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ISSUES OF MEANING AND STRUCTURE IN THE SYMPHONIC POEM

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Issues of Meaning and Structure in the Symphonic Poem

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Questions of how composers reconcile the relationship between content and structure when music is based on a non-musical idea have been explored in the genre of the tone poem since Liszt first coined the term “symphonische Dichtung” in 1848. This study explores issues that arise when non-musical content serves as an inspirational touchstone in the genre of the tone poem. Using a combination of traditional analytical tools and ideas from narrative theory, three comparative case studies are presented as a way to explore the interactions between music and three contrasting types of non-musical programs: narrative story, poetry, and painting.

The first two chapters of the study explore the origins of symphonic poems, the historical debate about their structural integrity, and the ways in which narrative theory can be a useful tool with which to understand meaning in the musical form and content of music based on a non-musical program. These introductory chapters are followed by three case studies, each involving a pair of works.

The first case study compares Strauss’s *Death and Transfiguration* and Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet*, two popular works in which narrative program are

combined with principles of sonata form. Although the traditional form has many parallels to narrative storytelling in its use of oppositional forces, discrepancies between the necessities of musical form and narrative form reveal themselves in each of the examples. In the second case study, interaction between poetry and music is explored in Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and in Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending*. While issues of narrative are still relevant in these tone poems, they are subordinated to poetic style, symbolism, structure, and alliteration. The final case study investigates issues that arise when painting is used as the non-musical medium. In Dutilleux's *Timbres, espace, mouvement* and my own tone poem, *Dream of The Sleeping Gypsy*, the structural and content-based parallels between the music and the program proved to be the least tangible of the three mediums discussed in the dissertation, due to the subjective nature of our perceptions when viewing painting and the spatial unfolding of painting as opposed to the temporal unfolding of music. Here I focus on the compositional process itself, exploring the psychological and emotional effects of the paintings on the composers as a way to gain deeper insights into connections between the painting and the music.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	x
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1 Origins of the Symphonic Poem	2
1.2 Structural Developments of the Symphonic Poem	3
1.3 The Symphonic Poem after Liszt	5
Chapter 2. Narratology: A Theory of Musical Meaning	8
2.1 Theory of Absolute Music in the 19 th Century	8
2.2. Origins of Narrative Theory	9
2.3 Applying Narrative Theory to Music	12
<u>Case Study # 1: Narrative Story and Music</u>	18
<i>Strauss's Death and Transfiguration and Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet</i>	
Chapter 3: Issues that arise when combining Narrative Stories and Music in Strauss's <i>Death and Transfiguration</i>.	18
3.1 The Program	20
3.2 Analysis of The Introduction	21
3.3 The Heartbeat Theme	23
3.4 The Breathing Theme	23

3.5 The Childhood Theme	24
3.6 Exposition: First Thematic Group	25
3.7 Second Thematic Section	26
3.8 Development	27
3.9 Recapitulation	29
3.10 Coda	29
3.11 Discussion and Conclusions	31
Chapter 4: Issues that arise when combining Narrative Stories and Music in Tchaikovsky's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	34
4.1 Background	34
4.2 Description/Analysis	34
4.3 Introduction/Friar Lawrence	35
4.4 Exposition/First Theme Group/Feud Theme	36
4.5 Exposition/Second Theme Group/Love Themes of Romeo & Juliet	36
4.6 Development	38
4.7 Recapitulation/First Resolution in Death	39
4.8 Coda/Final Resolution in Reconciliation	40
4.9 Discussion and Conclusions	41
4.10 Comparison	43
4.11 Thematic Transformation versus Thematic Presentation/Interaction	43
4.12 Temporal discrepancy between sonata allegro form and narrative story	44
4.13 Differing Approaches to Specificity in Representation of the Program	44

Case Study # 2: Poetry and Music	46
Debussy's <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i> and Vaughan Williams's <i>Lark Ascending</i>	46
Chapter 5: Issues that Arise when combining Poetry and Music in Debussy's <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>	46
5.1. Background to Debussy's <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>	47
5.2 Poet Stéphane Mallarmé	48
5.3 Genesis of the Poem and the Music	49
5.4 Analysis of The Poem	51
5.5 Debussy's Encounter with Mallarmé's Poem	54
5.6 Introduction to Analysis	56
5.7 Episode 1 (bars 1-10)/The Faun's First Flute Call	56
5.8 Episode 2 (bars 11-20)/The Faun's Second Flute Call	61
5.9 Episode 3 (bars 21-30)/The Faun's Third Flute Call	64
5.10 Episode 4/Less Specific Associations to the Poem/No Flute Call	66
5.11 Episode 5/Halfway Point/Climax/Fourth Call of the Faun- This Time With His Voice	70
5.12 Episode 6 and Beyond/Return of the Flute Calls	76
5.13 Formal Influence of the Poem on the Music	78
5.14 Stylistic Influence of the Poem on the Music	81

Chapter 6: Issues That Arise When Combining Poetry and Music in Vaughan Williams' <i>The Lark Ascending</i>	84
6.1 Background	84
6.2 Lark Ascending: Analytical Observations	86
6.3 Harmonic Content	89
6.4 Thematic Content	90
6.5 Structure	91
6.6 Differing Opinions on Poetic and Musical Meaning	92
6.7 Critical Responses to <i>Lark Ascending</i>	94
6.8 <i>Lark Ascending</i> as Tone Poem	96
6.9 Conclusions: <i>The Lark Ascending</i> and <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>	96
 Case Study #3: Painting and Music <i>Henri Dutilleux' Timbres, espace, mouvement ou La nuit étoilée</i> <i>and Amanda Harberg's Dream of the Sleeping Gypsy.</i>	99
 Chapter 7: Issues of Subjectivity When Painting is the Extra-Musical Program	99
7.1 Henri Dutilleux: Background	101
7.2 Influence of "Involuntary Memory" in Dutilleux's Creative Process	102
7.3 Background to <i>Timbres, espace, mouvement ou La nuit étoilée</i>	105
7.4 <i>La nuit étoilée</i> by Vincent Van Gogh	107
7.5 Dutilleux's Reaction to the Painting	109
7.6 Specific Ways that Dutilleux Uses Sound to Reproduce His Reactions to Van Gogh's Painting in <i>Timbres, espace, mouvements</i>	110

7.7 Movement One- <i>Nebuleuse</i> /Use of Instrumental Timbre to Evoke Elements in the Painting	111
7.8 Subjectivity of Specific Representation	114
7.9 Movement 2- <i>Interlude</i>	120
7.10 Movement Three- <i>Constellations</i>	121
7.11 Pitch Content and “Progressive Growth”	124
7.12 Ascending Lines: Symbolic of Aspiring “Towards the Infinity of Nature”	129
7.13 Visual/Spatial Connections	130
7.14 Conclusion	132
Chapter 8: Background: <i>Dream of The Sleeping Gypsy</i> by Amanda Harberg	133
8.1 Compositional Process and Influence of Narrative Theory	134
8.2 Description and Analysis, and Influence of Narrative Thought in Harberg’s <i>Dream of The Sleeping Gypsy</i> , for Orchestra	136
8.3 Questions of Programs	144
8.4 Background to Henri Rousseau and <i>La Bohémienne endormie</i>	146
8.5 Rousseau’s <i>La Bohémienne endormie</i> and Harberg’s <i>Dream of The Sleeping Gypsy</i>	147
8.6 Conclusion	149
	151
Chapter 9: Summary and Conclusions	
Bibliography	155

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 The Four Main Themes in Death and Transfiguration Presented in the Introduction	22
Figure 1.2 First Theme Group of Exposition/Syncopated Spasm Figure	25
Figure 1.3 Heroic Theme	26
Figure 2.1 Friar Lawrence's Three Assymetrical Phrases	35
Figure 2.2 Feud Theme	36
Figure 2.3 Romeo's Theme	37
Figure 2.4 Juliet's Theme	38
Figure 2.5 Coda/Reconciliation of the Themes Through Tragedy	40
Figure 3.1 Faun's Call with First Orchestral Response	59- 60
Figure 3.2 Natural A/Plunging Naiads/Faun Awaking Alone	63
Figure 3.3 Fourth Phrase of Third Episode Plus First Traditional Cadence	65
Figure 3.4 Bars 31-44	67- 69
Figure 3.5 Bars 55-65	73- 75
Figure 4.1 Fragment Foreshadowing of First Earthbound Scene	87
Figure 4.2 First Earthbound Theme	88
Figure 4.3 Solo Clarinet Theme	88
Figure 4.4 Pentatonic Opening Cadenza	89
Figure 4.5 Themes in Lark Ascending	91

Figure 5.1 <i>La nuit étoilée</i> by Vincent Van Gogh	107
Figure 5.2 Contrasting Timbres in Clusters of High Winds Against Low Bass Instruments to Represent Void Between Earth and Cosmos	113
Figure 5.3 Tremolos Evoking “Thickly Daubed Paint”	115
Figure 5.4 Trill Evoking “Thickly Daubed Paint”	116
Figures 5.5 Sixteenth Notes Evoking “Thickly Daubed Paint”	117
Figure 5.6 Chorale Texture in Divisi Celli	119- 120
Figure 5.7 Pointillistic Figures in High Winds Representing Constellations	122
Figure 5.8 Brilliant Brightly Lit Constellations Through Repeating Thirty-second Notes in high Registers of Winds and Metallic Glockenspiel	123
Figure 5.9 Opening Nine-Note Row Beginning With Pitch Set 0,1,5	125
Figure 5.10 Oboe d’Amour Solo Based on Pitch Set 0,1,4	126
Figure 5.11 Pitch Set Altered to 0,1,6 in the Third Movement	127
Figure 5.12 Brass Triads Moving from C Minor to G Major	128
Figure 5.13 Ascending Lines of the Oboe Solo in the Third Movement	130
Figure 5.14 Dutilleux’s Directions for Orchestra Setup	131
Figure 6.1 Syncopated Guitar-like String Pizzicati in the Opening	137
Figure 6.2 Double and Single Reeds on Solo Lines, Modally Exotic and Melismatic Melodies over Drones, Use of Percussion to Evoke Middle Eastern Affect	138- 139
Figure 6.3 Orchestral Climax	140
Figure 6.4 Coda with Augmentation of Earlier Melody in High Registers Acting As a Pedal to Rhythmic Activity Below	143
Figure 6.5 <i>La Bohémienne endormie</i> by Henri Rousseau	146

Chapter 1. Introduction

The question of how composers and listeners reconcile the relationship between content and structure when music is based on a non-musical idea has given rise to a fascinating series of debates in the genre of the tone poem since Liszt first coined the term “*symphonische Dichtung*” in 1848. Originally, debates centered over the historical merits of ‘absolute’ music versus ‘program’ music, and over the famously heated question of formal integrity in music inspired by a non-musical subject. More recently, musicological thought has attempted to bridge the gap between content and structure, and between program music and absolute music by considering narrative and other interpretive analytical approaches. In this thesis I will explore issues that arise when non-musical content serves as an inspirational touchstone for musical works, and I will observe how different artistic mediums can influence musical behavior.

The first chapter will explore the origins of symphonic poems and the historical debate about their structural integrity. In the second chapter I will look at how narrative theory can be a useful tool with which to understand meaning in musical form and content. In chapters three to eight, I will use three comparative case studies to observe the interaction of music with narrative stories, poetry, and painting. In the final two chapters, I will also reflect on my own process of writing a tone poem as I wrestled with issues of programmaticism, structure, and meaning.

1.1 Origins of the Symphonic Poem

The symphonic poem, also called tone poem, brought programmatic instrumental music to its apex in the second half of the 19th century and first two decades of the 20th century. While symphonic poems fell out of fashion in the mid-20th century, they again became increasingly popular in the late 20th and early 21st century.

Franz Liszt, a Hungarian composer working in the 19th century, originally coined the term ‘symphonische Dichtung’, or ‘symphonic poem’, to describe a series of orchestral works that he composed in the years following his appointment as director of the court orchestra in Weimar in 1848. Liszt used the generic term ‘symphonische Dichtung’ to describe orchestral works in a single movement with some sort of programmatic title and content. Liszt and his supporters proposed the symphonic poem as a way of uniting the Beethovenian symphony with the idealist philosophy of Hegel. Lofty philosophical subject matter could be incorporated through programmatic associations, giving instrumental music levels of expressivity and specificity that would elevate the soul in its struggle for transcendence.

Liszt was inspired by Romanticism, which encouraged literary, pictorial and dramatic associations in music, and celebrated the emotional experience of the artist. There were numerous precedents for both the programmatic content and the principal structural innovations of the symphonic poem, which Liszt himself acknowledged. Most obviously, orchestral pieces in one movement and with programmatic associations existed in the concert overtures of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Berlioz, some of which

were conceived as introductions to a stage work (Beethoven's *Coriolan* and *Egmont Overtures*) and some were not (Mendelssohn's *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Berlioz's *Le Corsair*). Liszt adopted the title 'Overture' in the early stages of some works that would later become symphonic poems.

This new genre was also analogous in its aspirations to Wagner's newly conceived music dramas. Wagner himself joined in the promotion of Liszt's symphonic poems in an 1857 essay, and together they became the leaders of the 'New German School,' which also included the influential music historian Franz Brendel, who saw in the form a visionary alternative to the traditional non-programmatic symphony. These advocates for 'program music' saw themselves as the historical successors to Beethoven, who had brought the symphony to a new level of aesthetic significance and who had made a dramatic philosophical statement by closing the Ninth with text from Friedrich Schiller's poem *An die Freude*.

Liszt would write thirteen tone poems, the majority of which were completed and performed between 1848 and 1858.

1.2 Structural Developments of the Symphonic Poem

Structurally, Liszt's symphonic poems differed from earlier overtures in two main respects. First, the single movement was subdivided into sections in contrasting tempi and styles that could both reflect programmatic content and suggest the several contrasting movements of the traditional symphony. Liszt experimented with this structure in his Fantasia quasi Sonata '*Après une lecture du Dante*' of 1849 and his

Sonata in B minor of 1853, both of which are essentially symphonic poems for piano (with the program left unacknowledged in the B minor Sonata).

Secondly, the contrasting sections were themselves unified by the technique of ‘thematic transformation’ -- a succession of transformations of motives presented at the outset of the work. There was a precedent for this aspect of the symphonic poem in the *idée fixe* that relates the sections of Schubert’s *Wanderer Fantasie* and the movements of Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* and *Harold en Italie*, all of which Liszt knew well.

Liszt and his followers insisted that the structure of the symphonic poems would be flexible, adapting in each case to the requirements of a higher philosophical message. They also made the provocative claim that the extra-musical content and the musical structure were in some way the same, and that the former generated the latter. They rejected the imposition of a predetermined form on changing extra-musical content, claiming that it limited the expressive potential of the content. This was a reaction to the traditional structures that underlay most symphonic work between 1750-1850.

Many contemporary musicians and critics found Liszt’s ideas about programmatic music to be pretentious and misguided, which gave rise to the famously heated dispute over the historical merits of ‘absolute’ music versus ‘program’ music. Conservative voices like Hanslick, whose book *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (*The Beautiful in Music*) was published in 1854, argued for the superiority of traditional abstract music and accused Liszt’s work

of formlessness. The old forms worked, at least in purely musical terms, and Liszt's new experiments often failed to satisfy in those same terms.

Liszt also wanted his listeners to contemplate the extra-musical subject and felt that the verbal explanations would prevent misinterpretations of the intended lofty idea. In the view of conservative critics, however, these programmatic explanations merely compensated for musical weaknesses and they would argue that symphonic poems were unintelligible without them.

1.3 The Symphonic Poem after Liszt

Whatever we may think now of Liszt's lofty aspirations for the symphonic poem, his pretensions to philosophical profundity, or especially the quality of his music, the basic idea of the symphonic poem as a genre caught on quickly with composers and audiences.

For some composers, the symphonic poem was seen as an attractive way of celebrating one's national heritage. The form itself had initially been promoted as an achievement that confirmed Germany's cultural primacy, quite apart from the extra-musical subject matter of any one example. Many composers in countries with less imposing musical traditions sought merely to affirm national identity. There was an outpouring of symphonic poems that drew on regional history, literature, and mythology as source material. The result was a repertory of works that incorporated local colors – citing the folksongs, patriotic songs, and hymns of an area, for example – and yet attained international popularity. Familiar examples from Russia include Rimsky Korsakov's

Skazka (1879-80) and Glazunov's *Stenka Razin*- (1885). From Bohemia is Smetana's *Má vlast* (1872-79), and from Finland were Sibelius' thirteen tone poems from 1892-1925.

In addition to the use of nationalistic themes as extra-musical subject matter, composers everywhere were also moved to write symphonic poems that referenced the other arts, especially literature. It was a genre that could borrow the prestige of its extra-musical subjects without always matching their historical or artistic significance. Innumerable symphonic poems were inspired by Shakespeare, including Tchaikovsky's *Hamlet* (1888) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1880), Schumann's *Julius Caesar* (1850), Korngold's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1920), and Liszt himself (*Hamlet*- 1856).

The late 19th/early 20th century culminated in symphonic poems by Richard Strauss, Claude Debussy, Jean Sibelius, and the English pastoral composers. But with the emergence of atonal expressionism and then anti-romantic neoclassicism in the years just before and after World War I, the musical culture was no longer as suitable as it had been for communicating nationalist subjects, literature and the other popular extra-musical subjects of the preceding period.

By the second half of the 20th century, the term "tone poem" itself seems to have become unfashionable. Perhaps the genre carried dated, romantic associations that were no longer relevant in the musical culture of late modernism. While one-movement programmatic works in a variety of styles and instrumentation began to reappear – works such as

Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960), composers were no longer inclined to use the term "tone poem".

More recently, the 21st century has seen a revival of interest in one-movement orchestral works influenced by extra-musical subjects. Sometimes the term "tone poem" or "symphonic poem" is used to describe the new pieces, and sometimes it isn't. Recent examples include Thomas Adès's *In Seven Days* (2008), Robert Aldridge's *Leda and the Swan* (2002), Lera Auerbach's *Icarus* (2006) and Robert Beaser's *Ground "0"* (2010). Tone poems seem to be back in fashion once again.

Chapter 2. Narratology: A Theory of Musical Meaning

One trend in recent analytical approaches to music is to apply literary narrative theory to music theory. By comparing musical events with characters, behaviors, actions and mental states, many musicologists contend that they can arrive at a deeper understanding of the form and content of abstract music than can be achieved through traditional analytical approaches. While this approach is a useful way to enhance understanding of absolute music, as we will see, it will also offer unique insights into our understanding of tone poems.

2.1 Theory of Absolute Music in the 19th Century

In the mid-19th century, Eduard Hanslick championed the idea that music is an autonomous art whose meaning is derived exclusively from its own inner logic. He asserted the belief that music should be understood as “sonically moving sounds,” rather than as representation of feelings or objects: “An interpretation of music based on feelings cannot be acceptable to either art or science,” he wrote.¹

Hanslick argued in his influential book *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* that the subject of a composition cannot be understood as an object derived from an external source, but as something intrinsically musical. He argued that program diluted the purity of music. “A musical idea reproduced in its entirety is not only an object of intrinsic

¹ Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, Chapter 4. Accessed online March 10, 2019, <http://www.koelnklavier.de/quellen/hanslick/kap04.html>

beauty but also an end in itself, and not a means for representing feelings and thoughts. The essence of music is sound and motion.”²

Hanslick’s writing was deeply influential well into the 20th century, when musical understanding was largely approached through formalist analyses that could be based on relationships within the score. In the past few decades, the breadth of music criticism has widened. Many of the leading musical thinkers have questioned traditional analysis as the exclusive authoritative approach to musical understanding. Musical aestheticians have begun to explore musical meanings through a variety of alternative lenses and theories, including hermeneutical and literary based approaches that incorporate psychological/emotional, semiotic, cultural, and gender-oriented perspectives.

2.2. Origins of Narrative Theory

Russian theorist Vladimir Propp and French intellectual Claude Levi Strauss were pioneers in the field of literary narratology in the first half of the 20th century. In his influential Morphology of the Folktale, published in 1928, Propp took 100 Russian fairy tales and extracted from them thirty-one principles, which he called “essential narrative functions.” He also identified seven essential and non-specific character functions. Narrative, according to Propp, is the unfolding sequence of interacting

² Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, Chapter 3. Source: From Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music* (1854), trans. Gustav Cohen from the 7th ed. (1885) (London: Novello, 1891) Accessed online March 10, 2019, http://www.cengage.com/music/book_content/049557273X_wrightSimms/assets/ITOW/7273X_58_ITOW.pdf

plot functions. In this approach to narrative syntax, which came to be known as Russian Formalism, narratology, content and structure are inseparable, since the overall structure is determined by the interaction of the essential narrative functions.

Propp's work greatly influenced Claude Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist who later developed a theory known as Structuralism, which critiqued Propp's approach to narrative syntax and also advanced this branch of literary theory by positing that the binary oppositions of narrative functions form the underlying structure of a narrative. Structure, according to Levi-Strauss, is created through the interaction of oppositional forces, and meaning occurs in the attempt at reconciling and unifying these oppositional forces.

Musicologist Fred Everett Maus describes how these early literary theorists offered a model for understanding the inner structure of musical works:

This branch of literary theory attempts to generalize about narrative by identifying recurring elements within plots and stating rules for combining them, just as grammarians do for languages. Perhaps the structures that literary theorists have found in narrative resemble the structures that music theorists have found in musical compositions.³

It is important at this stage to clarify that proponents of applying narrative theory to musical analysis do not claim that music and narrative are actually parallel to one

³ Maus, Fred Everett. "Music as Narrative." *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 2-3.

another in any literal way. Music and storytelling are like apples and oranges, but these theories are helpful, each in its own way, to enhance musical understanding – and can be used in conjunction with traditional analysis.

