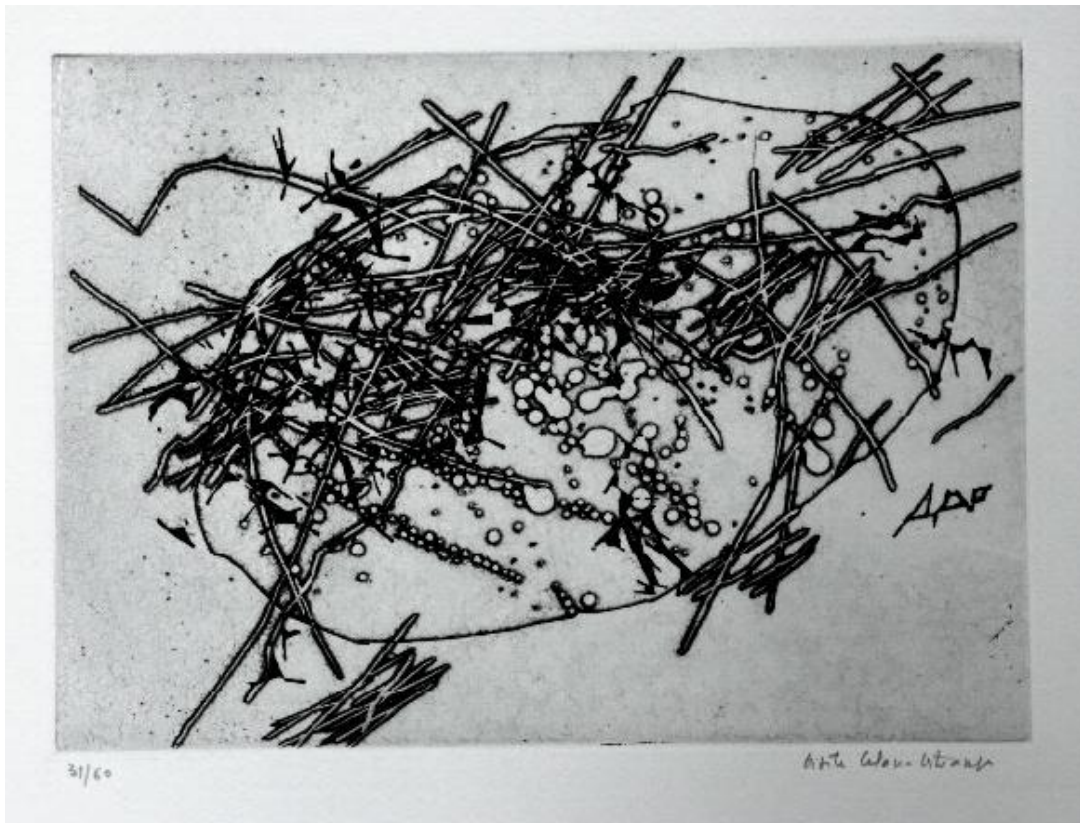


Wortaufschüttung:

**exploring expression through performances and analyses
of contemporary settings of twentieth-century poetry**



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1 Introduction

In this practice-based research project, I set out to investigate the aesthetics of settings of twentieth-century poetry by post-war avant-garde composers in relation to concepts of expressivity and abstraction, by treating these concepts as concomitant rather than antithetical. I analyse my chosen examples and the emergence of new and original expressive qualities of the music in relation to the autonomy of the poetic substance, and how the more general project of setting text to music can be considered in relation to these issues. My research involves elaborating a definition of 'expression' and conceptualising it around the question of what a specifically musical intellectuality might bring to aesthetics – as opposed to exclusively philosophical concepts, which may never make their way to the actual musical utterance as it is performed and perceived.

The ambition of my research is twofold: it consists of establishing an interdisciplinary dialogue aimed at decompartmentalising contemporary practices – musical, poetic and philosophical – consubstantially dependent upon one another, while an analytical text endeavours to formalise this research through an investigation of innovative concepts and means of expressivity brought about by the relation of poetic text and music in contemporary avant-garde composition. All of these aspects nevertheless only constitute a propaedeutic to the performance of the pieces I consider, as the rehearsal process and performance process necessarily have a retrospect effect, modifying or even contradicting the pre-rehearsal stages of the reflection.

