MARINU LECCIA

Sport, Play, Games, and Sounds

A Ludomusicological Perspective on Sport (with a Special Focus on Benjamin Britten)

ABSTRACT This article questions the interaction of sport, play, games, and sounds. Its philosophical approach is based on the works of Bernard Suits, especially his description of the 'tricky triad' (the overlapping notions of sport, game, and play), and investigates the relation of this triad to music. Subsequently, the notion of gesture is explored as a common denominator to these activities. Then, this article adopts a semiotic approach and considers analogical processes between sport gestures and music gestures (and their corresponding sounds). In addition, this study develops the concept of 'transitional topic,' which argues that 'sport' does not act as a direct topic in music but is mediated through various other topics (e.g., the march, the fanfare, or the music exercise). Each of these theoretical explorations is grounded in analyses of pieces by Benjamin Britten ("Playful Pizzicato," *Peter Grimes*, "Early Morning Bathe," and *Three Divertimenti*). Britten's music is used as a counterpoint to explore the theoretical perspectives of this article, as his music showcases the crossover between sport-like, play-like, and game-like aesthetics. KEYWORDS Sport, Play, Games, Gestures, Lusory attitude, Benjamin Britten

Sport is a central element of the non-digital gaming world.[1] But what might a ludomusicology of sport look like? How can we understand sport through theories of games and play (*ludo-*); and how can we explore the relation between sport and music? Sport, games, play, music: the present article tackles those intermingling activities and their crossovers. Some scholarship has covered and scrutinized some of these connections. For example, Bernard Suits' theoretical work (on which the present article is based) explores the tricky conceptual relations between sport, play, and games.[2] Similarly, the link between music and sport has motivated many studies (especially led by Anthony Bateman) that focused on manifold aspects, such as the convergence of music and sport to support an identity, or the function of music in sport training.[3] In addition, there is an impressive amount of scholarship on music and games (i.e., ludomusicology), especially via the study of video

1. My deepest thanks to my DPhil supervisors, Laura Tunbridge and Jo Bullivant (University of Oxford), as well as to Tim Summers, Dylan C. Price, and the anonymous reviewers for all their ingenious (and playful) comments.

2. See in particular Bernard Suits, *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2014; 2nd ed.).

3. See Anthony Bateman and John Bale, eds., *Sporting Sounds: Relationships between Sport and Music* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009). Also: Anthony Bateman, ed., *Sport, Music, Identities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015). The same focus on identity is found in Jonathan Long and Karl Spracklen, "Music and Sport: Exploring the Intersections," *Sport in Society* 24, no. 1 (2021): 1–7.

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games.[4] No study, however, has yet tried to encompass the interaction between these activities (play-games-sport-sounds) altogether. To do so, the present article focuses on four aspects of this interaction.

First, based on Bernard Suits' works, the article develops a taxonomy of the concepts of sport, play, and games (i.e., Suits' 'tricky triad'), and elaborates implications for music. Second, it explores the notion of gesture, as a common denominator of sport, music, play, and games. Third, it theorizes the analogical processes at work between those different gestures, especially between music and sport. Fourth, it ponders the relation between music and sport in terms of topic theory, from which I propose the notion of 'transitional topic' for sport references in music. Through those four concerns, it investigates sounds in sport and sport in sounds, at the crossroads of sport studies, ludology, and musicology.

Specifically, those four theoretical points are threaded together through analyses of works by Benjamin Britten, which act as a more or less arbitrary counterpoint to this theoretical article. In much of Britten's music, elements of play, games, and sport merge in a schoolboyish aesthetic of tricks, biased rules, and sport-like physicality. His music is used as a recurring case study throughout this paper (giving space, in few places, to other musical examples for the sake of variety and for some rhetorical points). By doing so, this article tries to present how ludomusicology and sport studies are fruitful tools for the analysis of a traditional repertoire of concert music. Britten's music appears as a fertile ground for a ludomusicology of sport to be played on. As John Bridcut comments,

> Britten had not shied away from sport at school, and he remained a physical man, who kept fit and active until the onset of his final illness. Sue Phipps [. . .] particularly noted the "very boyish" way he moved around, "with his great long legs." This sportiness was an essential, and perhaps underestimated, element in his character, and the key to much of his work.[5]

Britten's love for sport is a recurring element found all through his biographies, letters, and diaries. Tennis, swimming, cricket, and ping-pong in particular are mentioned many times by Britten himself or by close relatives. Today, anyone who visits Britten's Red House in Aldeburgh can testify to the presence of a tennis lawn to the left of the house. A sign explains to visitors Britten's love for sports and shows pictures of how he would spend his evenings playing with friends. The sporting aspect of Britten's life is acknowledged by many historians, performers, scholars, ~~or~~ and Britten lovers. It has not been, however, seriously considered as an element for an aesthetic analysis of his works.[6]

Many pieces by Britten, especially in the 1930s, refer to physical activities: physical training (*Three Divertimenti*); swimming (*Holiday Diaries*); cycling ("Going Down Hill

4. A lot of literature may be quoted. For analytical purposes, refer especially to Tim Summers, "Analysing Video Game Music: Sources, Methods and a Case Study," in *Ludomusicology, Approaches to Video Game Music*, eds. Michiel Kamp, Tim Summers, and Mark Sweeney (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2016a), 8–31; and Tim Summers, *Understanding Video Game Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016b).

5. John Bridcut, *Britten's Children* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), 175–176.

6. John Bridcut makes several strong connections between Britten's music and his love for sport, especially in chapter 11, "Go, Play, Boy, Play," but he never goes to the point of analyzing directly the music through sport concepts. See Bridcut, *Britten's Children*.

on a Bicycle"); or hunting games ("Sport," *Our Hunting Fathers*), among others. Yet, physicality influenced much of his subsequent work, up to his last opera, *Death in Venice* (1973), in which is found an Olympic pentathlon at the end of Act I. In these "Games of Apollo," a choir comments on the actions of the ballet dancers, exhibiting the beach games of the boys observed by Aschenbach. His suppressed fascination with the young Tadzio reframes the scene into an Olympic game contest, not devoid of homoerotic undertones.[7] While the dancers on stage perform cartwheels and other acrobatic moves, the choir makes coded references to an array of young figures of the Greek mythology or literature involved in pederastic relationships: Hyacinth (and Apollo) fatally wounded during a game, or Phaedrus' (and Socrates) reflections on beauty.[8] These beach games become a Greek pentathlon with running, long jump, discus throwing, javelin throwing, and wrestling. The music, driven by the commenting chorus (in a Greek manner), stylizes those sporting activities through gamelan sounds. The gamelan presents polysemous features: an obvious reference to the east (the sun); neoclassical Hellenic exoticism (the Olympic Games); watery gestures (the beach); a boyishness through toy-like percussion timbre (the boys); and finally, a sporting physicality (pentathlon and acrobatics). In the "Games of Apollo," sport is then entangled in homoerotic, neoclassical, childlike, and seaside-holiday features. This example shows the intermingling in Britten's music of the notions of sport, play, and games. Britten's fascination for childhood, his compositional strategies, and the essential physicality of his works (which find one of their epitomes in this passage of *Death in Venice*), manifest on an aesthetic and semiotic level a connection between games, play, sport, and music.

The present article explores the theoretical relation of sport with musical games and plays. It also inspects, via Britten's art, how a traditional concert hall repertoire can be reappraised in a ludomusicological way. Consequently, this article is simultaneously addressed to various types of scholars. On a specific level, it can be read by Britten researchers as a way to consider games, sport, and play as fruitful tools of analysis. Yet, it is mainly intended for any researcher interested into 'gameotics' (i.e., semiotics of games and play) from ludomusicologists to semioticians, initially through the exploration of the overlap between sport, play, games, and sounds; but also through examples of concert art music. In both cases, sport offers new perspectives to reappraise sounds, play, and games.

TRICKY TRIAD

What kind of game is a sport? Is sport a subcategory of games, or are the two notions more fundamentally distinct? How does a game differ from play? Where do these categories overlap? Play, game, and sport are three notions intertwined in a conceptual dance. For Bernard Suits, they constitute a "tricky triad," which he endeavored to clarify, especially through notions of self-limitation ('lusory attitude') and play for the sake of

7. Similar homoerotic descriptions of Olympic games can be found in Henry de Montherlant, especially his illustrated *Paysage des Olympiques* (Paris: Grasset, 1940).