It is also important to point out that many contemporary musicologists have stressed the role of cultural context and musical literacy in the process of interpreting music. Musical references are, for the most part, not universally meaningful. Metaphorical thought can be valid ways to elevate our musical understanding. For example, the use of the key of Eb in 18th century European music would have evoked the imagery of a processional fanfare when heard by a contemporary listener, while punctuations by horn fifths would have represented ideas of military and hunting. When used repeatedly in a given context- hunting, dancing, church- gestures may become associated with that context, and that association may be used for expressive or symbolic purposes by composers. These culturally bound interpretations, however, wouldn't be so obvious to a listener from a different culture or historical period – because their musical reference and meaning is culturally dependent.

The listener must also have some degree of learning about the musical materials. While the materials of music themselves (modes, scales, rhythms, periodicity, textures, tempi, timbre/instrumentation, intervallic relationships, etc.) are concrete, it is impossible for an untrained listener to understand their references.

2.3 Applying Narrative Theory to Music

Music theorists began systematizing musical semiology in the 17th century with doctrines of figures and of affects. Contemporary theorists like Fred Everett Maus, Anthony Newcomb and Gregory Karl have expanded upon these semiotic ideas by arguing that music can represent entire transformational successions of events, and the interaction of these events serves as the driving force behind the overall structure of the piece/movement. Borrowing the terminology and ideas of narrative theory, these theorists also argue for the existence of abstract or non-specific “musical plots” that can encompass psychological elements. When viewed from this analytical perspective music can be seen to reflect complex patterns of human action. Like many other musicologists working today, these theorists also acknowledge the value of traditional analysis, and believe that it can add value when used in conjunction with narrative theory.

Fred Everett Maus as well as Gregory Karl note issues of discourse that arise when seeing music as plot. Issues of discourse include questions of perspective and tense. We can see these questions play out in how the musical plot is presented by the composer and perceived by the listener- whether as a play with characters in real-time, as a story being narrated in past tense, or as a story being enacted by a person and being experienced from his/her perspective. The presentation, ordering, and duration of musical events also affects questions of how time is represented in music, and how memory/perception can play a role in the reconciliation of real-life time, musical time, objective time and subjective time.

However, Maus believes that the process of uncovering deeper musical understanding does not lie in pursuing generalized models of narrative theory to analyze music in any systematic way. He proposes that once a musical event can be viewed as a musical action with human agency, one can then interpret successions of events as plot structure. His work draws from the writings of Bulgarian-French literary critic Tzvetan Todorov,⁴ who described successive sequences in narrative plot structure as resulting from an imbalance of opposing forces

An ideal narrative begins with a stable situation that some force will perturb. From which results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in a converse direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is quite similar to the first, but the two are not identical.⁴

Drawing musical parallels to Todorov's understanding of narrative action, Maus focuses his analyses on forces of opposition in music, or forces of stability vs instability, as key analytical tools in describing musical plot structure.

Maus suggests that the contributions of narrative theory to musicology are best revealed not by wrestling with the abstractions of the underlying theory, but rather by focusing on close analysis of individual pieces. He believes that every piece yields its own narrative metaphors in its own unique way:

⁴ Maus, Fred Everett. "Music as Narrative." *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 16.

To see why listeners and critics have been attracted to analogies between instrumental music and narrative genres, it is helpful to turn, not to the technical vocabulary or abstract formalizations that preoccupy many theorists, but to relatively unambitious, blow-by-blow description of individual pieces. Such descriptions- informal, ad hoc, and unforced- promise to reveal much about the intuitions of listeners.⁵

Anthony Newcomb was more specific in his narrative terminology, and more schematic in his theoretical applications. While he agreed with Maus that music can be seen as a succession of events representative of human agency and actions, he went a step further by exploring the details of what makes a musical character, or persona. He then offered an approach by which one can systematically imagine a persona in music, which he called a scheme of “imagination of agency.”

According to Newcomb’s model, one can identify agency in music in four steps:

1. The selection of musical attributes that “stand out,” that we might call “characteristic” (in the sense of “full of character”). This involves contrasting the way the particular musical gesture behaves with the way such gestures should behave in the normative world of a particular musical style. The “character”- or representative/expressive element- of these musical attributes may be located in any of various musical elements- for example, in instrumentation, tempo, texture, interval vocabulary, metric design, rhythmic motive or style, harmonic support, and so on.
2. The interpretation of these musical attributes as attributes of human character or behavior, in those instances where the attribute or context suggests human agency.
3. The combination of these human attributes in various configurations, as possible or plausible human agencies...
4. The understanding of this fictional agency or these fictional agencies as relevant in the unfolding of a plausible chain of human actions and events...

⁵ Maus, Fred Everett. “Music as Narrative.” *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 8.

This last element may take me beyond the topic of agency in the strictest sense into what I call the narrative element of the piece, but it has a great deal to do with the understanding of the meaning of the piece as a transformational succession of events.⁶

Musical agency, according to this approach, can be found in the combinations of referential musical elements (timbre, intervallic combinations, motives, etc); as these elements develop, they become analogous to the unfolding of complex human agency/emotional and psychological states.

Gregory Karl, a composer and musical theorist proposes that musical structure can be derived from plot events and how they interact. He believes that the terms of narrative theory should be used “metaphorically,” not literally, when applied to musical subjects.

The principal musical ideas, usually themes and motives, are associated with forces and impressions of mental life and musical plots play out the interaction of such forces and impressions in the manner of an allegory. Thus a particular composition will likely not correspond to any particular sequence of mental events, either real or imaginary, but to an idealized fiction of mental life unfolding in the mind of an unspecified persona.⁷

He also suggests that “musical plot events” can be identified as musical ideas evocative of human agency (behavior/action/character/mental state), and that “musical plot” is identified as the temporal unfolding of musical plot events.

⁶ Anthony Newcomb, “Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, Second Movement.” In *Music and Meaning*, ed. Jenefer Robinson, 135. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

⁷ Karl, Gregory. “Structuralism and Musical Plot.” *Music Theory Spectrum* 19 (1997): 17.

Content and structure are inseparable when approached from this perspective, since structure is generated by the interactions of oppositional musical plot events.

Karl builds on Newcomb and Maus's ideas by proposing that the semiotic details of content in its smallest motives drive and shape the large-scale unfolding of structure in entire movements or works.

Karl writes that one cannot expect to find a "story" in the traditional verbal linguistic sense, because music does not have the descriptive capacity of verbal language, and it would be futile to interpret too much detailed description into musical plot events. He suggests that we think of musical plot as a kind of 'allegory', with unspecified persona, and with general/idealized plot events. This differentiation allows us to respect differences between verbal language and musical language, and it liberates us to understand music on its own terms.

In sonata form, the main musical theme can be seen as representing a character type or an allegorical role. These character types interact with their oppositional roles, and in doing so, a complex musical action ensues. The action is complex because it results from causality between opposing forces, as opposed to a simple independent gesture such as a leap or a sigh figure.

These complex actions resulting from oppositional roles and functions, Karl argues, create the important structural points in a piece. Questions of motivation and

causality between roles and functions can be evaluated by using Karl's structuralist approach in ways that would not be possible using traditional methods of analysis.

As we have seen, the lines that separate absolute music from program music have become less clearly defined with trends in recent musicology. Maus speaks for many in saying:

...the claim that music based on the self-sufficient forms of the classic period is different in kind from music based on dramatic or narrative models, and that a listener typically turns to programmatic interpretation only when "purely musical" interpretation fails. This implicit or explicit opposition between compositions that make purely musical sense and compositions that require dramatic or narrative interpretation should be questioned, both for programmatic and for nonprogrammatic music.⁸

While much of the recent discussion on narratology in music has been in its application to absolute music, as we will see, the following study of programmatic tone poems offers us unique insights into the parallels between narrative story and musical form and content.

⁸ Maus, *Music as Narrative*, 18/19.

CASE STUDY # 1: NARRATIVE STORY AND MUSIC

STRAUSS'S *DEATH AND TRANSFIGURATION* AND TCHAIKOVSKY'S *ROMEO AND JULIET*

Chapter 3. Issues that arise when combining Narrative Stories and Music in Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration*.

Many parallels exist between literature and music in terms of their respective plot and character functions. The use of verbal narrative as subject for programmatic music offers narratological metaphors between the mediums of the story and the music that can help enrich one's understanding of the music. However, while narrative theory can be a useful lens with which to understand complex musical events when applied to both the story and to the music, it also reveals discrepancies between the two mediums, especially with regard to specificity of representation, and the temporality of unfolding events.

Unlike in literature, it is impossible for musical representation of the story to be literal in a specific and objective sense. So the question arises- what does one attempt to represent in order to create successful hybridization? How detailed and specific should the musical content be in order to embody the essential properties of the story? Additionally, music moves through time differently than a story told in words. Are issues such as order of events and duration of events important when creating a successful hybrid? How do these questions affect the formal demands on

the material? In what sense do the distortions of textbook sonata form respond to events in the respective programs? Conversely, in what sense does distortion from the program respond to the necessities of the music? How do composers reconcile issues of specificity and temporality in order for their tone poems to retain the essential properties of their respective literary subjects, while still respecting the structural needs of the abstract music?

Strauss and Tchaikovsky both found sonata allegro form to be useful in providing a roadmap for their themes and thematic treatment. Sonata form lends itself to storytelling. It has parallels to narrative structure in that the form is built upon the juxtaposition and interaction of opposing themes. Both stories involve oppositional forces that interact and unfold over time. Therefore, it makes sense that both Strauss and Tchaikovsky would be drawn to sonata form in their tone poems. And in both cases, events from the stories call for a certain degree of distortions from textbook sonata form.

Despite the general commonality of formal type, there are key differences in the way that each composer approaches his materials. Part of their differences owes to the nature of the subject matter itself, and how that subject influences the thematic treatment in each piece. In Strauss's case, the story stems from an intense spiritual journey of a single person, and its "characters" are reflective of emotional states of that person. In Tchaikovsky's case, the famous story involves a staged play with characters in a state of conflict surrounding the dramatic themes of love versus hate.

These differences lend themselves to different treatment of themes. Strauss's approach is more about motivic unification of themes- appropriate for evoking many sides of a single person. And Tchaikovsky's approach is more about dramatic contrast and interaction of themes, reflective of the multitude of contrasting characters.

In this case study, I will address the questions listed above, and I will compare how Strauss and Tchaikovsky are similar and different in their approaches to narrative functions and their related formal and thematic processes.

3.1 The Program

It is important to know that Strauss had an intended specific program in mind when he composed *Death and Transfiguration*, Op. 24 (1889).

Strauss's Faustian program is an allegorical story of a man on his deathbed looking back on his life for an Ideal to hold on to as he struggles against illness, and is rewarded for his striving, after his death, with spiritual transfiguration. This narrative was in Strauss's mind as he invented his materials, and he fully intended to make connections between the human agency and the musical agency.

After the piece was completed, Strauss asked Alexander Ritter to compose a poem articulating the story. Strauss described the narrative inspiration that is the basis for the musical content in the following way, as cited by Norman Del Mar:

...he wakes up; he is once more racked with horrible agonies; his limbs shake with fever - as the attack passes and the pains leave off, his thoughts wander through his past life; his childhood passes before him, the time of his youth with its strivings and passions and then, as the pains already begin to return, there appears to him the fruit of his life's path, the conception, the ideal which he has sought to realize, to present artistically, but which he has not been able to complete, since it is not for man to be able to accomplish such things. The hour of death approaches, the soul leaves the body in order to find gloriously achieved in everlasting space those things which could not be fulfilled here below.⁹

As we shall see in the following analysis, Strauss uses sonata form, with introduction and extended coda, as the road-map of this piece. As Jee-Weon Cha notes in his article on the subject, "Strauss's own sketches for the tone poem show that the composer conceived sonata form at the outset and then gradually concealed it during the compositional process."¹⁰

3.2 Analysis of the Introduction

In the introduction, Strauss lays out five thematic phrases- some mere motives and one a more completed melodic idea- that will be used in the process of thematic development throughout the work. These five thematic phrases are used as the basis of compositional process in the exposition and development, and out of them, seven more thematic phrases emerge. The use of these 12 themes organized into sonata form allows him to be remarkably organized and detailed in his musical

⁹ Norman del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works, Vol. 1* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986.).

¹⁰ Jee-Weon Cha, "Moment and Allegory: Hearing Richard Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung*, op. 24," *Ad Parnassum*, Vol 12 (April 2014): 93.

depictions of the man's contrasting and evolving emotional states, and one can link every section of the piece to Strauss's narrative.

Rather than going into great detail about all 12 phrases, how they unfold, and how they are parallel to the narrative, I will primarily examine four themes- those of the irregular heartbeat, the labored breathing, the childhood theme, and the transfiguration theme- chosen for their narrative and musical importance in reflecting different aspects of the man's inner journey. I will use these examples as a way to discuss Strauss's narratological approach, to explore his process of thematic transformation as an important reflection of the narrative, and to observe the role and issues of sonata form as Strauss's organizational approach.

Figure 1.1 The Four Main Themes in Death and Transfiguration Presented in the Introduction

1. The Irregular Heartbeat Theme



2. The Labored Breathing Theme



3. The Childhood Theme



4. The Transfiguration Theme



3.3 The Heartbeat Theme

In the introduction, the use of oppositional elements calls to mind two different emotional states- with one in the present and one in the past. Strauss describes the narrative: “The sick man lies in bed, asleep, with heavy irregular breathing; friendly dreams conjure a smile on the features of the deeply suffering man”. The heartbeat theme is the first thing we hear in the form of an irregular rhythm heard faintly in muted and pianissimo violins and violas. Despite the common time signature, the meter is obscured by the combination of eighth notes and triplet eighth notes, with ties over strong beats and bar lines. The harmonic context is obscured by the lack of chordal root for the first two bars. The rhythm conveys a sense of an irregular heart beating faintly, as if exhausted. The primordial register of the contrabassoon’s low C sound almost inhuman, as if an ominous presence was hovering darkly over the scene.

3.4 The Breathing Theme

Onto this irregular ostinato’s heartbeat enters a new breathing theme descriptive of the man’s labored and pained breathing in what sounds like a musical depiction of a dark room. A pickup on beat four leading to a sustained and accented downbeat, harmonized triadically from the dark C minor on the pickup to a more dissonant F half-diminished on the downbeat, akin to a deep labored sigh figure. Flutes flicker a lackluster response (and rhythmic diminution of the previous breathing theme) in ascending perfect fourths. The theme repeats, in a slighter higher voicing and harmonized with greater tension in F minor 7th chords to B diminished 7th chords.

All the while, the heartbeat continues faintly. This breathing theme is, at its core, a simple stepwise dyad, syncopated when in diminution, that will be woven rhythmically and intervallically into many of the other themes.

3.5 The Childhood Theme

After establishing the man's physical state and place through the interaction of musical functions, Strauss sidesteps out of the world he has created and into what appear to be two dream sequences, conveyed by ethereal harp arpeggiations, warm cantabile woodwinds, and a different harmonic world. The impression of memory and dreams is further evoked by the way that the grim contrasting music keeps interrupting them and pulling them away.

In the second dream sequence, the first fully formed melodic statement is heard in the childhood theme, evoking the man's dreaming of the sweetness of childhood. The theme begins in cantabile oboe with an ascending octave leap that immediately descends back down in quarter notes in scalar motion. First heard in Ab minor, it is restated in solo violin in C major. The stepwise dyad from the breathing theme can be seen in the pickup 16th note leading to the first downbeat. It can also be seen in the stepwise motion of the descending scale.

These three themes will transform throughout the sections of the piece, until, in the coda, a new theme- the transfiguration theme- will emerge out of these earlier

materials, by way of the thematic transformation of the childhood theme and the breathing theme.

3.6 Exposition: First Thematic Group

The battle between life and death takes place in the first theme group of the exposition. The dyadic breathing theme transforms into a syncopated spasm figure (Figure 2) that violently interrupts the introduction with the *allegro molto agitato*.

Figure 1.2 First Theme Group of Exposition/Syncopated Spasm Figure



A groaning melody in the low strings and bassoons resembles a man in the grips of an accelerating pain-wave. While sounding nothing like the irregular heartbeat theme, the pitches are set to a variation of its rhythm, and the figure reveals itself to be a transformation of the actual heartbeat as it climaxes in bar 95/96. The man can be seen fighting death in the heroic theme at bars 97/98 (Figure 3), with its syncopated rhythms traceable to the pickup in the childhood theme. The heartbeats again are used climactically at bars 122-124, as an accompaniment to the heroic theme, showing the toll of the heroic struggle on the man's body through their relentless repetition in tutti orchestra in its high registers.

Figure 1.3 Heroic Theme

The struggle continues through contrapuntal combinations of materials into dense, fast and loud textures that sequence and develop. At the feverish climax of the struggle, just as it seems the protagonist can go no further, part of a new theme is announced in 164 in the brass that seems to bring a sense of relief to the violent battle that has just taken place. This is a partial statement of the final transfiguration theme being heard here prematurely. It foreshadows the spiritual transcendence that is to come, perhaps as the protagonist gets a glimpse of his mortality, despite his heroic efforts in his fight against death. The glimpse of the transfiguration theme serves to calm the protagonist in his writhing struggle, giving him a break from the convulsions of pain, and allowing for a new facet of his emotional drama to surface.

3.7 Second Thematic Section

Sonata form again allows Strauss to find structure through opposing forces. In the second thematic section, Strauss draws on the childhood theme to evoke memory once again. True to textbook sonata form, the section begins in the dominant key of G major. However, one could ask the question if Strauss was strong-arming his

material into the key of the dominant for purpose of staying closer to the textbook form. A harmonic transition from 180-183 thwarts an expectation of Eb Major and instead brings the music to G major (Figure 4). A second theme group in the dominant key makes sense in the textbook sense, but here, the progression feels forced and almost like a harmonic mistake. Or perhaps, in taking this unexpected harmonic turn, Strauss is deliberately setting the stage for a dream sequence based in memories.

3.8 Development

The development section is traditionally thought to begin at bar 236, with a continuation of the man's reminiscing. At b 236, the memories move forward, into the man's "youth with its strivings and passions".

At the *stringendo* (b 250-256), the man returns to the struggle and pain of the present, leaving the protective world of memory. At the *appassionato* at b. 257, "the pain returns, the struggle picks up again", and a new surging struggle theme emerges, motivically derived partially from the heartbeat rhythm. The heartbeat theme and the heroic motive can be heard pounding out emphatically in the trombones and timpani, layered with and responding to the new theme. The childhood theme (with its underlying breathing theme dyad) is also layered throughout this section as a foil to the new struggle theme. The heartbeat theme's frequent presence adds to the sense of extreme physical effort. The narrative and musical forces are all battling against one another from the developmental buildup

beginning at bar 257, building the tension higher and higher through musical and narrative means, until the structure and the content demand a release from the tension.

The release from the tension comes in the appearance of the majestic transfiguration theme. Only in death can the “ideal” be achieved, in Strauss’s narrative. Through his extreme struggle, the man becomes aware of the “ideal”, and through this understanding, the partial transfiguration theme (Figure 1) appears at bar 322 in the powerful key of the Neapolitan of V at b. 320. However, the theme’s lack of completion expresses “the ideal which he has sought to realize, to present artistically, but which he has not been able to complete, since it is not for man to be able to accomplish such things.” He cannot attain the ideal while he is still holding onto his mortal body.

The struggle returns after the short respite, with the labored breathing theme bringing us back to the dying man’s present beleaguered state for 10 bars.

The man is getting closer and closer to death, and to his ideal. Accordingly, the transfiguration theme returns to interrupt the raging struggle twice more. On the third and final time, the statement is in Db- the key of the Neapolitan- in full orchestration with brass and both harps in all their major-key fortissimo grandeur. It is in its most complete statement thus far but, for all its power and promise, the protagonist is not yet ready to give in to death.

3.9 Recapitulation

The recapitulation at b. 265 briefly brings back music from the introduction and from the first thematic section. The introduction's labored breathing theme returns, heard alternately by winds and strings over the irregular heartbeat in the timpani dominant and tonic pedal. Whereas the opening was in a clear C-minor tonality, now the music is heard as an uneasy F# half-diminished 7th chord placed over a C-pedal in the timpani. 5 breaths are heard, each one lower than the last, as the dying man loses his strength. A viola's low sforzando D# pierces through the pianissimo texture at bar 376, as if a final stab of pain, with its dissonant tritone and augmented 2nd dissonances putting it in stark contrast to the A and C pedals in the bass and horn.

This last stab of pain in the violas *senza sord* calls forth one final struggle, called forth by a brief, 16 bar restatement from the first thematic section. The themes protest in fury one last time- the hero's theme, the pain theme, the scurrying 16th note theme, and the heartbeat theme. But, this time, the heartbeat is in a spasm of steady offbeat pounding, as if in a final state of heart failure. The unexpected diminuendo and skyward scurrying 16 notes in the orchestra sound as if a soul is departing a body at bar 396.

3.10 Coda

At the coda, "the soul leaves the body in order to find gloriously achieved in everlasting space those things which could not be fulfilled here below." After the

moment of death, there is no more heartbeat. There is only a steady drone on a primordial low C, with 5ths in the harp and celli pizz, giving a glowing haze of “everlasting space” by the tam tam. Rising 5ths in the horns lead into fragments of the transfiguration theme in augmentation, leading their way to a high dominant pedal to set up for the entrance of the full transfiguration theme at bar 431.