The intrinsic difficulty of practice-based research lies in the fact that it is not merely a reflection based on the hiatus between theory and practice and how the latter emerges from the former. In my case, it is not a matter of illustrating musically a questioning that would precede the sound discourse. Similarly, the written research is not an *a posteriori* account of interpretative work. My ambition here is to enlighten the musical discourse by the ordinary discourse. My research does not

pretend in any way to fill the hiatus between two heterogeneous modes of discourse, which would undermine both the musical and the written part. For this reason, if I offer in this introduction two definitions of what I mean by expression at the beginning of my work, it would be wrong to think that the work of interpretation can be ‘inferred’ from the reflexive work, for the simple reason that an inference postulates the univocity of the language employed, which could not be the case in a discussion mixing linguistic and musical meaning.

On the contrary, what is gained during the performance of the piece or during the rehearsal process in return helps hone down the problematics first formulated during the preparation of the piece, i.e. it consists in turning a sonic event into a semantic content that does not flatten what a musician’s sensibility has produced.¹ In that regard, it tests an interpreter’s ability not only to reflect on his or her own practice, but his or her ability to reflect in terms that are specifically produced by a musical intellect and not borrowed from any other type of knowledge.²

This research originates in various experiences across different fields of my musical practice: both as a conductor and a pianist, in opera houses as much as with ensembles specialising in contemporary repertoire. The current circumstances under which music is performed with professional ensembles or in opera houses (I speak from my own experience, but anecdotal evidence suggests to me that this experience is shared by many colleagues with a similar professional profile) seem

¹ This aspect has very real implications that can be detrimental to the claim of practice-based research to constitute research at all. The reduction of a sound event to a semantic occurrence supposed to give an account of it constitutes a confusion of the terms in presence. The language by which the reflection on the music is expressed is not substitutable to the rules of use of the musical signs and to their properties in the work in its sonic and expressive capacities. To take a simple analogy, borrowed from elementary logic, we could say that any example of a logical law can be expressed in ordinary language (i.e. under metalogical form), but that the law itself – not possessing any propositional variable, and possessing its own symbolic system – cannot be expressed in ordinary language.

² Concerning the notion of ‘musical intellectuality’, see François Nicolas, *Le monde-musique III: Le musicien et son intellectuality musicale* (Château-Gontier: Aedam Musicae, 2015), where the author establishes a history of discourses pertaining to musical intellectualities, from Wagner to Rosen, which he contrasts with musical anti-intellectualities, from Chopin to Berio. In parallel, Nicolas develops an approach to musical intellectualities as they relate to other conceptual edifices: mathematics, philosophy and architecture.

increasingly to rely on the musician's ability to perform complex pieces with very short notice and preparation time, or to perform, almost at first sight, pieces which would require a process of maturation if one were to present them to an audience in the most musically accomplished and moving fashion.

It is, of course, normal for a musician to have been trained so as to be able to face such challenges. It is expected from an accompanist that they would play whatever score they are given, independently from any personal musical input. This has led to damaging consequences in musical interpretation of contemporary repertoire, insofar as it has given rise to stereotypical renditions that sharply highlight some parameters, while being detrimental to others.³ This 'expressionist' *modus operandi* has been a cause of the neutralisation of what I consider to be 'expressive' features, which do not necessarily overlap with the first-mentioned way of interpreting. Observing the nature of the expressive features that exist between text and music in the pieces that I consider in this inquiry reveals layers of interpretive decisions to be taken by both the pianist and the singer. These layers disclose a necessary approach to musical expression that differs from a one-dimensional 'expressionistic' approach such as can be observed to be widespread in contemporary practice. My remarks are not intended polemically, but represent a sum of observations gathered over the course of my experience in various institutions and countries in which contemporary repertoire and creation is generously represented. They are made here with the aim of honing down the definition of 'expressivity' in the context of pieces supported by the word-music relation.