8. At the end of Act I, this accumulation of images of love overflows Aschenbach who, devastated, utters "I love you," and acknowledges at last that he fell in love with the boy.

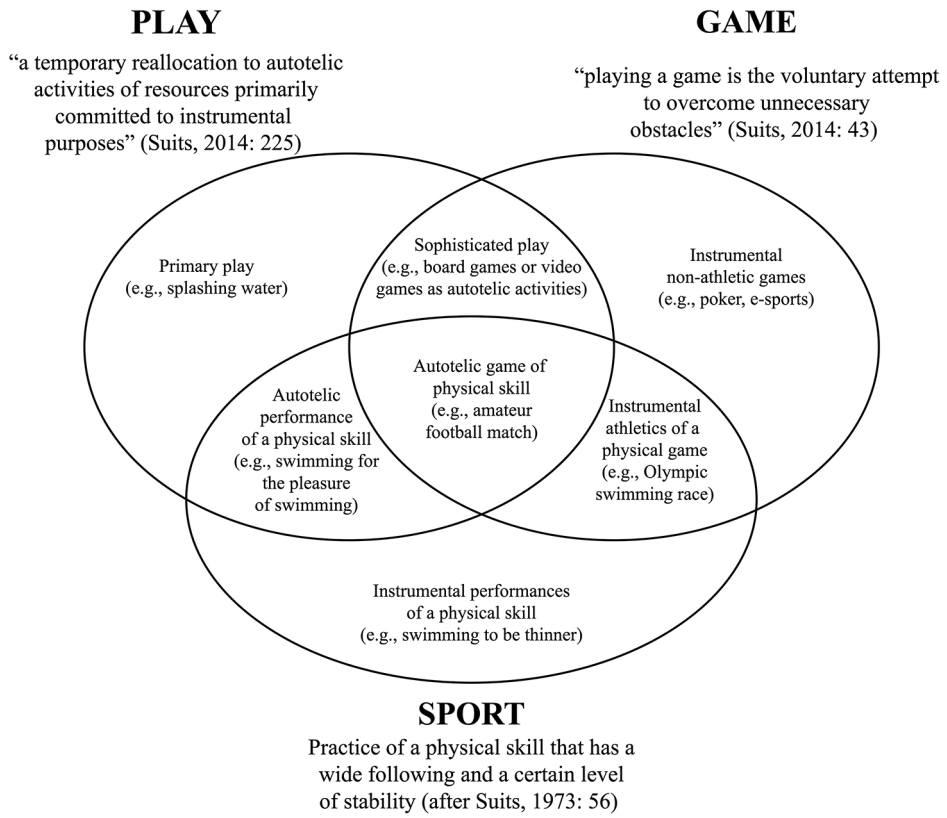


FIGURE 1. Development of Bernard Suits' 'tricky triad.'

play (autotelic activity).[9] The following diagram is a development on Suits' original synthesis of the tricky triad (Figure 1).[10]

To Suits' original formulation, I have added a *paidia*/*ludus* axis to the diagram. This refers to Roger Caillois' theories about ruled and unruled play and games. At one end of the axis is *paidia*, the anarchical, frolicsome, and uncontrolled activity. At the other end is *ludus*, the disciplined, ruled, and conventional game.[11] *Paidia* and *ludus* complement the tricky triad, in its interaction with attitudes of self-limitation (toward *ludus*) and autotelic toying with objects (toward *paidia*).

According to Suits, 'play' is to be understood in terms of "temporary reallocation to autotelic activities of resources primarily committed to instrumental purposes."[12] The autotelic/instrumental pair (in other words play as its own purpose, or play as an instrument for the accomplishment of an external goal) is central to Suits' definition.

9. Bernard Suits, "Tricky Triad: Games, Play, and Sport," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 15 (1988): 1–9.

10. Suits, "Tricky Triad," 7. I added to the diagram quotations of Suits' definitions of play, game, and sport as they are found in other places in his work (see footnotes 11, 13, and 15). I also renamed the sections, gave examples, and added Caillois' paidia/ludus axis.

11. Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games* (Urbanna: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 13.

12. Bernard Suits, *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia,* 2nd edition (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2014), 225.

For example, a pen has instrumental qualities, as it is used to write (a letter for instance). But, from the moment one starts to fiddle with their pen, its instrumental purpose is reallocated for the sake of its manipulation, i.e., for the sake of play.[13]

Suits' definition of 'game' takes a different turn. "Playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles," which means that there is a deliberate attitude to self-limitation and challenge that defines games at their core, an attitude Suits calls *lusory*. In a game of patience, the player is limited in the card movements that are operated. By accepting this limitation and trying to win in spite of them, the player enters into a 'lusory' challenge they try to overcome. But then, if the self-limitation is abandoned and the player starts to fiddle with their cards for the sake of it, the game becomes a play. And of course, the two categories overlap. Then, consider the same player changing their attitude again and deciding to build a house of cards—in other words, to build a model house *only* by the use of an inadequate object (a set of flimsy pieces of cardboard and without glue). This *obstacle*, to be *overcome* in order to realize the goal of 'building a house of cards' makes this activity a challenge. It makes it, once more, a game.

Many sports are to be understood in terms of games, and Suits' seminal book, *The Grasshopper*, builds a definition of game through many examples of sports.[14] A golf club, for instance, is quite a limitation for a goal such as putting a small ball in a faraway hole, and to do so in as few strokes as possible. But, with practice and exertion to master this limited object, the lusory challenge may be overcome. For Bernard Suits, the requirements for a game or activity to be called a sport are: "(1) that the game be a game of skill, (2) that the skill be physical, (3) that the game have a wide following, and (4) that the following achieve a certain level of stability."[15] If (1) and (2) are self-evident, (3) and (4) mean that I cannot play a sport if I am the only one to ever play said game. Sport supposes a set of shared activities ('a wide following') and a certain amount of stability through time created via the development of practices, institutions, types of training, coaching, and so on.

Therefore, if one follows Suits' definitions, one has to conclude that play, game, and sport are fundamentally different notions. Yet, they overlap, which explains the difficulty in sorting them conceptually as much as in practical terms. Suits' diagram, which I developed into categories and examples, shows the variety of the interaction of play, game, and sport. Sport can be play, game, game-play, or just sport. On the diagram in Figure 1, I give the example of a swimmer. If one swims with the objective to be thinner, the swimming activity becomes instrumental for other means. This kind of activity is not play. This is not game either, as there is no self-limiting obstacle that prohibits easier means. If one swims for the pleasure of swimming without obstacles or constitutive self-imposed rules to overcome, the activity is playful, but not gameful. If one makes a swimming

13. For Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, an "autotelic activity is one we do for its own sake because to experience it is the main goal." Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow. The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life* (New York City: Basic Books, 1997), 117.

14. Suits, *The Grasshopper*. Interestingly enough, most of the discussions on Suits' works were made in sport studies (especially in the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*).

15. Bernard Suits, "The Elements in Sport," in *The Philosophy of Sport, A Collection of Original Essays*, ed. Robert G. Osterhoudt (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1973), 56.

competition with no other objective (trophy, money, glory, etc.) than the swimming race itself, the activity falls into both categories of play and game. If one swims on a professional level (let's say, for the Olympic Games), one follows the constitutive rules of a game, while not being playful (as the sport is practiced for instrumental means, and not for itself). The same activity can easily metamorphose from one to the other: one can swim with an instrumental purpose with temporary reallocation to autotelic goals.

A fourth circle (called 'music' or 'sound') may be added to Suits' diagram and would offer new combinations between play, games, and sport in connection to music. Indeed, each of the seven entries can be coupled with sounds:

1. sounds and play
2. sounds and game
3. sounds and sport
4. sounds and play-game
5. sounds and play-sport
6. sounds and game-sport
7. sounds and play-game-sport

If sound and music may be explored in connection to sport, play, and games, one might contemplate, conversely, the playful, gameful, and sporting qualities of a sound. In other words, sounds may be considered in terms of lusory attitude (leaning toward games), for their autotelic aspect (leaning toward play), or with respect to their physicality (leaning toward sport).