The transfiguration theme is the teleological synthesis for all of the materials of the piece. The themes presented in the introduction all come together and find resolution in this theme. The breathing theme’s dyad has transformed into the stepwise quarter-note pickup to half-note downbeat. The childhood theme’s octave leap is a prominent connection between the two themes. The transfiguration theme resembles an inversion of the childhood theme, with the transfiguration theme built on ascending quarter notes, as opposed to the childhood theme’s descending quarter notes.

The harmony arrives at the final revelatory and celestial destination of C major at bar 471, with the harp arpeggiations and highest ranges in the violins and flutes giving a heavenly feeling to this C major harmony. The harmony assumes its ultimate root position at bar 481. Two final cadences help to give a sense of completion to the journey.

3.11 Discussion and Conclusions

In taking a Faustian story of a man facing death, Strauss creates a highly detailed scenario that is resonant for anyone who has thought about his or her mortality. The story is at once personal and universal. It appeals to the human desire to believe that 'this' is not all there is, and that there is a greater meaning. We must assume that anyone listening to this piece will be aware of the narrative, due to the title and the program notes. Armed with that knowledge, as well as with Strauss's uncanny ability to create detailed musical metaphors, Strauss is able to create a work that communicates the essential properties of the narrative.

Strauss's approach is literal to the story on a highly detailed level. He creates the character and the setting from the get-go. From there, the story moves through time, and memory, in a linear manner, with the music doing the same. The story affects his formal approach, causing a non-conventional use of sonata form in which sections are sometimes obscured due to their literal interaction with the story.

For example: the lack of oppositional force in the story during the memory section can be seen to cause a lack of clarity in the musical form at the development section. It is unclear as to whether the beginning of the development is a continuation of the second thematic section, an independent episode, or the beginning of the development. The narrative is still in the memory section at this point in the piece. The music follows the narrative, yet also has semblance of beginning the

development by the use of transformed materials and a new key center. But the contrast is not enough to create true formal clarity in the music's sonata form.

Another place in which the form is affected by the story is in the recapitulation. The recapitulation is the most unorthodox formal section of the piece. It restates the breathing theme from the introduction, and 16 bars of the first thematic section.

There is no trace of the secondary theme section. The brevity of the recapitulation is unusual to the extent that its size is a tiny fraction of what a recapitulation normally is. The unusually short recap has several implications and effects. One is that its brevity can be seen to reflect the fleeting moment of the man's actual death, with the narrative plot function being mirrored in the brevity of the section. Two is that by shortening the recap, Strauss allows for an extended coda. With a longer recapitulation, the coda would be out of balance due its length. And three, it is difficult to imagine the 'struggle music' and 'memory music' from the introduction, exposition and development sections going on any longer than they already have, without becoming truly redundant. Overuse of climaxes and arrivals can nullify their intended effects.

To me, Strauss's use of thematic transformation is the most striking element in his programmatic approach. Strauss weaves human agency into motivic phrases and melodies stated in the introduction. After transforming them throughout the work, they find their ultimate conclusion in the new expression of the transfiguration theme. Through the process of thematic transformation, Strauss was able to keep

the man's identity consistently unified throughout his many changing emotional states, and to communicate the man's transformation from mortal struggle to spiritual redemption.

The use of sonata form as framework for the complex content made a certain amount of sense in light of the oppositional forces of struggle, memory, and redemption. But at times, Strauss's literal approach to the story ensued in formal ambiguity. However, his use of thematic transformations gave a sweeping unity to the work, allowing the essential Faustian message to have an undeniable impact.

Chapter 4: Issues that arise when combining Narrative Stories and Music in Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*

4.1 Background

For all practical purposes, Tchaikovsky was under the mentorship of Balakirev when he embarked on his *Fantasy Overture: Romeo and Juliet*. Balakirev suggested that Tchaikovsky compose the piece, and he suggested that Tchaikovsky approach the piece as he had approached his own *King Lear*, that is, as a sonata form in which formal delineations correspond with characters. Tchaikovsky followed Balakirev's advice: "A large portion of what you advised me to do has been carried out as you instructed. In the first place, the scheme is yours: the introduction depicting the friar, the feud (allegro), and love (the second subject)." ¹¹

Balakirev continued to influence Tchaikovsky throughout the composing of the piece, pushing Tchaikovsky to revise sections and make changes. Tchaikovsky revised *Romeo and Juliet* three times over a ten-year period, with the final version being completed in 1870.

4.2 Description/Analysis

With Balakirev's influence, Tchaikovsky deliberately mapped out a plan with which to bring the characters together. His plan features an introduction depicting Friar Lawrence, followed by a sonata form with the main theme groups representing the

¹¹ David Brown, Tchaikovsky, The Man and his Music (New York: Pegasus Books, 2007), 48.

feud music and the second theme group representing the love music. The use of sonata form allows him to musically exploit the binary oppositions of the characters to create complex musical action, giving him a way to unite abstract form with musical and non-musical content.

4.3 Introduction/Friar Lawrence

The introduction focuses on Friar Lawrence, whose music will be woven throughout the piece, just as Friar Lawrence is woven throughout the play as the well-intentioned friend to Romeo who unwittingly causes the final tragedy. His music is ecclesiastical and somber, as shown by use of chorale topic, minor key and muted orchestration. His chant-like theme has an uneasy quality, with three asymmetrical phrases whose third phrase is introduced by an unexpected and disorienting half rest that interrupts the rhythmic expectation.

Figure 2.1 Friar Lawrence's Three Asymmetrical Phrases:



4.4 Exposition/First Theme Group/Feud Theme

The exposition presents the drastically contrasting themes of the family feud (first theme group) and the themes of Romeo and Juliet's love (second theme group). The first theme group shocks with violent rhythmic energy (Figure 2). In a driving and forte B minor tonality using the full tutti orchestra, the theme is characterized by abrupt and asymmetrical periodicity, use of violent accents on offbeats that obscure the downbeats, dotted rhythms interspersed between 8ths and 16th notes, frantically racing ascending and descending scales. Further impressions of fighting between the two families are created through rapidly imitating rhythms baiting back and forth between the strings and winds.

Figure 2.2 Feud Theme



4.5 Exposition/Second Theme Group/Love Themes of Romeo and Juliet

The violence of the first theme group adds to the poignancy of the love themes that follow in the second theme group. Set in the remote key of D \flat major, Romeo's theme (Figure 3) conveys the yearning sweetness of love through sustained notes on downbeats that are approached by ascending and descending leaps, and by the cantabile orchestration of English horn doubled by muted violas.

Figure 2.3 Romeo's Theme:

The image shows a musical score for Romeo's Theme, measures 187-190. The score is written for five staves: C.I. (Cello I), Fg. (Fagotto), Cor. (F) (Cor Anglais), Via. (Viola), and Vc. e Cb. (Violoncello and Contrabasso). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes the following markings: *Solo* above the C.I. staff, *mf espr.* below the C.I. staff, *1.* below the Fg. staff, *con Sord.* above the Via. staff, *dolce* below the Via. staff, and *pizz.* below the Vc. e Cb. staff. The measure number 190 is written above the C.I. staff.

Juliet's theme, tender and eager, enters as a B section to Romeo's theme (Figure 4). Her music is characterized by oscillating half-diminished 7th chords to augmented triads, set to muted strings in a pianissimo dynamic. The order and the way in which the themes are presented could be seen as Romeo seeing Juliet for the first time at the Capulet's party (first statement of Romeo's theme) followed by Juliet noticing Romeo for the first time (first statement of Juliet's theme). After they acknowledge their love for each other, Romeo's theme returns with heightened excitement, this time extended and more lushly orchestrated with Juliet's oscillating half steps providing a passionate counterpoint in the horn.

Figure 2.4 Juliet's Theme:

The image displays three systems of a musical score for Juliet's Theme. The first system includes staves for Violins I (Vl.), Violins II (Vla.), and Violoncello/Double Bass (Vc. e Cb.). The Violin parts are marked with *con Sord.* and *pp*, while the Viola part is marked with *pp* and *div.*. The second system continues the Violins I and II and Viola parts, with a tempo marking of 200. The third system introduces the Full Orchestra (Fg., Vl., Vla., Vc., Cb.) with a key signature change to A major (indicated by a sharp on the F line) and a tempo change to 'a 2'. The Violin parts are marked with *cresc.* and *mf*, while the Viola part is marked with *cresc.* and *mf*. The Violoncello/Double Bass part is marked with *con Sord.*, *p div.*, *cresc.*, and *mf*. The Viola part is marked with *mf*. The Violoncello/Double Bass part is marked with *p pizz.* and *mf*.

4.6 Development

The short development interrupts the lovers' euphoria with the return of the feud music. Unlike many developments, this one leaves out the second theme group/love theme. Instead, it weaves Friar Lawrence's theme into the tense feud theme, increasing in tension, density and volume throughout the development until his theme is blared in fortissimo trumpets against the protesting feud theme in the full orchestra. Through the layering of themes, Tchaikovsky simultaneously evokes

characters and events. If one is familiar with the play, one could easily hear the fight scenes between Tybalt, Romeo and Mercutio. What is less clear is why Friar Lawrence's theme is layered against the feud music, when, in the play, he is not involved in these fights.

4.7 Recapitulation/First Resolution in Death

True to a sonata recapitulation, the recapitulation begins with the first theme group/feud theme in its original key of b minor. However, the story has not yet come to any resolution, and thus the recap must continue the development. Here is an example of where the content forces the form into a non-conventional direction. Normally, the recapitulation would be a resolved restatement of theme groups after their journey undertaken in the development. Tchaikovsky's recapitulation, on the other hand, can be seen to continue the development, layering themes and escalating in tension, offering no resolution until the very end of the section.

In the recapitulation, the first theme group is truncated, and gives way to Juliet's oscillating harmonies. But, instead of conveying anticipation as the theme did previously, it now is given a frantic quality due to the racing 16th note accompaniment that brings the world of the feuding families directly into Juliet's world. Romeo's theme follows layered by Juliet's oscillations, extended beyond its original statement, and it leads back to the feud theme. The love theme in the recapitulation is laced with an anxiety that was not there in the exposition, as the conflict escalates and is increasingly threatened by the feud music. Friar Lawrence

tries one last time to intervene, but the feud is too powerful and continues on without him, and his intervention only serves to unwittingly drive the main characters to their death. A minor-second fragment embedded in both Romeo and Juliet's themes is used to interrupt the driving feud motive, escalating higher and higher to a fevered pitch until the end of the recap's violent timpani stroke heralds the death of the main characters.

4.8 Coda/Final Resolution in Reconciliation

The final coda brings together the Friar's, Romeo's, and the feud's theme, re-textured and re-harmonized in B major, showing the reconciliation of the families upon seeing the tragic effects caused by their feud (Figure 5).

Figure 2.5 Coda/Reconciliation of the Themes Through Tragedy:

The musical score is for a section titled "Moderato assai" and is marked with a "U" in a box. It features seven staves: Flute (Fl.), Tuba (Tba.), Timpani (Timp.), Violin I (Vl.), Violin II (Vla.), Viola (Vc.), and Cello (Cb.). The key signature is B major (two sharps). The Flute part begins with a first ending bracket. The Tuba part has a dynamic marking of *p*. The Timpani part has a dynamic marking of *p* and features a series of eighth notes. The Violin I part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and features a series of eighth notes. The Violin II part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and features a series of eighth notes. The Viola part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and features a series of eighth notes. The Cello part has a dynamic marking of *p* and features a series of eighth notes. The score is written in a standard musical notation with various dynamics and articulations.

4.9 Discussion and Conclusions

In his *Fantasy Overture: Romeo and Juliet*, it is safe to say that the characters and story are familiar to most. Shakespeare's play is embedded in the collective consciousness for most people under the influence of European tradition. The title itself is sufficient for calling to mind the themes and characters of Shakespeare's play in a detailed way. The collective familiarity with the play gives the music a certain degree of independence, making it not necessary to be strictly detailed for the events of the play to be evoked when transposing the medium of narrative story into music.

Tchaikovsky's approach to telling the story through music focuses not on a literal retelling of the story, but rather, on creating a musical essence of four main characters in states conflict who drive the play, just as discussed in Chapter Two. In making characterization his priority, he allows himself to focus on what he does so well, which is to create memorable and mind-blowing thematic material. In presenting powerful musical character functions, the listener can then easily infer the essential elements of the characters and themes from the play. Could these themes be referring allegorically to a different story? Yes. But with the title in place, associations of Romeo and Juliet are inevitable.

With sonata form as his road-map, Tchaikovsky uses the opposing forces/characters to drive the form's main structural points of conflict and resolution by means of

development techniques such as layering, interruption, modulation, sequencing, and call and response in order to create complex musical action through interaction of the themes/characters.

The form is largely clear, with the exception of the recapitulation. The recapitulation really resembles more of a development, due to Tchaikovsky's adherence to the story. The drama is far from resolved at the end of the Act-3 based development. The story continues to unfold, with the tension constantly escalating toward the final tragedy. So, it doesn't make sense for the recapitulation to be a balanced and resolved restatement of themes in a traditional manner. Tchaikovsky's recapitulation reflects the narrative story in that it continues to develop and build, until ending in tragedy at the very end of the section, with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

The recapitulation distorts the traditional form of sonata allegro due to the necessities of the narrative program. Conversely, the development distorts the narrative program due to musical necessity. Here, feud music calls forth the fights from Act III of Tybalt, Mercutio and Romeo. But then, why would he use Friar Lawrence's theme so prominently as the layering material? Wouldn't that imply that Friar Lawrence is prominently involved in these fights? Tchaikovsky's veering from the narrative story creates a lack of clarity of what is being represented. However, the use of Friar Lawrence's theme as a cantus to the fight music creates a thrilling escalation of tension, through the rhythmic contrast of the two themes. One

wonders if Tchaikovsky thought about this, and decided in favor of honoring the potential of the musical content, instead of forcing a different solution that may have been closer to the actual story.

4.10 Comparison

Comparisons between *Death and Transfiguration* and *Romeo and Juliet* provide a fascinating glimpse into the interaction between narrative program and musical treatment in two repertory tone poems with similar programmatic mediums. Differences in musical approach emanate primarily from the differences in story types, with one type being a drama of one character's inner journey and with the other being a staged drama of external characters in heightened states of conflict.

4.11 Thematic Transformation versus Thematic Presentation/Interaction

Strauss's use of thematic transformations is a brilliant way to reflect a single character in his many physical and spiritual states of being. And Tchaikovsky's approach focuses on the creation of powerful themes with dramatic contrasts, in order to reflect the powerful oppositional forces within the play. Strauss creates motivic phrases that sometimes turn into fully realized melodies, and uses them to create thematic transformation. Tchaikovsky creates gloriously completed themes with striking dramatic contrast. *Romeo and Juliet* is more about the interaction of themes than it is about motivic unification.

4.12 Temporal discrepancy between sonata allegro form and narrative story

Sonata allegro form provides the road-map for both pieces. Sonata form offers parallels to the binary oppositions that are central to narrative theory. Because sonata form is based on interaction between oppositional forces, it can invite parallels with narrative story. However, it is interesting to see that both pieces veer from the form right at the point in which traditional musical structure breaks with narrative story structure. This similarity between the two pieces points to an important temporal discrepancy between the two mediums. In traditional sonata form, the purpose of the recapitulation is restatement of earlier themes in the home key for a feeling of decisive closure and resolution. In narrative story, the closure frequently comes later in the sequence of events. At the point in which the recapitulation occurs in music, the narrative story is frequently still developing and the tension is still building.

4.13 Differing Approaches to Specificity in Representation of the Program

Strauss's approach is literal to the story on a highly detailed level. The specificity of the details shows his singular ability to create musical metaphors. He creates the impression of the character and setting from the get-go. From there, the story moves through time, and memory, in a linear manner, with the music doing the same at every step of the way. The program guides the listener so that the many layers of details can serve to unify the story with the music. For some, the density of specific and detailed narrative/musical metaphors might be cumbersome, and prevent the

music from realizing its essential power to communicate emotions in a direct manner. For others, the tight union between music and narrative could enhance the meaning of the story and help to convey its essential properties.

Tchaikovsky's approach is far less literal, and rather than dwelling on specific details of the text, focuses on larger emotional themes underlying the characters and their conflicts. The result is that *Romeo and Juliet* resembles an allegory of a tragic love story, with the music in itself lacking, for the most part, in specific and detailed representative metaphors. The sweeping power of his musical invention strikes to the core of the underlying themes of love and hate in the play.

CASE STUDY # 2: POETRY AND MUSIC

DEBUSSY'S *PRÉLUDE À L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE* AND VAUGHAN WILLIAMS'S *THE LARK ASCENDING*.

Chapter 5. Issues that arise when combining Poetry and Music

In this section I will explore issues raised when music uses poetry as its program through a comparison of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*. In Debussy's work there seems to be almost-mirror-like parallels between Mallarmé's poem and the music that it influenced. And in Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, there seems to be a more generalized connection between George Meredith's poem and the music that it inspired. In the following two chapters, we will observe these differences, and see how a poetic program leads to musical behavior that is quite different from that of a narrative, plot-driven program.

As we saw in the last two chapters, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Death and Transfiguration* are based on sources that lend themselves to treatment using sonata form principles. Shakespeare's play provides characters who can be identified with themes and a sequence of events that can be matched at least loosely with the dramatic progression of sonata form. The fact that everything in *Death and Transfiguration* occurs in the mind of a single individual, and that time progresses from a present into the past as memory and then into the future as transcendence

presents greater challenges to the tonal and thematic procedures of sonata form. As we have seen, Strauss adopts the Lisztian innovations, in which transformation supplies both contrast and unity in the thematic material and changes of key and tempo suggest a sequence of movements, while at the same time marking the sections of sonata form.

In the cases of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and *The Lark Ascending*, the programmatic source of each tone poem is not a narrative story, but poetry. When music uses poetry as its program, issues of specificity and temporality remain, but as we will see, the roles of style and poetic symbolism will play a far more important role than they played in music that used story narrative as its program. Additionally, in the case of Debussy, questions of style in particular will be seen to influence the future of modernism itself.

5.1 Background to Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*

It is important to understand details of the collaboration between Debussy and Mallarmé because of the significant influence of Mallarmé's poetic ideas on Debussy, which would change the course of Debussy's music. Here I will take a moment to discuss the backgrounds of their collaboration, and the genesis of the poem and the music.

In 1887, Debussy was a literate young man, passionate and well-versed in literature, painting and poetry. He had already set songs to Baudelaire, Verlaine as well as to

Theodore de Banville, Paul Bourget, and Mallarmé -- and had just purchased a copy of Mallarmé's *Eglogue*.

Before composing his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Debussy was under the spell of Wagner, having made trips to Bayreuth in 1888 and 1889. He embraced Wagner's use of chromaticism while reacting against the pretentious grandiosity of Wagner's large-scale forms and mythological/political subjects, and he looked down on the incessant use of leit-motifs. In 1889, he made his famous trip to the Paris World Exposition, where he was transfixed by the gamelan percussion orchestra. The exotic scales and timbres that he encountered there fueled his hunger for a new musical language that would be liberated from the traditional system of functional harmony and its vocabulary of major/minor scales that largely monopolized European classical music.

5.2 Poet Stéphane Mallarmé

Stéphane Mallarmé was recognized as a leader in the fin-de-siècle French avant-garde, and was revered by Debussy and by many other young French intellectuals of the period. He hosted weekly salons to discuss his ideas on poetry, drawing intellectuals and artists including W.B. Yeats, Paul Verlaine, Marcel Proust, André Gide, Paul Valéry, Maria Rilke, and Paul Claudel and Stefan George, and his portrait was painted by artists including Manet, Renoir, Whistler and Gaughin.

Mallarmé envisioned ideals of poetry and theatre that would crystallize the essence of the collective unconscious through focusing on the unspoken, the unnamed, and the unlabeled, and through the use of suggestion as opposed to literal description of an object/time/place. He aimed to capture the essence of a thing rather than the thing itself. In Mallarmé's poetry, the narrative virtually disappears in favor of metaphorically suggestive images, and in favor of the sounds and suggestive qualities of words, giving his poetry characteristics of ambiguity and abstraction.

Like Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk, Mallarmé believed that theatre should bring together all of the arts, but he reacted against Wagner's realistic, literal and materially decadent style. Mallarmé's style is characterized by its use of alexandrines (the 12-syllable verse line of classical French poetry). He also used ambiguity of traditional parameters like syntax, content, and form, and elevated the sibilant and alliterative sounds of words to convey their meaning and to become their own kind of music.

5.3 Genesis of the Poem and the Music

Mallarmé's *L'après-midi d'un faune* was initially conceived of as a theatrical piece- a heroic intermezzo- in 1865. Mallarmé intended the work to test his radical ideas on the theater while also embodying his symbolist poetic ideals.

The project was rejected by several venues and publishers, mainly due to its lack of potential commercial appeal. Ultimately, in 1876, Mallarmé's project was published by Durenne in its final form- a monologue told as a lyric poem.

The subtitle *Eglogue* was added to the final published version. An eclogue is a pastoral 'selection' or short poetic piece sometimes in the form of a dialogue, first seen popularly in the work of Theocritus. In Virgil's ten Eclogues, each of the pieces were recited by shepherds in dramatic fashion.

Musicologist David J. Cody suggests that Mallarmé's use of this subtitle shows that he was keenly conscious of the conflicting tension of identity over theatre piece versus poetry, outwardly spoken word versus inwardly read word. Cody also argues that Mallarmé used this conflict to reflect other binary oppositions in his poem, such as sensuality versus intellectuality, and of the duality of the faun.

