic cells of the opera—in their constant recycling and modification—cause a process of metamorphosis in their signification as the drama unfolds.³² Using a Nattiez-style paradigmatic analysis, Utz shows that the musical structure is based on a web of recurring vocal and instrumental modules—short gestural material that can be flexibly cross-related, combined and intermingled. Heavily relying on his own listening experience, he proposes a mapping between different types of instrumental modules and their potential extraversive significations. For instance: harmonic tremolos and trills on strings are linked to the sound of insects; tongue strokes on wind instruments, at the beginning also linked to insects, are perceived to represent “threat” later on.³³ Utz concludes that, as the drama unfolds and tension builds up, the morphological metamorphosis of these modules works in tandem with an ongoing process of semantic “recoding”. In his listening, the perception of the referential connotation of the same sonic sign transforms from an aural icon type (e.g. buzzing of cicadas and crickets) into an index type that reflects physio-psychological states (e.g. buzzing turning into dysphoric quivering).³⁴ Arguably, the shifting of musical meaning in Utz’s “close listening”—however arbitrary some of those mappings may seem—is, in turn, a characteristically vivid illustration of the immediacy and intensity of such sonic mimesis. More importantly, it also manifests how (Utz’s) listening becomes truly ecologically anchored with the aid of the dramatic context of the opera.

³⁰ “...la musique tend à inverser les termes d’absence et de présence, les déplaçant vers ce qui est « spectral »”. Sciarrino, Introductory note to *Introduzione all’Oscuro*, <https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/eng/67.html>, accessed on 4 July 2022.

³¹ “Ce qui s’annonce ne se perçoit pas: reste seulement un mouvement aveugle et énigmatique en accélération et décélération de pulsations périodiques”. Ibid.

³² Christian Utz, “Statische Allegorie und ‚Sog der Zeit‘: Zur strukturalistischen Semantik in Salvatore Sciarrinos Oper *Luci mie traditrici*”, *Musik & Ästhetik*, 2010, 14(53), 37–60.

³³ For a full view of this module-semantic typology including musical examples, see Utz 2010, 54–5.

³⁴ My use of the terms “aural icon” and “index” here is indebted to Naomi Cumming. See Cumming 2000.

Vinay goes a step further to expound on the phenomenon from the perspective of imagination. He astutely perceives an affinity between the richly shimmering imaginary aura of Sciarrino's mimesis and aspects of a theory of creative imagination developed by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard.³⁵ While imagination is normally understood as the action of forming a new image of something that is not present to the senses, Bachelard's definition of imagination, instead, stresses the distortion of an image.³⁶ For Bachelard, it is the deforming or changing of images provided by perception that constitutes the core of an imaginative act. Imagination, argues Bachelard, should be conceived strictly against a simple reproduction of what is perceived; imagination starts with differentiating the world of objective perception from an inward-turning, affective distortion of reality.³⁷ When citing Bachelard's concept, Vinay does not make it explicit that what defines Bachelard's imagination—that is, the absence or distortion of an original image—amounts to a void, one of a dynamic and productive kind. Vinay, however, does note that a “dynamic and positive” notion of the void has an important role in Sciarrino's poetics. The notion of the void is most evidently manifested in *Vanitas* (1987), a piece for voice, cello and piano which Sciarrino refers to as both a “still life” and an “impoverished theatre” (*teatro povero*). Here, the gesture of a sigh, which takes various musical shapes, is allegorically considered as a void, for it is into this breath that all the words fall. Vinay describes Sciarrino's musical reflection on the void as a “resounding ‘hollowing out’ of sound image”, which truly captures the meaning of *vanitas* in the still-life tradition.³⁸ Vinay stresses that this void is not to be perceived as static and negative as the notion sometimes was in Western civilization; rather, it is transformed into something dynamic and positive.³⁹

How is this void relevant to a listener's perception of Sciarrino's mimetic gestures? Vinay could have drawn a correspondence between this notion of void and the kind of void that underlies Bachelard's imagination, in that both voids are meant to open up an infinitude. Just like Bachelard's imagination

³⁵ Gaston Bachelard's theorization of an ontology of imagination was developed in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (1938) and *The Poetics of Reverie* (1960). For discussion of Bachelard's key views on imagination, see Edward K. Kaplan, “Gaston Bachelard's Philosophy of Imagination: An Introduction”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 33, no. 1 (1972): 1–24, and Roch C. Smith, *Gaston Bachelard: Philosopher of Science and Imagination*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016.

³⁶ Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams : An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1988, 1–2.

³⁷ Edward Kaplan points out that, for Bachelard, imagining consciousness should be free and isolated from perception and memory to gain its own ontological validity. See Kaplan 1972, 3–4.

³⁸ “l'« évidemment » retentissant de l'image sonore”. See Vinay, in Feneyrou 2013, 89.

³⁹ Ibid. 89.

prescribes the ability of a constant becoming of human's psychic power,⁴⁰ the semantic void in Sciarrino's sonic mimesis opens up to the listener in the form of, to borrow Max Nyffeler's vivid expression, "a web of meanings that are subtly held in suspension".⁴¹ Drawing on the distinction that Bachelard draws between perception (or memory of perception) and imagination, Vinay contends that Bachelard's "imaginary" can be used as a heuristic principle for the reception of Sciarrino's music. The ecology of listening, argues Vinay, is not about holding a perceptive attitude—a careful perception of reality. Rather, it conceives an ideal listening situation guided by imaginative action. Such listening gives rise to myriads of new images based on a distortion of perception. Affirming Vinay's argument, Feneyrou evokes an earlier observation that Vinay had made about the compelling "image-making" character of Sciarrino's music.⁴² Feneyrou particularly points to the transmedial quality that characterizes the imaginary aura of this music, suggesting that, in the ecology of listening, listeners are faced less with symbolic evocation than "a true metamorphosis of musical images, at the crossroads of mental, sound and visual images".⁴³

To summarize, the ecology of music brushes up against notions that have been familiar to Western classical music such as mimesis and naturalism. The current scholarly discussion of Sciarrino's intentionally naïve mimetic gestures attests to the observation that listening or the role of the listener takes the central stage in Sciarrino's ecological aesthetic. This aesthetic, consistent with Clarke's ecological approach, draws a direct connection between the perception of meaning in music and the impacts of sensory signals in general on the listener as sentient beings. Material immediacy and semantic ambiguity characterize

⁴⁰ Kaplan notes that, for Bachelard, imaginative activity means a constant going beyond one's present being. It is only when our inert habits of experience and knowledge are dispelled and our creative faculty of the mind is in an ongoing process of becoming can new images be created. This ethic of free imagination is considered by Bachelard as crucial to human transcendence. See Kaplan 1972, 1–5.

⁴¹ "...einem subtil in der Schweben gehaltenen Geflecht von Bedeutungen". See Max Nyffeler, "Das Meer, Der Klang, Der Spiegel: Anmerkungen zu den 12 Madrigali von Salvatore Sciarrino", in *12 Madrigali*, CD booklet, 2009, 22.

⁴² Vinay claims that the programme note that Sciarrino provided for *Vanitas*, which was published under the title "The Impossibility of Becoming Invisible" in *Carte da suono*, constitutes "the manifesto of an 'image-making' music." For Vinay, not only can this music "arouse images and inner visions in the listener". It can also "communicate poetic and mental images". See Vinay, "L'invisible impossible : voyage à travers les images poétiques de Salvatore Sciarrino", *Filigrane. Musique, esthétique, sciences, société* [En ligne], Traces d'invisible, Numéros de la revue, mis à jour le : 30/01/2012, URL: <https://revues.mshparisnord.fr:443/filigrane/index.php?id=107>. Terms like "visual image", "sonic image", "mental image" and "poetic image" have distinct meanings in Vinay's discussion, although a clear definition of these terms is absent. It however can be inferred that, by "mental image", which is alternatively put as "mental representation", Vinay means two things. The first has to do with the poetic or dramatic content that inspires the composer's sonic realization of it, in which case the term is interchangeable with "poetic image". The second is about the projection or manifestation of concrete sound in a listener's mind or through his or her perception. For Vinay, such mental representation of sound relies on our imagination—an imaginative inner staging or screening images. For more on the notion of mental image, see Vinay 2012.

⁴³ "Il ne s'agit pas d'une évocation symbolique, mais d'une véritable métamorphose d'images musicales, à la croisée d'images mentales, sonores et visuelles". Feneyrou 2013, 11.

Sciarrino's sonic mimesis, or, to replace the term mimesis with more accurate options: duplication, imprint, apparition, spectre. Vinay's resort to the notion of imagination reveals the degree to which this music's representativeness seems to be constituted only through allusion or illusion at the listener's end.

With his poetic language, Laurent Feneyrou expresses his perception of a post-humanist sentiment in Sciarrino's animate music world: "Sciarrino populates his work with a bestiary real or invented, and after Pythagoras, considers the human soul, the animal soul and the vegetal soul as of the same nature; after Empedocles who wrote: 'because I was once already, me, boys and girls, / bush, bird, silent fish jumping up out of the sea', a continuity was established here among the mineral, the vegetal, the animal and the human, under the sign of life..."⁴⁴ Feneyrou's observation of an ecological continuity between different forms of life touches upon an aspect that underscores an ideological dimension of Sciarrino's mimesis—that is, the human is far more physically and biologically enmeshed and dependent on the environment than a humanist perspective has assumed. This is a theme running throughout the discussion on Sciarrino in the rest of this chapter and the two chapters to follow.

Towards an Organic Music

Is it possible to comprehend Sciarrino's penchant for a naturalistic expression from a perspective that goes beyond the local and surface sonority of the composition? And can we link the music's disposition to mimesis to the morphological and architectural construction of the composition at a more fundamental level? The discussion presented in the next two sections of this chapter tries to theorize what "organic music" may mean for Sciarrino by, on the one hand, interrogating his organic concept of sound and, on the other hand, providing an analysis of his organization of sound material under the broader notion of an ecological aesthetic.

In Sciarrino's writings, the word organic exhibits multiple meanings in relation to multiple facets of his compositional thinking. The following quotations offer some basic ideas about what "organic music" may be about. In a journal article (2001), Sciarrino states:

⁴⁴ Feneyrou, "Salvatore Sciarrino en ses bestiaires", in Feneyrou 2013, 47.

I wanted an organic music, adapted to organic beings. The freedom of my choices gave them a free appearance. The central tension around timbre and its psycho-physiological and bodily implications openly opposed the dominant determinism and the dogmas of inexpressivity...

Having arrived precociously on an unknown side of musical experience, I began to compose unstable, frayed, multi-spectral organisms of a richness that made them almost indecipherable to the ear.⁴⁵

In the article “Connaître et reconnaître” (1990), Sciarrino writes:

...the gesture and the musical imagination come first, then the sound in all its organicity...Such sound elements have an organic presence more than in any other form of music, to the point of appearing almost like entities animated in silence.”⁴⁶

Finally, in a reflection on the Third Piano Sonata (1987), Sciarrino writes:

I don’t know how aware I was of what I was doing in the sixties. My endeavour was to overcome the conception of inert sound, and to construct, without going back to the melodic-rhythmic system. Indeed, without even touching it: I wanted to create an organic, highly mobile world, regulated by Gestalt, a sound completely transfigured by its intrinsic articulations.

Having voluntarily left aside the rigid conventions of the avant-garde, the anthropological approach immediately emerged.⁴⁷

What Sciarrino means by “organic” (*organique* or *organico*) or “organicity” (*organicità*) appears to be contingent on the specific aspects of music that he refers to in different contexts, be it the formal, the sonic or the perceptual. The word “organic”, which is the most accurate translation of the French word *organique* and the Italian word *organico*, has multiple meanings according to the Oxford English Dictionary. One meaning that seems to be pertinent here describes something as belonging to or inherent in a living being. This is clearly what Angius points to when he wonders: “are we perceiving a living organism when listening

⁴⁵ “...je voulais une musique organique, adaptée à des êtres organiques. La liberté de mes choix leur donnait une apparence de gratuité. La tension centrale vers le timbre et ses implications psycho-physiologiques, corporelles, s’opposaient ouvertement au déterminisme dominant et aux dogmes de l’inexpressivité...Parvenu de manière précoce sur un versant inconnu de l’expérience musicale, j’ai commencé à composer des organismes instables, effrangés, multi-spectraux, d’une richesse qui les rendait presque indéchiffrables à l’oreille.” Sciarrino, in Feneyrou 2013, 30–1.

⁴⁶ “...le geste et l’imagination musicale viennent d’abord, puis le son dans toute son organicité...De tels éléments sonores possèdent une présence organique plus que dans toute autre forme de musique, au point d’apparaître presque comme des entités animées dans le silence.” Sciarrino, “Connaître et reconnaître,” in Feneyrou 2013, 147. The article was originally published in Italian entitled “Conoscere e riconoscere,” in *Hortus musicus*, 18(2004), 53–5.

⁴⁷ “Non so quanta fossi cosciente di ciò che facevo negli anni Sessanta. Il mio sforzo era di superare la concezione del suono inerte, e di costruire, senza tornare all’impianto melodico-ritmico. Anzi, senza neppure sfiorarlo: voleva nascere un mondo organico, mobilissimo, regolato dalla Gestalt, un suono del tutto trasfigurato per le sue articolazioni intrinseche. Tralasciate volontariamente le convenzioni rigide dell’avanguardia, subito si profila l’approccio antropologico”. Sciarrino, *Carte da suono*, 2001, 145.

to Sciarrino's music"? To understand why the music appears so, we also need to consider another meaning that the term organic has, which, according to OED, describes something of "an organized structure compared to a living being". Such a structure, more specifically, is characterized by "continuous or natural development", and, more importantly, by "connection or coordination of parts into a single, harmonious whole".⁴⁸ As I demonstrate, these standard criteria provide a point of reference for better comprehending Sciarrino's statements cited above.

Sciarrino's organicism, I argue, can be understood in two different contexts. The first, as the first two quotations illustrate, is about an organic concept of sound. As discussed previously, Sciarrino's sound material aspires to a condition that sits in the converging area between noise and pure note. A sound entity in its organicity cannot be parsed into separable parameters like pitch, timbre and dynamics, for it is conceived from a Gestaltian perspective in terms of its overall shape, movement and trajectory. The sonic image of "unstable", "frayed" "animated entities" manifests itself on various scales in Sciarrino's composition. On a microscopic scale, for example, the pervading use of *crescendo* and *diminuendo dal nulla al nulla* ("from nothing to nothing") is intended to hide the attack of sound so that the recognition of individual instrument in relation to the sounding whole can be minimized.⁴⁹ In terms of tone production, the articulation of pure, stable and fully resonant notes is replaced with sonic complexes that feature a timbral profile with rich, subtle changes and an as-if-frayed dynamic contour. The term "non-tempered" (*non-temperato*) applies to the extended harmonic techniques for saxophone in *Studi per l'intonazione del mare* is an example in case. A quintessential Sciarrinian articulation of a single-note gesture often requires the same harmonic pitch to be produced by alternating finger positions on different fundamentals. In a highly original flute gesture that prevails in works like *Canzona di ringraziamento* (1985) and *Studi per l'intonazione del mare*, continuous dense trills—technically realized by right-hand fingers pressing the D and D# trill keys—are superimposed with foreign notes played with the left hand. The compound mechanical movements produce a series of wobbly, intercrossing pitches flowing in extreme fluidity. For another example, the

⁴⁸ "Organic", Entry in *Oxford English Dictionary: OED* (Online), Oxford University Press, 2018, <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2446/view/Entry/132431>, accessed on 14 July 2022.

⁴⁹ Sciarrino himself has commented on the significance of this particular technique: "...l'absence d'attaque est particulièrement développée (c'est ce que nous avons vu chez Mahler), une absence d'attaque qui réduit au minimum la reconnaissance individuelle de l'instrument par rapport à l'ensemble." Sciarrino, "La couleur du son", in Feneyrou 2013, 45–6.

saxophones in *Studi per l'intonazione del mare* search for a sustained tone (B flat) whose exact pitch is subject to frequency change produced by the rapid and successive changes in the right-hand position that are accurately prescribed (this technique dominates the second section of the piece starting at bar 124). On a macroscopic level, Sciarrino has a propensity to create monolithic sound continuums. The transformation process is as if carved out of a giant stone instead of constructed through an aggregation of notes in an atomistic sense. Sciarrino claims that such a morphing sonic entity encourages perception in its liminal state by exploiting a phenomenon that can be called “auditory inertia”.⁵⁰ The orchestral foil in the nearly forty-five-minute-long *Un'immagine di Arpocrate* for piano, orchestra and choir exemplifies this single sounding entity at its most amorphous and imperceptible—as if processed via electronic means. Works that are composed for mass instrumentalists such as *Il cerchio tagliato dei suoni* (1997) and *La bocca, i piedi, il suono* (1997)—both will be returned to later in this chapter—similarly display a seamless sonic process without clean cuts made between sections: even changes in morphology take place within these sections compared to previous ones. Such effect is attributed to a hypnotic layering process: imperceptible changes in texture are prepared well before the sudden revelation of a “turning point” in perception.⁵¹

The second dimension of Sciarrino's organicism, which is related to Sciarrino's claim that organic music is “adapted to organic beings”, prescribes some fundamental organizational principles of his music. With a Gestaltian underpinning, these principles, as this chapter aims to show, together support an organic way of listening. Giacco argues that Sciarrino's compositional thinking has a strong correspondence with founding principles of an ecological vision of the world; these concepts embrace, to name a few, a consistent and comprehensive view of the world against an atomized and mechanized vision of the world, the holistic view such as the organic interaction between part and whole, microcosm and macrocosm, the teleological method, the deductive method, the biosphere (the *Gaia* of James Lovelock) as well as the space-time system.⁵² It may be argued that what more directly defines an organic way of listening is Sciarrino's

⁵⁰ “...le sense atomiste de la note tend à s'abolir, repoussé aux limites de la perception [...] dans l'approximation, au point où l'on ne perçoit plus une succession de sons, mais au contraire un seul événement sonore, en exploitant un phénomène qu'on peut qualifier d'«inertie auditive».” See Sciarrino, “L'isola silenziosa”, text for Donaueschinger Musiktage (9 October 1979), as cited in Feneyrou 2013, 20.

⁵¹ In *Il cerchio tagliato dei suoni*, Sciarrino requires that the entry and the exit of the sound mass of flute need to be dampened. “Each performer will begin to play before entering the environment and will continue after he or she has left. Once outside, everyone will quickly return to the entrance, so that the mass of passing sounds appears to the spectators as continuous and infinite.” See Sciarrino, Commentary on *Il cerchio tagliato dei suoni* and preface to the score. <https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/ita/147.html>, accessed on 24 April 2019.

⁵² Giacco in Fenayrou 2013, 20–1.

preoccupation with, on the one hand, artistic laws of organization and development that can find models or archetypes in nature, and, on the other, principles drawn from the domains of psychology and phenomenology. It is not difficult to discern in Sciarrino's writings his interests in, for example, structural characteristics of visual and spatial perception, Gestalt psychology, consciousness of time, and the psycho-physiological effect of sound. Crucially, transplanting these principles into composition means for Sciarrino to explore what perceptual, musical values they can have for listeners. For him, a manifest of naturalism in composition—more substantial than its nurturing of a “realistic” sonority—is to channel a collective aesthetic experience based on the perception of archetypes. Sciarrino states that naturalism means:

...to find a more direct way, precisely, certain archetypes common to all [...] and also be able to tap into some aspects of reality, that can provide, for example, organizational means. [...] In our minds, the aesthetic experience in its fullness, recalls the naturalistic approach.⁵³

The idea of archetype and the concept of sound as an inseparable whole, as previously noted, both imply Sciarrino's holistic and Gestaltian leaning. A key aspect of his holistic approach is the belief that visual and spatial perception and the perception of music are deeply entangled. For Sciarrino, that musicians and scholars name sound as “mass” or “block” and describe the formal construction of music as “architectonic” is a proof that we habitually attach spatial and graphical qualities to the perception of sound.⁵⁴ In perceiving music, listeners resort to an “illusion of simultaneity” which is attributed to memory that constantly shuttles between present and past and the faculty of recognition that marks each theme as distinguishable.⁵⁵ This intermedial approach to sound and listening is most vividly comprehensible in two of Sciarrino's compositional devices. One is the “diagrams of flow” (*diagrammi di flusso*), the diagrammatic sketch that offers a glimpse into Sciarrino's *modus operandi* at the preliminary stage of composition. The other is Sciarrino's theoretical generalization of the figures of music.

To transcribe sound imagination into readable signs, Sciarrino used to create hand-painted, often painstakingly coloured graphic diagrams before notating the music in a conventional way on manuscript

⁵³ “...retrouver par un chemin plus direct, justement, certains archétypes communs à tous [...] et aussi pouvoir puiser dans certains aspects de la réalité, qui peuvent fournir, par exemple, des moyens d'organisation”. Sciarrino, as cited in Grazia Giacco, *La notion de “figure” chez Salvatore Sciarrino*, Paris: Harmattan, 2001, 54.

⁵⁴ Sciarrino, “L'espace dans l'esprit”, in Feneyrou 2013, 93–4.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 94.

paper.⁵⁶ The method has been adopted in almost every composition of his early decades, whether with or without text.⁵⁷ In these diagrams, assorted geometric marks, as representation of sounds produced by different instruments, are distributed and combined on paper drawn with grids that prescribe relative pitch heights (vertically) and time units counted in seconds (horizontally). **Figure 2.1** gives a glimpse into the *diagrammi di flusso* prepared for Scene I of *Luci mie traditrici*.⁵⁸ Instrumental gestures, represented by various coloured signs, are organized above or around the vocal material in the middle (represented by dots joined into undulating contours in black pencil). The visual presentation rendered the typology of miscellaneous figures clearly seen. In the staves below the signs, Sciarrino notates the core pitch material.

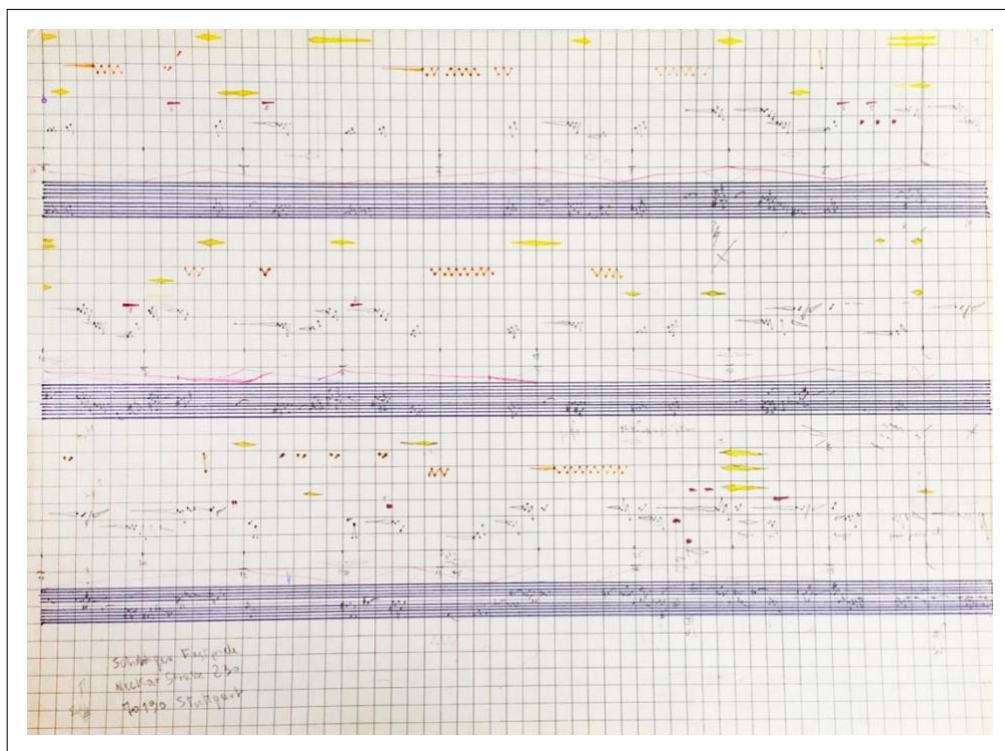


Figure 2.1: Sciarrino's diagrammatic sketch of *Luci mie traditrici*, Salvatore Sciarrino Collection, scanned with permission from Paul Sacher Foundation.

⁵⁶ Sciarrino scholars including Angius, Vinay, Carratelli and Angela Ida De Benedictis have all included a study of *diagrammi di flusso* in their works.

⁵⁷ Sciarrino told in the interview with Marco Angius and Oreste Bossini at the Biennale Musica 2016 that diagram sketching was a predominant method for his composition, although since recent years he had tried to avoid visualisation method in his working process and to conceive sounds more in mind only.

⁵⁸ The sketch (then-undigitalized) is held at the Paul Sacher Foundation and was accessed in August 2017. The diagram is included in the first page of a blue-cover, A4-size notebook titled "diagrammi di flusso", collected in the *Lobengrin* folder from the Salvatore Sciarrino Collection.

Composed of geometric shapes and contours, the sketch is visually reminiscent of the abstract geometric painting of Wassily Kandinsky to whom Sciarrino refers in his *Le figure della musica*. Various parallels can be drawn between the methods of the two artists. Kandinsky's point and line, rather analogous to Sciarrino's "stone" and "wind", are seen as the elementary forms of material for configuring complex compositions.⁵⁹ Crucially, in his famous theoretical work *Point and Line to Plane*, Kandinsky attaches a temporal and a spatial dimensions to his composition of basic forms rendered on a two-dimensional plane. Floating in "an indefinable (immaterial) space", points and lines are imaged as the outcome of a co-action contributed by such factors as force, tension, direction and motion.⁶⁰ Arguably, this imagined picture of moving objects lends insight into the way in which Sciarrino imagines his organization of sonic objects. What functions as a cause for the two-dimensional projection of dots, lines and other geometric forms on the grid paper is Sciarrino's imagination of the virtual motions of the sonic objects and the interactions or tensions between them—all operating in a virtual space. Kandinsky's spatial imagination of forms, as I demonstrate in the next section, offers an interesting parallel model for comprehending the self-organizing tendency of Sciarrino's recurrent sound gestures in a virtual space.

Another manifestation of Sciarrino's intermedial and spatial approach to sound organization is his summarization of the five archetypal formal processes, proposed in the richly illustrated pedagogical treatise *Le figure della musica de Beethoven a oggi*. Representing the allegedly naturalistic models of organization, these five processual figures—namely, accumulation, multiplication, Little Bang, Windows Form, and genetic transformations—are believed to be privileged by today's listeners' perceptual structure across different sensory modalities.⁶¹ Each of them is believed to be empirically verifiable as universal in the natural formal or behavioural patterns in the physical world as well as the artificial construction in the art world. The influence of Gestalt psychology is undeniable—the perception of unfolding musical processes as overarching "figures" morphing in a teleological or functional trajectory shows a closeness with the Gestaltian assumption that the mind has an innate disposition to perceive global patterns in the stimulus

⁵⁹ Kandinsky, too, considers his archetypal point and line as inspiration provided by nature. For more on this topic, see Wassily Kandinsky and Hilla Rebay, *Point and Line to Plane*, New York: Dover Publications, 1979, 38, 103.

⁶⁰ Kandinsky writes: "the elements lying firmly (materially) on a solid, more or less hard and, to the eye, tangible BP [basic plane] and, in contrast, the elements 'floating' without material weight in an indefinable (immaterial) space are of fundamentally different appearance, and stand in antithesis to each other". Words in brackets added. Kandinsky 1979, 144.

⁶¹ For in-depth discussion of the five archetypal figures and their realizations in Sciarrino's works, see Giacco 2001 and Song 2006.

based on certain simple rules. Sciarrino himself has indeed made a remark that is quintessential of the view of Gestalt psychology: “human perception proceeds from general to particular”.⁶² According to Gestalt psychologists, our mind understands external stimuli as a global whole which constitutes *something other* than a neat aggregation of its untied components. The self-organizing tendencies of this whole are derived from a series of principles that are thought to regulate our experience of percepts—including the laws of proximity, continuity, closure, symmetricity, simplicity, and so on.⁶³ The Gestalt whole helps to generate meaningful perceptions in a chaotic world and, importantly, has a prior effect on the mind’s interpretation of individual components of the stimuli. Sciarrino’s five archetypal figures, as “a global method of learning”, represent a collection of modality-crossing gestalts in that a completed image or contour is recognized from the linearity of listening. Sciarrino suggests that the fact that we perceive in a certain way and do not necessarily stick to “the absolute of structures” in music is a rather recent, fundamental vision.⁶⁴ This vision, however, has significant value for the ecology of music. The mediation of these generalized figures allows musical perception not to be confined to the atomized vision of musical grammar—a sphere of knowledge that is, for Sciarrino, “too far removed from any other problem of construction and meaning”.⁶⁵ It is in this sense that one can argue that Sciarrino’s holistic-ecological approach is underpinned by an anthropological concern.

⁶² “Oggi sappiamo che la nostra percezione procede dal generale al particolare”. Sciarrino, *Le figure della musica: da Beethoven a oggi*, Milano: Ricordi, 1998, 22.

⁶³ Dejan Todorovic, “Gestalt Principles”, *Scholarpedia*, 2008, 3(12): 5345, http://www.scholarpedia.org/article/Gestalt_principles, accessed on 17 July 2022.

⁶⁴ “Le fait que nous percevons d’une certaine manière et le fait de ne pas s’en tenir à l’absolu des structures dans la musique, est une vision assez récente, fondamentale...” Sciarrino in Grazia Giacco, “Entretien avec S. Sciarrino”, Paris, unpublished, June 1999, as cited in Giacco 2001, 58.

⁶⁵ “Un livello comunque troppo lontano da qualsiasi problema costruttivo e di significato”. Sciarrino 1998, 22.

Infinite Variation: the Self-Organizing Soundscape of

Lohengrin, azione invisibile

Fashioned as a monodrama *sui generis* for soloist, instruments and voices, *Lohengrin, invisible action* (1982–84) represents one of Sciarrino’s most radical musical and dramaturgical experiments. The work puts on stage a hyper-naturalistic soundscape, and the notion of sound as *sign* is fully in evidence. Sciarrino’s interest in altered mental states was initiated in this work which, as I try to demonstrate here and in Chapter 4, deserves to be called a meta-work of the ecology of listening. Highly comparable to that of the equally widely acclaimed *Luci mie traditrici*, the music of *Lohengrin* is organized into a sheer, transparent sonic web composed of a collection of highly recognizable figures. Scholars have applied different terms to describe this basic sonic unit. While Vinay refers to them generally as sound objects, Utz uses the term “modules” which accentuates modular variation as a key principle in Sciarrino’s organization of sound.⁶⁶ Antares Boyle uses the term “micro-gestures”, emphasizing the gestural-corporeal dimension.⁶⁷ Carlo Carratelli, who also adopts the term gesture (*versi*), suggests that these short units of sounds are thought to represent a complex but definite and recognizable “formal object” which is built in turn by the assembly of simpler timbral objects.⁶⁸ Each based on a prototype, these figures maintain a distinctive sonic profile while undergoing constant changes throughout the opera. When combined with text and drama, they acquire, to various degrees, dramatical significations thanks to a semanticizing treatment.⁶⁹ Vinay particularly distinguishes Sciarrino’s sound figure from concepts like motif, theme and “sound aggregates” in that he sees the music’s articulation of form as attributed to principles capable of “dramatizing the arrangement, combination and

⁶⁶ See Utz 2010 and Vinay: “Vue sur l’Atelier de Salvatore Sciarrino (à partir de Quaderno di Strada et Da Gelo a Gelo)”, *Circuit: Musiques Contemporaines*, 2008(18/1), 15.

⁶⁷ Boyle, “Formation and Process in Repetitive Post-Tonal Music”, Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2018.

⁶⁸ Carlo Carratelli, “L’integrazione dell’estesico nel poetico nella poetica musicale post-strutturalista. Il caso di Salvatore Sciarrino, una ‘composizione dell’ascolto’”, Doctoral dissertation, University of Trento and Paris-Sorbonne University, 2006, 324.

⁶⁹ For insightful discussion of Sciarrino’s semantization of musical material in operatic compositions, see Utz 2010, 2019, 2020.

resonance of these figures in the sound space”.⁷⁰ “Even in the case of instrumental music”, Vinay suggests, “it is more a question of sound dramaturgy than of composition in the sense of developing ‘material’”.⁷¹

What kinds of laws of virtual force might possibly be in operation in Sciarrino’s sound dramaturgy whose auditory effect is characterized by the spatial distribution of sonic objects and the delineation of mental or narrative space? From which sources does the music draw its tension and according to what principles does the sound flux unfolds its movements? Furthermore, Sciarrino’s obstinate varying repetition of figures, as the following analysis demonstrates, suggests a striking kinship with the somewhat outdated nineteenth-century organicist hypothesis built around the motif-development or prototype-variation model. Whether or not Sciarrino was aware of the discursive baggage that the term organicism has for today’s musicological discourse is not known. With a unique holistic-ecological outlook, however, his organicist thesis clearly distances itself from the nineteenth-century version of musical organicism which is based on an absolutized, atomistic, and reductive vision of biology and nature. To provide answers to the above questions, the following discussion focuses on the organization of the soundscape of Scene I of *Lohengrin* which is predominantly comprised of micro-figures played on wind instruments. The analysis aims to examine how Sciarrino composes a “calculated representation of chance” by choreographing the figures according to a series of principles relevant to the self-organization of biological organisms.

Figure 2.2 includes the transcription of a fragment of an early version of the diagram sketched for the first scene of *Lohengrin*. Sonic objects are emitted from a silent, spatialized environment, weaving a sparse texture that shows a strongly stochastic character. The silence makes every gesture—often unpredictable—gripping and psychologically intense in listening. Every single element of Elsa the heroine’s vocalization, once cast into the empty space, triggers immediate responses in the orchestra. The vocal material notated in the middle of the flow of signs as shown in the diagram contains spoken words and vocal figures of four different categories (for their prototypes, see **Table 1a** in Appendix).⁷² The four vocal figures, including Elsa’s turtle dove callings (represented by solid dots followed by wavy lines), short strokes of breath (represented by semiquaver with diamond heads), cooing (represented by solid dots), and peeping

⁷⁰ “...dramatiser l’agencement, la combinaison et la mise en résonance de ces figures dans l’espace sonore”. Vinay 2008, 15.

⁷¹ “Même dans le cas de la musique instrumentale, il s’agit plus d’une dramaturgie sonore que d’une composition au sens du développement d’un « matériau »”. Vinay 2008, 15.

⁷² The four vocal figures correspond to the prototype-figure No. 5, 1, 2 and 6 respectively in **Table 1a**.

(represented by solid dots exclusively in the time units marked as 14 and 15), are interspersed mainly with harmonic trills on flute (represented by diamonds above the vocal line with marked pitch names) and undulating string tremolos (represented by diamonds below the vocal line).⁷³ Persistent use of bar lines is dispensed with in favour of a notation that allows for maximum temporal elasticity.⁷⁴ Unique to the score of *Lohengrin*, square brackets and corresponding rehearsal numbers (1-55) are used to mark figures belonging to the same sound sequence. This visually highlights the perceivable tension and dynamic relationship between the individual figures which bind them up as an organic, compound sonic entity. Silent gaps are sometimes created between two entities, offering temporal manipulation that allows further freedom.

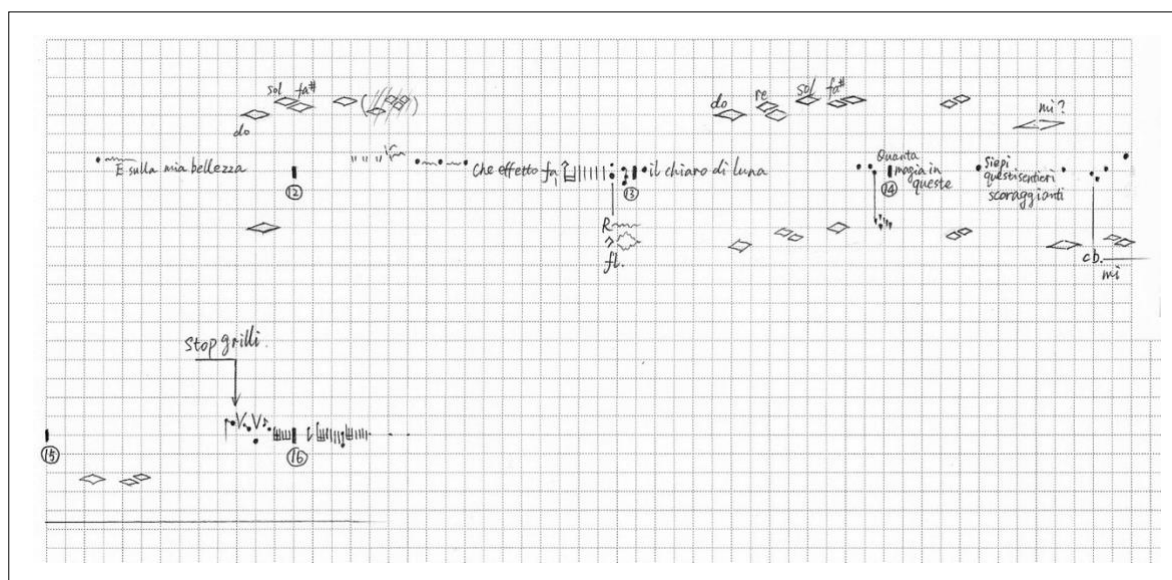


Figure 2.2: Sciarrino's preliminary diagrammatic sketch for Scene I, *Lohengrin*, Salvatore Sciarrino Collection, transcribed by the author with permission from the Paul Sacher Foundation

Closer analysis of archival material suggests that a reinvention of the classic prototype-variation principle is observable here. Among various sketches related to *Lohengrin* there is a piece of grid paper on

⁷³ The figure of harmonic trills on flute and the figure of undulating string tremolos are represented by figure No. 7 and 2/3 respectively listed in **Table 1b**.

⁷⁴ Time units numbered from 12 to 16, as shown in Figure 2.2, were only temporally used in the sketch as a time device.

which a preparatory listing of musical material can be seen.⁷⁵ The list enumerates variants of prototypical figures designed for the woodwind instruments in Scene I, predominantly bassoon, but also oboe and clarinet (**Example 2.1**). Modeled as preliminary examples and later replaced with slightly modified versions in the score, these figures offer valuable insights into the logic behind the pattern formation of the modular gestures that can be observed universally in other instrumental parts and even the vocal writing of the opera.⁷⁶

Example 2.1: Sciarrino's sketching of woodwind figures for *Lohengrin*, Scene I, transcribed by the author with permission from Paul Sacher Stiftung

⁷⁵ This sketch (then-undigitalized), accessed in August 2017, is rendered on a stave paper collected in the *Lohengrin* folder.

⁷⁶ The most typical example of vocal melody based on modular gestures can be seen in works like *Luci mie traditrici*. For a paradigmatic analysis of the structural relationship between various vocal modules, see Utz 2010.

The listing prepares for a music that appears to be self-regulating and self-reflexive in its constant referring back to the material that has been presented before. All the variation possibilities, ordered alphabetically, derive their basic pitches and contour from a preordained prototype figure which is defined by two generic features: the ascending or descending (and occasionally fluctuating) scales, and the repetition of a single note. Depending on which of these features are embodied, the colour labels in **Example 2.1** are added by me to categorize the eighteen variants into three groups: figure (A), marked in red, is representative of Type I which contains both generic features; figure (E) and (F), marked in green and blue, are representative of Type II and III. The former contains only repetitive single notes and the latter only the scalar material. The fact that the figures in green and blue groups as simpler prototypes are derived as subsets from the more complex and heterogeneous prototypes represented by figure (A) seems to reiterate the organicist notion of unity in a not-so-unfamiliar way—at least in the sense of textual analysis.

The resemblance with one of the self-organizing features of the ecological world can be perceived—that is, the principle of genetic identity expressed through particular and infinite variants. At first glance, the prototype-variation model is reminiscent of some of the oldest organicist propositions made around 1800, particularly the Goethean notion of prototype as a complex source. In his study of the problematics of musical organicism, David Montgomery provides two possible biological sources that are thought to have fed the theory.⁷⁷ The Goethean hypothesis suggests that a prototype itself constitutes a large motivic group that contains all the individual motives developing in an episodic manner. All of these motives form a connective entity.⁷⁸ Parallel to the Goethean prototype was the “one simple cell” hypothesis put forward by Jean Baptiste Robinet, and this hypothesis, according to Montgomery, was the one that actually dominated the nineteenth-century concept of organic development. Although the organicist procedures of replication and variation in the music of *Lohengrin* seems to echo the Goethean prototype, are they really the same?

Remarkably, in the final result of the music, neither a single woodwind figure nor a single type of it claims supremacy over others. The fact that the identities of these figures are distinguished by varied ways of combination of two generic features and the figures are ordered in the opera in a way that avoids adjacent

⁷⁷ David L. Montgomery, “The Myth of Organicism: From Bad Science to Great Art”, *The Musical Quarterly*, 1992 (76)1: 17–66.

⁷⁸ Montgomery 1992, 39–40.

repetition means that they are too “similar” to be aurally distinguished from each other. In this sense, the hierarchized relation between prototype and variant prioritized by the conventional organic unity is negated here. Perceptually the texture of the woodwinds features a heightened dialectics between approximation and difference, which imitates, as Sciarrino puts it, an “apparent, but calculated representation of chance.”⁷⁹

Example 2.2 is a schematic representation of the sound material of the whole scene in which the sonority of woodwind figures, especially bassoon and flute, is foregrounded. The diagram marks the occurrence of woodwind figures by mapping their identities onto the figure types established in the preparatory list (as labelled in red, green and blue).⁸⁰ There seems no pre-determined patterns emerging from the ordering of the woodwind figures, apart from that figures adjacent to each other always come from different colour groups and thus always subtly differentiated from each other in their morphologies. Before rehearsal number 22 where flute and strings start to take over and sound material becomes more homogenous, immediate repetition of figures of identical types is avoided.

⁷⁹ Feneyrou 2013, 22.

⁸⁰ Only type I figures (C), (N) and (Q) never return in their variations to the final score. The additive figure X shared among woodwind parts is a simple repetition of a same note. Also singled out in this diagram are materials of the flute (figure a, b and c), brass (figure x and y) and percussion parts, and three type of sound events in the strings that play special roles in terms of their significations (labeled as “insects buzzing”, “pedal not E” and “volatile gesture”).

Scene I

Rehearsal Number	2	3	4	5	6	7
Woodwind	Fg: <i>S</i>	Fg: <i>X</i>	Fg+Ob: <i>T</i>	Fg: <i>D'</i>		Fg: <i>I'</i> + <i>D'</i>
String (significant events)					"Insects buzzing"	
Percussion						G.c.
Woodwind	8	9	10	11	12	13
String (significant events)	Fl: <i>b</i>	Ob: <i>X</i>	Fg: <i>F</i>	Fg: <i>O</i> + <i>P</i>	Fg: <i>X'</i>	Fg: <i>G</i> ; Fl: <i>c</i> ("Insects buzzing")
Woodwind	14	15	16	17	18	19
String (significant events)	Fg: <i>M'</i>	Fg: <i>L</i>	Fg+Ob: <i>B'</i>	Fl: <i>a</i>	Fg: <i>R</i>	Fl: <i>b</i>
Woodwind	20	21	22	23	24	25
String (significant events)	Fl: <i>a</i>	Fg: <i>I'</i>	Fl: <i>a</i>	Fl: <i>a</i>		Fl: <i>a</i>
	"Insects buzzing"				Cb: Pedal note E	
Woodwind	26	27	28	29	30	31
	Fl: <i>a</i>	Fl: <i>a</i>	Fg: "Heart beating"	Fl: <i>a</i>	Fl: <i>c</i> Ob: <i>A'</i> Cl: <i>B'</i> Fg: <i>E'</i> Cr+Tr+Trbn: <i>y</i>	Fl: <i>a</i>
Brass						
String (significant events)	"Insects buzzing"			Volatile gesture		Cb: Pedal note E
	Cb: Pedal note E					
Woodwind	32	33	34	35	36	37
	Fl: <i>a</i>	Fl: <i>a</i> Fg: <i>A''</i>	Fl: <i>a</i>	Fl: <i>a</i> + <i>c</i> Fg: <i>X'</i>		Fl: <i>a</i> + <i>b</i> Fg: <i>L</i> Trbn: <i>x</i> ("Insects buzzing")
Brass			Cr: <i>x</i>	Cr+Trbn: <i>x</i>		
String (significant events)		Volatile gesture		Volatile gesture		
Woodwind	38	39	40	41	42	43
String (significant events)	Fl: <i>a</i>		Fl: <i>a</i>	Fg: <i>H'</i>	Fl+Cl: <i>a</i>	
		Volatile gesture ("Insects buzzing")				
Woodwind	44	45	46	47	48	49
			Fl: <i>b</i>	Fl: "Breath" Fg: <i>b</i>	Fl: <i>b</i> + "Breath"	Fl: <i>b</i> Cl: <i>L</i> Fg: <i>I'</i>
Brass				Trbn: "Breath"		
String (significant events)		"Insects buzzing"				
Percussion				G.c.: "Heart beating"		
Woodwind	50	51	52	53	54	55
	Fl: <i>c</i> Cl: <i>a</i> Fg: <i>I'</i>			Fg: <i>I'</i>	Fg: <i>I'</i>	Fg: <i>I'</i>
Brass	Cr+Tr+Trbn: <i>y</i>					
String (significant events)						
Percussion						G.c.: "Heart beating"
	T.t.					

Example 2.2: Schematic representation of instrumental figures in *Lohengrin*, Scene I

The organicist repetition and variation are archetypal in Sciarrino's formal organization in general. Precedents of musical organization based on Gestaltian replication in new music can be seen in works such as Gérard Grisey's *Prologue* (1976) for solo viola. Utz observes that in *Prologue*, the permutation process of a five-note figure and the various kinds of disturbance imposed onto it create a tension between the vectorial, the comprehensible, the processual elements and a sort of impossibility of prediction in listening.⁸¹ Grisey vividly described his Gestaltian construction as a "dialectic between noise and form".⁸² This antithesis equally works in *Lobengrin*. Perceptually, it generates complex interactions between those moments that are underpinned by a so-called low-information strategy and those described by Sciarrino as "sublime moments".⁸³ According to Synder, low-information strategy refers to music that contains a bare minimum of change and contrast to sustain interest. In Scene I, the web of micro-figures constitutes such an environment that produces high redundancy in information. In contrast, those unexpected and striking events that "pepper" the listener's otherwise "sabotaged" memory—usually triggered by the sporadic speech of Elsa—disrupt the almost hypnotic nets of noise and stand out as high-information events.

In the light of the ecological approach, the music of Scene I stands out as an almost radical example showing how the listener's auditory experience of everyday life readily serves as a reservoir of sources for his or her perception of musical meaning. All of the formal techniques discussed above contribute to a musical simulacrum of everyday sonorities—presumably the nocturnal soundscape of a coastal garden as Sciarrino described it.⁸⁴ In his introductory note to *Lobengrin*, Sciarrino writes that the *raison d'être* of the work is about a "discovery of reality, or rather of some essential connections between sound reality and musical language".⁸⁵ In the static, discontinuous space-time of Elsa's flow of consciousness (or monologue), the emission of gestures and their ensuing motions is as if regulated by an imaginary, natural force of inevitability. Similar to the way a pebble dropping into a pond causes a splash and, subsequently, ripples spread across the surface, in this music, one hears an airy flute whistle tone triggering a blast of whispery tremolos on strings, followed by a sustained glossy harmonic on flute with a tiny time lag. This perception

⁸¹ Utz 2012, 73–6.

⁸² Ibid. 75.

⁸³ Sciarrino in Feneyrou 2013, 146. For discussion of low-information strategy, see Bob Synder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000.

⁸⁴ Sciarrino 2001, 81.

⁸⁵ "Questa indagine muove alla scoperta della realtà, o, meglio, di alcune connessioni essenziali tra realtà sonora e linguaggio musicale". Sciarrino 2001, 83.

makes the notion of virtual agency, as defined by Clarke and Hatten, an apt and fruitful way of interpreting this music. The arrangement of micro-figures is based on an organizational law that calls into question the division between the auditory experience of real-life events and motions of sound determined by established structural laws of music themselves. Imagine the auditory environment of a morning walk down a leafy path along a winter stream. The walker is likely to specify a relatively stable group of sources of sound from this seemingly unorganized, chaotic soundscape. Inanimate and living beings respond to stimuli in manners that are both predictable and unpredictable from simple mechanical laws. In *Lohengrin*'s soundscape, an invariant structure is constituted by a host of elements: intermittent silence, paroxysms of volatile sonic gestures, spasmodic blasts of climax, and persistent variation of prototypes that defeats accurate memorization. The fact that individual figures are often combined into a constellation which maintains its basic configuration and, overall, its group identity throughout the opera all the more reinforces this impression.⁸⁶

In summary, the music of *Lohengrin* affords a multifaceted interpretation of a novel version of musical organicism. First of all, it exemplifies Sciarrino's organic music by creating a soundscape that affords the listener a rediscovery of the relationship between music and reality, between comprehensible form and unorganized noises. Second, Sciarrino's organicist approach to formal organization flattens the hierarchy between the role of prototypes or original single cells and that of their variants in the conventional model of organicism. To push the discussion further beyond the restriction of organicism, this chapter argues that an affinity arises between the autonomy of the modular working of micro-figures and the biological-ecological idea of self-organization. Self-organization is a process of pattern formation that occurs in both living and nonliving systems. In biology, the principle can be observed in many systems ranging from flocking behavior in birds and fishes and social behavior in insects and mammals to many examples of formation and morphogenesis in the developmental process of plants and unanimated objects (such as sand grains assembling into rippled dunes). Rather than describing the intentional activities of a discrete self that is external to the system, self-organization refers to the recurrence of self-similar components (Gestalts) at a local level and the emergence of patterns at a global level out of numerous interactions among the lower-

⁸⁶ Analysis in Chapter 4 provides detailed examples illuminating the organization of such constellations of figures.

level components of the system.⁸⁷ The simulacrum of this in music is a decentralized formal organization with similar patterns distributed all over the fragments of the system. As I demonstrate in the next and last section of this chapter, self-organization is also of immediate relevance to emergent properties of a chaotic, complex system, and this offers further points of reference for understanding Sciarrino's ecology of music.

Reimagining Organicism Through Chaos:

Composing Moving Sound Mass

While this chapter has so far argued that Sciarrino's self-professed "organic music" can be understood in terms of his holism and the music's link with classical organicism, it does not mean to underplay the role of such elements as rupture, interference and multi-dimensional stratification in this music. Rather, the recognition of the coexistence of forms that seem to counteract linear processes and organically correlated structures helps to unveil a musical vision which seeks to keep up with a more updated notion about biological organisms and ecology. Chaos theory, which deals with systems that feature an orderly disorder, has polarized tendencies like unpredictability and determinism, spontaneity and involuntariness, correlation and asymmetry lying at its core.⁸⁸ Principles like iteration, infinite variation and self-organization that are fundamental to the structuring process of the music of *Lohengrin*, as the analysis presented previously has shown, have demonstrable connections with basic aspects of chaos theory. The final part of this chapter sets out to tentatively consider the possibility of reconstructing organicism—the notion that sees the universe as orderly and alive—through the lens of chaos theory. While the latter may appear to undermine some fundamental premises of the former, I will try to shed light on possibilities in which the two theories mutually absorb and negate each other.

⁸⁷ For more on the concept of self-organization and its representation in music, see Scott Camazine et al, *Self-organization in Biological Systems*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001, 7–14 and Holly Watkins, *Musical Vitalities: Ventures in a Biotic Aesthetics of Music*, Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018, 2–8.

⁸⁸ For general introduction to chaos theory, see N. Katherine Hayles, *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science*, Cornell University Press, 1990 and J. M. Cushing et al, *Chaos in Ecology: Experimental Nonlinear Dynamics*, Boston: Academic Press, 2003. Within musicology, discussions of the application of chaos theory to composition and music analysis and its historical, mythological and ideological implications can be seen in works including: Charles B. Madden, *Fractals in Music: Introductory Mathematics for Musical Analysis*, Salt Lake City: High Art Press, 1999; Nicolas Darbon, *Les musiques du chaos*, Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 2006; Jonathan D. Kramer, *Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

Chaos theory came into being during the second half of the twentieth century as scientists awakened to the fact that “the universe was not as smooth and linear as had been thought”.⁸⁹ Chaos theorists started to believe that between the unpredictability of the sub-atomic realm expressed by quantum mechanics and the rigid mechanical order of the Newtonian universe, there was not a strict divide, but rather a continuum. Initially established as a mathematical study of emerging patterns that are present in data, chaos theory examines phenomena of apparent randomness (or non-regular occurrence) that are thought to be governed by rules or linked to a purely deterministic cause.⁹⁰ Chaos in this sense “inhabits the twilight zone between regularity and randomness”.⁹¹ The continuity between order and disorder, scientists claim, can be described by iterating simple formulas until the desired accuracy has been achieved in the convergence of results that differ less and less.⁹²

This thesis’s engagement with chaos theory has no direct relevance to mathematical formulas that have been proposed in the scientific field. Instead, its approach is of a metaphorical-hermeneutic nature, similar to those that have been adopted in works by Brian J. Lefresne, Nicholas Darbon, and Jonathan D. Kramer.⁹³ Based on a study of primary sources and textual analyses of pitch and rhythmic structures, Lefresne identifies in György Ligeti’s musical organization a host of hallmarks of chaotic dynamics such as self-similarity, bifurcation and fractal geometry. Darbon’s 2014 article is dedicated to Iannis Xenakis, another major figure in new music who received significant influence from the scientific study of chaos. While correspondences are made between Xenakis’s glissando technique and his treatment of phonemes in vocal repertoire and numerous chaos-related concepts (such as turbulence, probability, Brownian motion and cellular automata), Darbon’s study also incorporates a historical-biographical and aesthetic dimension. Xenakis’s chaos, Darbon suggests, has its genesis in Greek antiquity and the humanitarian crisis among years of political upheaval that Xenakis went through. Ideologically the notion of chaos was considered by the composer as an antipode of post-WWII serialism which endorsed a kind of “gratuitous

⁸⁹ Madden 1999, 5.

⁹⁰ Cushing, J. M. et al. 2003, 4.

⁹¹ Cushing et al. 2003, 4.

⁹² See Madden 1999, 5–6.

⁹³ See Brian J. Lefresne, “Application of Chaos Theory and Fractal Geometry in the Music of György Ligeti”, Masters Dissertation, University of Ottawa, Canada, 2005; Nicolas Darbon, “Littérature et vocalité chez Xenakis ou comment traiter des abîmes”, *Intersections* (Toronto. 2006) 34, no. 1–2 (2014): 113–34; Jonathan Kramer 2016.

intellectualism”.⁹⁴ The following discussion demonstrates that these dimensions are highly relatable to the meaning of chaos in Sciarrino’s works. Jonathan Kramer’s theorization of postmodern modes of listening enriches the implications that chaos theory has for musical reception and analysis. Kramer claims that the concept facilitates a paradigm-shifting mode of listening which temporarily does away with notions like unity by treating the unexpected, unjustified, and unexplained events in music in a productive way.⁹⁵ A range of fundamental principles of chaos theory provide a common ground for the arguments made by the authors mentioned above. For example, that complex consequences can be caused by unpredictable, simple and seemingly insignificant events, and that disturbance or intermittency is central to the non-causal aspects of non-linear dynamics.

A few points of correspondence can be made between Sciarrino’s compositions and properties of unorderly systems that have been studied within the framework of ecology and chaos theory. This is particularly true for works created for a moving mass of performers. The twin pieces composed in 1997, *Il cerchio tagliato dei suoni* for 104 flutes and *La bocca, i piedi, il suono* for 104 saxophones, present a spatially and theatrically arranged spectacle: four soloists stand still at four cardinal points of the venue, enclosing the audience at the centre; one hundred others, the “*migranti*”, as Sciarrino designates them, process through the hall following a regular or irregular pattern to create the illusion of an incessant flow, a “flow of feet, faces, mouths”.⁹⁶ A “circle cut by sounds” is realized in *Il cerchio* in a literal sense. The migrating flautists cut diagonally across the audience and then split into two currents, going clockwise and anti-clockwise, before merging again in the audience. In *La bocca*, the mass saxophonists are required to enter, then leave, and return to the space, each time wandering around in a more irregular pattern.

Sciarrino considers *La bocca* as “an initiation to contemporary naturalism”.⁹⁷ A biological and ecological underpinning persists in his conception for both works:

The sound of great masses is fascinating. There are countless examples of natural phenomena, just think of birds, crickets, a crowded market, traffic, rain... Circularity of space and time where the metaphor of travel opens a furrow. What else? A white butterfly crosses a field, it seems to flit at random. Instead, it has a precise direction and is not alone. There are no

⁹⁴ Darbon 2014, 119.

⁹⁵ See the section “Chaos and Chaos Theory” in Chapter 6 “Beyond Unity” in Kramer 2016, 105–11.

⁹⁶ Sciarrino, Introductory note to *La bocca, i piedi, il suono*, http://saxophonemes.fr/eng.saxophonemes.fr/La_Bocca_presentation_2.html, accessed on 28 April 2019.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

species of living beings that do not migrate periodically. Man migrates too, and lately we have witnessed events that we thought had faded forever in history.⁹⁸

In staging a flocking behaviour, however, the performance also brings to the fore the humanistic core of these works. A real image of migrating human being is at its heart. Sciarrino links the genesis of these works to Albanian refugees fleeing war in the former Yugoslavia and arriving by ship in Italy.⁹⁹ His introductory notes on the works feature a poetic account of the existential significance of migration—including the tension between the human impulse to move and an instinct for stability. Human beings' participation in the ubiquitous phenomenon of “circularity of space and time”, as Sciarrino puts it, yet again points to the human-animal affinity which has ramifications in the ecology of music.

The organic concept of sound, as discussed before, is given a new appearance here through a monolithic approach. In these pieces, only the four solo parts—playing flickering figures in the form of a polyphonic antiphon—are notated with precision. Composed of a potpourri of the same instrument in all possible sizes, the orchestra creates a sound mass that is contrarily based on a constellation of simple, ostinato gestures to be played according to a pre-established order. Sciarrino did not produce a score for the “migrants”. Instead, they are only given instructions in line with live coordination. Analogous to a chaotic system is that the proliferation and overlaying of surprisingly simple elements—such as the subtly oscillating single-note harmonics in *La bocca*—produce a mesmerizing ringing effect which in turn appears to form one complex, indivisible sound cloud. Moving sound masses like this, as Tim Rutherford-Johnson has observed, join the trend of composing superabundance, excess and spectacle in contemporary music.¹⁰⁰ The following description sheds light on many defining aspects of such sonority: “[o]ften the motivation is quasi-sculptural: with very large numbers of similar instruments, sound can be shaped like stone or clay, with a wide range of control of density and mass that can be deployed by the composer, rather like sound within the studio.”¹⁰¹ “Massed forces also defocus the musical detail of a work...The effect will always tend

⁹⁸ “Il suono di grandi masse è affascinante. Se ne possono trovare infiniti esempi tra i fenomeni di natura, basti pensare agli uccelli, ai grilli, a un mercato affollato, al traffico, alla pioggia...Circolarità dello spazio e del tempo dove la metafora del viaggio apre un solco. Che altro? Una farfalla bianca traversa un campo, sembra svolazzare a casaccio. Invece ha una direzione precisa e non è sola.” Sciarrino, Introductory note to *Il cerchio tagliato dei suoni* and preface to the score.

<https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/ita/147.html>, accessed on 24 April 2019.

⁹⁹ See Tim Rutherford-Johnson, *Music After the Fall: Modern Composition and Culture Since 1989*, Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017, 195.

¹⁰⁰ See Rutherford-Johnson 2017, 162–205.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 194.

to be one of sound diffusing, blurring around its edges, accepting and even acquiescing to its environmental conditions”.¹⁰²

Overabundance coated in illusory homogeneity, unpredictability contained within limits, orders embedded in chaos. As Sciarrino’s metaphor of the seemingly random flitting of a butterfly implies, both works invite an intuitive perception of the idea of the strange attractor of deterministic systems. In chaos theory, this abstract mathematical concept denotes a set of points toward which a periodic trajectory tends to develop over the course of a process for a wide variety of starting conditions.¹⁰³ Seen by scientists as the essence of chaos, a strange attractor is “strange” in the sense that it causes something to approach or draw near in the same general area, but the trajectories never repeat exactly.¹⁰⁴ It is obvious how this concept can be perceived in the pre-ordained patterns of the free movements of the instrumentalists. But the concept also has musical manifestation. In *Il cerchio*, for instance, notes are confined in a preordained pitch space albeit significantly invaded by contingency. This is particularly evident in the notated parts of the four soloists: the same gestures are played on each part according to a temporal arrangement that avoids exact synchronization, as if the four voices are “unconsciously” drawn to one single trajectory which is in slow metamorphosis.

Sciarrino’s fascination with compositions of a strong environmental disposition culminated in the *Studi per l’intonazione del mare* for contralto, a flute quartet, a saxophone quartet, percussion and orchestra of 100 flutes and 100 saxophones. Angius’s anecdotal account of the beguiling “rain-falling” effect, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, is another radical example showing how iteration of simple behaviours within a deterministic system creates a complex, stochastic result. Much more can be said about the mimetic sonority of the piece which ranges from the borrowing of everyday objects to word-painting-like symbolism (e.g. the music’s simulation of the exuberant saint’s stepping in a puddle). But on a deeper formal level, Sciarrino’s organic ideal manifests in this piece in a concept which is elemental to the study of chaos—that is, fractals or self-similarity.

¹⁰² Ibid. 194.

¹⁰³ Lefresne 2005, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Madden 1999, 6–7.