I thought of the work of Paul Celan as an example of a poetry which epitomises the concerns of post-World War II literary creation, in that it

³ Even if they seem to lend themselves to polemics, all these points – the lack of time devoted to rehearsals that would allow a creative and faithful restitution of the work, the 'expressionist', superficial character of interpretations that do not reflect the deep dynamics of the score – constitute the daily experience of those who have worked in opera houses or with orchestras. They are widely taken up in Stockhausen's writings: see in particular Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Texte zur Musik VI* (Cologne: Du Mont, 1989), devoted to questions of interpretation, and the interview with Felix Schmidt in Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Texte zur Musik XIV* (Kürten: Stockhausen-Verlag, 2014), pp. 133-157.

reformulates fundamental assumptions of poetic creation while maintaining a link with modernist authors from both Western and Eastern European countries. My aim is to observe how composers have reacted to this new impetus in poetry, and how this has led to a renewed reading and understanding of expression. My interest resides specifically in the relation between text and music as a key element that informs the expressive characteristics of any given piece I inquire into. For this reason, my main concern is not to consider each piece from an analytical perspective, but rather to observe what salient features can guide me, as a performer, through the particular challenges of a given piece, specifically in terms of expression.

As my goal is to observe how composers' readings of post-World War II poetry renewed the understanding of expression, using pre-existing material that was not initially meant to serve that same end did not seem to me to be a priority. First of all, the possibility of a continuity from a written analysis to an instrumental interpretation constitutes, in itself, a problem which calls for research in order to be corroborated or invalidated.⁴ Second, although the means of traditional analysis did not remain foreign to me – as attested by my discussion of individual pieces in Chapter 3 – it serves only as a means to the achievement of my interpretative ends. I have therefore focused more on specific aspects of the scores that pertain to their interpretation, rather than embarking on global analyses and situating these analyses in relation to other existing ones. Nonetheless, my practice-based research was undoubtedly influenced by analytical readings and by the writings of composers, as well as by my own collaborations with composers. As an illustration of the latter, I have been very fortunate to learn at first hand from a collaboration I had with György Kurtág on his *Petite musique solennelle* for orchestra in 2016.

In this respect, I would like to take advantage of two models. During my studies at the Musikhochschule in Basel, I had the opportunity to observe Kurtág's interpretative work which, without ever resorting to the means of traditional

⁴ On this question, and on the problematic of analysis and interpretation, I am indebted to the contributions of Rudolf Kelterborn. See Rudolf Kelterborn, *Zum Beispiel Mozart: Ein Beitrag zur musikalischen Analyse* (Basel: Bärenreiter, 1981) and *Analyse und Interpretation: Eine Einführung anhand von Klavierkompositionen* (Winterthur: Amadeus, 1993).

analysis, transmitted, through his purely interpretative work, all the information relating to the form and the formal relationships, the motivic work, the harmonic progressions, and so on. The second model is that offered by Christian Accaoui, once a teacher of mine, who, I believe, offers the most accomplished example of a musician who embodies the idea of interdisciplinarity, and whose aesthetic and philosophical analysis is as advanced as his musical means.⁵ These two examples authorise me not to place at the threshold of my research works which pursue goals heterogeneous to mine. At the same time, I consider it characteristic of a practice-based research that the preliminary questions are ‘reinjecte’d after the interpretative work in the course of reflection: modifying it, amending it, making it more subtle. This path is sufficient in itself in the perspective that is mine, and I do not need to borrow from existing materials, even if they are known to me, and that they have necessarily influenced my work in an implicit way, even though I recognise that to an extent that does not allow me to put my work in comparison.

For this reason, I focus on a narrow set of pieces that I have had the opportunity to perform in an environment that allowed the participants to gain an understanding of these pieces usually denied by professional constraints. I was working on the one hand with a student ensemble, and on the other hand with the soprano Alice Fagard, whom I have worked with on many occasions. This last aspect helped to optimise the rehearsal process, as I knew she was both an expert in contemporary repertoire, and very well versed in German-language poetry. My work does not carry any totalising ambition, but rather aims to show how the same working process can be applied to diverse pieces and the different results thus obtained.

A strong motivation for both the performance activities and the analytical text is to confront the frequently evoked contention of a ‘crisis’ in post-war contemporary music due to its supposed inaccessibility and lack of expressive

⁵ See the indispensable Christian Accaoui, *La musique parle, la musique peint. Tome 1 – Histoire : Les voies de l’imitation et de la référence dans l’art des sons* (Paris: Éditions du Conservatoire, 2021).