In the 1880's, Mallarmé continued to explore theatrical approaches to his poem, and in 1891, plans were underway for a staged production of the work at the avant-garde theater that Mallarmé directed. His vision for the project included a possible musical score, which he asked Debussy to compose. The details of this story as told by Andre-Ferdinand Herold to Jean Duperier are recalled here:

Mallarmé had just written *L'après-midi d'un faune* and wanted his eclogue which was to be performed at this short-lived theater set to music and sung, quite like a little opera. The poet therefore asked his friend Herold to present

Debussy for this purpose....Debussy accepted the proposal of Mallarmé and went to work.¹²

While the production never actually happened, Debussy continued to work on his Faun Prelude. Scholars agree that the actual music was completed at least by 1893, if not by 1892, even though it wasn't premiered until 1894.

5.4 Analysis of The Poem

On the surface, Mallarmé's eclogue is the Ovidian story of a faun awaking from sleep with a hazy memory of some vague sexual interaction with two nymphs. The story is told and remembered by the faun in a poetic monologue resembling a quasi-dramatic conversation. The faun muses and debates with himself, moving back and forth between first person (singular as well as plural) and third person. His monologue is punctuated by use of italics and quotation marks, which suggests oration and adds to the theatrical element of the poem.

The faun is filled with desire for the fleeting nymphs. In the first half of the poem, he believes, and wishes, that something sensual happened with them that he could possess through recollection, but to his frustration, he can't conjure up the actual memory. Three times he uses his flute to help summon the memory. Each time, before he can grasp it, the memory disappears.

¹² William W. Austin, *Claude Debussy, Prelude to "The Afternoon of A Faun,"* (New York, WW Norton & Company, 1970), 9.

In the second half of the poem, he abandons his ineffective flute, blaming it for causing images of the nymphs to vanish. In a fourth attempt at remembering, he uses his voice to summon the memory. This time, the memory comes closest to the surface. While the previous recollections were told mainly in the imparfait tense, for this iteration, Mallarmé uses the present tense in italics and quotation marks, again obscuring lines between spoken drama and read poetry, and contributing to a sense that the faun is reliving this memory in real time.

To his mortification and excitement, in this most realistic of the four hazy recollections, the faun recalls a possible rape of the nymphs. But again, the image flees. The effort of trying to remember, and then grappling with the possibility of his crime wears him out. He moves on in his mind from the frustratingly fleeting nymphs to other vehicles of his passions, happily replacing them with the thought of “others”, and even dreaming of the goddess Venus herself. After all this exhausting effort, he succumbs again to sleep, coming full circle to the space right before the poem began.

There are many layers of tension that interweave throughout the poem. The issues of memory and desire play out through tensions of what is real and what is imagined. Mallarmé’s use of suggestion instead of description, and his refusal to give the faun a fully realized memory of the nymphs that he so craves illustrates his belief that “to name is to destroy; to suggest is to create.” His use of

kaleidoscopically shifting metaphors to evoke memory and desire creates a vibrant suspenseful longing that would not be nearly as evocative through blunt and literal description.

The faun's foggy state of mind is heightened by the tangled forest imagery. His images of the nymphs are confused and used interchangeably with metaphors of nature such as roses, jewels, swans, naiads, rain and wind. The faun's desire is enhanced in his mind by imagery of grapes that he sucks, of ripe and purple bursting pomegranate. And all of the images and memories were born of a shadow and fell away back to shadow.

Another tension weaving throughout the poem is the conflict of sensuality versus intellectuality. The two nymphs themselves embody this conflict. One is portrayed as "cold", "chaste", and represented by a "fountain of tears" and "arid rain". The other represents sensuality, "all sighs, like a breeze of day warm on your fleece", represented by warm wind, and "visible breath.. of inspiration".

Music permeates the play through both the flute and the voice of the faun. Its sounds are woven throughout the poem through the use of exclamations like "le La!" and "O nymphes", and "O sur châtiment." Its narrative role is to call forth images and memories of the nymphs. It connects the poem to Ovid's Pan and Syrinx, alluding to Pan's ability to possess Syrinx only through melody. The use of the flute and the

voice also creates further confusion, causing the images to disappear almost as soon as they appear.

5.5 Debussy's Encounter with Mallarmé's Poem

Debussy knew the poem very well. In addition to the fact that Mallarmé asked Debussy to set the poem to music, scholars like William Austin believe that he and Mallarmé may have become friends, and were likely to have discussed ideas on the poem and the music: "We may reasonably imagine that the poet and composer together discussed the faun and various possibilities of music connected with the poem."¹³

Debussy's description of the relationship of music to poem is that of a "very free illustration of the beautiful poem of Mallarmé," and would later describe the relationship of music to poem as a "general impression of the poem" in a letter to a critic.¹⁴ In his approved program notes he also suggested a degree of distance from the original text.

By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of the latter. Rather there are the successive scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of this afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the fearful flight of the nymphs and the naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature.¹⁵

¹³ Austin, , *Claude Debussy, Prelude to "The Afternoon of A Faun,"*, 10.

¹⁴ David J Code, "Hearing Debussy Reading Mallarmé: Music après Wagner in the Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol 54, No 3 (Fall 2001), 508.

¹⁵ Austin, , *Claude Debussy, Prelude to "The Afternoon of A Faun,"*, 14.

Debussy's statements about his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* are not very specific and address issues of narrative in the most general way. And yet, one wonders whether Debussy's comments on the generality of his approach are entirely accurate. Or, as Code suggests, may have been intended ironically, which would have been in character with his personality.

For example, we know that there are 110 bars in the piece and that there are 110 alexandrines in the poem. That is a remarkable similarity. Does that parallel indicate a more literal relationship between the music and the poem than Debussy acknowledges? What exactly does the music illustrate? Is the music mimetic of the poem, or does it create its own meanings, with the poem's central ideas as a jumping off point? How is the music stylistically reflective of the poem?

Scholars frequently analyze *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* as an independent entity without addressing the uneasy parallels between the music and the poem. There is not a wealth of literature devoted to these questions. Below, I will break the music down into seven episodes based on moments of articulation in the music in order to better explore possible parallels between the poem and the music.

5.6 Introduction to Analysis

The following section will explore issues of musical representation in form, content and style. Such an exploration is crucial for an understanding of the relationship between the poem and the music.

The most obvious narrative parallel between the poem and music is centered around the role of the faun's flute melody and the fleeting images that it calls forth. Debussy calls forth an image of the faun playing his flute in the opening flute solo. The flute's call happens 7 times throughout the course of the piece. Each time, the call is answered and accompanied by the orchestra in kaleidoscopically shifting ways. Debussy clearly evokes the faun's repeated efforts to call forth fleeting images of the nymphs, represented by the orchestra, from his hazy memory through playing his flute, just as Mallarmé does in the poem.

5.7 Episode 1 (bars 1-10)/The Faun's First Flute Call

No water, but **that which my flute pours, murmurs**
 To the grove **sprinkled with melodies:** and the **sole breeze**
 Out of the **twin pipes, quick to breathe**
 Before it scatters the sound in an arid rain,
 Is unstirred by any wrinkle of the horizon,
 The **visible breath**, artificial and serene,
 Of inspiration returning to heights unseen.¹⁶

¹⁶ Stéphane Mallarmé, *The Afternoon of a Faun*, Eclogue. Trans. Roger Fry, accessed March 10, 2019, <http://www.angelfire.com/art/doi/mallarme.html>.

The poem opens with an ambiguity of voice and setting:

These nymphs I would perpetuate.
 So clear
 Their light carnation, that it floats in the air
 Heavy with tufted slumbers.
 Was it a dream I loved?

On its appearance in the very opening, the flute mirrors the poem's ambiguity in its lack of accompaniment, coupled with an improvisatory line devoid of clear meter, and in its contour outlining the tritone of C# and G.

The faun's musical calls summon fleeting images that disappear. The first time, the flute transforms images of the nymphs into "breeze... arid rain... visible breath... of inspiration returning to heights unseen".

In the music, the elusiveness of memory's evaporating images is felt vividly throughout the first interaction of flute call to orchestral response. A harp arpeggio enters on Wagner's half diminished 7th chord associated with "le desir". The "le desir" chord is followed by a Bb dominant 7th chord, caressed gently by the winds and horns. The opening is awash in ambiguity, as Leonard Bernstein so eloquently

describes in his fourth Harvard Norton Lecture, “The Delights and Dangers of Ambiguity”. The tritone outlined in the flute’s melody obscures any sense of key center. The E major triad in bar three comes close to painting a clear harmonic image, but is washed away by the Bb response in the horn, oboes, clarinets and bassoon, again emphasizing the tritone relationship between E and Bb. From the very beginning, the tritone is established as part of the harmonic framework. It’s effect is to undermine the 5th-based system of functional harmony and to create a lack of harmonic stability. Dominant 7th chords no longer resolve to tonics. Rather, they float, suspended in the air, with no cadential resolution at all.

The harmonic ambiguity is compounded by Debussy’s use of silence. Rather than a traditional harmonic resolution, the winds’ Bb dominant 7th chord simply hangs in thin air for an entire measure. The musical images almost seem to evaporate like an almost formed memory, until the winds and harp echo their gently unresolved call.

The sounds are pleasant with gentle timbres and non-jarring harmonies. The radical harmonic premise is so understated that it can go by altogether unnoticed.

Figure 3.1 Faun's Call with First Orchestral Response:

Très modéré
1^{er} SOLO

3 FLûTES

p doux et expressif

2 HAUTBOIS

2 CLARINETTES EN LA

4 CORs A PISTONS EN FA

2 HARPEs

1^{re} accordes
LA2-SIB, DO2-RÉ3, MI2-FA3, SOL2-LA3

1^{re} glissando

Très modéré

VIOLONS

ALTOS

VOLONCELLES

CONTREBASSES

The image displays a musical score for an orchestral piece. The top section is titled 'Très modéré' and '1^{er} SOLO'. It features staves for 3 Flutes, 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets in A, 4 Horns in F, and 2 Harps. The flute part is marked 'p doux et expressif'. The harp part includes a '1^{re} accordes' section with the notes LA2-SIB, DO2-RÉ3, MI2-FA3, SOL2-LA3, and a '1^{re} glissando' section. The bottom section is also marked 'Très modéré' and includes staves for Violins, Altos, Violoncelles, and Contrebasses. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

[illegible]

5.8 Episode 2 (bars 11-20)/The Faun's Second Flute Call

....RELATE
*'That I was cutting **hollow reeds here tamed***
***By talent:** when, on the green gold of distant*
Verdure offering its vine to the fountains,
*An **animal whiteness** undulates to rest:*
*And as a **slow prelude in which the pipes exist***
This flight of swans, no, of Naiads cower Or plunge...
 Inert, all things burn in the tawny hour
 Not seeing by what art there fled away together
 Too much of hymen desired by one who seeks there
 The **natural A:** then I'll wake to the primal fever
 Erect, alone, beneath the ancient flood, light's power,
 Lily! And the one among you all for artlessness.

The second flute call is in D Major, placing its opening C# on the raised 7th of the scale and creating a harmonic color that can be felt as hopeful and clear, perhaps echoing the fauns capitalized imperative: "CONTEZ (RELATE or TELL)" followed by the change of syntax and use of italics and quotation marks. It is certainly more defined in its emotional affect than the unaccompanied melody in the first episode.

The melody is answered by an orchestral episode of exactly the same length as the previous episode (seven bars), reflective of the images called forth by the faun's second flute call. Here, the 'hollow reeds tamed by talent' (a reference to Ovid's Syrinx) call forth an undulating 'animal whiteness' (reference to the skin of the nymphs), as if they are swans or naiads, cowering and plunging. This motion can be felt in the three 8th-notes ascending in the pulsating pentatonic figure that repeats

insistently, first in the two oboes and two clarinets, then doubled by the first violins in octaves and reinforced by the horns, strings and flutes, as the piece reaches its first fleetingly imploring forte (Figure 2).

Too much hymen desired by one who seeks the natural A;
then I'll wake to the primal fever, erect, alone

refers to the faun's unfulfilled lust ("hymen desired") confused with his flute ("the natural A"). The "A" is seen once, as a chromatic leading tone to the A# (Bb dominant 7th) arrival at bar 17, possibly evoking the importance of "le La", but simultaneously confused amidst a forest of accidentals.

At the end of the section, the faun is left "erect, alone". Accordingly, the orchestra's repeating 8th-note figure tapers off into a lone clarinet, 'dim et retenu'.

Figure 3.2 Natural A/ Plunging Naiads/Faun Awakening Alone:

FL. *1^{re} et 2^e*
p cre - scen - do f

HAUTR. *1^{re} et 2^e*
p cre - scen - do f

COR ANGL. *1^{re} et 2^e*
p cre - scen - do f

CL. *1^{re} et 2^e*
p cre - scen - do f dim. et relevé

BOIS *1^{re} et 2^e*
p cre - scen - do f

CORS *1. 2. (1)*
p cre - scen - do f dim.

3. 4. (3)
p cre - scen - do f dim.

Div. *- cresc. -*
f

position nat. *cre - scen - do f*

position nat. *cre - scen - do f*

position nat. *cre - scen - do f*

Unies.
cresc - - - f

5.9 Episode 3 (bars 21-30)/The Faun's Third Flute Call

The **great twin reed** we play under the azure ceiling,
 That turning towards itself the cheek's quivering,
Dreams, in a long solo, so we might amuse
 The beauties round about by **false notes that confuse**
Between itself and our credulous singing;
 And create as far as love can, modulating,
 The **vanishing**, from the common **dream of pure flank**
 Or back followed by my shuttered glances,
Of a sonorous, empty and monotonous line.

The flute calls for a third time much like the poem's faun, but this time, it is extended, and sings throughout the entire 10-bar episode in four continuous phrases, showing a parallel to the description of the solo this time as "a long solo" .

The flute's C# is now the 6th degree in an E major chord, suggestive of a more subtly complex feeling than in the second episode. The second phrase in this episode begins with A ("le La?") as the 7th degree in a B dominant 7th chord, and is back on C# as the 6th degree in E major in the third phrase. Here the melodic figure becomes restless and animated, leading into an important declamatory fourth figure in F# major that will return later in the piece. The section ends in the first actual traditional V-I cadence of the piece, from F# to B major in bar 30, calling an end to the opening section, and to the first half of the poem. The use of a traditional

cadence at the end of the third episode punctuates the last of the three flute calls in the poem.

Figure 3.3 Fourth Phrase of Third Episode Plus First Traditional Cadence:

The image displays a musical score for a piece in 12/8 time, featuring multiple staves for different instruments and voices. The score is divided into two main sections by a double bar line.

Top Section:

- Flute (Fl.):** The top staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The second staff continues the melodic line, also featuring triplets and slurs.
- Flute (Fl.):** The third staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The fourth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The fifth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The sixth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The seventh staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The eighth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The ninth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The tenth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The eleventh staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The twelfth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

Bottom Section:

- Flute (Fl.):** The top staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The second staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The third staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The fourth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The fifth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The sixth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
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- Flute (Fl.):** The tenth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The eleventh staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Flute (Fl.):** The twelfth staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

Lyrics:

ôtez vite les son
ôtez vite les son
ôtez vite les son

5.10 Episode 4/Less Specific Associations to the Poem/No Flute Call

The cadence going into bar 31 marks the first major point of articulation in the piece, as seen by the first V-I cadence, leading to B major, and marks the beginning of a longer episode noted for the lack of flute calls, its new episodic materials, and its use of contrasting orchestral timbres to create forward motion and contrasts.

Themes from the poem can be felt in this section, though in no particular order. It's almost as if they are extracted out of the poem and find new forms and ordering in the music.

The two restless and elusive nymphs are evoked by the scurrying whole tone and chromatic phrases traded imitatively back and forth between the clarinets and flutes between bars 31 and 36. The new pastoral pentatonic melody that emerges in bar 37 leads to an urgent and rhapsodic climax at bar 45, and leading to the "longest crescendo and accelerando" of the piece.¹⁷ According to David J. Code, the trading timbres between the winds at bar 44 and the strings at bar 45 could be seen to represent the conflict of "vocal expression and written artifice" existing in the poem.

He argues that:

"The first step toward an illumination of this musical reading is to note the close parallel between the succession of pointed timbral contrasts between winds and

¹⁷ Austin, , *Claude Debussy, Prelude to "The Afternoon of A Faun,"* 72.

strings in the Prelude and the form-defining contrasts between seeing and feeling in L'après-midi d'un faune .¹⁸

Figure 3.4 Bars 31-44

The image displays three staves of musical notation from Debussy's 'L'après-midi d'un faune', specifically bars 31-44. The top staff is a string quartet (Violins I, Violins II, Violas, Cellos/Double Basses). The middle staff is a woodwind section (Flute, Clarinet). The bottom staff is a vocal soloist (Soprano). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'. The bottom staff is labeled '1er SOLO' and 'doux et expressif'.

¹⁸ David J. Code, "Hearing Debussy Reading Mallarmé : Music après Wagner in the Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune", *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol 54, No 3 (Fall, 2001), 509.

[illegible]

The image shows a page of a musical score, likely for a symphony, featuring multiple staves for various instruments and voices. The score is in French and includes dynamic markings like 'p' (piano) and 'cresc.' (crescendo). A section is marked '5 Toujours en animant'.

The staves are labeled as follows:

- FL. 1^{re} 2nd 3rd
- HAUTE
- COR ANGL.
- CL. 1^{re}
- CL. 2nd
- CL. 3rd
- CL. 4th
- CL. 5th
- CL. 6th
- CL. 7th
- CL. 8th
- CL. 9th
- CL. 10th
- CL. 11th
- CL. 12th
- CL. 13th
- CL. 14th
- CL. 15th
- CL. 16th
- CL. 17th
- CL. 18th
- CL. 19th
- CL. 20th
- CL. 21th
- CL. 22th
- CL. 23th
- CL. 24th
- CL. 25th
- CL. 26th
- CL. 27th
- CL. 28th
- CL. 29th
- CL. 30th
- CL. 31th
- CL. 32th
- CL. 33th
- CL. 34th
- CL. 35th
- CL. 36th
- CL. 37th
- CL. 38th
- CL. 39th
- CL. 40th
- CL. 41th
- CL. 42th
- CL. 43th
- CL. 44th
- CL. 45th
- CL. 46th
- CL. 47th
- CL. 48th
- CL. 49th
- CL. 50th
- CL. 51th
- CL. 52th
- CL. 53th
- CL. 54th
- CL. 55th
- CL. 56th
- CL. 57th
- CL. 58th
- CL. 59th
- CL. 60th
- CL. 61th
- CL. 62th
- CL. 63th
- CL. 64th
- CL. 65th
- CL. 66th
- CL. 67th
- CL. 68th
- CL. 69th
- CL. 70th
- CL. 71th
- CL. 72th
- CL. 73th
- CL. 74th
- CL. 75th
- CL. 76th
- CL. 77th
- CL. 78th
- CL. 79th
- CL. 80th
- CL. 81th
- CL. 82th
- CL. 83th
- CL. 84th
- CL. 85th
- CL. 86th
- CL. 87th
- CL. 88th
- CL. 89th
- CL. 90th
- CL. 91th
- CL. 92th
- CL. 93th
- CL. 94th
- CL. 95th
- CL. 96th
- CL. 97th
- CL. 98th
- CL. 99th
- CL. 100th

The score includes the following text:

- Toujours en animant
- Changer en Sib
- Div.
- Fin

The section dims into a wash of whole-tone ambiguity as the image fades, which resolves by side-stepping through chromatic leading tones into an Ab dominant 7th

chord, leading to the next major point of articulation in the piece and signified by the prelude's second V-I cadence. The fading away through harmony and orchestration is parallel to the

‘vanishing, from the common dream of pure flank
Of a sonorous, empty and monotonous line.’

This fourth episode- a non-literal day-dream on the poem thus far- is bookended by traditional cadential articulation, keeping it separate from the more specific faun calls on either side.

5.11 Episode 5/Halfway Point/Climax/Fourth Call of the Faun- This Time

With His Voice

Try then, **instrument of flights, O malign**
Syrinx by the lake where you await me, to flower again!
I, proud of my murmur, **intend to speak** at length
Of goddesses:

Bar 55 marks the halfway point of the piece and, arguably, the halfway point of the poem. This episode can be interpreted to represent the fourth call of the faun. In his fourth call, the faun uses his voice, instead of his flute, to summon images of the nymphs. The significance of this change is reflected in the change in character and instrumentation of the music. However, despite the difference in feel of this episode

to the earlier episodes, unifying elements abound. The melody is based on the flute's opening melody in its contour. William Austin describes the melody thus:

The Chopinesque melody which begins the second half of the piece is not really a new theme, but a culminating expansion of the principal theme rather like the refrain or chorus of an aria or song that releases the flow prepared by a less tuneful stanza.¹⁹

Other unifying elements in this section include the tritone relationship apparent in the base motion, the motives from earlier in the piece which are present throughout the section, and the importance of the 6th as a melody note (the Bb that is emphasized through high register and through dramatic approach by leap).

In this episode, ambiguity gives way to a reveling in sensual delight emphasized by the greatest stability and clarity of musical elements yet seen in the piece. The musical stability reflects the vividness of the faun's recollections upon his fourth musical call; indeed, the most tangible memory he has yet been able to call forth. Stability is evoked in the grounded triadic feel of Db major, over which is placed a tuneful melody beginning on notes of the triad with expressive leaps and with a regular periodicity. An added element of stability is invoked by the regular

¹⁹ Austin, , *Claude Debussy, Prelude to "The Afternoon of A Faun,"* 75.

harmonic rhythm, with harmonies changing bar by bar, and bass notes moving in dotted half note regularity. A feeling of stability is gently put into question by the tritone motion of the bass, connecting the music to the previous sections, but not so much that it undermines the more stabile and regular feel of the section.

The melody is heard twice, but no longer in the solo flute, as the faun is now using his voice. The first time it is orchestrated in wind unison with the strings accompanying on pulsating chords. The second iteration is orchestrated in rapturous string unison with the winds on pulsating chords. The sigh figure of the nymphs can be heard in the winds' Ab to G repeating figure in bar 63.