A ubiquitous phenomenon in nature, fractal geometry is pertinent to chaos theory in that it shows that certain patterns emerge over the course of the development of a process.¹⁰⁵ In a perfect mathematical fractal, the exact self-similarity goes infinitely deep: each pattern is made up of smaller copies of itself, again and again. Sciarrino's interest in fractals dates back at least to the 1990s. When illustrating the formal principle of accumulation in *Le figure della musica*, he makes a case for the idea that the perception of the extremely small and the extremely large is relative.¹⁰⁶ "A galaxy, we know, on a different scale resembles the atom".¹⁰⁷ Fractals open up further formal possibilities for a composer who tends to understand form in terms of gestural behaviour and Gestaltian construction.¹⁰⁸ Antares Boyle is the first scholar who has provided a formalist analysis of the fractal-Gestaltian construction across multiple structural levels in Sciarrino's works.¹⁰⁹ Her analysis of *Recitativo oscuro* (1999) shows that local energetic shaping emerges directly from the "holistic gestures" which are generative of energetic trajectory and segmentation at higher levels. Structural organicity is hence derived from a fractal-like correspondence between the macroscopic and the microscopic.¹¹⁰

The response between small and large is first and foremost played out in *Studi per l'intonazione del mare* in a physical-spatial sense. The disparity in size between the two quartets and the two orchestras is unmistakable, and this gives rise to those intriguing moments when the small appears immense and aggressive whereas the large is miniscule and almost imperceptible. Particularly in section A (bars 1-124), the small often acts as a strong counterforce to the big. Playing throughout on a dynamic level between *f* and *ff*, both quartets take on a fierce character by using granular timbres and explosive articulations whose actual effect is no less piercing and brutal than that created in the masses. In bars 83-7, the four solo flutes play an ostinato of cluster blades in rotation, generating an intrusive sound block or what Angius describes as a "micro-storm."¹¹¹ This aurally imposing storm remarkably relativizes listeners' perception of the scale

¹⁰⁵ For detailed definitions of fractal geometry and self-similarity, see Madden 1999, 9–16, 19–39.

¹⁰⁶ Sciarrino 1998, 29.

¹⁰⁷ "Una galassia, sappiamo, su scala diversa assomiglia all'atomo". Ibid. 29.

¹⁰⁸ Sciarrino claims that analytical perspective developed in *Le figure della musica da Beethoven a oggi* is aimed for "a future theory of form, understood as an analysis of (gestural) behaviour" ("per il rinnovamento della didattica e per una futura teoria della forma, intesa come analisi del comportamento.") Sciarrino 1998, 23.

¹⁰⁹ Antares Boyle, "Gestural Time and *Grundgestalt* in Sciarrino's *Recitativo Oscuro*", Conference paper read at 2020 AMS-SMT Virtual Annual Meeting (forthcoming with *Music Theory Online* under the title "Gestural Temporality in Sciarrino's *Recitativo Oscuro*").

¹¹⁰ Boyle, Ibid.

¹¹¹ Angius, "Le son comme fiction: *Studi per l'intonazione del mare*", in Feneyrou 2013, 36.

of space in that it is so towering that the flute figures are marked out from their background which is composed of a nebula of flutter-tonguing played on a highly similar dynamic level in the mass saxophonists.

The co-emergence of part and whole also becomes formally thematized in the piece. It is no coincidence that its subject matter is the sea, whose intonations are manifested through myriad forms of waves—itself being a fractal. Wave gestalts of various scales permeate numerous aspects of the music. Wave structure can be observed horizontally and vertically in pitch contour. The wavy figure composed of six clusters of violently-sounding natural harmonics played on solo flutes (bar 1, see **Example 2.3**) is a seminal material based on which the first section (bars 1-124) of the piece unfolds. Echoing the flute figure are the solo saxophones which play a transposition (Eb-D $\flat$ -F-E $\flat$ -D $\sharp$ -Eb) of the (unheard) fundamentals (D-C-E-D-C $\sharp$ -D) of the harmonic clusters on the flutes (bars 1-2). The principle of iteration of identity through variations, as my previous analysis of how woodwind figures are organized in *Lohengrin* has shown, is further implemented here, albeit on the middle- instead of local-level of form. This is already evident at the beginning of the piece as shown in **Example 2.3**. The basic unit (bars 1-2), itself containing a sequence of sub-figures, recurs while undergoing paroxysmal disturbance that causes distortions or permutations such as sudden shrinkage, expansion, and a radical mutation in its material. The pattern resumes immediately at bar 3 but lasts for only one bar due to an interruption by the “jet-whistle” as an alien element. In bars 4-5, the intact structure of the basic pattern is vaguely preserved with much omission and addition in its material diversity and small changes in rhythm. Bar 6 restores the pattern into one closer to the original, but this does not carry on—a jet-whistle at the end of bar 7 opens up a four-bar-long excursion (or a “window”) containing completely foreign material and new musical character, before the pattern resumes from bar 12. The permutations hence serve in the opening bars as a driving force—like unexpected disturbances or turbulences operating in a chaotic system. The process appears similar to what has been termed by Jonathan Kramer as “moment form”, in which discontinuity or difference paradoxically becomes an ordering principle.¹¹²

¹¹² Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies*, New York: Schirmer Books, 1988, 201–18.

Terribile e grandioso (♩ =)

The musical score is for a large ensemble, including woodwinds, saxophones, percussion, and strings. The tempo is marked "Terribile e grandioso" with a quarter note equal to one beat. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into systems, with the first system showing the initial presentation of a gestural-thematic pattern. The woodwinds (Flauti soli I-IV, Saxofoni soli I-IV) and percussion (Crotali, Mokusho, Piastra met., Tam tam, Gran Cassa) play a complex, rhythmic pattern. The strings (100 Flauti, Soprani, Contralti, 100 Saxofoni, Tenori, Baritoni) are mostly silent in this section.

Example 2.3: First presentation of the basic gestural-thematic pattern, *Studi per l'intonazione del mare*, bars 1–6.

Contr.

I

II

Fl. soli

III

IV

I

II

Sax. soli

III

IV

Perc.

Example 2.3: (continued).

The countertenor's melody displays the undulating contour of Sciarrino's signature vocal writing known as *sillabazione scivolata* ("sliding syllable articulation"). The sliding and pendular movements of the melodic line are maintained throughout the piece. But the wavy shaping is at its most extreme in the "rain-falling" section (bars. 291-313) when the saint swoons in a state of ecstasy—articulated through the drastic rise and fall in his melody (bars. 293-323). The contact with water acts as a catalyst for the saint's experience of oceanic oneness, for we anticipate an apogee to come in the mass orchestra in bars. 314-23, where he indulges himself in rain, as Sciarrino's introductory note indicates, over and over stomping and splashing through the puddle. Wave gestalt also propagates in the vertical chordal structure. In section B (bars. 124-231), for instance, a small tidal intervallic accumulation appears in the flute quartet in bars. 133, 149, 151 and 158-9 in which a major second (B-C#) multiples and swells (see **Example 2.4**). The result is a more complex cluster structure, typical of Sciarrino's harmony: a juxtaposition of major second and perfect fourth (and sometimes minor third) based on a semi-tonal relationship. Bars. 149-59 contain three of these multiphonic micro-tides, each appearing "bigger" than the previous one by lasting longer and sounding louder.

The image shows a musical score for four flutes, labeled I, II, III, and IV. There is also a section labeled 'Fl. soli'. The score is for bar 133. The notation includes various dynamics such as *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano), and articulations like accents and slurs. The flutes are playing a complex, overlapping cluster of notes, with some flutes having triplets or other rhythmic patterns. The 'Fl. soli' section is marked with a *mp* dynamic and a slur.

Example 2.4: Micro-tidal cluster, *Studi per l'intonazione del mare*, bar 133.

Angius, who once conducted the piece at the cathedral of Città di Castello, sees wave gestalt as an archetype after which the music's various singular gestural behaviours are modelled.¹¹³ For him, the flute "jet-whistle" is to be perceived as the shortest and most constrained wave shape, whereas those long-lasting sonic envelopes articulating smooth dynamic arches as big ones. One example of Angius's latter type is

¹¹³ See Angius in Feneyrou 2013, 33–8.

heard in section B in which wobbling overtones (Db) on saxophones are layered-up against a foil of pulsating beats in the same note to form multiple gentle ebbs and flows throughout the whole section. Angius notes that the most grandiose “wave” in the piece appears in bars 241-2 in which a paroxysmal crescendo arises in the “subtone” carpet of the migrant saxophones, simulating a steep wave quickly decreasing from the ridge.¹¹⁴ This powerful gesture is accompanied by the countertenor’s repetitive phrases and the short, airy rustling in the one-hundred flautists. Imaginably, with an orchestra of that scale, Angius’s perception of the massive sonic wave must have been underpinned by the formidable spatial effect which significantly defines the auditory result of the music.

Starting with an account of a nuanced notion of sonic naturalism underlying Sciarrino’s mimetic gestures, this chapter set out to offer possible means for comprehending various dimensions of Sciarrino’s ecology of music and listening—a synecdoche of which is “organic music”. Sonorities with iconic immediacy and musical forms that bear semblance to some order- or pattern-creating principles prevalent in the natural world are the two major areas with which this chapter is concerned. As Sciarrino claims, two aspects of his musical language—the energetic, morphosyntactic organization of sound and the “iconic immediacy” of sound are unified in their common purpose, that is, to signify and communicate:

Signification and representation bring together the various components of a language and form from it the most intimate energy. Two apparently antithetical aspects shape this music: the abstract construction, and *at the same time* the iconic immediacy, an indication of a rediscovered relationship with nature or “reality.” ...this language is based on relationships of *figures...on sounds in motion* and not on intervals already given...¹¹⁵

Sciarrino’s organicism is proved novel not only because of a non-atomic vision of musical material and a holistic, ecological approach to musical perception. Its originality also lies in that it challenges some fundamentals of its nineteenth-century forebear, partly thanks to its awareness and absorption of more up-to-date scientific knowledge of organisms and ecology in general. The reinvented organicism turns out to

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 34.

¹¹⁵ “Signification et représentativité réunissent enfin les différentes composantes d’un langage et en constituent la plus intime énergie. Deux aspects apparemment antithétiques façonnent cette musique: la construction abstraite et *en même temps* l’immédiateté iconique, indice du rapport retrouvé avec la nature ou la « réalité ».” Sciarrino in Feneyrou 2013, 147.

be a less factitious version. Based on a limited scientific model of organisms, the old organicist claim is essentially tied to the concept of unity which dictates the subordinative role of the part in relation to the whole and a hierarchical relationship between a prototype and its variants. Such an understanding of the organic turns out to be reductive and arbitrary, more and more detached from its biological origin.¹¹⁶ The analysis presented in this chapter has demonstrated that, while maintaining an evident connection with the conventional organicist model, Sciarrino's gesture- and gestalt-oriented composition subtly downplays and even destabilizes this hierarchy. Principles of chaos systems are further introduced as a theoretical lens to help conceptualize the kind of organic ideal that Sciarrino's music aspires to, although the term organicism may no longer appear apt to describe such a musical outlook.

With the aid of concepts from chaos theory, Jonathan Kramer seeks to liberate music analysis from the doctrines of unity and organicist coherence. This chapter however has tried to make a case that the hypotheses offered by chaos theory and by conventional organicism do not have to be entirely antithetical. The vision of the former potentially facilitates a revision of the latter by relativizing some of its claims in a particular way. Self-similarity as a ubiquitous phenomenon that characterizes the self-organization of many organic beings, for instance, is at the heart of both theories. My analysis of different kinds of self-similar gestures in Sciarrino's works has striven to show the co-emergence of part and whole across various formal scales and musical dimensions. Such construction subverts a part-whole relationship which diminishes the autonomy of the part, at the same time propelling the unity of the whole to become plural. Sciarrino's advocacy of a Gestaltian view of perception, too, helps to contend that part and whole may not have to be cause and effect to each other, and the same also applies to different components at a local level.

¹¹⁶ Holly Watkins, for example, questions the conventional organicist view of part-whole relation, a view that dates back to Kant. Kant believes that parts and whole are "reciprocally cause and effect of each other's form"; "every part not only exists by means of the other parts, but is thought as existing for the sake of the others and the whole". See Watkin, "Toward a Post-Humanist Organicism", *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 14, 100. Negating this view, Watkins is of the opinion that part and whole are not necessarily always correlated. In her 2018 monograph, Watkins writes: "trees and other plants clearly lose parts without any threat to the whole." She finds support from A. B. Marx, who claims that the "absolute necessity" that "would pervade every individual detail" does not exist in any artwork because it was impossible to demonstrate the contribution of every element of a musical work to the whole. Watkins also cites a view from Terrence Deacon which holds that wholeness as the aim of the maintenance of life is not something achieved once and for all, nor is it literally present in their physical substrate. See Watkins 2018, 21–9.

Chapter Three

IMPOSSIBLE LOVE

SEMANTICIZATION OF MUSICAL STRUCTURE IN *LUCI MIE TRADITRICI*

Introduction

Sciarrino's *Luci mie traditrici* ("My treacherous eyes") is based on a rewriting of *Il tradimento per l'onore* ("the betrayal to honour"), a 1650 Venetian theatre work by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini that stages the notorious murder of Maria d'Avalos and her lover in 1590 at the hands of her husband Carlo Gesualdo. The subject matter of the opera—adultery brutally avenged with "honour murder"—may seem anachronistic and inadequate for contemporary listeners at first glance. While Sciarrino claims that what he had in mind when making the opera was going back to "the origins of melodrama" and to "the power of Monteverdi", the opera does away with gaudy melodramatic confrontations.¹ The plot is boiled down to something similar to a psychological chamber play, with the original narrative dramatically condensed into a compact set of snapshots designed to mine interior depth. Little is told about the historical and social background in which the four protagonists—referred to as the Duke and Duchess Malaspina, Guest and Servant—are situated.

Narrational minimalism arguably characterizes most of Sciarrino's operas. Classical myths and literature sources ranging from Eschilo and Izumi Shikibu to Shakespeare and Kafka are revived with a psychological twist. Music and drama are reduced to the extent that they bear only minimal actions. This abstraction however opens up possibilities for Sciarrino's theatre to be anchored in the notion of the ecology of listening. While the previous chapter investigates Sciarrino's ecological thinking predominantly from the perspective of the music's formal and aesthetical connection with nature- or real-world-related phenomena, this chapter, alongside the next, attempts to shed light on the ways in which meanings—especially those that have to do with the dramatic characters and their senses of the self—can be specified in the music which has compelling psychological effects on the listeners. My analytical-hermeneutic reading

¹ Sciarrino, "Sciarrino, per un'ecologia del teatro musicale" (Interview with Stefano Nardelli), <https://www.giornaledellamusica.it/articoli/sciarrino-unecologia-del-teatro-musicale>, accessed on 4 October 2021.

of the opera hence provides a personal case showing how a listener can ecologically engage with the work. Attention is particularly given to those examples where sonic events are semanticized through various kinds of formal configurations and hence specified as marked moments or singular “voices” of narrative. This approach is indebted to what has been loosely defined by Christian Utz as the “semanticization of musical structure” (*die Semantisierung musikalischer Strukturen*), a phenomenon that prevails in Sciarrino’s oeuvre.²

This chapter aims to demonstrate the viability and potential richness of Sciarrino’s semanticizing strategies, considering them as contributing to the essence of the ecology of listening. My analytical perspective is in the meantime informed by existing notions related to operatic narrative and metaphysics as well as existing concepts of subjectivity with a psychoanalytical underpinning. My musical analysis broadens the spectrum of formal aspects that have been so far covered in Utz’s study. Musical constructions under investigation range from the motif-modular organization and the instrumental *sillabazione sciolta*, to the use of language and text structure and the work’s multifarious mediation of operatic conventions. The narration of this chapter hence interweaves technical details with brief discussions of theories related to subjectivity and hermeneutic reading of musical meanings arising from the amalgamation of those two sources.

A Holistic Configuration of Decay

Before dealing with the musical substance, it is necessary to give a brief account of this chapter’s general analytical approach which is inspired by Utz’s idea of the semanticization of musical structure. Chapter 2 briefly mentioned Utz’s analysis of the semanticization of modules through their cyclic repetition in *Luci mie traditrici*. Utz’s more recent articles suggest that, in a wide selection of Sciarrino’s works, the unusual temporal functions of some gestures in the context of diachronic formal processes, also attain the effect of

² See Christian Utz, “Ausweglose Enden: Die Schlussbildung in Salvatore Sciarrinos Werken und die Semantisierung musikalischer Strukturen”, in *Salvatore Sciarrino. Musik-Konzepte Sonderband*, ed. Ulrich Tadday, München: edition text + kritik, 2019, 172–94. The idea of the semanticization of musical structure is further developed in a conference paper, in which Utz focuses on the signifying functions of the spatialized temporality and musical discontinuity in various works of Sciarrino. Also see Utz: “Imperceptible Beginnings and Inescapable Endings: Suspended and Enhanced Temporality in the Semanticized Form of Salvatore Sciarrino”, conference paper presented at the panel entitled “Salvatore Sciarrino’s Novel Forms: Organic Ideals and Multilinear Temporalities” at the 43rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory Conference on 8 November 2020, unpublished.

semanticization, and these gestures are often associated with peculiar-seeming modes of ending.³ For attentive listeners, Utz asserts, these endings tend to have specific rhetorical significance, which often retrospectively contributes to the signification of the overall formal process. This leads to the speculation that Sciarrino tends to semanticize formal processes. And Utz finds support for this claim in Sciarrino's own reflection on a movement cited as an example for illustrating the formal principle of accumulation—the movement titled *Langsam (marcia funebre)* from Anton Webern's *Six Pieces for Orchestra*, op. 6. Sciarrino draws attention to a rupture in the middle section of the movement, interpreting it as a “discursive, neutral parenthesis” which resembles “a desolate landscape, whose dull rumblings, idly threatening metallic gleams accumulate more tension than the same accumulative paroxysm of sounds” swelling in a crescendo towards the end of the movement.⁴ The comparison that Sciarrino draws between the two different accumulative configurations and their disparate rhetoric functions—the former preventing whereas the latter leading to a climax—facilitates a semanticized reading of the midway suspension and its formal significance for the movement. Utz offers his own reading of the idiosyncrasy of this middle-point rupture, suggesting that the discursive suspension renders the powerful climatic closure of the movement “unmotivated”, and for this reason, it is to be perceived as bound to be abruptly cut off.⁵ By drawing a causal link between the rupture and the truncated concluding phrase, Utz's reading reinforces the semantics of the rupture. This, claims Utz, contributes to Sciarrino's self-conscious avoidance of a predictable linear process. Utz ventures further to argue that the formations of beginning and ending in Sciarrino's works—in whatever ways they comply with or rebel against the conventional form-functional idioms—are legitimized in different ways through a semanticization of sonic process. His works from the 1980s and 90s, for example, show a tendency to end in a way that is marked by something enigmatic, something symbolizing “a remainder, an unresolved difference, a question mark.”⁶

A strategy like this, crucially, can be tailored to construct meanings of various kinds for individual works. Importantly, Utz notes that Sciarrino often encloses in his works some “cracks” or “grey areas of

³ See Utz 2019, 2020.

⁴ “Al centro del pezzo è situata una parentesi discorsiva, neutra; accediamo a un paesaggio desolato, i cui rimbombi sordi, i bagliori metallici pigramente minacciosi accumulano più tensione che lo stesso parossismo accumulativo dei suoni. Una *suspense* nell'aria troppo rarefatta, nel silenzio di tomba”. Sciarrino 1998, 55.

⁵ See Utz 2020.

⁶ Ibid.

aesthetic difference” which let the world penetrate into the sphere of art and thereby delimit the aesthetic experience.⁷ What Utz means by “the world” includes aspects like cultural memory.⁸ Especially in works with texts, as Utz’s study has shown, text-based or scenic connotations including work title, libretto, dramaturgical mediation and visual realization constitute a reservoir of meaning available to the listeners. But even in instrumental works, Utz suggests, semantic associations often arise as connotations of the musical structure *per se* by means of para- and intertextual relations created between the formal and gestural aspects of different works.⁹ Under this premise, musical events marked out as singular also take on a self-reflexive quality which helps to generate interesting interconnection between forms on local and global scales.¹⁰ This insight, notably, provides this chapter with an important analytical perspective for understanding the signification strategy of the opera.

Compared to the earlier *Lobengrin* (1982–84) and *Perseo e Andromeda* (1990) or the later *Da gelo a gelo* (2006), more elements of the formal setting of a conventional opera are retained in *Luci mie traditrici*: a linear narrative structure, character- and dialogue-based narration, a modified lyrical singing style still based on melody, and not least its overt reference to baroque ethos which seems to have become a *topoi* in Sciarrino’s stage works. However, with the appearance of more conventional elements, the opera is not any more conservative than Sciarrino’s other works in terms of its mediation of the opera tradition including some of its basic metaphysical assumptions. A chamber opera constructed in two acts, *Luci* starts with a quotation, an elegy about lost love composed by the Franco-Flemish composer Claude Le Jeune, now sung by a soprano voice behind the curtain. The two acts are divided into eight scenes, punctuated by two brief instrumental episodes (coined *Buio*)—to be performed in darkness—and three intermezzi which turn out to be variations based on the elegy. Marcelle Pierson and Amy Bauer have examined how the intermezzo triptych undergoes a linear process of transformation by deviating more and more from the original elegy, eventually thrusting the voice into shattered pieces of noise.¹¹ I would however like to add a few remarks

⁷ Utz 2019, 173–4.

⁸ For example, Sciarrino’s inclusion of his experience of listening to radio in his childhood in *Efebo con radio*. See Utz 2020.

⁹ Utz 2019, 194.

¹⁰ See Utz 2019 and 2020. In this respect, Utz’s semanticization of form is highly comparable to Clarke’s and Hatten’s accounts of the perception of a virtual agent in music, which can also carry a self-reflexive character.

¹¹ For an detailed analysis of the transformation of the Jeune elegy from a chanson featuring warm vocal timbre to a fragile, glassy-sounding instrumental web suffused with eerie atmosphere, see Marcelle Pierson, *The Voice under Erasure: Singing, Melody and Expression in Late Modernist Music*, PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2015, 73–6. Also see Amy Bauer, “Contemporary opera and the failure of language”, in Björn Heile and Charles Wilson, *The*

on how such a process, as the most explicit example of the semanticization of form, participates in a holistic configuration of the musical-dramatic development of the opera.

Located at carefully chosen points, the three intermezzi buoy the dramatic action and each marks a new phase of development in the ensuing music and drama. A teleological progression is unmistakable in the arrangement of the three intermezzi: the period style of the elegy is erased bit by bit until there are only barely recognizable tonal residues left, covered in rubbles of noise featuring a wobbly and muffled sonority. Along with these intermezzi, the drama proceeds from morning to the disastrous late night, from the at least seemingly tranquil garden scene to a deadly bedchamber. But these signpost-like passages are only a part of a global-level construction which transforms the opera from an eerily distracted mood to an ominous, intense one. Sciarrino devises a concentrating and silencing process which tails off the density and liveliness of the musical texture as the dramatic conflict escalates towards the end. In its thinning-out process, the numerous instrumental gestures produced in the chamber orchestra become less a representation of the environmental soundscape than an echo chamber of the human psyche.

Intriguingly, the vocal part, sung in the style of *sillabazione scivolata*, also gradually simplifies and quietens itself to the extent that, in some moments, normal speech is made a way of vocal being of the characters. Indeed a continuum created between singing and speech is inherent in Sciarrino's signature vocal writing. Literately translating as sliding syllable articulation, *sillabazione scivolata* reflects Sciarrino's intention to create a middle area between singing and Italian speech, especially its intonation and syllabic patterns.¹² Characteristic of the style is a melodic module based on a long or shortly held note which leads to a rapidly falling figure consisting of narrow intervals in pendular movements; compared with the sustained notes, these fast notes are lighter and have less vibrato. Everyday speech dictates the musical result of *sillabazione scivolata* not only in terms of its pitch, rhythm and dynamic but also on the level of emotion and expressivity.

Routledge Research Companion to Modernism in Music, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2019, 427–53.

¹² Sciarrino's commentary on *12 Madrigali* (2007) has a quasi-manifesto quality in terms of its in-depth reflection on the composer's decades-long search for a new vocal style and his eventual arrival at *sillabazione scivolata*. See Sciarrino, "12 Madrigali, perché oggi". <https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/ita/204.html>, accessed on 4 October 2021. Utz posits that the formation of the style shows traces of an examination of the concept of voice in monody in the madrigal and opera of the High Renaissance. See Utz, „Statische Allegorie und »Sog der Zeit«. Zur strukturalistischen Semantik in Salvatore Sciarrinos Oper *Luci mie traditrici*“, *Musik & Ästhetik*, 2010, 14(53), 45–6.

Noticeably, the three scenes (III, VII & VIII) preceded by an intermezzo receive reduction and homogenization to varying degrees in their music material. In Scene III, the truncated vocal phrases and the retreating of the strings into the articulation of brittle tremolo on harmonics in an extremely high register create a sense of intimacy and interiority, contrasting the abundance of utterance and the great variety in gestural variation in the first two scenes. The very close locations of the last two intermezzi facilitate a steep acceleration in the pace of the conflict, pushing the hysteria towards a climactic moment when the opera ends. A much more radical concentration takes place in Scene VII. Both vocal and instrumental materials are now reduced to one single figure which originally belongs to the voice of the Guest in Scene III, the hermeneutic significance of which will be further expounded later. In the highly emotionally charged dialogue in Scene VIII, a further step of silencing is coupled with the introduction of a whole range of vocalization which proves unprecedented in the opera. Remarkably, singing almost vanishes. The couple whispers or speaks in a sombre voice, occasionally shouting. For a moment, the opera turns into a form of pure drama in which the characters maintain their presence through speaking voice. It is until the second half of the dialogue that singing is resumed, but now the vocal lines shake off much of the stylistic configuration and elaboration required by *sillabazione scivolata* which is best exemplified in the first two scenes and more or less retained until Scene V.

Listeners may feel tempted to hear the substitution of the highly stylized singing for natural speech as a meaningful configuration constituting part of Sciarrino's semantically coded form, just like the elegy that falls into decay. As this chapter will explore later, this dilution process specifies a dramatic development that concludes with the experience of an identity crisis. One source supporting such a reading comes from Jörn Peter Hiekel, who conceptualizes the stylistic and expressive attributes of the opera's vocal persona through the term "seething reductionism" (*brodelnder Reduktionismus*).¹³ According to Hiekel, the reinforced stylization offered by the reductionist formulation of *sillabazione scivolata* creates a rather sophisticated vocal persona. He suggests that the stylization gives the vocal identity of the characters an unsettled and, at the same time, binding, restrained disposition. A sense of ambivalence defines this vocal persona: on the one hand, its affinity with natural speech gives it expressive directness, not to mention those moments where the characters burst into speech when experiencing a surge of excitement or fear. On the other hand, the

¹³ Hiekel 2019, 17–36.

strictly module-based melody gives the impression of an uncaring lightness, creating a distancing effect in the interaction between characters. Adding to the artificiality in the agitation of this vocal persona is the fixed rhythmic frame which ends with cascading short notes. What happens in the final scene is therefore quite exceptional. As Hiekel describes, “all moments filled with commitment, stylization, composure and balance are now completely destroyed”.¹⁴ By overcoming the stylistically constrained expression, the vocal style now turns into an unmediated one—that is, natural speech. And this signals a fundamental shifting of the character’s subjectivity into a drastic existential situation caused by the catastrophic experience of confronting the corpse.

The operatic convention of “mad scene” may serve as a fruitful intertextual reference here for understanding the simplification of melodic material and the occurrence of speech in the final scene. The concept of framing and transgression have been used as an effective musical and dramaturgical device for pinning down the madness of a protagonist.¹⁵ Signs of musical excess or disjunction which transgress the previously constructed frame of normality are to be perceived as symptoms of madness. Contrary to the musical glamour of Lucia’s coloratura, what are marked as a sign of such aberrance are the lucidness and directness of Duke Malaspina’s speech, and the opera’s abrupt ending on this climatic point further reinforces the inescapability of such an overwhelming situation.

In summary, by following and deviating from the style of *sillabazione sciolata*, the voice in *Luci* plays a significant role in offering “snippets” of a musical and an operatic subjectivity. Curiously, not only does the vocal style of *sillabazione sciolata* restrain the expressivity of the voices within a particular range by putting an anonymous “veil” on them. The homogeneity between each character’s vocal expression also gives rise to an enigmatic ambiguity in their articulations of personal identity. One might assume that, if Sciarrino’s reinvention of the love-murder topos makes the story relevant to our times again, then the music of *Luci* must have been injected with a contemporary love code based on renewed visions of subjectivity. The

¹⁴ Ibid. 26.

¹⁵ For a discussion of Lucia’s “Mad Scene” in *Lucia di Lammermoor* from the perspective of framing and transgression, see Mary Ann Smart, *Dalla tomba uscita: Representations of Madness in Nineteenth-century Italian Opera*, PhD dissertation, Cornell University. Also see “Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen”, in Susan McClary, *Feminine Ending*, Minneapolis, 1991. 80–111. For a discussion of Sciarrino’s deconstruction of the norm of framing and transgression in *Lohengrin*, see Camilla Bork, “Hörbare Körper. Rahmung und Transgression in Salvatore Sciarrinos Lohengrin”, in Tadday 2019, 5–16.

following sections interrogate this presumption by examining other aspects of the music which specify important clues to human (inter)subjectivity.

The Promiscuous Musical Self

The previous chapter has briefly addressed Utz's Nattiez-style paradigmatic analysis of the instrumental and vocal modules that make up the music fabric of *Luci*. Sciarrino notes that an orientation towards natural sounds is perceivable in the role of the chamber orchestra of the opera.¹⁶ Guided by a semiotic approach, Utz's analysis distils eleven instrumental modules, each acquiring its distinct identity not only through its morphological features but also through its binding with specific referent(s) in the opera. While the signifier-signified associations that Utz proposes may seem arbitrary in certain cases, the analysis itself does do justice to the idea that the composition invites such a way of listening—that is, listening to sound as a signal of something, despite that the original source of the sound may be forever barred to the listeners. This signification strategy is however not applied in the same manner to the voice. In his paradigmatic analysis of the duet of the Malaspina couple in Scene I, Utz segments the two characters' melodic material into fifty-seven cells. These melodic units fall into three categories. Two types, labelled as B1 and B2, are attributed to the Duke's part (baritone), and one, labelled as S, to the Duchess's part (soprano). The paradigmatic diagram in **Figure 3.1**, cited directly from Utz's article, provides a glimpse into the formation of the vocal parts.¹⁷

¹⁶ Sciarrino, *Luci mie traditrici* (liner notes), DVD booklet, Tarandek, Miedl, Schneider, Bode, Angius, Pade, Matcovich, Lintl, Eggers, and Sciarrino, *Luci mie traditrici* [videorecording], Berlin: EuroArts Music International, 2012.

¹⁷ The diagram originally appears in Example 5a in Utz 2010, 58–9.

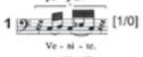
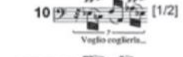
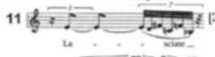
	B ¹	B ²	S	TAKT
		1  [1/0] Ve - ni - te,		1
		2  [1/8] mi a vi- ta,		2
		3  [1/1] ve - ni- te,		3
4  [3/3] mi - - - a vi - ta, - - -		5  [1/1] mi - a vi- ta,		4
		6  [1/7] mi - ra- re		5
		7  [1/1] mi - ra- re		6
8  [3/0] quel - - - la me- dia no- cte	9  [2/1] Quel - la		7	
	10  [1/2] Voglio coglierlo, - - -	11  [3/0] La - - -	8	
13  [2/0] Si - - - ve- di- jo- re- me - - -	14  [3/3] per - - - por- ge- vo- to	12  [3/-1] si - - - a la mia ma- no	9	
		15  [2/0] La - - -	10	
17  [2/0] Si - - - ve- di- jo- re- me - - -	18  [2/0] per - - - por- ge- vo- to	16  [3/-1] si - - - a la mia ma- no	11	
		19  [1/0] Ma - - -		
		20  [2/2] per - - -		
21  [4/0] Ab - - - Ma- re cu- ra - - -	22  [2/-1] ab - Ma- re cu- ra	23  [2/0] e' - - -	12	
	25  [1/5] Abbi- ste cu- ra	24  [3/1] si - - - Ma- re cu- ra	13	
	26  [1/1] Abbi- ste cu- ra		14	
27  [3/3] vi - - - Ma- re cu- ra	28  [1/1] Abbi- ste cu- ra		15-16	
	29  [1/3] Abbi- ste cu- ra			
30  [6/-4] vi - - - Ma- re cu- ra	32  [3/1] Ab - - - Ma- re cu- ra	31  [5/1] Ma - - - Ma- re cu- ra	17-18	

Figure 3.1: Except of Utz's listing of vocal modules, arranged by module type, Scene I, *Luci mie traditrici*, Information in square brackets: duration of the cell/distance to the next cell (in eighths)

Sax. c. I

La Mal.

Il Mal.

Vni

Vln II

Vla

Vc.

Cb.

Cell 57

mi sen-to ve-nir me-no

Che poco cuore è il vostro. A - iuto, è svenuto il mio consorte

pp > pp > pp > pp > pp > pp >

pp

pppp

ppppp

Example 3.1: La Malaspina's cell 57 in bar 34, *Luci mie traditrici*, Scene I, bars 33–4.

Similar to how Sciarrino designs his woodwind figures in *Lobengrin*, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, the organic relationship between the three module types is evident, especially because of the rhythmic grid of the concluding demisemiquaver septuplet that is common in all three types, all moving in a pendular or fan-like cascading pattern. Despite the kinship between all three types, it may appear at first sight that the inexhaustible variations of the melodic cells of the baritone and the soprano are more or less based exclusively on module types B and S respectively. And this might lead to the speculation that the Duke and the Duchess would stick to their own modules throughout the opera as a claim to their own vocal identities—just like how the instrumental modules are treated. It turns out that this is not the case. From cell 30 (bar 17) onwards, a fusion of all three types starts to emerge—not only between the Duke's type B1 and B2, but also between type B and S. For example, La Malaspina's cell 57 in bar 34 (**Example 3.1**), the figure that brings Scene I to an end, is assimilated to B1 and B2 (compare the two components in cell 57 with baritone's cell 21 and 1 or 34 respectively). Intriguingly, this melding takes place in a moment when a small conflict is fermenting (La Malaspina gets pricked by a rose thorn and bleeds, disregarding her husband's warning). In a nutshell, the vocal melody modelled on a direct linkage and juxtaposition of the

three close-related proto-modules, especially when the uniqueness of the prototypes no longer holds towards the second half of the scene, gives the impression that the boundary that defines the Duke's and the Duchess's sense of self is in jeopardy.

A thorough investigation of the voice writing throughout the opera shows that the melodic melding is more than just an occasional phenomenon. Such formal construction potentially affords the symbolic reading that the characters perhaps can hold only very fragile, if any, subjective substance. In Scene II when the couple's duet is joined by the lovestruck and eavesdropping servant, the promiscuous use of the same figures in the three parts is reinforced through their mutual imitation. Il Malaspina starts the scene with his swooning figure (bars 1–2, "I breathe again", see **Example 3.2**) which is passed on from Scene I when he faints over La Malaspina's bleeding finger. La Malaspina mocks her husband's cowardliness with a phrase that showcases a collection of core melodic cells to be recycled in this scene (bars 2–4, **Example 3.2**). Right from bar 4, Il Malaspina initiates his flexible imitation of La Malaspina's gestures. At times it becomes difficult to tell who is imitating whom because the melodic cells are never repeated in the same way nor do the pairs in imitation follow a rigid order. That single cells freely recur alone further complicates the relationship between the vocal parts.

Module S1

La Malaspina

Un Servo della casa

Il Malaspina

(non visto)

"Swooning" Figure

U - - - na stiliuccia di sangue u - ni

A - res - pi - rar - ri - tor - no - a - res - pi - rar - ri - tor - no -

Module B1 (Utz) Module X Module Y

La Mal.

Un Servo

Il Mal.

tol - - - to v'haqua - si l'a - nima tol - - - to v'ha qua - si l'a - ni - ma

Mi - - -

La Mal.

Un Servo

Il Mal.

o - pa - ra - di - so. v'è differenza tra Mar - tee A - mo - re

Chi

Example 3.2: *Luci mie traditrici*, Scene II, bars 1–6.

The manipulation in the relationship between vocal parts becomes a mirror of how the dynamics between the characters change over the course of the opera. The secret participation of the servant starting from bar 22 reveals a love triangle relationship. According to stage instruction, the voice of the furtive servant needs to be spatially distanced in the background. It turns out that the servant, indeed, does not have his “authentic” voice, as all of his melodic material is shared by the Malaspina couple. In most cases, the servant tails after La Malaspina, replicating what she just sings in his own way in the same register. This results in a few moments in which the three characters’ voices are entangled in the same module over a few bars (for example, in bars 23–4; 27–8; 29–31). As **Example 3.3** shows, the three are unified in a module that has been categorized by Utz as the Duke’s original module B1 in Scene I. The module is reintroduced

in Scene II by the Duchess in bar 3 (as shown in **Example 3.2**). In a strange musical similitude, the three articulate their different interiorities. (The Duchess: “sono ardita”/The servant: “Io disperato”/The Duke: “Io timoroso”).

Example 3.3: The unification of the Malaspina couple and the servant in bars 23–4, *Luci mie traditrici*, Scene II.

Il M: My paradise, what difference between Mars and Amor
La M. : He who loves, is daring
Il M. : He who loves, is timorous
A Servant: (hidden) Alas, he who loves, suffers

La M. : I am daring
Il M. : And I timorous
A Servant: (hidden) I despairing

La M. : Daring, for I love you
Il M. : Timorous, for a adore you
Serv. : (hidden) Distraight, for I do not dare

La M. : I will always love you
Il M. : I too in all eternity
Serv. : (hidden) And I to the end of my life

La M. : O, joys of love
Il M. : O, delights of love
Serv. : (hidden) O, misery of one who loves

La M. : You are mine
Il M. : I am yours
Serv. : (hidden) I am unto death

...

Figure 3.2: Conversation from *Luci mie traditrici*, Scene II.

When reworking the opera in 2016, Sciarrino made the remark that the drama is not just about the wreckage of a relationship, instead, it portrays “a mysterious trap of love with no way out, lived by four people, each one under a different perspective.”¹⁸ Here in Scene II, the three characters’ convergence in voice makes this triangle relationship appear ambivalent and even dubious. While the tripartite conversation (see **Figure 3.2**) gives a rather clear-cut portrayal of each character’s state of mind, the music seems to cunningly cancel such claims of individuality. The image of an audacious Duchess (already pronounced in Scene I) is reassured not only in the text but also in the fact that she is actively leading in the imitation and alone exhibits the whole range of melodic material at a very early stage (as **Example 3.3** indicates). The Duke is contrarily passively suffering. He is the more sensitive one, who in Scene I perceives the crimson and ivory of the roses on behalf of his wife and even faints for her. The wicked servant, fashioned after the role of Harlequin in the traditional *commedia dell’arte*, suffers the most due to his low social status. Unlike the couple who at least seems to express a pseudo-individuality at the beginning of the opera, the servant never bothers to exhibit a single trace of uniqueness in his musical identity—his utterance never includes any new module. His last line in Scene II (“Go, oh Duchess, I accompany you with my heart”, bars 66–72) exemplifies how his voice is nothing other than a compilation of fragments of his master and mistress’ utterances (**Example 3.4**). Two of the Duchess’s module S from Scene I (Utz’s cell 11 and 24 in bar 7 and 13) is also included in his melody, which presumably symbolizes the servant’s covert (imagined) unification with his mistress.

¹⁸ „Da bei ist dieses Drama nicht nur das Scheitern einer Beziehung, vielmehr: es ist eine geheimnisvolle Liebes-Falle ohne Auswege, erlebt von vier Personen, jede aus einer anderen Perspektiven (Ehemann, Ehefrau, Gast, Diener).“ Salvatore Sciarrino, »Distendi la fronte« für 4 Stimmen und Instrumente, in Programme of Lamento – Musictheatre nach Claudio Monteverdis *L’Orfeo* und Salvatore Sciarrinos *Luci mie traditrici* mit dem *Epilog Distendi la fronte* (premiere), prduciton of Gare du Nord, Basel, Switzerland, 19-24 October 2017.

La Mal. o mio be - ne Vi... seguo

Un Servo Va... che t'accom - pagno

La Mal. Module S Module X Module B1 (Utz)

Un Servo o Du - chessa, con il cuore Va

Il Mal.

La Mal. B1 X S Module Y

Un Servo che t'accom - pagno, Du - chessa, con il cuo - re

Il Mal.

La Mal. B1 X Y

Un Servo Va che t'accompagno con il cuore

Il Mal.

Example 3.4: The last line of the servant in bars 66–72, Scene II, *Luci mie traditrici*

The assimilation of musical identities is not fully completed until Scene III, when the Guest eventually absorbs the Duke’s Module B1 in bar 41, closely followed by the Duchess who accurately repeats the figure in the next bar. Later in Scene V (in bar 7, for instance) and VII, the Duke in turn appropriates a module which has originally been marked as a signature figure of the Guest in Scene III (Module C1 in **Example 3.5**). Eventually, in Scene VII, the penultimate scene after the Guest is murdered, this module desperately haunts the Duke and also infiltrates the voice of the Duchess. A peculiar vision of romantic relationship is revealed here through the musical profile of the four characters which displays a tendency to constantly merge with each other. In this what has been described by Sciarrino as a “mysterious trap of love with no

way out”, the original passion-driven love murder is put under a musical coat which defies strong expression of interiority. Just like the semiotically constructed musical personas whose innately unbounded subjectivity experiences a dissolution over the course of the opera, the protagonists get lost in a situation where their passion is directed to nowhere and cannot receive a true echo. The way in which Sciarrino treats the “swooning” figure (see bars 1-2 in **Example 3.2**) seems to confirm this paradoxical love code. Composed of widely undulating intervals in dotted rhythm, the figure comes back at the beginning of Scene II as the Duke recovers from the fainting fit. With a slight modification, the figure later disguises as the core motif of the central lines in the love duets in Scene II, III and VI, sung between the Duke and the Duchess as well as the Duchess and the Guest. This swaying figure is thus semiotically double-coded, pointing to a fading out of consciousness and an oath of love at the same time—a correlation that seems to put into question the authenticity of the claim of love.

The image shows a musical score for two characters: La Malaspina and L'Ospite. The score is in 3/4 time. Two specific musical motifs are highlighted with brackets and labels. 'Module S1' is indicated by a green bracket above the La Malaspina staff, encompassing a melodic phrase with lyrics 'O - hi - mé'. 'Module C1' is indicated by a blue bracket below the L'Ospite staff, encompassing a similar melodic phrase with lyrics 'O - Dio'. Both motifs consist of a series of notes with slurs and accents, and are marked with dynamic symbols like *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*.

Example 3.5: The Guest’s and La Malaspina’s signature modules in Scene III, bars 1–2, *Luci mie traditrici*

Mediating Noumena—Phenomena

It becomes clear that through different configurations of micro-gestures and their contrasting operations in signification in the instrumental and the vocal parts of the opera, Sciarrino manages to demarcate the music into different symbolic spheres. As this section of the chapter seeks to argue, this demarcation opens up possibilities for staging idiosyncratic “voice” which possesses a powerful narrative function, and this is especially true when the boundaries between those spheres are deliberately blurred. This chapter argues

that this boundary-crossing phenomenon manifests in the opera's engagement with one of the fundamental premises of operatic metaphysics.

In *Unsung Voices*, Carolyn Abbate develops the notion that operatic metaphysics is premised on hearing the difference between “noumenal music” and “phenomenal music”.¹⁹ Particularly evident in early Romantic opera, this distinction constitutes a basic perceptual code in hearing and viewing opera. Abbate's adaption of the noumenon/phenomenon binary is indebted to Kant. Noumena in the Kantian sense are objects in the world as they exist outside subjective understanding. Phenomena enable us to approach noumena, but only partially and imperfectly, through an *a priori* joining of sensible intuition and understanding of the appearances of the objects. In short, phenomena are the way that things *appear*, whereas noumena are the way things *are*. Adapting the two terms to opera, Abbate uses the phenomenal to mean music that declares itself openly *as* sound or music that is audible to its singers and auditors on stage. Phenomenal music often takes the form of a self-conscious performance such as Orpheus's lute playing, Lakmé's “Bell Song”, and the song contest in Wagner's *Meistersinger* (1867). Because clearly perceptible to stage characters, it is thus seen as *worldly* in the context of the dualistic division of body and mind, subject and divinity that had since the post-Cartesian period dominated operatic metaphysics. The noumenal music, on the contrary, is not produced by or within the stage-world. It is at once an equivalence of stage-world *speech* and a kind of unmarked *discourse* that “emanates from other loci as secret commentaries for our ears alone.”²⁰ Noumenal music witnesses characters' “deafness.”²¹ It is “silent”, lying beyond the characters' sensibilities, thus often seen as *otherworldly*.

A precursor of Abbate's thesis is Edward T. Cone's concepts of “realistic song” (or “naturalistic song”) and “operatic song” (or “expressive song”).²² Realistic song is basically synonymous with Abbate's phenomenal song. With operatic song, Cone notes that it is to be understood by both audience and stage characters as speaking, and alternatively, as thinking or feeling out loud.²³ To complement Cone's

¹⁹ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voice: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991.

²⁰ Ibid. 119.

²¹ Ibid. 119.

²² See Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, Berkeley: 1974 and Edward T. Cone, “The World of Opera and Its Inhabitants”, in *Music: A View from Deft: Selected Essays*, ed. Robert P. Morgan, University of Chicago Press, 1989, 125–38.

²³ See Cone 1989. Also see Ellen Rosand, “Operatic Ambiguities and the Power of Music”, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 1992 (4/1), 76.

observation, Ellen Rosand suggests yet a third category of expression in opera: “realistic speech”, which refers to speech or recitative taken as real in the fictional world.²⁴ The critical split that characterizes operatic metaphysics has also been noticed by Peter Kivy whose philosophical consideration of opera is based on the idea that opera’s fundamental way of being is representation.²⁵ The so-called “operatic song” hence means for Kivy opera’s medium of representation, part of the content being represented being the speech of everyday life in the fictional world. Instead of hearing the speech, the audience is hearing *in* the medium.²⁶ Kivy asserts that whether the medium is opaque or transparent to perception is contingent on the style in which the music is composed, but the existence of such medium *per se* is ever present in our experience of opera. Crucially, this gap between the medium itself and the content it is supposed to represent gives rise to what Kivy calls the concert attitude versus the representational attitude of operatic experience. By concentrating on the material and technical base of sound production, the former, argues Kivy, removes opera in the fullest possible way from its metaphysical centre which is speech represented in music.²⁷ He further adds, in some cases, the concert attitude and the extreme opacity of music as a representational medium mutually reinforce each other, making opera’s ontological state inherently divided.²⁸

Significantly, instead of attempting to heal the rift, both Cone and Abbate highly value the situation where the music of realistic song frequently burst their boundaries and transmigrates by “exploiting” musical themes that are previously heard as operatic song. Cone’s real purpose of setting up the binary, as Rosand emphasizes, is to affirm the importance of the overlapping between operatic noumenal and phenomenal, and to discover what he calls “the fundamental operatic ambiguity” in the blurring of the boundary between the two.²⁹ An adequate comprehension of opera, Cone claims, “rests on appreciation of this ambiguity.”³⁰ For Cone, this ambiguity provides the opera audience with a rich source of meanings. Following Cone, Abbate’s case studies offer an insightful reflection on this fabulous contradiction central to operatic metaphysics—epitomized in those extraordinary moments in which characters appear to pass

²⁴ Rosand 1992, 75.

²⁵ Peter Kivy, “Speech, Song, and the Transparency of Medium: A Note on Operatic Metaphysics”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 1994(52/1), 63–8.

²⁶ Kivy 1994, 67–8.

²⁷ Ibid. 67.

²⁸ Ellen Rosand holds a similar opinion about the obliteration of the distinction between operatic and realistic songs, inspired by Kivy’s argument. See Rosand 1992, 76.

²⁹ Rosand 1992, 76. Also see Cone, 1989, 132.

³⁰ Cone 1989, 129.

across the boundary and to “hear beyond realistic song to that other music surrounding him.”³¹ The hypothesis that phenomenal and noumenal music point to a physical and a metaphysical world finds an echo in the work of Gary Tomlinson. In *Metaphysical Song*, Tomlinson posits that “opera...has been a chief staging ground in elite Western culture for a belief in the existence of two worlds, one accessible to the senses, the other not. Operatic singing has supplied...a potent experience of a metaphysics as well as of a physics, of an immaterial as well as of a material world.”³² Through analysis of numerous cases, Tomlinson demonstrates the ways in which both voice and orchestra can become powerful avenues to the supersensible realm. Tomlinson draws attention to the curious phenomenon that, under certain circumstances, noumenal music can make a character attain “a special self-consciousness of the musical nature of his or her experience.”³³ In other words, the character becomes paradoxically aware in these moments of the means of production of the musical substance that he or she “resides” in. This observation has a direct connection with the kind of ambiguity that Abbate has tried to investigate with the novel idea of an emergent, uncanny “unsung voice”.

The phenomena-noumena framework established by the theories of Cone, Abbate, Kivy and Tomlinson is useful as a point of reference here for comprehending how Sciarrino channels the different symbolic modalities of the music for signification. **Figure 3.3** attempts to conceptualize how the phenomenal and noumenal realms are demarcated in the voice and the orchestra of *Luci* respectively. As noted previously, the singing straddles the border between a style adapted from High Renaissance and Italian speech as in real conversations with regard to its intonation, rhythm and even dynamics between the interlocutors. Had he considered it, Kivy might have thought the singing sits on the transparent side of the spectrum of “operatic song” as a representational medium. Noticeably, “realistic song” is totally absent from the opera, which might be said to help enhance the music’s role as a medium by shielding the noumena-phenomena division. However, the appearance of “realistic speech” in the last scene and its alternation with “operatic song” brings the opposed modalities of the operatic voice back to the forefront. One might conclude that, while the noumena-phenomena tension seems to be released to a certain extent

³¹ Abbate 1991, 119.

³² Tomlinson 1999, 4.

³³ Ibid. 89.

in the opera's voice part, the occasional "trespass" effect still has a significant role to play in expanding the music's amplitude of expressiveness.

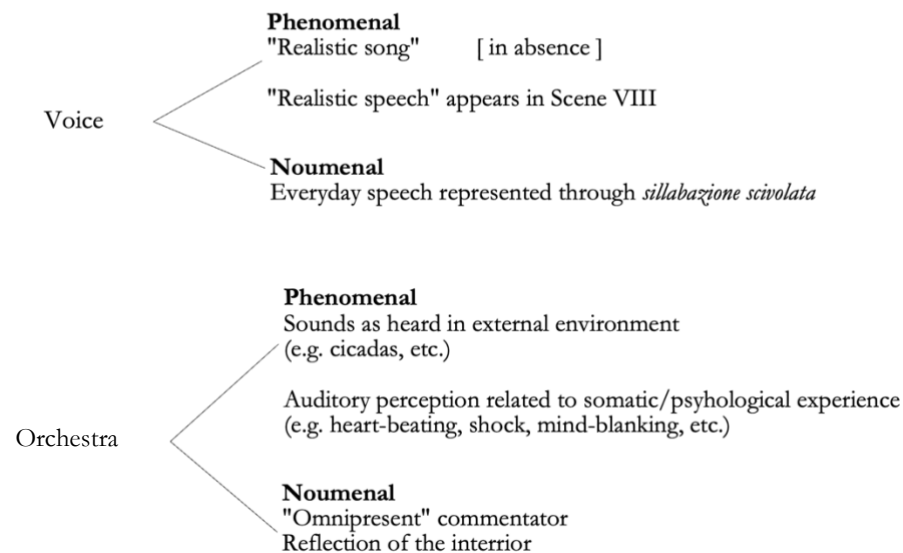


Figure 3.3: Demarcations of the phenomenal/noumenal realms
in voice and orchestra in *Luci mie traditrici*

It might be further argued that the orchestra shows a strong tendency to shift towards the realm of the phenomenal, thereby obliterating the boundary between noumena and phenomena. Utz's specification of sources of sound related to the environment such as "cicadas", "bird sounds", "wind noise" and "footstep" is evidence of the instrumental music's phenomenal nature. Even when the chamber orchestra takes on the role of an "outsider" or "commentator" to foreshadow the ominous and leave numerous insinuations, the strong corporeal association often renders the supposedly omniscient noumenal voice relatable to an externalization of the characters' psyches and bodies. Typical examples of this include the "heart-beatings" on bass drum, the metal-sheet vibrations as a reflection of the heavy silence and the gruesome atmosphere, and bursts of multi-phonics clusters on saxophone as an alarming "warning".³⁴ Significantly, the weakening of the voice of the noumenal and the general shift towards the perception of the phenomenal world contributes greatly to a kind of cinematic verisimilitude. When the audience is

³⁴ Similar examples can be found in Utz's distillation of the eleven instrumental modules. For instance, Utz perceives the tongue-striking figure on wind instruments as referring either to insect sounds or to "threat" depending on different contexts, and the synchronized pulses led by bass drum is perceived as signal of "betrayal". See Utz 2010.

cognizant of what the characters are hearing and feeling, the boundary between the audience and the on-stage characters is blurred.³⁵ Such, one might say, is an ideal reception of an opera composed in the light of an ecological aesthetic.

Scene V deserves special attention in this regard. The chamber orchestra is subdued in this indoor scene, reduced to a tenuous veil comprised only of bass drum beats, a thin carpet of continuous white noise on strings and hushed capriccioso flute figures (Sciarrino requires the latter two figures to be played as if they are heard coming “distantly from outside”). The quietness creates a disjunction with the music surrounding it. At the beginning of the scene, the eavesdropping servant rushes to reveal the Duchess’ betrayal to his master. But the action is only vaguely alluded to in the servant’s wheezing, a gesture notated in a specific pattern (bars 1–2; 6–7). This gesture is then reproduced on trombone with breathy blows (bars 79–80; 82–3), which clearly registers the music in the realm of the phenomenal. The bass drum beats and the sustained white noise, too, can be perceived as a record of the mental and physical physiognomy of the Duke who seems to be going through a mind-blanking due to the shock. The intimacy of the phenomenal music encourages the listener to engage with the drama from the first-person point of view and to identify with the Duke. This first-person point of view in fact characterizes the whole Act II, in which the growling metal sheet persists in the background, serving as a foil to a “close-up” on even the tiniest (re)actions in the characters. The music’s shaping of a particular listening perspective can be seen as an example of what Clarke has discussed under the notion of subject-position.³⁶ A concept widely used in film studies, subject-position emerges from specific camerawork which draws a separation between the narrative content and the manner in which viewers are allowed or invited to know about that narrative. Within music, the experience of subject-position as a component of music’s meaning has a direct connection with the ecological theory of perception. According to Clarke, subject-position describes the way in which characteristics of musical material solicit a certain kind of attitude or response in a listener towards what he or she is hearing—being involved, repulsive to or showing indifference, *et cetera*). In Scene V, such separation can be specified in the unusually muted orchestra and the instrumental gestures that mirror the

³⁵ On this, Abbate writes: “Like phenomenal song, such moments are the means by which opera flaunts itself, representing within itself those who watch and hear it, who write it, and who perform it, even as it blurs the distinction between the three functions”. Abbate 1991, 119.

³⁶ See Clarke 2005, 91–125.

Duke's mental state, as indicated. The becoming-phenomenal as a fundamental quality of the instrumental music in *Luci* is most evident in Scene V.

While the orchestra in general dwells in the realm of phenomena, there are extraordinary moments in which the noumenal raises its voice. The projection of vocal motives onto instruments does not occur in the opera until the *Preludio* that divides Act I and II (just before Scene VI). In this interlude, figures reminiscent of the vocal gestures sung by the Guest and the Duchess in Scene III multiply like spectres on viola and cello, suffusing the music with a muted voice of human presence—perhaps releasing an omen of the foreseeable murder of the Guest. The replication of vocal melody on the strings should not be taken for granted as a standard compositional technique commonly seen in traditional opera music. Arguably, the presence of instrumental *sillabazione sciolata* in *Preludio* generates one of the rare moments in *Luci* in which the *noumenal* voice of the music is accentuated. The fact that the vocal figure, which is counted as the noumenal song, is transformed as instrumental *sillabazione sciolata* onto the orchestra seems to reaffirm its noumenal nature. Since the orchestra appears to nestle predominantly in the phenomenal realm in the previous scenes, its absorption of vocal cells here is surprising. The strangeness lies in that it gives birth to an exceptional voice at once injected with a trace of human presence and dehumanized as something beyond the sensible realm.

After *Preludio*, the instrumental *sillabazione sciolata* in Scene VII further contributes to the uncanny effect of this noumenal voice. The Guest's signature gesture, labelled as Module C1 in **Example 3.5**, not only propagates on flute and strings, but also permeates the couple's voices, predominately the Duke's. Mysteriously, the voices of the Guest, the couple and the orchestral music unify around this tiny cell. As previously noted, characters in *Luci* tend to musically merge with each other, appropriating conversationalists' gestures when they are involved in a conversation or are eavesdropping on one another. This is particularly evident in Scenes II, III and VI. The sharing of "operatic song"—which is not uncommon in the traditional repertoire—causes the ambivalence that not only can the characters actually hear each other musically, they are also self-conscious of the musical nature and even the means of production of their expression. This illusion is apparently in contradiction to the presumption that the characters are deaf to each other's singing as the noumenal song, as Abbate has suggested. But the more bizarre thing about the Duke's appropriation of the Guest's melodic cell here is that, in Scene VII, he is *not*

confronting the Guest in person. In fact, throughout the opera, the two never have a conversation, although the audience may know only retrospectively that by this point the Duke must have already met the Guest in order to kill him. The duplication of Module C1 in the voice of the Duke and the orchestra hence becomes a signal of the music's declaration of accessing the operatic-noumenal, which carries out a significant dramatic function in hinting at the potential disastrous encounter between the two characters.

Arguably, the fact that the Duke himself becomes a component of this voice of narrative also points to a critical transformation in his perception of the sense of self. According to Abbate, music of the noumenal, like those of most supernatural figures in opera, is usually perceptible only to individuals coded as hysterical or artistic. Those moments when characters hear the noumenal music are marked as loci of transfiguration at which the mundane and transcendental cross.³⁷ Tomlinson has noted that a congeries of technical means has been repeatedly adopted in *primo ottocento* melodrama like *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) and *La sonnambula* (1831) to signify alerted psychic states, particularly the maddened mind, but also other less pathological symptoms like sleepwalking, dreaming, and entranced vision.³⁸ Tomlinson observes that musical devices performing such a standardized semanticizing function include the fragmentary reminiscence of previous motivic gestures in orchestral parts, the "singing" of instruments to the singer, the quintessential appearance of the ethereal flute, and lengthy, elaborate recitative *scena* with greater formal freedom and lyricism.

Sciarrino is arguably well aware of this tradition. One example that attests to this is the "mad scene" (Scene I of Act Three) in his *Macbeth* (2002). A response to Verdi's take on the same playscript, the disproportionately lengthy scene stages Lady Macbeth's loss of conscious control of her mind through various means reminiscent of conventions: the freer and more lyrical singing set against a meditative yet intense atmosphere, the celestial, glassy sounding strings, the verse whose original structure is disrupted by repetitive lines, the haunted and haunting voices of solo string that "sings" to the heroin by duplicating her gestures. In the case of *Luci*, the Duke's musical "trespass" is justified by the narrative that he starts to turn dangerous after the end of Scene V and is right in the mental aftermath of a murder in Scene VII. The Guest's motif, which now sounds more enigmatic and eerie, looms in the orchestra, haunts and "sings" to

³⁷ See Abbate 1991, 120.

³⁸ See Tomlinson, 1999, 92–6.

the Malaspina couple, divulging secrets to the characters as well as the audience. Marked moments like this are created through an economy of technical effort—by adjusting elements in the previously-established symbolic structure of the music.

Scholars including Vinay, Giacco and Feneyrou have commented that the orchestra in Sciarrino's operas constantly projects the senses and psyches of the characters.³⁹ This remark holds much truth on the basis of an intuitive perception of the sound *per se*. Tito Ceccherini, in particular, emphasizes the psychological effect of the orchestra, suggesting that it is as if we can hear, through the ulterior echo of the orchestra, the sounds resonating in a character's world, including the reverberating of lines that other characters utter and reactions other give.⁴⁰ To comprehend Sciarrino's opera from the perspective of this psychological orientation brings to the surface the noumena-phenomena topic. Listening through this psychological lens, we may find that many extraordinarily ambiguous "voices" in the opera no longer appear that bizarre. However, as a consequence, we may at the same time impoverish the interpretation of the much-layered construction of the symbolic meaning of the music and lose sight of the opera's potential contribution to the age-old noumena-phenomena discourse.

Subject and the Encroaching of Otherness

I have argued in the previous section that the permeation of the Guest's Module C1 in the flute and strings, already foreshadowed in *Preludio*, and in the Duke's voice—which may be seen as the emergence of a noumenal "voice", hints at a significant change in the representation of the Duke's sense of selfhood. This section further pursues this idea, interrogating what this change in the self is about. By further examining the affordances of instrumental replications of *sillabazione scivolata* in terms of their musical-dramatic meaning and by drawing on some particular visual elements from a recent production of the opera as "extra-

³⁹ See Grazia Giacco, '...un cielo notturno dalle bianche veloci nuvolette...: Salvatore Sciarrino et ses lieux d'écoute', in Feneyrou 2013, 22; Laurent Feneyrou, 'Salvatore Sciarrino en ses bestiaires', in Feneyrou 2013, 51; Gianfranco Vinay, '...un nuage de vent et de pierre... : Écoté écologique et imaginaire musical dans les oeuvres dramatiques de Salvatore Sciarrino', in Feneyrou 2013, 86.