Concerning the writings of the composers or on the composers which constitute the practical part of my work, they will be mentioned in the respective sections of Chapter 3 dedicated to them.

qualities. The difficulty in engaging with this music for a listener often results from a disorientation induced by an apparent lack of a teleology.⁶ This question is addressed through the interpretations of the works which I have chosen to perform, as they include examples of pieces which do not depotentialise the text, but on the contrary create a new level of expressivity, without ever getting rid of the initial substance of the poems and assimilating it in a monochrome discourse that reduces the peculiarity of the text. This reflection leads necessarily to a re-evaluation and more precise delimitation of the concept of expressivity, to escape the generic use of it that predominates among musical discourses, as a simple marking in the score, but also, over the last decades, in psychology and various areas of philosophical studies.⁷ Those areas encompass various currents such as phenomenology, neopositivism and aesthetics. Even a philosopher of science such as Raymond Ruyer, whose work focuses mainly on cybernetics, quantum physics and biology, stresses the importance of this concept.⁸ Aesthetics should be seen here both as an attempt for musicians concerned with aesthesis to articulate and develop their specific intellectual discourse on their practice as composers, performers and/or enlightened listeners, and as a possible path towards a philosophical understanding. In that regard, confronting the numerous issues raised by the use of the word

⁶ It is difficult to count the sources that would best illustrate this point. Three that have received significant attention are: George Rochberg, 'The Avant-Garde and the Aesthetics of Survival', *New Literary History* 3/1 (Autumn 1971), pp. 71-92; Benoît Duteurtre, *Requiem pour une avant-garde* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2006); and the lecture at the Collège de France by pianist Jérôme Ducros as part of the conference *L'atonalisme. Et après* (2012), available at <<https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/karol-beffa/seminar-2012-12-20-15h00.htm>> [accessed 14 May 2021].

References to this type of criticism can be found in the writings of Karlheinz Stockhausen – see 'Der Widerstand gegen neue Musik', in *Texte zur Musik VI* (Cologne: Du Mont, 1989), pp. 458-483; 'Protest gegen zeitgenössische Musik', in *Texte zur Musik IX* (Kürten: Stockhausen Verlag, 2014), pp. 521-524; 'Wird die zeitgenössische das Publikum erobern?', in *Texte zur Musik XVI* (Kürten: Stockhausen Verlag, 2014), p. 387. One will also find in Iannis Xenakis's writings a penetrating criticism of the effects of disorientation induced by certain contemporary music: see above all his 'Wahrscheinlichkeitstheorie und Musik', *Gravesaner Blätter* 6 (1956), pp. 28-34.

⁷ See, for example, Susanne Langer, *Problems of Art* (London: Routledge, 1957); Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1968); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La prose du monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969); and Jean-François Lyotard, *Discours Figure* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971). These references may already sound dated in the context of academic research, but to my knowledge, no major contribution has since been released that makes use of different *a priori* than these books.

⁸ 'Expression, be it artistic or ritual, is neither an inappropriate nor unfinished meaning, it is a *distinct act*.' (Emphasis added.) Raymond Ruyer, 'L'expressivité', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 60/1-2 (1955), pp. 69-100 (at p. 78); my translation. [« L'expression artistique ou rituelle n'est pas une signification maladroite ou inachevée, elle est un acte distinct. »]

‘expression’ underscores the importance of developing critical means amenable to fostering the progression of practice-based studies.

As part of this research project, I also investigate definitions and examples of practice-based research, in order to situate my research within a well-populated field and to make the underpinning aesthetic and methodological premises as transparent as possible. My application of the term ‘practice-based’ does not necessarily mean that a musician would simply proceed from a performer’s point of view and reflect on his or her practice, both in artistic and sociological terms; that is the least we can expect from classically trained musicians, especially in light of the current insecurity of the place of the arts in modern society. On the other hand, ‘practice-based research’ is not the opposite of a – so far non-existent – ‘theory-based practice’. This dualistic opposition between performers and musicologists, with the latter assumed to have a more conceptual approach to music, is unfortunately still upheld in many conservatoires and universities, with notable exceptions, such as the English-speaking sphere.⁹ This fact has hindered an autonomous evolution of practice-based research.¹⁰ By autonomous, I do not mean that it cannot be informed by various approaches and a constant dialogue with other disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, philosophy and psychology.¹¹ Rather, I simply mean that it should develop intra-specific skills and methods relevant primarily to the practice of music itself, and to discourse on music.¹² To cover the entire range of meanings of ‘practice-based research’ would entail bringing the practical aspects of it into the constitution of the problem itself. Creating a certain problematic and clarifying it are almost synonymous in this case: by doing so, one is