GAMES, PLAY, AND SPORT IN BRITTEN'S "PLAYFUL PIZZICATO" (1933–4)

Benjamin Britten's work is especially useful for considering how the tricky triad may relate to music. His "Playful Pizzicato" (from the *Simple Symphony*) offers many features to discuss the intermingling of sport, play, games, and sounds. In this piece, a physical quality is allied with a reclaiming of childhood. Indeed, *Simple Symphony* is based on pieces from Britten's own juvenilia (pieces composed when 10 to 13 years old). Britten's introduction to the piece for the Decca recording sleevenote in 1955 is now famous:

> Once upon a time there was a prep-school boy. He was called Britten mi. . . . [H]e loved cricket, only quite liked football (although he kicked a pretty 'corner'); he adored mathematics, got on all right with history, was scared by Latin Unseen. . . . There was one curious thing about this boy: he wrote music.[16]

Even the choice of the titles presents a mischievous and childlike attitude, all based on double letters like his own name: BB (Boisterous Bourrée), PP (Playful Pizzicato), SS (Sentimental Sarabande), FF (Frolicsome Finale); and of course, *Simple Symphony*.[17]

16. Kildea, *Britten on Music*, 358.

17. On Benjamin Britten's use of puns with double letters or else, see Mervyn Cooke, "Be Flat or Be Natural? Pitch Symbolism in Britten's Operas," in *Rethinking Britten*, ed. Philip Rupprecht (New York: Oxford University

The adjectives used express a sport-like and energetic childlikeness: boisterous, playful, or frolicsome. At the same time, they denote a lusory attitude toward double-letter limitations (i.e., a double-lettered naming game).

In "Playful Pizzicato," the same mindset is at play. First of all, Britten's self-limitation to pizzicati manifests, like its double-letter titles, an inclination toward lusory games. Likewise, this pizzicato-only piece tests the limitation of the performers. The writing flirts with being playable or not, and challenges the players' speed and endurance. There is a gameful attitude from the performers' part, who participate in the composer's game and try to overcome speed by mastering the pizzicato challenge. Speed (an element essential to many sports) is often a crucial element in Britten's music: frantic fugues (*Bridge Variations*, *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*), breathless manhunts (*Albert Herring*, *Peter Grimes*), or cars racing at full speed ('Calypso' from the *Cabaret Songs*). According to John Bridcut, "[Britten's] fascination with speed and movement led naturally in adult life to skiing, which he took up with great success. It also lay behind his favourite toys—his cars."[18] And these speedy 'toys' were often the opportunity for Britten to become a child again: "He knew that speed impressed his young friends, who would usually sit with him in the front, while any adult passengers were confined to the back."[19] In car racing, pleasure can come from the danger of losing control of the vehicle. In risk-taking resides the enjoyment. This recalls Roger Caillois' concept of *ilinx*, based on "the pursuit of vertigo and which consists of an attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind."[20] As in "This Little Babe" (*A Ceremony of Carols*), where music lines come dangerously close to each other in canon and seem like an athletic running competition, "Playful Pizzicato" puts speed and physicality at the forefront. In particular, this use of an instrumental technique (pizzicati) reallocated for the sake of the game itself (fiddling on violins), falls into the category of play.

Therefore, "Playful Pizzicato" displays elements of game (in lusory limitations to overcome for the composer and the performers) and play (in the autotelic reallocation of the pizzicato playing). Moreover, there is a connection between the speed of the piece and sport. On top of it, the physicality of the pizzicato challenge brings this piece closer to the notion of sport: "(1) that the game be a game of skill, (2) that the skill be physical" (quoted from earlier). Yet, to make it a sport in a strict sense of Bernard Suits' description, one should still need to prove "(3) that the game have a wide following, and (4) that the following achieve a certain level of stability." At that point, one could rhetorically argue that a musical composition has a wide following (many performances) and a certain level of stability (scores), but it would push the analogy too far. One can at least see,

Press, 2013), 102–127. These double-letter games, in connection to a childlike aesthetic, can be found in some books for children, for example Lemony Snicket's *The Reptile Room, The Ersatz Elevator, The Carnivorous Carnival* and all the other volumes of his *Series of Unfortunate Events* (1999–2006).

18. Bridcut, *Britten's Children*, 186.

19. Bridcut, *Britten's Children*, 186.

20. Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, 23.

however, the strong connection between music and sport, as activities: performing, playing, composing, training, sporting.

In short, this first study illustrates the possibility for music and sounds to lean toward sport (via physicality), games (via lusory self-limitations), and play (via autotelic manipulations). Significantly, *Simple Symphony* epitomizes how these interactions may happen in a general reclaiming of childhood and elements of boyishness. The gestural feature of the performance, and its lusory challenge, brings it close to activities of sporting, gaming, or playing. The next section questions this interaction between sonic gestures, sport gestures, gameful gestures (lusory), and playful gestures (autotelic).

GESTURES

"Gesture: A movement of the body or any part of it. Not only in restricted sense: a movement expressive of thought or feeling." (*OED*) A gesture is a possibility among the infinite variation of movements that can be combined in a body. There is a general scholarly tendency to limit 'gesture' to a symbolic or semiotic process, and to distinguish it from the bodily movement. I follow here the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition, in its broadest and more common sense. It comprises a simple muscle contraction, or the synchronization of several contractions and stretching. Let me provide an example. When I grasp the mug currently placed at the right-hand side of my computer, I stretch my arm, open my fingers, then grab the mug. These three movements are combined in one gesture which I call 'taking my mug.' Yet, now I have had a gulp of tea, I can realize the function of that gesture. By grabbing an object because I was thirsty, the gesture's function was instrumental. It did not have any symbolic function. If I were now to perform the same gesture to someone describing how I grabbed my teacup to drink tea, my gesture would accompany a speech act and become iconic, as an echo of the action I was describing.[21] Its function would have been instrumental, but this time for communicational purposes, with emotional qualities attached. Indeed, according to how thirsty one is, or how good my tea is, the gesture may carry an emotion, by its speed or strength.

A gesture can also be symbolic. That is the case when it is, for example, codified as a sign language, or when it is used in religious rituals. A gesture might, however, present autotelic characteristics too. For instance, dance movements can be performed and contemplated for themselves. They can create a special pleasure in their autotelic execution or observation. At the same time, the identical danced movement may evoke something different and take on an instrumental meaning: social, political, and so on. In that case, the autotelic movement suddenly loses its autotelic quality for instrumental purposes. This example shows how much art is situated at the boundary between the autotelic and the instrumental. And following Bernard Suits' definition of play as the reallocation of an instrumental resource (e.g., a gesture) for autotelic purposes (e.g., dance), one can see how much art is situated at the frontier between play and non-play. Both play and non-play interact in art performance and reception. Both are the

21. For a typology of semiotic gestures, see David McNeill, *Hand and Mind, What Gestures Reveal about Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

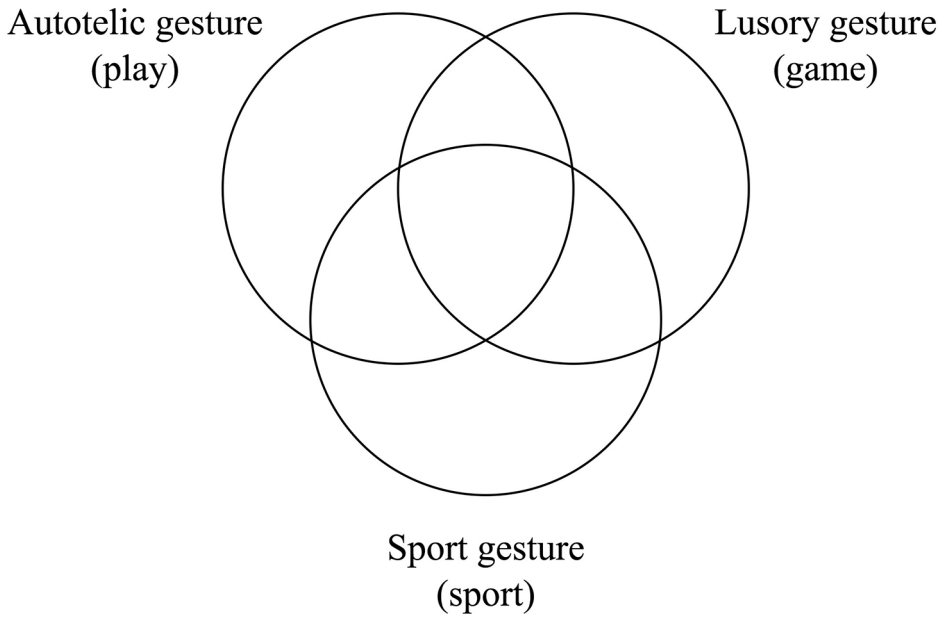


FIGURE 2. Play, game, and sport gestures.