⁴⁰ See Tito Ceccherini, "Sounds and Backgrounds for a Real, Psychological Setting", Programme notes for *Luci mie traditrici*, 2019 production by Fondazione teatro la fenice at Teatro Malibran, Venice, 69–71.

musical” evidence, this section considers the projection of the Duke’s interiority towards the end of the opera and how this is semanticized in the music and its staged performance.

In Scene VII, the solo flute, being an elusive yet captivating virtual agent in listening, plays a paramount role in portraying this change in mental state. The melodic cell (Module C1), delivered in a breathy, hollow timbre, now appears as an alien material—a sonic object almost animated with a degree of consciousness. It anticipates and echoes the Duke’s voice, externalizing the physiognomy of his mind. The justification for this stems from multiple factors. Arguably, seen as a direct extension of the human respiratory and vocal organ, the flute has a strikingly privileged place in Sciarrino’s composition. Sciarrino’s predilection for flute manifests not only in the abundance of an oeuvre dedicated to the instrument, but also in the fact that solo flute pieces like those collected in *L’Opera per flauto* Vol. 1 (1990) and 2 (2001) are the forefront where Sciarrino explores a range of themes central to his ecological aesthetic, such as silence, corporeality, the idea of organic music, the psychoacoustic study of sound, and the consciousness of time and spatiality.⁴¹

Beyond the flute, the presence of instrumental *sillabazione scivolata* itself also enjoys a special role in Sciarrino’s works. The composer often links it to a “subjective” wish to sing and express. Instrumental *sillabazione scivolata* has left imprints in Sciarrino’s works since the 1990s. As Sciarrino himself has pointed out, his decade-long exploration of the new vocal style feeds back into his instrumental music language.⁴² An investigation of some works of the recent decades leads to the conclusion that vocal gesture like Module S1 and C1 (as shown in **Example. 3.5**)—the two core figures in *Luci*—has proved to be the meta-figure that can be recognized in a series of works composed around the time when the opera was composed. In *Quartetto n. 7* for string quartet (1999), for instance, harmony is almost absent in order for the instruments to vocalize a naked tune. The four parts play figures featuring downward sliding in what Sciarrino calls “an absolute monody”.⁴³ Sometimes they are even in sync like one single voice. An intriguing example of cross-reference between voice and instrument can be heard in the fourth movement of *Cantare con silenzio* (1999)

⁴¹ Pieces for solo flute dating back to the 1970s were collected in an anthology comprised of three volumes, *L’Opera per flauto I, II and III*, published by Ricordi in 1995, 2017 and 2021.

⁴² In an 2019 interview, Sciarrino states: “*Luci mie traditrici* foresaw the possibility of instruments imitating voices. In addition to the sounds, which are instrumental ‘by nature’, the instruments let slip echoes and replies, interweaving with the voices. Each voice may discover its alter ego in the orchestra as well, and in turn, the orchestra can understand, reawaken and reply”. Sciarrino, “A Tragedy of Anticipation”, in programme of *Luci mie traditrici*, 2019 production by Fondazione teatro la fenice at Teatro Malibran, Venice, 58.

⁴³ Sciarrino, “Cross of Square? A Few Questions about the String Quartet” (liner notes), in CD *Quartetto Prometeo*, Salvatore Sciarrino: *Quartetto N. 7, Quartetto N. 8, Sei quartetti brevi*, Vienna: Kairos, 2012, 17.

composed for 6 voices, flute, percussion and electronic resonances. The soprano sings the *meta*-figure in an extremely high register, the dry, brittle timbre is reminiscent of the effect of *sillabazione scivolata* played on violins with limited vibrato. In the introductory note on *Cantare con silenzio*, Sciarrino claims that “in fact, my music increasingly wants to become the voice”.⁴⁴ Intertextual correspondence between these works and *Luci* arises exactly from these downward-sliding cells which sound inherently vocal. As a last example, in the first *Adagio* of *4 Adagi* (2007), a recorder concerto, this meta-figure, in slight variations, proliferates intensively on the solo recorder as well as the horns and trombones (**Example 3.6**), becoming the core motif of the movement. In these works, Sciarrino conceives voice and instrument as two connected and fluid poles by making the instruments sing with a particular kind of expressiveness, an expressiveness that derives from the Italian language, which sometimes means the opposite of pursuing instrumental virtuosity. In concerto works like *4 Adagi*, such a feature of the instruments becomes ever more prominent: “[n]ow this style of singing is gradually extended to all sorts of instruments, so that they can respond or join in singing. It is better understood how the concertante role can take on the appearance of *an operatic presence*”.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Sciarrino, Commentary on *Cantare con silenzio*, translation of Pierson. See Pierson 2015, 80.

⁴⁵ “Ora tale stile di canto gradatamente viene esteso a ogni sorta di strumenti, affinché possano risponderci o unirsi nel canto. Si comprende meglio come il ruolo concertante possa prendere l’aspetto di una presenza lirica”. Sciarrino, Commentary on *4 Adagi* (emphasis added), <https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/ita/203.html>, accessed on 4 October 2021.

Example 3.6: N. 1 Adagio non troppo, *4 Adagi per flauto dolce e orchestra*, bars 74–6.

Admittedly, this interest in the capability of instruments to sing suggests a kinship with conventional vocalism—the phenomenon in opera or Lied of instruments expressing an impulse to sing, declaim, or take a breath in ways reminiscent of the human voice.⁴⁶ Sciarrino is self-aware enough to avoid regressing to a banal kind of expressivity when reengaging with this tradition, asserting that “it is necessary to free the voice from inert imitation by instruments, from clumsy banality”.⁴⁷ Marcelle Pierson has pointed out that, for Sciarrino, instrumental melody in general can only emerge through “an act of restriction and silencing”.⁴⁸ Sciarrino’s vocalism, after all, results from his search for a radical kind of expressivity. One extraordinary example showcasing such expressivity is the *Fifth Sonata* for solo piano (1994), in which Sciarrino contrives

⁴⁶ Joseph Kerman has discussed the phenomenon of vocalism. See the Chapter “Voice” in Joseph Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979.

⁴⁷ Sciarrino, Note on Quartetto N. 7 (liner notes), in CD Quartetto Prometeo, *Salvatore Sciarrino: Quartetto N. 7, Quartetto N. 8, Sei quartetti brevi*, Vienna: Kairos, 2012, 18.

⁴⁸ Marcelle Pierson, *The Voice Under Erasure: Singing, Melody and Expression in Late Modernist Music*, Doctoral Thesis, University of Chicago, 2015, 58.

a whimsical image of a “talking” piano. The principal material includes a simple proto-piano-gesture that is structured from a mechanical point of view: a superimposition of black keys with white keys. The phrase-generating repetition of this gesture is designed to sound vocal, recitative and expressive in a special way: Sciarrino even specifies the exact words, noted above the piano part in the score, that the imaginary “voice” ought to be uttering.⁴⁹ In the later piano concerto *Recitativo Oscuro* (1999), this proto-gesture is recycled. A similar “talking” piano is set against an orchestral background composed of “bursts of strongly naturalistic sound”, thereby a human-environment or subject-object relation is shaped between the two parts.⁵⁰ In both works, Sciarrino succeeds in discovering new expressivity by letting the piano sound like imaginary humanly utterances without recourse to musical expressions, either vocal or instrumental, that have been conventionally perceived as adding to expressivity (for example, the use of *legato* or *rubato*). Pierson argues that “it is precisely the piano’s existence in a space between human and machine, its loss of ‘normality,’ that makes it expressive”.⁵¹ Characterized by this novel expressivity, the instrumental gestures that obstinately want to speak have become one of Sciarrino’s trademarks.

Similarly, in Scene VII of *Luci*, the breathy flute figure obtains an expressive voice only after deliberate repression of expressions that are counted as standard for either flute or voice. More importantly, all the examples of instrumental *sillabazione sciolata* discussed above and the striking similitude between them offer listeners an important intertextual source to perceive a sign of agential will in this singing flute figure. According to Hatten’s theory, to leave traces of narrative agency and to project subjectivity, a virtual agency needs to engage with other agential sources in the music and undergo development and transformation. Initially one of the vocal modules, this flute figure gets more differentiated against its musical context and becomes more assertive towards the end of the opera since its first presence in *Preludio*. Its actorial continuity and its singular agential identity are manifested in a sense of obsessiveness in its repetition. Such

⁴⁹ The text is from the first vocal entrance in the last movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony: “O Freunde, nicht diese Töne”. On the beginning of his Fifth Sonata, Sciarrino writes that, “The piano here wants to speak; it sobs and maybe laughs, we do not exactly know... It grumbles, speaks a little like a machine, a little less than human expression. What may seem strange is that this makes the piano more expressive”. Sciarrino, Liner notes, in Hodges, Pizzo, and Wosner, *Piano Sonatas II-V; 4 Notturmi (Live at Ars Musica 2000)*, Cypres CYP5603.2, Enki Productions, 2001, 17–8.

⁵⁰ On the piece, Sciarrino writes: “[t]he soloist piano stands out as if it were a talking character, and hints at dialogues that were once inconceivable between the keyboard and bursts of strongly naturalistic sound”. Commentary on *Recitativo oscuro*, <https://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/data/composition/ita/171.html>, accessed on 4 October 2021.

⁵¹ Pierson 2015, 65.

obsessiveness is comparable to what Hatten describes as a state of entrapment, which implies a subjectivity unable to escape or rise above the constraints of the virtual environment it is in.⁵² Given the dramatic context, the state of entrapment lends a rather apt lens for the interpretation of the figure here. In this scene, the dynamic between the couple is at a tipping point. Their seemingly ordinary conversation about the Duchess's choice of embroidery patterns—laden with metaphors—barely disassembles their deeply troubled interiors. The wheezing flute, remarkably, plays out the role of voicing the operatic-noûmenal by reflecting such an unsettling state.

Significantly, the flute figure, as an emergent agential source in the music, also acquires an *otherness* because of its declaration of its own subject. The uncanny overlapping of the voices of the Duke and this mysterious flute figure hence potentially affords the interpretation that, in these particular moments, the music portrays the Duke as someone whose sense of self encounters an unwelcome otherness—a threat to his subjectivity as a bounded, autonomous whole. The exclusion of otherness from the self has been widely accepted as a basic requirement for shaping a secure subjectivity. Julia Kristeva, for example, following the Lacanian-Freudian model of subjectivity, has argued that, in our fantasy of an autonomous selfhood, we as subjects tend to draw an imaginary line around the perimeters of our bodies.⁵³ This imaginary line is the border of subjectivity where “the object no longer has, or does not yet have a correlative function bonding the subject”, and we use it to declare ownership of the body, maintaining its cleanness, separateness and uniqueness, demarcating it as a social unit.⁵⁴ This separation from otherness, however, is far from stable. There are many factors that constantly challenge this border and jeopardize the integrity and autonomy of the subject's sense of selfhood. In Kristeva's theory, this includes encounters with things that tend to be perceived as filth and defilement, such as blood, vomit, and shit (we will see how this is related to the opera later through the analysis of a production), as well as repressed thoughts and unconsciouness in the Freudian sense—resurfacing in dreams, slips of the tongue, and neurotic symptoms.⁵⁵ The result of this is a notion of subjectivity that does not take the form of a fixed structure but is an ongoing process that is

⁵² For discussion of musical examples that manifest states of entrapment, see Hatten 2019, 169.

⁵³ Julia Kristeva: *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 76.

⁵⁵ See Kristeva 1982, 6–7. For discussion of the idea that the repression can never be complete, see Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, 79–83.

essentially unstable and discontinuous in the face of “the ambivalent, uncertain, unresolved and dangerous.”⁵⁶

In Scene VII, the Duke’s coupling with the noumenal voice of the flute figure suggests a crisis of selfhood that is caused by the pollution of otherness, which is, specifically, associated with bloodshed and violence, as well as the collapse of the Duke’s sense of truth and faith (as a result of being betrayed and humiliated). One may argue that this blurring between self and alterity resembles a model of subjectivity that has been described by Kristeva as abjection: a liminal or in-between situation that starts in the incomplete process of pushing away at those things that trespass boundaries, for the purpose of fortifying one’s selfhood.⁵⁷ The salient presence of the flute figure, as a shadow of the Duke’s voice, becomes something that can neither be consciously absorbed into nor cast away from the Duke’s interior world. What finally pushes the Duke into a state teetering between the subject and the object, human and inhuman, however, is the supposed “honour killing”. The Duke’s killing is malicious and grotesque, proof of which is that, before stabbing the Duchess, the Duke leads her to uncover the body of the Guest in her bed. The minimalism of Sciarrino’s dramaturgy leaves the Duke’s first killing of the Guest out of the libretto. From a dramatic perspective, it is therefore shocking, in the last scene of the opera, to look retrospectively at how drastic a transformation it is that the Duke becomes a murderer, flaunting his transgressive act, from a man with a “little heart”, as the Duchess describes him, that faints from the blood oozing from a wound on his wife’s finger, as we saw in Scene I. This emptiness in the drama, however, allows the music to create a carefully demarcated symbolic space, making this transformation easily comprehensible by projecting a process of degradation—specifically, a transformation in which alterity increasingly encroaches on the Duke’s sense of self.

Intriguingly, this chapter’s observation that the opera music’s semanticization of a process of decay or human degradation is mirrored in various elements in the dramaturgy of a 2016 production of the

⁵⁶ See Mansfield 2000, 38–50, 81, 84–5.

⁵⁷ For more on the topic of the experience of the abject and its association with the breaking down of the subject-object boundaries, see Kristeva, 1982, 4–7. Also see Dino Franco Felluga, *Critical Theory: The Key Concepts*, London: Routledge, 2015, 3–5, and Robbie Duschinsky, “Abjection and Self-Identity: Towards a Revised Account of Purity and Impurity”, *The Sociological Review*, 2013; 61(4), 709–27.

opera by the stage director Jürgen Flimm at the Berlin Staatsoper.⁷⁰ Following the fashion of *Regietheater*, Flimm's production adopts a highly symbolic dramaturgy to support the overall minimalist style of the libretto and, more importantly, to visualize numerous dramatic actions that are off-scene in the libretto. The production features a domestic setting that is ambiguous in terms of era, although singers dress in quasi-nineteenth-century attire, with the Servant modelled after the clownish, devious Harlequin. Significantly, many examples can be drawn from the production to show how the directorial mediation echoes this chapter's argument about the music's role in projecting a subject that faces the abject. A striking example comes from Scene V where Flimm adds in a peculiar "surgery scene", an entirely new creation annexed to the original libretto. While telling the Duke that he has been cuckolded, the servant, dressed in a medical apron, performs a gruesome mini-surgery on the ailing master (see images in **Figure 3.4**). This scene arguably makes the Servant a pivotal agent responsible for the Duke's cruelty here, and this is not a groundless mediation: the Duke says to the Servant that "I was not disgraced when you were silent". Soon blood stains the white sheet that covers the Duke. It is the director's decision to stage this presumed medical treatment that is worth attention here. Visualized on stage is the Duke's second confrontation with his corporeal being—through another incision and a splash of blood, the symbolic function of which strengthens here after they appear in the first scene. For Kristeva, blood indicates impurity, inheriting "the propensity for murder of which man must cleanse himself".⁷¹ In myth and literature, blood has been "a fascinating semantic crossroads" and "the propitious place for abjection where death and femininity, murder and procreation, cessation of life and vitality all come together."⁷² Blood, argues Kristeva, represents "the objective frailty of symbolic order".⁷³ The add-on surgery scene in Flimm's production thus may be seen as a catalyst to separate the Duke from his human, virtuous state, enabling him, through exposure to the boundary state, to transgress and sin.

⁷⁰ The production is co-produced by the Staatsoper unter den Linden and the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, in cooperation with the Istituto Italiano di Cultura Berlino. The production, staged by the director Jürgen Flimm, was premiered on 10 July 2016, and was a part of the Infektion! Festival für neues Musiktheater of the year.

⁷¹ Kristeva 1982, 96.

⁷² Ibid. 96.

⁷³ Ibid. 70.



Figure 3.4: Upper: the servant tells the Duke about the betrayal, Scene VII;
Bottom: The Duke turns into a sinister “bird-man”, Scene VII (left) and VIII (right),
2016 Berlin production by Staatsoper im Schiller Theater

The surgery eventually turns out to be a ritualistic preparation for the Duke’s becoming animal—another important creation in Flimm’s production. In the subsequent scene, the Duke literally transforms into what appears to be “a vampire-like or exterminator angel-like figure”—a bird-man with a pair of giant black wings, holding a sword in hand (see **Figure 3.4**)⁷⁴ The territories of animals, according to Kristeva, are a threatening area that has an ancient link to sex and murder, and are to be distanced from one’s self.⁷⁵ Thus, it appears that Flimm’s visualization of the hybrid form of human and animal is in line with this chapter’s observation about a subjectivity that is invaded by otherness—an image that has deep roots in the music.

⁷⁴ Luiz Gazzola, “*Luci mie traditrici* at Berlin Staatsoper”, 2016, <https://operalively.com/forums/showthread.php/2757-Luci-mie-traditrice-at-Berlin-Staatsoper>, accessed on 15 August 2022.

⁷⁵ See Kristeva 1982, 12–3.

Barred Subject and an Illusory Vision of Love

So far, this chapter has discussed on some particular aspects of the musical subjectivity of the opera through two different analytical-hermeneutical lenses: a blurred identity that characterizes the key vocal modules, and the music's navigation through the different strata of the semantic space. The last section of this chapter tries to offer a final observation with regard to the conundrum caused by an irreconcilable relationship between the self and the other that prevails in modern opera, as outlined early in the introductory chapter. What does *Luci mie traditrici* have to offer in response to this? I try to answer this question through an analysis of the eccentric use of language and musical repetition in the love duets in Scene III, II and VI. My interpretation contains two parts: the first is devoted to an analysis of Sciarrino's construction of duets in terms of their intertextual connections with "Pur ti miro", an epitome of the late Baroque love duet from Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642/43); the second focuses on Lacan's proposition of a contemporary vision of love, in relation to his ideas about the subject.

Singing in Sciarrino's signature vocal style, the four characters in *Luci* are obsessed with aphoristic speech and language play. Their dialogues are conducted in the quaint style of stichomythia—quick, biting ripostes that have been traditionally used in disputes in ancient drama. The lines are grouped into couplets (or occasionally triplets) that feature symmetry and antithesis. In terms of language style, as Gazzola describes, "things are implied more than said".⁷⁷ The conversation is rife with metaphors in pairs such as "Mars" and "Amor", "sun" and "darkness", "paradise" and "inferno". The one-line speeches are given to alternating characters who often negate and contradict (particularly in Scenes I, II, VI, VII). Frequently they talk eagerly over each other, but, as Pierson observes, seem neither to listen nor try to instigate change in one another.⁷⁸ To hark back to Utz's paradigmatic analysis of the vocal melodies of Scene I, as shown in **Figure 3.1**, different temporal durations between the last module in each line sung by the Duke and the first module of the Duchess's response are counted out in the form of the numbers of quavers that these gaps contain. Utz's result includes seventeen negative numbers out of the total twenty-five times of the alternation between the two characters' parts. This means that most of the time, a sentence cannot be

⁷⁷ Gazzola 2016.

⁷⁸ Pierson 2015, 76.

finished before the co-conversationalist's reply or sometimes retort.⁷⁹ The fact that more negative numbers appear towards the second half of the scene means that the conversation is less clearly conveyed and turns more musically oriented. Marion Saxer observes that the utterances in the opera “fly back and forth like balls without ever coming to rest” (there are 55 times of alternation in Scene II); single “inputs” in the conversation, adds Saxer, are on average five seconds long.⁸⁰ The communication, in short, is curiously passionate and indifferent at the same time.⁸¹ Instead of conveying actions, most of the text is devoted to feelings or raw emotions, often ardent avowals of love (more on this shortly). Also contributing to this ambiguity is the fact that characters are reticent throughout the opera about their identities, their past and their relationship with others.

One might argue that what underlies the eccentric use of language and the problematized verbal communication here is modern opera composers' uneasiness with representation as one fundamental premise of operatic metaphysics. Amy Bauer, for example, argues that the difficult relationship between music and language in contemporary opera makes the very idea of representation as opera's oldest premise come under pressure.⁸² Bauer contends that the role of representational language as a stable site of meaning, truth and subjectivity, or even the presence of a verbal text itself, is questioned and, sometimes, “performatively subsumed” by a musical discourse that “speaks” in the place of a verbal text.⁸³ Is there such a musical discourse operating in *Luci*, given the idiosyncrasy in its use of language, and how is this relevant to the opera's depiction of intersubjective relationships?

Even in the quiet yet passion-stricken Scene III where the Duchess and the Guest first meet, they seem to be talking at cross purposes, and their amorous bonding through the exchange of vows is, arguably, presented as questionable. To test this observation in the musical and verbal texts, let us draw a comparison between this love duet and “Pur ti miro”, the famous duet of Poppea and Nerone in the closing scene of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. I consider this archetypical Baroque love duet as a potential historical reference for

⁷⁹ Among the seventeen negative numbers there are eleven -1, one -2, three -3 and two -4.

⁸⁰ Marion Saxer, “Der verbotene Blick Anmerkungen zur Scena III in Salvatore Sciarrinos *Luci mie traditrici*”, in Hiekel 2019, 43.

⁸¹ This recalls Hiekel's comment on the picture of a paradoxically agitated and indifferent subject emerging from the vocal style of the opera, as discussed earlier.

⁸² Bauer in Heile and Wilson 2018, 427–53.

⁸³ Ibid, 430. Bauer's remark is particularly relevant to my investigation of the emergence of a subjective voice in the absence of a verbal text in Chapter 6.

Sciarrino's duet in terms of the similarities they share in text content, musical form and subject matter, especially the gaze topoi. With its simple yet exceptionally sensual musical affect, the concluding duet celebrates Nerone and Poppea's exultation in love through which an array of vices—ambition, manipulation and greed—have, by now, claimed triumph. Rachel Lewis observes that, in this duet, “‘love’ retains a specific musical language with which to convey its affective potential, consisting of musical devices that eventually came to comprise the Baroque catalogue of affects”.⁸⁴ Ellen Rosand argues that the conventionality of Baroque love duets has a dominant impact on the duet's dramatic placement—usually a closure to a scene—as well as its text and musical setting.⁸⁵ Rosand outlines some important characters that make “Pur ti miro” a quintessential example of such duet:

Texts were usually quite short—sometimes only a line or two—and used essentially the same images...Duets usually began with brief motivic exchanges or longer imitative passages that culminated in parallel movement in thirds and sixths enriched by suspensions and resolving into unisons. Interdependence of lines, perfect consonance, and ultimate union: these were all qualities that represented quite literally the relationship between reconciled lovers.⁸⁶

As **Example 3.7** shows, the duet starts like an antiphon with intimate interaction between the two parts: Nerone tails after and imitates Poppea in an almost canon-like way. This relationship is soon reversed in bar 21 when Poppaea copies Nerone's ornamental melody. The fact that they share a strikingly similar tessitura and that their melodic lines often meld together has been perceived by scholars as remarkably sensual.⁸⁷ Like in “Pur ti miro”, the duet in Scene III binds two voices that sing in very close ranges (the Guest, potentially mirroring the Baroque tradition, has a contralto voice). It has been shown in **Example 3.5** that the core melodic modules of the Duchess and the Guest are built on an interrelated intervallic relationship (Module S1: minor second followed by major third; Module C1: minor third followed by major

⁸⁴ Rachel A. Lewis, “Love as Persuasion in Monteverdi's ‘*L'incoronazione Di Poppea*’: New Thoughts on the Authorship Question”, *Music & Letters* 86, no. 1 (2005), 35.

⁸⁵ See Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-century Venice: The Creation of a Genre*, Berkeley ; Oxford: University of California Press, 1991, 337–8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 337–8.

⁸⁷ See Wendy Heller, *Music in the Baroque* (Western Music in Context), New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013, 102–3. Ellen Rosand has also noted on how Monteverdi adopts the conventional form of love duet to establish erotic effect for particular scenes and to underline the opera's libertine message. See Rosand 1991, 335.

second). Both figures are then recycled three more times (bars 14, 27, 58), structurally bracketing out three small cycles before the music enters its climactic middle section from bar 72.

Poppea 16
Pur ti mi-ro, pur ti mi-ro.

Nerone 16
Pur ti go-do, pur ti

Pop. 19
Pur ti strin-go, pur ti strin-go, pur t'an-

Ner. 19
go-do, pur t'an-no do, pur ti strin-

Pop. 23
no do, più non pe-no, non pe-no, più non

Ner. 23
go pur ti string-go, più non mo-ro,

Example 3.7: “Pur ti miro”, Monteverdi, *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, Act 3 Scene VIII, bars 17–25.

The texts of many Baroque closing duets, according to Rosand, show a striking similarity due to the dependence of librettists on formulas, so much so that they bear very limited dramatic importance.⁸⁸ Sciarrino’s duet demonstrates a different case. Instead of simply centering on the happiness of amorous bonding, the conversation between the Duchess and the Guest encompasses a shift in different discourses, which naturally creates a sectional form in the music. **Figure 3.5** illustrates this form with the shifts in topic outlined (“love and death”—“seeing”—“speaking”—“listening”) and significant musical events of each section marked out.

⁸⁸ Rosand 1991, 337.

Section	A				B	C	D
Bars	1-13	14-26	27-57	58-71	72-105	106-139	140-161
Discourse	“Love” & “Death”				“Seeing”	“Speaking”	“Listening”
Significant musical events	Modules S1 & C1 recurring in bars 2, 14, 27, 58						
	Imitating/exchanging of modules between the two parts						
		Copying the Duke’s module			Apotheosis: culminating towards perfect unison	Waning phase: melody turns more heterogeneous; less often overlapping	Echoing between one- or two-word retorts
	Quiet ambient sounds in the strings Echoes of voice on cello	More active in the woodwinds and brass				Echoes of voice on flute	Alerting bass drum strikes

Figure 3.5: Sectional form of the love duet in Scene III, *Luci mie traditrici*

Throughout sections A and B the two characters continually take over melodic cells from each other (including modules originally assigned to the Duke from previous scenes), sometimes interlacing their lines, other times delivering the same cell successively. In conventional love duets, and particularly those from Baroque time, two parts sharing a line in unison is perceived as an explicit expression of sexual liaison. In the middle section of “Pur ti miro”, the two voices eventually share the line “yes, my love, yes, my heart, my life, yes” in a parallel third after alternating phrases for the whole *da capo* section. This Baroque love code serves as a historical foil to an understanding of the romantic relationship as portrayed in Sciarrino’s duet, when the “love at first sight” reaches its apotheosis in section B: the voices culminate in unison while the discourse dwells on “seeing” or “gaze”.

The metaphor of vision plays a central role in this section. The dialogue persistently revolves around feelings linked to “seeing”, “eyes”, “sight” and “gaze”, which, without coincidence, conjures up another rhetorical convention related to love duets—that, by looking at each other in the eyes, one recognizes and bonds with his or her lover. According to Marion Saxer, the gaze or the “forbidden gaze”, such as the one

in *L'Orfeo*, has been treated as a core trope in the discourse of love in opera history.⁸⁹ The gaze embraces the notion of seeing as an awareness of the desire for love, a recognition of self in one another, and ultimately, a cypher for a perfect union. To complement Saxer's argument, one apt example that can be drawn here is a short duet from *Eliogabalo* by the Italian composer Giovanni Antonio Boretti (1640-1672) (Figure 3.6a). In this duet, it is through the wounded "true eyes" that the librettist Aurelio Aureli recalls the bittersweet or even fatal nature of love; the metaphor of "wound" itself hints at love as an inescapable fate.

Al ferir	In wounding
Occhi veraci	True eyes
Sia campo il letto e dolci strali i baci.	Let bed the field, and kisses the sweet arrows be.

Figure 3.6a: Text of a love duet from *Eliogabalo*, Giovanni Antonio Boretti⁹⁰

Guest: What do I see?
La M.: What do I feel?
Guest: What beauty
La M.: What luminescence
...
Guest: O, would I were born without eyes
La M.: O, would I had died as an infant in my swaddling clothes
Guest: O, what power is taking hold of me
La M.: O, what force possesses me
...
Guest: I shall suffer
La M.: I shall die
Guest: O, love
La M.: O, honour
Guest: Mine deceiving eyes
La M.: Mine treacherous sight
Guest: Take your eyes from this countenance
La M.: Meet not this gaze

Figure 3.6b: Text, Scene III, *Luci mie traditrici*

⁸⁹ Saxer in Hiekel 2019, 37–52.

⁹⁰ The text, including the English translation, is cited from Rosand 1991, 337.

The “eyes” in *Luci*, however, turn out to be no longer trusted. There are signs of a struggle to see on both ends: upon meeting the dazzling beauty in each other’s eyes, the overwhelmingness of such gaze engulfs them, so much so that they deem their visions as merely a gratifying yet treacherous delusion and decide to withdraw (see text in **Figure 3.6b**). The two repeat at length the lines from which the title of the opera is derived: “Mine deceiving eyes”/“Mine treacherous sight” (*Luci mie traditrici/Occhi miei traditori*). It is in these lines that the two voices finally merge in perfect unison (bars 87–101), which is exceptional in the whole opera. The melodic material becomes more heterogeneous and the two voices start to diverge from bar 105 onwards. The two softly uttered “m” sounds heard in bar 123 in section C hint at an erotic satisfaction. Charged by a passion that is unprecedented in the opera, the unity reached in section B brings the music to an affective apotheosis. An ambivalence, however, goes with it: the rhetorical function of vision as a symbol of affirmations of love receives a twist here. While the lovers’ withdrawal and deliberate concealment might be driven by a sense of guilt, it is through questioning the reliability of vision that they denounce the supreme delight of the fulfilment of love. This, strikingly, renders the declaration of love troublingly paradoxical. Drawing on Niklas Luhmann’s theory of historical love codes, Saxer points out that, during the late Renaissance, the forbidden gaze tended to be formulated in a paradoxical fashion so that the delight of perfect union can be heightened. This paradoxical behavioural imposition, according to Luhmann, contains elements of active personal struggle and is thus linked to a preliminary form of individualization or subjectification.⁹¹ The duet in Scene III, argues Saxer, negates all this: the vision of the lovers—fragile and delusional—becomes instead an articulation of fundamental existential uncertainty.⁹² Based on the deep ambiguity built into the scene, Saxer further suggests that, the entire dialogue may exist merely in the imagination of the Duchess.⁹³ As I will demonstrate momentarily, Lacan’s model of the subject, expressed through the metaphor of mirror, offers a way to approach this paradoxical “seeing but (can)not seeing”.

⁹¹ See Saxer in Hiekel 2019, 44–9.

⁹² Ibid. 49.

⁹³ Ibid. 49.

Poppea and Nerone	
I gaze at you	Guest: Be silent, tongue
I tighten closer to you	La Ma.: Shut thee, o mouth
I delight in you	Guest: Presumptuous tongue
I am bound to you	La Ma.: Bold mouth
I no longer suffer	Guest: I say no more, o lady mine
I no longer die	La Ma.: I sink into silence
Oh my life, Oh my treasure.	...
I am yours	Guest: Listen
You are mine	La Ma.: Listen to me
My hope, say it, say,	Guest: What?
The idol of mine, Yes, my love,	La Ma.: What?
You are mine, tell me so	Guest: Nothing.
The idol of mine,	La Ma.: Nothing at all.
Yes, my love,	Guest: Alas
Yes, my heart, my life, yes.	La Ma.: O God!
	Guest: What confusion
	La Ma.: What shock

Figure 3.7: Comparison of texts of “Pur ti miro” (Neron, Popea), Act 3 of *L’incoronazione di Poppea* and the duet (“O Dio”) in Scene III, *Luci mie traditrici*

The doubt about visual perception is inevitably concomitant with a lack of faith in verbal communication. In sections C and D, the futility that the lovers experience in language and their temporary withdrawal from speech acquire a clearer sense of meta-referentiality with regard to the opera’s articulation of a musical and a human subjectivity that is constantly held in a liminal state. The dialogue now shifts to a self-conscious reflection on the “speechlessness” of speaking. Caught in a dilemma, they are urged to verbalize and implored to listen. But instead of resorting to language, both opt for silence. In the last few couplets in the concluding dialogue of the scene, words can no longer go through but only reflect (see **Figure 3.7**). The Guest and the Duchess are simply mirroring each other. They are as much talking at cross purposes as much as fusing into one single subject—as if talking to one’s reflection in a mirror. The stilted duplication of words is mapped in music as short, successive echoing gestures in the two vocal parts, which helps to reinforce the impression of reflection or mirroring on a purely auditory level. The distrust of language, arguably, is the most important means through which Sciarrino injects contemporary topicality into the Baroque love code. It acquires a meta-referential quality given its role in mediating the conventional

love-duet conversation. More importantly, as I will demonstrate further, the failure of language presents a troubling intersubjective relationship caught in the void or lack within what Lacan calls the symbolic order.

Unsurprisingly, the relationship between the Malaspina couple is doomed by the same problem. This, I suggest, is most compellingly manifested through musical repetitions of a deliberately disproportionate amount. Since *Lobengrin*, it has become a norm in Sciarrino's opera repertoire that the recitative-like utterance of the characters often involves extensive repetitions. Those repeated lines themselves generate sometimes formally "redundant" sectional structures in the music, and they can be customized for variable kinds of expressiveness. One radical example of this is from *Macbeth*. The disproportionately long scene (Scene I Act 3)—more than 22 minutes—is devoted to the pathologically repetitive verbal expression of Lady Macbeth, who has been traumatized by Duncan's death. Lengthy repetitions are added to clusters of lines, creating disturbing temporal suspensions in the music—a reflection of the nightmare that haunted Lady Macbeth.

In *Luci*, repetition as a rhetorical device is stretched to its limit in the two love duets of the Malaspina couple in Scene II and VI, both featuring lengthy, advent avowals of love. Such an affirmative tone—which is not to be questioned in most conventional love duets—appears only to be groundless in the light of the work's contemporary core. This aspect again puts Sciarrino in dialogue with conventional rhetorical devices. Writing on seventeenth-century Venetian love duets, Rosand posits that, "love duets often involved considerable expansion of text through repetition and melismatic extension. The repetition was usually threefold, one statement for each voice followed by one for both together. In addition to repetition of individual words and lines in successive musical phrases, opening lines were sometimes repeated at the end to create a da capo form."⁹⁴ In which way, then, does Sciarrino engage with and mediate the conventional rhetorical function of repetition?

In Scene II, Sciarrino structures a cyclic form in which a subsection of the conversation is repeated three times (with the servant secretly joining in in the last cycle). In this looped passage, starting from the Duchess's "I will always love you" (*V'amerò sempre*) and ending with the Duke's "I am yours" (*Vostro sono*), the couple recalls the highly formalized speech of conventional duets with sometimes almost banal language (**Figure 3.2** offers a glimpse of this). Within the third time of repetition, the couple slips into yet another

⁹⁴ Rosand 1991, 338.

vortex of obsessive reiteration, forming a smaller loop within the bigger one: from the passage between bars 33 and 50, the dialogue gets stuck on the couplet which would later turn out to be the central love motto of the duet: “O, joys of love” (*O contenti amorosi*)/“O, delights of love” (*O delizie d’Amore*), already uttered three times before. By bar 50, the couplet would have been heard eight times already, creating a startling stagnation in the music and the drama. The musical standstill gives rise to a framing effect, which is most perceivable from the fourth repetition of the couplets in bar 33 where both characters recap a melodic cell that is reminiscent of the pendular “swooning” figure—arguably the most easily-recognizable figure in the opera, originally linked to the Duke’s fainting fit in Scene I. It is important to note that, while the love-motto couplet receives extensive repetitions, their musical settings incorporate changing permutations of preordained cells, which are, conceivably, never quite the same. **Example 3.8** illustrate one of these repetitive episodes in which a variant of the “swooning” figure combines with other melodic cells including the Duke’s Module B1 from Scene I and a module to be recycled by the Guest later in Scene III (Module S2).

Thanks to the repetition, the excessiveness in a way of declaring love like this affords important meanings related to operatic subjectivity. In their indulgence in the love oath, the couple seems to have relinquished any possible individualization, with true voices being overcome by the words that are repeated to the extent that they appear solely as empty, artificial symbols. A similar vow-exchange episode based on extensive repetition returns in Scene VI. In this longest scene of the opera, a dark, ominous atmosphere is brewing in the orchestra. The tense conversation between the couple is now laden with innuendo.⁹⁵ The fact that, in this sinister conversation, the couple are again caught in a swirl of praise for love only proves their addiction to oaths. The passage to be repeated (bars 74–110) is now, astonishingly, marked out with traditional repeat signs. The speech centres around another love motto: “What great magician beauty is”/“What grand magic love is”, which is set to a slightly modified version of the melodic module of the love motto from Scene II. The two duets in Scenes II and VI thus form an arch on both musical and dramatic levels. Repetition as a large-scale rhetorical device—stretching over three scenes—makes the

⁹⁵ The text tells the audience that, by this time, the Duchess thinks the Duke has already known about the affair between she and the Guest.

factitiousness in their way of communication especially clear. Instead of sticking to true feelings, the couple is, unconsciously, are obsessed with an idealized view of love and its beauty.

The image displays a musical score for three vocal parts: La Mal., Un Servo, and Il Mal. The score is divided into two systems. The first system features a 'Variant of "Swooning" Figure' (indicated by a grey bracket) and 'Module B1 (Utz)' (indicated by a purple bracket). The second system features 'Module B1 (Utz)' (purple bracket), 'Module S2' (green bracket), and another 'Module B1 (Utz)' (purple bracket). The lyrics are: La Mal. 'contenti', 'O con - ten - ti', 'con - ten - ti a - mo - ro - si'; Un Servo (silent); Il Mal. 'de - li - zi - e d'Amore'. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (f, p, mp, ppf), articulation (>), and phrasing slurs.

Example 3.8: Central love motto in Scene II, bars 37–40, *Luci mie traditrici*

The examples of the failure of vision and the failure of language discussed above provide clues to an operatic subjectivity that in many ways approximates the Lacanian “barred” subject (represented by Lacan’s symbol \$). It is worth briefly summarizing Lacan’s theory of the subject at this point so that the quilting point between Lacanian thinking and Sciarrino’s approach to the topic appears self-evident. Lacan has developed an extremely sophisticated theory of the ego and the subject as two different concepts, but for this chapter’s purposes, I will stress two related notions here: one is about the symbolic function of mirror, the other being the formation of the ego in the network of signifiers. For Lacan, the fixed, unified, idealized image of the self in the mirror that we start to get obsessed with since we enter the mirror-stage as a child

provides us with a false equation between this image and “I”, the ego self. The ego is for this reason considered a product of construction based on the imaginary.⁹⁶ But apart from seeing an integrated image of the self in a literal mirror, the mirroring, according to Lacan, happens also through other human beings—the gaze imagined by “me” emanating in all directions from other people—and, more importantly, through our relationship with the Symbolic (or “the big Other”).⁹⁷ He puts forward the idea that individual human beings are thrown at birth into the collective symbolic order, that is, an elaborate set of intersubjective and trans-subjective contexts that are predominantly ruled by language. In other words, language preexists individuals and is the very material of singular subjectivity. Following Lacan, Francis Jacques posits that subjectivity should be seen in terms of the speaking person. This individual speaks, producing discourses, creating meanings of all sorts, but cannot be “in charge of and completely in control of his or her words and meanings”.⁹⁸ Lacan calls this inevitable subjection to socio-symbolic networks “symbolic castration”, that is, a form of alienation caused by language.

This alienation in language, crucially, gives rise to a critical split that defines Lacan’s “barred” or “divided” subject. Bruce Fink argues that the Lacanian subject is nothing but the split between two kinds of otherness: ego and the unconscious.⁹⁹ Ego’s otherness lies in it being “an ineluctably false sense of self” based on the mirroring moment, whereas the unconscious is formed by the discourse of the Big Other, that is, the automatic functioning of language which is itself structured around an inherent lack.¹⁰⁰ The Lacanian subject, asserts Fink, is “devoid of being”.¹⁰¹ Slavoj Žižek has made a similar remark: “The *subject* is therefore to be strictly opposed to the effect of *subjectivation*: what the subjectivation masks is not a pre- or trans-subjective process of writing but a lack in the [symbolic] structure, a lack which is the subject”.¹⁰²

The difficulty in the use of speech in Sciarrino’s operas makes Pierson perceive a “dark void” at the core of Sciarrino’s characters.¹⁰³ As my analysis has shown, the numbing effect of the textual and musical

⁹⁶ Put simply, the imaginary denotes which that is based on or governed by image. The imaginary is central to Lacan’s account of the formation of selfhood. For more on this concept, see Mansfield 2000, 42–3.

⁹⁷ For Lacan’s utilization of the idea of mirror beyond a visible physical phenomenon, see section “2.2 The Mirror Stage, the Ego, and the Subject” in Adrian Johnson, “Jacques Lacan”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/lacan/>, accessed on 25 August 2022.

⁹⁸ Francis Jacques, as cited in Corse 2000, 22.

⁹⁹ See Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton, NJ, 2017, 41–6.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 45.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 173.

¹⁰² Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London; New York: Verso, 2008, 197. Word in brackets inserted.

¹⁰³ Pierson 2015, 77.

repetition in the duets of the Malaspinas in Scenes II and IV truly turns their exchange of vows into dispassionate precipitates of “dead” meaning. The more they repeat, the more language reveals itself as the unassimilable Other and its lack, leaving the audience to question whether the characters hold any subjective substance. Trent Leipert argues that, with a demonstrable familiarity with Lacan, Sciarrino’s approach to composing the subject is characterized by a strong sense of concealment and ambiguity. Based on his study of mirroring or reflection as one of the key sonic imageries and symbols in Sciarrino’s oeuvre, Leipert observes that “any notion of individual self-reflection or self-presentation is consistently undermined by Sciarrino”.¹⁰⁴

As demonstrated earlier, the promiscuous blending of melodic modules exemplifies how the musical identities of the characters are constantly deflected from the original position that they ostensibly hold at the beginning. Based on this, this chapter shares a similar view with Leipert’s observation with regard to a model of musical subjectivity underlying Sciarrino’s music in general. In the operatic context of *Luci*, however, it is possible to make some further extensions. I argue that the literal imitation of a mirroring relation in the text that concludes Scene III and the striking ambivalence in the characters’ feelings—a mixture of rapture and distress—come very close to some aspects of the Lacanian view of desire and the notions of the subject associated with it. To understand Lacan’s view of desire, and, by extension, his view of love, it is necessary to go back the metaphor of the mirror. As indicated, Lacan posits that gazing at the mirror provides us with an essentially narcissistic ideal image of the ego or what he calls a misrecognition (*méconnaissance*). Such gaze, however, at the same time elicits something deeply disturbing: gazing causes an exceeding objectification of the things gazed upon, and these things, in turn, rip the meaning structures of the symbolic order, leading to exposure of the lack inside the Symbolic and, even worse, an unwanted encounter with the materiality of the Real. Like consciousness which is, according to Lacan, “irremediably limited”, the reflection of the self in the mirror offers no more than an “illusion of *seeing itself seeing itself*”.¹⁰⁵

That gazing functions as a reminder of the lack inside a subject and its symbolic network potentially offers a fruitful way of interpreting the (rather negative) meaning of the “eyes” or “gaze” in *Luci*. Denouncing the nature of the gaze as “deceiving” and “treacherous”, the Duchess and the Guest urge each

¹⁰⁴ Leipert 2014, 121.

¹⁰⁵ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI), New York: W.W. Norton, 1998, 82.

other to withdraw from the illusory beauty and delight that such a gaze offers. The mirroring structure of the Duchess and the Guest's closing dialogue further deepens the opera's connection with the Lacanian subject through the idea of desire. Two points that Lacan has said about the relationship between the subject and desire are important for our concerns here. One is that it is from the lack in the subject that desire springs. The other is that what we desire is that what is interchangeable with our own ideal image of the "true subjecthood", that is, our lack. These two basic arguments about desire together make the paradoxical nature of desire clear; they also explain why we can never fulfil our desire yet we continue to desire: the actual object of this desire cannot match the one that it imagines, which is related to what Lacan calls the unattainable *objet petit a*, that is, the object-cause of desire that provides us with a shield from the Real through symbolization. As Dino Felluga notes, "at the heart of desire is a misrecognition of fullness where there is really nothing but a screen for our own narcissistic projections".¹⁰⁶ More importantly, the fantasy image of oneself, "can be filled in by others who we may want to emulate in our adult lives (role models, love objects, *et cetera*), anyone that we set up as a mirror for ourselves in what is, ultimately, a narcissistic relationship".¹⁰⁷ For Lacan, the object we look for in a sexual relationship that involves dependency is what that is interchangeable with the love that we have for our own image. In short, love facilitates our imaginary fascination.

I suggest that the idea of desire as nothing more than a narcissistic projection of the self precisely captures what is going on in the eccentric closing dialogue between the Duchess and the Guest—a moment that is critical to the meaning of the whole opera. With this particular concept of desire in mind, we can readily understand Lacan's view of love and sexual relationship. To quote some of his famous aphorisms on love: "loving is to give what one does not have"; "one cannot love except by becoming a non-haver, even if one has". The Lacanian vision of love can be put succinctly as follow: in loving someone, the subject conveys in words to the desired person that they lack, in the hope that that person makes up for the subject's sense that something is missing in them.¹⁰⁸ But unlike desire which sustains without the need to be required, Lacan claims that "all love seems to constitute a request for love in return".¹⁰⁹ And because of the

¹⁰⁶ Felluga 2015, 111.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 246.

¹⁰⁸ My summarization is indebted to Bruce Fink's insightful discussion of Lacan's view of love. See Fink, *Lacan on Love: An Exploration of Lacan's Seminar VIII, Transference*, Cambridge: Polity, 2016.

¹⁰⁹ Lacan, Seminar XX, as cited in Fink 2016, accessed digitally.

narcissistic nature of desire, the fundamental paradox of love arises: “what the one is missing is not what is hidden in the other. This is the whole problem of love”.¹¹⁰ Fink aptly summarizes this paradox as caused by “a mutual ignorance”: on the one hand, the lover is in search of something which he does not know about. On the other hand, what the beloved is believed by the lover to have is not necessarily what the beloved believes he has.¹¹¹ As a result of this mutual ignorance, the love becomes incurably doomed. The lover does not receive love back from the beloved, as he or she would prefer, but instead a reflection of his or her desire back to him or her:

What we give in love is essentially what we haven’t got and when this *not having* comes back at us there is most certainly regression and at the same time a revelation of the way in which we left him wanting, so as to represent this lack.¹¹²

It is thus understandable why what the Guest (or the Duchess) puts and struggles to put into words is simply reflected back upon him (or her). Instead of receiving answers, they mutually become to each other a screen for their own narcissistic projections. The vision of love as manifested in the dialogue thus contains a rather pessimistic core. Love, according to Lacan, is a predominantly imaginary-order phenomenon. In this concept of love, the mirror structure functions as a limit, a barrier that keeps the inaccessibility of the object. And if there exists any positive content in this mutual projection of self-images, such as in those moments when the ill-fated lovers in *Luci* speak of delight, beauty, luminescence and paradise, it is because, for the subject, the beloved one has the capability to validate (or sanction) the subject’s relation to his or her own image.

Drawing upon Utz’s proposition that Sciarrino’s composition tends to semanticize its musical structures, this chapter has provided a series of analyses, each of which looks at a different structural, rhetorical, or philosophical aspect of the music of *Luci mie traditrici*. These analyses have mined the coherence between Utz’s assumption and the perspective as outlined by Clarke’s and Sciarrino’s ecological notions of listening and interpreting musical meaning: my interpretation has not only drawn from the

¹¹⁰ Ibid. accessed digitally.

¹¹¹ Fink 2016, accessed digitally.

¹¹² Lacan, *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X*, Cambridge: Polity, 2014, 141.

perception of Gestalts and shapes on different scales, virtual listening positions, and discriminations between the normal and the abberant, but also explored the work's mediation of operatic metaphysics and conventions as an important source for musical meaning. The various sonic and textual constructions analyzed in this chapter have cumulatively contributed to the key arguments about the opera's answer to the issue of modern operatic (inter)subjectivity. The opera's spatialized configuration of a large-scale process of dilution, manifested in the music texture as well as in the changing use of vocalization types, primes the unfolding of the catastrophe that concludes the drama. The opera's highly homogeneous module-based organization gives each character a musical identity that exists only faintly and can often be rewritten, creating rich signification possibilities through exchanging, interconnecting, and overlapping, and this leads to a preliminary speculation about an operatic subjectivity that is insubstantial, hard to access, and hard to grasp. The opera's meticulous manipulation of particular sound types and its delineation of sonic spaces—and, importantly, the trespass on these spaces—also provide a rich reservoir for significations. Inspired by the conventional division between the operatic noumenal and phenomenal, I have explored multiple cases in which a musical moment might be marked as dramatically extraordinary through the use of instrumental *sillabazione scivolata*—a musical device that prevails in Sciaarrino's instrumental and operatic repertoires. The occurrence of instrumental *sillabazione scivolata* in the second half of the opera further specifies a significant change in the characters' selfhood: the persistence of the Guest's figure in both vocal and instrumental parts projects the Malaspinas' gradual loss of control over the stability of their boundaries—an inevitable failure in completely separating from the objects and the world around them.

Lastly, in the final section of the chapter, the characters' expression of distrust in vision and in language in Scene III turns the love duet into an articulation of fundamental existential uncertainty. The extensive use of repetition in Scenes II and VI serves a similar purpose by rendering evident the Malaspinas's obsession with an idealized view of love, and, relevant to what the duet in Scene III reveals, the deadening effect of the repetition points to nothing but a void that constitutes the core of verbal communication—a formulation that evokes Lacan's idea of the subject's confrontation with the unassimilable Other and its lack. The subject, accordingly, is only the construction of the symbolic order; it is barred from self-reflection or self-presentation as it barely holds subjective substance. The paradoxical declarations of love that run through the opera, characterized by a striking emotional ambivalence and the eccentric mirroring relation

in the text (as seen in Scene III), lead to a final general remark on the opera's projection of a troubled intersubjective or, more specifically, love relationship: the characters receive in the relationship nothing but a reflection back to them of their own desire; at the core of this relationship is the desire that springs from a lack and points to a lack.

Chapter 4

MULTIDIMENSIONAL SPACE-TIME, BECOMING, AND PROTEUS-LIKE SUBJECTIVITY IN *LOHENGRIN*, *AZIONE INVISIBLE*

Introduction (Hearing the Invisible)

With a prologue, four scenes and an epilogue, *Lohengrin, invisible action* is based on a reworking of *Lohengrin, fils de Parsifal*, one of the satirical pastiches from Jules Laforgue's *Moralités légendaires* (1887).¹ Sciarrino's retelling of the Lohengrin myth presents the solo protagonist Elsa through the lens of psychiatric pathology. The music, as Sciarrino claims, is intended as a direct transmission of the point-of-view of Elsa who is at the same time impersonating Lohengrin and other characters in her oneiric delirium.² Only in the epilogue, which arrives as a cinematic *coup de théâtre*, does reality, for the first time, take over the narrative space. The revelation of an asylum and Elsa's schizophrenia finally resolves the enigma of her constantly changing identities as previously portrayed in the opera.

The subtitle "invisible action" itself provides clues about one of Sciarrino's preoccupations in the creation of the work. Arguably, the phenomenology of sound and listening *per se* forms part of the subject matter of the opera. Action is "invisible" first and foremost because everything in the opera is supposed to take place only in Elsa's hallucination. But, more importantly, "invisible action" captures the idea that Sciarrino lets the audience become the protagonist. In other words, listeners are invited to perceive the sound as a phenomenon filtered through the senses of Elsa as a virtual subject. Sciarrino's commentary on this conception is worth quoting in length:

"Evoke the space within" is a sort of epigraph to the new *Lohengrin*. To achieve this effect the musical action is seen through the crazed eyes of Elsa. Without losing its autonomous function, the music is transformed into the things that Elsa sees, thus facilitating our participation...The underlying

¹ *Moralités légendaires* is Laforgue's only collection of stories which contains six parodies. *Lohengrin, fils de Parsifal* was initially published in 1886 as a single novella. Ten years after *Lohengrin*, Sciarrino used another text from the same anthology for his opera *Perseo e Andromeda* (1992).

² See Sciarrino, in *Carte da suono*, ed. Dario Oliveri. Palermo: Novecento; Roma: CIDIM, 2001, 81–5.

premise of a work of this sort is the conception of “the voice and the body as a universe”. The introspective action that results consists of a sort of monstrous landscape of the soul, theatrically self-sufficient in itself...*Lohengrin* is thus a cosmogony, entirely vocal. Elsa, her mouth, is its point of irradiation, but at the centre is us. The very structure of the opera is marked by Elsa’s part...³

If by “evoke the space within” Sciarrino means to create a music that depicts not things, but the perceptual responses to these things, it then may be said that Sciarrino is composing out his perception. Many works in Sciarrino’s repertoire offer a similar experience of listening to someone’s listening. The autobiographical *Efebo con radio*, for instance, was inspired by Sciarrino’s radio experiences during the early 1950s. The listening experience of the composer’s subject, partially determined by his or her behavior of controlling the radio, is represented through formal patterns featuring the fragmentary quality of modern daily life.⁴ The telephone-inspired *Archeologia del telefono* (2005), with Nokia ringtone included, recreates the auditory impression of the ubiquitous signals of modern communication technology which, like radios, have shaped the way people listen today. In *Infinito nero*, music mirrors what the characters listen to and perceive inside and outside of their bodies.⁵ The idea of *azione invisibile* is in a way germane to all the works mentioned above, in that they demonstrate in different ways Sciarrino’s belief in music’s capability of referring and representing. For Sciarrino, “action” does not have to be visible to be perceivable:

Why an invisible action? All too often, musical invention seeks its *raison d’être* on stage. We forget the power of a language and its very capacity for representation: to arouse pure illusions. It is not by simply combining music with the visible that the magic of theatre is created. On the contrary, the actual mixing of the two is distracting (as it is when a fact of life, the tiniest one, crosses our attention). Even in the old melodrama, we are not so drawn in by the understanding of what is happening on the stage. Instead, we are moved and taken by a drama intrinsic to the music, certainly quite indeterminate rationally, but how immediate!⁶

³ “Evocare lo spazio interiore vuol’ essere epigrafe al nuovo Lohengrin. Per ottenerlo, la vicenda musicale è tessuta dentro gli occhi folli di Elsa, fragile vittima che un tripudio di campane ha ormai assordato. La musica senza in nulla perdere le proprie dignità trova modo di trasformarsi nelle cose che Elsa vede, per renderci partecipi... Presupposto di una composizione di tal genere è concepire ‘la voce, il corpo come universo.’ E il moto introspettivo che ne consegue riflette l’ambiente esterno quasi a costruire, illusionisticamente, un mostruoso paesaggio dell’anima, di per sé spettacolo autosufficiente... *Lohengrin*, dunque una cosmogonia sonora, tutta vocale. Elsa, la sua bocca, e il punto di irradiazione, ma al centro siamo noi. La struttura medesima dell’opera è scandita dalla parte di Elsa”. Sciarrino 2001a, 82–3.

⁴ Utz in Tadday 2019, 172–94.

⁵ Leydon 2012, 308–28.

⁶ “*Perché un’azione invisibile?* Troppo spesso l’invenzione musicale ricerca sulla scena la propria ragion d’essere. Si dimentica che forza di un linguaggio è la sua stessa capacità di rappresentazione: suscitare pure illusioni. Non è semplicemente unendo la musica al visibile che scocchi la magia del teatro. Anzi la loro mescolanza reale distrae (com’è quando un fatto della vita, il più minuscolo, attraversa la nostra attenzione). Persino nel vecchio melodramma non si è trascinati tanto dalla comprensione di ciò che avviene sul palcoscenico. Emoziona e ci prende invece una drammaticità intrinseca alla musica, assai generica certo, ma quanto immediata!” Sciarrino 2001a, 82.

The quotation reveals Sciarrino's critical attitude towards the relationship between music and image. Sciarrino appeals to music's power to evoke visual associations. Conversely, however, he articulates his scepticism over the sort of musical theatre which, in the guise of the notion of the "total artwork", prescribes certain bonds between image and sound in the service of preordained programmatic content. For Sciarrino, the nature of such binding is arbitrary and ambiguous (or, to use his word, "distracting"). Musical representation in his definition instead presupposes the expressiveness of sound from a semiotic perspective and that music can in a self-sufficient way affords multifarious associations (or, as Sciarrino terms them, "illusions"). According to Jörn Peter Hiekel, *invisible action* seems to be a continuation of the Wagnerian idea of "the acts of music made manifest" (*die »ersichtlich gewordenen Taten der Musik«*).⁷ However, arguably, *invisible action* goes further by linking music's "acts made visible" to the directness of perception and the grounding of perception in reality. As Sciarrino writes in the preface to *Lobengrin*: "These sounds already are theatre. They do not require illustration, nor do they need to be disguised as an image: they have their own image. To refine hearing. Make it subtle, transparent for the dimension of recollection".⁸ For Sciarrino, perceptions of traces of materiality, human and animal behaviours and cultural memory in sound all constitute the dramas that the sound carries intrinsically. As Chapter 6 will show, this notion is highly comparable to Lachenmann's "music with images".

Interestingly, what adds to the opera's meta-reflection on sound and listening is the opera's portrayal of madness. *Lobengrin* explores senses sharpened, particularly, sharpened in an altered state. Marco Angius gives a vivid and somewhat poignant description of what the drama of *Lobengrin* is about: "Lying motionlessly, the trauma of extraneousness in a place of care and transition, the painful (pathological and liberating) emergence of physiology in states of bodily constraint, the sharpening of perceptions when the violated body is forced (to remain silent) in immobility, the experience of the hospital, in short".⁹ *Lobengrin*

⁷ Hiekel, in Tadday 2019, 25.

⁸ "Questi suoni sono già teatro. Non chiedono illustrazione né di essere rivestiti d'immagine, essi hanno la propria immagine. Affinare l'ascolto. Renderlo sottile, trasparente alle dimensioni della memoria. Ogni suggestione scenica susciterà dunque quei suoni senza imprigionarli". Preface to *Lobengrin: azione invisibile, per solista, strumenti e voci* (da J. Laforque), Milano: Ricordi, 1995.

⁹ "Giacere immobili, il trauma dell'estraneità in un luogo di cura e di passaggio, il doloroso (patologico e liberatorio) emergere della fisiologia negli stati di costrizione del corpo, l'acuirsi delle percezioni quando il corpo violato è costretto (a tacere) nell'immobilità, l'esperienza dell'ospedale insomma". Angius, *Come avvicinare il silenzio: La musica di Salvatore Sciarrino*, Padova: Il Poligrafo casa editrice, 2020, 100.

in this sense qualifies as the meta-music of Sciarrino's ecology of music. The music's internalization of Elsa's shifting points of view invites the listeners to approach the musical meaning in a particular way.

Based on the notion of the semanticization of musical form introduced in the previous chapter, this chapter continues to investigate the issue of subjectivity in the music and drama of *Lohengrin*. In particular, it adopts an ecological approach to the work's spatialized temporality which, as I will demonstrate, is premised on an intricate dramatical-textural reconstruction of the original novella. I also offer a brief discussion of some theoretical influences that have shaped Sciarrino's idea of Window Form—a simulation of the perception of multi-dimensional space-time in music. In the last section of this chapter, I venture a theoretical challenge by arguing that the Deleuzian notion of becoming provides a useful point of reference for better conceptualizing Sciarrino's mimetic conceits. The idea of becoming-animal or becoming-imperceptible sheds light on new possibilities of the relationship between the human subject and the non-human otherness.

Identity Problems: A Satire Reimagined

Lohengrin's non-linear narrative is puzzling: little happens, and its text often seems almost too fragmentary to be penetrable and coherent. The drama's inclusion of elements of insanity causes further difficulties for any interpretation seeking to eliminate ambiguity. As Sciarrino explains: "things come apart sometimes, as in a 'montage': dreams don't hide their own incoherence".¹⁰ By subduing explicit references to the content of the Lohengrin legend, the libretto acquires a sense of timelessness and lightness. The dialogue between the characters revolves around topics that often seem amusingly frivolous. Only at several key points does the narrative of the old myth manifest itself. Given that *Lohengrin* is based on an adaptation of an adaptation, an account of the complex genesis of the libretto provides valuable insights not only into the opera's sound dramaturgy but also Sciarrino's reflection on the subject matter of the Lohengrin myth.

¹⁰ Sciarrino, CD Liner notes, trans. Stephen Hastings, in Salvatore Sciarrino: *Lohengrin*, Ricordi Oggi (Stradivarius), 1998.

The preliminary drafts and sketches held at the Paul Sacher Foundation illuminate the trajectory of the making of the libretto.¹¹ The adaptation of Laforgue's novella is a collaboration between Sciarrino and Pier'Alli. A printed, full version script prepared by Pier'Alli, with Sciarrino's miscellaneous hand-written revision marks and notes on it, shows that the adaptation mainly involves changes in three areas.¹² First, the events are reordered into a different sequence and a subversive twist is added to the end of the story. Second, texts borrowed from other sources, mainly poems by Laforgue which have intertextual relevance, are inserted into the *Lohengrin* main text. On top of these changes, Sciarrino makes an extreme reduction of the script.¹³ Passages are drastically reduced to essential lines and phrases: most Laforgue's text is absent from the final libretto. After the reduction, three lines of foreign origins are kept in the libretto, which, as I will show, play a structural role in the opera and offers profound philosophical reflections.