⁹ It is also for the most part with the support of British publishing houses that the practice-based literature has developed.

¹⁰ If the literature is now abundant in this discipline, the fact remains, as I will show in section 1.3, that the lexicon specific to this and related disciplines is very far from being homogeneous in its use in the academic community.

¹¹ Psychology can be particularly useful when dealing with *poïesis*, for example.

¹² I emphasise here what I said in fn. 1. The means by which something is said about the music are not similar to what the music says about itself in its idiom. Music, having its syntax, is not soluble in a natural language. The stakes of the act of interpretation (I refer here to interpretation in the hermeneutic sense) are immense, because interpretation considers the relation of the expressions of the language to the musical situations to which they relate. Confusion of the levels of language is equivalent to confusion of thought.

able to shape an aesthetic problematic in the most literal way, aesthesis being perception or sensation that takes place via not only the senses but also the intellect.¹³ The corollary to that first step is the necessary ‘rejection’ of this initial component into the performance. This aspect is clarified in Chapter 3, where I devote individual sections to discussing the rehearsals that I took part in both as a pianist and conductor for Liza Lim’s *Voodoo Child* (1989), György Kurtág’s *Four Songs to Poems by János Pilinszky* (1975-86), Wolfgang Rihm’s *Four Songs from ‘Atemwende’* (1973) and Kurtág’s *Hölderlin-Gesänge* (1993-97).

As an area of endeavour which has emerged fairly recently, practice-based research has not yet achieved the formation of a clear and precise common lexicon, or even a homogenisation of the vocabulary employed.¹⁴ This critique though is in part due to the nature of practice-based research, in that the material considered is supposed to offer or at least help offer the means with which the study is going to be pursued.¹⁵ Each repertoire or each problematic issue can thus be addressed with different means. But a certain continuity in the vocabulary used should be aimed at. In social sciences, an attempt to define concepts, which aim at a certain veracity, should constitute one of the initial tasks of any researcher, who cannot be satisfied with inaccurate terminology. It is obvious that musical jargon is clear to most performers. One supposes that a certain shared language is available to musicians who are also familiar with aesthetics, even though the concepts might have a broad, sometimes contradictory connotation: i.e. musical meaning, affect, pure music,

¹³ One can easily recognise here the influence of what Gilles Deleuze calls the ‘first rule of the method’ in his work devoted to Henri Bergson: ‘Apply the test of true and false to problems themselves. Condemn false problems and reconcile truth and creation at the level of problems.’ See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberiam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 15.

¹⁴ Lenore W. Hervey, in her review of the practice research literature in her field, traces the earliest contributions to the field to 1981 and the American Dance Therapy Association’s ‘Research as a Creative Process’ conference. See Lenore W. Hervey, *Artistic Inquiry in Dance/Movement Therapy: Creative Research Alternatives* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 2000), p. 21.

¹⁵ This is at least my ambition at the beginning of this work. I do not say that it must be the same for other research. But musical aesthetics, in order to assert itself as a discipline presupposing its own intellectuality and not to be corroded by extra-specific means, often does better to rely on its own strengths. Nevertheless, it is also evident that some recent publications know how to profit from the use of a conceptual edifice that they borrow from other disciplines – I am thinking here of the emergence over the last fifteen years of a dialogue between artistic disciplines and neurosciences. For a detailed discussion of the issues involved in this dialogue, see Shaun May, *Rethinking Practice as Research and the Cognitive Turn* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), in particular pp. 12-38.