double-face of art, centered on the autotelic/instrumental ambiguity of its elements (which may explain the heated debates between the advocates of each option).[22]

Physicality is central to sport, and so is gesture. Sport gestures inherit the tricky relation between sport, play, and game, presented in the previous section. They may be autotelic or instrumental (playful or not). A child playing keepy-uppy presents an autotelic gesture. But, this gesture may become instrumental if it is performed as an exercise during a training course. Besides, functions of sport gestures may serve the mastering and overcoming of unnecessary obstacles (gameful). On one side, the playful or play-like gesture in sport emphasizes the appreciation of the gesture for its own sake. A particularly well-made gesture, when scoring a goal in football or an exemplary good swing in golf, may provoke in the player or the spectator a sentiment of amazement. On the other side, the gameful or game-like gesture in sport highlights the skilled practice of self-limited means: the same football scoring or golf swing are observed now in terms of their efficiency in a given situation. In consequence, one same gesture can express different functions, various motivations, and diverse simultaneous appreciations. These two gestures (playful and gameful) may be formulated as *autotelic gesture* and *lusory gesture*, and present several types of overlaps with *sport gestures* (Figure 2).

Rock climbing shows a characteristic combination of *autotelic gesture* and *lusory gesture*. For C. Thi Nguyen, "rock climbing is full of aesthetic experiences. Climbers praise particular climbs for having interesting movement or beautiful flow. But, unlike many forms of dance, climbing aims at overcoming obstacles."[23] Nguyen's comment hints

22. See debates about art for art's sake versus art as culturally instrumental.
23. C. Thi Nguyen, *Games: Agency as Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 12.

at the same time to a rock-climbing gesture as an autotelic gesture ('a beautiful flow') and to a rock-climbing gesture as a lusory gesture (which 'aims at overcoming obstacles'). The second triggers "experiences of movement *as the solution to a problem*."[24] Altogether, Nguyen focuses on the agency at stake in game playing and considers movement in terms of an aesthetic of "acting, deciding and solving."[25] Next to its functions (instrumental/autotelic, lusory/non-lusory), the types of sport gestures can vary greatly. If some involve only the gesture of an individual (archery), others present gestures of groups of people. These can be synchronized (in rowing) or choreographed (synchronized swimming). Otherwise, they can be coordinated as in sports that involve ball passing (football), turn-by-turn actions (croquet), or specializations (curling).

Now that the specificities of sport gestures have been established (especially in relation to the tricky play-game-sport triad), we can address a related question: how is a sport gesture sonic? To start with, let us consider the auditory aspect of sport. As Ben Powis and Thomas Carter comment, this auditory aspect is "a crucial element of any sporting experience. From the distinctive syncopated pattern of a table tennis rally to the visceral grunt of the front rows locking horns in a rugby scrum."[26] Powis and Carter give through copious examples an idea of the great variety of these "unique soundscapes."[27] Let us give two quick examples to understand this multiplicity of sounds and music in sport. My first example is a professional game of tennis. In a general silence, the sound of the ball bouncing on the racket or the court is heard. Grunts are made by the players. Shouts (suspense or release) are heard in the crowd. My second example is an amateur game of boules. This time, the general silence that surrounded tennis is replaced by a chattering of players and observers. Around the metallic clanking of the balls, a social game is at stake. Through these two snapshots, sports present many sounds, from many sources, with many functions. Moreover, these sporting sounds emanate from different sources: objects, players, spectators, commentators. Nevertheless, they are in many cases the consequences of sport gestures. The different clanking of the boules depends on the throwing gesture of the player. The different tennis crowd silences or shouts differ according to the trajectory of the tennis ball. To that extent, I propose in the following paragraph an original extension of Powis & Carter's approach, with a typology of sounds in sport gestures.

The sounds in sport gestures can be apprehended in three categories. First, the sounds signaling a gesture to be made (the commands of the coxswain, the gunshot that launches a race). Second, the sounds resulting from the gesture itself (the sound made by the water during a swimming stroke; the sound of a racket hit). The second category includes sounds made by the body itself, or made via the use of a sporting object (club, racket,

24. Nguyen, *Games: Agency as Art*, 12.

25. Nguyen, *Games: Agency as Art*, 12.

26. Ben Powis and Thomas Carter, "Sporting Sounds," in *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, ed. Michael Bull (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 391. See also, for a consideration of sounds in sport, John Bale and Anthony Bateman, "Introduction," in *Sporting Sounds: Relationships Between Sport and Music* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 1–2.

27. Powis and Carter's typology is as follows: embodied sounds, competitive sounds, spectacular sounds, sound competition. See Powis and Carter, "Sporting Sounds."

etc.). The diverse vocalizations of a player should also be considered in this category. They are part of the gestural-making process (grunts of tennis players, shouts in martial arts, etc.). The third category examines the delayed sounds produced by the gesture (especially in sports that include a ball to be thrown or bounced). In other words, these three categories present three different times: sounds before the gesture, sounds during the gesture, and sounds after the gesture. To the last one can be added the sounds orally commenting on the gesture (the words of a commentator, the reactions of the audience).

Can a sonic gesture also share gameful or playful qualities? In other words, could the gestures of the players be perceived in terms of challenges, self-imposed obstacles, lesser means, or autotelic movements? The previous presentation of "Playful Pizzicato" hinted so, as does the following case study on the first few measures of *Peter Grimes*.

SPORTING, LUSORY, AND AUTOTELIC GESTURES IN BRITTEN'S *PETER GRIMES* (1945)

There is no direct mention of sport, play, or games in *Peter Grimes*'s opening. On the contrary, the prologue depicts a very serious scene: the trial of Peter for the death of his apprentice. Surprisingly, however, the tone of the music is strangely light-hearted. This buoyant and cheerful orchestral and choral displays, at odds with the violence exerted on Grimes (or by Grimes), is one of Britten's cruelest devices in this opera. The chorus, for example, sings merry songs, at variance with their angst, which betrays their sadistic pleasure in opposing the abject fisherman ('abject' in the sense used by Julia Kristeva, as something disgustingly attractive).[28] The opening, too, is playful in its major, staccato, hiccupping *buffa* features. It also exhibits a physicality typical of Britten's youthful style. Indeed, sport-like physicality is felt all through Britten's early works in the 1930s. In particular, it is Britten's own way to react to his predecessors. For him, "[Parry and his followers] are inclined to suspect technical brilliance of being superficial and insincere. . . . Parry's national ideal, was, in fact, the English Gentleman (who generally thinks it rather vulgar to take too much trouble)."[29] Britten's opposition to the English Gentleman attitude in art echoes conflicting attitudes to sport that are found all along the nineteenth century as explored by Gideon Dishon:

> On the one hand, character was tied to the aristocratic ideal of the "gentleman amateur" according to which conduct was to be characterised by self-control, fairness, respect for rules, and effortless participation. . . . Concurrently, as the [nineteenth] century progressed, character became more strongly associated with an ethos of rugged manliness which centred on the capacity to endure and *overcome challenges*, prioritising determination in place of detachment. This model of character as to be expressed in attributes such as toughness, resilience, courage, and independence.[30]

28. Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

29. Benjamin Britten, "England and the Folk-Art Problem (1941)," in *Britten on Music*, ed. Paul Kildea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 31.

30. Gideon Dishon, "Games of Character: Team Sports, Games, and Character Development in Victorian Public Schools, 1850–1900," *Paedagogica Historica* 53, no. 4 (2017): 368, emphasis added.

Britten's music belongs to this second category. This "capacity to endure and overcome challenges" mentioned by Dishon evokes a characteristic lusory attitude. The physicality of Britten's pieces infuses the performer's gestures at the boundary between body discipline (lusory limitations) and schoolboyish tricks (clever overcoming of these limitations). His use of sport in his music is also a way for Britten to meet the modernist styles of Stravinsky, Shostakovich, or Prokofiev, a set a composers who, like Britten, were often accused of mere cleverness.[31] If these accusations in 'cleverness,' used by British critics of the 1930s, have deprecatory undertones, they however point toward a crucial aspect of Britten's music. Linked to games, problem-solving features, and challenges to overcome, 'cleverness' is in fact a key component of the lusory aesthetic of Benjamin Britten.