Figure 3.5 Bars 55-65

[illegible]

7

FL. 2^e et 3^e

HAUTB.

CLAR. ANG.

CL.

BASSON

1. 2.

CORR.

2. 4.

7

Div.

FL.
ppp subito

HAUTB.
ppp subito

COR ANG.
ppp subito

CL.
ppp subito

FAG.
ppp

COR ANGL.
ppp

Vn I
ppp

Vn II
ppp

Vla
ppp

Cél
ppp

Bass.
ppp

Unis très expressif et très soutenu

ppp subito

ppp subito

ppp subito

ppp subito

ppp subito

Dis.

109

5.12 Episode 6 and Beyond/Return of the Flute Calls

In the poem, the faun's flute calls are over. A new conflict arises in which the faun must grapple with the possibility that he violated the nymphs ("O certain punishment" for his crime against the gods-

My crime was this: in my delight at conquering
Those treacherous fears, I did divide the casual bunch
Of kisses that the gods kept so well mixed;

His anxiety is mingled with delight over the nymphs, and frustration over their fleeing him: :

For hardly had I hidden an exulting laugh
Under the blessed folds of one of them (keeping my touch
By just a finger- so her feathery whiteness might
Be colored by her sister's kindling passion- with
The naïve little one who was not blushing yet)
When from my arms, relaxed by quasi-deaths, my prey,
Always ungrateful, slips away, pitiless toward
My gasp of gluttonous intoxication.²⁰

After the fleeing of his prey, he continues to muse over his "passion, ripe and purple" like "pomegranate bursts". He fantasizes about "others leading him towards happiness" and of possessing the queen, Venus herself. Amidst such thoughts, he

²⁰ Austin, *Claude Debussy, Prelude to "The Afternoon of A Faun,"* 27-29.

falls back to sleep “Farewell to you, both: I go to see the shadow of my wine’s true constellation!” “Both”, in this context, can refer to either the nymphs, or to the faun’s dual self, or to all of the above.

Arguably, Debussy does not fully address the last quarter of the poem in his prelude. Instead, he circles back to the earlier flute calls.

At bar 79, Debussy evokes a recapitulation that retains the call and response feel of the first three episodes, while shortening the proportions and taking away much of what could be a predictable symmetry. We hear four more flute calls with new energetic and playful orchestral responses pleasantly evocative of the nymphs. But now, the earlier languorous 10-bar episodes are shortened to 6 bar mini-episodes and 7 bar mini-episodes. Additionally, the flute’s melody begins on pitches other than C# on all but its final call, furthering the differences to the first half.

About the last section, Debussy states: “The end is the last line prolonged: “Couple, adieu; je vais voir l’ombre que tu devins (Farewell to you, both; I go to see the shadow you have become)”.

In so saying, Debussy indicates that the last section is a prolonged farewell to the waking dream that is his prelude. In distorting any sense of symmetry, he adds to a dreamy and improvised feel, floating through tertial harmonies and harmonic shifts through chromatic leading tones on a bed of irregular harmonic rhythm. No materials from earlier in the piece are repeated but some are evoked. An illusion of recap is suggested, but the actual effect is of a sweetly nostalgic and sleepy descent back into the shadows of the unconscious. The ending of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* focuses on the faun's descent into sleep, and does not address the anxiety and vainly overt passion extant in the poem's ending.

5.13 Formal Influence of the Poem on the Music

The form of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* is elusive. William Austin sums it up neatly: "With respect to details within the whole form, Debussy's music characteristically evades or blurs all sorts of classifications and abstractions. Yet it is not blurry itself, but supple, precise, clearly articulated, and balanced."

There are numerous possible formal interpretations. Some listeners/scholars see the halfway point up until the end as being two parts, creating a lopsided balance to the first 54 bars and call the piece ABA'. Others see that the first three episodes are the A section, the fourth is the B section, the fifth is the C section, and from 79 til the

end is A'. Some argue that the prelude is in sonata form, some say it is more akin to a theme and variations. William Austin argues that "all of these different interpretations are plausible":

The experts' disagreement can be left unreconciled...Perhaps the disagreement is more about the meaning of the labels than about the way the music coheres. Or perhaps the music coheres in more than one way: that is, different ways of organizing the experience of listening to it are complementary, not contradictory.²¹

It is indeed tricky to define the form of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*.

In part, this is because we try to hard to impose traditional musical abstract understandings of form onto the piece, and the piece simply does not fit any traditional mold. The problem is that it simply doesn't make sense unless you take the poem into careful and detailed consideration.

The first half of the music can be largely seen as a literal interpretation of the poem by way of the faun's three calls, in which we can see how the music is parallel to the poem in quite specific and temporal ways.

The fourth episode is a meditation on the themes thus presented. The music and poem meet at the exact halfway point- at bar 55 and at the 55th alexandrine, with the

²¹ Austin, , *Claude Debussy, Prelude to "The Afternoon of A Faun,"* 74.

faun's fourth call. The climax of the piece occurs in the fifth episode at bar 63 (with the golden section of the piece occurring at bar 67 amidst the climax), amidst the faun's final musical call, made with his voice. This is yet another example of temporal and specific parallels between the poem and the musical work it inspired.

This section also encompasses the faun's finally realized memory of sexual interaction with the nymphs portrayed in the climax of the music/the golden section of the prelude. The italics and quotation marks used in the poem to describe the quasi-rape scene disappear in bar 79, just as the fifth episode comes to an end, and the final section is coordinated exactly with the poem at bar 79. From bar 79 until the end, the music suggests a recapitulation back to the earlier flute calls, but the music is more different than it appears to be on the surface, making it difficult to classify in musical terms. The overall effect is of a sweetly nostalgic farewell to elusive memories of beautiful nymphs, as the faun softly goes back to the shadows of sleep from whence he came.

While the music is not always literal to the poem, it is remarkable how Debussy mirrors the poem's structure in his music, creating a fully hybridized musico-poetic form full of temporal and specific parallels, which are revealed when applying the

tools of narrative and poetic analysis, but remain hidden when approached from a purely traditional abstract musical analysis.

5.14 Stylistic Influence of the Poem on the Music

While our application of narrative theory helps to reveal some of the key relationships between the poem and the musical work, we can also enrich our understanding of parallels between the music and poetry by exploring issues of style. On stylistic levels, the music is also deeply influenced by Mallarmé's poetic vision. Elusiveness reigns supreme in the poem and in the music, and yet is conveyed in both mediums meticulously and with greatly detailed precision.

Debussy continued and furthered Mallarmé's poetic vision in his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* through stylistic means, including the ever so pleasant explosion of traditional functional harmony through use of tritones instead of perfect 5th as harmonic axis, exotic scales and modes that go beyond traditional major/minor scales, tertial and chromatic leading-tone modulations, chords used for sound instead of for function, chords that don't resolve, silence and rhythmic ambiguity, and exotic timbres. These stylistic developments offered ingenious musical parallels to the ambiguities and abstractions that were key to Mallarmé's poetic vision.

Debussy described Mallarmé's reaction to the music thus: "After having listened, he

was silent for a long time, and then said to me: 'I was not expecting anything of this kind! This music prolongs the emotion of my poem, and sets its scene more vividly than color.'"

Mallarmé also inscribed a poem onto Debussy's score which was sent to him after the first performance of the piece:

O forest god of breathing air
If you have made your flute aright,
Now hear the way that Debussy
Breathes into it the broad daylight.²²

The Faun opened the door to a period of great fertility for Debussy and he produced many major works in the years that followed, including *Pelléas et Mélisande* (begun in 1893 and finished in 1902), *Nocturnes* for Orchestra (1899), the *String Quartet* (1893), *Fêtes galantes* (published 1892), *Proses Lyriques* (1893), and *Pour le Piano* (1894-1901). Scholars like William Austin have suggested that Mallarmé's groundbreaking literary ideas may have contributed to Debussy's creative outpouring of this period. We may speculate further that the ideas of Mallarmé contributed something essential to [Debussy's turning point].²³

²² Austin, , *Claude Debussy, Prelude to "The Afternoon of A Faun,"* 13.

²³ Austin, , *Claude Debussy, Prelude to "The Afternoon of A Faun,"* 11.

Debussy managed to create a revolution in music just as Mallarmé was able to do in poetry. And both revolutions happened upon the shoulders of a faun. Pierre Boulez said famously of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* that “Modern music was awakened by (it)”,²⁴ and Alex Ross referred to Debussy’s “Velvet Revolution”²⁵. If indeed it is true that Mallarmé’s influence on Debussy opened the door to the Faun as well as to the pieces that followed that would influence the entire future of 20th century classical music, then it is safe to speculate that Mallarmé’s influence on Debussy goes beyond the uniting of their two fauns, but in fact, through stylistic influence, that Mallarmé was central in pioneering an entire new musical direction that would help to shape virtually every composer following in Debussy’s footsteps.

Who would have thought that Pan’s misogynistic and hallucinatory fantasies objectifying women into mere crimson flesh would open the door to modernism, by virtue of its stylistic contributions?

²⁴ Matthew Brown, *Tonality and Form in Debussy’s “Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune”*, Music Theory Spectrum, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Autumn, 1993): 127.

²⁵ Alex Ross, The Velvet Revolution of Claude Debussy, accessed March 10, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/29/the-velvet-revolution-of-claude-debussy>

Chapter 6: Issues that Arise When Combining Poetry and Music in Vaughan

Williams' The Lark Ascending

As we just saw, in Debussy's work there are many parallels between Mallarmé's poem and the music that it influenced. While in Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, as we shall see, there are more generalized connections between George Meredith's poem and the music that it inspired.

6.1 Background

Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* is a post-war reflection on a more innocent time. Vaughan Williams drafted a version of *The Lark Ascending* for violin and piano in 1914 before enlisting in the British army and serving in World War I. After he came home in 1919, he returned to the piece and orchestrated it in 1920. It seems to many observers to be a reflection of a simpler time, and an ode to the innocence and beauty of nature evoked by the call of the skylark, and possibly a remedy to the horrors that he had witnessed during the war.

The piece incorporates pentatonicism, modality, and the simple tunefulness characteristic of the English folk music that Vaughan Williams had collected as a young man. The first performance, by the dedicatee Marie Hall, was in June 1921, and it was published in 1925 as a "Romance for violin and orchestra". The title is taken from a poem written by George Meredith in 1881 called *The Lark Ascending*. The poem's 122 lines are written in three continuous sections and consists of

rhyming couplets. This poem is often interpreted as nostalgic in its loving portrayal of nature and in the lark's metaphoric ability to elevate humankind's aspirations.

The Lark Ascending is a musically appealing tone poem with a simple form, accessible musical language and a powerfully symbolic programmatic title. It has remained popular for a century, especially in England. Vaughan Williams didn't just reuse the strikingly evocative title of the poem but also explicitly included twelve of its 122 lines on a page preceding the score, thereby summarizing the main message and the two main themes of the poem.

This invocation includes the first four lines of the poem:

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake...

The next six lines are drawn from the beginning of the poem's second section:

For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup
And he the wine which overflows
to lift us with him as he goes...

And he concluded with the final two lines of the poem:

Till lost on his aërial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

6.2 Lark Ascending: Analytical Observations

Significance of Relationship between the Violin and the Orchestra

While Vaughan Williams didn't write anything about the connection between Meredith's poem and his music, direct parallels can be made between the language of the poem evoking the flight and song of the skylark, and the solo violin's linked sweet melodic yet unmetered phrases that combine rapid circular 16th-notes with folky sustained longer note values:

silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake...²⁶

And just as the language of the poem can be seen to evoke the flight of the skylark in the solo violin, it also can be seen to have inspired the contrasting idea of earthbound associations depicted by the orchestra's lower registers and use of repetitive, folky sustained and dotted rhythms in a metered context.

This contrasting dialectic between the bird's song and its earthbound audience is clearly expressed in the lines:

For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instills...

²⁶ George Meredith, *The Lark Ascending*, accessed on March 10, 2019, <https://www.bartleby.com/246/680.html>

In a personal sense, the lark represents what we aspire to, while in some more general cultural sense the lark is a part of us:

But wider over many heads
The starry voice ascending spreads,
Awakening, as it waxes thin,
The best in us to him akin;

The relationship between the solo violin part with the orchestra offers contrasting yet interweaving forces that drive the structure of the work. While the pitch content of the contrasting materials is similarly pentatonic and modal, the approach to phrasing is very different. The phrases of the violin-as-lark are unmetred, much like the song of the lark, and the earthbound phrases of the orchestra are contrasting through their metered phrases. But the lark moves fluidly through the earthbound realm, as it moves fluidly through metered and unmetred phrases. On a symbolic level, the relationship seems to reflect an idealized and romantic view of humanity's feeling toward the lark, as seen in the nostalgically tonal style of the music.

Towards the end of the opening cadenza a fragment appears (Figure 4.1):

Figure 4.1 Fragment Foreshadowing of First Earthbound Scene



The previous fragment from the cadenza foreshadows what will become the first earthbound theme seen in the orchestra (Figure 4.2):



Figure 4.2 First Earthbound Theme:

Sixteen measures later (at letter B) a solo clarinet derives the orchestra's first new theme (Figure 4.3), which is echoed immediately by the violin:

Figure 4.3 Solo Clarinet Theme:

These two examples illustrate the interweaving of materials between the circular, 32nd/64th-note infused soaring bird theme, and the tunefully grounded earthbound theme. The soloist is clearly identified with the lark at the outset, as it is easy to interpret the warbling with its song and the rising contour of the cadenza with the

larks ascending flight. But throughout the work, the solo part, while primarily associated with lark-like flight, also reflects the more folky themes, as is seen in the two above examples.

6.3 Harmonic Content

Additionally, the harmonic content is reflective of English folksong, in its use of modality and pentatonicism, which are characteristic of the English folksong he had been collecting. Because of this particular harmonic language, the music has a notable absence of leading tones, which weakened functional tonal motion in the harmony. Vaughan Williams further weakened functional motion by extensive use of parallel voice-leading. Modality and parallelism were his primary stylistic points of contact with musical impressionism.

Much of the pitch content is pentatonic. The entire opening violin cadenza (Figure 4.4) explores the collection D-E-F#-A-B:

Figure 4.4 Pentatonic Opening Cadenza:





The analogous cadenza at the end substitutes G for F#, and the resulting G-A-B-D-E collection is harmonized as an e7 sonority. The cadenzas are free, *senza misura*. In the body of the work a series of more conventional thematic phrases emerges, all loosely related.

6.4 Thematic Content

Kenneth Drobnak and a few other writers have analyzed the harmonic dimension of *The Lark Ascending* in functional terms, but it seems questionable how much the effect of the work is clarified by such analysis. Drobnak identifies five members of the family in his dissertation: ²⁷

²⁷ Kenneth Drobnak, "A Comparative Analysis of the Romances of Ralph Vaughan Williams" (DMA Diss., Michigan State University, 2005), 64, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Figure 4.5 Themes in The Lark Ascending

**Figure 4.5 Themes in *The Lark Ascending***

The themes are similar in their affects. With the exception of the more contrasting Theme 4, they other three themes have similar feels caused by their shared meters, tempi, and pitch content. The result is a more generalized pastoral feeling lacking in strong individual characters- effective for evoking a nostalgic sense of a simpler bucolic time.

6.5 Structure

Structurally, the poem and music are in three sections. While the basic structure of the musical work is a ternary ABA form, some writers have wanted to separate the

beginning and closing cadenza-like solos for the violin from the outer sections, describing the whole as ABCBA rather than just ABA.

The circularity of ternary form offers a poetic resonance to the timelessness of the content. The lark will repeat its song and flight tomorrow, and whatever hopes we invest symbolically in its ascent will likewise continue. Vaughan Williams affirms this by ending the work as it began, with the same ascent, in scholar James Day's elegant phrase, "upward into the remoteness of the sunset."

6.6 Differing Opinions on Poetic and Musical Meaning

Some writers have wanted to hear a musical metaphor reflecting the lark's presence in the human world -- typically a rural village -- before the lark flies away in much the way it had arrived. These were the images in the portrayal by James Day in the 1975 edition of his *Master Musicians* biography:

Mild and gentle, it depicts an atmosphere where man is reduced to his true proportions; indeed, in the middle 2/4 section, it seems almost as if the lark is flying over some village fair, viewing the doings of the human beings on the ground from his height, and the ending gives the impression that he flies off and upward into the remoteness of the sunset.²⁸

Day denies that Vaughan Williams had any literal programmatic intentions in the work, and though the lark clearly occupies a place between humans below and the heavens above, Day refuses to explore its symbolic role. He explicitly rejects any religious/spiritual associations between birdsong and divinity of the kind one finds

²⁸ James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, London. J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1975, 168.

in Messiaen, comparing the work instead to Smetana's *From Bohemia's Woods and Fields*.

Other writers have been more adventurous. After all, the lark is not merely fluttering about, enhancing nature with silvery song. The lark ascending is soaring back and forth between heaven and earth, acting as a messenger for God reaching down to humans and for humans reaching up to God.

In the lines Vaughan Williams prefaced to his score,

...And ever winging up and up,/ Our valley is his golden cup,/ And he the
wine which overflows/ To lift us with him as he goes.

Are the aspirations of mankind the wine embodied in this lark?

Other parts of Meredith's poem support this symbolic reading of the lark. The following lines, not quoted by Vaughan Williams, make clear that the lark's song is uniquely capable of combining the voices of man and nature alike:

The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine
He is, the hills, the human line,
The meadows green, the fallows brown,
The dreams of labor in the town;
He sings the sap, the quicken'd veins;
The wedding song of sun and rains
He is, the dance of children, thanks
Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
And eye of violets while they breathe;
All these circling song will wreathe,
And you shall hear the herb and tree,

The better heart of men shall see, Shall feel celestially, as long
 As you crave nothing save the song.
 Was never voice of ours could say
 Our inmost in the sweetest way,
 Like yonder voice aloft, and link
 All hearers in the song they drink:
 Our wisdom speak from failing blood,
 Our passion is too full in flood,
 We want the key of his wild note
 Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
 The song seraphically free
 Of taint of personality,
 So pure that it salutes the suns
The voice of one for millions.
In whom the millions rejoice
For giving their one spirit voice.

We cannot assume, of course, that Vaughan Williams approved of lines he did not quote. It seems unlikely, however, that he would have identified his work with the poem if he had profound reservations about its message.

6.7 Critical Responses to *Lark Ascending*

Some critics find a transcendentalist message underlying the *The Lark Ascending*.

Walter Aaron Clark asserts that Vaughan Williams' aesthetic "remained forever grounded in the 19th century" and notes that his transcendentalism posited nature "as an emblem of a benign Eternal, ennobling and sublimating even violent death."

In the case of *The Lark Ascending*, Clark associates its message with an idealist, naïve, pre-World War I conception that did not survive the horrors of the war, with the result that, along with Vaughan Williams' other pastoral works, it has inadvertently served to typecast him as a sort of 'bucolic bard', stubbornly resisting

“the encroachment of modernism and the eclipse of Albion”²⁹. Alain Frogley has also described the ways in which pastoral works like *The Lark Ascending* came to epitomize a particularly English experience of the natural world – for many “a species of national spiritual experience, that had never before been expressed with such immediacy,” but for others merely the basis for “an expression of indulgent affection, as if for a senile, elderly relative or a half-witted country cousin...”³⁰

The arguments for the piece’s historical importance have involved aspirational religious experience and a nostalgic nationalism, both of which grew less fashionable among critics in the post-WWI years.

Wilfrid Mellers, who published a book-length appreciation of Vaughan Williams in 1989, highlighted the work’s assertions of transcendental philosophy and cultural pride. The English nostalgia-laden musical style is accommodated neatly into Mellers’ long cultural view. In a move reminiscent of Schenker’s reduction of tonal music to the chord of nature, he suggests that the pentatonic pitch collection is generated from a few elemental interval relationships to which both folksong and plainsong can be traced.³¹

As with the absorption of the lark into a tradition of nature-God syntheses, Vaughan Williams’ apparently simple pentatonic language (in the pastoral works) resonates

²⁹ Walter Aaron Clark, “Vaughan Williams and the ‘night side of nature’: Octatonicism in *Riders to the Sea*,” in *Vaughan Williams Essays*, ed. Byron Adams and Robin Wells, Franham, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003, 55.

³⁰ Alain Frogley, “Constructing Englishness in music: national character and the reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams,” in *Vaughan Williams Studies*, ed. Alain Frogley, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 6.

³¹ Wilfrid Mellers, *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion*, London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1989.

with a larger history of both folksong and modally similar sacred music, notably that of England's renaissance masters. *The Lark Ascending* takes its place alongside the *Tallis Fantasia* as well as *On Wenlock Edge* and the *Norfolk Rhapsodies*.

6.8 *Lark Ascending* as Tone Poem

While Vaughan Williams called this work a "Romance," I would argue that it is a tone poem, since it is so clearly linked to the poem by the same name. As a one-movement orchestral work with a programmatic title and associated lines of poetry, *The Lark Ascending* meets our criteria for inclusion. Two of Liszt's earliest symphonic poems were titled after poems by Hugo and Lamartine. In both those cases there was little narrative connection between source poem and symphonic poem. (In fact, both titles were superimposed on pre-existent music.) This was not a problem for Liszt, who encouraged the composer:

To give in a few lines the spiritual sketch of the work and, without falling into petty and detailed explanations, convey the idea which served as the basis for his composition. This will prevent faulty elucidations, hazardous interpretations, idle quarrels with intentions the composer never had, and endless commentaries which rest on nothing.³²

6.9 Conclusions: *The Lark Ascending* and *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*

George Meredith's poem aspires to elevate the human spirit through connection with nature/the skylark. However, its flowery language is mannered and dated to its time. Vaughan Williams manages to achieve the essence and aspiration of the work,

³² Cited in Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol.4, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, 421.

while offering a timeless piece of music. While it may not have the historical badge of importance in terms of shaping the course of 20th century music and beyond- like the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* can be said to have done- it continues to be a touchstone of inspiration, offering listeners a profound connection to both nature and to their collective past through folk tradition.