Figure 4.1 provides a summary of *Lohengrin*'s scenic structure, compared with Laforgue's chronological one. Letter O and S represent what is omitted from and what is annexed as a supplement in Sciarrino's version. The changes made to the orders of events A and E decide the radical nature of Sciarrino's adaptation. What happens at the end in the original tale—Lohengrin's sailing off towards “the altitudes of Metaphysical Love”—is transposed to the opening of the opera (Prologue), represented by volatile gestures in the orchestra. And, more bizarrely, the couple's Nuptial Villa scene and Lohengrin's flee precede the crowd's accusation of Elsa's degradation and the much-anticipated arrival of the knight. For the listener, all these chronological confusions are supposed to be resolved by the Epilogue, a brief scene created by Pier'Alli, where a shocking shift in the dramatic space takes place. The revealing of a bleak clinic setting re-contextualizes the previous scenes as a “close-up” of Elsa's consciousness and illusions. Significantly, it is owing to Sciarrino's drastic condensation of the text that Laforgue's satirical retelling of the story is turned into a woman's enigmatic soliloquy. Because of the reduction and deliberate obscuration, troubling narrative gaps open up throughout Elsa's speech. This, however, makes the speech similar to a recollected dream—fragmentary and illogical. The fact that multiple parts are conflated into the lonely voice

¹¹ During my visit in 2017, material held at the Paul Sacher Foundation related to *Lohengrin* were compiled in two cases. One contains rich material showing the creative process of the libretto. The other one contains only a few preliminary sketches and manuscripts for the music.

¹² The document is in A4 size, labelled with the caption “Cambiamenti Sul Copione de preparato Pier'alli” (Changes on the prepared Pier' Alli script).

¹³ The draft script shows that, in Sciarrino's revision, he crossed off most of the passages, rephrased the text in a simplified style and added in stage instructions. Captions were also added to create scenic structure.

of the soprano makes it even harder to tell whether the narrative contains any event that has actually happened.

Laforge:		Sciarrino: <i>Lohengrin</i> , <i>Azione invisibile</i>	
	<i>Lohengrin, fils de Parsifal</i>		
		<i>Prologue</i>	(E*) Lohengrin's escape
<i>Part I</i>	(A) The accusation of Elsa	<i>Scene I</i>	(C) Entering the Nuptial Villa
	(B) The waiting of Elsa, the arrival of Lohengrin	<i>II</i>	(D) Nuptial Villa talk
	(O) Wedding ceremony	<i>III</i>	(E) Lohengrin's escape
<i>Part II</i>	(C) Entering the Nuptial Villa	<i>IV</i>	(A) The accusation of Elsa
	(D) Nuptial Villa talk		(B) The waiting of Elsa , the arrival of Lohengrin
	(E) Lohengrin's escape		
		<i>Epilogue</i>	(S) Hospital scene

Figure 4.1. Comparison between the dramatic structure of Laforge's and Sciarrino's *Lohengrin*

Like the other pieces in *Moralités légendaires*, Laforge's *Lohengrin* is injected with a modern sensibility.¹⁴ Michele Hannoosh suggests that Laforge refashioned the stories in accordance with the stereotypical preoccupations of the Decadence of the 1880s, the avant-garde movement of which Laforge considered himself a part.¹⁵ Motivated by a revulsion at the rampant materialism of the modern world and the banality of the productivist culture, decadents sought to escape into realms of the aesthetic, fantastic, erotic, spiritual and religious.¹⁶ Commonly seen as the general characteristics of Decadence are a feeling of ennui, advocacy of amorality (or perversity), interest in explicit and unconventional sexuality, illness and decay, and its challenge of what was thought to be false narrative including "industrial progress" and "a common moral

¹⁴ "My novella volume", Laforge writes in a letter, "you know the principle: old canvas embroidered with souls in fashion". (Mon volume de nouvelles, tu en connais le principe: de vieux canevas brodés d'âmes à la mode.) See Henri Scepi, "*Moralités légendaires* de Jules Laforge: pour une poétique de l'écoute", in Feneyrou 2013, 124.

¹⁵ See Michele Hannoosh, *Parody and Decadence: Laforge's Moralités légendaires*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989, 1, 36.

¹⁶ For more on Decadence as a literary category and its aesthetic, see Dennis Denisoff, "Decadence and Aestheticism," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin De Siècle*, ed. Gail Marshall, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 31–52.

basis to beauty and the meaning of life”.¹⁷ Hannoosh argues that Laforgue’s *Lohengrin* incorporates a wide array of what is quintessentially Decadent to the extent that the satire itself suggests a sense of self-aware mockery. The cult of Decadence, including its revolutionary aspects, becomes at once the target of the parody and the medium through which such satirizing is realized. In satirizing both the medieval and the Decadent ideologies, Laforgue foregrounds a criticism of a series of moral issues, especially those associated with sexualities. The scene of assembly and the accusation of Elsa, for example, forms a provocative satire on the medieval religious views of female morality as well as the Decadent movement itself as a kind of religious veneration.

Laforgue’s sarcastic voice is toned down in Sciarrino’s *Lohengrin*. The reason for this seems to be that Sciarrino prefers an adaptation free of a specific historical-social setting. The criticism of medieval morality is curtailed, and depiction of Decadent fetish much diluted. However, what is carefully distilled from Laforgue’s text and accentuated as the core subject matter in the opera is the satirical portrayal of the uncommon sexualities of Lohengrin and Elsa. Significantly, it is through Lohengrin’s mockery of Elsa and a mockery of Lohengrin as representing typical Decadent attitudes that the novella articulates a view of sexualities that is ahead of its time. Curiously, the new Elsa is ascribed with an ambivalent image. Laforgue’s feminist criticism targets two traditional female archetypes that Elsa embodies at the same time. On the one hand, it is the sacred Vestal Virgins, a female identity disciplined by medieval ecclesiastic morality. This is the Elsa that is girly, naive, self-negating, and submissive to Lohengrin who in turn mocks her by calling her a “time-honoured slave”, “a transcendental spy”, begging her to be a bit “libidinous”.¹⁸ On the other hand, Elsa represents the Schopenhauerian Eternal Feminine, a female type that was criticized by Decadents like Dumas *fils* and Baudelaire.¹⁹ The misogynistic myth of the Eternal Feminine is linked to the imprisonment of women whose longing for love is inscribed with the divine goal of procreation. A high point of Laforgue’s parody of this female type is in the moment when Elsa, on the wedding night, ventures

¹⁷ Denisoff, in Marshall 2007, 32.

¹⁸ Jules Laforgue, “Lohengrin, son of Parsifal”, in *Moral Tales*, trans. William Jay Smith, London: Picador, 1985, 79.

¹⁹ In her study on the *Moralités*, Hannoosh observes that the principle decadent view of love and women derives from the tradition of Schopenhauer. According to Hannoosh, the female type of “Eternal Feminine” in the Schopenhauerian formula is someone who “lures men into submitting themselves to the loathsome procreative purposes of the universal life force, the Will”. “Thinking that they will find the Ideal, or even pure pleasure (*volupté*), men in fact become instruments of the Will in its effort to perpetuate itself and, as a result, prolong the misery of life. Love is a trap set by the Will to ensure the continuation of the species, and women are its chief accomplices”. Hannoosh 1989, 46.

a seduction by saying things that utterly repel Lohengrin: “Boy, boy, are you familiar with the voluptuary ceremonies? Behold the sweet almonds of my young breasts, touch my hair...O ennuiversal resentment! nerve-killing experiences, martyred nights! Love me by degrees, inventory me, massacre me, profane me!”²⁰ Correspondingly, Laforgue’s Lohengrin is portrayed as a disciple of Decadence who is excellent at solitary thought and uninterested in producing offspring. Describing himself as a “lily of future crusades for the Emancipation of Women”, Lohengrin rejects the deception of fulfilling the procreative process of nature and is determined, as Hannoosh puts it, to “redeem the earthly, and all too earthy, sister”.²¹ But unfortunately, he fails. For Lohengrin, Elsa, on the one hand, appears as “a divine human specimen”, incurably “away from humanity”.²² On the other hand, Elsa’s request for physical intimacy is simply unbearable for the hero who sees love as a path to the metaphysical ideal and detests any perpetuation of the Eternal Feminine.

How does Sciarrino’s opera respond to the critical nature of Laforgue’s parody? A de-stylization of the Decadent substance of the novella provides a fitting textual base for Sciarrino’s minimal sound dramaturgy. As my analysis demonstrates later, to make it more pertinent today, Sciarrino transforms Laforgue’s representation of Lohengrin and Elsa as historical stereotypes into a play with gender identities in a time-less context. At certain points in the opera, both roles go androgynous, assimilating a child who is both eager and fearful, “refusing to grow up”.²³ They appear like two strange lovers who, while reticent for most of the time, occasionally show childish malice toward each other. More astonishingly, Elsa is constantly becoming something other than herself. Just like Sciarrino’s mimetic conceit which disturbingly blurs the boundary between the “musical” sound and the sounds of everyday life, Elsa seems no longer to live with a subjectivity that is secured by a strict demarcation of the inside and outside.

²⁰ Laforgue 1985, 81. Only the first few lines of this quotation are kept in Scene II of *Lohengrin*. The last two sentences in this quotation are excluded, conceivably, for its all-too-explicit sarcastic tone and decadent connotation.

²¹ Hannoosh 1989, 132.

²² Laforgue 1985, 76–82.

²³ In his commentary on his creation of *Lohengrin*, Sciarrino uses the expression “A child who refuses to grow up” (“Un fanciullo che rifiuta di crescere”) as a subtitle for a section in which he reflects on the provocative attitude underlying Laforgue’s writing in the spirit of Symbolism and Decadence. See Sciarrino 2001a, 81–4.

Spatialized Time

Sciarrino's take on the *Lohengrin* satire, as discussed, explores such topics as dream, delusion, madness, and disease. For the music, Sciarrino finds a formal plan that aptly captures the fragmentary and elliptical constructions in the libretto: a musical form that is highly spatialized and meaningfully configured, or semanticized. The perception of space, as this and the next section try to demonstrate, plays a crucial role in terms of the compositional-dramaturgical concept of the work. More importantly, it is a prominent locus from which sources for the picturing of a novel operatic subjectivity spring.

Sciarrino's proposition that space is inherent in the perception of music and that "temporal continuity is made up of small discontinuities" represent his most important views about the perception of musical space-time.²⁴ For Sciarrino, the common notion that time is usually experienced as a flow indicates that we perceive it as inextricably connected to vision and space. When talking about musical time, Sciarrino repeatedly refers to the roles of memory (or recognition) and notation in listening with regard to their function of inducing visualization. In an article originally entitled "Conoscere e riconoscere", Sciarrino asserts that in music listening, memory is the only guarantor of form, and the realm in which musical perception and memory take place is a highly spatialized temporality. In particular, he accentuates the idea that the perceptual foundation of music, especially logical connections in music, is closely associated with the way we perceive visual information. Memory makes possible "fixing, controlling and projecting in a *simultaneous* reading what we listen to *successively*".²⁵ The perception of music hence becomes relatable to a cinematographic experience. Sciarrino writes, "the mind tirelessly 'exits' the temporal dimension in order to be able, when it 'comes back in,' to relate events to each other".²⁶ For Sciarrino, it is this unconscious, instantaneous mental work, which deploys our visual sense and spatial imagination, that makes musical recollection possible. To be able to recognize the recurring elements and to order musical events in a formal relationship, listeners need to draw on an "illusion of simultaneity". Sciarrino claims that, "at the moment when notation is born, vision lends to music the illusion of simultaneity, as if to compensate for the

²⁴ "La continuité temporelle est donc faite de petites discontinuités". Sciarrino, "L'espace dans l'esprit", in Feneyrou, 2013, 93.

²⁵ See Feneyrou 2013, 93-4 ; 145-50.

²⁶ "Nous devons donc faire l'hypothèse que l'esprit « sort » inlassablement de la dimension temporelle pour pouvoir, quand il y « rentre », mettre en relation les événements entre eux". Sciarrino, in Feneyrou 2013, 93.

inexorable flow of *temporal succession*”.²⁷ In other words, in listening to music, it is natural to deviate from the linear, temporal flow by drawing on spatial orientation. It is in this sense that Sciarrino argues that the temporal field in which music takes shape is a strongly spatialized one, and that temporal continuity is made up of successive intermittence which serves to confront each instant of music with the instants already memorized.

Although Sciarrino seems to suggest that spatialized temporality is a fundamental aspect of how we experience and remember music, his notion of temporality contains subtleties that are worth interrogating. Evidence from Sciarrino’s repertoire suggests a direct influence from the theory of time consciousness of Henri Bergson. References to the philosopher, for example, can be found in the text of *Cantare con silenzio* (1999) for six voices, flute, percussion, and electronic resonances and in Sciarrino’s commentary on *L’orologio di Bergson* (1999) for solo flute. Sciarrino’s spatialized temporality, arguably, is very close to what has been conceptualized by Bergson as *temps espace*, a mode of temporal experience in which time is segmented into separate moments and can be added onto or juxtaposed to the others as if it is quantifiable.²⁸ Bergson critiques *temps espace* based on the idea that the discontinuity of *temps espace* tends to impoverish and homogenize our experience of the “qualitative multiplicity” of time.²⁹ To offer a more sophisticated view of time, Bergson proposes a contrasting mode of time consciousness: *temps durée*—a concept that describes the experience of time as continuous, manifold, malleable, and immeasurable.

Interestingly, in his reflection on *L’orologio di Bergson*, Sciarrino writes about the experience of the imperceptible flexing of time with direct reference to Bergson: “Bergson’s watch beats violently, seemingly always the same. But time imperceptibly flexes”.³⁰ The idea of time as a flexing flow seems to bear similarities with an important aspect of Bergson’s *durée*: the malleability of duration in perception. What is fascinating about this quote, however, is that it displays a temporal concept that seems to embrace the co-existence of the two contrasting modes of time consciousness. Matteo Cesari has argued that the music of *L’orologio di Bergson* attests to such an approach to time. Cesari’s analysis demonstrates how the music, based

²⁷ “Nous pouvons dire que, au moment où naît la notation, la vision prête à la musique l’illusion de la simultanéité, comme pour compenser l’écoulement inexorable de la *succession temporelle*”. Sciarrino, in Feneyrou 2013, 94.

²⁸ See Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2013, 127–8.

²⁹ See Bergson 2013, 128.

³⁰ “L’orologio di Bergson batte colpi violenti, in apparenza sempre uguali. Invece il tempo impercettibilmente si flette.” See Sciarrino 2001a, 191.

on two contrasting types of material, is structured in a way that seeks to bring into effect a dynamic interplay between time experienced as space (or what Cesari refers to as “vertical”) and as duration (“horizontal”).³¹ One might argue that many of Sciarrino’s works play with this binary character in the way that we experience time, often with the implication that the two time consciousnesses are never truly separate in reality. It is necessary to clarify that the durational or “horizontal” dimension of time is comparatively marginalized in the analysis of this chapter. This is not because of its absence in the music of *Lobengrin*, but because it is not the most prominent temporal experience that pertains to my observation of the opera’s illustration of the subject.

Sciarrino’s theorization of musical time also draws on his observation of the modern experience of time, particularly the now-ubiquitous perception of temporal-spatial discontinuity. In *Le Figure Della Musica*, Sciarrino reflects on the impact of global travelling, communication technology and photography on our sense of time, which has become ever more variable, relative and discontinuous.³⁹ The most prominent influence of this on Sciarrino’s composition, as I demonstrate with musical details in the next section of this chapter, is a multi-layered or multi-dimensional temporality that is a preoccupation of both the sonic and the narrative or theatrical construction of Sciarrino’s work. A musical time that features multi-dimensionality is encapsulated in Sciarrino’s own term Window Form.⁴⁰ The stopping of an instant creates spatial-temporal discontinuity by opening a window to the past and elsewhere in the here and now. For Sciarrino, the Window Form is related to the kind of temporal consciousness afforded by technological innovations ranging from photography and television to computer and video game. User interfaces, for example, allow us to know where we are in the whole process while we are proceeding with our task. In this case, the user monitors two temporalities simultaneously and views the same event from multiple points of view.⁴¹ Similarly, as Grazio Giacco has pointed out, the intermittence caused by distant musical events creates temporal-spatial discontinuities in our perception of the music.⁴²

³¹ Matteo Cesari, “Déchiffrer les horloges: L’interprétation du temps dans *L’orologio di Bergson* de Salvatore Sciarrino et *Carceri d’Invenzione IIb* de Brian Ferneyhough,” Thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et Danse de Paris, 2015.

³⁹ See Sciarrino 1998, 97.

⁴⁰ The term Window Form has received much discussion. See Giacco 2001, Song 2006, Carratelli 2006 and Cesari 2015.

⁴¹ Sciarrino 1998, 97–9.

⁴² Giacco 2001, 61.

A Window into the Past: The Multidimensional Space–Time

Drawing on personal listening experience, let us now consider how a spatialized temporality is realized in the musical and dramatic structures of *Lohengrin* and how those micro- or macro-constructures are perceived as sources of meaning. As Chapter 2 has demonstrated, the music of *Lohengrin*, often reduced to the threshold of silence, is based on a collection of micro-gestures in continuously varied repetition. Once projected into the empty space, these gestures immediately acquire structural salience. Sciarrino's use of Window Form creates temporal-spatial intermittency that has significant dramatical meaning. Musically, this produces a structure analogous to what has been described by Edward T. Cone as stratification—"the separation in musical space of ideas—or better, of musical areas—juxtaposed in time".⁴³ Interruption, argues Cone, is "the mark of this separation".⁴⁴ More than simply stratified, the Window Form of *Lohengrin* also contains elements of circularity which, as we will see, becomes fully in evidence over a large span of time.

Based on a live recording, **Figure 4.2** provides a partial representation of the distribution of sound modules across the whole opera. Specifically, it shows the unfolding of a selection of sound modules (Y-axis) in real time (X-axis). These sound materials, including Elsa's verbal text and vocalization (gasping and singing), the singing of the choir, and miscellaneous figurative instrumental gestures, play important roles in shaping the total form of *Lohengrin* on a background level.⁴⁵ It is visually striking how the Prologue, Epilogue and the four scenes stand out from each other in a drastic way, each showcasing its principal sound material, displaying contrasting texture density and distinctive rhythmic-temporal structure. **Figure 4.3** renders the full scenic structure in an alternative analytical form, with verbal descriptions of various formal parameters, which reflects a way of listening following the principle of musical autonomy. While **Figure 4.2** gives the impression that each scene has its own sonic character and thus shows a degree of formal independency, **Figure 4.3** tries to outline that, at the background level, a linear, goal-directed motion

⁴³ Edward T. Cone, "Stravinsky: The Progress of a Method," *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 1, No.1, 1962, 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 19.

⁴⁵ This recording is the first live recording of *Lohengrin* made in 2005 at the Landesmusikschule Kufstein in Austria. The production features soprano Marianne Pousseur and the Ensemble Risognanze under the direction of Tito Ceccherini. Salvatore Sciarrino: *Lohengrin*, CD, Col legno, WVE 1CD 20264, 2008.

can be perceived throughout the opera as a whole in at least some musical aspects. In terms of type of principal sound material, a directed shift from “noisy” or “tonic” sound gestures to stably pitched material—culminating in Elsa’s idiotic lullaby in the Epilogue—can be observed. The changes in the variety of sound material and the behavior or motion of the sound events throughout all the scenes echo such a tendency. The music in general becomes more homogeneous and static towards the end as the presentation of sustained melodic material takes over. The gradual replacements of “noisy” sound by tonal melody, speech by singing, and sporadic and volatile behavior by continuity and stability together shape a generally linear motion.

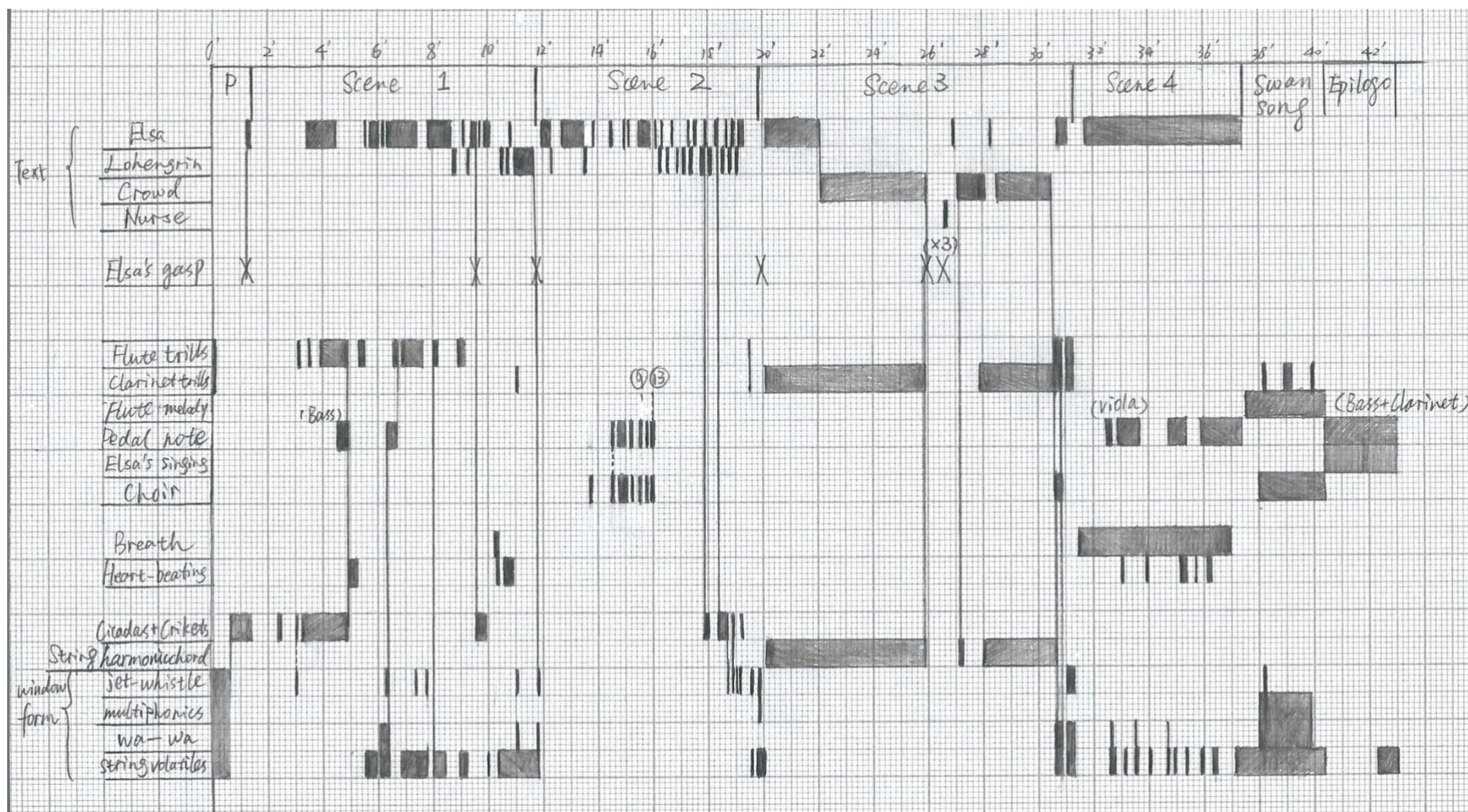


Figure 4.2. Diagram of key sound modules unfolding in real time, *Lohengrin* (total length: 43 minutes)

	Prologue “through an open window”	Scene I	Scene II	Scene III	Scene IV	(“Swan Song”)	Epilogue
Duration	01’21”	10’22”	08’12”	11’26”	06’03”	02’32”	03’32”
Principal Sound Material	“Tonic” sound complex	“Tonic” sound gestures; “Abnormal” vocal sounds; Speech (dual-roling)	“Abnormal” vocal sounds; Speech (dual-roling)	Melody on harmonics; Blowing and coughing; Speech (multi-roling)	“Tonic” sound gestures (respiration & heartbeating); Speech (monologue)	Melody on harmonics; “Tonic” sound complex; Choir	Soprano melody
Variety of Material	Heterogeneous	Very heterogeneous	Homogeneous		Heterogeneous		Very homogeneous
Behavior or Motion	Volatile; Unstable	Aleatoric; Sporadic		Cyclic; Stable	Sporadic; Stable	Continuous; Unstable	Metrical and continuous; Stable
Density and Tension	Highest density and strongest tension swerve to a low level	Both increase from low to medium	Both increase from low to medium	Hourglass-shape progression between high and low	Uniform density (low) and tension (medium)	Uniform density (high) and tension (high)	Uniform density (medium) and tension (low)

Figure 4.3. Diachronic changes in a selection of formal parameters of *Lohengrin*

Writing on the perception of top-down linearity, Bob Snyder suggests that the goal of the linear progression in non-tonal music, especially that in which secondary parameters are brought into play, is often not precisely described.⁴⁶ In Jonathan Kramer's terminology, such linearity is called "nondirected linearity".⁴⁷ Expectations about arrival at specific types of goals in non-tonal music are therefore much weaker than in music situated within the syntax of conventional tonality, and the perception of motion as goal-directed is usually confined to lower and intermediate hierarchical levels.⁴⁸ However, as in the case of the elegy of *Luci mie traditrici*, Sciarrino semantizes the form on a background level by setting up carefully "curated" if not "directed" patterns of change in various musical dimensions. Mostly intuitively perceivable, these patterns of change optimize an ecology of listening—the perception of "what is going on" in the opera, both musically and dramatically. Here, the gradation in multiple parameters represents a psychological transition—from Elsa's mad dream which encompasses a monstrous, kaleidoscopic landscape to the real environment in which she finds herself, stagnant and tedious. Noticeably, two elements interrupt this general tendency. One is that a cyclic pattern emerges in Scene III, which appears to be an early premonition of the occurrence of the most stable temporal frame—the metrical structure—in Epilogue. The other is that the changes in musical intensity and tension tend to be perceived as multiply-directed in the first four sections of the opera, before they both become more stable across the scenes after Scene III. The fact that the highest level of intensity and tension is reached at the end of "Swan Song" unmistakably makes the episode a climax, and the sudden drop that comes after it intensifies the shocking effect of the final revelation of the "truth".

In *Lohengrin*, non-linear progression and a spatialized temporality are more pronounced on lower formal levels. Listeners are likely to find that the points of interruption in the music are triggered by the corresponding actions—mental or physical—in the drama. The fact that musical form has its roots primarily in extra-musical and practical sources forms a basis for Sciarrino's connection with ecological thinking. Remarkably, the construction of musical space is in dialogue with the structure of the opera's text

⁴⁶ Bob Snyder, *Music and Memory: An Introduction*, MIT Press, 2000, 233.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Kramer, *The Time of Music*, New York: Collier Macmillan, 1988, 39–40, 61–2. Kramer defines standard linearity as a complex web of constantly changing implications (in the music) and expectations (of the listener), whether these expectations are fully or partially satisfied, delayed or thwarted. Central to this idea of linearity is not continuity nor contiguity, but a series of change towards a directed goal, because an event may be implied by events that far precede it. See Kramer 1988, 21–2.

⁴⁸ Snyder 2000, 233.

which is itself highly spatialized. The libretto is characterized by speeches of various modalities amalgamated into one single stream, delivered through the soprano voice. Elsa at the same time acts in the story and, occasionally, tells or recalls what happened to her. The alternation between a mimetic and a diegetic mode of story-telling is further complicated by the temporal-spatial demarcation between hallucination and reality. This combination produces a narrative structure that is sophisticatedly stratified. **Figure 4.4** reproduces the entire text of *Lohengrin* in a format designed to demonstrate how the narrative unfolds by shifting between multiple threads (types) of speech.

The speech types fall into three categories—“mimesis” and “diegesis” in a narrative space to be perceived as in Elsa’s dream or hallucination (marked in blue and green respectively), and “mimesis” in a space preordained as reality (marked in red). The mimetic mode predominates and is enacted through the dialogues between Elsa and the other roles she takes on and Elsa’s interior monologue (for instance, Elsa’s grumbling about Lohengrin’s stiffness in Scene III and her prayer for the knight’s arrival in Scenes III and IV). The mimetic speech contrasts with two types of diegetic voices – Elsa as a narrator and the male choir as a commentator. Particularly striking in Scene I and II, Elsa’s recounting of acts and feelings is closely entangled with her dialogue with Lohengrin. By fusing multiple modalities of speech, the text affords different interpretations about a special state of consciousness. The shifting in persons and tenses in the speech possibly suggests the inseparability of Elsa’s dream content from her past memory. It could alternatively imply that everything represented in the work is no more than hallucinations in a schizophrenic mind. The choir provides the only voice whose narrative function is unequivocal in the opera, presenting an “outsider” or “spectator” view. By making remarks that leave clues as to the subject matter of the opera, the choir secures an independent narrative space.⁴⁹ This is particularly evident in Scene II, in which the choir sings in an eerily cold and calm voice which is completely alienated from the surrounding context, thereby forming a separate musical stratum.

⁴⁹ In Scene II, the choir sings: “Alas! To irritate with a lily the violet of Isis!...” This line (*Hélas! Agacer d’un lys/La violette d’Isis!...*) is originally from Laforgue’s poem *Avis, je vous prie* from *L’Imitation de Notre-Dame la Lune*. In the concluding part of Scene IV, the choir sings the line “Would you wish to cloak yourself in my displaced Being?” This is a quotation (*...veux-tu te vêtir de mon Être éperdu?*) from Laforgue’s *Complainte des formalités nuptiales* from *Les Complaintes*. The subject matter of the poem *Complainte des formalités nuptiales* and the dialogue form in which the poem is written show a kinship with the couple’s conversation in wedding night in Laforgue’s *Lohengrin* text.

Mode	Reality – <i>In a Hospital</i> [Mimesis]	Elsa's Dream or Hallucination – <i>In a Nuptial Villa by the Sea</i>	
		[Diegesis]	[Mimesis]
Prologue	<u>Nurse</u> <i>dialogue</i> <u>Elsa</u> <i>monologue</i> The cushion, the cushion!	<u>Elsa</u> <u>Choir</u>	<i>monologue</i> <u>Elsa</u> <i>dialogue</i> <u>Lohengrin</u> <i>dialogue</i> <u>Crowd</u> <i>dialogue</i>
Scene I		We ventured forward, stricken with uneasiness and silence, feet worn weary by the tepid gravel. The cascading water, hardly deep enough to cover a foot, lent itself to the luminous magic of the moon. Lohengrin looking into the void. I said.	And what effect does the moonlight have upon my beauty? How much discouraging magic in these hedges and paths! Why do you no longer address me confidentially? Ah, you don't love me! I am not yet eighteen, you know. Of course you know everything. You are not answering? Oh, you will regret telling me this for the rest of your life! Perhaps I am getting you wet?

Figure 4.4. Stratification of narrative space in *Lohengrin*

Scene II			Gentle knight, I have dreamed of you... Don't you hear? Don't you hear a sound of germination everywhere?	Never mind.
			Come on, you'll catch cold...	Don't touch me! No, no!
Scene II	We entered the villa invaded by crazy weeds. Echoing corridors. Empty rooms. Names and dates cut in the mirrors.			Empty rooms.
				This wedding villa stinks of a communal grave
	Alas! To irritate with a lily the violet of Isis!...	He is so frigid...	Boy, boy, boy do you not know the voluptuary ceremonies?	
			Look at my hair. Taste my young breasts... But you are diverting...	I detest your skinny hips.
			What? If I only ask to love you.	I detest your skinny hips. I accept only wide hips, I!
			Don't say that to me.	Sorry, sorry. Don't cry. On the contrary, I adore them, the strong, straight sides!
			Really? Well then?	That is... well, here I detest...

Figure 4.4. (continued).

	I remember your only compliment was for my swan-like neck. Here, let me take a cat-nap all by myself in the silence of the night, then I promise you that... Ah, my pillow will longer have a cool place for my forehead... Oh, my goo-, goo-, good pillow, pure and white! Oh my little Elsa! My good pillow, white and pure like a swan. Do you hear me? Swan, my swan, do you hear me? Oh, it is really you! It's you!
Scene III	How everything is white in this hour, on the shore... And the crowd: frightened green and gray eyes in expectation... Elsa! Elsa! Elsa, lost vestal, your breast has known caresses other than the ones of the distant moon; profane hands have unfastened the belt and broken the seal of your little solitudes! Elsa! Elsa! Elsa!

Figure 4.4. (continued).

	One teaspoon only. Ah! Every two hours... What silence! I believe in my innocence. A cruel misapprehension – my God, how much gossip! Elsa! Elsa! Elsa! Elsa, now contemplate the Goddess for the last time, according to the rite. If your betrothed does not appear after three summonses in order to defend you, your eyes, Elsa, your lovely eyes will be... Give me a mirror first!
Scene IV	Good knight who appeared to me one night riding a great shining swan! Would you thus desert your slave? Fatal knight, my eyes are at your mercy, with mad looks I shall be close to you ... Gentle Knight, I am not yet eighteen. But if I tell you that he will come! He promised me...

Figure 4.4. (continued).

	I am beautiful, beautiful, beautiful! Like an incarnate look! I will follow you. And I will remain suspended from the light of your forehead and forget to grow old. Enshrined in your trailing light, I will have shined a little... Ah, here he is! Here he is!
<i>Swan Song</i>	Would you wish to cloak yourself in my displaced Being?
<i>Epilogue</i>	Bells of beautiful Sunday over tranquil provinces! Joy of clean linen, as if it hadn't been soiled all week! Ah, bells that ring just so... Bells etc. ...

Figure 4.4. (continued).

Shifting between different roles, Elsa's voice involves an extensive range of extended vocal techniques.⁵⁰ While on the foreground level, the web of recurring instrumental modules seems to sew all the verbal signs together in a space that suspends any sense of linear temporality, on the middleground level, the combination of these gestures is often patterned in Window Form. This is most intricately exemplified in Scene I. Based on the same recording used for **Figure 4.2**, **Figure 4.5** reproduces the distribution of key sound modules in real time in the last 40 seconds of the Prologue (1'21" long in total) and most of Scene I (up to 8'20" out of the full length of 10'22").⁵¹ The sound modules in the Y-axis are arranged in a sequence that highlights the formal function of each module and the structural connection between certain modules. These modules cover Elsa's (or Lohengrin's) speech, a selection of vocal techniques, labeled as "barking," "turtledove cry" (kr~), "peep," "cooing," "gallop" and "gasp", and instrumental gestures including the "cicadas and crickets" effect (strings), tongue stroke and flutter-tonguing (woods), trills (flute or clarinet), pedal note (cello), "jet-whistle" (flute), harmonic volatiles (strings), "wa-wa" (trumpet and trombone), and the "breathing" and "heart-beating" effects.

The diagram gives a direct impression of how the sound objects are grouped and sometimes formed into repetitive patterns. For a music whose logic of sound connection is based on discontinuity and intermittency, grouping and chunking become decisive in creating hierarchies within the non-linear form. Sciarrino claims that "the relationship between isolated figures or groupings of figures into logical units of different sizes is functional, teleological. Neither chance nor mutual indifference."⁵² To organize figures in a "functional" or "teleological" way means to optimize a listener's perception of the meaningful formal relationship between these figures. A basic principle underlying this approach is the chunk phenomenon that has been studied in the fields of musical psychology and phenomenology. Chunk is obviously a metaphor referring to the "mental images" of what we have heard.⁵³ Rolf Inge Godøy defines chunking as our mind's ability to cut up or segment continuous streams of auditory information and turn it into "more

⁵⁰ For an overview of the full range of module types and their techniques for production, see **Table 1a** and **1b** in the **Appendix**.

⁵¹ The design of this diagram indebted to the time-material diagram produced in a similar form for the Scene I of *Lohengrin* by Carlo Carratelli. See Carratelli 2006, 327.

⁵² "La relation entre les figures isolées ou les regroupements de figures en unités logiques de différentes tailles sont de nature fonctionnelle, téléologique. Ni hasard ni indifférence réciproque". Feneyrou 2013, 146.

⁵³ For definition of chunking and the significance of chunking for musical analysis, see Rolf Inge Godøy, "Chunking Sound for Musical Analysis" and Kristoffer Jensen and Ole Kühl, "Towards a Model of Musical Chunks" in *Computer Music Modeling and Retrieval. Genesis of Meaning in Sound and Music*, ed. Solvi Ystad et al. Berlin: Springer, 2008, 67–80; 81–92.

compact, solid, and tractable entities”.⁵⁴ A chunk as a relatively closed entity is “holistically perceived as somehow meaningful units”.⁵⁵ In terms of formal function, chunking is of vital importance for stretching the limits of short-term memory and for optimizing long-term memory storage and retrieval.⁵⁶ As a kind of small groupings that can be associated with each other and thereby form higher-level units, they facilitate “structured hierarchies of associations”.⁵⁷ Sciarrino’s module-based music naturally avails of the principle of easy chunking and its advantage for enhancing memory. In *Lobengrin*, to make chunk boundaries memorable over a long time span involves organizing the modules into easily recognizable constellations and to augment their spatial-geometrical quality for perception. For example, the four successive squares highlighted in grey-blue in **Figure 4.5** illustrate an exceptionally simple case in the music where a seemingly stochastic distribution of sound objects within a two-minute span are chunked into four recursive patterns. Here each individual chunk comprises Elsa’s “cooing” and the tongue-striking and flutter-tonguing gestures on the woodwinds, ending with a single “peep” whose high-pitched timbre and rhythmic brevity bring the chunk to its dynamic peak and closure.

The notion of chunking serves as a foil to our understanding of the Window Form in *Lobengrin*. In such forms, chunks or fragments of various types recur over a long time-span. Those that belong to the same group make up a distinctive sonic “path”, and listeners perceive multiple “paths” intermittently if they can identify the different identities of these chunks or fragments. The often momentary exposure to a “path” has significant implications for the dramaturgy of *Lobengrin*. As Carratelli argues, Window Form has the task of mimicking the mental and associative paths of consciousness. “Each path...has its own space-time dimension, its own direction, its own narrative and dramaturgy level, its own scale of ‘physiological’ magnitude”.⁵⁸ Sciarrino’s formal ideal is to compose what he calls “parallel paths” instead of “a rectilinear process”, so as to simulate in music the “short circuit of memory”, a phenomenon reminiscent of cued

⁵⁴ Ystad 2008, 71.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 69.

⁵⁶ Snyder 2000, 54. Bernard Baars, *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 37.

⁵⁷ On the role that chunking plays in memory, Snyder writes, “chunking is the consolidation of small groups of associated memory elements”. It is “one of the ways in which short- and long-term memory interact and work together”. “A chunk can itself become (through strengthening of associations) an element in a larger chunk. In this way, chunking leads to the creation of structured hierarchies of associations”. Snyder 2000, 53–5.

⁵⁸ “Ciascun frammento appartiene ad un percorso di cui l’ascoltatore percepisce dei brandelli in modo intermittente, integrando i momenti di vuoto. Ciascun percorso, a sua volta, possiede una dimensione spazio-temporale sua propria, una propria direzione, un proprio livello narrativo e drammaturgico, una propria scala di grandezza ‘fisiologica’”. Carratelli 2006, 326.

recall or Proust's *mémoire involontaire*.⁵⁹ With its fragmentation and unpredictability, the Window Form seeks to achieve a sense of objectivity, something that resists being controlled by our conscious mind. Sciarrino metaphorically explains that the fragments constituting a path are essentially “false fragments”. After all, as he puts it, they do not necessarily piece together into an authentic, unitary whole.⁶⁰

One of the most striking examples of Window Form in *Lohengrin* is built around Elsa's gasp, a gesture that presumably suggests Elsa's sudden waking from dream. It can be seen from the eight “X” marks in **Figure 4.2** that the gasp module repetitively punctuates the music throughout the work. It appears three times in Scene I. **Figure 4.5** shows its first two appearances (marked as “X”). The first gasp at the end of the Prologue marks Elsa's reaction to the devastating moment of Lohengrin's departure. This is followed by a short line (“the cushion, the cushion!”) which seems to signal Elsa's coming into consciousness. Both gasps are coupled with “barking” and the “insects-buzzing” figure on the strings (as the yellow squares indicate), which significantly intensifies the nocturnal atmosphere. Although Sciarrino specifies in the score that the “barking” should be produced in a way that resembles “dogs barking afar”, it seems that, as will become clearer later in the discussion, the figure is equally likely to be perceived as a symbol of Elsa's emotion—her panting in fear. It is not until nearly the end of Scene I that Elsa wakes up again gasping for air, intoning in a soft voice: “I've dreamt of you...” The “barking” and the “insects-buzzing” sneak back in, and their combination with the gasp recapitulates a familiar moment that has been heard at the end of the Prologue. The two homogenous sound constellations hence stand out as a unit with a specified meaning and formally enclose the music in between into a bracket. Conceivably, the periodicity of the gasp in Scene I (with a third one concluding the scene) reveals not only a hidden musical path, but also a “mental path” that witnesses Elsa's constant shifting between the worlds she sees in dream and in reality.

⁵⁹ In an interview, Sciarrino states: “I am looking for a new idea of form: it is a search for parallel paths, which I call the short circuit of memory. To compose then is not to conduct a rectilinear process, but to make use of fragments”. (“...Io cerco una nuova idea della forma: è una ricerca che riguarda i percorsi paralleli, e che io chiamo il corto circuito della memoria. Comporre allora non è condurre un processo rettilineo, ma servirsi di frammenti”.) Sciarrino, as cited in Carretelli 2006, 144.

⁶⁰ Sciarrino writes, “[G]radual processes of accumulation and rarefaction are usual in today's music. But they are spread out over an arc of predictability. Formally *Lohengrin* rejects them, in order to simulate the objectivity of a montage, as if it were putting together the pieces of a totality that never existed. It perpetuates the mystery of a music that comes “from elsewhere”—the appearances of a *film of music*, made possible only by the complete evidence of the language obtained”. Sciarrino 2001a, 83.

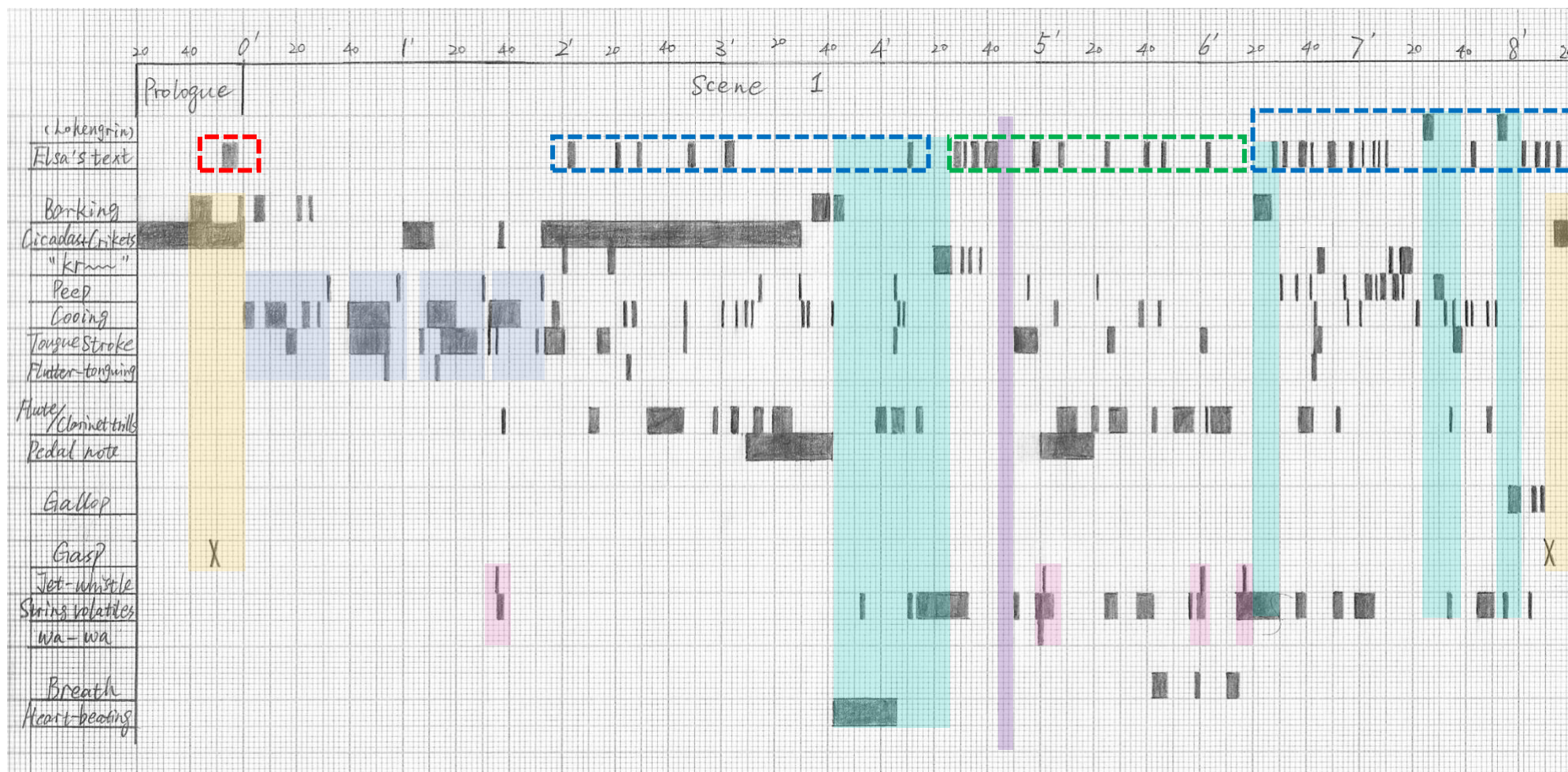


Figure 4.5. Diagram of key sound modules unfolding in real time, Prologue and most of Scene I, *Lohengrin* (0'40" to 8'20")

* dashed squares in red, blue and green represent Elsa(Lohengrin)'s speech in different modalities

One example of Window Form created on a global level that spans the whole opera is based on a group of modules combined “vertically”: the “jet-whistle” gesture on flute, “multiphonics” on oboe, clarinet and bassoon, “harmonic volatiles” on strings, and “wa-wa” effect on trumpet and trombone (see the last four categories on Y-axis in **Figure 4.2**). Derived from the core material that prefaces the Prologue, the configuration of these modules brings in paroxysms of turbulence, creating “cuts” in musical space that resembles open windows. Although fleeting in its form, the constellation is perceived as one of the most identifiable chunks in the opera. A partially reduced version of the constellation appears repeatedly in Scene I, as highlighted in the pink squares in **Figure 4.5**. Semantically, the alerting effect of these “cuts” relates both to nocturnal threats in the physical environment and the intermittent incursion of Elsa’s trauma, given that the material is originally associated with Lohengrin’s escape in the Prologue. It is at the end of Scene III and, particularly, in the climatic “Swan Song” section, that this constellation receives its most extensive recapitulation (see **Figure 4.2**) since its exposition at the very beginning of the opera. A long path is revealed in between, which renders the Epilogue a formal annexe and hence a differentiated musical and narrative space.

Using Window Form to simulate the “short circuit of memory” is exemplary of Sciarrino’s predilection for forms that are ecologically adapted to the ways in which our musical perception and memory work. Sciarrino claims that “each work, in its composition, alternates sublime moments with accessory, functional parts in relation to the evolution of the piece”.⁶¹ This statement implies Sciarrino’s tendency to structure musical material according to the contrasting effects produced by what Snyder describes as the low- and high-information strategies.⁶² As my analysis of the woodwind figures in *Lohengrin* has demonstrated (Chapter 2), the similar modules as recurring variants are difficult to identify and remember individually. They sabotage the listener’s memory of minor differences and give the impression that the music is constantly varying in relation to the nearest past, but such difference is perceptually redundant. This auditory experience is studied by Snyder as the “memory interference effect”, a phenomenon related to the low-information strategies. Usually highly repetitive, music of low information exhibits a low degree of

⁶¹ “Chaque œuvre, dans sa rédaction, alterne des moments sublimes et des parties accessoires, fonctionnelles, par rapport à l’évolution de la pièce.” Sciarrino in Feneyrou 2013, 146.

⁶² Snyder 1988, 235–7.

change and only contains bare minimum of contrast necessary to sustain interest.⁶³ What Sciarrino refers to as “sublime moments”, in contrast, are moments that immediately stand out for listeners. These moments contain strong cue events, and, for listeners, the chunking boundaries of these events are perceived as more salient than others. In Snyder’s theory, such musical perception is linked to “high-information events”, that is, events unexpected or unpredictable and thus would be likely to be remembered.⁶⁴ This sort of event plays a role in long-term music memory thanks to the fact that “a particular chunk can cue (remind one of) another particularly salient chunk that is some distance in the future, and not immediately adjacent”.⁶⁵ Therefore, our long-term memory of a piece of music, in its initial formation, is likely to be “peppered” with episodic memories of events that were particularly striking or novel in some way.⁶⁶

Much of Snyder’s observation about strong cue events is relevant to the perception of the temporal structure of *Lohengrin*, a significant feature of which is the interaction between moments of low and high information. In the example discussed previously, the abrupt “cuts” of the sonic vortex stand out and mark the beginning, ending and some middle points in the opera as exceptionally memorable despite the overall impression of a temporal stasis. Salient chunks of sound constellation are brought into contact with each other by virtue of both musical and dramaturgical means. Four moments in Scene I, highlighted in turquoise squares in **Figure 4.5**, are likely to be heard as chunked units of strong cue events. With the aid of the text, they piece together a narrative stratum devoted to a close portrait of Elsa’s response towards what Lohengrin says and does—often a rush of intense consternation and physical symptoms of fear. The four moments are associated with each other by cognate components including the volatile gesture of string harmonics and miscellaneous elements that tend to be perceived as a reflection of Elsa’s panic—a feeling that overwhelms her to the point that she has to retreat into her animalistic states.

As **Example 4.1** shows, the first of these moments arrives at around 3’40”, with core material including the “string volatiles,” two vocal figures, “barking” and “turtledove-cry,” both used in particular places in the opera as an expression of anxiety and a token of Elsa’s troubled identity.⁶⁷ Following the

⁶³ Snyder, 1988, 236–7.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 221–2.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 222.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 221.

⁶⁷ The effect of “turtledove cry” is specified in the score (“il verso d’una tortora”).

“barking” is a novel figure in the bassoon part whose rhythmic profile clearly imitates the accelerating heart rate. The momentary amplification of heart-beating is a strong signal that prompts listeners to take the subject position of Elsa, who nervously asks—“Why do you no longer address me confidentially?” The question triggers a blast of glossy trills and glissandi on the strings, in the ripples of which Elsa turns into a turtledove-cry (the “Kr~” figure). At around 6’27”, as the second square shows, Elsa further confirms Lohengrin’s indifference (“Ah, you don’t love me!”), and this is similarly preceded by the “barking” figure and accompanied by a whirlwind in the strings. At 7’24”, again, the nonchalant groom gives Elsa such a fright saying, “Oh, you will regret telling me this for the rest of your life!” that Elsa reacts with a spasm of shrieks (the “peep” figure). However, the awkwardness of the vocal gesture makes it hard to tell if she is no more than performing her role as an obedient bride. This little turmoil is quickly stopped by the “cooing” figure. The fact that it is echoed by the tongue-striking on bassoon, which resembles the sound of flapping wings, enhances an animal-related imagery. But, as is often the case in Sciarrino’s opera, the “cooing” figure soon morphs into a retching gesture that implies Elsa’s physical and mental discomfort. In the last of the four moments (7’53”), Elsa’s attention is met with Lohengrin’s apathetic “Pay no heed”. As in the previous examples, Elsa reacts with vocal gestures that disclose a both confusing and confused subjectivity. The “gallop” figure, produced by teeth chattering in a gallop rhythm, straddles in between the image of a horse (an obvious allusion to what is mentioned in Elsa’s phrase that follows, “Gracious knight...”) and the image of a body shivering in fear.⁶⁸ The fright leads to Elsa’s second awakening.

⁶⁸ James Bunch argues that Elsa’s imitation of the clatter of hooves may be heard as a reference to the “noble horse” topic, but rendered in its “dysphoric” version which underlines Elsa’s tragic situation. See Bunch, “A Polyphony of the Mind: Intertextuality in the Music of Salvatore Sciarrino”, Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016.

18

28

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cr.

Tc.

Trbn.

Elsa

Tcn.

Bar.

Bs.

I

Vln

II

Vle

Vc.

Cb.

4/4

(pp)

f

(pp)

ad libitum

p

pp

a poco a poco

Example 4.1. *Lohengrin*, Scene I, Rehearsal number 28–29

19

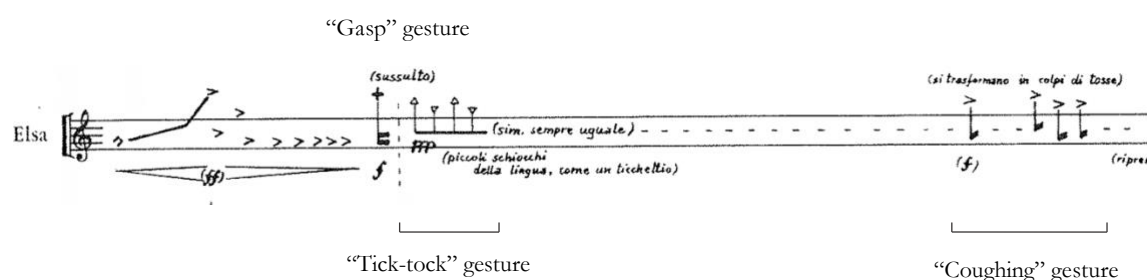
174

Musical score for Example 4.1 (continued). The score is written for a large ensemble and includes the following parts:

- Fl.** (Flute): Features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo).
- Ob.** (Oboe): Resting.
- Cl.** (Clarinet): Resting.
- Fg.** (Bassoon): Resting.
- Cx.** (Trumpet): Resting.
- Tc.** (Trombone): Resting.
- Tbn.** (Trombone): Resting.
- Elsa**: A vocal part with a melodic line and a dynamic marking of *KR* (Kraft).
- Ten.** (Tenor): Resting.
- Bar.** (Baritone): Resting.
- Bs.** (Bass): Resting.
- I** (Violin I): Features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *pp*.
- II** (Violin II): Features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *pp*.
- Vlc.** (Viola): Features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *pp*.
- Vc.** (Violoncello): Features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *pp*.
- Cb.** (Contrabass): Features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *pp*.

Example 4.1. (continued).

The grouping of modules according to a spatial principle means that even silences *per se* can be structured as memorable cue events. In Scene I at around 4'27", Elsa recalls her entry into the nuptial villa in a past voice. Echoing the last phrase of her speech, "...with uneasiness and the silence," a silent interval of almost seven seconds long stands out for the listener (highlight in the purple square in **Figure 4.6**). A more prominent case in which silence is perceived as a strong cue event can be found in Scene III, the scene of congregation. Just over the halfway point in the scene, a sudden gasp from Elsa brings the crowd scene to a halt. What follows unexpectedly is a sequence of "click-clack" sounds, an imitation of the tick-tock of a clock, which opens a "window" in both the sonic and the narrative space-time (**Example 4.2**).⁶⁹



Example 4.2: A moment of self-reference to the perception of real-time duration in *Lohengrin*, Scene III

This is another example where the listener tends to find him- or herself taking the subject position of Elsa—the clock-ticking in the background is a signal of Elsa’s consciousness emerging from dream. An intermittent cough is then heard, accompanied by three gentle gasps—she wakes up. The intrusion of the nurse’s line (“Just one spoonful, ah! Every two hours...”) gives a strong clue to the clinical setting that is unexpectedly revealed.⁷⁰ This minute-long passage of near-silence is comprised of vocal gestures not conventionally considered as “musical”, and it contains bare minimum of structural information. In *Lohengrin*, listeners’ awareness of musical time is predominantly determined by structural information perceived in relation to real-time duration in more general, non-musical contexts instead of within a

⁶⁹ For description of the technique used to produce the “Tick-tock” figure, see module 21 in **Table 1a** in Appendix.

⁷⁰ The nurse’s line is originally from Laforgue’s poem *Les linges, le cygne*. The poem also deals with the Lohengrin myth, and the presence of a bleak hospital scene in the poem may be considered as a direct inspiration for Pier’Alli’s subversive adaptation.

continuous hierarchical metrical framework.⁷¹ This passage of extensive blankness, in particular, is likely to strike listeners as a revelation that we do not switch off the outside world when listening to music. As Glover, Gottschalk and Harrison suggest, “our perceptions of temporal flow in musical listening are a part of our wider awareness of temporality”.⁷² The on-and-off clock-ticking gesture may even be read as an example of the music’s self-reflexive reference to the perception of real-time duration. Evidence from psychological studies of time perception suggests that, in listening to music, our attention is divided between strictly durational properties and information properties. This means that when listeners are strongly focused, their judgements of proportion are based primarily on structural information rather than duration”.⁷³ In the case of Elsa’s “tick-tock” gesture, however, the listener’s perception of the developing structural information tends to overlap with the perception of duration which relies on each individual’s “internal clock”. Because, rhythmically, Elsa’s “tick-tock” gesture is rendered almost realistic, the music is thus perceived as temporally “living in” the real-time flow.

Starting with an account of the linear and non-linear constructions in the music of *Lohengrin* on multiple formal levels and how these constructions contribute to the semanticization of form, this section addresses diverse aspects of the temporal experiences that listeners may encounter in *Lohengrin*. While a goal-directed linear structure can be observed on a high formal level, rather similar to that in *Luci mie traditrici*, the music is predominantly characterized by a multilayered construction of discontinuity and intermittency—a counterpoint of Window Forms at various scales. The musical-dramatic analysis of a series of examples associated with varied versions of Window Forms in the opera is guided by two primary issues: first, the various compositional means involved in the formation of the music’s spatialized temporality demonstrate Sciarrino’s concern with sonic forms that are ecologically or psychologically optimized for the ways we perceive and remember music; second, by simulating the “mental or associative paths of consciousness” and by encouraging the listener to take the subject-position of Elsa,

⁷¹ Clarke suggests that in non-metrical contemporary music, listeners are forced to base judgements of segmental length on durational properties because of the absence of a hierarchical structure of regular integer-related time-spans. The internal representation of formal musical units relies upon “the same mechanisms for duration perception as are involved in everyday time perceptions”. Clarke, “Levels of Structure in the Organization of Musical Time”, *Contemporary Music Review*, 1987(2/1), 232.

⁷² Richard Glover, Jennie Gottschalk, and Bryn Harrison, *Being Time: Case Studies in Musical Temporality*, New York, 2019, 1.

⁷³ Clarke 1987, 232.

the multi-dimensional space-time affords the perception of intricate meanings related to a mind or a subjectivity with pathological abnormality.

Becoming – *contra* Mimesis

As the previous analyses have shown, Sciarrino's composition situates the listener at the centre of Elsa's mental landscape, as if to let the listener perceive *for* Elsa what happens inside and outside of her body. Boundaries often seem to dissolve between the generically mimetic sonic environment and Elsa's animalistic becoming, which is, arguably, one of the most eccentric aspects of the opera. The final section of this chapter has a twofold purpose: with *Lohengrin* serving as a special example, it tries to reappraise Sciarrino's mimetic sonic writing in the new theoretical light, leading to further observations on what Elsa's mimicry itself means in terms of the picturing of a contemporary operatic subjectivity.

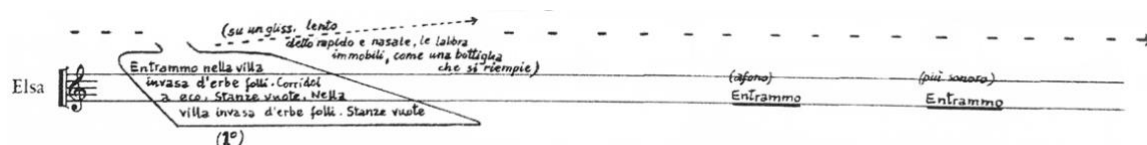
In "Conoscere e riconoscere", Sciarrino reflects from a linguistic perspective on the potential danger lurking in a highly "illusive" (or, mimetic) musical language—the danger of the music's association with certain referents being so stiff that they confine our perception in an unproductive way:

Possessing a high degree of illusionism for a language is equivalent to having invented a vehicle of communication so lucid as to mortify its own charm. And the obligatory transit through recognizability, through the commonplace, is an extreme cue to self-parody, since it burns in advance every possible "way" ...⁷⁴

In *Lohengrin*, the iconic immediacy of Sciarrino's language is most palpably manifested in those micro-gestures that prevail in the first three scenes, which are mostly onomatopoeic. Extra-musical referents are specified in the score for some of the gestures through text (for example, "come tubando") or graphical notation (**Example 4.3**). Arguably, the perceptual immediacy of these gestures *per se* is compelling enough for listeners to receive them as aural signs. The way in which the semantics are specified exemplifies the

⁷⁴ "Possedere un alto grado di illusionismo per un linguaggio equivale ad aver inventato un veicolo di comunicazione tanto lucido da mortificare il suo stesso fascino. E il transito obbligato nella riconoscibilità, nel luogo comune, è spunto estremo alla parodia di se stessi, poiché brucia in anticipo ogni possibile 'maniera'". Sciarrino 2001a, 83.

interpretation of what has been defined by Naomi Cumming as aural icon.⁷⁵ With the aid of the dramatic context, they lure listeners into a reservoir of associations and evocations. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the “ghostly” quality of these signs is so disturbing that scholars like Carratelli and Angius have come up with different interpretations of the extra-musical referents with which these gestures could possibly be associated.