Robert S. Hatten defines a gesture as an "energetic shaping through time that may be interpreted as significant," and by extension a musical gesture as focusing in particular on the "energy it takes a performer to produce sound."[32] The concept of energy might be too loose to successfully define a gesture (as it instantly triggers a new definitional conundrum: what defines an *energetic* shaping?). In our present case, however, the energetic analogy (and the images of vitality and boisterous dynamism it denotes) generates a set of correlations with a Brittenian physicality. And this musical physicality can be linked to sporting, lusory, and autotelic gestures. First of all, the lusory limitation of a gesture—in other words, its attempt to overcome a self-limitation—is found in most relations to rackets and balls. The mastering of these limited apparatuses is fundamental to good sport playing. Likewise, cricket puts strategy and cleverness at its center. As stated by Derek Birley, "cunning is as important as physical strength" in cricket, with its complex and various rules. For example, bowling offers many strategies and tricks by spinning the ball. The play between the two sides of the ball creates slides that are difficult for the batsman to predict. According to an old cricket handbook, "the mental attitude of a bowler should be that he imagines himself to be the batsman at whom he is bowling, tries to think as the batsman does, and then plans his attack accordingly."[33] These deceiving tricks are essential to bowling gestures, as they are in many pieces by Benjamin Britten, in particular in his handling of unpredictable scales.

This is where the beginning of *Peter Grimes* offers a striking parallel with these cricket-bowling tricks that extends the sporting metaphor to a broader compositional approach. After the steady B flat major opening, a succession of scales appears, twisting in unexpected directions, like a cricket ball spinning around the batsman. As a bowler, Britten is

31. See Donald Mitchell, "Introduction," in *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters and Diaries of Benjamin Britten 1913–1976, Volume One 1923–1939*, eds. Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed (London: Faber and Faber, 1991) 1–67, 6. For Prokofiev, similar accusations can be found: "[Prokofiev] is quite clever and accomplished, but without much personality or definite convictions." Quoted in Joseph Schultz, "Prokofiev's Reception in the United Kingdom: A Case Study," in *Rethinking Prokofiev*, eds. Rita McAllister and Christina Guillaumier (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 387.

32. Robert S. Hatten, "A Theory of Musical Gestures and its Application to Beethoven and Schubert," in *Music and Gesture*, eds. Anthony Gritten and Elaine King (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 1–3.

33. E.G. Martin, "Bowling," in *The Game of Cricket*, edited by A.P.F. Chapman et al. (London: Seeley, Service & Co., 1930), 50.

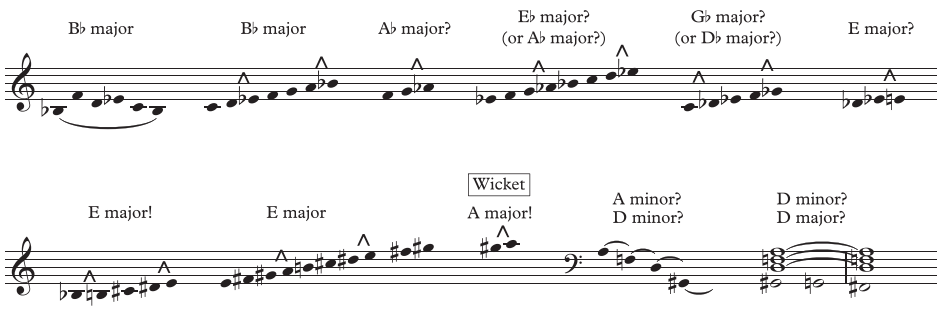


FIGURE 3. Scalic tricks in the opening of *Peter Grimes* (1945).

playing spinning tricks with the listener and leads them into a game of deceived expectations. The scale is an element strongly characterized tonally: it implies a key that is recognizable by the position of its semitones, especially the articulation between the leading-note and the tonic. Figure 3 presents the tonal expectations implied by the scales used by Britten. As shown, the B flat major quickly swings around expectancies and finishes in A major. This is a wicket. The ball spinning was successful, and the listener/batsman was tricked. The scale is particularly suitable to the analogy as it can metamorphose itself into another scale by small modifications in the alterations of leading notes. These sudden changes emphasize what is happening on stage: the music jumps straight into the action of the trial without any preparation. As shown in Figure 3, once the A major is reached, a succession of chords deepens the ongoing insecurity and tonal ambivalence. The harmony becomes ambiguous and part and parcel of the playful and gameful aesthetic and physicality of Britten's music.

There is, in the terms of Hatten, a strong gestural (energetic) aspect in these short fragments of scales. Indeed, they are sonic gestures that can be observed in relation to the gestural tricky triad in Figure 2. First, these gestures lean toward sport via their physicality. Second, there is, through the variational exploration of these running scales, a motivic fiddling not devoid of playful qualities (i.e., of reallocation of the tonal instrumentality of a scale to autotelic motivic explorations). Third, there is in these scalic gestures a lusory pleasure in the overcoming and play-testing of the scalic limitation (i.e., in the sudden bifurcations from one scale to another and its serendipitous pseudo-tonal outcomes). As such, sport gestures, autotelic gestures (play), lusory gestures (games), give new insight into the semiotic qualities of this musical extract. Having explored the typology of sport-play-games-and-sound gestures, let us now consider some of their analogical processes in music.

ANALOGICAL PROCESSES

A musical gesture has been understood in many studies either literally or figuratively. This is the case of Jonathan De Souza who explores the relation between body, musical instrument, and sound; Roger Moseley and his ludomusicological approach to the keyboard; the ample scholarship on electronic music design; or, as already mentioned, music

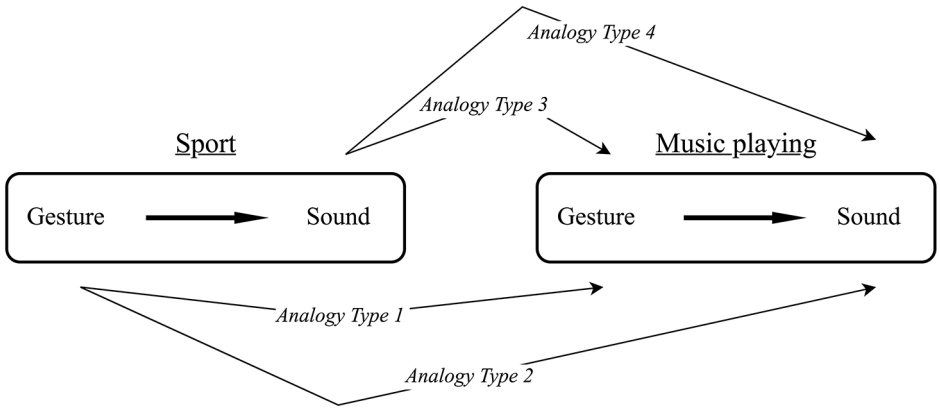


FIGURE 4. Types of analogies between a sport(/game/play) gesture and music.

semiotics with figures such as Robert S. Hatten (who focuses mostly on phrasing and accentuation in eighteenth and nineteenth century music).[34] In terms of analogical process, the comparison between musical gestures and sport gestures (and by extension play and game gestures) offers multiple layers of consideration. First, a direct analogy might be made between a sport gesture and the gesture of the musician. This is what is presented in Figure 4 as a 'type 1 analogy.' Type 2 draws a parallel between the sport gesture and the design of the sound produced by a musician. Types 3 and 4 consider analogies with the sound of a sport gesture.