Drawing on narrative theory, specifically the work of Anthony Newcomb, we can see how Vaughan Williams created musical characters, or personae, in the form of the lark and the form of the human centered village below. The balance through opposition of these two musical characters (embodied in the orchestra and the violin), reflecting their representation in the original poem, helps to drive forward the temporal narrative of the musical work, which, even though circular in ABA form, effectively reflect both the story of the physical and metaphysical encounters between these contrasting elements.

Personally, I find great power in the symbolism of *The Lark Ascending*, and in the way that Vaughan Williams managed to find such a simple and direct poetic metaphor to draw upon in order to connect us to the natural world. And as we have explored, music has the singularly direct ability to evoke the central themes of the poem, even more effectively than the poem itself.

As we saw in the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Debussy's sensitivity to Mallarmé's poetically groundbreaking, nuanced, and visionary poem enabled him to

draw upon both poetic themes and also on stylistic elements in his tone poem. The resulting tone poem was a hybrid indebted to its poem on many levels, and ultimately going beyond the poem with its expressive power. This cross-pollination between artistic forms seems to have compelled Debussy into new territory that would shape the future of concert music to come.

Who is to say which is more important? The ability to innovate, and to influence composers for many generations to come? Or the ability to touch a wide range of listeners on a profound level through breathtaking yet humble beauty?

CASE STUDY #3: PAINTING AND MUSIC

**HENRI DUTILLEUX' *TIMBRES, ESPACE, MOUVEMENT OU LA NUIT ÉTOILÉE* AND
AMANDA HARBERG'S *DREAM OF THE SLEEPING GYPSY*.**

Chapter 7: Issues of Subjectivity When Painting is the Extra-Musical Program

Comparisons between music and painting present issues that haven't been encountered in our previous case studies. The most obvious issue concerns the temporal process of our perceptions. Narrative story and poetry require the temporal process of reading. Music requires the temporal process of performance/hearing through time. One can't glance at or hear a piece of music, a poem, or a story and have an immediate understanding of its content and form. Our perception of painting, however, seems to be much more immediate. With a glance, we can see, at least superficially, what is going on in the painting. Additionally, in painting, the plot events/characters/themes are set apart by space instead of by a temporal succession, whereas in music, poetry and story, plot events move successively through time.

An additional tricky issue in painting/music parallels is that of specific representation. While this is also an issue in narrative/poetic/music parallels, it tends to be more of an issue with painting, due to the more subjective nature of our perceptions when viewing a painting, combined with the lack of successive plot events. In the former mediums, successive plot events and contrasting poetic themes can find evocative musical expression in a variety of musical forms, even

when music's inability to convey specific plot content reduces musical forms to generalities that are more allegorical/abstract than their narrative/poetic counterparts.

In painting, by contrast, we are not *told* what is going on, rather, we are *shown* what is going on. And different viewers are likely to interpret the events and themes of the painting in far more personally subjective ways than if they were reading a story or a poem.

In painting, the subjective nature of specific interpretation obscures the more obvious structural and stylistic parallels that we have seen in music that is based on narrative and on poetry.

Due to the less direct parallels between painting and music, it will be helpful in our exploration to include considerations of compositional process, and psychological impact of the composer's reactions to the painting, as well as more direct expressive, structural and stylistic parallels between the painting and the music. I will explore these issues in my new orchestral tone poem, *Dream of the Sleeping Gypsy*, derived from the name of Rousseau's famous painting, and in Dutilleux's programmatic work *Timbres, espace, mouvement ou La nuit étoilée*, which was inspired by Van Gogh's *La nuit étoilée*.

7.1 Henri Dutilleux: Background

Parisian composer Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013) came from a family of artists. His great-grandfather was a painter and lithographer, his grandfather was an organist and composer, his father was a printer and mother was an amateur violinist and pianist. His three surviving siblings all attended conservatory. The world of the arts was the world in which he felt most at home. "Most of my friends are artists," he said in an interview with Stuart Jeffries. "I need to be utterly in that world."³³

Dutilleux won the Prix de Rome in 1938 after his studies at the Conservatoire de Paris, but was only able to be in Rome for five months out of the four-year residency due to the war. He was deployed as a stretcher-bearer until 1940, and was sympathetic to the Resistance.

Dutilleux was a methodical composer, as is seen in his small output. His major works include two symphonies, a cello concerto (*Tout un monde lointain*), a violin concerto (*l'Arbre des songes*), and several other orchestra works including *Metaboles*, *Correspondances* for soprano and orchestra, *The Shadows of Time*, and *Timbres, espace, mouvement. Ainsi la nuit* for string quartet is also among his works with lasting influence.

³³ Stuart Jeffries, The Guardian, as accessed March 10, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2002/apr/19/shopping.artsfeatures1>

7.2 Influence of “Involuntary Memory” in Dutilleux’s Creative Process

Like Debussy, Dutilleux’s work was influenced by his love for poetry and painting.

We have seen the important influence of Mallarmé on Debussy’s aesthetic direction.

Dutilleux was similarly influenced by Proust in his compositional process. A key developmental technique in Dutilleux’s mature works from the First Symphony onward is that of ‘progressive growth’, in which the main theme of a piece is not heard in the opening, but rather, revealed progressively as the piece develops, with musical motifs referring back to earlier materials and foreshadowing what is to come, with primary thematic material only being fully realized later in the piece. Dutilleux attributes this technique to the influence of Proust and the nature of “involuntary memory”, as explored in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*, most famously in the “episode of the madeleine”, in which the narrator’s process of biting into a madeleine cookie triggers a flood of visceral childhood memories. In an interview with Roger Nichols, which was quoted by Caroline Potter, Dutilleux reflected on how Proust’s work influenced his compositional process:

[I have an] almost intuitive tendency not to expose a theme in its definitive state from the beginning. It is not cyclic form, that is different, in cyclic form, the theme is determined from the start, as in Debussy’s quartet. That is not the case in my music: I use small cells which are gradually developed. Perhaps I was influenced by literature- by Proust- concerning the concept of memory. It is difficult to explain this, but it is also important because it is a central preoccupation of mine from the First Symphony. When I started to use this ‘procedure’, if you want to call it that, I was not entirely conscious of it. I became aware of it later, and I have gradually exploited it.³⁴

³⁴ Caroline Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), 60.

One could argue that Proust's ideas on "involuntary memory" reveal their influence on Dutilleux's creative process in other ways as well. For example- Dutilleux was very moved by other works of art, and spoke of ways that they would weave themselves into his work indirectly and over time. He discusses this process in the interview with Stuart Jeffries:

I often feel great emotion when I read or study a work of art, and that emotion exalts me. Afterwards, under this emotion, I create my own works- sometimes many years after. Sometimes the work will be utterly abstract, but there are the traces there of the emotion.

The non-linear way that inspiration would materialize many years after an emotional reaction to a work of art can be seen to reflect the Proustian concept of "involuntary memory". Dutilleux's reaction to Van Gogh's painting is a perfect example of this, given that his emotional reaction gestated over "a long time" before finding clarity through artistic expression:

I'd known the painting for a long time, having seen it in books and really rotten reproductions. But even then the painting spoke to me..."Then I went to the Museum of Modern Art in New York and saw it for the first time. It was a remarkable experience: even though there were other Van Gogh paintings in the room, all the crowds seemed to be standing in front of this picture, as if it had a magnetic hold on them. And it had the same effect on me.³⁵

Thus, Dutilleux's very act of composing music inspired by an earlier emotional reaction can be seen analogously to Proust's "involuntary memory".

³⁵ Jeffries, The Guardian,
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2002/apr/19/shopping.artsfeatures1>

Elaborating on this idea, Caroline Potter explains that Dutilleux believes that “the concept of memory is equally valid btw different works of Dutilleux’s as within a single piece.” She explains that there is a unity of expressive and structural meaning that occurs in individual pieces as well as throughout his collective output, and likens this characteristic to Proust’s creative process: “It is also intriguing that Proust very frequently made use of old material in his own writings; it is not even an exaggeration to state that the *Recherche* is in part a consummation of all his previous works.”³⁶

Potter quotes an article by Bayer to strengthen this point:

each work is different from the others, but they all seem to belong to a single work which is being gradually elaborated over the years, a work whose unity encompasses the variety of the constituent parts as its identity encompasses their differences.³⁷

Given Dutilleux’s Proustian long-term thinking, it makes sense that his creative process was not an immediate or facile process, but rather a meticulous process that revealed answers slowly and over long periods of time. He describes his labored process thus:

I always doubt my work. I always have regrets. That’s why I revise my work so much and, at the same time, I regret not being more prolific. But the reason I am not more prolific is because I doubt my work and spend a lot of time changing it. It’s paradoxical, isn’t it?” and he went on to say, “I am a

³⁶ Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works*, 70.

³⁷ Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works*, 70.

perfectionist, I know. I hate to leave a work in a form that doesn't satisfy me.³⁸

While Dutilleux was deeply influenced by Proust in terms of his compositional process, he never composed any programmatic works with Proust as non-musical source. However, we can see specific affinities toward non-musical mediums in several of his works. His cello concerto, *Tout un monde lointain* was based on *Les Fleurs du mal* by Baudelaire, and has inscriptions of the poem engraved in the beginnings of each of the five movements. And his connection toward painting can be seen in his *Timbres, espace, mouvements ou la nuit étoilée*, based on Van Gogh's *La nuit étoilée*- the subject of this chapter.

7.3 Background to *Timbres, espace, mouvement ou La nuit étoilée*

Timbres, espace, mouvement ou La nuit étoilée was commissioned by Mstislav Rostopovich, who conducted the premiere in 1978 with the Washington National Symphony Orchestra. Dutilleux was well-known for his perfectionism, and his ideas on the work continued well beyond its premiere. His revisions give us further insight into his creative process.

Originally, the work was in two untitled movements, it did not have the subtitle *La nuit étoilée*. Dutilleux expressed reticence at making the program an explicit part of the piece. As he himself said to Rene Koering, "there was a time when I wanted to forget about the painting, because it is extremely dangerous to attempt musical

³⁸ Jeffries, The Guardian,
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2002/apr/19/shopping.artsfeatures1>

illustration.” Potter recalls, “Dutilleux also told me that he fears the titles he added to the two original movements are ‘perhaps too closely linked w the painting’, revealing that his attitude towards titles is curiously ambiguous.”³⁹

The ambiguity Potter refers to can be seen in Dutilleux’s formal and conceptual revisions, showing his drawn-out compositional process. Only after the piece had gestated, twelve years after the premiere, was Dutilleux able to tap into his “involuntary memory” to find its final clarity of form and meaning.

In 1990, twelve years after the premiere, he went against his earlier decision and decided to make programmatic associations explicit after all, adding the subtitle *La nuit étoilée*, and the movement titles of *Nebuleuse* and *Constellations*: “Dutilleux only added titles to the two movements of *Timbres, espace, mouvement* (*Nebuleuse* and *Constellations*) in 1990, when he also decided to add an interlude.”⁴⁰

The revised movement titles and subtitles gives us insight into the evolving concept of the work. Initially he felt that the meaning of the work would be most powerfully conveyed if heard as an abstract piece. But, ultimately he believed that an association with the painting would enhance the meaning of the work. Julian Green claims that Dutilleux’s ambiguity and ultimate decision about titles suggests that he wanted to convey his reaction to the painting through his music, rather than having the music be a representation of the painting’s specific content: “his intentions were

³⁹ Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works*, 131.

⁴⁰ Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works*, 71.

more to assimilate musically the effects of the painting than to represent its subject matter.”⁴¹

An additional major structural revision to the work occurred in 1990, when he added the interlude movement as a way to feature the 12 celli called for in the score, in between movements 1 and 2.

7.4 *La nuit étoilée* by Vincent Van Gogh

Figure 5.1 *La nuit étoilée* by Vincent Van Gogh



⁴¹ Julian Jay Green, “Frames of Reference”, (PhD diss., Cardiff University, 2008), 216, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Van Gogh painted *La nuit étoilée* in 1889. His mental instability at this time is well-documented. The painting was created during his stay in a mental institution a year after he cut off his ear, and a year before he committed suicide. Many critics say that the painting offered insight into Van Gogh's troubled and tormented mental state through its extreme brushstrokes and contrasts of colors, as well as its undulating and agitated sense of motion, contrasted with the oppressive stillness of the cosmic void.

The image presents the starry night of its title, in which spiraling nebulae and reverberating yellow/gold orbs of light are presented against a background of dark, thick, swirling blue and black brushstrokes. Julian Green's vivid description of the vortices is particularly evocative: "Rushes of streaked paint form vortices in the centre, implying that some larger stars have spun wildly out of their orbits and are tearing through the cosmos into this giant whirlpool of forces."⁴²

The fantastical sky is contrasted by the mundane earth below, showing village houses with their windows cozily lit. A church spire and cypress tree reach up to the sky, and the hills echo the sky in their affect of roiling motion.

Underlying all of these contrasting and strange images, there is a vibrant beauty in the painting, perhaps reflective of the human aspiration to find something greater than

⁴² Green, "Frames of Reference", 212.

itself through nature. Van Gogh states this need in a letter written to his brother Hugo, which was also referred to by Dutilleux in several interviews: “I have a terrible need for religion. So I go outside at night to paint the stars.”

7.5 Dutilleux’s Reaction to the Painting

Dutilleux was drawn to the spiritual element in the painting. He recognized an “aspiration towards the infinity of nature” ⁴³in the way that the earth-bound cypress and church spire reach toward the sky. The aspirational theme of ascension will be explored in the analysis section.

Dutilleux also reflected his own thoughts on psychological and physical aspects of the painting:

It's a little bit excessive, because at the time Van Gogh was more and more marked by his illness. But for me it's a canvas in movement - the stars are huge and swirling, monstrous really. And the ground is important, too - the way the church spire follows the line of the cypresses is just as spiritually suggestive as what is happening in that strange, contorted sky.⁴⁴

References to “huge, swirling, monstrous stars”, “strange, contorted sky”, point to the psychological as well as physical experience upon viewing the painting, as does his acknowledgement of Van Gogh’s mental illness as a factor in the painting’s excessiveness. And his reference to the ascending line of cypress followed by the

⁴³ Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works*, 129.

⁴⁴ Jeffries, *The Guardian*,

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2002/apr/19/shopping.artsfeatures1>

church spire, shows his awareness of a human, “spiritual” reaction to the disturbed skies above.

In his dissertation, Julian Green refers to Dutilleux’s psychological and physical reaction to the painting and his subsequent expression of that reaction through his orchestral work:

Rather than creating simply a representation of Van Gogh’s painting (were such a thing possible), Dutilleux has sought to express something about his psychological and emotional experience upon viewing it... Thus, the music might be said to provide a representation of a physical encounter and a psychological involvement with the painting, led by certain recognizable aspects of the visual world so depicted.⁴⁵

7.6 Specific Ways that Dutilleux Uses Sound to Reproduce His Reactions to Van Gogh’s Painting in *Timbres, espace, mouvements ou La nuit étoilée*

We have explored ideas of involuntary memory in its influence on Dutilleux’s meticulous and slow process of creating individual works and creating a unified body of work, as well as its influence in the music inspired by other works of art such as Van Gogh’s *La nuit étoilée*. We have discussed Van Gogh’s painting and seen Dutilleux’s powerful reaction to the painting on spiritual, psychological and physical levels. Now the question remains- how, specifically, does *Timbres, espace, mouvements ou La nuit étoilée* reflect Dutilleux’s reactions to Van Gogh’s painting? Below, I will explore some of the more tangible parallels between the music and the painting. I will

⁴⁵ Green, “Frames of Reference,” 243, 244.

also look at problems arising from subjectivity. And I will consider how insights into his creative process can enhance this subjective exploration.

7.7 Movement One- *Nebuleuse*/Use of Instrumental Timbre to Evoke Elements in the Painting

Dutilleux said that wanted to convey the painting's "vertigo and cosmic space" in sound. He emphasizes the importance of orchestral texture and form to his approach here, as quoted by Julian Green:

I felt that I could use this Van Gogh painting- w its prodigious cosmic and mystic force- as the basis for an attempt at reproducing in sound the strange impression of vertigo and cosmic space this picture gives you, for which I should need to find something quite new in the way of form but particularly of instrumental texture.⁴⁶

Dutilleux attempts to "find something quite new" to reproduce the "vertiginous impression of space" between earth and sky that exists in the painting in his use of orchestral timbres. His unusual decision to leave out the violins and violas literally leaves a gap in the main body of the orchestra, helping him to evoke the abyss between the earth and cosmos: "Between them and the canopy of the sky there is a vertiginous impression of space, which immediately made me think of an instrumental grouping without any violins or violas."⁴⁷

In Dutilleux's mind, this decision highlighted the contrasting range and timbre of the woodwinds and the low strings, with the winds representing the starry sky and the

⁴⁶ Green, "Frames of Reference," 215.

⁴⁷ Green, "Frames of Reference," 219.

low strings representing the darker earth. Caroline Potter describes how Dutilleux “pointed to the starry sky at the top of the painting when talking about the woodwind and to the town in darkness at the bottom of the painting when referring to the low strings.”⁴⁸

One needs only to look at the first movement’s opening episode to see how Dutilleux exploits timbral contrast. The double bass’s low material sounds dark in comparison to the cloudlike cluster in the woodwinds floating above it, and emphasizes the contrast of timbres. In knowing the close connection with the painting as described by Dutilleux himself, it becomes plausible that the contrasting timbres could represent the void between earth and cosmos in the painting.

⁴⁸ Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works*, 126.

Figure 5.2 Contrasting of Timbres in clusters of high winds against low
bass instruments to represent void between earth and cosmos:

The image shows a page of a musical score, likely for a large orchestra. The score is divided into two systems, with a double bar line and a section marker '2' indicating a change. The woodwinds (flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons) and brass (trumpets, trombones, tuba, euphonium) are playing sustained, melodic lines. The strings (violins, violas, cellos, double basses) are playing a rhythmic, pulsating pattern. The score is written in a standard musical notation with various dynamics and articulation marks.

The instruments listed on the left side of the score are:

- Fl. 1
- Fl. 2
- Hob. 1
- Hob. 2
- Clar. 1
- Clar. 2
- Clar. 3
- Bassoon 1
- Bassoon 2
- Corn 1
- Corn 2
- Trumpet 1
- Trumpet 2
- Trombone 1
- Trombone 2
- Tuba
- Euphonium
- Harpe
- Vcl. div. on 1
- Vcl. div. on 2
- Cb.

The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (e.g., *pp*, *f*, *ppp*). The woodwinds and brass sections are playing sustained, melodic lines, while the strings are playing a rhythmic, pulsating pattern. The score is written in a standard musical notation with various dynamics and articulation marks.

7.8 Subjectivity of Specific Representation

To my ear, Dutilleux's decision to call the first movement *Nebuleuse* can be seen to reflect the way that he represented the spiraling and shifting cloud-like textures of the painting in sound. While Julian Green argues that the statically moving opening clusters in the woodwinds can be seen to represent Van Gogh's "renowned impressionistic brushstrokes" and Van Gogh's "individualistic style of thickly daubed paint upon the canvas"⁴⁹ to me, the expanding woodwind clusters- first seen at Figure 1 and reappearing throughout the movement- evoke a sonic image of slowly spiraling celestial clouds of gas and dust.

To me, Van Gogh's "thickly daubed paint" can be heard more when orchestral colors are subjected to trills (Figure 5.3), tremolos (Figure 5.4), repeating 16th notes (Figure 5.5).

⁴⁹ Green, "Frames of Reference," 220.

Figure 5.3 Tremolos Evoking “Thickly Daubed Paint”

10

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system includes the following instruments and parts:

- Pic Fl.** (Piccolo Flute): 1. *pp* (G. Fl.) *un poco cresc.*
- Fl.** (Flute): *furi.* *p un poco cresc.* *(ordin.)*
- Hrh. d'A.** (Horn in A): *pp*
- Cl.** (Clarinet): *ppp* *ppp poco cresc.* *ppp*
- Bass.** (Bassoon): *ppp* *ppp poco cresc.* *ppp*
- C. Bas.** (Contrabassoon): *pp*
- Cor.** (Cor Anglais): 1. et 2. *pp*
- Trp.** (Trumpet): *p* *pp*
- Tib.** (Trombone): *pp*
- Tuba**: *pp*
- Timb.** (Timpani): *ppp* *pp*
- Symb. rmp. mtd.** (Snare Drum): *pp*
- T. Tam grave** (Tom-Tom): *pp*
- Harpe** (Harp): *pp* *mp* *pp*

The second system includes the following instruments and parts:

- 1.** *pp* *(sur la corde de ré)* *mf*
- 2.** *pp* *(sur la corde de ré)* *mf*
- 3.** *pp* *(sur la corde de ré)* *mf*
- 4.** *pp* *(sur la corde de ré)* *mf*
- 5. div.** *pp* *(sur la corde de ré)* *mf*

H. 32608

Figure 5.4 Trill Evoking “Thickly Daubed Paint”

7 Misterioso ($\text{♩} = 96$)

Fl. 1, 2
Ob. 1, 2
Cl. 1, 2
Cl. B.
Bsn. 1, 2
C. Bsn.
Vn. 1, 2
Vn. 3, 4
Va. 1, 2
Cb. 1, 2
Cb. 3, 4
Db.