Example 4.3. Graphical notation for speech with the effect of “bottle-being-filled-up-with-liquid” in *Lohengrin*, Scene II

Suffering from echolalia, Elsa resorts to a pre-linguistic vocality. While some of the vocal gestures, such as the gasp, the yawn, the retch and the cough, are delivered realistically as in an everyday context, many others can be fittingly heard as aural icons related to animals (dog, turtledove, pigeon, horse), natural elements (winds and waves), and even sounding objects—a bottle being filled up with liquid, dripping water or bursting bubbles, a ticking clock.⁷⁶ Some instrumental gestures, such as breathing, heart-beating and ringing in the ears, exteriorize Elsa’s physical symptoms. Other instrumental gestures often possess a kind of iconic immediacy that is “double-coded”. While they are likely to be heard as projecting Elsa’s perception of the surrounding environment (such as insects buzzing, beating of wings, mammal’s grunts, waves, and the sheen of moonlight), they also index Elsa’s psychological and affective states via their intrinsic sonic properties.

Sciarrino suggests that in the aesthetic sphere, and particularly in his own practice, mimesis is conceived as a form of “allusionism” or “illusionism”, which embraces varied degrees of realism in different cases.⁷⁷ One implication of this is that Sciarrino places the locus of his mimetic conceit in the reception

⁷⁵ See Cumming 2000, 86–93. In an aural icon, indexing properties are retained and embedded within iconicity. When a shriek, for instance, is taken from a real event and heard in a musical context, its “indexing” of distress may still be heard within that sound *per se*. The musical shriek hence becomes an aural icon of distress.

⁷⁶ **Table 1a** and **1b** in Appendix describe the playing techniques used to produce these instrumental and vocal gestures. These particular techniques by themselves—even without the musical and dramatic context—may provide some clues to the extra-musical referents with which these gestures can possibly be associated.

⁷⁷ Sciarrino 2001a, 132.

more than the creation end of music. He attributes the repulsion that today's professional musicians feel for musical descriptivism to their fear, or rather their misconception, that reality can be faithfully imitated:

The bourgeois concept of “descriptivism” probably shuns reality for fear that it might actually be imitated, and that the false be similar to the true. And the angel counterfeited by the devil. The incarnations of the duplicate, the apparitions in the mirror, the madness, and Proteus, the clues of our fear.⁷⁸

For Sciarrino, reality is never settled, and it cannot be so easily copied. What matters is how the real world is *perceived*—mimetic expression is nourished by perception and is constantly refined by studying the ever subtler perception of reality.⁷⁹ Reality in art, moreover, can always be confounded with fabrication. The arbitrariness or artificiality inherent in mimetic expression can be transformed into creative results. In a conversation with Jean-Christophe Bailly, Sciarrino reflects on the song of the blackbird—a bird species capable of reproducing the sounds they hear—that inspired the flute music in Scene V of *Luci mie traditrici*.⁸⁰ The sonic image of two blackbirds close to each other singing in antiphonal imitation (with noticeable changes) provides the model for this scene. This is transformed into the material of the solo flute which contains a muted, capricious gesture recurring irregularly, with the birdsong model reduced to a faint “subcutaneous” trace. Importantly, according to Sciarrino, an obvious distortion is wanted for this particular moment. Blackbird song should be exclusively antiphonal, whereas here in the scene the music is modelled on a solitary blackbird. The mimesis, which is rendered “absolutely unrealistic”, creates an aberrant situation that signifies the changing mood in the drama.⁸¹ In contrast with the presence of two flutes in the music before Scene V, the single flute represents an ill omen that foreshadows the murder of the duchess.

As Sciarrino himself has asserted, at the heart of his music is the tension between realism and illusion.⁸² This explains why an examination of referentiality, or simply an intuitive search for associations, becomes

⁷⁸ “Il concetto borghese di ‘descrittivismo’ sfugge la realtà probabilmente nel timore che possa davvero essere imitata, e il falso esser simile al vero. E l’angelo contraffatto dal demonio. Le incarnazioni del Duplice, le apparizioni nello specchio, la follia, Protea, cifre della nostra paura”. Sciarrino 2001a, 83.

⁷⁹ See Sciarrino 2001a, 83.

⁸⁰ Sciarrino in Ferneyrou 2013, 64.

⁸¹ Ibid. 64.

⁸² Laurent Feneyrou, “Silenzio dell’oracolo”, in *Omaggio a Salvatore Sciarrino*, ed. Enzo Restagno, Torino: Divisione Servizi Culturali della Città di Torino, 2012, 13, accessed digitally on 27 May 2021: <https://www.byterfly.eu/islandora/object/librib:910408#page/15/mode/1up>.

an almost irresistible “impulse” felt by the listeners when hearing this music. What defines a listening experience like this is an unsettling ambiguity caused by a haunted sonic immediacy and a nomadic (hence always escaping) referentiality. Sciarrino describes this as the “doubling” or “duplicating” (*doppio*) effect.⁸³ Elsa’s “cooing”, as mentioned before, simultaneously resembles a swallow or retch gesture. In Scene II, a new vocal sonority—the noise made by the tongue stirring saliva between teeth and lips (see module 14 in **Table 1a** in Appendix)—is introduced in the context of Elsa’s request for intimacy. For Angius, this sonority represents the squishy body fluid that explicitly suggests sex.⁸⁴ For Carratelli, the possible source of the sound could either be wallowing or flapping in the mud or feral nails scraping on a bedsheet.⁸⁵

Sciarrino’s mimetic sound gestures are closer to evocation, haunting, possession and even ventriloquism than to the slightly clichéd and outdated imitation. Pondering on the nature of such sonic association, Sciarrino writes, “like flowers in a bouquet: things seem to blend with each other, but in reality, it is only given to us to put them together”.⁸⁶ Sciarrino uses the term “assemblage” as a metaphor to describe the relationship between the stimulus and the associations it brings into life.⁸⁷ The link between the two is not guaranteed by a homogeneity between the object and the subject. Neither it is about a coercive addition or superposition. It may be argued that there is a potential connection between this idea of assemblage and concepts like affordance, as discussed in Chapter 1. To repeat an argument central to this thesis again: hearing sound as a sign touches the core of ecological thinking. This potentially explains why Sciarrino attaches to the phenomenon of sonic association a unique humanistic value. Seeing it as the “vehicle and path of recognition”, the “cause of syntony of immediate affinity (or repulsion)”, Sciarrino believes that association passes the individual into the collective level and has become part of our human nature.⁸⁸

⁸³ See Angius 2020, 103–4. Also see Sciarrino, Giacco, Feneyrou, 2012, 36.

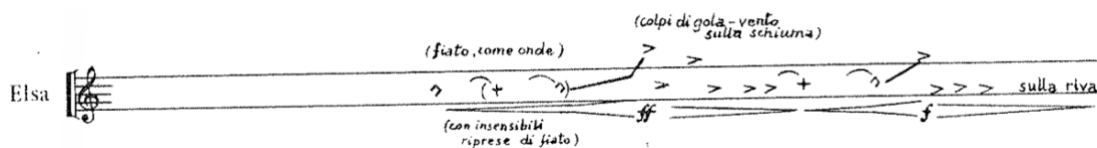
⁸⁴ See Angius 2020, 106.

⁸⁵ Carratelli 2006, 523.

⁸⁶ Sciarrino, Giacco, Feneyrou 2012, 31–3.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 33.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 32.



Example 4.4. Scene III, *Lohengrin*, between rehearsal number 4 and 7

What, then, does Elsa's obsessive mimicry itself tell us about the condition of human subjectivity? Let us consider a final example from the opera where Elsa, by combining miscellaneous vocal gestures in a sequence, constantly changes in her affective encounter with the other. Circulating in Scene III, these gestures make up a compound unit which establishes within itself a fluid continuity between the sounds of wind and wave (as indicated in the score) and the human sounds of sucking and coughing (**Example 4.4**). In Elsa's oscillation between speech and pre-linguistic vocality, the elemental (wind and water) and the human (noise made by breath and saliva) seem to enter into a zone of mutual becoming.

This passage represents a most remarkable moment in the opera which offers a glimpse of what Nicholas Till describes as Elsa's "porous, and often depleted, subjectivity".⁸⁹ Instead of regarding it as a regression, however, this chapter argues that there is a radical element in the depletion of a secure, bounded sense of self. I suggest that the paradigm-shifting potential in Sciarrino's mimetic aesthetic—and, more importantly, the particular implications it has for the notion of subjectivity—may be better revealed and conceptualized through the Deleuzian notion of becoming. Becoming is one concept among many Deleuze uses for the proposition of a nomadic philosophy which zeroes in on the logic of identity and noncontradiction in the Aristotelian tradition.⁹⁰ Nomadic thought enables us to discern singularities or hybrids that might not have been recognized as such in the more established categories of traditional philosophy. The principal objective of the work of Deleuze and Guattari, to adopt their idiom, is to replace arborescent structures of thought with rhizomatic ones, to call for deterritorialization rather than territorialization, becoming rather than being.

⁸⁹ Till 2013, 56.

⁹⁰ See Eric Prieto, "Deleuze, Music and Modernist Mimesis", in *Essays on Music and the Spoken Word and on Surveying the Field*, ed. Suzanne M. Lodato, David Francis Urrows, Rodopi: Amsterdam, 2005, 9.

The opposition that Deleuze and Guattari draw between the molar and the molecular or the idea of becoming-molecular may provide a shortcut for us to understand becoming. To become means for Deleuze and Guattari to break down molar aggregates in favour of molecules. Initially introduced by Guattari, the terms molar and molecular are borrowed from chemistry.⁹¹ Mole is originally a counting number. The molar mass of a chemical compound is defined as the bulk of samples of that compound. Molecule is something very different: it means a bunch of atoms connected to each other to make something. To explain what a molecule is in terms of its relationship with the concept of mole, one might use the expression “a mole of molecule”, as molecules constitute a part of a molar mass. For Deleuze and Guattari, in brief, molarity represents the site of coded wholes and hence a metaphor for the mode of being. The molecular, in contrast, is a partial, infra-conceptual object. It escapes and exceeds structure and is constantly in a semi-stable state or process.

Central to nomadic thinking are precisely the infra-conceptual relations of a molecular scale, as opposed to the conceptually defined resemblances of a molar scale. Elaborating on the idea of becoming in scientific terms, Deleuze and Guattari argue that becoming always involves a double changing process; the two parts in becoming enter a “zone of indiscernibility”, sharing proximities between their “molecules in composition, relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between emitted particles”.⁹² Becoming is an exposure of the deterritorialized part in an entire heterogeneity. A subject in the process of becoming no longer occupies a realm of stability and identity but is instead folded imperceptibly into a movement—from major to minor, unity to complexity, organization to chaos.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the term imitation is entangled with becoming.⁹³ For Deleuze and Guattari, what essentially distinguishes becoming from imitation is that only becoming is generative of new values and functions. Becoming is neither progression nor regression; it is involution, a kind of creative evolution between heterogeneous terms.⁹⁴ While imitation aims for resemblance, becoming is a result of influence or affect. Imitating a spider is not the *entirety* of becoming-spider. That, instead, would be just a person

⁹¹ For discussion of the idea of becoming-molecular, see François Dosse, “Deleuze and Structuralism”, *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, David W. Smith ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 139–40.

⁹² Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, 320–2, 342, 355–7.

⁹³ For an insightful discussion of the entanglements of imitation and representation with becoming, see Prieto 2005, 3–20.

⁹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 278–9.

signifying a spider, not becoming it. Imitating a given example will always be confined to the logic of mapping procedures (a demarcated region a *signifies* region b). In imitation, humans and spiders remain molar beings. However, in the dance of Tarantella, which is seen by Deleuze and Guattari as an example of becoming, one goes within him- or herself and finds those elements (or molecules) that already are part of the assemblage of “venomous spider biting people”, the whirling, the hysterics, the ecstasy, and simultaneously, it is through the becoming-spider of the music-dance that the molecular spider becomes sound, colour, orchestra and painting.⁹⁵ Becoming also distinguishes itself from representation. The problem with representation, Eric Prieto argues, is that “it has become so entrenched in our thought patterns that it has become all but impossible for us to think about individuals directly, without the mediation of the concept. As a result, all direct experiences of becoming and difference melt away before the abstractive, generalizing work of conceptual, representational thought”.⁹⁶

We can relate Prieto’s critique of representation to music by considering a definition of musical representation offered by Roger Scruton. Scruton suggests that the conceptualization of a subject or thought is an essential part of our understanding of representation:

A man understands a representational work of art only if he gains some awareness of what it represents...Representation requires a medium, and is understood only when the distinction between subject and medium has been recognized...to represent an object is to convey a thought about it...To understand a representation is to understand the thought which it conveys; it is therefore to have some grasp of the context which completes that thought. In the absence of such a context representation is vague and indeterminate...⁹⁷

What Scruton means by the necessary awareness of a context is conceivable in musical examples like Schubert’s *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (1814). Listeners are likely to hear the whirling arpeggio on piano as a spinning wheel only when they—if not already informed of the work’s title—are aware of the isomorphic relation between the piano pattern as a representational medium and the visual and auditory impression of a spinning wheel as a subject. In other words, to understand what the music represents listeners first need to “decode” the formalized language of the music. Without such a “deciphering” process, what the music

⁹⁵ Ibid. 355.

⁹⁶ Prieto 2005, 8.

⁹⁷ Roger Scruton, “Representation in Music”, *Philosophy*, 1976 (51/197), 273, 276.

represents remains “vague and indeterminate.” Paramount in musical representation hence is a conceptualization of the relation between the represented subject and the medium used to represent it.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari draw heavily from the ontology of music to develop the concept of becoming. They discuss numerous examples of becoming offered by the works of Western art music—for instance, the becoming-women/child of men in the singing of countertenor or castrati tradition, the becoming-sonorous of birds and horses in Mozart’s music, and the tendency of an instrumentalization of voice since Schumann’s *lieder*.⁹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari also observe in the recent evolution of musical language a significant shift from music’s “becoming-animal” to “becoming-insect”, especially in compositions of Wagner, Debussy, Varèse and Messiaen. For both authors, a cosmic, elementary power enters increasingly into these composers’ music, be it the “aquaticism” and the “atomization” of the motif in Wagner or the combination of child/woman with water/sea in Debussy, the ionization and the synthesizing “sound machine” in Varèse or the coalescence of a multitude of durations in Messiaen.⁹⁹ The ever greater degree of molecularization of musical material amounts to “a becoming-music of the world”:

...birds are still as important, yet the reign of birds seems to have been replaced by the age of insects, with its much more molecular vibrations, chirring, rustling, buzzing, clicking, scratching, and scraping. Birds are vocal, but insects are instrumental: drums and violins, guitars and cymbals [...] The insect is closer, better able to make audible the truth that all becomings are molecular (cf. *ondes Martenot*, electronic music). The molecular has the capacity to make the elementary communicate with the cosmic: precisely because it effects a dissolution of form that connects the most diverse longitudes and latitudes, the most varied speeds and slownesses, which guarantees a continuum by stretching variation far beyond its formal limits.¹⁰⁰

A becoming-molecular could be said to be taking place in Sciarrino’s engagement with *musique concrète instrumentale*—exactly in its “chirring, rustling, buzzing, clicking, scratching...” And in terms of Sciarrino’s mimetic conceit, it may be argued: this music imitates, but ultimately, it imitates becoming. It brings the world and music into a novel “zone of indiscernibility”. Situating this in the context of Scruton’s discussion of musical representation, it may be said that, in Sciarrino’s music, the distance between the subject that is meant to be represented and the medium used to represent this subject becomes imperceptible. Sciarrino’s

⁹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 353–8. Arguably, these examples of musical becoming may cause confusion for the reason that, in a musicological context, they are more often associated with concepts like imitation or representation. Here D&G use Western art music in general as a cipher for their philosophical idea, and their approach is not sensitive to the stylistic characteristics or the techniques of music *per se*.

⁹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 359–60, 399.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 359. Translation modified.

mimetic gestures acquire the generative power of becoming also because of, as I have demonstrated, the ambiguity in its semantics and, more importantly, an interplay between realism and illusion. The conceptualization of the subject of the representation is now forced into a nomadic movement. It seems fitting that Sciarrino mentions Proteus when he expounds on his illusionism: “[t]he incarnations of the duplicate, the apparitions in the mirror, the madness, and Proteus, the clues of our fear”.¹⁰¹ Proteus, the etymon from which the word “protean” is derived, metamorphoses into animals, plants and elements including water and fire.

A Proteus-like becoming characterizes Sciarrino’s opera characters. Sciarrino’s beloved blackbird, which has a genius for replicating the sound of nature (drops of water or cracks of branches), is embodied by the characters in *Luci mie traditrici*. A major concern of the music analysis presented in Chapter 3 is to understand in which way and for what reasons the Duke, the Duchess and the servant—in replicating each other’s melodic cells—are constantly and unknowingly involved in a process of becoming others. Sciarrino’s Elsa constitutes a Proteus-like subjectivity to an even greater extent. She shifts between adult and child, woman and man, human and non-human beings. In the climactic ending of the “Song of Swan”, the choir’s line is heard: “Would you wish to cloak in my displaced Being?” This diegetic voice-over unmistakably hints at the opera’s presentation of a mode of being as an alternative to a notion of subjectivity that is settled and securely bounded—the one that assumes a subject “at one with itself and at peace with others”.¹⁰² In the conversation with Bailly, Sciarrino implies that there is a link between Elsa’s becoming-animal and those moments when she might wish to reproach Lohengrin.¹⁰³ As we have seen in the “barking” examples discussed earlier, Elsa does not become an animal only when she is aggressive. This happens also when she is anxious and frightened. Anxiety, fear, hostility—these feelings are often associated with the moments when the boundary between human and animal becomes blurred. Without the intention to signify a dog, without the effort to hide the difference between human and dog, Elsa becomes a dog.

Harking back to my earlier discussion of the portrayal of gender stereotypes in Laforgue’s text, it may be argued that Elsa’s becoming helps to transform Laforgue’s gender criticism into broader advocacy for a post-humanist fluidity of identity. In the opera, Elsa becomes man and child whereas Lohengrin becomes

¹⁰¹ Sciarrino 2001a, 83.

¹⁰² Gerald L. Bruns, “Becoming-Animal (Some Simple Ways),” *New Literary History*, 2007 (38/04), 704.

¹⁰³ Sciarrino in Ferneyrou 2013, 64.

an ephebe, sexually uninterested. Especially in Scene II, as previously indicated, a reversed gender relationship between Elsa and Lohengrin is presented through their divergent attitudes towards desire—Elsa is the one who actively ventures, whereas Lohengrin passively suffers.¹⁰⁴ At times Elsa also becomes a child, blowing saliva bubbles. In the assembly scene (Scene III), Elsa’s vocal identity further multiplies: it becomes masculine, senile, sick, maternal, and infantile. Over a long passage, the name “Elsa”, now reduced to nothing more than an empty sign, is called again and again in different intonations and moods, sometimes hostile, sometimes tentative, sometimes with pity and affection, and sometimes as an invocation. The showcase of miscellaneous vocal characters as much represents an imagined crowd as mirrors a kaleidoscope of identities.

In attacking all sorts of universalism and essentialism, the notion of becoming challenges the subject position of the humanist Man and raises one of the persistent questions of recent European thinking: “Who comes after the subject?”¹⁰⁵ In *The Posthuman*, Rosi Braidotti writes that “the humanist image of thought also sets the frame for a self-congratulating relationship of Man to himself, which confirms the dominant subject as much in what he includes as his core characteristics as in what he excludes as ‘other’.”¹⁰⁶ The notion of Man as “rational animal”, Braidotti adds, is implicitly modelled upon ideals of white masculinity, normality, youth and health.¹⁰⁷ Difference is only recognized in a negative sense, because all other modes of embodiment—non-white, non-masculine, non-normal, non-young, non-healthy, *et cetera*—are cast out of the dominant position and often rendered as pejoration or “on the side of anomaly, deviance, monstrosity and bestiality”.¹⁰⁸

The theory of becoming revolts against a single, common standard for “Man” as the measure of all things. In becoming-animal, the human subject transforms the self in the face of multiplicity and otherness. Remarkably, Sciarrino’s oeuvre is replete with such topoi as Pan, monsters such as the centaur, and the mad. In his account of Sciarrino’s bestiaries, Laurent Feneyrou carries out a cultural archeology of Pan.¹⁰⁹ He notes that while the aesthetic inspiration of the monstrous Pan was condemned and repressed by the

¹⁰⁴ For more on the reversed gender relationship in Lohengrin, see Camilla Bork, “Hörbare Körper Rahmung und Transgression in Salvatore Sciarrinos *Lohengrin*,” in Ulrich Tadday (ed.) 2019, 5–16.

¹⁰⁵ Bruns 2007, 703.

¹⁰⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge: Polity, 2013, 67.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 68.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 67.

¹⁰⁹ Feneyrou, “Salvatore Sciarrino en ses bestiaires,” in Feneyrou 2013, 47–56.

ethics of ancient Greek philosophers, Pan is retained in us, according to Jung and the mythologist James Hillman, in the form of our dark drives or the Freudian symptoms.¹¹⁰ Pan as the demon of the nightmare incarnates anxiety, panic, terror and excitement. But Pan also represents instinctual compulsion and a creative passion by which this compulsion can be modified by imagination—after all Pan is a musician. Feneyrou considers this mythical creature emblematic of an art that embraces difference, because the grafting of man on a goat requires a recognition of non-identity. Pan, the mad, and the nocturnal all belong to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the anomalous or the “phenomenon of bordering”.¹¹¹ For both authors, the notion of becoming plays a critical political function. The anomalous is the exceptional individual among a pack; the anomalous is more of an “affect” than a particular being, because it “has neither familiar or subjectified feelings, nor specific or significant characteristics”.¹¹² The anomalous amongst a group can bring particular assemblages into play. The political implication of becoming is that becoming-animal is always minoritarian, because to become means to forge a “monstrous alliance” with the anomalous.

In *Lobengrin*, Elsa suffers from schizophrenia, but her madness is not attached to the stereotypical notion of femininity that underlies what has been described by Catherine Clément as the “undoing of women”. Elsa’s madness circumvents this pitfall and taps into the richness of otherness. Elsa’s pathology functions as a lens through which her becomings are seen and a new vision of operatic subjectivity comes into being. It is a subject that borders between identity and alterity, and through becoming, opposes its power to the hegemonies of human beings.

To summarize, the discussion of Sciarrino’s *Lobengrin* in this chapter has revolved around two key issues: the construction of a spatialized and multi-dimensional time in the music and the mimetic conceit of Sciarrino’s musical language, revisited from the perspective of musical and operatic subjectivity. These two aspects are closely related to what constitutes the rationale behind the composition: to compose (Elsa’s) perception and to mine music’s capacity to generate associations—visual, physical, and psychological. Sciarrino’s use of Window Forms, as my analysis has shown, serves the purpose of semanticizing musical structures in a way that is similar to that in *Luci mie traditrici*. What is unique about *Lobengrin*, however, is the

¹¹⁰ See Feneyrou 2013, 54.

¹¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 284–9.

¹¹² Ibid. 284.

highly sophisticated, multi-layered demarcations of speech and sonic space in different modalities. The composition makes use of such techniques as pattern formation, “easy chunking”, and an alternation between low- and high-information moments, to name a few, to create a sonic simulation of a mind that constantly traverses different paths. Importantly, these constructions are significant for a music that invites an ecological approach to the perception of meaning. The same might be said of the astonishingly imaginative use of mimetic sonorities.

The last section of the chapter has deepened the discussion of Sciarrino’s sonic mimicry, which was first introduced in Chapter 2. I have demonstrated that the idea of becoming may serve as a useful intellectual discourse for us to better understand this sonority, and the connection between them appears particularly evident in what is referred to by Deleuze and Guattari as Western art music’s recent shift from “becoming-animal” to “becoming-insect”, or, put differently, “a becoming-music of the world”. The generative power of the becoming of Sciarrino’s music lies precisely in its wavering between illusionism and realism—that is, the ambiguity in its perceived semantics, a character that is widely manifested in the reception of this music. Deleuzian becoming also underpins my reading of an operatic subjectivity that may be seen as an alternative to a model of subjectivity that is securely bounded, defined as much by what is included as the humanist person as by what is excluded as the other. Elsa’s becoming escapes the site of a pre-conceptualized whole by embracing otherness, multiplicity, and non-identity, and it is in this sense that the gender criticism presented in Laforgue’s novella is turned into an anticipation of a post-humanist heterogeneity.

Chapter Five

AURA ILLUMINATING STRUCTURE: HELMUT LACHENMANN'S *MUSIQUE CONCRÈTE INSTRUMENTALE* AND THE IDEAL LISTENING SUBJECT

Introduction

The ecology of listening, as previous chapters have demonstrated, invites listeners to draw upon multifarious aspects of their direct experience of being in the world when listening. In treating music listening, our corporeal being and our perception of the world as organically connected, Sciarrino claims:

...The world then becomes an existentially different experience; and if the refusal of all certainty is a source of worry, vice versa, the smallest things, the rediscovery of oneself, consciousness, perceptions themselves become a continuous source of new wonders.¹

The idea that listening can cause “an existentially different experience” which allows one to (re)discover him- or herself with “new wonders” is strikingly similar to a key element of Helmut Lachenmann’s notion of listening, as this chapter will show. Much weight has been attached to the topic of listening in Lachenmann’s extensive writings on his music philosophy. Intertwined with other focal points of thought—including the conditions of musical material faced by today’s composers and listeners and the social implications of music—ideas about listening have been resolutely articulated in some of his seminal texts. These texts include “Vier Grundbestimmungen des Musikhören” (1979), “Hören ist wehrlos—ohne Hören. Über Möglichkeiten und Schwierigkeiten” (1985) and “Herausforderungen an das Hören (Gespräch mit Reinhold Urmetzer)” (1991). The origins of most propositions in these texts can be traced in earlier writings, including “Klangtypen der Neuen Musik” (1966, revised in 1993), which sets forward the groundbreaking typology of sound, and “Bedingungen des Materials” (1978), which represents a preliminary attempt to theorize the four basic properties of music material. Two socio-historically directed

¹ “...Le monde devient alors une expérience existentiellement autre ; et si le refus de toute certitude est source d’inquiétude, vice versa, les plus petites choses, la redécouverte de soi-même, la conscience, les perceptions mêmes deviennent source continue de nouvelles merveilles”. Sciarrino, “Connaître et reconnaître”, in Feneyrou 2013, 148.

purposes underlie Lachenmann's discourse of listening, one being the concern with the situation of music's becoming the Walkman with which, as Lachenmann puts it, "one hears and at the same time shuts one's ears"; the other being the urge to justify what has been often (mis)perceived by contemporary listeners as the perplexing character of new music.² Together, with an astute modernist sensibility, these texts address the crises and conundrums that listening has encountered in today's music world, giving shape to a notion of listening that poses a series of demands on the listener.

This chapter is structured into four sections. I start with a discussion of Lachenmann's *musique concrète instrumentale* and the idea of nature, with Lachenmann's and Julian Johnson's criticism of Mahler's *Naturlaut* serving as a foil. This leads to the second and third sections where I address the dialectics of structure and aura—a cornerstone of Lachenmann's listening-centered "sonic existentialism". I emphasize that it is through the mutual negation between structure and aura that, Lachenmann hopes, a liberated sense of self can come into being. Walter Benjamin's conceptualization of auratic alterity serves in the last section of this chapter as a fruitful framework for understanding the structural function and the musical meaning of a particular passage in Lachenmann's seminal "...zwei Gefühle...", *Musik mit Leonardo*. I argue that while Lachenmann is significantly influenced by Adornian structural listening, he manages to surpass the paradigm by introducing a critical distance from such a mode of listening in the music itself. This constitutes part of Lachenmann's attempt to pursue a mapping of an ideal listening subject to the musical subjectivity of the work.

***Musique concrète instrumentale* and the Idea of Nature**

The raw materiality of *musique concrète instrumentale* (hereinafter *MCI*) and the particular attitude of reception that this aesthetic idiom elicits—that is, to treat music as sonic reality—bring to the fore the idea of nature in music, in a manner that is similar to the way that the idea of nature becomes a major topic in the musicological discourse on Mahler. Like Sciarrino, Lachenmann, too, has given importance to the idea of

² See Lachenmann, "Hearing [Hören] is Defenseless – without Listening [Hören]: On Possibilities and Difficulties," *Circuit* (Montréal, Québec) 13, no. 2 (2003), 29; "Vier Grundbestimmungen des Musikhören," in *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, ed. Josef Häuslers, Wiesbaden/Leipzig/Paris, Breitkopf & Härtels, 1996, 56.

nature in his concepts of sound and listening, reflected in his statement that “sounds are natural events”.³ The idea of nature as the phenomena of the physical world, as opposed to anything human-made, is not quite what Lachenmann understands by “natural” in this context. What he means by “natural” here points to the physical origin and constitution of a mechanically-produced sonic object, whether or not humans are included. More precisely, it denotes the physical medium, the mechanical cause and the energetic condition involved in the process of sound production. A timpani strike is a natural event inasmuch as it is produced by a stretched calfskin, excited to vibrate.⁴ More importantly, “natural” also means for Lachenmann—and in this regard highly comparable to Sciarrino—to interpret sound in the most immediate, intuitive way, in the same way that we react and relate to sound, as Lachenmann puts it, in “the prosaic context of the everyday”.⁵ Lachenmann visualizes this idea through a vivid example: “the soft crunch of a snail crushed underfoot startles us more than the roar of a jet engine.”⁶ To be aware of the physical, situational associations of sound and their psychological reverberations is a starting point for the kind of listening that Lachenmann’s *MCI* aspires to. Crucially, Lachenmann insists that associations with the quotidian remain superficial and trivial if sounds are perceived as nothing beyond being “natural”. In other words, sound as a “natural event” is not an end in itself and is not sufficiently valid on its own in specific compositional contexts. While Lachenmann seems to invite the “non-musical” world into the idiom of *MCI*, his ideal mode of listening remains “musically” bounded, which means it is still concerned with an autonomous approach.

Lachenmann’s criticism of the presence of nature in Mahler’s music, which is influenced by Adorno’s writings on the composer, offers an alternative route for understanding how *MCI* approaches the idea of nature.⁷ Lachenmann admits that one affinity that he shares with Mahler in terms of the latter’s extensive use of *Naturlaut* (the sound of nature) is that they both look for “a conscious artlessness for the sake of

³ David Ryan, “Composer in Interview: Helmut Lachenmann,” *Tempo*, 210(1999), 21; also see Lachenmann, “Klänge sind Naturereignisse: Helmut Lachenmann im Gespräch mit Klaus Zehlele und Hans Thomalla” in *Programme for Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (Premiere on 12 October 2001 at Staatsopera Stuttgart), 33, and Abigail Heathcote, “Sound Structures, Transformations, and Broken Magic: An Interview with Helmut Lachenmann,” in *Contemporary Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Max Paddison and Irène Deliège, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010, 334–5.

⁴ In an interview with David Ryan, Lachenmann gave another example: “the ripping fortissimo pizzicato open C-string on the cello is an element which is no longer consonant or dissonant or somehow otherwise functional as an interval: it is instead an explosive, physically controlled ‘natural’ event in the physical world.” See Ryan 1999, 21.

⁵ Lachenmann 2003, 37.

⁶ Ibid. 37.

⁷ Adorno’s ideas are explicitly referred to in an interview where Lachenmann discusses his reception of Mahler, see Lachenmann: “Mahler—eine Herausforderung: Antworten auf fünf Fragen,” in *MaeE*, 263–9.

art”.⁸ By introducing artless *Naturlaut* into his music, Mahler pushes the boundaries of the category of symphonic sound. This arguably reflects a common perception of Mahler’s symphonic language. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, who has extensively explored the idea of nature in Mahler, proposes that *Naturlaut* covers the noise of creatures and, in a broader sense, sounds that are foreign to the compositional tradition.⁹ In the broadest sense, it also refers to the musical substance of Mahler’s symphonies as a whole—a musical totality “inscribed with a world and a cosmos”.¹⁰ This expansion of the notion of musical sound through nature, Eggebrecht argues, points to a new path of “empirical” composition.¹¹ In the meantime, however, Lachenmann finds Mahler’s use of *Naturlaute* unsatisfying, because they are used, Lachenmann notes, “as realistically as possible”: “...the bird call, the bells, the signals, the songs, the major-minor sensibility, the march figures: a world of the familiar, exaggerated in the homogeneous medium of his symphonic language.”¹² The dissatisfaction, in brief, arises from the fact that episodes of nature music remain distinct from the homogeneous musical fabric which follows a more conventional symphonic-narrative paradigm. For Lachenmann, Mahler’s *Naturlaute* fail to unsettle the symphonic language to the extent that it causes a substantial reshuffling of the categories of sound. This assessment is not groundless. Lachenmann would find his perspective consistent with Eggebrecht who has similarly pointed out that the sonority of nature in Mahler remains alien, remains “stubbornly ‘other’”, and is “incapable of being absorbed into musical syntax”.¹³ In agreement with Eggebrecht, Julian Johnson argues that Mahler’s *Naturlaut*, despite its structural prominence in the context of the symphonic whole, is “shockingly pre-linguistic, unsyntactical and resistant to being rationalized as orchestral tone or compositional material”.¹⁴

Lachenmann’s dissatisfaction however does not prevent him from sensing another layer of connection with Mahler—a quite personal one in the former’s words. This connection is derived precisely from the fact that nature in Mahler represents an alienness, a deviation from the artificiality of art. The connection

⁸ “Ein bewußt Kuntloses um der Kunst”. See Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 268.

⁹ For Eggebrecht’s account of Mahler’s *Naturlaut*, see Julian Johnson, “Mahler and the Idea of Nature”, in Jeremy Barham, *Perspectives on Gustav Mahler*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, 23–36. Also see Christian Utz, “Vom ‚Sprechen‘ der Natur durch Musik. Die Physiognomie von Salvatore Sciarinos *Luci mie traditrici* (1996–98) im Kontext von Naturkonzeptionen bei Wagner, Mahler, Debussy und Varèse”, in *Klanglandschaften—Musik und gestaltete Natur*, ed. Jörn Peter Hiekel and Manuel Gervink, Hofheim, Wolke Verlag, 2009, 111–40.

¹⁰ “...Laut einer Welt und Kosmos eingeschriebenen Musik”. Utz 2009, 120.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 120.

¹² “...der Vogelruf, die Glocken, die Signale, die Lieder, die Dur-Moll-Empfindsamkeit, die Marschfiguren: eine Welt des Vertrauten, im homogenen Medium seiner symphonischen Sprache überhöht.” Lachenmann, in *MaeE*, 268.

¹³ Johnson 2005, 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 36.

concerns the idea that, to evade the danger of ending in the trivial and superficial, the invitation of nature into music should touch upon the issue of what nature means in relation to social realities and, more importantly, what critical power it can offer. Hence, for Lachenmann, the comment that Mahler's music resembles a "gigantic symphonic potpourri" is only partially an accusation. In Mahler, Lachenmann perceives a Lukácsian "worldliness" (*Welthaftigkeit*)—an aspect that, for Lachenmann, makes Mahler's music still potentially political today.¹⁵ Mahler presents in music "a comprehensive reflection of the world of sensation that had sedimented itself in the late nineteenth century as a refuge and resignation from an unmastered reality".¹⁶ What serves as a container for such self-contained worldliness is the newly forged form which pushes the limits of motivic-thematic development to what Lachenmann calls "pure structural constellations".¹⁷ Lachenmann does not hide his suspicion over Mahler's form, contending that listeners do face difficulties in comprehending the "dialectic of identification and negation" in terms of Mahler's treatment of the stylistically heterogeneous music and "what constitutes coherence". He advances the argument that the stylistically trivial and inconsistent in Mahler can make some people (presumably including Adorno) perceive the music as a "potpourri of reified bourgeois sensibilities".¹⁸ Nature, in short, becomes a witness to what Lachenmann—through an Adornian lens—perceives as Mahler's brokenness. This brokenness (or anxiety, to tone down Lachenmann's remark) is the effect of what Johnson refers to as Mahler's subjective mediation of the opposing poles represented by the "turmoil of the world" and nature.¹⁹

Crucially, a key aspect of Lachenmann's reception of Mahler's nature music is that, for the former, there remains ambiguity in Mahler's reflections on the function of nature.²⁰ This observation, again, has an Adornian underpinning. With Adorno in mind, Johnson argues that the particular configuration of Mahler's idea of nature rests on a sense of ambivalence.²¹ Johnson contends that, on the one hand, Mahler affirms the "otherness" of nature as an immanent presence in his music. Nature in this sense acquires an emancipating potential. As an embodiment of what is repressed and other to the world of civilization, it

¹⁵ See Lachenmann *MaeE*, 267. The Lukácsian notion of worldliness will be revisited in Chapter 6.

¹⁶ "...umfassende Widerspiegelung jener Empfindungswelt, wie sie sich im ausgehenden neunzehnten Jahrhundert als Zuflucht und Resignation vor einer unbewältigten Wirklichkeit sedimentiert hatte." Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 267.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 267–8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 268.

¹⁹ Johnson 2005, 29.

²⁰ Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 268–9.

²¹ Johnson 2005, 34.

questions the status of the autonomous, constitutive subject.²² On the other hand, the critical potential of this nature music is constantly under threat. Johnson notes that neither those affirmatory triumphs that end some of Mahler's works, which hint at the possibility of achieving reconciliation, nor a readily perceivable ideology of resignation and withdrawal that characterizes his late works amounts to a successful mediation of the opposing forces. In both of these circumstances, Mahler's music "remains partially complicit with that which it seeks to critique".²³ Johnson's assessment of the ambivalence in Mahler's attitude toward nature facilitates a better understanding of Christian Utz's more extreme argument regarding Mahler's mediation between the subject and the object. Utz argues that the assimilation of nature in Mahler's work rejects a clear distinction between a sense of self and that of other. He writes, "Mahler's nature is understood as an integrative part of his symphonic world draft and not so much as a principle of 'otherness'...For Mahler, there is perhaps no 'ownness', no foil of identity anymore, from which an 'otherness' can stand out in a sustainable way".²⁴

Recognizing such ambivalence, Lachenmann is of the view that, in Mahler, the critical potential of nature as the repressed other is only implied, not carried out through substantial means. In the following comment, Lachenmann illustrates how he perceives sounds as "natural events" in Mahler and what it means for him to treat nature as the repressed other, or what he calls, "the reverse side of a socially enacted pattern":

...the little piece of wood that splinters away at the blow of the great hammer, the string that breaks at the "emerging" upbeat in the third row of strings, the involuntary vibrato of the tuba player whose lips flutter with strain at the end of *Sixth*: they interest and shatter me, precisely in relation to the process from which they spring. They are the reverse side of a socially enacted pattern: to make one conscious of them means to expose the repressed, a process that would remain ridiculous and childish, just as Mahler's emphasis as broken would remain ridiculous and childish, if it did not impinge, like this, on society's taboos in contradiction to its communicative self-image.²⁵

²² See Johnson 2005, 34–6.

²³ Ibid. 34.

²⁴ "...dass Mahler Natur als integrativen Teil seiner symphonischen Weltentwürfe begreift und nicht so sehr als ein Prinzip des „Anderen“...gibt es bei Mahler vielleicht kein „Eigenes“, keine Folie von Identität mehr, von der sich ein "Anderes" nachhaltig abheben könnte". Utz 2009, 128.

²⁵ "...das Holzstückchen, das beim Schlag des großen Hammers wegsplittert, die Saite, die beim „zufahrenden“ Auftakt in der dritten Streicherreihe reißt, das unfreiwillige Vibrato des Tubaspielers, dem am Ende der *Sechsten* vor Anstrengung die Lippen flattern: Sie interessieren und erschüttern mich, und zwar gerade in Beziehung zu dem Prozeß, dem sie entstammen. Sie sind die Kehrseite eines gesellschaftlich getragenen Musters: Sie bewußtmachen bedeutet Unterdrücktes freilegen, ein Prozeß, der lächerlich und kindisch bliebe, so wie die Mahlersche Emphase als gebrochene lächerlich und kindisch bliebe, wenn er nicht wie diese im Widerspruch zum kommunikativen Selbstverständnis der Gesellschaft deren Tabus anrührte." Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 269.

In short, for Lachenmann, only through a confrontation with existing socially-constructed habits—that is, what has become second nature—can the incorporation of nature in music avoid the danger of what Adorno calls a mere “alliance with the trivial”.²⁶ In this sense, the relationship between *MCI* and the idea of nature (or more specifically, the physical reality of sound), arguably, touches upon some key dimensions of the notion of nature as elaborated by Adorno in his chapter on “natural beauty” in *Aesthetic Theory*. Furthermore, Adorno’s idea that natural beauty must be mediated by artistic beauty sheds further light on Lachenmann’s compositional approach, which prescribes a mediation of the raw materiality of sound and its associations by structural means.

Nature in Adorno’s terms has multiple connotations. Of concern to this chapter are three major aspects. First, Adorno sees nature as subsumed under the concept of myth and regards the appeal to nature as an attempt to evade history and collude with a reactionary ideology that aims to preserve the *status quo*. Nature in this sense indicates that which is static, timeless, unchanging and “apparently beyond history”.²⁷ Second, according to Max Paddison, the idea of nature, particularly in Adorno’s later writings, is simultaneously seen as itself a historical construct—a “socially necessary illusion” or “semblance” (*Schein*).²⁸ Nature in this sense absorbs the Lukácsian–Marxian “second nature”, which means reified history and society.²⁹ Most pertinent to Lachenmann’s concern with *MCI* is an indication of nature that takes on distinctly Freudian associations and is understood as a projection of the repressed contents of the unconscious. Paddison notes that nature in this sense functions as the “repository of our longings, the screen upon which historically we project our deepest needs as well as our anxieties and insecurities.”³⁰ Paddison stresses that this particular connotation of nature is conceptualized through one of Adorno’s seminal notions: “non-identity” (*Nicht-Identität*). Adorno writes:

Natural beauty is the trace of the nonidentical in things under the spell of universal identity. As long as this spell prevails, the nonidentical has no positive existence. Therefore natural beauty remains as

²⁶ Ibid. 268.

²⁷ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 30.

²⁸ Ibid. 30.

²⁹ Ibid. 30–3.

³⁰ Ibid. 57.

dispersed and uncertain as what it promises, that which surpasses all human immanence...Natural beauty shares the weakness of every promise with that promise's inextinguishability.³¹

What is significant about this quote is that Adorno considers nature as that which is left-out, occluded and suppressed by the dominant mode of rationality of human being—manifested in the form of “identity thinking”. The spell of the domination of nature, as Camilla Flodin explains, is “the spell that we are all under”; that spell is the creation of human beings themselves—“the spell of second nature”.³² Nature as the nonidentical, however, escapes becoming functionalized by such rationality. This is why Adorno believes that there is still truth content in the experience of natural beauty, precisely in its resistance to domination, although a direct access to natural beauty is no longer possible. As Flodin rightly points out, thinking that the song of blackbirds after a rain shower has not completely lost its appeal to the European sensibility (as Adorno does), that such beauty has not been damaged by domination, “conceals the suffering that is prerequisite for this experience”.³³ This “suffering” points to the “spell” within which the birdsong has historically become enmeshed. To render manifest the “spell”’s domination of nature in art, Adorno presents the argument that is central to his ideas about the relationship between natural beauty and art beauty: natural beauty must be mediated through art; art aspires to and resembles nature only through exerting control and mediation over nature. Flodin’s words, quoted below, capture the reason why, for Adorno, true art provides a revelation of what nature means to us paradoxically through its mastering of nature: “[o]nly an artwork that does not pretend to be nature, or to have access to the beauty of nature, is able to do nature justice as something beyond its current reduction to myth or fate. Such artworks hold on to what natural beauty promises: that which is beyond domination.”³⁴

Adorno, on the one hand, suggests that natural beauty shapes the aesthetic attitude of artwork. The artifice of art, the technical domination of nature, is paradoxically devoted to the production of something that acquires a “naturalness” and spontaneity.³⁵ On the other hand, the truth content of art, Adorno insists,

³¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, London: Continuum, 2002, 73.

³² Camilla Flodin, “Art and Animals in Adorno”, in Robin Truth Goodman (ed.), *Understanding Adorno, Understanding Modernism*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, 183.

³³ *Ibid.* 183.

³⁴ Flodin, in Goodman 2020, 183.

³⁵ A quintessential example of this in music, Paddison points out, is the Austro-German music of the paradigm of autonomous artwork and its connection with the discourse of organicism. See Paddison 1993, 57.

lies in its attempt to recover nature as the nonidentical through featuring it as the central problem around which the work of art is formed. He writes:

Mediate nature, the truth content of art, takes shape, immediately, as the opposite of nature...Nature is beautiful in that it appears to say more than it is. To wrest this more from that more's contingency, to gain control of its semblance, to determine it as semblance as well as to negate it as unreal: This is the idea of art.³⁶

It is in this sense that art's rumination about nature (including second nature) is endowed with an emancipatory potential. As we have seen in the case of Mahler's *Naturlaut*, Paddison stresses that for Adorno, art should take the mediation of nature as its central task, even sometimes at the expense of the work's formal consistency—which it is initially meant to construct from nature.³⁷ The purpose of art's domination of nature, Paddison suggests, is to rescue a whole array of significations that nature holds for us: beauty, spontaneity, transience, and above all, immediacy and liberation.³⁸

This chapter argues that Lachenmann's preoccupation with structuralist thinking, which functions as a crucial complement and counterforce to the focus of *MCI* on the perception of materiality and its associations, is directly influenced by Adorno's demand that nature should be mediated in art. For Lachenmann, the "sound of nature" serves to restore immediacy and the socially prohibitive in art, but is only possible and effective when the "non-musical" sounds undergo a strict process of structural mediation. In a general sense, this involves incorporating "non-musical" sounds into the serially pre-determined compositional procedures. Instead of keeping his *Naturlaute* as alien components, Lachenmann, inspired by Foucault's *The Order of Things*, creates his own order of sounds, seeking to establish interconnecting links between sounds that belong to different "planes".³⁹ In "Vier Grundbestimmungen des Musikhörens", one of the earliest articles articulating Lachenmann's idea about the dialectics between material and structure and its significance for listening, he writes: "sounds have to be broken up so that their innermost nucleus and vibration can be set free in space and time."⁴⁰ Assuming that there is no musical material that cannot

³⁶ Adorno 2002, 78.

³⁷ See Paddison 1997, 58.

³⁸ Ibid. 58.

³⁹ Lachenmann discusses Foucault's innovative notion of classification as presented in the preface to *The Order of Things*. See Lachenmann 1995, 99.

⁴⁰ Ryan 1999, 21–2.

be described as a purely physical appearance, Lachenmann enables a continuity between a simple (or reconstructed) “sound of nature” and a meticulously constructed sound-form.⁴¹ Lachenmann’s typology of the five sound-form archetypes (*Kadenzklang*, *Texturklang*, *Farbklang*, *Fluktuationsklang*, and *Strukturklang*), significantly, represents one of his earliest theoretical attempts at assimilating “natural sound” to more organized, syntactical “musical sound”.⁴² The underlying principle of the categorization is to imagine sound from the perspectives of sound as an event and sound as different forms of movement based on intensity and energy—whether there is human agency involved or not. The dialectic between nature and structure culminates in the concept of structural sound (*Strukturklang*). Presuming a fluidity between the presentation of sound and that of form, structural sound is a manifestation of Lachenmann’s serial thinking at a micro-scale: it arranges sounds of different families in its multi-layered structure, in the hope that the familiar, “natural” quality of sound will be perceived anew in a dialectical context through the diachronic interaction between the miscellaneous individual components.

The notion of a mutual mediation between nature and structure took shape in early works that mark Lachenmann’s very first step into *MCI*. In the 1968 work *temA*, for instance, airflow as one of the “naturalistic extreme situations” that the work reflects upon acquires new significance through the structural correspondence—or, as Lachenmann would have called it, the “family resemblance”—assigned to the mezzo soprano’s voice (breathing) and the toneless blowing of the flute (bars 1-2 give a clear demonstration of this).⁴³ Many existing analyses of Lachenmann’s works, including my analyses, especially in Chapter 6, take a more or less similar approach, involving an investigation of the familial consistency between sound objects that may first seem “incommensurable”.⁴⁴ The idea of creating a considerable amount of “friction” between nature and structure, arguably, becomes more cogent in relation to Lachenmann’s works after the defining period of *MCI* during the 1960s and 1970s, where more “tonal” pitches start to make their appearance.

⁴¹ Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 58

⁴² Lachenmann, “Klangtypen der Neuen Musik”, *MaeE*, 1-20. For a detailed explanation of Lachenmann’s sound types and an analytical method based on this typology, see Ming Tsao, “Helmut Lachenmann’s ‘Sound Types’,” *Perspectives of New Music*, 52(1), 2014, 217–38.

⁴³ “Naturalistische Grenzsituationen wurden in *temA*, anders als in meinen früheren Werken, bewußt akzeptiert, aber zugleich in einen streng musikalisch konstruierten Zusammenhang integriert, der so auch den traditionellen Spielaktionen neue Bedeutung geben sollte.” Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 378. In his analysis of *Gran torso*, Ming Tsao also observes a focus on the structural construction of the sound associated with wind. See Tsao 2014, 227, 233.

⁴⁴ I am referring to the analyses in works such as Ming Tsao 2014 and Trent Leipert 2014.

“Feeling-out” the Structure, Sensing the Self

To understand the relevance of the dialectic between nature and structure for Lachenmann’s concept of listening and in what way structurally mediated nature may afford a perceptual experience that approaches Lachenmann’s ideal mode of listening, it is necessary to first consider the significance of the self in Lachenmann’s aesthetic. Sciarrino’s idea that, via a refusal of certainty, perception of even the tiniest events can lead to “a rediscovery of oneself” discloses a further affinity with Lachenmann’s notion of listening. Central to the latter’s compositional aesthetic is the notion of the (listening) self and its potential for self-discovery and self-recognition. For Lachenmann, the weight placed on the notion of the self, which amounts to a modernist inquiry into the issue of subjectivity, is a critical feature of the musical tradition of European culture.⁴⁵ This quest for a sense of self emerges from Lachenmann’s foundational understanding of art as “a form of magic broken in and with spirit.”⁴⁶ This idea was later rephrased as the formula “Art as magic mastered by spirit” (*Kunst als vom Geist beherrschte Magie*), and it becomes the title of the second volume of Lachenmann’s anthology (a collection of texts from 1996-2020). Paulo de Assis argues that the idea encapsulates important conceptual elements related to the theories of Frankfurt School philosophers including Marcuse (“Beauty as the ‘denial of habit’”), Lukács (“the ‘whole’ man”), Benjamin (“aura”, “magic”) and Adorno (“material”, “broken magic”).⁴⁷ The dialectical thinking that characterizes this formula is condensed into the two key concepts: magic and spirit. Following Benjamin and Adorno, Lachenmann believes that beauty in art has something to do with magic. This argument, on the one hand, is concerned with the ritualistic, cultic origin of artworks. On the other hand, it attempts to raise our awareness about how art—particularly in the context of the elite bourgeois philosophical tradition—has

⁴⁵ Lachenmann believes that creative reason and technical innovation characterize the traditional European concept of art, and this is reflected in the fact that the concept of art itself has been constantly changing. Lachenmann makes this point through a comparison. He argues that European art differs fundamentally from non-European art in that, in the latter, technical innovation plays a rather incidental role under the impact of the handed-down rules of what were originally magic rituals. See Lachenmann, “Herausforderung an das Hören Gespräch mit Reinhold Urmeter,” in *MaeE*, 353–4. There may be some weakness in the last argument due to the oversimplification in Lachenmann’s cross-cultural comparison, but it is beyond this chapter’s aim to further demonstrate this.

⁴⁶ Lachenmann discussed this idea in an 1991 interview in response to the question “What is beautiful music for you?” See “Herausforderung an das Hören Gespräch mit Reinhold Urmeter,” *MaeE*, 353–4. The idea is addressed in a text transcribed from a lecture Lachenmann gave at the Orpheus Institute. See “Philosophy of Composition—Is There Such a Thing?”, in *Identity and Difference*, Ghent/Leuven: Leuven University press, 2004, 56.

⁴⁷ Assis, “The Condition of Creation and the Haecceity of Musical Material: Philosophical-Aesthetic Convergences between Helmut Lachenmann and Gilles Deleuze”, in *Logic of Experimentation*, ed. Paulo de Assis, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018, 225–44.

been received as something that possesses an irresistible, compelling power over people. Lachenmann contends that such power, sometimes remaining unbroken in the course of time, gives rise to a collective consciousness which provides cultural memory and solidarity. In the meantime, however, this collective consciousness can get tied up with a fetishizing effect, as diagnosed by Adorno, which may under certain circumstances engender “unhealthy” social solidarity. This eventually leads to an abuse of the concept of beauty—when people experience beauty as something that has been habitually accepted as such by socially mediated circumstances. To curb the repressive, incapacitating power of magic, to be alert to the acceptance of things that appear to have been “magically” transfigured by aesthetic means, Lachenmann insists on the importance of the spiritual power of a creative mind and the artistic innovation it can bring forth via rational control. For Lachenmann, this creative will reacts to the reality that it “constantly recognizes anew” and hence utters a voice of the self that increasingly realizes its new potentialities.⁴⁸

Lachenmann’s concern with the social function of music directs him to the issue of listening. He believes that, *a priori*, listening is not a self-evident capacity, but has to be learned and practiced. For this reason, Lachenmann observes, it is common today to see that in the discourse of traditional music, extraordinary efforts are made to make the listener capable of perceiving the new in the familiar.⁴⁹ Referring to the Freudian notion of the tripartite psyche of the human being (the id—ego—superego), Lachenmann proposes that music should always provide the listening subject with the opportunity of an awakening through experiences related to the instinctual and the impulsive, that is, the experience of confronting one’s basic urges, needs and desires in sounds. He writes:

...music—which once existed in order to conjure up the powers latent in the human environment—was bound to adopt the course of the spiritual–historical development of the Christian West. This meant altering its approach and unfolding as a medium in which the subject just discovering itself could say “I” [*ich*]. Once there, music could not simply hold to this course but had to go beyond it by penetrating into the unknown provinces of the ego [*ich*], into its “id”.⁵⁰

...the ego, groping for its id, for its superego, for its structure in the hope of that saving thing—of which Hölderlin says—that grows where there is danger...⁵¹

⁴⁸ Lachenmann, “Philosophy of Composition—Is There Such a Thing?”, in *Identity and Difference*, Ghent/Leuven: Leuven University press, 2004, 56.

⁴⁹ Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 355.

⁵⁰ Lachenmann 2003, 28.

⁵¹ “...das Ich, tastend nach seinem Es, nach seinem Über-Ich, nach seiner Struktur in der Hoffnung auf jenes Rettende, von dem Hölderlin sagt, daß es dort wachse, wo Gefahr sei...”, *MaeE*, 68.

In letting the listening subject confront his or her basic needs and limits, music makes this subject come to realize his or her alterability. What Lachenmann means by music as “existential experience” lies precisely in the experience of discovering one’s new “antennae”, new sensibilities, or getting a new angle on familiar things. Lachenmann’s description of a listening experience that penetrates into the unknown provinces of the id relates to an empirical case provided by Naomi Cumming. Cumming gives an account of the emergence of an enhanced sense of self in music performance based on her own experience as a violinist. Theoretically, Cumming thinks of self-identity as having two sides: an “outward” and an “inward” face.⁵² The “outward” one—a publicly observable side—showcases the perceptible result of an individual’s patterned choices, which are subject to a social domain and environment. The “inward” side of self-identity minimally allows an individual to know themselves as an agent of choice; it endows an individual with a reflexive awareness of their own choice and the beliefs that govern them. Cumming recalls a scenario in which the “inward” version of her self-identity “speaks up” in the decision-making process before and during her presentation of the violin works by Debussy and Chausson. As a violinist, and therefore—at the same time—her own first listener, Cumming finds that the invitation to produce a sensuous warmth of tone, as a requirement of the “stylistic code” of such music, is confronted with her “very British” inclination toward restricted expressivity, together with beliefs about the value of restraint that underlie such socialization.⁵³ In deciding to edge toward the ideal French style and to diminish the inhibiting factors of the musical culture of an ascetic tradition that she has been accustomed to, Cumming realizes that:

I thereby gain not only an increased awareness of myself, as subject to conflicting ideologies and an agent of choice within them, but I gain the possibility of entering a sound world that was closed to me before...In the process of questioning my musical capacities, I gain a self-reflexive knowledge, a new ability to refute the beliefs implicit in my social behavior, and a possibility of entering freely into an expressive domain that had been “foreign” to me.⁵⁴

An important element of Cumming’s argument is that subjectivity, be it perceived in the locus of a performing musician or an attentive listener, has to do with experiencing music as something shaped in an acting body. In another scenario, Cumming likewise notices a changing image of her social self-positioning

⁵² See Cumming 2000, 10–11.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 11.

as a performing subject and a correspondingly renewed sense of self. This change takes place as she adjusts the qualities of the aural projection of her sound in the performance space—from an “insipid” sonic gesture to an assertive and vigorous one. Cumming notes: “In the process of changing my relationship to space, I discover a new possibility of ‘self’, a new construction of my embodied position and relative dominance.”⁵⁵ Cumming’s perceptive personal account offers an insight into Lachenmann’s notion of the possibilities of a listening or performing subject rediscovering itself anew after realizing his or her own propensions and limits. But what is it like to experience an “existential” moment in Lachenmann’s music? And what aspects of this music particularly contribute to such an experience of self-recognition and breakthrough?

For both Lachenmann and Sciarrino, an ideal model of listening is characterized by a meta-referential quality. The belief that music should draw listeners’ attention to their own aesthetic predeterminations runs through Lachenmann’s theoretical writings, emerging most clearly in the article “Hearing [Hören] is Defenseless—without Listening [Hören].”⁵⁶ Listening, as much for Lachenmann as for Sciarrino, means perception perceiving itself. Lachenmann writes:

I am concerned with music in which our perception becomes sensible and attentive on the basis of itself, of its own structuredness; music in which perception attempts to make the perceiving spirit conscious of the structures outside and within us, the very structures to which such musical composition is a reaction.⁵⁷

As noted previously, the aesthetic of *MCI* is based on a resolute structuralist attitude. That structure should be “heard” in the process of perception and be “scanned” in an exploratory manner is a prerequisite for Lachenmann’s ideal listening subject. Instead of dealing with structures that already exist, Lachenmann insists on the importance of making structures—which means, “exposing them, making them consciously perceived, relating them to each other, bringing them to mind, suggesting them, triggering them hallucinatorily, etc.”⁵⁸ For a listener, structures should not be taken as abstract, overarching frameworks

⁵⁵ Cumming 2000, 13.

⁵⁶ The maturation of the idea was reflected in Lachenmann’s modifications of the formula over many years. Initially put as “hearing is defenseless without *feeling*”, the phrase was later changed to “hearing is defenseless without *thinking*,” before it took its final form: “hearing is defenseless without *listening*”. For Lachenmann, the dimensions of “feeling” and “thinking” are now absorbed in an enriched concept of listening.

⁵⁷ Lachenmann 2003, 49.

⁵⁸ “Komponieren bedeutet dann über bloßes Strukturengestalt hinaus einiges mehr, nämlich die Auseinandersetzung mit wie auch immer bereits gegebenen Strukturen; es bedeutet: Strukturen—welche auch immer - ermöglichen, freilegen, bewusst machen, in Beziehung zueinander setzen, in Erinnerung bringen, suggerieren, halluzinatorisch auslösen usw.” Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 46.

which shape our perception through a top-down approach. In Lachenmann's model, instead, the labour involved in perceiving the sonic structure—including the effort of concentrating and memorizing, the sorting-out process, and the corrective cancelling—ties the listener to a way of listening that keeps one's physical and psychic sensorium highly active and self-aware. In working on the structure from the bottom up, the listener reacts to music through his or her own creativity. Listening becomes an act of searching, in which one's own structure of perception becomes manifest.⁵⁹ In this way, Lachenmann believes, the listener is forced to relinquish the communication that is made through familiar linguistic contexts and emotion-laden gestures—both as components of guarantee of an illusory unbroken subject.⁶⁰ Listening in this sense becomes “an empirical existential act”, and it is realized, as Iyad Mohammad argues, through that unity between the perceiving subject and the structural process of a composition for which Lachenmann strives.⁶¹ Lachenmann has repeatedly emphasized in his writings that such a way of listening has its significance for today's listeners in terms of redeeming their “false consciousness” of an integrated, fully self-conscious and autonomous subject. The ideal listening subject becomes simultaneously a listening “object” in that this subject obtains a perspective from which to observe his or her own alienness—that is, listening habits as socially and ideologically conditioned.

For a more straightforward illustration of Lachenmann's ideal listening—specifically the key connection between “feeling-out” the structure and listening as grounding in materiality, it is worth briefly considering a musical example of what Lachenmann calls composing a “super-instrument”. In his discussion of listening and structure, Lachenmann's fondness for the word *abtasten*, as previously mentioned in Chapter 1, reflects his very Adornian vision of assigning the form-giving right to the individual, through his or her (regained) free will and action. This freedom is as much hoped for the composer as for the listener. *Abtasten* describes listening as a process of tactile discovery—“touching one's way through,” as

⁵⁹ Lachenmann metaphorically speaks of the difference between perception as speaking a familiar language with fluency, and perception as simply acting: “[b]ut where the ego does not repress its brokenness, but rather deals with it in a recognizing, vigilantly registering way, it no longer expresses itself unambiguously affectively as speaking, but rather as acting: it sets about experiencing itself as a structure and making it tangible. In such a readiness to recognize, it simultaneously preserves a piece of hope in its own human substance. (“Wo aber das Ich mit seiner Gebrochenheit nicht verdrängend, sondern erkennend, wachsam registrierend umgeht, drückt es sich nicht mehr eindeutig affektiv als Sprechendes, sondern aspektiv als Handelndes aus: Es geht daran, sich selbst als Struktur zu erfahren und erfahrbar zu machen. In solcher Bereitschaft des Erkennens bewahrt es sich zugleich ein Stück Hoffnung in die eigene humane Substanz.”) Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 67.