To understand the mechanics of these types of sport analogies, one should consider Nelson Goodman's concept of 'exemplification.' To take Goodman's own image, a fabric swatch exemplifies the texture or the color of the fabric, but not its size.[35] In music, a set of sounds can exemplify a particular trait of an object of the world. As described by Christian Accaoui, "a fast tempo does not refer to speed by naming it, it refers to it by showing it and shows it by giving an example."[36] Musical exemplification, however, leads to an analogical ambiguity. Indeed, in Accaoui's example, the tempo (A) is fast (B) as *x* (C) is fast (D). This inherent ambiguity of musical semiotics (what is *x*?) is for Accaoui

34. Jonathan De Souza, *Music at Hand: Instruments, Bodies, and Cognition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). Roger Moseley, *Keys to Play: Music as a Ludic Medium from Apollo to Nintendo* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016). For electroacoustic approaches, which take place in the various concerns of sonic interaction design (SID) as much as theories of embodied cognition, see Rolf Inge Godøy, "Gestural-Sonorous Objects: Embodied Extensions of Schaeffer's Conceptual Apparatus," *Organised Sounds* 11, no. 2 (2006): 149–157; and Doug Van Nort, "Instrumental Listening: Sonic Gesture as Design Principle," *Organised Sound* 14, no. 2 (2009): 177–187. On embodied cognition, see Arnie Cox, *Music and Embodied Cognition: Listening, Moving, Feeling and Thinking* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016). For music semiotics: Robert S. Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); and Lawrence M. Zbikowski, *Foundations of Musical Grammar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

35. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art, An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), 57–67.

36. "Un tempo rapide ne réfère pas à la rapidité en la nommant, il y réfère en la montrant et il la montre en donnant un exemple." (my translation) Christian Accaoui, *La Musique parle, la musique peint: Les voies de l'imitation musicale et de la référence dans l'art des sons. Tome 2: Sémiotique* (Paris: Éditions du Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, 2022), 63.

its strength: "Music can signify, for example, lack or exaltation, dispersion or gathering, without saying precisely what this lack or exaltation is about. Its intimacy and power come from this indeterminacy: it speaks to everyone."[37]

Therefore, what are the qualities that can be exemplified in a sport gesture? This depends of course on the gesture and the sport. Among these qualities are shortness, movement, repetition, and humanness. In consequence, any music that exemplifies one of these traits can possibly refer to sport, but there a problem arises. The 'gestural' characteristics of a machine are similar (shortness, movement, repetition), with the exception of humanness. Consequently, a music that exemplifies shortness and repetition can refer to a sport gesture as much as to a machine gesture. This is where the presence of tangential elements (titles, para-texts, etc.) helps music refer to sport more unequivocally.

This is, for example, the case of one of the songs most culturally associated with sport: "Eye of the Tiger." The analogical connection between music and sport is made through the clarification offered by the screen. In *Rocky III* (1982), for which it has been commissioned, the music appears first as a counterpoint to fireworks. The short and energetic rhythms interspersed by silences structure an analogy between the music and the visual pyrotechnics. Then, the video shows a ring fight. Suddenly, the punchy rhythms take another turn and an analogy of the music with strikes and kicks sets up. Indeed, there is an analogy between the boxing gesture and the music (type 2, see Figure 4). The panting repeated notes are linked with the ongoing physical activity and dramatic tension. In return, this music has become the quintessential 'sport music,' and is now used extensively as a physical exercise accompaniment. The rhythm and the rocky punches of the electric guitar are used to motivate the gymnast's training. In the end, the analogical element of the music is used as a stimulus for the sport activity itself: the analogical soundtrack becomes a physical incitement. To summarize, this example shows the two modes of representation discussed above: the gestural analogies between sport and music, inscribed, more broadly, in the Goodmanian process of musical exemplification.

If the soundtrack of *Rocky III* seems miles apart from Britten's music, its aesthetics do not, as both showcase semiotic analogies to sport. As demonstrated, the movie shows a type 2 analogy, according to my typology presented in Figure 4. The following example from Britten's repertoire helps to consider what a type 1 analogy (from sport player's gesture to the music player's gesture) looks like.

SWIMMING ON THE PIANO: BRITTEN'S "EARLY MORNING BATHE" (1934)

"Early Morning Bathe" is part of Britten's 1934 *Holiday Diary* for piano. The opening of the piece presents a quick succession of snapshots of sounds typical of the early Benjamin Britten (of the 1930s). This style recalls Roger Caillois' concept of *paidia*, the unruled game or play, defined by its "frolicsome and impulsive exuberance."[38] Paidian style

37. "La musique peut signifier par exemple le manque ou l'exaltation, la dispersion ou le rassemblement, sans dire précisément l'objet de ce manque ou de cette exaltation. Son intimité et son pouvoir provient de cette indétermination: elle parle à chacun." (my translation) Accaoui, *La Musique parle, la musique peint*, 65.

38. Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 13.

(as I propose to call it) is found in many early works by Britten: the March and Waltz of the *Suite for Violin* (1934–5), the March and Burlesque of *Three Divertimenti* (1936), "Rats Away!" of *Our Hunting Fathers* (1936), and at the transition between the last movements of the *Sinfonia da Requiem* (1942). It is characterized by glimpses of instrumental gestures presented in a chaotic manner and with a nonsensical taste of childish disruption.[39] "Early Morning Bathe," from *Holiday Diary* for solo piano (1934) presents the first occurrence of these stylistic tricks of Britten's, linked here to a visual and tactile depiction of getting into the cold water at the beach, as vivaciously described by John Bridcut:

> The ginger barefoot walk across sharp shingle, the first tentative steps into ice-cold water, the decisive immersion of the whole body, the realisation that the water was not as cold as it had seemed, the purposeful swimming in deeper water, and ~~w~~hen the awkward exit across painful pebbles . . . It is all there in the music.[40]

Cold baths and wild swimming, which are among Britten's favorite activities, are linked (again) in his music to childhood memories. As Britten himself recounted, "These little pieces . . . are [subjective] impressions of a boy's seaside holiday, in pre-war years."[41] The music is indeed vividly descriptive and one shivers at the sound of those brisk clashes of fresh air and cold water. Evocations of water in piano music (or in harp music) have a long and rich history: for example swift music, made of light back-and-forth arpeggios on the piano, is typical of Debussy's or Ravel's writing. In their music, sounds evoke the splashes of water and exemplify the shape of waves. The undulations in the second page of Britten's piece (when the proper swimming begins) follow this tradition. Yet, it goes one step further. Indeed, there is an analogical gestural process between piano playing and swimming (type 1). In Britten's piece, the performer seems to literally swim on the piano. The pianist's movements are circular in both hands, recalling the gestures of a breaststroke. It establishes many possibilities of comparison with, at the center of it, a similitude between music performance and sport performance: training, rhythmicity, automatization of gestures, and so on.

In consequence, Britten's piece presents a type 1 analogy, from gesture to gesture. The swimming gesture of a breaststroke finds its equivalent in the piano playing. At the same time, the resulting sounds evoke water, in a long genealogy of piano pieces. Those two phenomena occur concomitantly and give to the piece its particular taste: physical and sport-like via the gestural analogy, while belonging to a watery piano-writing topic. Besides, there is a gestural playfulness in the piece through its variational writing. The repetitive breaststroke is also an exploration of the keyboard, which recalls Roger Moseley's analysis of a keyboard as an "interface" and gestural "platform."[42] One can also consider Britten's variation-driven piece as an autotelic activity itself: a playful manipulation of the motivic material. Interestingly, this autotelic aspect creates a narrative

39. See the next section on *Three Divertimenti* for a topic analysis of this *paidian* style.

40. Bridcut, *Britten's Children*, 191.

41. In Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed, eds., *Letters From a Life: The Selected Letters and Diaries of Benjamin Britten 1913–1976, Volume 1* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), 348.

42. Moseley, *Keys to Play*.

description of a swimming practice: the swimming (a play-sport-like autotelic repetition) becomes a musical program (a narrative instrumentality). Britten seems to use the gestural limitation of a breaststroke to create *nonetheless* a tune interwoven between the hands (which, again, has links with a Ravelian and Debussyan piano or harp writing). In other words, by restricting himself to a self-imposed limitation of the motivic material he is composing with, Britten showcases a lusory attitude. His compositional process, therefore, can be assimilated to a game. Britten's piece, in short, is a *compositional game* that *playfully manipulates* the music material drawn from an analogy between the pianist's gesture and a *sport gesture*.

TRANSITIONAL TOPICS

"Early Morning Bathe" does not make a *topical* reference to sport, but an *analogical* one (while showcasing a topical reference to water). A musical topic crystallizes stylistic traits culturally shared by listeners: is there such reference in music for sport in general or some sports in particular?[43] Heinrich W. Schwab attempted to demonstrate the existence of a genre of "tennis composition."[44] If the variety of the corpus of music selected by Schwab can be assembled together as pieces that refer to tennis in their titles, it stays difficult to establish common musical traits. In topic-theoretical terms, nothing in common emerges from these pieces. The reason is that, in music, sport is not directly referred to via a sport topic; only a *transitional topic* successfully establishes a link clear enough for sport to be sonically recognized in music. This referential link (the transitional topic) may occur in many ways. To rhetorically make such a case, let us first present two (non-Britten) examples.