Cym.
Trb.
Tub.
Timp.
Cymb.

(1. or 2. word)
(1. or 4. note word)

7 Misterioso ($\text{♩} = 96$)

1. Sopr.
2. Sopr.
3. Sopr.
4. Sopr.
1. Alto
2. Alto
3. Alto
4. Alto
1. Tenor
2. Tenor
3. Tenor
4. Tenor
1. Bass
2. Bass
3. Bass
4. Bass

Tutti div. ex. 2

H. 32008

Figure 5.5 16th Notes Evoking “Thickly Daubed Paint”

40

The musical score is arranged in a system of staves. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Ptes Fl** (Piccolo Flute): Two staves, measures 1-4.
- Fl** (Flute): Two staves, measures 1-4.
- Hrb** (Horn): Two staves, measures 1-4.
- Cl** (Clarinet): Two staves, measures 1-4.
- Bons** (Bassoon): Two staves, measures 1-4.
- Cors** (Cor Anglais): Two staves, measures 1-4.
- Trp** (Trumpet): Two staves, measures 1-4.
- Timb** (Timpani): One staff, measures 1-4.
- T. Tam médium** (T. Tam médium): One staff, measures 1-4.
- Glock** (Glockenspiel): One staff, measures 1-4.
- Cyl** (Cymbals): One staff, measures 1-4.
- Harpe** (Harp): One staff, measures 1-4.
- Vlc** (Violoncello): One staff, measures 1-4.
- Cb** (Contrabass): One staff, measures 1-4.

The score includes various dynamics and articulations, such as *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *cresc.*, *decresc.*, *ppp*, *fff*, *pizz*, and *marc.*. The 16th notes are prominently featured in the woodwind and string parts, creating a thick, textured sound.

These are but a few examples of the subjectivity involved in musical/painting parallels, and how two peoples' interpretations can differ so easily. Indeed, this subjectivity can even be problematic. The use of paintings as program can also be seen to detract from one's experience of the music.

For example: toward the end of the first movement, a chorale texture in divisi cello emerges, with clusters played in fortissimo unison. The striking difference of texture from anything heard before signals a new association. Dutilleux discusses here how "it is as if the cellos are completely suspended in space," and Potter argues that "this use of the low strings in high registers therefore evokes the sense of space in the painting, particularly the gap between the stars and the village."⁵⁰

I didn't hear the chorale texture in this way at all. As I listened to the orchestral work while studying the painting, I assumed that this section represented the church spire due to the chorale topic. I was a bit confused as to why Dutilleux would place an earth-bound texture in such intensely high ranges of the instrument. My experience of this section was less than satisfying due to my confusion of associations. Upon hearing what was intended by the composer, the section makes more sense to me. However, in my case, listening for parallels between the painting and the music created a lack of clear understanding in the intended meaning of the music at this section.

⁵⁰ Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works*, 126.

Figure 5.6 Chorale Texture in Divisi Cello

The image displays a musical score for a cello ensemble, specifically measures 30 and 31. The score is written for six divisi cello parts, labeled 1. div. through 6. div. on the left. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 30 begins with a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo). The notation for each part shows a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, creating a rich, textured sound. Measure 31 continues this texture, with a tempo instruction in French: "Garder le mouvement des 2) (2) soit environ 126 à la 2)". The score is published by H. 32608, as indicated at the bottom.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Movement 2- Interlude". The score is written for a large ensemble, likely a string orchestra, and consists of 12 staves. The first system contains staves 1 through 6, and the second system contains staves 7 through 12. The music is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The score includes various dynamics such as *sempre ff*, *ff*, *f*, *mf*, and *pp*. There are also articulations like *div.* (divisi) and *rit.* (ritardando). A rehearsal mark 32 is present at the beginning of the second system. The score is identified by the number H. 32608 at the bottom.

7.9 Movement 2- Interlude

The interlude movement that was added in 1990 connects Movement 1, *Nebuleuse*, and Movement 2, *Constellations*, through texture and pitch content. It features the orchestra's twelve celli in striking ways that exploit the instruments' large tessitura seen in dark, low, somber, earthy sounds to poignant and intense sonorities in high registers. Ascending clusters in the interlude connect to the first movement. The celesta reminisces back the opening pitches G#-E-D#-F that began the first movement as if remembering but a fragment, and then, reminded by this fragment, the strings pick up the entire opening 9-pitch set first heard in the descending woodwind line at Figure 1. Forte pizzicato come in the end of the interlude, playing almost repeating 6 note fragments of the opening row, transposed down a fourth, so they start on D#

instead of G#. The pizzicato texture at the end of the interlude anticipates the staccato punctuations of the *Constellations* discussed in the following paragraph.

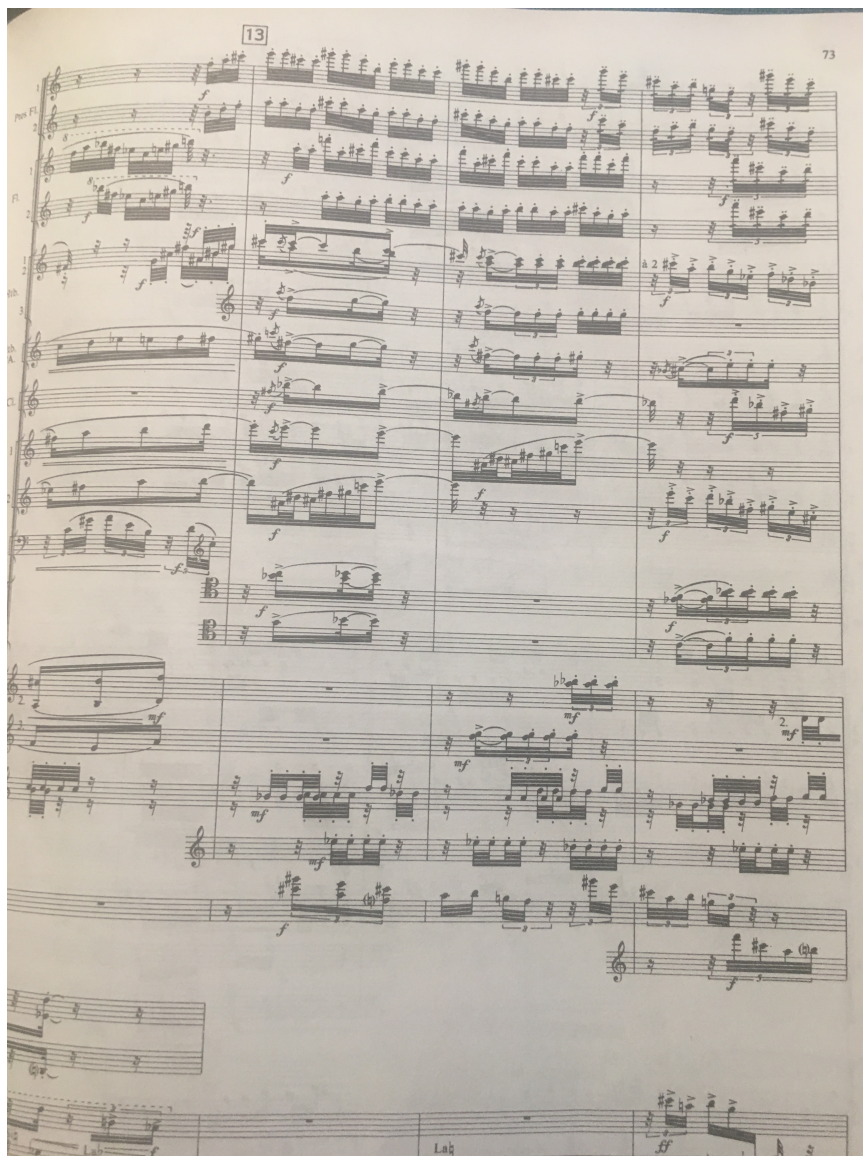
The Interlude is not in the 1980 score.

7.10 Movement Three- *Constellations*

One can hear the constellations evocative of its title in the third movement, beginning at Figure 7, with sounds that can be heard to represent stars. Pointillistic and sustained high notes in flutes, oboes, and Eb clarinet are punctuated percussively by harp, crotales, and later, marimbas, celesta and glockenspiel. These glistening star-like flickers are placed against different backdrops, including undulating orchestral 16th notes in low and mid-ranges, and faster 16th note triplets and 32nd notes, ultimately, in Figure 13, leading to a sound world evocative of many brilliantly lit constellations through fast repeating 32nd notes of trumpets, horns and winds in bright high registers, and metallic glockenspiel adding to the shimmer. Images of sheer bright light can be “heard” through sustained high chords in winds and brass accompanied by tremoloing suspended cymbal and vibrating low tam tam.

Figure 5.8 Rehearsal Number 13 in the Music: Brilliant Brightly Lit

Constellations Through Repeating 32nd Notes in High Registers of Winds and Metallic Glockenspiel:



Melismatic solo lines first stated in oboe d'amour/oboe are featured in both *Nebuleuse* and in *Constellations*. While pitch content is different, the solo lines in both movements are characterized by rhythmically active phrases that are full of

arpeggiated bursts. In *Constellations*, the ascending affect is more notable than in *Nebuleuse*.

To my ear, the solo lines in both movements are striking for their human feel, evoked through the use of the singing oboe d'amour/oboe, phrases of breathable lengths, and through expressively searching and reaching affects heard in bursts of ascending and descending arpeggiations.

Figure 22 in *Constellations* is notably striking for its majestic brass color underneath a fast and exciting swirl of woodwinds, timpani and bongos. A new harmonic color is heard here- that of simple triads- emphasized in fortissimo brass chords. The effect of golden brass timbre on major (and one minor) triads can be seen to suggest the brilliant colors of the stars. It's impact is all the more striking given the work's dense atonality and the hyper-extended nature of the triadic pitch content up until this point.

7.11 Pitch Content and "Progressive Growth"

While many writers have much to say regarding Dutilleux's use of timbre to evoke affective and physical reactions to the painting in *Timbre, espace, mouvements*, not much mention has been made of his pitch content. Scholars more often refer generally to Dutilleux's non-systematic approach to his atonal language in the piece. However, if one looks more closely, one can see how Dutilleux's use of progressive thematic growth can be seen in the gradually development motivic cells based on pitch sets

0,1,4 and 0,1,5, emphasizing the intervals of a semi-tone to a major or minor third.

This cell is first presented in the woodwinds at Figure 1. Dutilleux weaves a 9-note row out of the figure, transforming it throughout the piece (see Figure 8 below):

Figure 5.9 Opening 9-Note Row Beginning With Pitch Set 0,1,5

The image shows a page from a musical score, likely for a symphony or orchestral work. The top staff is marked with a rehearsal number '1' and the tempo '♩ = 80 - Penser 40 à la d'. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The score is written for a large ensemble, including woodwinds, strings, and percussion. The woodwind section (flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons) is prominent in the upper staves, playing a complex, melodic line. The string section (violins, violas, cellos, double basses) is in the lower staves, providing a harmonic and rhythmic foundation. The percussion section includes timpani, snare drum, and cymbals. The score is marked with various dynamics such as *pp* (pianissimo), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *ppp* (pianississimo). The overall texture is dense and intricate, characteristic of Dutilleux's style.

The oboe d'amour solo at rehearsal number 10 and all of the ensuing canons and unisons of the section is based on pitch set 0,1,4.

And much of the figuration in the movement is based on the same pitch set. The interlude, as previously mentioned, also features this pitch set in the celli and celesta. In the third movement, the set has been altered to 0,1,6 as seen first in the flutes at Figure 3, highlighting the interval of a fourth (see Figure 10, below):

Figure 5.11 Pitch Set Altered to 0,1,6 in the Third Movement,
Emphasizing the Interval of the Fourth:

The image shows a page of a musical score, page 58, with a 3/8 time signature and a key signature of one flat. The score is for a woodwind section, including Flutes (Fl.), Horns (Htb.), Clarinets (Cl.), and Bass Clarinet (Cl. B.). The music is in 3/8 time and features a pitch set of 0,1,6. The score is divided into two systems, with measures 58 and 59 indicated. The first system (measures 58-59) shows the woodwind section playing a melodic line with a pitch set of 0,1,6. The second system (measures 60-61) shows the woodwind section playing a melodic line with a pitch set of 0,1,6. The score is marked with 'p' (piano) and 'mp' (mezzo-piano).

This fourth returns fully harmonized by the aforementioned brass triads at Figure 22 in the final two triads of C minor down to G Major, adding to the sense of excitement

and brilliance (see Figure 11, below). The growth of one intervallic motive into another reflects Dutilleux's process of the "progressive growth" characteristic of his mature style:

Figure 5.12 Brass Triads Moving From C Minor to G Major:

This image shows a page from a musical score, likely for a symphony, featuring a variety of instruments. The page is numbered 88 in the top left corner. The instruments listed on the left include: Piccolo Flute (Pic. Fl.), Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Hob.), Piccolo Clarinet (Pic. Cl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bass.), Contrabassoon (C. Bass.), Cor Anglais (Cor.), Trumpet (Trp.), Trombone (Trb.), Tuba, Timpani (Timb.), Cymbal (C. Cl.), 2 Tom-toms (2 Tom.), T. Tam. grave, Glockenspiel (Glock.), Harp (Harpe), Violins (Vlc.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Cb.). The score is written in French and includes dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo) and *f* (forte). The music is arranged in staves, with some instruments having multiple staves. The page shows a transition from C Minor to G Major, as indicated by the caption.

Also reflective of “progressive growth” is his use of the repeating notes from which melismatic lines emerge. The pitch G# is central to the piece. It recurs continuously throughout the first movement, but, at the end of the movement, the pitch transforms to an four-octave unison D throughout the orchestra- a particularly significant move given the tritone relationship between the two important pitches.

Why is the tritone relationship important in the context of the painting? Because the tritone represents opposite ends of the pitch spectrum, which can be seen to reflect the blue and yellow/gold that are the basis of the painting, and, like the tritone, are at opposite ends of the color spectrum. Of course, the representation of specific color through musical pitch is entirely subjective, but the idea in this case of contrasting pitches representing contrasting colors is plausible.

7.12 Ascending Lines: Symbolic of Aspiring “Towards the Infinity of Nature”

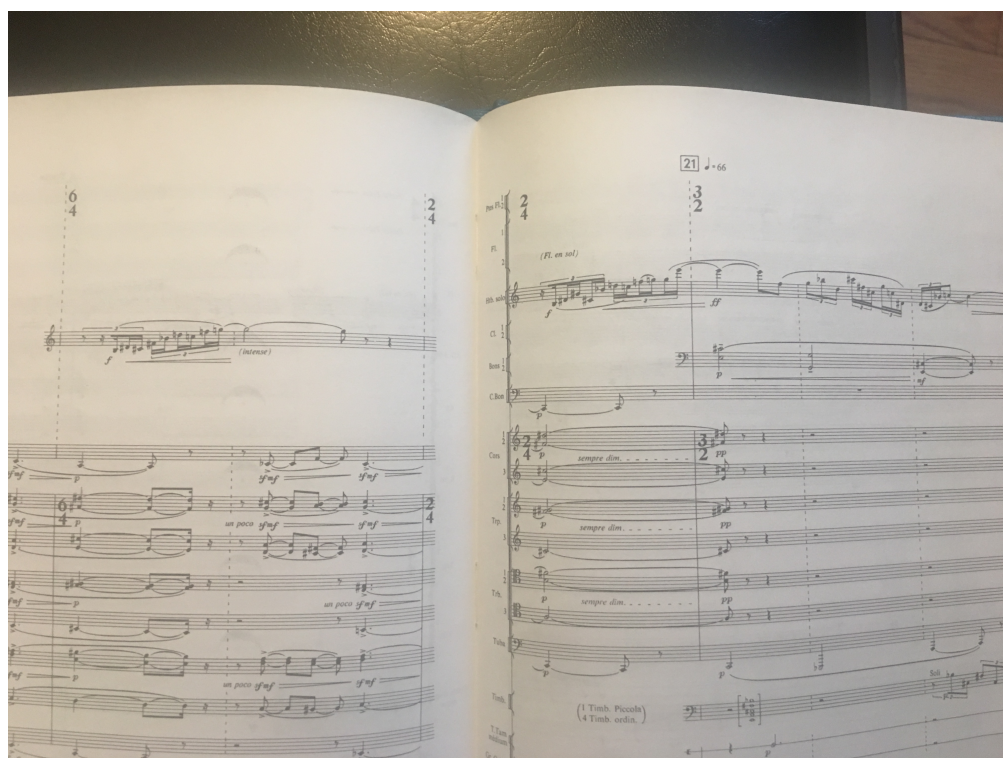
Another key feature of Dutilleux’s style is his use of ascending lines. While one could point to Dutilleux’s use of ascending lines as characteristic of this piece, in fact, as pointed out by Caroline Potter, they are significant to his entire style:

Of course, ascensional movement is very common in Dutilleux’s music, showing that *Timbres, espace, mouvement* is stylistically linked with the rest of Dutilleux’s output and that the numerous ascents in this work cannot be considered purely as an interpretation of certain aspects of Van Gogh’s painting.⁵¹

⁵¹ Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works*, 310.

And yet, Dutilleux refers to the ascents specifically as being “like an aspiration towards the infinity of nature.” Examples can be seen throughout the opening two episodes in the ascending bass lines, in the very opening four bars of the piece’s ascending percussion sounds, in the opening of *Constellations*, in the oboe solo of *Constellations* (see Figure 12 below), and in many other places throughout the work. It is therefore fair to say that Dutilleux’s compositional approach to melodic/linear composing found a direct outlet for an expressive reaction in Van Gogh’s painting.

Figure 5.13- Ascending Lines of the Oboe Solo in the Third Movement:

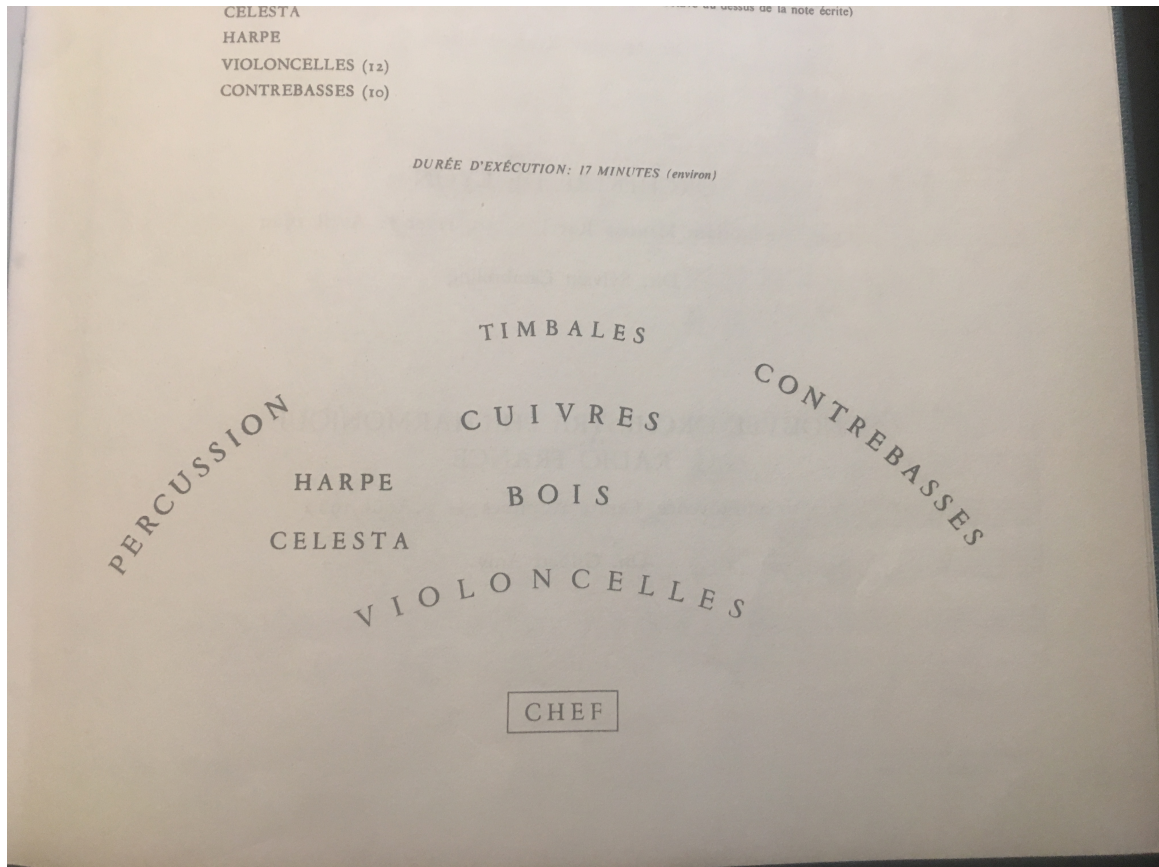


7.13 Visual/Spatial Connections

We can see Dutilleux’s reaction to the painting in two additional visual/spatial ways. One is in his use of stage set-up to convey the impression of space. The setup includes an unusual instruction to arrange the twelve cello in a semi-circle surrounding the

conductor (see Figure 13). Many have said that the effect of Dutilleux's circular arrangement in live performance highlights the physicality of sonic shapes moving through space and time.

Figure 5.14- Dutilleux's Directions for Orchestra Setup:



Several scholars have pointed to the visual aspect of the score's physical look as important to Dutilleux's creative process. Caroline Potter quotes Dutilleux's description of its importance: "Often, in my own work, if I am not satisfied with a page of orchestral music from a purely visual point of view, then I feel something is

wrong.”⁵² It is interesting to note that from a purely visual perspective, one can see conspicuously evocative voids in the score when certain instruments are not playing, spiral effects when instruments are playing ascending and descending spiraling lines, and pages that resembles a starry night in how they are dotted pointillistically with notes.