⁶⁰ See Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 68.

⁶¹ Mohammad, “The Theory of Perception in the Aesthetic Conception of Helmut Lachenmann: A ‘Redefinition’ Trial of the ‘Functional’ Aspect of Music,” *Contemporary Music Review* 23(3-4), 2004, 93–4.

Lachenmann paraphrases it. That the term also has the meaning of “scanning”, equally indicating the process of visual projection.⁶² Crucially, for Lachenmann, listening as a kind of continuous and repetitive scanning applies not only to low-level structures that are composed of fleeting, individual sonic events; the perception of high-level formal organizations also requires a similar scanning process.⁶³ Along with the idea of *abtasten*, Lachenmann conceives a metaphorical confluence of composing a musical work and mastering (or even building) an instrument. He speaks of the structural similarity between organ manuals and the idea of sound families—the multiple layers of keys are analogous to the arrangement of various sound types. Figuratively he also talks about composing a piece as analogous to playing an “arpeggio” on a “super-instrument”.⁶⁴ The metaphor is meant to stress the correlation between structure and material. It suggests that composing-out musical structure, specifically, the polyphony of arrangements that define this structure, is simultaneously palpating the physical structure of the “super-instrument” through a composite “arpeggio” gesture.

⁶² In this case the concept can be understood as comparable with Sciarrino’s resort to the diagramme of flowing sound.

⁶³ This is self-evident in Lachenmann’s theorization of musical structure as the polyphony of allocation (or ordering), based on the notion of sound family. In a piece, the networking of sound families stretches over a long time span. For the listener, “feeling out” a superordinate articulation process like this is similarly a “scanning process”.

⁶⁴ Lachenmann 2003, 36. Sometimes Lachenmann speaks of a customized “mega harp” as a synecdoche of such “super-instrument”.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a string quartet, specifically bars 341-54. The score is written on four staves, labeled I, II, B, and C. Each staff begins with a circled number (341, 342, 343, 344) and a tempo/mood marking: 'meno al Pont.' and 'al Pont.'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Red arrows are drawn across the staves, pointing to specific musical features, likely indicating techniques like *pizzicato* or *scordatura*. The score is written in a clear, legible hand, with some additional markings like 'Plektrum weg, u. Bogen' and 'Instrument wie eine Kanne' on staff B.

Example 5.1: Lachenmann, Second String Quartet *Reigen seliger Geister*, bars 341–54

An example of such a “super-instrument” can be heard in the Second String Quartet *Reigen seliger Geister*. From bar 280 onwards, the quartet enters a *pizzicato* field. By temporarily renouncing their individuality, the four players merge as one single “super-player” of a sixteen-stringed massive “guitar”. From bar 317 onwards, the four players start to use a *scordatura* that is supposed to avoid normal fifths

and to produce unpredictable pitch results.⁶⁵ In the section between bar 304 and 355, percussive-sounding chords on the four instruments are dovetailed with each other in a hocket style or synchronized into a “super-chord” spanning the register of a string quartet as a whole (**Example 5.1**). On top of that, eight styles of left-hand fingering or grip are allotted to the *pizzicato* chords on the four instruments, which creates a gradation of timbral variance that gives the overall “super-chordal sequence” a structural profile.

From bar 345, a hocket melody that is typical of Lachenmann’s pointillist melody style emerges from the open string quintal chords (as marked out with arrows in **Example 5.1**), thanks to the application of the note-filtering technique.⁶⁶ On each instrument, after each attack on the four muted strings, one string is undamped and thus allowed to resonate. In a “negative” way, the resulting tone row exposes the damped attack as a physical condition that necessarily precedes the sounding of the open string pitches. In this *pizzicato* section, the palpable isomorphism between the musical structure and the structure of the “super-instrument” is an example of Lachenmann’s imagination of a “sound-form-instrument”. Through a “feeling-out” of the structure, Lachenmann’s aesthetic methodology aspires to a reconciliation between the sensing subject and the sensed object. It imagines an almost utopian transparency between the physical construction of the instrument (and the body playing it), the immanent autonomy of the sound structure, and the perceptual structure of the composing/listening subject.

⁶⁵ Lachenmann refers to this particular scordatura as “wild” or “extreme scordatura.” For Lachenmann’s own analysis of the work, see Lachenmann, “On My Second String Quartet (“Reigen seliger Geister”),” *Contemporary Music Review* 23, no. 3-4 (2004): 59–79.

⁶⁶ The note-filtering technique finds its precursor in Lachenmann’s earlier works, such as the “Filter-Schaukel” movement of *Ein Kinderspiel*. For an analysis of the movement and the full piano cycle, see 宋育任 (Yu-Jen Sung), 《音樂與存在知覺: 論德國當代作曲家拉亨曼的音樂與美學》 (*Music and Existential Perception: On the Contemporary German Composer Helmut Lachenmann’s Music and Aesthetics*), 台北: 國立陽明交通大學出版社 (Taipei: National Chiao Tung University Press, 2016, 123–56.

Auratic Alterity

Lachenmann's conception of listening as a structural experience shows clear affinities with Adornian-Schoenbergian "structural listening", seen by Adorno as the only fully adequate type of listening attributed to those known as "expert listeners".⁶⁷ Detailed examples of Lachenmann's ideal model of listening can be seen in his own analyses, including that of Beethoven's String Quartet No. 10, Op. 76 ("Harp").⁶⁸ His analytical chart presents a synchronic view of the diachronic development of three major musical materials as key formal constituents of the movement. The quasi-paradigmatic format of the analysis suggests a particular way of listening which, arguably, can be considered compatible with the fundamental criterion that Adorno sets for his "expert listener". This criterion demands that the listener singles out formal components in pieces like Webern's *String Trio*, Op.20, which is regarded by Adorno himself as structurally "dissolved" and "architectonically unsupported".⁶⁹ Moreover, special importance is placed on the context, interrelation and hierarchy related to the sonic objects in Lachenmann's ideal listening.⁷⁰ Adorno similarly claims that the object of structural listening is a "concrete musical logic" located in the technical sphere.⁷¹ It is in the music's "technical categories" that the listener "hears the sequence, hears past, present, and future moments together so that they crystallize into a meaningful context".⁷²

Lachenmann's structural listening, however, is characterized by a dialectical tension that is not so articulate—if not absent—in the Adornian counterpart. I have previously discussed the notion of illuminating the condition of nature through structure as the cornerstone of Lachenmann's *MCI*. Now I take a further step in expanding an understanding of this notion by incorporating another key concept in Lachenmann's aesthetic—the idea of aura, which concerns the communication of musical meaning via

⁶⁷ Adorno, "Types of Musical Conduct", in *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, New York: Continuum, 1989, 1–20.

⁶⁸ See Lachenmann 2003.

⁶⁹ Adorno 1989, 2.

⁷⁰ Lachenmann has reiterated the idea that listening as a structural experience is about an exploration of the acoustic object in its "environment". For example, he speaks of structure as "a dialectical object of perception", inasmuch as "the musical meaning and aural experience of individual sounds or their elements were not determined just by themselves—i.e. by their own direct physical characteristics—but by their relationship to their immediate and wider environment, their affinities, the various roles they played in a context or hierarchy." See Lachenmann, "On Structuralism", *Contemporary Music Review*, (12/1)1995, 97.

⁷¹ Adorno 1989, 5.

⁷² Ibid. 4–5.

socially and culturally bounded means.⁷³ For Lachenmann, aura has always been a part of the determinable, albeit unmeasurable, effect on our perception of musical events. For listening to become an experience of penetrating the world, for it to become self-reflexive, the perception of structure must form a dialogical relationship with not only the material but also the auratic experience of the sound objects. This is precisely what Lachenmann's self-coined "dialectical structuralism" is about.⁷⁴ While a part of this special structuralism is concerned with what is "quantifiable" in music and what demands more rationality of the listener, the intervention of auratic effects enables a distance in perception between the music in question and a reflection on how music changes in different socio-historical situations.

Contemplating the alternative of a "distracted", "lacunary listening", Peter Szendy criticizes Adorno's structural listening as a modern regime of listening whose ultimate goal is the "the absorption or *resorption of the listener in the work*".⁷⁵ For Szendy, structural listening encourages the listener to consolidate the "transparency" or "total audibility" of the work, thereby enclosing listening in a functionalist horizon. I argue that in Lachenmann's music, the auratic moments potentially open up a special arena for the perception of musical meaning. Like reaching a threshold, in these moments, the listener obtains an increased awareness of their unique, or even critical, relationship to the work as well as to their own listening. In the rest of this chapter, I develop this argument by interrogating a particular aspect of Walter Benjamin's concept of aura, an aspect that has been widely overlooked in current Lachenmann scholarship—that is, the experience of the aura as encountering a sense of alterity. The discussion aims to illuminate how auratic moments offer opportunities for an alternative listening mode, one that elicits a self-liberating experience.

"Aura" is a direct influence from Benjamin, although the term was absorbed by Lachenmann through Lukács's writings.⁷⁶ Lachenmann defines aura as "the realm of association, memories, archetypal magical

⁷³ Lachenmann has argued in various articles that the idea of aura constitutes one of the four basic aspects of musical material. The choice of term however experienced a history of evolution. In "Bedingungen des Materials" (1978), "existential aspect" was used to denote what was later to be generalized by the term "aura". In "Vier Grundbestimmungen des Musikhörens" (1979) and "Zum Problem des Strukturalismus" (1990), Lachenmann shifted to a more consistent use of the term "aura". Furthermore, while Lachenmann's term "aesthetic apparatus", first mentioned in the 1976 article "Die Schönheit und die Schöntöner", normally refers to the totality of the four aspects of musical material, the term was sometimes used to denote aura only. An example of this can be found in the 1985 article "Musik als Abbild vom Menschen".

⁷⁴ Lachenmann discusses the term in depth in the article "On Structuralism".

⁷⁵ Peter Szendy, Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listen: A History of Our Ears*, trans. Charlotte Mandell, Fordham University Press, 2008, 127.

⁷⁶ In the article "Bedingungen des Materials", Lachenmann explicitly refers to Benjamin's discussion of aura. Also see Hockings 1995, 7.

predeterminations”.⁷⁷ Many authors have written about Lachenmann’s aura in terms of the feeling of familiarity evoked in a particular sonic context.⁷⁸ This dimension of aura relates to Benjamin’s description of the concept as “presence in time and space”, or “unique existence at the place where it happens to be”.⁷⁹ Because of its embeddedness in particular historical circumstances, aura amounts to a “unique manifestation of a remoteness, no matter how near it may be”.⁸⁰ Aura in this sense also represents a kind of unapproachability. According to Alastair Williams, Lachenmann’s aura, musically linked to the domains of tonal sensibilities and meanings, has to do with the composer’s attempt, especially since *Accanto* (1976), to engage with the past as a response to a wider retrospective tendency in the late 1970s.⁸¹ This musical past embraces existing works, genres and traditions. For Lachenmann, allusions to this past amount to a confrontation with what he calls the “aesthetic apparatus” of Western art music.⁸² But aura is about more than the musically distant. It points to all the spheres where there is a place for the perception of sound or music, for Lachenmann considers aura as:

...a carrier of familiar experiences from existential reality: of everyday life, the various social strata, the religious sphere, culture(s), technology, history, landscapes, classes, perhaps also the subconscious from archaic layers of our psyche, the dream world etc..⁸³

Rainer Nonnenmann interprets aura as what has become “second nature” to sounds through their “intra- and extra-musical contexts of application”.⁸⁴ Aura conjures up the history of music as well as the domain of the worldly and the socio-cultural history of human development in general, and this, Nonnenmann argues, gives Lachenmann’s music its unique transcendental and representational quality.⁸⁵

⁷⁷ Lachenmann 1995, 98.

⁷⁸ For discussions of Lachenmann’s “aura”, see, for example, Elke Hockings 1995, Abigail Heathcote 2003, Rainer Nonnenmann 2005, Alastair Williams 2013.

⁷⁹ Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. A. Underwood, London: Penguin, 2008.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 71 (in footnote).

⁸¹ Alastair Williams 2013, 87–8.

⁸² Hockings enumerates various specific associations with tonal tradition found in Lachenmann’s works, providing examples ranging from tonal gestures or topically specific rhythmic patterns and various types of quotation to certain archetypical articulations and stylistic idioms. See Hockings, “Lachenmann’s Concept of Rejection”, *Tempo*, vol. 193, 1995, 13.

⁸³ “...Aura als Trägerin von vertrauten Erfahrungen aus der existentiellen Wirklichkeit: des Alltags, der verschiedenen Gesellschaftsschichten, der religiösen Sphäre, der Kultur(en), der Technik, der Geschichte, der Landschaften, Klassen, vielleicht auch des Unterbewußtseins aus archaischen Schichten unserer Psyche, der Traumwelt usw”. Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 60.

⁸⁴ Nonnenmann, “Music with Images—The Development of Helmut Lachenmann’s Sound Composition Between Concretion and Transcendence”, trans. Wieland Hoban, *Contemporary Music Review*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005, 8.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 8.

A necessary supplement to the idea of aura as “second nature” would be that, while aura is neither imaginary nor fabricated, it is contingent on musical context and on individual experience. Elke Hockings, for example, has observed cases in which the source that the auratic experience points to is too elusive to be pinned down to a particular hearing of individual bars.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, that Lachenmann names aura, along with tonality, acoustic-physical experience and structure, as the four basic dimensions of musical material, demonstrates an attempt to clarify how a musical language affords meaning. Lachenmann contends that, with the interactions between these four dimensions in mind, there is no music that would not be immediately and intuitively understood by every listener.⁸⁷ This vision, with the purpose of restoring credibility to the communicability of new music, suggests a consistency with the ecological theory of music perception. Be it the water-filled tin tubs in *Kontrabadenz*, which evoke an archetypal image of childhood warmth and security, or the sound of two starting pistols in the 1969 premiere of *Air*, which made Nonnenmann and Williams think of the violence that took place in April 1968 against Rudi Dutschke, the aura connects the two poles in Lachenmann’s sonic existentialism—the acoustic-physical (or the sensory) and the cultural and ideological.⁸⁸ The ecological approach—to repeat the point again—similarly suggests that sources of meaning, such as memory, culture and ideology, are themselves a part of the total environment of perception, and that they are just as material as the source that is more “overtly” of a natural kind. Lachenmann admits that aura is a “decisive complement and the most important corrective to the claim to autonomy of structural thinking”.⁸⁹ This is because, for him, “[m]usic only makes sense when it points beyond its own structure to [other] structures—that is, to realities and possibilities—around us and within us”.⁹⁰ As I demonstrate later, aura not only makes the music “speak” by letting the voice of a composing or listening subjectivity shine through, but it does so with a modernist attitude that bans any “naïve” communication in which an object is evoked in an unreflective and uncritical way.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of an auratic moment in *Gran Torso* which is not so easy to capture, see Hockings 1995, 13.

⁸⁷ Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 62.

⁸⁸ See Nonnenmann 2005, 11–2 and Williams 2013, 81–3. Also see Rainer Nonnenmann, *Angebot durch Verweigerung: Die Ästhetik instrumentalkonkreten Klangkomponierens in Helmut Lachenmanns Orchesterwerken*, Mainz: Schott, 2000, 67. For a historical account of the relationship between Lachenmann’s music and the 1968 political turbulence, see Williams, 2013.

⁸⁹ “Der Aspekt der Aura scheint mir die entscheidende Ergänzung und das wichtigste Korrektiv zum Autonomie-Anspruch des Strukturdenkens zu sein”. Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 60.

⁹⁰ “Musik hat Sinn doch nur, wenn sie über ihre eigene Struktur hinausweist auf Strukturen—das heißt: auf Wirklichkeiten und Möglichkeiten—um uns und in uns selbst”. Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 62.

One example of musicological writing about the idea of aura that demonstrates a hermeneutic focus is that of Christian Utz. Utz conceptualizes aura not in terms of familiarity, but through the idea of alterity.⁹¹ This interpretation draws from Dieter Mersch's study of the auratic experience in the practice of art—in the performative as opposed to the textural—and Mersch's elaboration on the idea of alterity as developed by Emmanuel Lévinas in *Alterity and Transcendence*.⁹² Mersch compares the perception of the auratic to the experience of “encountering an ‘outside of me’”.⁹³ Resembling a feeling of ecstasy, this encounter with the Other retains a fundamentally enigmatic character for the perceiver, and it constitutes “part of the tendency to limit or confuse my concepts and signification schemata and to overthrow them”.⁹⁴ Such moments in aesthetic experience mark a change in the act of perceiving by “letting the form suspend itself in favour of the act of appearance”.⁹⁵ For Utz, Mersch's approach to aura fits well with Lachenmann's aesthetic because perceiving aura as alterity is consistent with pursuing the negation of the negation of a sound ideal.

In his case study, Utz argues that the entry of the Japanese *shō* in the form of a continuous chordal tide in the penultimate scene of *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* materializes the principle of alterity.⁹⁶ The *shō* music acquires a sense of otherness because of its auratically ethereal and “exotic” sonority, which causes a break with the surrounding sound fields.⁹⁷ More importantly, the *shō* brings about a change in the “prescribed” state of listening. Utz observes that this auratically strange passage elicits a special listening situation: the listener is now invited to “listen sensuously for the sake of listening itself”, thereby breaking out of the “‘listening grammar’ that seemed unproblematic a few seconds earlier”, together with the aesthetic and cultural agreements on which the rules of this grammar are based.⁹⁸ Such a listening situation, Utz claims, is described in Lachenmann's listening phenomenology as, a self-conscious listening-in. A clear definition of the concept is absent in Utz's chapter, but it can be inferred that, in listening-in, one does not

⁹¹ Utz, “Klangkadenzen und Himmelsmechanik: Alterität und Selbstreferentialität in Helmut Lachenmanns *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* und *Concertini*,” in: *Musik als Wahrnehmungskunst. Untersuchungen zu Kompositionsmethodik und Hörästhetik bei Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. Christian Utz and Clemens Gadenstätter, Saarbrücken: Pfau 2008, 127–54. See also Utz, *Musical Composition in the Context of Globalization: New Perspectives on Music History in the 20th and 21st Century*, trans. Laurence Sinclair Willis, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021, 308–35.

⁹² An important work that Utz refers to is Dieter Mersch, *Ereignis Und Aura: Untersuchungen Zu Einer Ästhetik des Performativen*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2002.

⁹³ Utz 2021, 309.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 309.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 309.

⁹⁶ Utz 2008, 127–54.

⁹⁷ Utz's analytical reconstruction of the sound organization of the *shō* music is mainly concerned with pitch material, gestural character and temporal relationship.

⁹⁸ See Utz 2008, 127. Also see Utz 2021, 308.

listen “metaphorically” for the musical meaning that is prescribed by a set of pre-conceived rules. *Hin-hören* is to be understood as a foil to what Lachenmann calls *Zu-hören*, that is, listening-*for*. In the mode of *Zu-hören*, one’s listening is contained in a preordained conceptual framework with a view to achieving maximum comprehensibility. The *shō*, in this sense, produces a self-referentiality. Such a self-reflexive effect, argues Utz, also relates to Lachenmann’s critical attitude towards cultural alterity. In brief, Lachenmann’s “negation of negation” is manifested here in the fact that the traditional organizational means of the *shō* music—specifically, its chordal structure—are integrated into the system of European tonality, particularly the pitch field in which they play a part. The auratic alterity of the *shō* thus circumvents the banality of the oriental other and acquires a critical potential.

To further pursue the idea of aura as alterity, I suggest we examine Benjamin’s elaboration of aura in terms of the auratic object’s ability to return the *gaze* that is bestowed on it by the perceiver. In *Illuminations*, Benjamin speaks of the perception of the auratic as investing the inanimate or natural object with a gaze of reciprocity. It is worth quoting Benjamin’s words in length:

...looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze. Where this expectation is met (which, in the case of thought processes, can apply equally to the look of the eye of the mind and to a glance pure and simple), there is an experience of the aura to the fullest extent...Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return. This experience corresponds to the data of the *memoire involontaire*. (These data, incidentally, are unique: they are lost to the memory that seeks to retain them. Thus they lend support to a concept of the aura that comprises the “unique manifestation of a distance”. This designation has the advantage of clarifying the ceremonial character of the phenomenon...⁹⁹

In this extract, the auratic experience is theorized as the somehow ineffable intersubjective exchange between the subject and the object. The auratic object’s returning of gaze relates to “an ‘investiture’ of the object derivative of the spectator’s originary gaze”.¹⁰⁰ There is no completion or exhaustion in this subject–object relation, as what the auratic objects contain that fulfils the desire of the subject is the exact stuff on which this desire continuously feeds. The aura thus relies on “something held in abeyance through the play

⁹⁹ Benjamin and Arendt, *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books, 1986, 188.

¹⁰⁰ Spencer Shaw, *Film Consciousness: From Phenomenology to Deleuze*, Jefferson, N.C.; London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008, 127.

of subjectivities”.¹⁰¹ Quoting Novalis, Benjamin adopts the somewhat ambiguous phrase that “perceptibility...is an attentiveness” to indicate a deliberate blurring of the distinction between the subject and object of perception.¹⁰² The subject, on the one hand, projects the expectation that the gaze will be returned by the object; on the other hand, this subject claims their passivity—a necessary surrendering of the will. The discourse on gaze makes Benjamin’s aura a nascent theory of intentionality. The very ambiguity in the question of whether aura is inherent in the object or results from the projection of the subject, however, points to an important revelation: the world presumably has the capacity to “appear to us without being a mirror of our (or someone else’s) will to power”.¹⁰³ Arianne Conty suggests that the passive reception of the returning of the gaze “allows the world or the other to appear of its own accord”.¹⁰⁴ Such a feeling of passivity is often evoked to describe “poetic, artistic and phenomenological inspiration”.¹⁰⁵ The destabilization of a clear-cut distinction between the subject and the object has an unsettling power. The gaze of the object appears to the subject as “other and prior, strange and heteronomous”.¹⁰⁶ Such strangeness manifests at the moment when Cézanne felt himself to be observed by the Sainte-Victoire mountain range and wept, or the moment when Lacan, in his childhood, felt overwhelmed by meeting the gaze of a tin can floating in the sea.¹⁰⁷ This unsettling effect, crucially, confronts the subject with the necessity of a deeper recollection of the self. It is in this sense that the auratic experience potentially affords a self-reflexivity.

Before we move on to investigate how auratic alterity offers a special listening perspective, it is worth pointing out that aura is often linked with space-time displacement. In making a reference to Proust’s *mémoire involontaire*, Benjamin makes a case that auratic experience is a temporal experience. Aura, like *mémoire involontaire*, is thought to be lost to conscious memory and encountered only involuntarily—aura, as Benjamin puts it, “takes possession of us”.¹⁰⁸ Perception of aura actualizes an encounter with the haunting past that is not ordinarily accessible to the conscious mind. This entwinement of distance and proximity

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 127.

¹⁰² Miriam Bratu Hansen, “Benjamin’s Aura”, *Critical Inquiry*, 34 (2008), 344–6.

¹⁰³ Arianne Conty, “They Have Eyes that They Might Not See: Walter Benjamin’s Aura and the Optical Unconsciousness”, *Literature & Theology*, 27/4 (2013), 478.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 477.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 478.

¹⁰⁶ Hansen 2008, 345.

¹⁰⁷ Conty 2013, 477.

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002, 447.

hence causes a temporal displacement, because, Conty writes, such an encounter interrupts “the habits of linear time used to fulfil the teleological goals of the status quo, replacing them with the shocks of a familiar unknown”.¹⁰⁹

The Moment of Self-Discovery in “...zwei Gefühle...”, *Musik mit Leonardo*

“...zwei Gefühle...”, *Musik mit Leonardo* (1992), composed for speaker(s) and ensemble, is Lachenmann’s most important work for voice after the *Consolation* series written between 1967-1978.¹¹⁰ The work was inspired by a passage from Leonardo da Vinci’s *Codex Arundel* in which the narrator, while marvelling at the natural force at work in the landscape of the Sicilian coastline, contemplates the efforts that it takes to gain insight. Central to the text is the allegory of looking into a dark, mysterious cave. A key metaphor related to epistemology in the history of occidental philosophy, the cave is linked to multifarious feelings: fear, doubt, as well as curiosity, desire, and reflection.¹¹¹ The idea of an existential quest for the unknown and the potentially dangerous is made the subject matter of “...zwei Gefühle...”. But Lachenmann also takes the idea as a “motto”—in the formula of “the two feelings”—for his artistic thinking in general, and this gives the piece a prominent position in his oeuvre. It was after the 2000 “Tokyo version” of *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* that Lachenmann made the piece—in its full length, after a slight modification of the music setting—an individual episode in the opera, giving it a pivotal role in terms of its dramatic function.

The notion of involving a “scanning process” in listening is manifested in the atomized verbal text which is quintessential to Lachenmann’s treatment of voice. A meticulous deconstruction of text comes before music setting. Words are decomposed into a stream of syllables, and those that can jointly make sense as a word are interwoven with others potentially belonging to other words. “So donnernd brüllt nicht

¹⁰⁹ Conty 2013, 478.

¹¹⁰ The piece was initially written for two speakers, although the two vocal parts can be performed by a single speaker without changes in text and music. In the performance of the piece in recent decades, Lachenmann alone has regularly taken the role of the speaker.

¹¹¹ It may be said that Plato’s allegory of the cave is “negatively” referred to here, as Plato’s cave represents conversely the prison of ignorance. For more discussion on the link between the cave metaphor and curiosity, see Eberhard Hüppe, “Topographie der ästhetischen Neugierde. Versuch über Helmut Lachenmann,” in *Nachgedachte Musik. Studien zum Werk von Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. Jörn Peter Hiekel and Siegfried Mauser, Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2005, 89.

das stürmische Meer”, for example, is decomposed into “SO DO-NN- BR-ÜLL- -N-E-RND -T NI-CH- -T DA-S SCH- WENN TÜ- DE-R -(R)- MI- SCH-E MEE-R”. To improve the intelligibility of the text, Lachenmann specifies that syllables that grammatically belong together are notated in the score on the same level and are to be articulated with one overall inflection throughout, regardless of their alternation with phonemes from other levels: for example, “SCH- TÜ- (R)- MI- SCH-E” or “BR-ÜLL- -T NI-CH- -T” are notated on the same level and rendered with a consistent tone. To grasp the speech semantically, listeners have to “scan” the syllables one by one, memorizing and reorganizing them retrospectively. This painstaking process of searching for meaning, realized with a kind of “structurally ritualized intensity”, reflects Lachenmann’s central concern with the work—a sonic representation of the astonishment and joy that come with new discoveries after a difficult journey of searching.¹¹²

¹¹² Christian Utz and Frederick Lau, *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West*, New York; London: Routledge, 2013, 14.

Section	A	B Interlude I	C	D Interlude II
Bars	1–106	107–30	131–73	174–98
Text material	„So donnernd brüllt nicht... Wüten entgeggestellt.“		„Doch ich irre umher... die die sinnreiche Natur hervorgebracht hat.“ „O Mensch gib acht, was spricht die tiefe Mitternacht“ (Nietzsche, „Also sprach Zarathustra“)	
Level of complexity of text	from extremely intricate to discernible		from easily discernible to relatively complicated	
Main material		107 - 18: <i>tutti</i> presentation of pitched material in tremolo, glissando and scalic patterns 113: tuba's foreshadowing (Db ₄ – C ₃ – F ₅) of the tuba tone-row in bars 213-14 (F ₃ – A ₂ – Db ₄) 119 - 30: stifled <i>pizzicato</i> and pressed bowing		a. 174 – 81: guitar: strike the strings with rocker bridge <i>quasi dolce marcato</i> ; strings: articulation of quintal harmonics b. 182 – 85 [“non-directed”] guitar: dab the muted strings delicately with rocker bridge; strings: free distribution of <i>pizzicati</i> c. 186 – 88 [“non-directed”] guitar: free distribution of harmonics; strings: free distribution of harmonics and <i>pizz. fluido</i> d. 188 – 198 Synchronized harmonics <i>pizzicati</i> on strings
Marked events	50: highlighted presentation of intervallic pitch material (E - Ab) in winds, brass, harp and piano – <i>warmth/brightness of the “flame”/ “glowing cave”</i> 63 - 5: Fluctuant resonance of a piano cluster is produced and by the flapping of the piano lid, which continues and echoes the resonance of the swelling gesture on winds and brass – <i>ebocing cave</i>		155 - 57: quartal harmonies on piano, harp, guitar and percussion; tertian harmonies on winds, brass and strings 173: undulating breaths on bass woodwinds – <i>wind</i>	194: whispering (<i>tutti</i>) of the consonant “H” (quasi “Hauch”) – <i>gesture of astonishment</i>

Figure 5.1: Text structure, main material of the interludes and marked evens in
“...zwei Gefühle...”, *Musik mit Leonardo*

Section	E	F	G
Bars	199–250	251–303	304–48
Text material	„Ich wand mich eine Weile... mit der Rechten die gesenkten und geschlossenen Wimpern. Und nun...“	„...da ich mich oftmals hin und her beugte, ... die große Dunkelheit, die darin herrschte.“	„Als ich aber geraume Zeit verharrt hatte, ... was darin an Wunderbarem sein möchte.“
Level of complexity of syllabic layers	from easily discernible to relatively complicated	relatively discernible; rhythmically simplified climactic instrumental episode from bars 272–303 (<i>tutti</i>)	relatively and sometimes very easily discernible; rhythmically simplified
Marked events	205: short burst of trumpet – <i>shady cliffs</i> 207–14, 215–33: tone rows led by piano, with the resonance of Tuba shading amplified – <i>echoing cave</i> 234–47: toneless blowing on trombone + trumpet with on-and-off wa-wa mute – “ <i>wind blowing on a plateau</i> ” 235: whispering of the word “Ich” by violinist – <i>phonetically echoing the wind sound/ a gesture of articulating the self</i>	280–83: “jerkily writing” of text (“Ich aber irre umher, getrieben von meiner Brennenden Begierde”) on tam- tam – a “ <i>speaking</i> ” figure producing a <i>characteristic parlando</i> 296: speaker’s whispering of the consonant “H” (quasi “Ha”) – <i>gesture of astonishment</i>	310–11: recapitulation of previous text, delivered by the reciter in <i>fff</i> .

Figure 5.1: (continued).

In accordance with the text structure, the music of “...*zwei Gefühle*...” is formed into seven sections, with sections B and D being two episodic instrumental interludes. **Figure 5.1** provides analytical observations related to three aspects of the work. The first concerns the structure of text-setting and changes in the level of complexity regarding the listener’s deciphering of the text. The second concerns the

two interludes and their major musical material. The third outlines the occurrence of marked events that are perceptually salient, many of which are related to word-painting-like mimicry.¹¹³

Through tonal fragments and figurative sonic gestures, the programmatic content of Leonardo da Vinci's text is conveyed vividly in the music in an accessible manner rarely seen in Lachenmann's oeuvre. Numerous atmospheric, auratic sonorities inject what might even be considered a sense of Romantic idyll into the music. The presence of nature, including rocky caves, winds, and the Mediterranean waterscape, are given an almost realistic sonic portrayal. Nonnenmann argues that the sonic mimesis of the work animates the listener to an expressive recontextualization of the concrete material. "Any analysis that does not even attempt to address these possible points of contact", claims Nonnenmann, "falls short and overlooks the existential dimension contained in the experience of this music".¹¹⁴ Thus in bar 50, we hear the "spurting flame" and the "glowing cave"—as the text suggests—in the sonority of an unexpected major third. The warmth and brightness in its timbre stands out in a context predominantly composed of toneless breathing and the dry, rattling sound of the strings. The grand piano, with its lid lifted, is literally turned into an echoing cave in the work. In bars 63–4, the reverberation of a violently pressed-down piano cluster acquires an exaggeratedly fluctuating profile, thanks to the quick flapping of the lid, coinciding with the speaker's utterance of the name of the volcano, "Mongibello". Later, at bars 207–33, the image of an echoing cave, as indicated in the accompanying text ("bis ich zum Eingang einer großen Höhle gelangte"), is evoked through the spatialized sonority of the two successive tone rows orchestrated in a quasi-*Klangfarbenmelodie* style (**Example 5.2**). In bars 212–14, the tuba adds a final touch on the last few notes of the tone row—a segment that constitutes the signature motif that can be heard in many of Lachenmann's works, including *Schreiben* and *Serynade*—by pointing the instrument inside the "cave" of the piano. The effect is realistic in both a visual and an aural sense. Variations of the sound of wind prevail, and this includes not only simple "special effects" such as the breathy figures played on the wind instruments (as heard in bars 140, 173, 269–79). As always, Lachenmann unifies the onomatopoeic and the semantic in the same sound families. In the sound field at bars 234–47, Lachenmann requires the trombonists and the

¹¹³ The marked events are outlined (as Table 1 shows) with a view to demonstrate how it is that such musical meaning is *perceived*, and the perception of these musical moments as highlighted is a result of putting my own listening experience at the center of the interpretations presented here – with an awareness of the work's programmatic delimitation.

¹¹⁴ Nonnenmann 2005, 11–3.

trumpeters to search for the effect of “wind blowing on a plateau”.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the syllable “Ich” repeatedly whispered by the violinist in bar 235 creates a “reverberation” of the same sound just enunciated by the speaker one bar before in the sentence “vor der Ich betroffen im Gefühle der Unwissenheit...”(**Example 5.3**). The breathy “-CH” sound in “Ich” is thus structurally linked to the wind sound mimicked on the brass. This is just one of the many examples in the work in which sensations associated with concrete objects are reproduced at the intersection of the verbal or semantical and the purely sonic means.

¹¹⁵ See Lachenmann’s comments on notation and performance technique in the score.

Example 5.3. “...zwei Gefühle...”, *Musik mit Leonardo*, bars 234–37.

It is necessary to give a brief account of the general function of sections B and D—the two interludes—in **Figure 5.1** before we talk about the music of section D, the focus of my analysis. The relatively independent structure of the two interludes is first and foremost defined by their sonorities that contrast with their surroundings. In both sections, music is quietened and simplified, and more homogeneous in terms of material. The use of rests is prominent. The same can be said of the instrumental episode between bars 272 and 303 in section F, in which a gesture of “writing” on two tam-tams takes over the role of the narrator. It is interesting to note that these quiet breaks, with vocal utterance absent, not only play a structural function musically, but are also literally integrated into the narration. To represent da Vinci’s protagonist (a solitary wanderer) Lachenmann composes out his contemplation in these wordless passages: the wanderer takes in nature and reflects on his conflicting feelings in silence.¹¹⁶ At the end of these repose, the voice of the narrator resumes, with sentences starting like “But I wander about, driven by my burning desire...”, “I wandered for a while...”, and, from bar 304, “When I had paused for a while”. The articulation of “I” in these opening lines helps to realize an image of a narrator who emerges from his reverie about what da Vinci depicts as “the myriad varied forms that fecund nature creates”. Importantly, as I demonstrate later, the articulation of the “I” that emerges from long silence has the effect of calling forth an identification between the narrator and the listening subject.

Immediately preceding section D is a “wiping” or *glissando* sound field (bars 161–172). Here, a significant organological characteristic of the guitar is brought to the listener’s awareness. For the first time, a continuous display of a single timbral gesture is heard—by gliding a rocker bridge over its strings, the guitar is assimilated into the bowed string family.¹¹⁷ The ethereal, metallic sonority and the *glissando* texture appear extraordinarily unfamiliar at this point in the music. The gliding gesture is given extravagant prominence towards the climactic ending of the passage, but this is only to give an emphatic marking to the subsequent stillness of a guitar solo that leads the listener to a place of musical Otherness (starting bar 174) (**Example 5.4**).

¹¹⁶ Lachenmann speaks of the two narrators as “the two quasi-complementary conscious parts of an imaginary ‘Wanderer’ and of a reader who marvels in silence”. See Lachenmann, Commentary on “...Zwei Gefühle...”, *Musik mit Leonardo* (1991/92), <https://www.breitkopf.com/work/3849/2-gefuehle-musik-mit-leonardo>, accessed 18 November 2021. Also see Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 401.

¹¹⁷ Rocker bridge or, as in the score, “Gleitstahl”, is a movable metal bar bridge used on guitar.

170

Altfl. Baßfl. Baßkl. Kb.klar.

3 4 4 3 4 4 6 4

Schülz.1 Schülz.2

Klav.

Harfe

Git.

Vi.1 Vi.2 Va.1 Va.2 Vc.1 Vc.2 Kb.

mit Trommelstock Spitze (wie T.18) mit Paukenschlägel Schaft mit Paukenschlägel gliss., nicht neu anschlagen

mit Trommelstock mit Paukenschlägel gliss. (wie l.)

ten. ff Ped. 7

suoni fluidi (bei angelegtem Stimmschlüssel:)

ff ord. (nicht schlagen) Solo: dolce ma chiaro

hervortreten f psab. Dpf. ab

hervortreten f psab. Dpf. ab

hervortreten f psab. Dpf. ab

hervortreten f psab. Dpf. ab

hervortreten f psab. pizz. Dpf. ab arco

hervortreten f psab. fff pizz. Dpf. ab arco

hervortreten f psab. pizz. fff pizz. Dpf. ab arco

Steicher genau synchron mit Gitarrenglissando

*) Zwischen Gleitstahl und Sattel

Example 5.4. "...zwei Gefühle...", *Musik mit Leonardo*, bars 170–81

175

Altfl. *tonlos*

Baßfl. *a tempo* *p*

Schlz.1 *PK*

Schlz.2 *PK* *a2:* *PPP* (wie l.) *p*

Klav. *pp* *Perl.* *a tempo* *pp* *pizz.* *lv.* *Perl.*

Harfe *a tempo*

Git. (Solo) *quasi 'wave' ** *links vom Gleitstahl gezupft* *ohne Gleitstahl* *liberamente* *Gleitstahl in rechte Hand* *pp* *erstickt*

**) Bewegung der rechten Handfläche über dem Schall-Loch*

4/4 6/4 3/4 *a tempo* 3/8 5/4 3/4

Seiten werden durch Loslassen bei zuvor aufgesetzten Fingern angeregt, und, genau im angegebenen Rhythmus, wieder erstickt. Die übrigen leeren Saiten müssen (mit der Linken) erstickt gehalten werden.

VI.1 *ff* *senza arco* *non pizz.* *p* *a tempo* *l.v.* *p*

VI.2 *ff* *senza arco* *non pizz.* *p* *a tempo* *l.v.* *p*

Va.1 *ff* *senza arco* *non pizz.* *p* *a tempo* *l.v.* *p*

Va.2 *ff* *senza arco* *non pizz.* *p* *a tempo* *l.v.* *p*

Vc.1 *ff* *senza arco* *non pizz.* *p* *a tempo* *l.v.* *p*

Vc.2 *ff* *senza arco* *non pizz.* *p* *a tempo* *l.v.* *p*

Kb. *pizz.* *l.v.* *a tempo* *p*

Example 5.4: (continued).

Like an oasis of serenity, section D arrives at a point just over one-third of the way through the piece.¹¹⁸ In contrast to the more linear syntax of the music before, this section, which features an extended *pizzicato* field unfolding in an amorphous temporality, appears to showcase the auratic “artlessness” of the sound of nature. With dominant instruments including guitar, piano, harp and strings integrated as a “super-plucked-instrument”, the music splits into four subsections: two temporally elastic areas (subsections *b* and *c*), wrapped by two outer mensural passages (see **Figure 5.1** for more descriptions). Crystalline, sparkly sonorities, with the woody and metallic qualities of the sounding material laid bare, give this strangely static episode its concreteness and define its predominant sound type. Based on subjective impressions, one might feel tempted to link them to the imagery of water. In sub-area *a* (bars 174–81, see Example 5.4), a brittle, transparent sonic image is created through the light clattering of the rocker bridge on multiple guitar strings and the trickling of empty fifths in the string group—excited by quietly releasing the previously muted strings. The undulating tone of the scraping sound on the timpani (bars 180–81), echoing the metallic gliding gesture just heard, is reminiscent of the sound of water sloshing and swinging in the tin tubs in *Kontrakadenz*. In subsection *b* (bars 182–85) which generally sounds like bubbling, the metallic tapping on single guitar strings is joined by isolated *pizzicati* in the string family distributed freely within a predetermined time frame, with strings damped or reverberating. The serially dictated mutations in the attack type of these *pizzicati* allows subtle contrasts in timbre, including that between determinate and indeterminate pitches. The next “undirected” area *c* (bars 186–88) involves a more pronounced articulation of harmonic *pizzicato*, against a layer of breathy sounds of wind on the brass. With the aid of tension screws, the first violins imitate the metallic-sounding gliding tones that have been heard multiple times before.¹¹⁹

These feather-light, tinkling sound gestures together suggest an interesting intertextual link with Lachenmann’s other works, belonging to a sound family that recurs in Lachenmann’s oeuvre. This sound type features a disjunct, bouncy contour. Subtle to perceive, it expresses an ethereal, serene and even meditative quality. Most typical examples include the *saltando* field in the central part of *Pression* and the “impulse field” in *Gran Torso*, both perceived as structurally salient components. Equally related is a passage

¹¹⁸ In a recording by Mode Record, section D starts at 7’55” and lasts around 2’24”. The full length of work is 21’28”. Helmut Lachenmann: „... *Zwei Gefühle* ...“ *And Solo Works*, CD (mode252), New York: Mode Record, 2020.

¹¹⁹ This extended technique on violin is designated in the score as *pizz. fluido*.

in *Kontrakadenz* in which the same sound type is rendered in a more explicitly auratic or “anecdotal” fashion: a sound field composed of *saltandi*, *battutti* and *pizzicati*, which, according to Nonnenmann, creates “an impression of subsiding rain”, eventually leads to the entry of the sound of waterfilled washtubs.¹²⁰ The percussionists are required to gently shake the tubs to let the water actually spill out (bars 226–27 and later bar 236 which lasts about 25 seconds). This “watery” impression is further reinforced by the “water gong” (bars 244–50), a sonority that appeared in the earlier *Air*. Despite intra-opus reference, there are also biographical reasons that encourage the listener to link the music of this interlude to the aura of a tranquil waterscape: the fact that the piece was written in Nono’s residence on the island of Sardinia might have provided Lachemann with direct inspiration for a musical imagination about a Mediterranean land/waterscape.¹²¹ In short, the crystalline, “watery” sonority of section D, through multiple associations, plays a significant role in conjuring up an auratic distance.

Due to the unusual stillness, the timbral idiosyncrasy, and a lack of a linear syntax and directional motion, section D is parenthesized by its surroundings like a musical Other. Like an auratic object casting its gaze back onto the observer, the music appears to the listener with a sense of excessive objectivity. With a radical disjunction in space-time, the music appears to want to withdraw, or rather, “take flight”.¹²² It enters a new field of stasis—a series of loosely structured variations on *pizzicato*; and this correspondingly invites a change in ways of listening. The music that surrounds this section could be said to articulate a mode of time perception that is described by Cosima Linke as “coordinated time”.¹²³ This temporality invites a way of listening that is referential by nature, involving listening retrospectively or prospectively for the interaction or mutual reference of the individual sound events, especially when an “acting subject” arises in perception. The music of section D, however, shifts to a temporality similar to what Linke calls

¹²⁰ Nonnenmann 2005, 13.

¹²¹ For more on this, see Martin Kaltenecker, “Musik mit Bildern,” in Programme book, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (Staatsopera Stuttgart), 41.

¹²² My wording here is indebted to Robert Hatten. In an analytical interpretation of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in F Major, op. 10, no. 2, Hatten links the momentary repose in the development of the main theme to the staging of a level of subjective freedom. Hatten argues that the “breaking free” of the conventional harmonic and syntactical structure allows a perception of the music’s extraordinary freedom—a moment of transcendence of consciousness. See Hatten 2018, 151–5.

¹²³ “Coordinated time” is one of the three modes of time articulation that Linke theorized from Lachemann’s works based on a listening-oriented perspective. See Linke, “Schreiben als Differenz von Stille und Klang. Aspekte der musikalischen Form in Helmut Lachemanns *Schreiben. Musik für Orchester*,” *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie*, 2016(13/1), 117–49.

“amorphous time”.¹²⁴ Amorphous time relates to a listening situation without metric orientation. The duration of sound events and their respective positioning in time are usually unpredictable for the listener. Such a perceptual mode of time is associated with what Linke calls “presence listening”, in which the phenomenality of the present sound event becomes the only centre of attention. Compared with the music preceding section D, the repetition of similar gestures and disorientation in time offer the listener a chance to “wind down”, and to immerse themselves in the atmospheric and the meditative, from which a slight feeling of saturation may occur.¹²⁵ The listener thus becomes self-aware of the act of listening *per se*. In his or her experience of alterity, the music acquires a sense of self-referentiality.

This example of auratic alterity shares a striking similarity with the structural function of “nature music” in Mahler’s works. Julian Johnson argues that nature episodes in Mahler’s works often function as a “threshold”.¹²⁶ This threshold structure causes an interruption to the previous linear, narrative unfolding in terms of which the musical subject was articulated. The interruption, more specifically, is defined by two crucial shifts in the music—one concerned with space, and one concerned with timbre. Johnson argues that the threshold provides a “liminal crossing” to a new space through a suspension of time. The emphasis on spatiality gives these nature episodes a sense of “an achieved plateau”.¹²⁷ At the same time, Johnson links the auratic sonority of this threshold music to an image of the heavenly or utopian. This “otherness” is particularly related to Mahler’s use of plucked instruments including harp, guitar, mandolin, and percussions like celesta, glockenspiel, triangle, and cowbells. The shifts that lead to an augmented sense of space and an immersion in ethereal sonorities, as previously discussed, are both key features of Lachenmann’s interlude. What makes this potential affinity with Mahler more interesting, however, is that Johnson similarly perceives a sense of self-referentiality in Mahler’s nature music. He argues that these episodes present themselves as “means by which the music confronts its own model of time, identity and subjective experience”.¹²⁸ In this sense they represent unusual moments in the music in which “the work

¹²⁴ Linke 2016, 117–49. Utz, in his analysis of different modes of time perception in Lachenmann’s music, proposes the idea of “presentist time”, which is highly comparable to Linke’s “amorphous time”. See Utz 2017.

¹²⁵ “Saturation” here refers to the law of saturation as defined by Leonard Meyer. Meyer suggests that, in a listening situation where the signification of repetition is not yet perceived as “normal” or “understandable”, the longer a pattern or process persists, the stronger a feeling of saturation and a concomitant expectation of change. See Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Meyer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956, 135–8.

¹²⁶ Johnson 2005, 30–3.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 31.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 30.

point[s] beyond itself’.¹²⁹ Crucially, for Johnson, this self-reflexivity has its roots precisely in Mahler’s “failure”—the formal failure, as Lachenmann has also observed, of presenting nature as something alien, outside of the more artistic language of music. Johnson further suggests that this failure marks a key moment in aesthetic modernism, and that by projecting a resolution beyond the formal articulation of the music’s own failure, Mahler turns this failure into a discourse.

This discourse of failure, arguably, is the point where Lachenmann departs from Mahler. Unlike the Mahlerian episodes in which, as Johnson observes, an ideology of resignation and withdrawal is still perceivable, Lachenmann resolutely envisages the experience of an enhanced sense of self in his auratic interludes. What Johnson describes as “an achieved plateau” is equally applicable to section D of “...*zwei Gefühle*...”. In fact, a rhetorical repose like this is common in Lachenmann’s works—a “stationary moment” or a “fermata”, as the composer calls it. Often sitting near the mid-point of a work, such points of repose disrupt the more dynamic and syntactically complicated structure that precedes them.¹³⁰ Curiously, Lachenmann speaks anthropomorphically of such musical construction, comparing it to the experience of a mountain-climber who does not realize the changes that he has undergone in making the journey, until he is greeted with a new, majestic view:

In almost all of my composition, there is a moment of repose—in the manner of a fermata—in which the music glances around like a mountain-climber who only becomes aware of his new surroundings upon standing still, and only now experiences the characteristic stillness of the plateau he has reached.¹³¹

The significance of this mountain-climber metaphor is not only reflected in the fact that Lachenmann mentions this repeatedly throughout his writings. Self-consciously, Lachenmann portrays himself as the mountain-climber in question. In doing so, he incarnates an ideal composing subjectivity—one that seeks to acquire new self-knowledge by taking touch journeys through music. This ideal subjectivity is visualized in a literal way in *My Way*, a 2021 documentary dedicated to Lachenmann, directed by Wiebke Pöpel (**Figure 5.2**). Visualized along with Lachenmann’s mountain-climbing are the ideas of intensity and

¹²⁹ Ibid. 32.

¹³⁰ Lachenmann 2004, 63.

¹³¹ Ibid. 63.

serenity—a conceptual pair that Lachenmann has been obsessed with.¹³² He speaks of the radiating of expressive energy from the strict negation process that is central to his composition, asserting that such expressivity appears eventually like a kind of “creative serenity”.¹³³ The viewer of *My Way* is rewarded with a visualization of such serenity in a long take that concludes the documentary—a breathtaking unveiling of Lake Maggiore from a bird’s eye view.



Figure 5.2. Selected shots from *My Way*

¹³² Lachenmann has spoken of these ideas, especially serenity, in multiple broadcast interviews. For written account of these ideas, see Ryan 1999 and Lachenmann 2003.

¹³³ Ryan 1999, 22.

When Lachenmann draws a comparison between his musical “fermata” and the view reached from a plateau, the idea of an ideal listening subject must be in his mind. The moment of repose is a moment for self-reflection. The ideal listening subject is expected to acquire self-awareness of their own listening. Even in the case of “...*zwei Gefühle*...”, a work that has programmatic content and is full of sonic imageries, Lachenmann emphasizes the importance of structural listening. He writes:

My work began from the experience of “structural hearing”, which is to say the perception and observation of what resonates in an immediate manner, but also the relationships which structure it. These are tied to interior images and feelings which do not in any way distract from this process of observation, but remain indissolubly linked to it and even give it a particular intensity.¹³⁴

As previously noted, to scan and reorganize the phonetic components for signification, one needs to be committed to structural listening as part of a strenuous “deciphering” project. But it has to some extent become standard for Lachenmann that a musical work needs to include passages that are supposed to invite alternative modes of listening. These passages typically feature a strong pulse or a simple, quasi-march-like rhythm. Examples of this include the “Sicilienne” section in *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, a section in *Accanto* (bars 83–140), and a section in *Fassade* (bars 220–325), to name three. For Lachenmann, these passages have “a quasi-narcotic, hallucinatory function in relation to structural listening.”¹³⁵ The staging in the music of interaction between different modes of listening, arguably, allows the listener to maintain a critical distance from structural listening in the strictest Adornian sense, a listening that summons transparency, plenitude, and even totality. This in a way echoes Peter Szendy’s query in *Listen: A History of Our Ears*: perhaps there is also an element of deafness in the “omniscient” structural listening? Szendy suggests: “[i]sn’t a certain distraction a condition that is just as necessary for an active listening as total, structural, and functional listening is?”¹³⁶ The “distracting” stasis of Lachenmann’s interludes, which elicit a reorientation and reflection in the listener, provides an answer to Szendy’s inquiry.

The voice of a wanderer and a trajectory of his internal feelings constitute the narrative of “...*zwei Gefühle*...”. To consolidate the voice of this wanderer, Lachenmann composes two quasi-recapitulations of

¹³⁴ <https://www.breitkopf.com/work/3849/2-gefuhle-musik-mit-leonardo>, accessed 18 November 2021. For the original version in German, see Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 401.

¹³⁵ “...eine quasi betäubende, in bezug auf das strukturelle Hören halluzinatorische Funktion” Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 47.

¹³⁶ Szendy and Nancy 2008, 128.

the line “doch Ich irre umher...” (“But I wander about...”) through rhythmic means on instruments later in the work (bars 208–83, 309–10). There are traces in the music showing that this wanderer, a *Doppelgänger* of Lachenmann’s ideal listening subject, gradually approaches a state of lucidity. Those expressions of astonishment, carefully composed-out in the music in various forms, are considered by Lachenmann as critical moments of new discovery about the self. The image of a “reader marveling in silence” is embodied in a family of “exclamation” sounds that run through the piece. We hear, for example, the accentuated “cracked” voice “AU-” in bar 48, sounding like gasp of shock; the barely audible “H(a)”, vocalized by the instrumentalists in bar 325; and the other two more prolonged articulations of “awe”, which blend with the breathy “wind” sounds on the brass—the *tutti* whispering of “H” (quasi “Hauch”) in section D (bar 194) and the speaker’s prolonged “H(a)” in section F (bar 296). Jörn Peter Hiekel suggests that, in Lachenmann’s music, the interpretation of astonishment goes beyond overcoming a state of ignorance or mere overpowering by a sublime sight.¹³⁷ To follow one’s impulse of astonishment means for Lachenmann a highly rewarding or even “an existentially moving experience”.¹³⁸ Astonishment, notes Hiekel, requires the constant mobilization of experience through the mental “work of accommodation” (*Anpassungsarbeit*).¹³⁹ It thus counts as a true accomplishment. Applying this to Lachenmann’s ideal listening subject, moments of astonishment mean new revelations about one’s own sensibility and creativity.

Unlike Mahler’s attitude toward nature which is characterized by an intricately layered ambiguity, Lachenmann seems to have presented his listeners with a blueprint in which, by exploring an unknown nature, one eventually achieves the insight of nature as a cipher for what Adorno calls the “non-repressive condition”. We can know this from an observation of how verbal communication is integrated as a part of the sound structure in various ways. In “...*zwei Gefühle*...”, text is transformed differently into direct speech, words atomized and recomposed, or a phonetic assimilation of the particles of language into the sounds of the instruments. The degree of intelligibility of the semantic component that varies across the piece, as described in **Figure 5.1**, has structural significance. It is by no coincidence that, after the two interludes (section B and D) and a third instrumental “repose” (bars 280–303 of section F) in which the two tam-

¹³⁷ Hiekel, “Escaped from Paradise? Construction of Identity and Elements of Ritual in Vocal Works by Helmut Lachenmann and Giacinto Scelsi”, in Utz and Lau 2013, 167–8.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 168.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 166–8.

tams “speak” aloud through a “writing” act, the multilayered verbal particles become radically simplified. “...*zwei Gefühle*...” ends with the sentence “two feelings suddenly arose in me: fear of the threatening darkness of the cave, but desire to see with my own eyes what wonderful things might be inside”. Rendered as normal speech, albeit with the words dispersed, this final sentence delivers the key message straightforwardly. In these rare moments of lucidity, the verbal text unleashes an affective intensity. They are a reward to the listener who just manages to overcome the difficulty along the way in deciphering the message. Here, they acquire a renewed understanding of the word-music relationship. It is in this sense that Lachenmann conceives an identification between the musical subjectivity and an ideal listening subjectivity. Self-knowledge as a subject matter seamlessly unites the voices of the composer, the music itself, and the listener.

Chapter 6

SEEING SOUND, HEARING IMAGE: META-REFERENTIALITY AND THE SELF-REFLEXIVE SUBJECT IN *DAS MÄDCHEN MIT DEN SCHWEFELHÖLZERN*

The Little Match Girl and Her *Doppelgänger*

Having examined how sound, word and image are correlated with each other in “...*zwei Gefühle*...”, we can turn to Lachenmann’s *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (hereafter *Das Mädchen*), an “opera” subtitled *Musik mit Bildern*. Taking this magnum opus as its focus, this chapter further pursues the issue of self-reflection as a core subject matter in Lachenmann’s composition. Questions arising from the engagement with opera tradition intertwine with Lachenmann’s own concepts and notions related to sound and listening. How does *musique concrète instrumentale*, now integrated into the notion of “music with images”, give rise to a dramatic vision that challenges core assumptions about the “aesthetic apparatus” of opera? Are there any real protagonists in the opera, and to whom should the subjective voice raised in the music be attributed? On top of this, how might the promise of a self-liberating listening subjectivity be fulfilled in the music? Finally, as this chapter seeks to explore, in what sense does the “opera” qualify as a meta-reference to the composer’s preoccupation with an existentialist inquiry into the experience of feeling, acting, and reflecting?

Lachenmann sees his only stage work, composed for two sopranos, speaker(s), choir, large orchestra and pre-recorded CD tracks, as a point of completion, the pinnacle of his work to date.¹ As well as incorporating a network of intertextual dialogues with numerous works of his own and of others, to which we will return, the opera brings together topics with which Lachenmann had been creatively preoccupied long before he started to draft the work. The Leonardo of “...*zwei Gefühle*...” speaks in the opera as an “outsider”, soliloquizing in a musical space that runs parallel to that of the two female “protagonists”: Hans Christian Andersen’s little match

¹ “Summum opus—‘Höhepunkt meiner bisherige Arbeit’.” Lachenmann, Programme book, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (Hamburg production 1997), 39.

girl and Gudrun Ensslin—a leading member of the infamous *Baader-Meinhof-Gruppe*, the first generation of the far-left, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist urban guerrilla Red Army Faction. A *Doppelgänger* of the little match girl, Ensslin, was supposedly the intellectual head of the RAF who set ablaze two department stores in Frankfurt, and was an acquaintance of Lachenmann's from his childhood.² Lachenmann's interest in Andersen's match girl germinated in 1975 at the latest, two years before Ensslin was found dead in her block in the Stammheim Prison. In a self-portrait written in that year for his debut at the *Donaueschinger Musiktage*, Lachenmann declared that his musical vision encompassed figures like Don Quixote and the little match girl instead of the messiah and the buffoon.³ The obsession with the Andersen fable continued to grow and eventually, culminated in the arrival of the German Autumn (*Deutscher Herbst*) in 1977.⁴ Thoughts on the fable was materialized as the textual basis of the prelude, interlude and postlude of *Les Consolations* (1967–68/1977–78).⁵ In 1987, Lachenmann sent Nono a book, *Stammheim: der Prozess gegen die Rote Armee Faktion* (1986) by Pieter Bakker Schut, with a note revealing that Ensslin's desperate acts had left him in baffled shock and, at the same time, that he had found consolation in the musical universe of his teacher. This was a sort of consolation, to paraphrase Lachenmann's

² Lachenmann knew Ensslin as the daughter of a Protestant pastor who worked as a subordinate of Lachenmann's father. See Williams 2013, 115. For Lachenmann's own account of his acquaintance with and his impression of Ensslin, see "Klänge sind Naturereignisse" in Programme book (2001 Stuttgart production), 20–35, and Wiebke Pöpel's documentary *My Way*. For more on Lachenmann's personal relationship with Ensslin and a comprehensive account of how the RAF movement led to the genesis of the opera, see Martin Kaltenecker, *Avec Helmut Lachenmann*, Paris: Van Dieren Éditeur, 2004, Rainer Nonnenmann, *Der Gang durch die Klippen: Helmut Lachenmanns Begegnungen mit Luigi Nono anhand ihres Briefwechsels und anderer Quellen, 1957–1990*, Breitkopf & Härtel, 2013 and Laurent Feneyrou, *De Lave Et De Fer: Helmut Lachenmann: une jeunesse allemande*, Paris: Éditions MF, 2017.

³ "Ich hasse—nicht nur in der Kunst - den Messias und den Hanswurst. Der eine ist mir Zerrbild des anderen. Dafür liebe ich den Don Quichotte, und ich glaube an das kleine Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzchen." Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 154.

⁴ The German Autumn was a period of intensive violent events that occurred in West Germany, around the autumn of 1977, associated with the RAF. The crimes included the kidnapping and murdering of Jürgen Ponto, the head of Dresdner Bank, and Hanns Martin Schleyer, then-president of the German employers' association, as well as the hijacking of a Lufthansa airplane on 13 October 1977. Ensslin and other founding members of RAF, including Andreas Baader, were already imprisoned before the younger generation of RAF members carried out their activities. On 18 October the same year, Ensslin was found dead hanging herself in her cell in the Stammheim Prison.

⁵ Lachenmann writes in his commentary on *Les Consolations*: "The story of *The Little Match Girl* (textual basis of Präludium, Interludium, Postludium)—who, ignored by society, lights the matches she couldn't sell and before she freezes to death at least has a vision of her grandmother and is carried aloft by her—becomes the framework for the ensemble: a story about taking action, without overblown insights into (the anyway abbreviated doctrinaire notion of) historical necessity, but according to inner imperatives, under the pressure of reality, the reality of society and of nature". <https://www.breitkopf.com/work/3873/les-consolations>, accessed 29 January 2022. In addition, in an interview, Lachenmann states: "The story of the Little Match Girl is full of 'messages' [Botschaften], clear and obscure: social criticism, existential loneliness, 'regressive' protest—the little girl's 'capital', the matches burnt to keep warm, to evoke the hallucinations of 'happiness' and to perish from it." See Feneyrou 2017, 185.

words, that springs from an almost utopian, introspective, and intellectual perspective that saved him from being paralyzed, as Ensslin was, by the indifference of the reality of their time.⁶ The formation of the subject matter of *Das Mädchen* witnessed the long-awaited maturation of an idea over a span of two decades.

Remarkably, many attributes of Andersen's tale proved that the text was, in a way, an ideal choice for Lachenmann's first opera project, and this is particularly true with regard to the work's implementation of the aesthetic and technique of *musique concrète instrumentale*. Stripped of its sentimental shell, Andersen's text is distilled into two basic elements: warmth and coldness. The two feelings—apparently echoing the desire and fear in "...*zwei Gefühle*..."—permeate the story with a wealth of imageries of material objects and bodily feelings: the snow-covered street, the thick, icy house wall, the trembling body, the sputtering and burning of the matchstick and all of the resplendent illusions it creates (the iron stove, the roast goose, the Christmas tree, the shooting star, the grandmother). Additionally, feelings of an introspective nature provided by the two "interlopers"—Leonardo and Ensslin—augment the sensations of a chilly Scandinavian night: sentences or phrases from Ensslin's prison letters are scattered in three numbers (10th, 15th[a] and 15th[b]), and the full text used in "...*zwei Gefühle*..." occupies number 18th. While the former is evidently associated with the image of icy prison walls, the latter visualizes the fires of sulphur and lava of Mediterranean volcanoes. These imageries from divergent space-time unite and enhance the "wall" and the "match" motive in the fairytale. "Wall" and "cave" as two metaphors have long been central to Lachenmann's oeuvre. The former is derived from Ernst Toller's *Masse-Mensch* which provides the text for *Consolation I* (1967/2000). Lachenmann adopts the image of a man standing against a wall as a symbol for the moral impasse that one faces during a politically turbulent time.⁷ The latter, symbolizing fear and desire as discussed before, now takes on a specific social and moral hue, given what Lachenmann's two "girls" share in common—a desire for self-preservation that leads to disobedience, crime and death.