The first example is from Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*. This short opera depicts the dreams, phantasms, and hypocrisies of a post-war American couple. Many day-to-day scenes are represented, as when Sam, the husband, sings in the changing rooms after a handball tournament (scene V). He triumphantly boasts of being a winner (a bitter contrast with his sentimental life). The text of this number aria sounds like a spoof of the worst competitive and masculinist aspects of sport (with a taste of puritanical predestination):

> There's a law about men:
> There are men who can make it and men who cannot;
> There are fish who go swimming
> And fish who wind up in the pot!

As shown in the following graph, the music presents four transitional topics (Figure 5). The first is hunting, evoked through the presence of high-pitched calling horns. The physical activity of sport and hunting (both 'games') is the basis of their connection. Additionally, the horn echoes Sam's self-proud statements on virility. He is the strongest

43. On topic theory, see the works of Danuta Mirka, Kofi Agawu, or Raymond Monelle. For a list of topics, see especially: Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 42–50.

44. Heinrich W. Schwab, "Anyone for Tennis? Notes on the Genre Tennis Composition," in *Sporting Sounds, Relationships Between Sport and Music*, eds. John Bateman and John Bale (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 128–144.

FIGURE 5. Transitional topics in Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, Scene 5.

(at least in his mind). He hunts losers. He is like a mighty animal with horn-like sounds that frighten prey.[45] The second transitional topic is a march. As another physical activity, the march refers to sport. It calls to mind the synchronized steps of groups of people. Besides, its military connotations, allied with hunting references, accentuate the overall impression of power, in connection with Sam's speech. The third transitional topic is the music exercise. Up-and-down scales, diatonic patterns in succession: much in this music recalls the exercises of a music-instrument practice (a Czerny-exercise style). First, it gives a similar analogy between the physical activity of practicing sport and practicing music. Second, it gives a simplicity to the music that contradicts Sam's utterances. If he is a winner, the naivety and childlikeness of the tunes that accompany him convey an unimaginative and school-like turn to the scene. The fourth transitional topic is a fanfare, which heralds the winner with its trumpets. This last element is more diegetic, in the sense that it is a genre of music that can be heard at the end of a sporting competition. Here, it comes in interaction with the hunting horn calls. "The winner, has never to worry about his dinner:" this winner-minded, hunter-related, misogynistic exclamation is exaggeratedly praised by the fanfare. As it is, the stereotypical beliefs of Sam are mirrored in musical topics and clichés used as transitional references to sport.

The second example turns toward Russia. Shostakovich's passion for football has been thoroughly documented by Dmitri Braginsky.[46] *Football* (1944) was written for the birthday of Beria, head of the NKVD (the People's Commissariat for International Affairs), and football enthusiast as well. The piece is a choreographic scene from *Russkaya Reka*, composed in 1944. In Shostakovich's piece, the transitional topic is a cancan, as surprising as it might seem. The lively tempo gives to the music a chaotic energy. It exemplifies a disorganized running of players in a football stadium. But, at the same time, it draws an analogy between football players and female cabaret dancers (and reversely). The whistled sounds heard in the woodwinds are polysemous: they are the referee's whistle; or the whistling of cabaret customers. Every now and then, Shostakovich's use

45. The reference to wild and dangerous animals in sport, in connection to strength, is commonplace. "Eye of the Tiger" plays on the same logic: to tame a beast; to be a beast.

46. See Dmitri Braginsky, *Shostakovich and Football: Escape to Freedom* (Moscow: DSCH, 2018); and Dmitri Braginsky, "Dmitry Shostakovich, Sport and Politics in the USSR," in *Sport, Music, Identities*, ed. Anthony Bateman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 53–65.

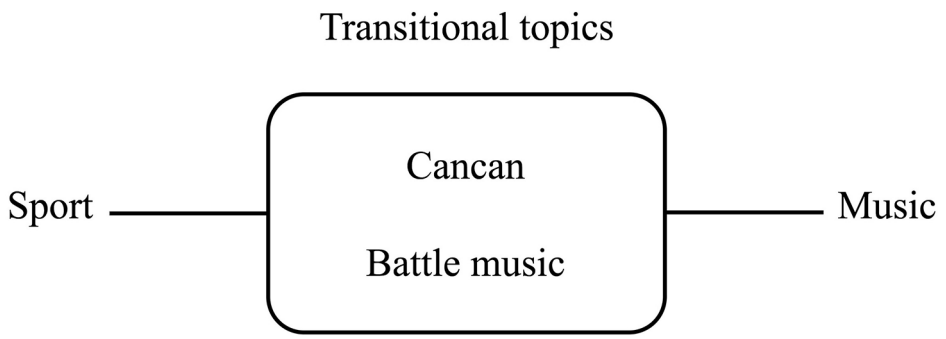


FIGURE 6. Transitional topics in Dmitri Shostakovich's *Football*.

of snare drums, horns, and cymbals metamorphoses the cancan into a battle music. This second transitional topic also evokes chaos. Whether battlefield or cabaret, the football stadium takes new profiles in the music. As a matter of fact, Shostakovich's use of transitional topics owes a lot to silent film music piano accompaniment.[47] The music of a silent film in the early twentieth century was made of improvisation or reuse of preexisting character pieces. The match between the music and the screen was not mandatory. And it is in this leeway between the screen and the music that Shostakovich found a perfect occasion to develop his ironical style, "replete with sardonic parodies of popular idioms, including several slick waltzes to characterize the bourgeoisie and circus-like gallops reminding the listener that Soviet film in the silent era remained deeply rooted in the cinema of attractions."[48]

In these two examples, the transitional topic process meets modernism, which delights in the disruption of genres.[49] Warped waltzes, uncanny lullabies, and warlike playgrounds are staples of the modernist musical aesthetic.[50] Consequently, sport and transitional topics found an intrinsic echo in modernist music, and so do they ~~t does~~ in Britten's.

TRANSITIONAL TOPICS TO SPORT IN BRITTEN'S *THREE DIVERTIMENTI* (1936)

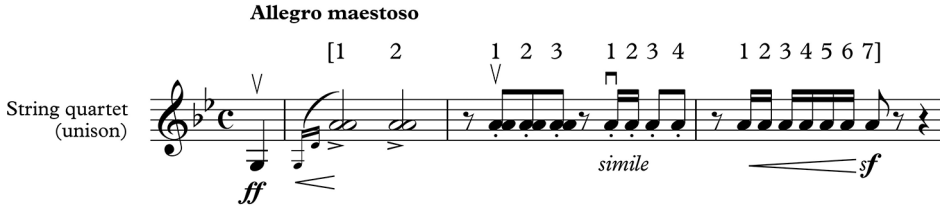
First titled *Go Play, Boy, Play*, Britten's *Three Divertimenti* (1936) make reference to physical activity in school. Its first movement describes a PT (Physical Training) lesson.

47. "Shostakovich, the most famous musician who worked in the Soviet silent cinema, initially gained valuable experience as a pianist at the Bright Reel, Splendid Palace, and Piccadilly theatres in Leningrad, where he worked in the mid-1920s in order to support his family." Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 36.

48. Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, 36.

49. See Anthony Bateman, according to whom modernist composers "also absorbed novel musical influences, including sport, as they attempted to engage with the new clamour and dissonance of modern life. . . . Sport provided [modernist composers] with a suitably contemporary and impertinently anti-Romantic subject matter." Anthony Bateman, "Ludus Tonalis. Sport and Musical Modernisms, 1910–1938," in *Sporting Sounds, Relationships Between Sport and Music*, eds. Jonathan Bateman and John Bale (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 146. Similarly, in visual arts, see Bernard Vere, Sport and Modernism in the Visual Arts in Europe, c.190–-39 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

50. For a study of uncanniness in Britten's lullabies, see Marinu Leccia, "Danger or Shelter? Lullabies in the Music of Benjamin Britten," *Textes & Contextes* 18, no. 1 (2023).