7.14 Conclusion

Looking at Dutilleux’s creative process gives us different angles of insight into his *Timbres, espace, mouvement ou Le nuit étoilée*. One could argue, poetically, that Van Gogh’s painting was analogous to Proust’s Madeleine in how it unleashed an outpouring of creativity in the form of the orchestral work.

We can also see how Dutilleux’s affective and physical reactions to Van Gogh’s painting acted as a catalyst for the composer, inviting key aesthetic features of his mature style to find a voice, including use of ‘progressive growth’, ascending lines, repeating ‘pivot tones’, and a strong focus on imaginative timbre that exploits the ranges and possibilities of the instruments.

The tricky question in this piece is on the subjectivity of specific representation. Dutilleux made his physical and affective reactions to the painting clear by his use of titles, and by his openness in discussing his process in various interviews. But, while his reactions are clear, it is more difficult to objectively nail down specific parallels

⁵² Potter, *Henri Dutilleux: His Life and Works*, 123.

between the painting and the music, and even more so if one hasn't read his words about his process.

Dutilleux's initial reticence at acknowledging the painting in the title of his work shows his own struggle with how to present the work to its listeners. Ultimately, Dutilleux felt that it was indeed necessary to make the painting part of our perceptual listening experience through his use of subtitle and movement titles. Did his decision deepen the listener's experience of the music? Or did it confuse the listener's experience of the music? How would not knowing the programmatic inspiration behind the music affect the listener's experience of the piece?

From my own listening experience, ultimately, while there are definite clear parallels between the two works, the relationship is too removed on a foundational level of colors and objects to offer me perceptual clarity, and I end up feeling like I'm missing something. I would prefer a less intellectualized and conceptual experience of listening to this highly imaginative and beautiful work in which I could allow my own associations to have free rein, and not be working quite so hard to see connections that seem to be subjective in the first place.

Chapter 8: Background: *Dream of the Sleeping Gypsy* by Amanda Harberg

I was commissioned in summer of 2018 to write an 8-12 minute orchestral work for the Bay Atlantic Symphony, by Artistic Director Jed Gaylin. At the time, I was deciding on topics for my doctoral dissertation. When the commission came in, it

seemed like the perfect opportunity to explore the genre of the tone poem through the lens of my own creative process. With the support of my thesis committee I decided that for my dissertation, I would both compose a tone poem and also study the genre as the topic of my doctoral thesis.

8.1 Compositional Process and Influence of Narrative Theory

My music is often inspired by emotional reaction to personal experience.

Frequently, the reaction acts as a catalyst for motivic ideas that, for me, seem rich with potential. Once I have such an idea in place, I draw from it larger melodic materials. I then intuitively try to understand the structural needs of the materials.

In my previous works, I've not tried to impose a structure onto my materials, but rather, I worked to try to understand and respect the materials' ideal forms.

Some ideas seem to need arc-shaped forms that do not rely on contrast for their structure. Other times, ideas seem to necessitate contrasting materials. When thematic materials call for foils, the opposition between materials creates the underlying structural moments that determine the form, be it binary, ternary, sonata, rondo, theme and variations, or episodic form.

In Chapter Two, I explored the discussion amongst musicologists over ways in which narrative theory can be used to widen one's approach to music analysis. I found that metaphors between narrative plot structure and musical plot structure offered a compelling and creative way in which to expand one's thinking about

musical form and content. Particularly resonant for me was the idea of how we can think of musical plot in a metaphorical way, with successions of non-specific musical plot events unfolding over time to create a “narrative” in music analogous to an allegorical plot sequence. The application of narrative thought to music allows music to be understood on its own abstract terms while also enabling it to borrow from ideas on narrative plot structure.

I realized through my exploration of this topic that I often think about music in a narrative way. When I compose “abstract”/non-programmatic music, I am thinking about how oppositional forces interact to drive the underlying structure. By consciously thinking about plot interaction in a narratological way, my imagination is stimulated to find possibilities in expanded and sometimes unexpected directions.

However, my process of composing the tone poem called “*Dream of The Sleeping Gypsy*” was not a direct or obvious path. I began by searching for stories that were meaningful to me and could inspire musical thought. I initially gravitated toward stories that revolved around nature themes, as they seemed to be less burdened by narrative detail and would allow for plenty of musical freedom. But none of the stories that I considered inspired the creative alchemy in me that generates rich materials. Perhaps the pressure of having an ‘assignment’ was paralyzing to me.

Whatever the case, with a deadline looming, I had to write something and I decided to put aside the pressure of coming up with a non-musical program. But I couldn’t

shake the sense of obligation that I needed to make the piece programmatic, and I realized I needed a compelling jumping-off point, programmatic or not. I decided to look to the past in order to move forward.

8.2 Description and Analysis, and Influence of Narrative Thought in Harberg's *Dream of The Sleeping Gypsy*, for Orchestra

A Section

In 2007, I wrote a funky little sketch of a piece for viola and piano. At the time, I didn't have the craft or the experience to fully realize the form of the piece in a satisfying way, but I've always wanted to return to this idea and try again. Now was my moment.

I took this little piece and reconceived of it for orchestra, adding new lines, and timbral layers. I also changed the harmonic structure so that I could expand the preexisting sketch into a larger form. The result of this process turned into the first section of the work. Three minutes long, this upbeat and playful and rhythmic section clearly illustrates American stylistic influences of pop, jazz and even a little bluegrass through its use of "blue" notes, syncopated rhythms, and guitar-like strumming in the string pizzicati (Figure 1):

Figure 6.1 Syncopated Guitar-like String Pizzicati in the Opening:

B Section

At this point, I was three minutes into the piece, and I felt that I needed a contrasting section. Thinking about narrative plot structure and oppositional forces creating structure through contrast, I listened in my mind's ear for what 'wanted' to happen next. The opening section seemed to me like an 'outer' world, full of the bustle of urban life. I was feeling a pull to create something more reminiscent of a private, 'inner' world in this new contrasting section. The result turned into a four-minute rhapsodic section, with an exotic feeling due to its use modes, drones, percussion, and predominance of double and single reeds on solo lines:

Figure 6.2 Double and Single Reeds on Solo Lines, Modally Exotic and Melismatic

Melodies over Drones, Use of Percussion to Evoke Middle Eastern Affect:

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts and markings:

- Fl.**: Melodic line starting at measure 170, marked *mp*.
- Ob.**: Melodic line starting at measure 170, marked *mp*.
- Bs. Cl.**: Melodic line starting at measure 170, marked *mp*.
- Bsn.**: Melodic line starting at measure 170, marked *mp*, with a *Solo* instruction at measure 173.
- Hrn.**: Measures 170-175, marked *mp*.
- C Tpt.**: Measures 170-175, marked *mp*.
- Tbn.**: Measures 170-175, marked *mp*.
- B. Tbn.**: Measures 170-175, marked *mp*.
- Mrb.**: Measures 170-175, marked *mp*.
- Timp.**: Measures 170-175, marked *mp*.
- Perc.**: Includes *Tam* (Tambourine) and *Tri* (Triangle) parts, marked *mp*, with a *Sax Cym* (Saxophone Cymbal) part marked *p* and *mf*.
- Vln. I**: Measures 170-175, marked *pp*.
- Vln. II**: Measures 170-175, marked *pp*.
- Vla.**: Measures 170-175, marked *pp*.
- Vc.**: Measures 170-175, marked *p*, with a *unis* (unison) instruction.
- D.B.**: Measures 170-175, marked *p*.



A conversation between the high bassoon and clarinet in modal recitative-like statements leads to the oboe's aria, based on a dotted rhythm motif. From here, the orchestra develops and builds to a large climax in which the tutti strings and woodwinds take over the dotted rhythm figure with the brass and timpani punctuating the melody in fortissimo triplet quarter notes, with the harmony reaching its most dissonant point in the piece so far (Figure 3):

Figure 6.3 Orchestral Climax:

This figure displays a page of an orchestral score, specifically measures 139 through 144. The score is written for a large orchestra, including woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The music is marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic throughout. The score is organized into systems, with measures 139, 141, 142, 143, and 144 indicated at the beginning of their respective staves. The woodwind section (Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, and Tuba) features complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines. The brass section (Trumpet, Trombone, and Tuba) provides a strong harmonic foundation. The percussion section (Maracas, Timpani, and Percussion) adds rhythmic texture. The string section (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass) plays a continuous, rhythmic pattern. The score is written in a standard musical notation style, with notes, rests, and dynamic markings clearly visible.

139 *ff* 141 142 143 144

Picc. dbl fl.

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hr.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Mrb.

Timp.

Perc.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

After the tension winds down, the clarinet and bassoon return, offering a relief to the climax, and the section ends softly, and perhaps, mysteriously. The whole second section is punctuated throughout with playful recollections of the jazzy pizzicato opening, creating thematic unity between the sections and sprinkling a touch of humor throughout the more rhapsodic and seemingly more “serious” materials.

A1 Section and Coda

At this point, it was clear to me that the piece wanted to be an ABA form plus coda. However, an exact recapitulation would have been boring and lifeless. Instead, the material needed to go through some changes in proportions of the original materials, and later, through developmental treatment through overall key structure, use of harmonic sequencing, augmentation and diminution of themes from the A section and B section, and other traditional developmental techniques used to create a sense of forward motion.

After the melismatic and exotic sounding bassoon brings the B section to a close, I felt that its oozy materials called for a total contrast, in the form of a return to the mischievously playful and rhythmic pizzicato groove from the opening. Eventually, themes from the A section and B section become more and more intertwined, and lead to a broad, maestoso tutti climax, in which the dotted rhythms from the B section return in fortissimo chorale brass writing, and the strings and upper woodwinds have a rhapsodic transformation of the opening melody.

At the end of the climax, six fast ascending bars of 16th notes from the lowest ranges of the orchestra to the highest create a sudden transition figure, leading with a driving sweep to the final coda. The jazzy bluegrass material heard in the A sections return triumphantly, with an augmentation of an earlier climactic figure from bar 82 heard in the highest registers of strings and flute/piccolo (Figure 4). Now in augmentation, this stretched out melody gives a high pedal effect above all of the rhythmic commotion in the lower registers. After this playful, raucous, joyous coda, the piece comes to rest on a final straightforward tutti D major triad.

Figure 6.4 Coda with Augmentation of Earlier Melody in High Registers Acting As a Pedal to Rhythmic Activity Below:

The musical score is arranged in a system of staves, starting at measure 239. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Piccolo (Picc):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Flute (Fl.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Oboe (Ob.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- B♭ Clarinet (B♭ Cl.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Bassoon (Bsn.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Horn (Hn.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Trumpet (C Tpt.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Trombone (Tbn.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Bass Trombone (B. Tbn.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Mallets (Mrb.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Timpani (Timp.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Percussion (Perc.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Violin I (Vln. I):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Violin II (Vln. II):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Viola (Vla.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).
- Double Bass (D.B.):** Plays a high, sustained melody in the right hand, with notes marked with a 'V' (vibrato) and a 'P' (piano).

The score is marked with a 'Coda' symbol at the beginning of the section. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' and the time signature is 4/4. The key signature is one flat (B♭). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

8.3 Questions of Programs

I had set out to compose a tone poem. And, while I was not able to find my inspiration from a specific non-musical source, I did incorporate a narrative approach to my musical thinking. The music is full of abstract plot events that interact with one another. Additionally, the music has many features evocative of extra-musical associations. There are the cultural stylistic influences of American popular music in the outer sections and of foreign/exotic music in the inner B section. There are ideas of outer surface urban reality contrasted with a more personal inner world that opens up into something passionate and rhapsodic, before returning to the playfulness of the A section. There is a great deal of playfulness suggested in the opening rhythmic motif that weaves throughout the piece, and one could even hear a mischievous, cat-like quality to the opening string pizzicatos.

However, not satisfied to leave the orchestral work as an abstract piece with no extra-musical program, I continued my search for a programmatic subject. Even though I wrote the piece independently of a program, the abstract idea of a program was very much in my mind the whole time. I tried to find stories whose associations would complement my piece. But I ran into the same problem over and over: the stylistic influences in the American sounding outer sections and the exotic sounding inner section imbued the piece with associations that were already quite specific, and I couldn't find a pre-existing story that would encompass this stylistic contrast, while also making sense with all of the other associations in the piece.

So I focused my search onto painting as non-musical program, thinking that it would offer greater flexibility due to the fact that it can be more subjective than verbal narrative, as discussed earlier in this chapter's opening section on Dutilleux.

After several trips to museums in NYC and looking through many paintings from many styles, my husband suggested Rousseau's *La Bohémienne endormie*. I immediately knew that this was the right answer.

8.4 Background to Henri Rousseau and *La Bohémienne endormie*

Figure 6.5 *La Bohémienne endormie* by Henri Rousseau



Rousseau, 1844-1910, became a painter against the odds. Born into a working class family that needed him to work as a small boy, his family lost their house to debts and he ended up having to support his mother as a government employee from the age of twenty-four. Rousseau became a toll-collector in Paris around this time, and had six children with his teenaged wife, only one of whom survived. Rousseau taught himself to paint in his 40's, while working as a toll-collector. His famously primitive/naïve style was influenced by nature, popular magazines, children's stories' illustrations, taxidermy, and the Paris botanical gardens. His work frequently mixes different cultural elements, combining seemingly incongruous habitats in understatedly striking ways.

Rousseau painted *La Bohémienne endormie* in 1897. He described the painting thus:

A wandering Negress, a mandolin player, lies with her jar beside her (a vase with drinking water), overcome by fatigue in a deep sleep. A lion chances to pass by, picks up her scent yet does not devour her. There is a moonlight effect, very poetic.⁵³

8.5 Rousseau's *La Bohémienne endormie* and Harberg's *Dream of The Sleeping Gypsy*

I've loved Rousseau's painting *La Bohémienne endormie* since I was a high school student. It always resonated with me due to its naïve/primitive style and due to its whimsical humor laced with danger. And I loved its dreamy quality, on one hand figurative and direct, and on the other hand, open to all sorts of interpretation.

In looking at Rousseau's painting as I was finishing my orchestral work, I was struck by what seemed to me to be stylistic parallels between the painting and my music. Rousseau's primitivism/naivism is echoed in the music through use of simplicity and directness in tonal language and melodic approach, its use of folk/jazz elements, and its sense of humor and playfulness.

Rhythm is an important element in my piece. It is first felt in the opening string pizzicato motif, and continues to be a driving force throughout the work. Rousseau's painting has strong rhythmic elements that resonate with the music. It uses

⁵³ Henri Rousseau- Paintings, Biography, Quotes. Accessed March 15, 2019.
<http://www.henrirousseau.net/the-sleeping-gypsy.jsp>

rhythmic patterns, as is seen in the stripes of the gypsy's colorful dress, which can be felt analogously in the music's use of rhythmic ostinatos. And the presence of the mandolin to me is suggestive of the folksy, jazzy string pizzicatos that recur throughout the music.

The painting appears to be in a desert setting, with the night sky brightly lit by stars and a full moon. The setting reverberates with the B section's timbres and modes that are evocative of Middle Eastern music.

Additionally, Rousseau's painting also has a narrative quality in which figurative objects are suggestive of a story, similar to the subjective narrative quality of my music. While the subjects of the lion, the stars and the moon do not factor their way into the music with any real degree specificity --nor, I suspect, could they -- the music does resonate with the idea of the dreaming gypsy -- and the narrative possibilities of exploring her dreams.

The theme of dreaming is closely tied in to the music, both in structure and content. A strong element of the musical structure is the idea of a rhythmic, folksy outer world contrasted with a rhapsodic inner world. By changing the title of the piece to "Dream of The Sleeping Gypsy", I have offered my interpretation of the painting in order to suggest a stronger parallel with the music, and in order to invite the idea of dreaming versus waking, as analogous to inner world versus outer world.

8.6 Conclusion

The process of composing my new orchestral work was complex. In coming up with a concept and title to fit the work, I could have treated it like an abstract piece, but this would have felt incomplete to me. At its heart, the piece felt to me all along like it needed an extra-musical association. I sought this association unsuccessfully throughout the process of composing the piece. Only at the end of my process did I come across *La Bohémienne endormie*. And when I did, it felt like I had found the missing puzzle piece.

To me, Rousseau's painting offers meaningful parallels to the music. The music seems stylistically connected to the painting, in its use of primitive stylistic elements. The painting offers colorful rhythmic resonances to the music. The music meets the painting in its topical affect summoning Middle Eastern associations. And notions of outer and inner worlds have an important role in the painting's content, and in the music's structure.

Now that I have finished the piece and come up with the title, I must ask myself- will the association with *La Bohémienne endormie* enhance the listener's experience? Or will it confuse the listener due to the subjective nature of the content-based parallels? Are stylistic and subjective associations between painting and music sufficient for creating a successful tone poem as we have defined the term?

Due to the lack of narrative succession of events in painting, as well as to the subjective nature of our perceptions when viewing a painting, the parallels that we have seen in the Dutilleux and in my new work are more subjective than they were in the tone poems we have explored based on narrative story and on poetry.

Van Gogh's *Le nuit étoilée* triggered and inspired reactions in Dutilleux's music based on its physical and psychological elements. But aside from the most obvious associations, parallels between the painting and the music- including the ones described in interviews by the composer himself- are arguably more subjective than in any works we have seen so far.

In my new tone poem, *Dream of the Sleeping Gypsy*, Rousseau's painting helped me to find completion in the piece through finding a non-musical work of art that resonates on stylistic levels and in some levels of content and form. In my case, I harnessed my reaction to the painting and my interpretation of the painting in order to serve the music that I'd already composed.

Based on exploration of *Timbres, espace, mouvement* and of *Dream of The Sleeping Gypsy*, one can see how music that uses painting as its non-musical program is likely to have a looser, more subjective relationship between the music and the program than music that uses a literary program such as story or poetry.

Chapter 9: Summary and Conclusions

In promoting the genre of the “symphonische Dichtung” in 1848, Liszt aimed to free musical content from its dependency on conventional absolute musical forms, in the name of philosophical elevation. While the impact and potentials of this new form may have been overstated by Liszt and his supporters, the inclusion of non-musical content did in fact open up a range of new possibilities. As other composers took up this form and took it into their own directions, Liszt’s lofty philosophical ideals went in directions that he may never have intended for them to go. But the fact remains that he opened up a new way to explore and expand upon musical thinking, in which music can incorporate and reflect many aspects of the non-musical program, including the subjects, styles, meanings, emotions, aspirations, humor, psychology, and political and philosophical intents of a range of different mediums.

What I’ve discovered in my exploration of music based on narrative stories is that Liszt was right- in this flexible genre, content can indeed shape form and give rise to expressive possibilities. In Strauss’s *Tod und Verklärung* and Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet*, the sonata forms used in both pieces reflected the narrative content of their literary programs in places where they veered from conventions of the form. Additionally, the two composers’ approaches to thematic and motivic development helped to strengthen the connection to their respective stories.

In music based on a poetic program, issues of narrative story continue to play out, with temporally unfolding points of oppositional plot functions continuing to play a

role in driving the musical forms. In addition, questions of poetic style took on a surprisingly powerful influence in shaping the musical form and content. In the case of Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, the poetic style helped Vaughan Williams to create a work that continues to offer listeners a connection to humankind's aspirations with the beauty of nature, and a nostalgic ode to simpler times. And in the case of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, the influence of poetic style helped Debussy to forge a musical direction that would shape the entire future of classical music, in a way that continues to be felt powerfully to this day.

The structural and content-based impact of music based on painting proved to be the least tangible of the three mediums that I explored. In Dutilleux's work, the correlations between non-musical content and the music was harder to define due to the subjective nature of the way in which we perceive painting, and due to the spatial dimension of painting as opposed to the temporal unfolding of the other mediums explored in my thesis. En lieu of an unfolding narrative, impressions of physical elements of the painting were evoked through physical qualities of the instruments including instrumental timbre, instrumental effects, contrast of instrumental families and ranges, and psychological and thematic elements were evoked through use of cluster effects, rhythmic pacing, and the use of ascending and descending lines. Dutilleux's use of "progressive growth" helped to weave it all together, and further, connected the piece to his larger body of work. Dutilleux's openly discussed compositional process offered meaningful insights into

connections with Van Gogh's painting that could be otherwise be misinterpreted, due to the challenge of reconciling two mediums with very different behaviors.

Clearly, there are a range of approaches to creating programmatic musical forms. My own experience of composing a tone poem illustrates a different process than the works of the other composers explored in this thesis. My process did in fact incorporate some of the elements of narrative theory that I had been focused on while writing my thesis. But, in finding no suitable narrative, I found Rousseau's painting to suggest narrative, stylistic, and whimsical elements that found great resonance for me in my tone poem. For me, the extra-musical source became important later in the process as a way to offer a point of entry to the listeners, as was sometimes the case with Liszt himself.

While we can speak of generalities in terms of the interactions between content and form, we can't speak in generalities in terms of individual composers' creative processes. In order to better understand interactions between music and non-musical content, we must take Maus's advice and "turn, not to the technical vocabulary or abstract formalizations that preoccupy many theorists, but to relatively unambitious, blow-by-blow description of individual pieces."

In this thesis, narrative theory proved useful for opening a window to understanding the compositional process of music based on literary sources, and how the process engages with the world around us. But as the medium changed, so

did the behavior of the music, and so did our approach to understanding the interaction between mediums. Some composers talk openly and articulately about their compositional process. But others may be reluctant to reveal their intimate personal process for a variety of reasons. Analysis has the potential to shed a sharper light onto the complexities of the creative process, and any light is valuable if we want to gain insight into the mysterious process of creating art.

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