⁶ Feneyrou 2017, 190. For the original citation in German, see Nonnenmann 2013, 400.

⁷ For a discussion of the wall as an important metaphor in *Das Mädchen* and, more generally, in Lachenmann's creative poesis and its multilayered meanings, see Matthias Hermann, "Die Wand – das Gegenüber. Über die Rolle der »Hauswand« in Helmut Lachenmanns *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*" in Hans-Peter Jahn ed. 2005, 119–56.

Existential Situations of the Operatic Subject			
	<u>Warm</u>	<u>Cold</u>	<u>Contemplative- Reflexive</u>
1		Choralvorspiel: „Oh du fröhliche“	
2		Überleitung „In dieser Kälte“	
3		Frier-Arie, 1. Teil	
4		Trio und Reprise, 2. Teil	
5	Scherzo, 1. Teil: „Königin der Nacht“		
	a. Scherzo, 2. Teil: „Schnalz-Arie“		
6	b. „Stille Nacht“		
	c. „Schnalz-Arie“ (Schluss)		
7		Überleitung zur „Jagd“: „Zwei Wagen“	
8		„Jagd“	
9		Schwefelhölzern und Schneeflocken	
10			„Aus allen Fenstern“
11		Hauswand 1: „In einem Winkel“	
12	Ritsch 1: Ofen		
13		Hauswand 2: „Da erlosch die Flamme“	
14	Ritsch 2: Gedeckter Tisch, Gans [not composed]		
		Hauswand 3:	
15		a. „Litanei“	
		b. „Schreibt auf unsere Haut“ („Cadenza parlando“)	
	a. Ritsch 3		
16	b. Kaufladen		
	c. Überleitung: „Die Weihnachtslichter stiegen höher“		
17	Abendsegen: „Wenn ein Stern fällt...“		
18			„... zwei Gefühle ...“
19		Hauswand 4 (Zählakte)	
20	a. Ritsch 4		
	b. Großmutter		
21	„Nimm mich mit“		
22	Himmelfahrt: „In Glanz und Freude“		
23			Shô: „Sie waren bei Gott“
24		Epilog: „Aber in der kalten Morgenstunde“	

Figure 6.1: Classification of the scenic structure of *Das Mädchen* according to three existential situations

A constant oscillation between coldness and warmth, with the existential meanings they represent—fear and desire—shapes the dramaturgical structure and the musical narrative on the global level. “Cold” and “warm” as two sonic categories are valid on the grounds that, as I demonstrate later with analytical details, numbers belonging to these two categories are defined by two major sound types simulating the sensations of coldness and warmth respectively. The former includes predominantly toneless, dry, rustling and stuttering sounds, whereas the latter, most typically pitched chords and metallic timbre, are sonic gestures that are allowed to resonate fully. **Figure 6.1** illustrates how the twenty-four numbers shift between these two poles. Significantly, four exceptional moments provide opportunities given to both the protagonists and the audience for contemplation and self-reflection. The 10th “*Aus allen Fenstern*”, the 15th *Hauswand 3*, and the 18th „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ all feature a verbally delivered sub-text that is foreign to the fairytale, and these texts witness efforts by the operatic subject to articulate a voice of the self in a highly self-conscious and compelling way (more on this later). All these numbers, and in particular the *Shó* section, as briefly noted in Chapter 5, stand out from the surrounding musical contexts for their distinctive sonic configurations. Self-recognition, as the core theme of the „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ text, as previously discussed, acquires paramount importance because of Lachenmann’s self-reference here. Ensslin’s letter, entitled “Written on Our Skin”, consolidates the same theme in that, like a direct interpellation of the audience as the subject, it forces us to reflect on the choices: to freeze to death or to act.

An element that further contributes to the metaphorical importance of “coldness” and “warmth” is a passage from Benjamin’s “Kaiserpanorama”, cited in the programme book of the 2001 Stuttgart production of the opera. In this prose, partly copied below, Benjamin reflects on the ebbing of warmth of German society between the two wars:

The warmth is going out of things. Objects of daily use are quietly yet insistently repulsing man. Altogether, he faces a huge task every day, overcoming the secret resistances (not just the obvious ones, either) that they put up. He must cancel out their coldness with his own warmth if he does not wish to stiffen at their touch, and he must grasp their prickles with meticulous care if he wants to avoid bleeding to death...⁸

⁸ Benjamin, *One-way Street and Other Writings*, trans. J. A. Underwood, London: Penguin, 2009, 62.

These words, which represent Benjamin's most unswerving criticism of the corrosion of sociality and individual conscience under capitalism, arguably consolidate the subject matter of *Das Mädchen*. In what sense has the "coldness" of modern industrial society changed people's perceptions and sense of their environment, and how does this influence Lachenmann's protagonists? An obvious link between Ensslin and the little match girl is that both are abandoned by society with their protest subdued or unheard. For David Metzger, Leonardo and the two girls make a group of "outsiders"—"the poor, the political radical, and the artist".⁹ For Martin Kaltenecker, the trio represents three layers of suffering.¹⁰ Behind the surface gesture of criticism of social indifference, however, the binding of the two girls is based on less discernible factors linked to deeper issues about being human in extreme existential situations, and about humaneness. Significantly, Lachenmann's reading of the eerily dark fairytale brings to the fore the "heretical" elements it contains. An aspect of the tale that particularly stimulated him is its covert portrayal of a "radical sensuality" (*radikale Sinnlichkeit*), the political connotation of which is made more explicit through the reference to words from Ensslin's letter: "the criminal, the insane, the suicidal..."¹¹ The little match girl, as Lachenmann describes her, "acted alone, against her orders, and wasted the goods, burning them in search of warmth".¹² The "radical sensuality" of the little girl is triggered by the pressure of a brutal environment—the environment of society and of nature—and this pressure eventually turns an instinct for life into an aggressive act. In her flickering hallucinations about happiness, she longs for death. Similarly, it is a "radical sensuality" that drives Ensslin's action, and Lachenmann sees such radicality as lying in taking actions "without overblown insights into (the anyway abbreviated doctrinaire notion of) historical necessity, but according to inner imperatives".¹³ The two girls were undoubtedly in different situations. But in a certain sense they faced the same contradiction—as Ensslin puts it—"the contradiction between wanting to live and not *being able* to live".¹⁴ Despite her hopeless, "regressive" protest, the little match

⁹ Metzger, *Musical Modernism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 201.

¹⁰ Kaltenecker 2004, 244.

¹¹ See Lachenmann's commentary on *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelbölzern*, in *Kunst als vom Geist beherrschte Magie (Texte zur Musik 1996 bis 2020)*, ed. Ulrich Mosch, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2021, 475. An English version of this text is partially available at <https://www.breitkopf.com/work/3858/the-little-match-girl>, accessed 29 January 2022.

¹² Lachenmann in Mosch 2021, 475.

¹³ Lachenmann's commentary on *Les Consolations* (English version), <https://www.breitkopf.com/work/3873/les-consolations>, accessed 29 January 2022.

¹⁴ "...der widerspruch zwischen leben wollen und nicht leben können." Ensslin, letter written in 1973, in *Das Info: Briefe der Gefangenen aus der RAF 1973 – 1977: Dokumente*, ed. Pieter H. Bakker Schut, Kiel: Neuer Malik-Verlag, 1987, 17.

girl welcomes death. With reference to Ensslin, Lachenmann laments: “Why didn’t they [RAF] make society understand what it is about?”¹⁵ In the opera, Lachenmann goes beyond presenting his disapproval of the crime of the terrorist gang. Following Benjamin’s diagnosis of the numbing coldness of modern society, Lachenmann tries to offer his solution. And he boils the problem down to a series of existentialist imperatives pertaining to every individual. These include: 1) people need to reflect on the nature of their desires and urges so as to have better control of them; 2) people need to learn to communicate and rebuild interpersonal connections; and 3) people need, to quote Lachenmann’s own words, to “relearn how to use their senses in a human(e) way: thinking instead of subtly speculating, sensing instead of being sentimental, being sensitive instead of obeying, yearning instead of being addicted, perceiving instead of self-pitying”.¹⁶

Intriguingly, an element of self-reflection is perceivable in the way that Lachenmann both honours the intense physical grounding of musical sound in an opera that takes as its subject matter an encounter with existential situations (e.g. hunger, coldness, loneliness, desperation) and criticizes progressive actions solely driven by irrational inner imperatives. On the one hand, Lachenmann seeks to uncover the resistance potential in sensitized perception, and this is achieved through the idiom of *MCI* whose emphasis on the material and corporeal dimension of sound-making now couples with explicit visual and dramatic significations. On the other hand, in criticizing the irrational acts of RAF, Lachenmann reflects on the danger lurking in sensations and feelings as guidelines for action, thereby emphasizing the importance of sanity and conscience. In this context, the narrative leap caused by the intrusion of da Vinci’s prose, regarded by Lachenmann as “the heart of the whole”, appears more cogent.¹⁷ The contemplative text calls for deep introspection and a constant search for the unknown, which seems to Lachenmann an antidote to Ensslin and her like.

In a revision for what is labelled as the “Tokyo version” of the opera, the prominence of this text was further accentuated. The original music of “...*zwei Gefühle*...” is replaced with five newly composed “sound

¹⁵ Lachenmann’s words from the documentary *My Way*.

¹⁶ “...in einer Umgebung, die erstmal wieder lernen müßte, die Sinne menschlich zu gebrauchen: denkend statt feinsinnig spekulierend, fühlend statt gefühlvoll, hellhörig statt hörig, sehnsüchtig statt süchtig, wahrnehmend statt wehleidig.” Lachenmann 2021 (Mosch ed.), 475.

¹⁷ Lachenmann, Programme book, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (2019 Zurich production), 55.

fermatas” and is shortened into little more than eleven minutes.¹⁸ The five fermatas offer a variety of ambient background sounds including dull drumrolls and dry, muted rubbing of the strings.¹⁹ This “silencing” treatment of “...*zwei Gefühle*...”, to recall an idea that has been discussed in Chapter 5, makes number 18 a prototypical example of Lachenmann’s “meta-fermata”. If Lachenmann himself “ventriloquizes” the wanderer in the performance of “...*zwei Gefühle*...”, helping to confirm this as a self-portrayal of a composer who believes in the importance of self-recognition, then Lachenmann’s physical presence on stage in number 18 in a couple of recent productions of the opera has further reinforced such a sense of self-referentiality (**Figure 6.2** shows Lachenmann as the speaker in the 2015 Frankfurt production and the 2019 Zurich production). The real voice of the composer and the voice of his musical persona merge in this strange scene, and the “silenced” music gives voice to the composer—as if saying: “This is a moment for me—and for you all—to observe and reflect on our ways of feeling and knowing.”

¹⁸ The “Tokyo version” was originally created for a concert performance of the opera in Tokyo’s Suntory Hall in February 2000. The new version that removes the text from its musical context is considered by Lachenmann as a convincing revision in that it “enhances both dramaturgic and musical events.” The treatment of the Leonardo scene in all the productions after 2000 follows the “Tokyo version” model. A CD recording of this version was released by ECM in 2002. For more details about the “Tokyo version,” see Lachenmann, “Das Mädchen, (die Ensslin,) und Leonardo,” in Lachenmann, *Kunst als vom Geist beherrschte Magie*, ed. Ulrich Mosch, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2021, 510–11.

¹⁹ Lachenmann details the key musical material of these five fermatas in “Das Mädchen, (die Ensslin,) und Leonardo,” in Lachenmann 2021, 510.

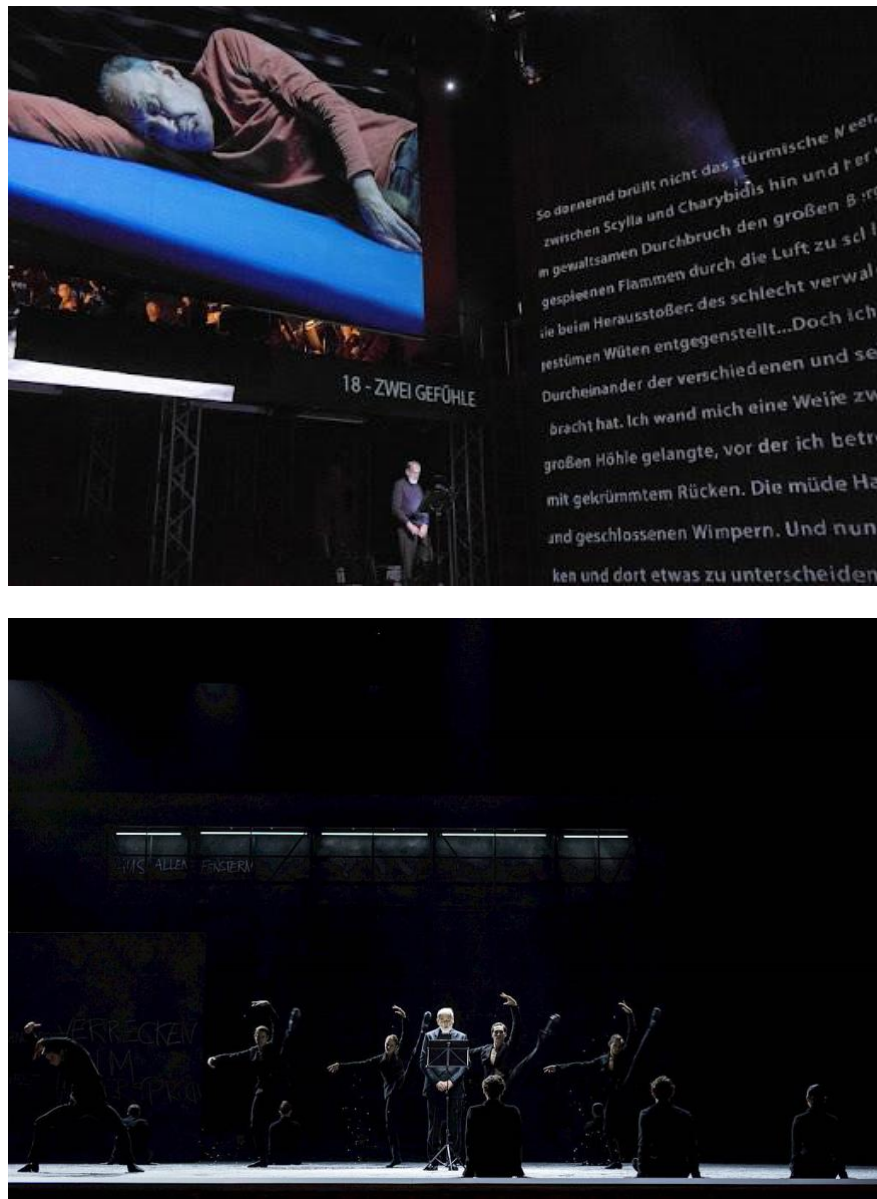


Figure 6.2: Lachenmann as speaker in *Das Mädchen* (2015 Frankfurt and 2019 Zurich production), photo credit: Monika Rittershaus and Gregory Batardon

The significance of the “Leonardo break” may be better understood with regard to Lachenmann’s absorption of an idea taken from Georg Lukács’s aesthetic theory concerning the relationship between everyday reality and works of art. This notion of Lukács’s suggests that an important task of works of art is to transform the “whole human” (*der ganze Mensch*) or, translated differently, “human person as a whole”, into the “human

whole” or “man-made-whole” (*das Menschenganz*).²⁰ Based on the idea that a reflection of reality is a fundamental aspect of art, Lukács’s theory endows artworks with the liberating potential to help people overcome alienation. The “whole human” and the “man-made-whole” constitute a dialectic in facilitating the achievement of such an effect. For Lukács, the ideal artistic reflection must at least aim to portray the generality and totality of “relationships in which men stand to the experienced world”.²¹ This reflection, moreover, should make perceptible the “contradictions and contingencies of everyday experience and ‘ordinary life’”.²² The subject of Lukács’s “whole human” is this everyday human being, whose perception is dispersedly distributed for multifarious daily practical purposes. Such a subject is, consequently, alienated. The “whole” in this case indicates the sum total of everyday people’s heterogeneous experiencing.²³ Lukács contends that a true artwork comes into being only when a transformative leap from the “whole human” to the “man-made-whole” takes place. In Lukács’s theory, art, and particularly music, provides a medium for suspending practical objectives, homogenizing and intensifying human perception that is multiply directed. The concept of “man-made-whole” denotes a normative subject of artistic creation and reception, who, by concentrating on a single sensory experience, embraces the completeness of the form of experiencing. The “whole” in this sense hence means the totality of perception. As Lukács claims, music should afford the experience of the “ear as a whole”, and visual art the “eyes as a whole”. It is this through this completeness that people eventually overcome their alienation. In being homogenized into a “man-made-whole”, the “whole human” liberates itself from its own ego determination (*Ichgebundenheit*) and transforms into an intersubjective subject without ceasing to be a concrete subject.²⁴

²⁰ Developed by Lukács in his *The Specificity of the Aesthetic*, first published in German in 1963, the notion has been repeatedly referred to in Lachenmann’s writings and interviews, including “The ‘Beautiful’ in Music Today”, “Touched by Nono”, “»Klänge sind Naturereignisse«. Helmut Lachenmann im Gespräch mit Klaus Zehlein und Hans Thomalla”, “Über das Komponieren: An Wolfgang Rihm”, and so on. The English translation of the terms *der ganze Mensch* and *das Menschenganz* that I adopt here—the “whole human” and the “man-made-whole”—is from Erik Bachman’s English translation of Lukács’s work. See Georg Lukács, *The Specificity of the Aesthetic*, Volume 1. Erik M. Bachman trans. & ed., Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2023.

²¹ G. H. R. Parkinson, *Georg Lukács: the Man, His Work and His Ideas*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970, 148. Also see Ian Aitken, *Lukácsian Film Theory and Cinema: A Study of Georg Lukács’ Writings on Film, 1931-71*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012, 78.

²² Aitken 2012, 78.

²³ See Agnes Heller, “The Unknown Masterpiece”, in *Maps and Mirrors: Topologies of Art and Politics*, ed. Steve Martinot, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001, 208.

²⁴ Heller, in Martinot ed. 2001, 208.

Lachenmann took the notion of creating in art a “man-made-whole” as a guideline for his opera project. The musical-narrative suspension introduced by number No. 18 and the self-reflexive character of the Da Vinci text frame the real and fictional lived experiences of the two girls as part of the “whole human”, the representation of whose subjectivity in the opera, as this chapter will show, appears hopelessly fragmented and muted. At the same time, Lukács’s appeal to the completeness of perception is deeply sutured into Lachenmann’s formula of “music as existential experience”. In a laudation for Hans Ulrich Lehmann, Lachenmann describes his aspiration of restoring via music the totality of perception and thereby a recovery of interpersonal connection:

Only as a “human whole” in the totality of perception, which is not only “ear-in-its-wholeness” but also, via this lateral entrance to the human being, “spirit-in-its-wholeness”, vigilant spirit, do we overcome our barriers and enter into connection with ourselves and our fellow human being, as the one listening to and affected by us, and thus at the same time—to use Stravinsky’s expression—“in connection with the highest being”.³¹

Lachenmann’s invitation to the audience to enter the “contemplative-reflexive” space offered in the opera, as outlined previously, represents part of his effort to complete his picture of the “man-made-whole”. The discussion that follows examines different aspects of the work that might be contributing to the realization of Lukácsian human wholeness. My analysis covers three areas. It investigates, first, how the opera acquires meta-referentiality through various dramaturgical and compositional means, including the incorporation of an extensive network of musical and textual references. Second, I offer a close reading of Lachenmann’s preliminary work on the music-text relationship, which starts with a distillation of structurally important words or phrases and sonic “images” from the Andersen text. Based on the analysis, finally, I venture a hermeneutic reading of a musical procedure that symbolizes the coming-into-being of an expressive, albeit short-lived voice. This, I argue, provides a more positive alternative to the pre-existing reading of the opera’s projection of the impossibility of articulating the self.

³¹ “Erst als „Mensch ganz“ in der Totalität der Wahrnehmung, die nicht nur „ganz Ohr“, sondern über diesen seitlichen Eingang zum Menschen „ganz Geist“, wachsender Geist ist, überwinden wir unsere Schranken und treten mit uns selbst und dem Mitmenschen als dem mit uns Lauschenden und Betroffenen in Verbindung und so zugleich—um Strawinsky zu bemühen—„in Verbindung mit dem höchsten Wesen“”. Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 1996, 291.

Metareference

Das Mädchen includes two soprano voices and thirty-two vocalists, and it is structured in what appears at first sight to be an old-fashioned operatic sequence of short numbers.³³ But this so-called “opera” has no actual roles, no dialogues, no staged actions. No single singer plays the part of the little girl. The subtitle of the stage work, “music with images”, signals its potential to elicit a meta-awareness—an awareness of music’s capacity to “establish something like a distant second level or a meta-level on which music becomes the object of contemplation and reflection”.³⁴ The meta-reflection in “music with images” is manifested in two aspects.³⁵ First, the deviation of the work from standard practice which normally includes generic terms explicitly suggesting “opera” or “music theatre” (such as “acts” or “scenes”) implies that the work is intended as an “opera about opera”. The deviation indicates that a reflection on or even a challenge to opera as a historical genre (or, in Lachenmann’s term, an “aesthetic apparatus”) with all its concomitant assumptions is itself constructed as part of the meaning of the opera. Second, “music with images” also indicates the idea of “music about music” in the sense that it foregrounds a medial consciousness about music’s capacity to trigger visual associations—a capacity that can be contentious in other contexts. “Music with images” as a meta-reference elicits in the recipients a reflection on music as a medium and a semiotic system *per se*, and especially its function in an opera-like work. The meta-reference also enables differentiation between the work’s (re)telling a story—on the level of representation—and its agenda of posing some questions about listening and seeing—on the level of meta-reflection.

³³ The “opera” could also be perceived as structured in a form similar to a song cycle, and *Winterreise* is a special example in question given the similarity in subject matter (coldness) and in narrative (lonely wanderer) it shares with *Das Mädchen*.

³⁴ Tobias Janz, “‘Music about Music’: Metaization and Intertextuality in Beethoven’s Prometheus Variations op. 35”, in Werner Wolf, et al. *Metareference across Media: Theory and Case Studies*, Amsterdam; New York: Brill Academic Publishers, 2009, 211.

³⁵ The term “metareflection” here follows the definition given by Werner Wolf. Wolf differentiates between two variants of self-reference. The first type of self-reference means the fact that a sign (system) merely points at itself or to similar (or identical) elements within the same system. Examples of this include recurrences, intertextual quotations or imitations and the *mise en abyme* of storytelling in stories within stories. The second type of self-reference is a signifying practice that creates a self-referential meaning, an example of which is metareflection or metareference. Metareference is able to elicits a cognitive process or reflection on itself, on other elements of the system or on the system as a whole. See Wolf, “Metafiction and Metamusic: Exploring the Limits of Metareference,” in Winfried Nöth and Nina Bishara, *Self-Reference in the Media*, Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter, 2007, 305–6.

Hermann Danuser argues that when titles suggest generic attributes by foregrounding a deviation from the standard practice, they often raise questions about generic affiliation and stimulate certain ways of reception.³⁶ This is precisely the case for operas like *Das Mädchen* and Sciarrino's *Lohengrin* with which the composers endorse a way of listening that hears the sound itself *as* theatre. Rather similarly to *Lohengrin*, in *Das Mädchen*, the distribution of an operatic "voice" across the singers and the orchestra, the nullification of verbal expression and the atomization of words, as well as the "sonic" treatment of the singing voice, all serve the purpose of a dramaturgy that may be described as "scenes from within". It is as if the spectators are observing the unfolding of the interiority of a self which, although for most of the time keeps silent, is highly sensitive to its environment, and is conscious of its intimacy with itself.

If the traditional function of the libretto is still preserved in most of the operatic works of Sciarrino, then for Lachenmann it becomes ambiguous in *Das Mädchen* to what extent a libretto truly exists. In what is supposed to be a synopsis, Lachenmann cites Andersen's text in full, mapping the narrative unfolding onto the twenty-four music numbers in sequence. By doing so, the "textuality" of the story—more than being a pretext for the musical performance—is incorporated as a component of the production. In the programme book for the Stuttgart premiere, this "pseudo-libretto" is accompanied by "A Musical Plot" provided by Lachenmann himself which details the key musical events of each number. What adds to *Das Mädchen*'s meta-reflection is the fact that, instead of letting the story show itself in a way that presumes the audience's "ignorance" of the narrative, Lachenmann's treatment of the text seeks to make a self-referential statement—a message saying that "this is my way of reading the fairytale anew". Only a tiny fraction of Andersen's text is selected as the sung texts for the vocalists, mostly rendered as fragments of syllables verging on the border of intelligibility. Instead of being enacted by means of dialogue and action according to operatic norms, the story is presented through the (often silenced) "voice" of a virtual, "all-knowing" narrator. The reciting of Andersen's fairytale in its original form prompts a heightened awareness in the listener about the unconventional relationship between the dramatic (pre-)text and the music. Admittedly, from the audience's perspective, a rather traditional dimension in the role of the Andersen text is also present—supporting a mimetic mode of story-telling.

³⁶ Danuser, "Generic Titles: On Paratextual Metareference in Music", in Wolf, et al. 2009, 191–2.

Throughout the opera there are solid reference points for the listener to pin down the meaning of the abundant sonic images created in the music (for instance, the roaring of the “traffic”, the stiffness of the “wall”, and the glittering of the “Christmas merchandise”).³⁷

A renewed relationship between music and text (along with the images it conjures up) is arguably Lachenmann’s starting point for his operatic project. As my analysis will show in detail, the deconstruction of words continues to provide structural force for a composition that concentrates on various possible relationships between verbal meaning and sound structure. An exploration in this direction is at the same time a response to one of the major issues relating to the operatic genre, namely: how should composers curate the interaction between opera’s multiple media? According to Christopher Morris, critics of the romantic era such as Lessing, Herder, Schlegel and Schelling talked about an ideal synthesis of music, poem and picture in opera.³⁸ The apogee of this aesthetic of synthesis is Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*. A modernist swerve from this ideal synthesis subsequently took place in the twentieth century in the operatic-theatrical conception articulated by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht. Weill, who according to Morris represents the attitude of “modernist purism”, contends that opera takes its “rightful place...in the whole area of absolute music”.³⁹ Speaking of his own music theatre, Weill asserts that the music—though basically of a theatrical type—makes it possible to “give opera a structure that is absolutely musical, even instrumental”.⁴⁰ Weill’s collaborator Brecht conceived of a theatre of mutually estranged media and argued for a “radical separation of the elements” in opera.⁴¹ Criticizing the degradation of various media as a result of a muddled fusion under the notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Brecht

³⁷ For Metzger, a basic function of “music with images” is that the opera relies on a number of obvious and familiar images provided by Andersen’s tale to have the listener hear the “enigmatic” sound as something specifically related to reality. In other words, sounds, particularly those individual sonic gestures, are obediently serving or conforming to the theatrical image. See Metzger 2009, 195–221.

³⁸ August Wilhelm Schlegel, for instance, wrote that “We should try to bring the arts closer together and seek transitions from one to the other. Statues perhaps may quicken into pictures, pictures become poems, poems music...” Morris notes that the perceived gap separating operatic reality from its ideal state of synthesis became a recurrent theme among the generation of Romantic critics. See Christopher Morris, “‘Too Much Music’: the Media of Opera,” in Nicholas Till ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 95–116.

³⁹ Morris 2012, 106.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 106.

⁴¹ Matthew W. Smith, *The Total Work of Art: From Bayreuth to Cyberspace*, New York, N.Y. ; London: Routledge, 2007, 74–8.

attached particular importance to the independence of each medium and the opposition, instead of conformity or confluence, between the media of theatre.⁴²

In general, Lachenmann's view of operatic intermediality reflects the modernist shift in focus, as Morris describes, "from genre to the vessel of signification as perceived, from message or meaning to underlying materiality, from art form to medium".⁴³ More attention is now given to sound itself as a conduit of signification. Two seemingly opposed aspects characterize Lachenmann's conception of music for stage. One is musical autonomy, and the other is the "sticky" associations—be it material, corporeal, visual or symbolic—that the language of *MCI* cannot and does not try to shake off. Following Weill's "purism", Lachenmann insists that, in composing for the big opera stage, he feels the need to rub the ideas of musical complexity against what he perceives as a kind of resistance, that is, opera's presumed constraints of simplification regarding music-text relationship.⁴⁴ His approach to opera seems to be firmly anchored in the notion that sound has its own "images", and that this should be treated as an organic dimension of, instead of seen as detrimental to, the structural autonomy of the opera music. In other words, consistent with his wish to reconcile structure with aura through "dialectical structuralism", Lachenmann's view of music, especially as an operatic medium, does not presume media purity. It assumes that music itself has a visual, sensual dimension, even beyond those "textual images" supplied by Andersen. In this sense, it is different from Brecht's inclination toward a more separate relationship between words, music and setting. It also differentiates itself from the Wagnerian totality which conceives an idealized synthesis achieved through the juxtaposition of various media. When Achim Freyer was preparing the staging of the premiere of *Das Mädchen*, Lachenmann even worried that the *mise-en-scène* might seem redundant and weaken the notion of "music with images". What Lachenmann aspires to, in brief, is a hybrid of sound, word and image that is achieved through musical mediation, a view that echoes an idea articulated by Nicholas

⁴² For Matthew W. Smith and Christopher Morris, the outcome of Brechtian epic theatre however, is no more than a reformed version of Gesamtkunstwerk. See Morris 2012, 106; Smith 2007, 71–91.

⁴³ Morris 2012, 105.

⁴⁴ "Ein Werk für die große Opernbühne schreiben, konnte nicht heißen, mich den dort vermuteten/unterstellten Vereinfachungszwängen anzupassen, zum groben Pinsel zu greifen, sondern meine Vorstellungen von musikalischer Komplexität als absoluter Musiker an solchem Widerstand zu reiben." Lachenmann, Programme book (1997 Hamburg production), 39.

Cook in the concluding chapter of *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, that music is itself a form of “multimedia”, since even in “pure” music, meaning is inextricably bound with representational figures and practices.⁴⁵

Figure 6.3 offers a summary of what has been discussed so far regarding the elements of meta-referentiality and meta-reflexivity presented in diverse aspects of *Das Mädchen*. The table lists the musical concepts of various kinds and their respective self-referential meanings—either associated with a medial consciousness or pointing to a self-reflexive subject.

<i>Musical concept</i>	<i>Signification related to Meta-Referentiality and Meta-Reflexivity</i>
subtitle <i>Musik mit Bildern</i>	medial consciousness about the viscosity of sound and music
renunciation of roles; traditional number form; atomization of verbal text; instrumentalization of singing voice	as meta-opera, subverting the “aesthetic apparatus” of opera tradition
Andersen text “read out”, not enacted	the composer requests: “I want you to perceive the familiar fairytale anew ‘in my way’.”
The presence of Lachenmann and his voice on stage in “...zwei Gefühle...”	the composer requests: “This is a moment for me—and for you all—to observe and reflect on our ways of feeling and knowing.”
“wall” and “cave” metaphors	symbolizing confrontation with existential moments, including moral impasse: the fear of danger and the desire for knowledge and justice

Figure 6.3: Overview of elements of meta-referentiality and meta-reflexivity

⁴⁵ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1998, 215–60.

Working Procedure: Text – Sound – Image

In order to address the question of how a subject makes itself heard in an “opera” that has literally no actual characters and dialogues, it is necessary to start with an investigation of Lachenmann’s distinctive approach to the text-music relationship, which always involves a deconstruction of language particles into sound objects. Of paramount importance to Lachenmann is the question of how the semantic and the phonetic can respectively develop a more meaningful relationship with the organization of musical material. Envisaging a compositional method for music with text that embraces various media as conduits of meaning, Nono wrote: “The purely semantic ‘understanding’ of the content of a text does not in any case guarantee that one has understood it. It is the interaction of image, light, movement, action, sound, musical structure—it is this very complex sensitive experience that is the vehicle of meaning”.⁴⁶ When dealing with text and voice, Lachenmann follows the teaching of Nono and Stockhausen.⁴⁷ Like his precursors, Lachenmann is not satisfied with a way of treating text in which the word is taken “almost solely as a vehicle of its semantics”.⁴⁸ His exploration involves two major dimensions. The first, as we have seen in Chapter 5, is that by deconstructing the phonetic structure, the sonic quality of words is treated in a more musically meaningful way. The second is that the temporal arrangement of musical material and the overall musical form are derived from a deeper structure that is revealed through a semiotic analysis of the grammar and the semantics of the text.

The preliminary sketches for *Das Mädchen* suggest that in the process of constructing the scenic and musical structure of the opera, Lachenmann’s first step was to enter into the structure of Andersen’s text itself, and

⁴⁶ “La « compréhension » purement sémantique de contenu d’un texte ne garantit pas de toute façon qu’on l’ait compris. C’est l’interaction de l’image, de la lumière, du mouvement, de l’action, du son, de la structure musicale – c’est cette expérience sensible très complexe qui est le véhicule du sens”. Kaltenecker 2004, 236.

⁴⁷ Leipert suggests that Lachenmann’s search for new possibilities of treating text in music seems to be a response to the then-recent call from Adorno in the essay “Music and Language” (1963) for the necessity of a critical reformulation of the relationship between music and language. In the meantime, Lachenmann also looked back to works by Nono and Stockhausen such as *la terra e la campagna* (1958) and *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1955-56) for conceptual topics and formal ideas about how to develop text-music relationship. The theoretical essays of the two, including Nono’s “Text-Musik-Gesang” (1960), a text which Lachenmann helped Nono draft in German, and Stockhausen’s “Music and Speech” (1959), also had a profound influence on many aspects of Lachenmann’s treatment of text in music. See Leipert “Lachenmann’s Silent Voices (and the Speechless Echoes of Nono and Stockhausen),” *Twentieth-Century Music*, 16, no. 3, 2019, 589–619.

⁴⁸ Nono’s words from a script for a lecture given at the Darmstadt course in 1960 entitled “Text-Music-Song”, see Luigi Nono, et al, *Nostalgia for the Future: Luigi Nono’s Selected Writings and Interviews*, Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018, 162.

then to progress directly with sonic material. The preliminary work was to conduct a temporal mapping of the topical structure of the text into the musical structure on a high and a middle level. This working procedure, as shown in the diagram in the upper part of the sketch in **Figure 6.4a** and in my transcription of it in **Figure 6.4b**, is named by Lachenmann as an “Arpeggio of Topoi” (*Arpeggio der Topoi*).⁴⁹ It is basically a paradigmatic arrangement of important elements from Andersen’s text which gives rise to the opera’s scenic segmentation and some determinations of particular organizational principles of musical material. As the diagram illustrates, the diachronic “arpeggio” of semantic units (single words or phrases), ordered in Arabic numbers from left to right, reflects the syntagmatic structure of the text. The vertical or synchronic arrangement makes evident the quasi-paradigmatic structure in the semantics or the grammatical function of these units. For instance, units 2 and 6 are grouped together because of their reference to “coldness” (*kalt*). Units 4 and 7 are grouped for their shared meaning: “darkness” (*dunkel/Finsternis*). Units 8, 11 and 14 are words and phrases indicating movements or/and locations. Units 9 and 12, 13 and 16 refer to the little girl and to the oversized slippers the girl wears (*Pantoffeln*), and Lachenmann, as can be seen from the sketch, literally visualizes both “images” at the bottom left corner of the paper. The phrase “Es war” in unit 1 is linked to the “Es waren” in unit 16, both seen as the signal of a narrative voice that looks back into the past, and for this reason, scene 3 was provisionally subtitled as “Memory(-ies)” (*Erinnerung(en)*).

The implication of this textual reconstruction process is that “images” derived from the semantics of the text play a fundamental role in shaping the musical structure of the opera from a very early stage. The grouping of homogenous semantic units has significant formal functions. It selects out the recurring motives in the text, and makes them a kind of “refrain” throughout the music. As indicated in the sketch, single words highlighted with a red circle—*sinken*, *Neujahrstag*, *Kaelte*, *Pantoffeln*—are the “topoi” which Lachenmann finds most important. “Topoi” like these, which make an abundant collection, are composed into the most memorable sonic “images”.⁵⁰ And by using this method, Lachenmann works out the pacing of the “topoi” across the twenty-three scenes (numbers). The formal relationship between different sonic materials—which is analogous

⁴⁹ The sketch, which is in A4 size, is the first page of a series of sketches drafted for the same purpose included in the Folder 10 of the Helmut Lachenmann Collection.

⁵⁰ I will return to Lachenmann’s sonic realization of these “topoi” with more details in the following discussion.

to a stratification of loosely defined musical “themes”—naturally takes shape. In this way, the blueprint of the musical form enters into a relationship with the text.

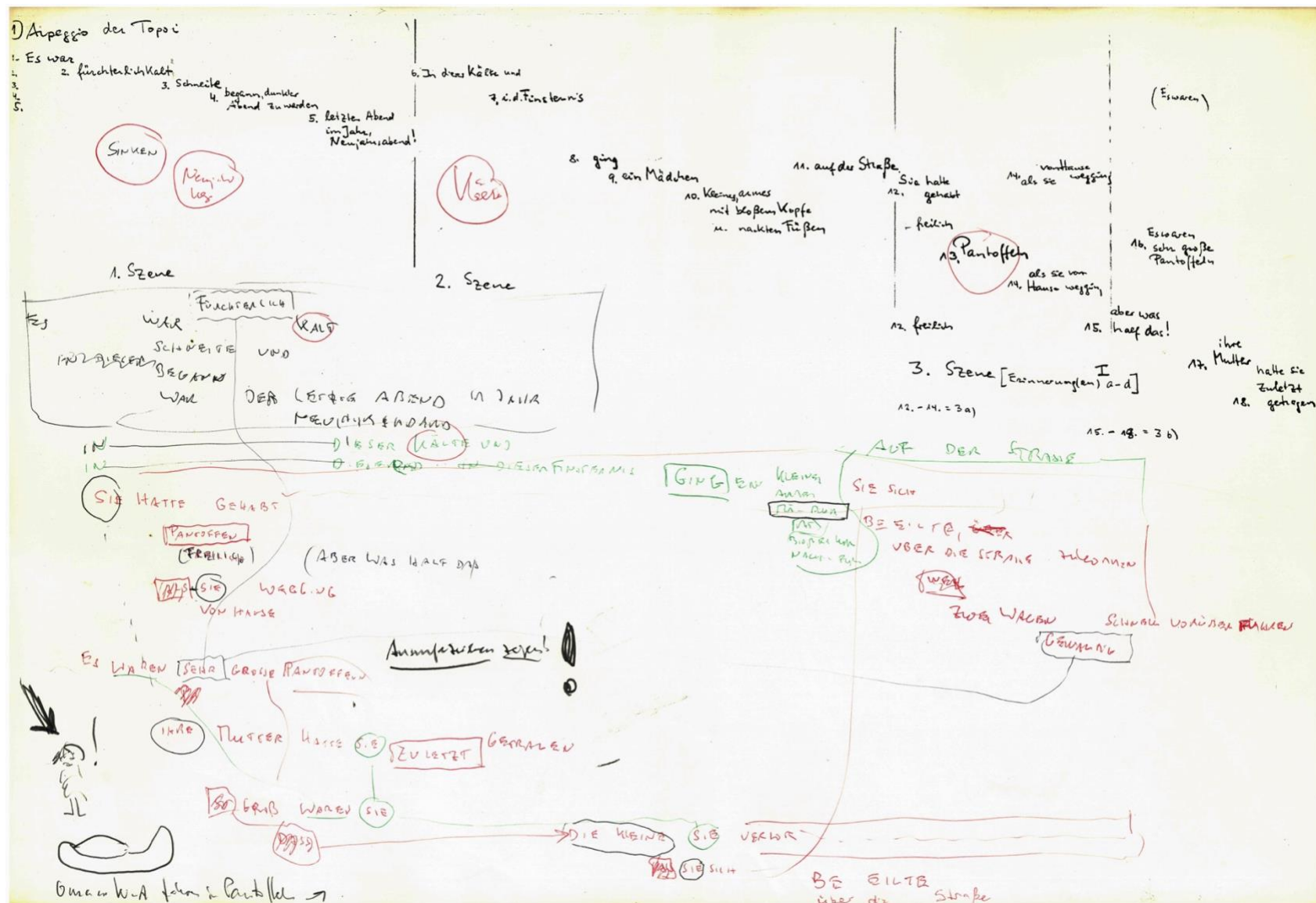


Figure 6.4a. Sketch for *Das Mädchen*, Paradigmatic analysis of text structure for the design of the scenic structure, Reproduced with permission from the Paul Sacher Foundation

Arpeggio der Topoi			
1. Es war 2. fürchterlich kalt 3. schneite 4. begann dunkler Abend zu werden 5. letzte Abend im Jahre, Neujahrs-abend! (SINKEN) (Neujahrstag)	6. in dieser Kälte 7. in dieser Finsternis 8. ging 9. ein Mädchen (Kälte) 10. kleines, armes mit bloßem Kopfe und nackten Füßen 11. auf der Straße	12. Sie hatte gehabt - freilich (13. Pantoffeln) 14. als sie vom Hause wegging	(Es waren) 15. Aber was half das! 16. Es waren sehr große pantoffeln
1. Scene	2. Scene	3. Scene [Erinnerung(en) a-d] 12.-14.= 3 a) 15.-18.= 3 b)	

Figure 6.4b: Transcription of the upper part of the sketch in Figure 6.4a

How does Lachenmann determine the text that is actually to be sung? The working procedure as shown in the sketches reveals that this is another function of his quasi-paradigmatic analysis of Andersen's text. The way Lachenmann treats Andersen's text confirms what he once claimed: "music and musical form have traded in their old language-like laws for others, for laws that resist any surface-structure linkage to linguistic discourse based on traditional notions of syntax and semantics. 'Composing' a text, beyond 'setting' it to music, must mean intervening in the arrangement of the text and reacting to it".⁵¹ Thanks to this analytical procedure, Lachenmann manages to draw forth an underlying correlation between the textual structure and the musical structure. The lower part of the sketch in **Figure 6.4a** includes a chart that shows Lachenmann's structural analysis of the text from the first few lines of the fairytale. Some words in this chart are "set" to the first number (Choralvorspiel: "Oh du fröhliche"), although they are not always heard in the original order. As in a standard paradigmatic analysis, the fractured text in the sketch can be followed from left to right and top to bottom. Lachenmann tries to map out synchronic similarities between the semantic units by placing individual words into columns or "pairing" them with lines of different colours. A few categories of similar elements can be identified. For example, the phrase *es war* as in "Es war fürchterlich kalt" and as in "es war der letzte Abend im Jahre" are rendered in tabular presentation. The same applies to *der letzte Abend im Jahre* and *Neujahrsabend*, and to *in dieser Kälte* and *in dieser Finsternis*. *Fürchterlich*—*sehr*—*gewaltig*, linked together with black lines, are all adverbs indicating "to a high degree". *Sie*—*Mädchen*—*ihre*—*die Kleine*, circled in black, all refer to the little girl. Even the two *Sie* (see Fig. 6.4a), circled and linked to each other with green lines, are grouped as the pronoun for the girl's slippers. Conceivably, the two subtitles that divide the twenty-three numbers into two parts, *Auf der Strasse* and *An der Hauswand*, are also derived from this semiotic grouping method. The fragmentation and re-grouping of the text simultaneously defamiliarizes and enhances the semantic articulation—legible utterance is substituted for components of structural significance.

The textual analysis as shown in **Figure 6.4a** thus has a dual function: firstly, "topoi" such as *Neujahr*, *Mädchen*, the girl's *Pantoffeln* and the coldness she experiences provide a direct imagery source for a repository of key individual sonic gestures or constellations. Usually defined by distinctive timbral and gestural qualities, they are

⁵¹ Leipert 2019, 605.

in a way reminiscent of Wagnerian *leitmotifs*. Secondly, certain particles, such as the phrase *es war*, and the words *fürchterlich* and *Neujahr*, are picked out as text to be vocalized in a recognizable manner.

Let us consider the two functions of the text through more details from the sketches. The musical material of *Das Mädchen* is predominantly based on a process of sonification (or orchestration) of “topoi” or “images” selected from Andersen’s text. In the upper-left part of the sketch shown in **Figure 6.5**, Lachenmann lists six “topoi”—numbered 1 to 6, and marked out with red circles in the picture—that are important in the first three numbers of the opera. Each “topos” acquires its distinctive sonic configuration. It can be inferred from the sketch that for each of them, Lachenmann specifies particular instruments, playing techniques, timbral qualities, gestural morphologies and pitch contents. Functioning as reference points for listening, these six “topoi” are: 1) Night-falling or snowing (*Sinkend/schneite*), 2) Coldness (*Kälte*), 3) New Year’s Eve (*Neujahrsabend*), 4) “It was” (*Es war*), 5) Traffic (*Verkehr*), and 6) Slippers (*Pantoffeln*). Together, they provide a glimpse of how Lachenmann’s sonic “images” draw from a wide range of sensory modalities. For example, the sonic realization of “coldness”, which overlaps to a great extent with that of “night-falling” or “snowing”, is comprised of “airy” (*luft/tonlos*, as the sketch suggests) sounds in the choir and wind instruments, cold harp chords, and a variety of “grating” sonorities: the trembling strings, the “jagged” glissando in piano, a collection of rattling, clanking (*klirrend*) noises in xylorimba, vibraphone, claves, antique cymbals, woodblocks and metalblocks, a cymbal effect specified as “sizzle”, and a rhythmized pattern of scraping on the timpani rim (as the word “*Kante*” indicates). These sonorities afford a mixture of corporeal, tactile, and auditory sensations related to the harshness of an icy, snowy night. For listeners like Laurence Osborn, these rattling sonorities suggest “something brittle undergoing a series of tremors”, and “the bone-like quality of these sounds primes the emergence of images of a corporeal nature”, a frail, shivering body.⁵²

⁵² Osborn 2015, 29.

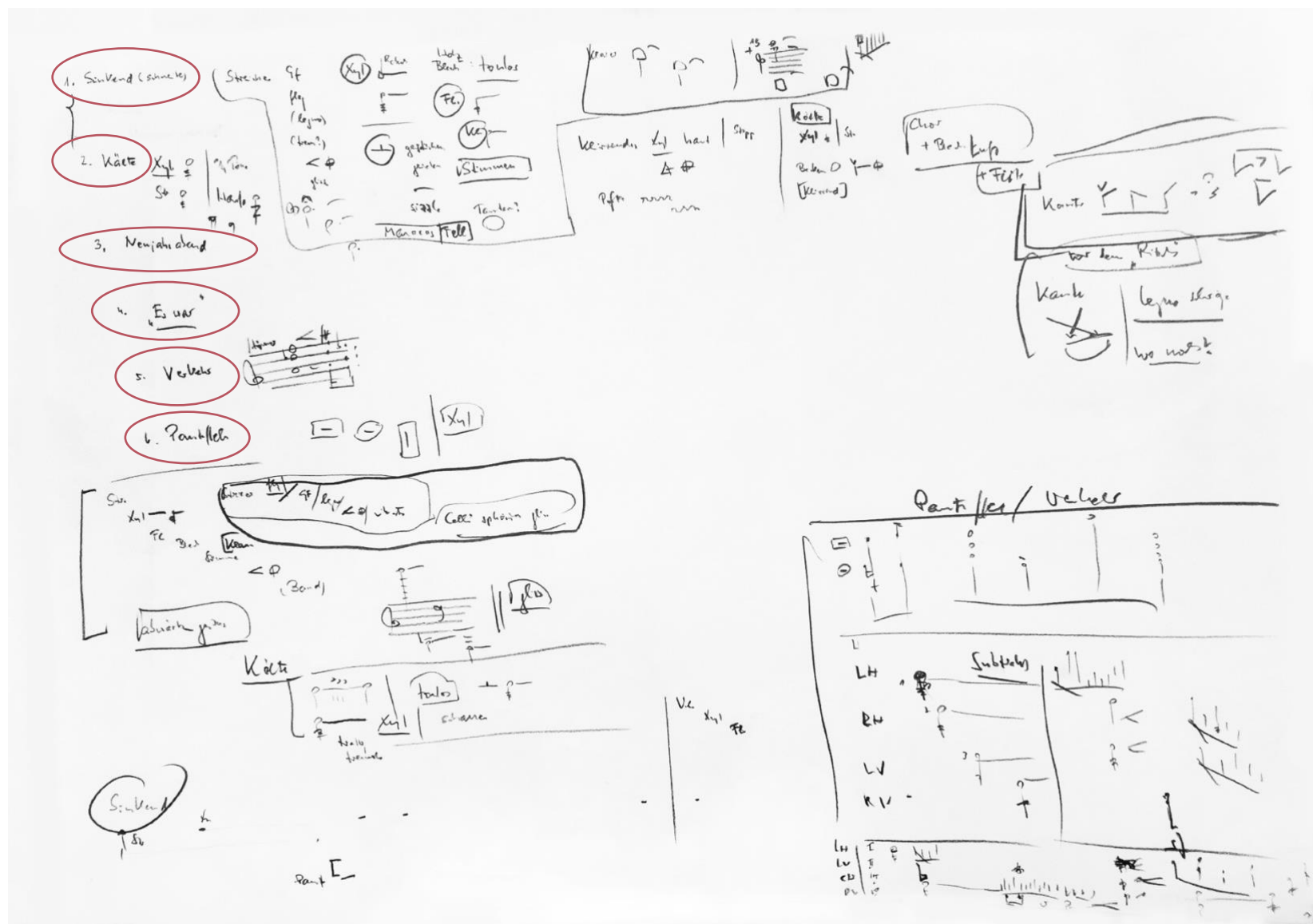


Figure 6.5: Sketch for *Das Mädchen*, Sonification of "Images" ("Topoi")
 Reproduced with permission from the Paul Sacher Foundation

Lachenmann's "images" draw as much from the perception of virtual agential motions in music (such as the scattered triadic sequences for the image of "falling snowflakes" in number No.9, or the strings ascending and thinning in register for the "rising-higher of Christmas lights" in number No. 16c) as from sources that are visually or auditorily perceptible in the real performance space. When the vocalists are scattered around the auditorium rubbing their hands against their bodies, the image of the desperate attempt to ward off the cold becomes literal. In number No. 20a "Ritsch 4", a percussionist strikes with a wooden beater on a resonant edge (bars 375–80), and this action is required by the composer to be visible on stage at all cost, so that the image of a matchstick—previously heard at the beginning of the number in the light, "woody" sonority of strings playing *legno saltando*—can be reinforced. The sketch shown in **Figure 6.5** includes an example of an "image" which is made perceptible through a sonic gesture with real, spatial implications. The sonic "image" of traffic, which recurs at various points in scenes including No.2 "Frier-Arie", No. 7 "Zwei Wagen" and No.10 "Aus allen Fenstern", is modelled on the "doppler effect". A typical example of this is heard in the brass and the woodwinds clusters and the strings between bars 216–17 (see **Example 6.1**). Despite the fact that the pitch contour of the clusters (a descending major second) clearly imitates a "doppler shift" in the sound of car horns, Lachenmann specifies spatial positioning of the four trombones to maximize the stereophonic effect (as detailed in the bottom-right part of the sketch: "LH," "RH," "LV" and "RV" stand for left-back, right-back, left-front, right-front respectively).

213. (Keine Tränen!)

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Solo

1. 2.

Stimm

man

Pf. 4

Cell

Git.

Zup.

Hr. 2

Ph. 1

Ph. 2

Xylo

Vib. 1

Vib. 2

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Example 6.1: "Doppler effect" in number 2. Frier-Arie, bars 216–17

The examples discussed above show how Lachenmann's anatomy of the semantics shapes a text–music relationship that goes beyond the normal text-setting procedure. A musical reconstruction of the phonetics—as we have already touched upon in „... *zwei Gefühle* ...”—plays an equally important role in this regard. Let us consider a passage (bars 61–72) from the opening scene: “Chorale prelude” (“O du fröhliche”). With its unreserved depiction of a cold, desolate landscape, this prelude plays the role of what Amy Bauer calls an “anti-overture” or “a shadow chorale” in that many traditional features of operatic overture and chorale are negated here.⁵³ At the very beginning is a standstill of white-noise—silent rubbing in *flautato* strings and on a sustained Ab, lasting almost a minute. This opening sound-world, as Laurence Osborn notes, denies the listener any perception of human agency.⁵⁴ It is only with the emergence of the rattling wooden percussion and the first instance of isolated phonemes in bar 33 that a night street scene comes to life. In this “field of rubble”, tonal gestures are sporadically emitted from the orchestra. Cold, hard-accented chords or long reverberant sounds in the leading instruments display a harmonic language that prioritizes tritones, major and minor sixths, and minor sevenths.⁵⁵ While occasionally brief melodic contours can be traced in the vocalists, they appear too fragmentary to be labelled as melody. With the entry of the full ensemble of vocalists, bar 61 marks the beginning of a passage in which a narrative voice starts to express the condition surrounding the little girl.

Between bars 61–72, a series of disjunct phonemes pop out from the instrumental texture. The passage is exemplary of Lachenmann's polyphonic, hocket-like choring (Example 6.2). Because the phonetic structure of the words are fragmented and distributed among the different parts and is not easily legible in the full score, Lachenmann usually writes out the words or sentences above the vocal parts. Figure 6.6a represents the four text layers assigned to the four groups of vocalists (each comprising two sopranos, two altos, two tenors and two basses). The four layers include: 1) “Sie hatte freilich Pant(offeln)”; 2) “Es war fürchterlich kalt”; 3) “es war der letzte (Abend)”; 4) “es schneite und”. Figure 6.6b further visualizes the rhythmicizing and pacing of the syllables in the four groups of the vocal ensemble. In bar 61, with great clarity, the solo bass in the fourth

⁵³ Amy Bauer, “Contemporary Opera and the Failure of Language”, in *The Routledge Research Companion to Modernism in Music*, ed. Björn Heile and Charles Wilson, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2019, 438.

⁵⁴ Laurence Osborn, “Sound, Meaning and Music-Drama in Lachenmann's *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*”, *Tempo*, No. 268 (2014), 28.

⁵⁵ For a brief account of the harmonic language here, see Osborn 2014, 29.

group utters “E-S-W-A-R”—a phrase loaded with importance as a result of the structural analysis. But the semantic readability is soon replaced with a series of isolated consonants whose purely sonic or musical qualities are the primary focus. These consonants, derived from the word “fürchterlich”, contribute to the impression of a freezing landscape with two types of sounds: aspirated sounds like S, F, and CH[Ü] that resemble the hissing, whistling and howling of chilly wind; and sounds involving a periodic movement like the rolled R and the stuttered TE which are associated with trembling as an involuntary physical reaction to the cold.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ The auxiliary vowel sound [Ü] is added here to indicate that the “CH” sound should be pronounced in a way that sounds similar to the whistling of winds.

Text layer	Es w-ar f - (f)ü - r - ch - te - r - lich kal - t									
	Sie hatte f - rei - lich Pan - t									
	war der letz - te									
	(e)s schnei - te und									

Figure 6.6a. Text structure of the voices in bars 61–72, 1. Choralvorspiel “O du fröhliche”

bars 61–66									
Solo soprano					IN				
Voice Group	1.	S	R	F -	F -	INN -			
	2.	S	R	F -	F -				
	3.	S	R	F -	F -	F -	Ü -	R -	CH[ü]
	4.	E - S	W - A - R	F -	F -	F -	Ü -	CH[ü]	

bars 67–72									
Voice Group	1.	[H]A	LÄ S	SCH - NAI -	TE		LI-CH	KALL -	UN - T
	2.	[H]A - R	DE - R LÄ - TZ	CH -	TE -	R	LI-CH	CH[j]	KALL -
	3.	CH[ü]		SIE HATTE	TETETE...	F-R-AI	LI-CH	KALL -	PAN - T
	4.	CH[ü]			TE -	R - RR -	TETETETE	KALL -	

Figure 6.6b. Distribution of syllables in the four groups of vocalists, bars 61–72, Number 1. Choralvorspiel “O du fröhliche”

Remarkably, the paradigmatic relationships between the phonemes, as another outcome of Lachenmann’s analysis, are translated musically into the texture of the parts sung by the thirty-two vocalists. Hence we hear a juxtaposition of the TE sound in bar 69 as a phoneme shared by words belonging to all four text layers (hatte, fürchterlich, letzte, schneite). Meanwhile, as we hear in bars 69–72, the TE is set to a “stuttered” rhythm, treated

as a musical onomatopoeia for the clattering of teeth. In bar 68, the sound S and TZ are synchronized in one single hissing sonority. In bar 72, similarly, the plosive T as in “undt” and “Pant(offeln)” are synchronized as an echo of the previous TE sound. Before the T sound in bar 72, the syllable KALL—representing an important semantic unit (cold)—is uttered by all four groups with accentuation.

The text-composing discussed above facilitates an understanding of a primary principle characterizing the text-sound relationship in *Das Mädchen*—that the semantic and phonetic, the sonic and textual are unified in the sensory “images” they collaboratively afford. At first sight, the obscured semantic articulation does not provide the listener with an easy path to meaning. Through a “deciphering” process, however, it is possible to glean a text–music entity which implies the transcendence of an unmediated comprehension of text in which one takes the text–music combination at face value. Nono states in “Text–Music–Song” that, “whatever devotees of purism might dream of, a word cannot be stripped of its constituent element”.⁵⁷ One implication of this statement is that meaning cannot be eradicated completely even in fragmented syllables. And in an observation that helps to justify Lachenmann’s sound-text perspective, Nono quotes an idea from Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*, in a formulation provided by Jean-Paul Sartre, that “there is no quality of sensation so bare that it is not penetrated with significance”.⁵⁸

What further expands the channel of communication is the implication of the idea of sound families in the orchestra. In the prelude, as elsewhere in the opera, the orchestra materializes the words. In bars 62–63, the rolled R as in the word “war” is echoed by the piano tuning pin glissando and the chattering of xylorimba, vibraphone and woodblocks. These sounds become part of the sound family that features a “grating” shape or what Lachenmann calls the “guiro” effect. In bar 72, the trumpet echoes the stuttered TE with its similarly rhythmicized toneless blowing whose particular shade is produced by articulating the consonant T. And these isolated phonemes do not correspond only to the instruments with which they are synchronized. Often they are a part of a more systematically organized sound family. The “breathy” consonant F, for instance, becomes a component of one of the most important timbral families in the prelude across a wide range of musical

⁵⁷ Nono, et al 2018, 158.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 158.

contexts. Before the consonant is heard as in the word “fürchterlich”, its sonority is introduced in varied forms in a “purely musical” context, as F[y] and/or F[u] in bars 33–35 and 96–97, F[ü] in bar 39, and HF[i] in bar 59. When put into dialogue with the strings’ dry bowing on bridge and the toneless blowing of brass instruments (between bar 33 and 39), the vocal sound is perceived as a constituent of a family of dry yet relatively light “white-noise” which, in these bars, encourages the listener to think of the icy, howling wind. After the fermata in bar 73 which marks the beginning of the second half of the prelude, the F sound undergoes further evolution. Now rhythmicized periodically in semiquaver and in demisemiquaver sextuplets (bar 74), it is combined with the vocalists’ hand-rubbing and the *col legno* wiping in the strings. All of these gestures are unified by a rustling timbre that features a periodic rhythm. The same F sound which is previously heard as a phoneme or a sound of nature is now, importantly, recontextualized semantically as sound clearly specifying a human agent—it evokes exhalations through lips shivering from the cold. In the bar that follows, the CH, previously heard as a phoneme in “fürchterlich”, now takes on a similarly corporeal dimension when combined with hand-rubbing and the toneless breathing of trombone in bars 77–78.

It is not difficult to notice that the phonetic material drawn from the first few words from Andersen’s text, including the consonants S, W, R, F, CH and SCH, continues to play a dominant role in the numbers that follow, namely the transitional “In dieser Kälte” and the “Frier-Arie” (“Freezing Aria”). In the former, the prolonged rolled R and the F, which is rendered as a choppy repetition, are still heard as major sonic elements resonating with the sizzle cymbal, the scraped keyboard percussions, the hollow-sounding brass and the trembling strings. In “Frier-Arie”, considered by Martin Kaltenecker as a pastiche of Baroque “Cold Songs” (whose most famous examples are in Purcell’s *King Arthur* and Vivaldi’s Concerto “Winter”), the solo soprano sings an aria led by the spasmodically repeated consonant W, while the other vocalists prime the virtuosic solo voice with the sharp, breathy S and F sounds. Reflecting on the sonic mimicking of coldness in “Frier-Arie”, Thomas Schäfer states that “sound—as always in Lachenmann’s work, but here with particular impressiveness—is not understood as something *a priori*, but rather we participate in the creation of ‘cold’ sound

and ‘cold’ image in one”.⁵⁹ Schäfer’s comment upholds this chapter’s observation that the text–sound–image–triad is at the heart of Lachenmann’s sonic dramaturgy, an approach that challenges word-music combination in an arbitrary, unmediated way by cutting across multiple sonic strata via structural means. The perceptual immediacy of those sonic particles creates an “ecology” that encourages listening and detecting musical meaning in an intuitive yet structurally mediated way. It is also worth noting that Lachenmann’s use of a topology of motivic sonic images shares a striking similarity with Sciarrino’s sonic modules, as we have seen in the case of *Lohengrin*. Both strengthen the semiotic meaning of sound through repetition and mutation.