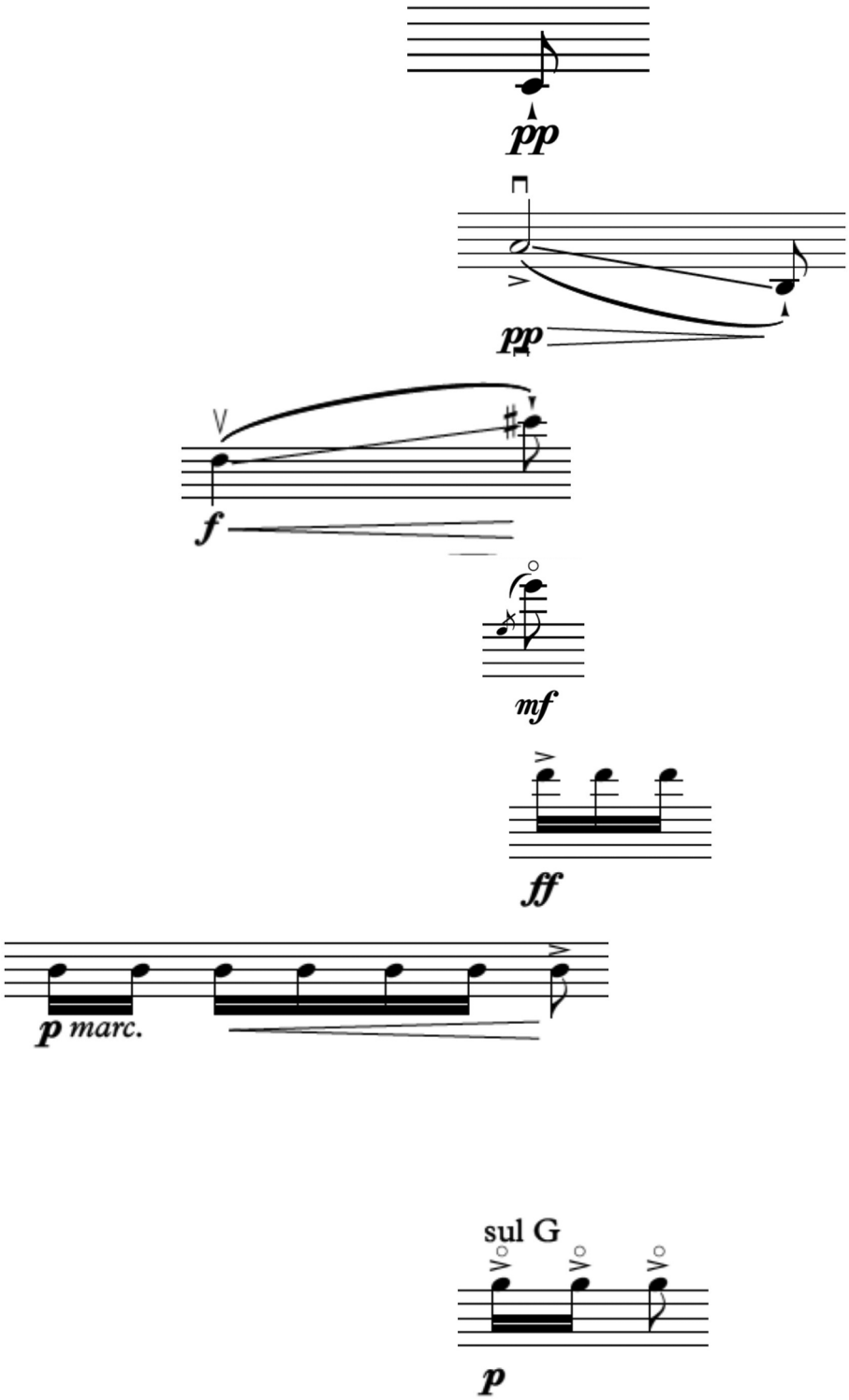


EXAMPLE 1. *Three Divertimenti*, "March," first three measures.

The music oscillates between march-like or disciplined reference to bodily exercise on the one hand, and *paidian* chaos of sounds on the other. The two physicalities (the seriousness of the march, and the light-heartedness of the chaotic display) give to this piece a double-sided aspect. The first aspect recalls the physical synchronization of the interwar gymnastic exercises made in schools, from jumping jacks to diverse kinds of stretching. An idea of these calisthenics can be observed through archive footage of PT lessons in interwar Britain.[51] There is a certain military dimension to these exercises, especially through the powerful synchronization. The second aspect has a schoolboyish taste in disruption. It presents a completely different kind of physicality through an apparently random succession of fragmented musical gestures. This is Britten's *paidian* style (see discussion earlier), which may be spotted in many of his 1930s or 1940s works. There is a sporting quality to these snapshots of sounds. The plasticity of the glissando and its bouncing effects musicalize the exercise gestures of the children, as much as they trigger the listener's imagination toward a whole apparatus of sport equipment: elastic, bouncing tennis balls, racket sounds, and so on. At the same time, it sounds Webernian with its seemingly aleatory pointillist sounds. Webern-like avant-garde style is here unexpectedly connected to the randomness of the overflowing actions of a group of brisk and energetic children in a gym schoolroom.

These two opposite aspects create links to a sport-like physical activity. On one side, the march appeals to its military and mechanic aspects. On the other side, a Viennese avant-garde pointillism is used to refer to the chaotic spectacle of exercising. These *transitional topics* are heard from the beginning of the piece: the three first measures present the march, followed from measure 4 by *paidian* pointillism. The march evokes strength, mechanism, and synchronization (see Example 1). 'Strength' is expressed through the importance of rhythm, the harshness of the dynamics, the violence of the articulations; 'mechanism' through the repetitions, the absence of lyrical tune, the addition and amplification of the notes (2 + 3 + 4 + 7), and the acceleration of rhythms; 'synchronization' through the unison that is reinforced by the double stops, and the homorhythm of the ensemble. The march acts as a powerful transitional topic that refers to sport. It carries with it these ideas of mechanization and military demonstration of strength. Conversely, the *paidian* pointillism is made of crackling and bouncy sounds that are many variations of hints, flicks, and smashes, as presented paradigmatically on Example 2. Besides, in analogical

51. See for example "1930 s UK Boys Private School, Gym Class" (Kino Library Archives, BP1), available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcBsFt2Cz_E, accessed May 26, 2023.



EXAMPLE 2. Paradigmatic presentation of the paidian beginning of the "March," in *Three Divertimenti.*

terms, this assortment of short gestures exemplifies sport gestures via their vivacity, speed, elasticity, and stretching: as a collection of musical gymnastics.

CONCLUSION

As this article has shown, sport is a way to reassess many aspects of the musicological field. First, it posits as central the notion of physicality, too often seen as secondary in ludomusicology (as it is secondary for playing video games ~~many video game playing~~). With its emphasis on physical skills and gestural processes, sport brings new questioning into the musical study of play and games. Besides, via the discussion on the definition of the tricky triad (play-game-sport), this article helps to refine further the confusing and overlapping relationship between play and games, central to any ludomusicological inquiry. Second, sport brings many tools to analyze musical works and more traditional repertoire. The analysis of the analogical processes at work between sounds and sport give a fruitful case study for music semiotics and topic theory. Likewise, the play-analyses and game-analyses I presented on a few pieces by Britten are ways to reappraise ~~afresh~~ a repertoire on which much had already been written. Many of Britten's pieces appeared to interact with these overlapping notions of sport, games, and play, in links with elements of childhood, school environments, physical engagement, and lusory attitudes. Sport-like, playful, gameful, schoolboyish, full of tricks and physicality, Britten's music points toward an essential aesthetic element: its ludomusicality.

In sum, this article posited musicking and the production of sounds as a sporting, gaming, or playing activity, and musical aesthetics as potentially sport-like, game-like, and play-like. Its taxonomical and theoretical focus attempted to sort out and give tools to ~~apprehend~~ clarify the complexity of the interaction between sport, play, games, and sounds. If the more or less arbitrary Britten examples I provided show ways to confront those notions altogether (and I hope may give ideas on how to address similar issues in other repertoires), the overall article was intended as a piece of analytical philosophy. As a signpost on a tricky conceptual crossroad. ■

MARINU LECCIA is a PhD candidate at the University of Oxford (St Catherine's College) exploring the playful aesthetics of Benjamin Britten's music. His research focuses on the presence of ludic trends in musical modernism, especially in British, French, and Russian art; and considers the aesthetic interactions between modernism, playfulness, childlikeness, and sport.

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