Ch-ch-ch-ch... – Ich – Ritsch

The concept of “image”, as my analysis has demonstrated, is a meeting point for the many different strands of Lachenmann’s compositional thinking. “Image” first and foremost raises questions about the auratic and the very concrete, mimetic aspects of sound. But Lachenmann never deploys such “magical” aspects of sound without coupling them with a structural aspect of composition. The fact that a topology of topoi from the text generates and serves as a formal plan for the musical material and that sounds and words are unified in the same sound families jointly fulfils the task of a structural construction of sonic “images”. Focusing on the tenth scene, “Aus allen Fenstern”, the following discussion further investigates the meaning of “music with images”. It argues that, by creating a contemporary “world picture” in music through multiple references and by constructing a symbolic image based on a figurative sonic process, Lachenmann presents an astonishing moment in the opera in which a voice struggles to make the first utterance of “the self”.

“Aus allen Fenstern” concludes the first half of the opera and it follows No. 9 “Streichhölzern und Schneeflocken”, a scene that portrays the falling snow and the little girl’s inner feelings—her loneliness and her

⁵⁹ “...wird Klang – wie immer bei Lachenmann, hier jedoch mit besonderer Eindrücklichkeit – nicht als etwas Apriorisches verstanden, sondern wir nehmen teil an der Entstehung von »kaltem« Klang und »kaltem« Bild in einem.” Thomas Schäfer, “Musik aus der Eiskammer der Gesellschaft: Über das Motiv der Kälte anlässlich von Helmut Lachenmanns *Mädchen mit den Schweißhölzern*”, in Hiekel and Mauser ed. 2005, 134–5.

despair over the unsaleable matches, as expressed through the exceptionally lyrical voice of the solo sopranos. In this transition, there is an almost cinematic shift of gaze, from the cold street scene to the warm festive windows, from a focus on the lonely body to the city's hustle and bustle. The scene as a grandiose finale has an extensive sectional structure and includes a large number of musical ideas.⁶⁰ As Martin Kaltenecker states, quoting one of Lachenmann's favorite metaphors ("organ", as the quintessence of polyphonic arrangement), the finale is striking for the amount of musical devices that are drawn and blended in it like the full sound of an organ.⁶¹ Structured evenly into four parts, the scene combines some most concrete pictures as well as some abstract ones laden with symbolic meanings. The first section (bars 606–58) is all about "the fuss and schmaltzy rhetoric of the Christmas season".⁶² Here the orchestra comes together in a big *tutti* which contributes to a splendid richness of sonority. For the first time in the opera, a wide selection of traditional chords (including major/minor third, dominant seventh/ninth, and major/minor seventh), sequenced in the fashion of a Christmas carol, are heard in the woodwinds and the brass (a typical example of this can be heard between bars 608–22). And among the gliding harmonics in the strings and chordal progressions led by the wind instruments, the "traffic" topos—the characteristic downward glissando (major second, minor/major third and fourth)—is repeated in the orchestra with greater intensity than before (for example, bar 631). For Kaltenecker, the sound of roaring traffic is at the same time a caricature of the song "Silent Night" which similarly has descending third and fourth as its signature intervals.⁶³ "Glittery" instruments such as harp, vibraphone, celesta and piano line up in parallel sixths in jaunty scalic gestures (bars 612–24), generating more auratic associations with the fracas of Christmas shopping. Snatches of pre-recorded radio broadcasts and pop music are heard vaguely in the background. The allusion to Christmas consumerism is eventually made evident between bars 652–56 in which the two solo sopranos make an urgent appeal for consumption—"KA-U-FT!" ("buy!")

Lachenmann once used prepared radio speech in his early *Kontrakadenz* to produce an effect of self-reference, with the phrase "Lachenmann's *Kontrakadenz*" heard in the narrator's text. In the second section (bars

⁶⁰ It is one of the longest scenes in the opera. In ECM's 2002 recording, its exact length is 9'52" minutes.

⁶¹ Kaltenecker, "Musik mit Bildern", Programme book (2001 Stuttgart production), 38.

⁶² Ibid. 38.

⁶³ Ibid. 38.

659–98), six CD tracks are brought into play to visualize a wider picture of the hubbub of a consumerist society. The six tracks, two with a variety of continuously transformed white noise, two with a wide selection of pop music, and two with speech words which sound as if they are taken from radio programmes, are controlled by six musicians who “play” their special faders according to a precise notation. The result is a polyphony of fleeting, unrecognizable fragments, before the entry of the first long speech which quietens the orchestra. Intriguingly, the supposed broadcast speech features a male voice telling the same story of the little match girl. It appears that, in different productions, the speech texts that are chosen to be audible at different points in the scene are different. In ECM’s 2002 recording of the “Tokyo version”, what can be heard at this point is the segment in which the little girl sits in the corner between two houses, which, interestingly, amounts to a self-reflexive foreshadowing of the scene to follow (No. 11 Hauswand 1).⁶⁴ In the same version, despite blasts of electronic guitar and drumbeat, a soprano voice gradually fades in reciting sentences from Jean-Paul Sartre:

[The status of “native” is a nervous condition] introduced and maintained by the settler among colonized people with their consent...The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When his rage erupts, he *rediscovers his lost self-image* and he comes to know himself precisely to the extent that *he himself creates his self*.⁶⁵

The inclusion of a politically-charged text—here an extract from Sartre’s comment on the Algerian War of Independence quoted at the very beginning of Ensslin’s letter written in 1973—implies the influence of Nono’s politically charged stage works such as *Al gran sole carico d’amore* and *Intolleranza 1960*.⁶⁶ The quotation within a quotation not only produces a further intertextual resonance but also hints at a broader and rather controversial historical picture: Sartre’s notorious trip to the Stammheim prison in 1974. The purpose of the trip was to talk to Andreas Baader, the leader of the RAF, who was then on a hunger strike. Sartre tried to

⁶⁴ It is not clear whether Lachenmann’s choice of the long passages of text is completely or partially predetermined. In the 2001 Stuttgart production, the male narrator tells the bit where a boy runs away with the slipper that the girl has lost.

⁶⁵ Emphasis in italic added. This is my translation of the German version of the text heard in the scene: “[Der Eingeborenenstatus ist eine Neurose,] die vom Kolonialherren bei den kolonisierten mit ihrer Zustimmung eingeführt und aufrechterhalten wird...der Kolonisierte heilt sich von der kolonialen Neurose, indem er den Kolonialherren mit Waffengewalt davonjagt. Wenn seine Wut ausbricht, findet er sein verlorenes Selbstverständnis wieder, und erkennt sich genau in dem Maße, wie er sich selbst schafft.” Text in the square brackets are not entirely recognizable in the recording.

⁶⁶ The quote is originally from Sartre’s preface to the 1961 edition of Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*, an influential work of post-colonial studies.

persuade Baader to stop murdering German officials and politicians while discussing the principles that Baader was pursuing.⁶⁷ It is difficult to tell whether the fact that this particular quotation is made recognizable at this point in the recording of the “Tokyo version” is a result of an intentional choice.⁶⁸ From a listener’s perspective, however, the quotation “coincidentally” delivers a powerful message of epiphany. Sartre’s appeal to a recuperation of the lost self-understanding on the part of the “colonized” strongly echoes Lachenmann’s notion of a listening subjectivity opening up to self-recognition and self-appraisal. Remarkably, never has a political message—one tinged with principles of existentialism—been conveyed in such a straightforward way as in the opera or in any other part of Lachenmann’s entire oeuvre.⁶⁹ It is a message that calls upon the protagonists as well as the listener to lay claim to their individual selves. The young female voice delivering these words also suggests the attribution of the text to Ensslin. And immediately before the male narrator returns to resume his match girl story, another signal of “awakening” is heard: three isolated cries (“Da!” “Di!” “Du!”) burst from the choir in tandem with jarring whip cracks (bars 669–70). While the three syllables blend well with blasts of percussions and pre-recorded songs and noises, “da” (there), “du” (you), and “di(ch)” (you) are clearly exclamatory expressions directed at the presumed subjects of the opera—the two girls—as well as the listener. Before this “calling” develops into something more magnificent, a tide of fifths in the winds, strings and keyboard instruments (bars 679–81) creeps in, the warm sonority of which brings back the Christmas music which, soon interrupted by shouts from the choir, now sounds sarcastically grandiose after the Sartre quote.

Lachenmann writes in the “musical plot”: “homeliness from the perspective of the marginalized becomes uncanny, shows its hermetic, hostile side, leads to a cry against violence”.⁷⁰ This summary captures what

⁶⁷ A document dated 2 January 1975 that includes a partial transcript of the meeting between Sartre and Baader was released in 2013 by the German authority, at the request of *Der Spiegel*. For part of the transcript, see Felix Bohr and Klaus Wiegrefe, “The Philosopher and the Terrorist: When Sartre Met RAF Leader Andreas Baader,” in *Spiegel Online*, available at:

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/transcript-released-of-sartre-visit-to-raf-leader-andreas-baader-a-881395.html>, accessed 26 Jan 2022.

⁶⁸ In the later 2001 Stuttgart production, the speech words used in the same place, according to Kaltenecker’s article in the programme book, is still from the same letter by Ensslin, but it is about a charge against bourgeoisie and the inward-looking imperialism. Words including “revolution” and the phrase “this is the world of consumption” were heard.

⁶⁹ An important part of Ensslin’s text (“the criminal, the insane, the suicide...”) which enters the “libretto” of the opera is, instead, not treated in a way that guarantees semantic accessibility, but is translated musically into the “morse code” in scene No. 15.

⁷⁰ Lachenmann, “*Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*. Eine musikalische Handlung,” in Ulrich Mosch ed. 2021, 472.

happens in the third section (bars 688–727) which includes the apotheosis of the scene. What defines the music of this section is based on a middle-scale, figurative formal process that stretches over about ten bars. This formal configuration, importantly, can qualify as an example that is close to Lachenmann’s “image” as defined specifically by Metzger as archetypal sonic figures.⁷¹ Here, without any direct reference to non-musical sources, the gestural articulation of form gives rise to the music’s own voice of narration, which bears multilayered rhetorical and symbolic meanings. The basic idea underlying this “image” is that exclamatory utterance (truncated words), emitted from the vocalists distributed on stage and around the auditorium, is constantly cut off by increasingly violent *tutti* chords or clusters in the orchestra. These orchestral interjections are single chords quoted from miscellaneous musical works including Beethoven’s *Coriolan Overture*, Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck* (the *fff* six-note chord), Mahler’s Symphony No. 6 (the final A minor chord), Schönberg’s *Orchestral Variations* op. 31 (conclusion chord), Stravinsky’s *Le sacre du printemps* (opening chord of the final dance “Danse de l’élue”), Boulez’s *Pli selon pli* (opening cluster) and others.⁷² Some of these chords have obvious symbolic value in relation to the original dramatic contexts they conjure up – most pertinently, perhaps, *Wozzeck*, the “chosen girl” in the rite, and the explosive tragic ending of Mahler’s Sixth. Adding to this passage’s referentiality is the fact that, like nowhere else in the score, the bar-based switching of time signature—mostly related to a prime number series—amounts to a reference to the archaic mid-century total-serialism.

Figure 6.7 illustrates the basic musical structure of the passage between bars 708–14. Over a stretch of about two and a half minutes, the configuration of this sonic figure features a conspicuous, powerful spatial effect in the physical performance space. This sonic figure “visualizes” a process in which individual utterances of short or abbreviated words are repeatedly beaten down by the emphatic chords—as if the orchestra now turns metaphorically into a repressive apparatus. These chords, although re-orchestrated and re-contextualized,

⁷¹ Metzger proposes to offer a broader view of the relationship between Lachenmann “image” and music by interpreting “image” as archetypal sound figures. Metzger argues that, in the second half of *Das Mädchen*, a large-scale “diminishment figure”, starting at the 11th scene, covers a stretch of scenes up to the 19th scene. Metzger further argues the diminishing figure is representative of common formal constructions in contemporary composition based on what he terms as “sonic flux”. Metzger 2009, 195–221.

⁷² Archival material show that Lachenmann prepared the pitch structure of each of these chords on manuscript paper. And on a different manuscript paper in which these chords are partially orchestrated, Lachenmann labels the four chords in bar 709, 710, 711 and 712 with the name of composers quoted—“Berg,” “Mahler,” “Beethoven,” and “Schoenberg”.

still reveal themselves as quotations due to the dramatic clashes between their unique sonorities. With a uniformly brazen appearance, these chords, closely packed in six bars one by one, also resemble the bars of a prison.⁷³ The imagery, overall, represents an appalling and, at the same time, grotesque moment of struggle and repression in the work.

Bar	708	709	710	711	712	713	714
Time signature	3/18	23/8	17/8	11/8	5/8	21/8	13/8
Voice	Solo-soprano 1	4. Alto	1. Bass	2. Soprano		Solo-soprano 1	Solo-soprano 2
Word	WO	R – KENN	DI	CH – DOCH		ICH	ICH
Chordal Source		Berg	Mahler	Beethoven	Schoenberg	Boulez	Stravinsky

Figure 6.7: Text and music structure between bar 708–14, 10. “Aus Allen Fenstern”

Among the scattered cries across the hall, we can piece together meaningful messages by reordering the syllables. There are “W” words like “was,” “wie,” and “wo”. Five syllables that are scattered across twenty bars suggest the name of one of the “match girls”—Gudrun Ensslin (“gud”—“run-en”—“sillin”). Surrounded by the isolated syllables, five fleeting cries of “ich” are heard across fifteen bars. They are uttered by the two solo sopranos on stage and are hence supposedly attributed to our heroines, who, until now, have been almost entirely wordless. At first we, as listeners, may wonder if this “ich” signifies anything but itself as an empty syllable. When it is heard for the first time, almost overlapping with the syllable “pli”, we may think of the word “Pflicht” (duty). But later as we decipher more messages, the meaning of “ich” as the most succinct and elemental expression of one’s self becomes clear. Among these messages there are, again, sentences from Ernst Toller’s *Masse Mensch*—“recognize yourself” (“er”—“r-kenn”—“di”—“ch-doch”) and “this is you” (“da[s]”—“bi-st”—“du”)—that are used by Lachenmann in his *Consolation* series and „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“.

⁷³ Kaltenecker, “Musik mit Bildern”, 39.

I have mentioned in a number of places in this chapter the intertextual relationship that the opera has with musical works of the past—including Lachenmann’s own—and works of other media, mostly literature. To give a comprehensive survey of the symbolic signification in these references is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the table in **Figure 6.8** offers a glimpse of how rich and broad these references are. It also indicates Lachenmann’s long preoccupation with the issue of how to treat the musical past in today’s composition. Particularly in “Aus allen Fenstern”, numerous references create a complex pictorial space. The idea of making a spectacle of multimedia collage itself implicitly alludes to works like Bernd Alois Zimmermann’s *Requiem für einen jungen Dichter* (1967-69) in which pop songs, ancient liturgical music, various types of white noise and analogue-generated signals, poems and radio speech of multiple languages are blended together to create a vivid portrayal of the society. Thomas Schäfer, paraphrasing Peter Becker’s formula, proposes that “music with images” might be understood in a symbolic sense: by allowing listeners and viewers to immerse themselves in the social, cultural, and musical images, they become an integral part of them. “Music and images” denotes “*Wir* are in the picture”, more than just “We get a picture of this music”.⁷⁴ This “picture”, to extend Schäfer’s view, is at the same time a reflection of our intellectual life, which is bombarded with discourses including (anti-)imperialism, (de-)colonization, liberation, and the “new economy”. All of these catchwords once shaped the parlance of the “consumer terror” of the RAF, to which Ensslin’s diary can attest.

Taking this argument one step further, the “picture” and the multiple utterances of “ich” are also a reflection of Lachenmann’s criticism of the legacy that the great traditions of Western classical music have left us today. In the particular musical context, the famous chords from accepted masterpieces are paid tribute to and simultaneously, symbolically, “demonized” as the symbol of a “monstrous”, ossified institution—or, what Lachenmann calls the “philharmonic music”—that hinders the free, authentic expression of the (musical) self. It is through the music’s self-reference that Lachenmann touches upon a topic that has featured in his early writings, that is, the idiom and ideology of classical music as a kind of “aesthetic apparatus”. Defined as a handed-down system of ruling aesthetic needs and norms, it mirrors “social consciousness, with the value-

⁷⁴ “...nicht: »Wir machen un sein Bild zu dieser Musik«, sondern vielmehr: »*Wir* sind im Bilde«...” Schäfer, in Hiekel and Mauser ed. 2005, 131.

concepts and taboos, and with its contradictions”.⁷⁵ It still shapes artistic creation and reception today. For Lachenmann, the function of the aesthetic apparatus is double-faced. On the one hand, it feeds society with its longing for beauty and for the freedom of spirit; but on the other hand, it shields reality and perpetuates the fear of the inconvenience associated with the search and fight for such freedom.⁷⁶ In “Aus allen Fernster”, the chord quotations are configured in a particular way that rightly draws attention to the rigidity and even the oppressive force latent in the aesthetic apparatus of classical music. But despite the brutal manner in which the chords enter the new context, Lachenmann, by choosing these particular chords with the subversive and revolutionary connotations they once held, hopes to reveal that these sonorities were once signs of “the advancing spirit”, often misunderstood and “betrayed” nowadays as conservative or reactionary. The sonic figure that constitutes the heart of the scene thus elicits a critical awareness of the conditions of the production and reception of classical music within the context of the double-sided character of the aesthetic apparatus.

The last section of this expanded scene brings back the “Christmas fracas”, which overshadows another fragment of Ensslin’s letter that addresses the hypocritical “blue-collar blues” of the middle class.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Lachenmann, “The ‘Beautiful’ in Music Today”, *Tempo*, No. 135 (1980), 22–3.

⁷⁶ Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 113.

⁷⁷ In the ECM recording, the passage made audible is: “[...]und die arbeiter sind nicht die netten ding-arschlöcher, fangen an,] den blue-collar-blues zu singen, machen krank (blue-collar-blues heisst: ziemlich die schnauze voll von der sorte arbeitsorganisation, [machen blau, wenns ihnen passt...]) Text in the brackets are not audible.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Musical Intertextuality</u>	<u>Intermedial Intertextuality</u>
3. Frier-Arie 4. Trio und Reprise	Baroque music topos: “cold song”	
5. Scherzo I “Königin der Nacht”	Queen of the Night’s aria, <i>The Magic Flute</i>	narrative reference to <i>The Magic Flute</i> (troubled mother-daughter relationship)
6. Scherzo II (“Schnalz-Arie” – “Stille Nacht”)	rhythmic reference to <i>Silent Night</i>	
9. Streichhölzer und Schneeflocken	light dab in the strings in the two “Arias” in <i>Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied</i>	
10. “Aus allen Fenstern”	radio speech in <i>Kontrakadenz</i> Stravinsky <i>Le sacre du printemps</i> (final dance “Danse de l’élue”); Beethoven <i>Coriolan Overture</i> ; Schönberg <i>Orchestral Variations</i> op. 31 (conclusion); Boulez <i>Pli selon pli</i> (beginning) Mahler <i>Sixth</i> (the final A minor chord); Berg <i>Wozzeck</i> (the <i>fff</i> six-note); Musical collage itself as echoing B. A. Zimmermann’s <i>Requiem für einen jungen Dichter</i>	Gudrun Ensslin’s diary Andersen text
12. Ritsch 1/Oven	whole orchestral quotation from <i>Air</i> (starting bar 231)	
15a. Hauswand 3 “Litany”		Gudrun Ensslin’s diary
15b. “schreibt auf unsere haut”	the <i>parlando</i> “writing” gesture, also used in „... <i>zwei Gefühle</i> ...“ and <i>Schreiben</i> , reminiscent of the phantomatic tango at the end of <i>Salute for Candwell</i>	
16a. Ritsch 3	ironic reference to the “decorative” style of French music, based on Lachenmann’s stereotypical impression	the phonetic “ritsch” as an allusion to “ich”
17. Abendsegen: “Wenn ein Stern fällt...”	the appearance of pure “song” as in correspondence with <i>Don Giovanni</i> ’s Serenade, the Italian tenor’s song in <i>Der Rosenkavalier</i> , or the “Abendsegen” in <i>Hansel and Gretel</i>	
18. „... zwei Gefühle ...“, Musik mit Leonardo		Leonardo da Vinci <i>Codex Arundel</i> Ernest Toller <i>Masse-Mensch</i> Friedrich Nietzsche <i>Zarathustra</i> Plato’s Allegory of the Cave [<i>ex negativo</i>]
20b. Grossmutter		the “Star Money Child” fairytale
23. Shô: “Sie waren bei Gott”	<i>Shô</i> music and its association with ritual and the idea of transcendence	

Figure 6.8: Musical and intermedial intertextualities between *Das Mädchen* and other works

The kaleidoscopic “world picture” in the finale of the first half of *Das Mädchen* reminds us of the bafflement that Lachenmann had as he started on the opera project. He told Peter Szendy: “Ich kann keine Oper »comme il faut« schreiben”.⁷⁸ The impossibility of writing an opera lies in at least two domains. For one thing, the human utterance itself appears to Lachenmann already laden with its innate material, affective and semantic components, which seems at odds with his structuralist approach to sound. For another, the idea of constructing an expressive operatic subjectivity now conflicts with an important facet of Lachenmann’s aesthetic discourse, that is, his absorption of the Adornian notion of speechlessness (*Sprachlosigkeit*). In “Affekt und Aspekt”, Lachenmann argues that speechlessness, as opposed to what he calls the “false fluency” (*Sprachfertigkeit*), is a state that modernists like Schoenberg find themselves in, as the starting point as well as the result of their quest for the “naked structure” of music.⁷⁹ “False fluency”, in contrast, is primarily manifested in music tied up with the culture industry and mass media—where listening tends to succumb to the temptation of tonal comfort and immediate affect. For Lachenmann, the state of speechlessness contains the seed of hope for a new aesthetic, in that it recognizes the real fears and threats facing the bourgeois subjects of late capitalism. Composing means for him to make perceptible the feeling of “speechlessness” as a symptom of a “radical identity crisis”.⁸⁰ Lachenmann has, indeed, always composed in a “speechless” way in terms of the ways in which familiar musical material is treated in his works. He regards it as imperative to use structural devices to place pre-existing material in new contexts and to create new connections, and often, the musical past is given only a fleeting or obscured glance.

Interestingly, Lachenmann comments on *Das Mädchen*: “I at least knew that all of the things invoked speechlessly in my previous compositional work had this once been put into words”.⁸¹ It might be an exaggeration to claim that everything was “put into words”, given that most of the alleged references in the work are no more than sonic “shadows” or “skeletons”. However, the use of numerous textual and musical quotations and the various intertextual links the work has with other sources indeed make *Das Mädchen*

⁷⁸ Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 210.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 66–9.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 67.

⁸¹ Nonnenmann 2005, 20.

exceptional in terms of its articulation of a desire—stronger than ever before in Lachmann’s oeuvre—to connect the music with its recipients. The meta-referentiality of *Das Mädchen* plays a role in suturing the listener’s own subjectivity into those rare moments in the music where a subjective voice breaks through the surface of the cold, rubble-strewn field of sound. The brief cries of “ich” from the two sopranos might be interpreted as a message sent from both “match girls”, a message that reads: “I try to raise a voice despite all the struggles—so should you!” Such a message is echoed by the particles like “dich”, “du”, and “da” in the same scene.

Despite the earnestness of the work’s impetus to express, the feeling of speechlessness still hangs over the protagonists’ attempt to articulate and communicate. However, in a slow process of phonetic transformation, as demonstrated below, the listener may sense a glimmer of hope. Before its first occurrence in the climactic scene No. 10, the sound of the “ich”, Rainer Nonnenmann notes, already exists in the form of a syllable in a keyword of the work—*Stre-ich-ölz* (match). Hence it may be argued that “ich” belongs to a centrally important sound family in the opera whose members take various forms: the light rubbing of bows on the muted strings, the intermittent, harsh-sounding white noise, the prolonged syllable “-ch” which imitates the chilly wind, and the “shh” sound produced by rubbing hands or styrofoam. The sounds related to “(i)ch” at this stage in the work tend to be perceived as corporeal, material and, more importantly, representative of involuntary actions, pointing to a subject reduced to a reticent, shivering body. It is not until “Aus allen Fenstern” that “ich” starts to take on symbolic meanings and represents a daring expressive act. In No. 11 Hauswand 1, where the music goes back to darkness and bleakness, the girl’s sharp gasp, also sounding like the syllable “ch”, is repeated and thematized as a key component thanks to rhythmic and intonational elaboration. The sporadic repetition of gasps, as if representing a painful process of struggle, prepares for a few more utterances of “ich” heard at the beginning of scene No. 12 Ritsch 1 (“Ofen”). Here, the third “ich” sound is followed by an accentuated syllable “hölz”, which validates Nonnenmann’s speculation about the “family resemblance” between *ich* and *streichhölz*. The “hölz” here prefigures a significant dramatic-musical event via a trace of signification that remains in it. In the brief climax of this pivotal scene, “ich” morphs into “Ritsch”, an onomatopoeia for the sound of igniting the match, which is materialized in the halo of the rubbed gong. The resonance of the gong gives rise to a series of large chromatic clusters, and from the thick texture of these clusters, major and minor third chords are

filtered out.⁸² The pleasant familiarity of their sonority is to be perceived as a symbol of “warmth”. Here, the utterance that proclaims “I” transforms into a purposeful act—a subversive one to fend off the cold and the cruelty.⁸³ The little girl is taking action, and so does Ensslin. Scene No. 15, with its hoarse, stifled sonority, is devoted to an extract of Ensslin’s prison diary which contains some poignantly penetrating messages. Particularly in the section entitled “Schreibt auf unsere Haut”, the “writing” (scraping) gestures in the percussion—a sonic presence of Ensslin materializing her thoughts—can be heard as another gesture of communication. Later in the transitional 16a Ritsch 3, the “Ritsch” sound is assimilated into the solo sopranos’ syllable range, articulated in an affirmative and desperate tone. Beyond semantics, its phonetic similarity with “ich” is compelling.

Commenting on the musical style of *Das Mädchen*, Nicholas Till argues that the combination of long, static sections with explosions, stuttering glitches, and erasures denies “the possibility of musical self-presence or structural integrity”, which is a prerequisite for shaping operatic subjectivity based on such notions as interiority, self-presence and wholeness.⁸⁴ Indeed, many commentators on *Das Mädchen* have emphasised the idea that the erasure of speech and song amounts to an erasure of the subjective voice.⁸⁵ Metzger, for instance, hears the “opera” as a depiction of the speechlessness of both girls, contending that the work contains an essentially ironic representation of the doomed failure of the modernist act of subjective expression.⁸⁶ Even the statements of “ich” seems to Metzger no more than a quotation—one that satirises the musical-dramatic expression of the self in the arias of conventional operas.

Based on a close analysis of Lachenmann’s treatment of text, which searches for structural congruence across the textual, vocal, and instrumental layers, and the trajectory of phonetic transformation, as demonstrated above, this chapter suggests that there is another way to look at the question of subjectivity in this case. The continuum from the environmental and involuntary sound “ch-ch-ch-ch...” to the tentative articulation

⁸² A filtering process which creates a continuum between clusters and chords or intervals is a technique that frequently appears in Lachenmann’s works. For the application of this technique in Ritsch 1 (“Ofen”), see analysis in Christian Kemper, “Repräsentation und Struktur in einer »Musik mit Bildern«: Überlegungen zu Helmut Lachenmanns Musiktheater,” *Musik & Ästhetik*, Heft 19, Juli 2001, 5. Jahrgang. 105–21.

⁸³ The “Ritsch”, obviously, also alludes to the fire that was set by Ensslin to the department stores in Frankfurt.

⁸⁴ Till 2013, 10–17.

⁸⁵ See, for example, Metzger 2009, Pierson 2015, Bauer 2019.

⁸⁶ Metzger 2009, 210–20.

of “ich” and, eventually, the agential, purposeful “Ritsch”, I argue, forms a sonic process that plays into the idea of “music with images”. This “image”, which appears less hopeless than Till’s and Metzger’s, demonstrates a process of the coming into being of a musical subject that seeks its structural coherence and continuity from the debris of the sound of music and language.

Crucially, what underlies such a reading is—to recall a key argument of the previous chapter—the centrality of an ideal listening subject in Lachenmann’s philosophy, which means the intention to suture the listening subject into the narrative of music. While rendering the speechlessness of the operatic subject manifest, Lachenmann offers his listeners a means of reflection by asking them to undertake a listening journey—partaking in a painstaking reconstruction of the structural connections between the fragmented sounds. My analysis has shown that in Lachenmann’s treatment of the text-music relationship, the perceptual focus oscillates between the phonetic and the semantic aspects of the words, which leads to an ever-refreshing discovery of new structural connections. The same applies to the case in which a sonic element belongs at once to a verbal-phonetic category and to a category of orchestral sound or pre-linguistic vocalization. All of the experiences of this sort, importantly, are associated with a concentration on one’s own perception and how it has changed over this process.

In this sense, it may be argued that Lachenmann achieves in the music the Lukácsian “ear-in-its-wholeness”. The intricate networking between phonetics, voices, instrumental sounds, semantics, and visual associations offers the listener a kind of intensifying and homogenizing experience—an opportunity for the listener to restore the completeness of perception. For Lukács, as well as for Lachenmann, the transformation of the “whole human” of the everyday into the “man-made-whole” of a listener receptive to a musical work strives precisely towards such a moment of renewal: the listener develops their “perceptual capacity to recognise and enjoy new object-forms, relationships, etc.”, changes their customary way of regarding the world, and thereby lays claim to their self-presence in an authentic way.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Lukács, Bachman, 2023, 706.

Conclusions

The musical idiom of Sciarrino and Lachenmann—exemplary of what is generally referred to as “sound composition” —has had a major impact on the European new music scene since the 1970s. The affinities between the two composers’ music languages and thinking are evident in the outputs of younger composers who continue to till the soil of *musique concrète instrumentale*. Those particularly relevant here are, to name only a few, Beat Furrer, Mark Andre, Rebecca Saunders, Gérard Pesson, Francesco Filidei, Chaya Czernowin—and to broaden the stylistic diversity further—Raphaël Cendo, Yann Robin and Malin Bång. These composers continue to plough their way through new territories of sensibility, each in their own distinctive way, and this partially explains why most of the existing musicological works on this body of music consist of studies devoted to a single composer and the personal characteristics of their music. The scarcity of an approach that draws connections as well as contrasts between different composers has prevented scholars of new music from gaining insight into a potential framework of reference that transcends individual specialties, and this is one of the major areas that this thesis has sought to contribute to. Another issue central to the thesis is subjectivity, which has generally been a neglected area in the research of contemporary new music. One of the interpretative reflexes in the existing reception of compositions based on sound and extended techniques is associated with the sentiment that the articulation of subjectivity in this music tends to be reduced to a bare minimum or completely muted in a field of shattered tonal sounds. Subjectivity, therefore, becomes a difficult topic or a perspective that is no longer pertinent to this repertoire. Through close studies of a number of works, this thesis has tried to offer a different view.

In order to treat Sciarrino and Lachenmann at once as a meaningful pair and as polarities, this thesis has brought them into dialogue with the ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning as a broader theoretical framework. This framework, constituted mainly by Clarke’s ecological theory of perception, relevant aspects from Linke’s constellational model, and Hatten’s and Cumming’s theories of musical agencies and subjectivities, has proved to enable a fruitful conceptualization of Sciarrino’s and Lachenmann’s ideas of

sound and listening, which revolve around the idea that music as an existential experience entails the listening subject's self-awareness of his or her relationships with everyday reality—physical as well as cultural and social. In particular, this framework does justice to the vital role of listening in both composers' aesthetics by rendering explicit the following three positions: 1) it takes the lively process of listening experience as a starting point and a reference point for the perception of meanings, including formal or structural meanings; 2), it proposes an essentially relational connection between the subject and the object, granting legitimacy to the contingencies of the subject in a process of forming its unique relationship with the object; and, most importantly, 3), it invites listeners to link some basic attributes about being-in-the-world to music reception. This last position, crucially, has provided the thesis with a toolbox for shaping analytical-hermeneutical interpretations of meanings specified in a musical work. Specifically, the utilization of such notions as gesture, motion, direction, position, and space has informed my interpretation of all the musical works included in the thesis. The analysis presented in Chapter 4, for example, demonstrated that Sciarrino's *Lobengrin* qualifies as a meta-work of ecological listening precisely in that it encourages the listener to take virtual positions, track sonic entities, identify the individuals, discriminate their boundaries, and acquire embodied experience of their interactions with each other. Arguably, a reception method as such is applicable to music written in the fashion of "sound composition" of a broad scope.

Against this theoretical background, which helped to confirm some fundamental aspects common to Sciarrino's and Lachenmann's approaches, two lines of enquiry have run through the thesis: one centres around the discussion of a concept of sound grounded in the physical being of humans and things, and this leads to a focus on the significant relevance for both composers' music of topics such as naturalism or nature, mimesis, aura, and associations with the physical world. The other strand concerns Sciarrino and Lachenmann's reflections on issues related to the contemporary condition of human subjectivity and how this may be perceived in musical works, especially those with words. While the two composers share a basic concept of sound and have incorporated key aspects of ecological thinking into their compositions, I argue that their approaches to composing subjectivities diverge in significant ways, and this mirrors their bonding with divergent intellectual sources and expressive pursuits. Methodologically, the key enquiries outlined in this thesis

may serve as the basis of a critical framework that is useful for considering other compositional practices that generally follow this path.

Material, Nature, Mimesis

An emphasis on the material, corporeal, and semiotic attributes of sound constitutes the core of Sciarrino and Lachenmann's concept of sound. My analysis of some particular aspects of their compositional procedures—Sciarrino's holistic Gestalts and modular gestures and Lachenmann's sound-family-based typologies—has suggested that the materiality of sound and its implications for the listener are as important an aspect as is structural construction in their music. This tendency, one might argue, responds to a call from Adorno in the early 1960s. In the famous article "Vers une musique informelle", Adorno diagnosed an alienation between material and composition in the increasingly rigid operation of serial techniques of the 1950s. *Musique informelle* as an ideal music type, put simply, requires structures to be derived only from the inner truth of the musical material. Formal norms that are irreducibly alien to or superimposed on the material in an inflexible way should be discarded. Crucially, the construction of such music, Adorno argues, should demonstrate a sense of a "surplus of objectivity" in the musical substance itself.¹ For Adorno, this surplus plays a role in reflecting the modern condition of the disintegration of an internally consistent musical material. *Musique informelle* claims its social integrity by incorporating this very disintegration, and, at the same time, also a degree of formal unity which is still necessary for articulating a critical distance between the musical work itself and the *status quo*.² Sciarrino and Lachenmann's extensive use of extended techniques may be said to exemplify such a musical ideal. Both composers' search for a reconciliation between material and composition starts with a serious enquiry into the role of perceiving materiality in the Western musical tradition and, particularly, its significance for musical listening today in a social and communal context. Presenting themselves as the "surplus of

¹ Adorno, *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, London: Verso, 1998, 303.

² See Heathcote 2003, 36. It is in this sense that *musique informelle* reflects Adorno's notion of non-identity or a constellation that conceives a series of relations with an object—determinate and immediate, but at once revelatory of the immanent contradictions of the object in question. For more discussion of *musique informelle* and its relationship with Adorno's key ideas, see Heathcote 2003, De-Henau 2015.

objectivity” in the music, the rich material and symbolic associations of sound in both composers’ works elicit in listeners a way of engaging with the music that renders listening *per se* a self-reflective act. In the preordained material of serial works, Adorno astutely perceives “the ascription of an occult quality which mysteriously creates an objective musical meaning to an already prepared material”.³ In the ecological approach, I argue, perception of musical meaning relinquishes such a mysterious objectivity by penetrating into the physical, intuitive, and psychic.

For Schoenberg, the impossibility of a return to an unconditional devotion to nature was the basic condition of the modern age.⁴ The idea of nature as an uncontrollable, self-regulating, and thus sometimes threatening force, however, continues to play a major role in contemporary music. This thesis’s application of the ecological perspective has related many issues in Sciarrino’s and Lachenmann’s compositions to the ideas of nature, naturalism, and mimesis, and discussions of these issues have significant consequences for my investigation of musical meaning as perceived in the sonic idiom of *MCI*. Sciarrino’s and Lachenmann’s sound concepts, as this thesis has demonstrated, involving a criticism of the conventional understanding of mimesis. Parts of Chapters 2 and 4 are devoted to a critical consideration of Sciarrino’s deliberately naïve mimetic gestures. I have argued that Sciarrino’s conception of mimesis—based on his materialist view of hearing sounds as signals or signs—challenges the conventional discourse around mimesis, according to which music is thought to imitate or represent something external to itself. As Chapter 2 has demonstrated, Sciarrino’s remark on music’s “intrinsic representativeness”, which is often mistaken as the result of imitation, sheds new light on music’s communicative quality. The idea of “intrinsic representativeness” comes very close to Paddison’s notion of the embodied mimetic impulse as something inherent in the expressive and communicative nature of musicking and music reception. Such a mimetic impulse accentuates the (pre)historical, anthropological and physiological dimensions of mimesis, and therefore may be thought to have ecological implications for understanding musical listening: receivers as well as producers of sonic events re-enact through their bodies the movements of the sounds. Furthermore, the analytical interpretation of miscellaneous mimetic gestures in

³ Adorno 1998, 287.

⁴ Utz 2009, 129.

Chapter 4 has demonstrated that the perceptual characteristics of Sciarrino's mimetic gestures may be better captured by the idea of illusionism or allusionism, haunting, possession and apparition. With regard to the perception of their "extra-musical" meanings, these gestures—characterized by material immediacy—are paradoxically always suspended somewhere between realism and imagination; an original source is ultimately occluded.

A striking similarity between Sciarrino's and Lachenmann's concepts of sound is that both composers contend that sounds have their own "images" and that the "magic" of associations is inherent in our everyday perception of sound. Lachenmann's strong endorsement of such a view is made evident in Chapter 6 through an analysis of his working procedures, which are preoccupied with the sonic transference of images. However, although the aesthetic of *MCI* advocates a way of interpreting sound in the most immediate, intuitive way, Lachenmann's compositions are much less directly modelled on nature than Sciarrino's. As I have shown in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, Lachenmann's fascination with the auratic aspect of sound is always tightly intertwined with structural concerns, and this constitutes the core of his self-coined dialectical structuralism—a key to understanding his compositional intention in general. I have revealed in Chapter 1 the ecological and phenomenological dimensions that characterize Lachenmann's basic position on composing with sound, through an elaboration of some of Lachenmann's terminologies, such as *abtasten*, continuum, and *Strukturklang*. Following this thread, Chapter 5 presented a reading of Lachenmann's critique of Mahler's *Naturlaut*, arguing that Lachenmann's attitude toward nature in many ways echoes the Adornian idea of the relationship between art and nature. While Lachenmann shares with Mahler a deliberate embrace of nature as the artless and the alien, the former more firmly explores the critical potential of nature as the repressed other—both in theory and in actual practice—by weaving the unruly *Naturlaut* into his "felt-out" projection of sound-structure. This is, again, a typical manifestation of Lachenmann's dialectical structuralism; the hope is to allow this otherness to breach the pre-existing subject-object relationship that defines the position of the listener, to illuminate what has become sedimented and is responsible for a reified sensibility, to shed a consciousness that is factitious or inauthentic, and, finally, to liberate the pre-established notion of the self.

There is undoubtedly an emergent critical potential in Lachenmann's concept of sound with regard to its mediation of nature. The ideological connotation of nature in Sciarrino's concept of sound has also given rise to a critical, subversive voice—one that is different from Lachenmann's. In the context of Sciarrino's aesthetic, nature is similarly seen as a lost or repressed otherness, subjugated by the control of modern rationality. Hence, in his music, Sciarrino lets nature be reborn with Dionysus, Pan, and Proteus—gods that are associated with madness, ecstasy, fear, instinctual compulsion, and non-identical thought. By encompassing nature, or more generally a physical world whose often disturbing, arcane, and phantasmatic appearance triggers visceral feelings in us, Sciarrino's music protests against the modernist interdiction of the “all too human” need for affect and immediacy. As Sciarrino claims, “[m]y music would indeed contain a core of heresy, related to the creative and contradictory function of *eros* in society”.⁵ The manifestations of desire and instinct in this music counter what Sciarrino calls the “sexophobic”, “pseudo-scientific” attitude that was once endemic among the modernists.⁶ The “ghostly” mimetic gestures uphold Sciarrino's criticism of an ideological schism in recent music historiography between the abstractionist and the figurative, referential trends. Sciarrino observes that today's professional musicians are often associated with a negative attitude toward the recognition of the “real world” meaning in musical sound. People holding such a view “would demand that his art be in no way contaminated by his life”, and they link what they label as a kind of fallacious sonic “descriptivism” to some basic features of regressive bourgeois art (for example, figurative, representational), decrying the mimetic trend altogether.⁷ For Sciarrino, such an attitude has obscured a true understanding of the relationship between music and reality.

It may be argued that the “heretical core” of Sciarrino's engagement with nature is a manifestation of the post-humanist inclination of Sciarrino's ecological aesthetic. This thesis, specifically in Chapter 2, has explored the relationship between Sciarrino's music and some form-shaping principles that are prevalent in the physical world in light of the study of chaos. The chapter has demonstrated that, while there are overlaps between

⁵ “Ma musique contiendrait effectivement un noyau d'hérésie, lié à la fonction créatrice et contradictoire de l'*eros* dans la société”. Sciarrino, in Feneyrou 2013, 30.

⁶ Sciarrino, in Feneyrou 2013, 30–1.

⁷ “Le musicien exigerait que son art ne soit aucunement contaminé par sa vie”. Sciarrino, Giacco, Feneyrou 2012, 35. Also see Sciarrino, Giacco, Feneyrou 2012, 34–6.

Sciarrino's model of organic music and the nineteenth-century organicism, specifically in the organization based on recurring gestalts, there are reasons to suggest that Sciarrino's model enables a reimagination of the age-old musical organicism: insights from the study of chaos provide a more scientific grounding for the presence of the self-organizing physical world in Sciarrino's music, which bypasses the reductive, formalist tendency of the nineteenth-century organicism by encompassing disruption and unpredictability. Furthermore, this new imagination of organicism is more holistic and ecological in nature, as it brings to the fore not only the role of listening and reception but also the social and communal aspects of musicking.

It is worth noting here that a highly comparable attempt at a reimagination of organicism in recent musicological scholarship is Holly Watkins's proposal of a biotic aesthetics of music.⁸ Watkins turns to a critical framework that is in tune with contemporary scientific and philosophical thought to offer a post-humanist account of organic life. Watkins writes: "the legacy of organicism challenges us to think anew about what our bodies, our sociality, and our creativity shared with other living entities and the ecologies in which they are enmeshed".⁹ Especially relevant to what is offered in Sciarrino's music, Watkins's biotic aesthetics also incorporates a social dimension. On the one hand, by redefining organicism as a musical system that aspires to the condition of self-organization, Watkins's theory broadens the possibilities of environmental contact in listeners' perception of music. On the other hand, drawing from Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems, Watkins considers music as a subsystem of the social system of communication. The new organicist model emphasizes the coupling that music establishes with other systems—including the body, feelings and affect, social networks, and many others.¹⁰ Significantly, in a conceptual expansion of organicism, this venture overcomes divisions such as those between score and performance, and composer and listener, that lurk in the old model of the theory. In a similar way, Sciarrino's ecological aesthetics invites contact with the physical world into his music, encouraging communications between form and association, music and non-music, human and environment, and the human self and its others.

⁸ See Watkins 2017, 2018.

⁹ Watkins 2018, 27.

¹⁰ See Watkins 2017, 107–8.

Subjectivity and Expression

The scholarly reception of the musical idiom of Sciarrino and Lachenmann encompasses a lexicon replete with onomatopoeic words—as if this is a music that is restored to bare physical states. As sincere, lyrical songs collapse, the shards of sound naturally seem to form a subject-less alliance with the world of non-human and inanimate beings. In this sense, the music casts doubt on the conventional status of an autonomous constitutive subjectivity, especially in the operatic context. This observation provides a precondition for what this thesis argues with respect to subjectivity. As the thesis has tried to demonstrate, both composers' approaches to the issue of the Self are characterized by a sense of meta-awareness, and this is especially the case for Lachenmann. The analysis of three operatic works and one work involving speakers—*Luci mie traditrici*, *Lohengrin*, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*, and „...zwei Gefühle...“—*Music with Leonardo*—offered interpretations of different models of operatic subjectivity or different ways to approach subjectivities in musical modernism with reference to precedents or relevant perspectives from recent opera history as well as the contemporary intellectual discourses that had had a direct or indirect impact on the composers.

Fluent speech or interpersonal communications and an unmediated image of a bounded, coherent subject dissolve to a certain degree in both composers' works. Some general conclusions might be drawn with regard to the characteristic differences between the ways in which Sciarrino and Lachenmann approach the issue. In Sciarrino's musical organizations, the dissolution of boundaries renders differentiation of a distinctive, secure personal identity impossible and, consequently, intersubjective relationships problematic. Sciarrino's highly original approach to sonic mimesis has given rise to a particular model of musical or operatic subjectivity: the encroachment of the other on the self is not always regarded as negative, but rather as generative of a “becoming-” —a heterogeneity that may afford positive effects. The construction of operatic subjectivity in *Luci mie traditrici* and *Lohengrin* therefore demonstrated an affinity with notions about the subject associated with psychoanalytic and post-structuralist approaches: an anti-metaphysical claim underpins the doubt cast over a fixed “core” of the self that is accessible for reflection. In relation to Lachenmann, the current study has sought to paint a picture that shows that the post-structuralist thinking that empowers Lachenmann's

compositional approach is coupled with the goal of representing in music a resistance to alienation and a continuing striving for self-reflection—a position that reflects Lachenmann’s resolute endorsement of ideas from Marxist thinkers including Adorno, Benjamin, and Lukács. The many compositional concepts covered in this thesis, including sound families and structure-aura dialectics, have demonstrated the idea of creating a unity out of the incommensurable from multiple systems, rather than comfortably bringing different components under an all-encompassing identity. Such a compositional approach may be said to exemplify Adorno’s non-identity thinking. It is also from the writings of Marxist aesthetics that Lachenmann identified what would later constitute the centre of his concern with the modern subject—the idea of speechlessness. As this thesis has demonstrated, such a state of speechlessness, along with a compromised capability to perceive, primed Lachenmann’s treatment of the human subject and its voice in his works, and this, crucially, anticipated Lachenmann’s construction of an ideal listening subject, sutured into his work through particular musical procedures.

My analysis of “...*zwei Gefühle*...” sought to illuminate this ideal listening subject through an interpretation of aura that resists the habitual inclination to link the concept to familiarity, memory, or the musical past. Lachenmann’s *Naturlaut*, as I have argued, when situated in a particular sonic context, gives rise to a sense of auratic alterity, and this lends Lachenmann’s alliance with some key aspects of Adorno’s structural listening a new critical potential. When confronted with this excessive objectness in an extraordinary auratic repose in the music, the listening subject is likely to start to appraise what he or she has experienced before, thereby acquiring a self-awareness of the corresponding changes in listening perspective. In *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*, a musical discourse characterized by multiple meta-references “speaks” in the place of an honest narration. By self-consciously incarnating the metaphorical mountain-climber, by ventriloquizing da Vinci, Nietzsche, Toller, and Ensslin, whose exhortations, like gestures of interpellation, make the listener recognize his or her subjecthood, Lachenmann brings an ideal listening subject into the spotlight. The opera’s projection of a subject, moreover, is embedded in a sonic procedure, as I have outlined at the end of Chapter 6, that requires the deciphering work of an ideal listener. For Lachenmann, only through an arduous process of scanning,

deciphering, and reconstructing can a listening subject, in confronting their basic needs, limits, alterability, and creativity, arrive at a moment of self-knowledge.

It may be argued that a sense of speechlessness is also presented in *Luci mie traditrici* and *Lohengrin*, most perceptibly manifested in the form of the protagonists' restless retorts and echolalia. The musical source that gives rise to an image about the subject in both operas, as this thesis has shown, is precisely Sciarrino's mimesis—reimagined as an illusion, apparition or a mirror that does not show but only reflects. In *Luci mie traditrici*, this conception of mimesis is substantialized, on the one hand, as the conceptless promiscuity in the musical identities of the characters. Like Sciarrino's beloved blackbirds, these characters similarly possess a genius for replicating the sounds of each other. René Girard's mimetic theory of desire provides a compelling reading of what this image of bird-person can tell us about the human subject: "Man is the creature who does not know what to desire, and he turns to others in order to make up his mind. We desire what others desire because we imitate their desires".¹¹ On the other hand, the mirroring structure in their verbal expression, along with the music's projection of a total distrust in language as the unassimilable Other, delineates a vision of the subject that comes very close to Lacan's barred subject. This model of the subject, characterized by a fundamental lack, is consequently associated with a failure in communication and intersubjective relationship.

For *Lohengrin*, this thesis turns to Deleuze and Guattari's idea of becoming as a point of reference. As I have argued in Chapter 4, becoming serves as an alternative to mimesis and imitation to better conceptualize Sciarrino's musical language. More importantly, becoming facilitates our comprehension of an emergent condition of human subjectivity as embodied by Elsa—a Proteus-like, post-humanist becoming that not only challenges subjectivity as a universal, irreducible constitution but also the subject position of the humanist individual. Within the framework of mimesis, one may feel tempted to interpret Elsa's becoming-animal as a kind of resignation. According to Adorno, an important facet of mimesis is its connection with the Freudian death instinct—that is, the tendency to "lose oneself in one's surroundings instead of playing an active role in

¹¹ Girard, "Generative Scapegoating", in Walter Burkert, et al. *Violent Origins*, Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1987, 122.

it”.¹² However, as this thesis has sought to show, the idea of becoming mines the positivity in what may generate in an ever-loosening boundary between the subject and the other: in reinforcing the environmental in herself, Elsa enables a transformation in the face of heteronomy and otherness. The critical potential of becoming is therefore associated with an ethical imperative.

It might be argued that Lachenmann’s hope for a completeness of perception and a Lukácsian “human whole” to arise from the dialectical mediation of aura and structure points to an elitist stance that has characterized the canonical tradition whose gatekeepers included Mahler, Schoenberg, Webern, and Adorno—figures whose influences on Lachenmann have been tremendous. The communal orientation of Lachenmann’s compositional aesthetic, therefore, may be said to contain an almost utopian vision. By contrast, Sciarrino’s sonic symbolism based on the semanticization of structures, with an even deeper root in the ecological approach, seems to have proved more effective in terms of the composer’s commitment to community. This, I argue, may be regarded as an important junction where Lachenmann’s and Sciarrino’s philosophies depart. Biographically, we know that the former was a disciple of Darmstadt whose humorous side was allowed to be publicized only at a very late stage of his professional career, whilst the latter is an autodidact and at once a painter, a birdkeeper, a palaeontology and literature enthusiast, a conservator of musical antiques, and a Tin Pan Alley arranger.¹³ Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf argues that Lachenmann’s Adornian leaning is manifested in the belief that “the best way to grasp society is to immerse and forfeit oneself in the detailed problems of one’s own subject”.¹⁴ Given Lachenmann’s commitment to the critical thinking of the Frankfurt School thinkers, it is not surprising that Lachenmann deliberately defies unmediated expression altogether and advocates, instead, a special notion of expression(-lessness). He has famously claimed that expression can be created only “on the reverse face of that on which the composer is working”, and has asserted that the highest degree of expression

¹² Horkheimer and Adorno, as cited in Molnar and Molnar, “Adorno, Schubert, and Mimesis”, *19th-Century Music*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2014, 66.

¹³ A manifestation of Lachenmann’s humorous side involves his composition of the mash-up *Marche Fatale* in 2020 and his revealing in *My Way* of his early experience working as a jazz pianist in a pub. Sciarrino’s account of his interest in palaeontology can be found in Fenech 2013, 63–72. There are photos showing Sciarrino feeding birds in the archival collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation (accessed in August 2017).

¹⁴ “... daß man die gesellschaft am besten erfasse, indem man sich in die Detailprobleme des eigenen Fachs versenke und verelire”. Mahnkopf, in Jahn ed. 2005, 15.

in Berg's music is indicated in the score with the mark "without expression".¹⁵ Confronting the petrified canon of Western art music, Lachenmann finds that expression is possible only when the composer combats what is contradictory to the self-image of the society that has cultivated this canon. This expression(-lessness) echoes what has been described by Adorno as "weeping without tears":

There is no general test for deciding if an artist who wipes out expression altogether has become the mouthpiece of reified consciousness or of the speechless, expressionless expression that denounces it. Authentic art knows the expression of the expressionless, a kind of weeping without tears. By contrast, *Neue Sachlichkeit's* polished extirpation of expression contributes to universal conformism and subordinates antifunctional art to a principle that originates entirely in functionality. This form of reaction fails to recognize in expression what is not metaphorical, not ornamental...If the subject is no longer able to speak directly, then at least it should—in accord with a modernism that has not pledged itself to absolute construction—speak through things, through their alienated and mutilated form.¹⁶

Adorno's idea of expressing "speechlessly" through the reified condition of things sheds light on the kind of expressivity exemplified by Lachenmann's *MCI*. Lachenmann, touched by Nono, reiterates in his writing Nono's pursuit of an old expressive topos—pathos.¹⁷ For Lachenmann, the revolutionary potential of this pathos finds its origin in Beethoven.¹⁸ While distancing himself from undisguised political engagement, Lachenmann has taken over Nono's Promethean position by proposing that in listening, as a practice purer in nature, individual subjects must confront themselves as if they were in existentially critical situations. And only in this way do the "perceptibility of pathos" (*Wahrnehmbarkeit des Pathos*) and "the pathos of perception" (*das Pathos von Wahrnehmung*) come together as one thing.¹⁹

While it has been less strongly articulated, the expressivity of Sciarrino's music, with its refreshing novelty, contains a critical core that is no less radical. Departing from the humanist nature–culture dualism, this music, whether in its evocation of cosmic arcana or in its affective identification with animal-like agitation, questions those attributes that are conventionally thought to make us uniquely human—particularly speech,

¹⁵ Ryan 1999, 22.

¹⁶ Adorno 2002, 118.

¹⁷ See Lachenmann, *MaeE*, 206.

¹⁸ Ibid. 206, 271–2.

¹⁹ Ibid. 215.

reason, and the separation from nature. Unlike Lachenmann's pathos, Sciarrino's expressivity features a sense of lightness. This is especially true in works like *Lohengrin*. While the sarcastic, absurdist adaptation of the old story turns the narration into an open text for existential reflection, the work itself neither grieves nor preaches. But the ecology of listening also has a significant ethical dimension that is analogous to Lachenmann's pathos. In freeing and encouraging listeners to perceive music as, essentially, a part of the phenomenal world itself and, more importantly, a means of communication, the ecology of listening, as Sciarrino puts it, has "important consequences for everyone".²⁰

²⁰ "En investissant le phénomène musical à sa racine, l'écologie de l'écoute a également des conséquences importantes pour la collectivité". Sciarrino, in Feneyrou 2013, 27.

Appendix

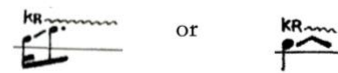
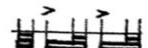
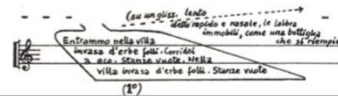
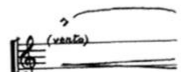
Scene	Module Type	Vocal Technique	Notation example
Prologo I	1. Barking	Successive, short stroke of breath (exhale, “ho” sound)	
	2. Cooing	Guttural sound emitted with mouth closed	
	3. Peep	Very acute hiccupping, like seagull chirping	
	4. “Kr ~” (turtledove cry)	Flutter-tonguing, making a “Kr” sound (glissando and trill)	
		Flutter-tonguing, making a “Kr” sound, gliding from low to high pitch	
	6. Shriek	Successive, feeble, high-pitched shout	
	7. Galloping	Teeth chattering in rhythmic pattern	
	8. Gasp	Inhale violently, like in shock	
	9. Shivering in cold	Intake of air between teeth with lips open	
	10. Retch	Vocalizing with muffled mouth, like when try to suppress vomiting	
II	11. “Echoing drops”	Making bubbles of saliva with lips	
	12. “Bottling-filling”	Intoning words quickly and softly with a gradual ascending intonation (nasal voice, lips kept motionlessly)	
	13. Blowing	Blow with a “who” sound, starting quietly then louder, ending with a sharp “sh” sound	

Table 1a: Categorization of vocal modules in Sciarrino’s *Lohengrin*

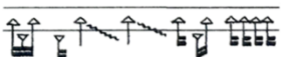
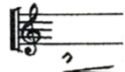
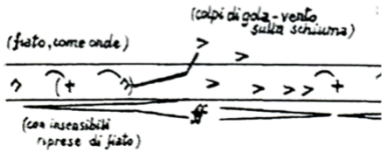
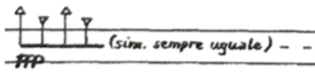
	14. “Wallowing-in-mud”	Tongue stirring saliva between teeth and lips	
	15. Yawn	Yawning	
	16. Sob	Sobbing-like sound, like in panic	
	17. Laughing	Silvery laughing sound (“ahahaha...”)	“ride argentino”
III	18. Breathing	Exhaling in a stable tone; sounding like winds or waves	 Module 18 19 20 * Module 18, 19 and 20 are often jointed together as one pattern
	19. Breathing and throat-striking	Exhaling and making the vibration at the back of throat audible, with an increasing volume and tone; sounding like wind blowing over foam.	
	20. Cough	Coughing, sounding like aged or sick people	
	21. Tick-tock	Soft, regular cracks of tongue, sounding like clock ticking	
	22. Weep/guffaw/howl	Loud weeping or laughing (uncertain), but sounding like violent howl	
IV Epilogo	23. Normal singing	Singing in exact pitch (Ab – Bb – C – Eb)	

Table 1a: (continued).

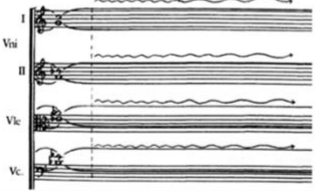
Instrument Groups	Module Type	Technique / Morphology	Notation example
Strings	1.	String conflagration (gesture combinations of/between): (1) bow tremolo as tight as possible on harmonics; (2) arpeggio on harmonics (notes lightly grazed); (3) trills on harmonics (with alternating fingers) (4) glissando on harmonics	 Musical notation for string conflagration, showing five staves (I, Vii, II, Vlc, Vc, Ch) with complex, overlapping patterns of notes and tremolos.
	2	Tremoli on harmonics, continuously, with varied vibration magnitudes	 Musical notation for tremoli on harmonics, showing three staves (I, Vii, Vlc) with tremolos and dynamic markings like <i>fff</i> and <i>ppp</i> .
	3	Cello tremolo on harmonics, placidly and densely, occurring at regular intervals	 Musical notation for cello tremolo, showing a single staff (Vc) with a tremolo and dynamic markings like <i>fff</i> and <i>ppp</i> .
	4	Prolonged note E played normally on Contrabass	 Musical notation for a prolonged note E on Contrabass, showing a single staff (Cb) with a long note and dynamic marking <i>ppp</i> .
	5	Chord on harmonics (pitches: Eb – F – G – Bb)	 Musical notation for a chord on harmonics, showing four staves (I, Vii, Vlc, Vc) with sustained notes and dynamic markings like <i>ppp</i> .
	6	Trills of viola	 Musical notation for trills of viola, showing a single staff (Vla) with trills and dynamic markings like <i>pp</i> and <i>fff sempre</i> .

Table 1b: Categorization of instrumental modules in Sciarrino's *Lohengrin*

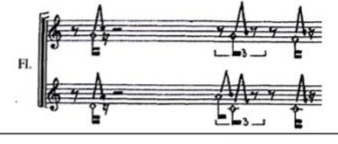
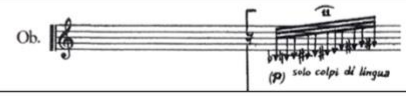
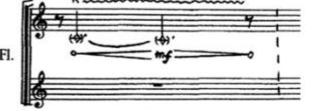
Woodwinds	7	Trills of harmonics on flute/clarinet (each single note obtained by using the same harmonic note of different fundamentals)	
	8	Whistle tone (airy sound) on flute	
	9	Multiphonics on oboe/clarinet/bassoon	
	10	Strikes of tongue on bassoon, pitched on a single note, rhythmically periodic	
	11	Strikes of tongue on bassoon, pitched on a cluster of descending notes, rhythmically denser	
	12	“Tu” sound strike-tonguing on oboe (airy sound), pitched on a cluster of ascending notes, diminishing	
	13	Flutter-tonguing (airy sound) on bassoon/flute	

Table 1b: (continued).

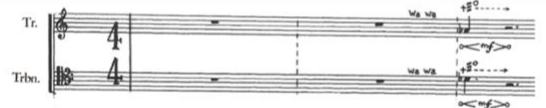
	14	Melodic fragments (played by trills) on harmonics on clarinet (pitches: Eb – F – G – Bb)	
	15	Exhale and inhale alternately through only the headjoint of flute	
	16	Trills of harmonics on the same note (G) on clarinet	
Brass	17	Breath sound on horn/trombone (blow)	
	18	Fast open-closed tremolo obtained by moving the hand on the wa-wa sordine on trumpet/horn/trombone	
	19	Exhale and inhale alternately through only the mouthpiece of trombone	
Percussion	20	Bass drum	
	21	Metal sheets	
	22	Crotales / Bells (pitches: F – G – A – C)	

Table 1b: (continued).

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