absolute music, etc.¹⁶ However, the relation between those two registers of discourse and the nature of this relation presents a fundamental problem. The question which arises here is that of the possibility for music to immanently inform its own discourse. By that we do not mean a discourse *referring* to music, but rather a discourse constituted and informed by a musical problematic, by means of which a set of original issues become constituent of a new enunciation.¹⁷

The questions then follow, as to how practice-based research may be rendered accessible to the community of musicians and researchers in music. How can it be effectively presented, if by effectiveness one means the opportunity not only to be heard but also carried out?¹⁸ Is publication the medium which would best suit the nature of the research, or is it just the most convenient or conventional one? Do the results of the research have to be demonstrated as part of a performance? How does the knowledge gained by such a research help us inform our faculty of judgment, as the necessary end result of our appreciation of art? These questions are of crucial importance in defining the methodology, on a conceptual as well as practical level.¹⁹ The articulation of expression and judgment is dealt with in greater detail in my Conclusion.

As regards the sorts of audiences to which this research is principally addressed, the ideal readership might be comprised of interpreters whose standards have led them to experience the shortcomings of a more conventional approach to musical production – as was the case for me as I worked in opera houses, in which too little time is allowed for interpreters to fully make the pieces they perform their own. Having had the rare privilege of being able to devote a large

¹⁶ Concerning these last two notions, that of pure music and absolute music, one can consult the classic work by Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. by Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

¹⁷ By musical problematic, I do not mean what constitutes the theme of my research, explicitly formulated, but the problem as it emerges from the personal work of hermeneutics.

¹⁸ On the issues of performance documentation, many insights are to be found in Matthew Reason's comprehensive *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

¹⁹ Eric Clarke, 'Empirical Methods in the Study of Performance', in *Empirical Musicology: Aims, Methods, Prospects*, ed. by Eric Clarke and Nicholas Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 77-102.

amount of time to the pieces I performed for this research, I hope that exhibiting the process and methodology that guided my work might inspire other interpreters to approach more closely the field of practice-based research.

This field of study provides an opportunity to develop an intellectual approach both to the scores we are inquiring into and to our musical practice as such. By 'intellectual', I do not mean an analytical approach to the score, since the latter, at least in the way it is most commonly taught in music conservatories, does not aim primarily at any rendition by an interpreter. I hold the view that the requirements of today's professional life take many interpreters away from gaining an aesthetic understanding of the pieces they perform (except where an interpreter has already established themselves in a particular repertoire and has developed a thorough understanding of it – as well, indeed, as a personal take on all, or as many aspects as possible, of it).

A practice-based research should serve as a possible way to approach a specific repertoire in light of a specific research question. By doing so, it helps interested musicians and colleagues to expand their practice in two different directions. The first one has to do with the ability to talk about the piece they are playing to an audience of listeners and melomanes who may feel they need some guidance as they discover a repertoire with which they are initially unfamiliar. In a comparable manner, a benefit of developing fluency in practice-based research has been that I have become notably more articulate when teaching contemporary repertoire to my students, in terms of presenting clearly what the aesthetic stakes are, and how it resonates with somewhat similar concerns in other artistic disciplines – such as, in this case, poetry.

If instrumentalists seeking greater autonomy in their practice in an institutional context represent the audience I wish to reach, my work may also be of interest to the exegetes of the poets whose work I consider. The reading that each of the composers makes of these poems testifies to a reading from which stylistic analysis is absent, but the ambition to transform them into music is revealing. It may

be interesting for readers of these poems to understand how the composers found in these works expressive qualities which are not necessarily those that a stylistic analysis would teach us. These readings serve as portraits of poets whose aesthetic characteristics must be identified by literary researchers. A step-by-step approach to these works, as I undertake myself, has great potential to lead non-musicians to an understanding of the issues specific to these works.

This research project endeavours to illustrate that expression and knowledge are dependent upon one another in the field of aesthetics, thereby raising practice-based research to the height of a self-determining and sovereign discipline, fully participating in the evolution of musical intelligence and reflection. It is beyond the scope of my inquiry to ascertain whether or not this reciprocal implication can be extended to other art forms; it is an issue that each discipline must be able to tackle on its own, independently of the pursuit of related initiatives in other artistic disciplines.

1.2 On the concept of expression

Before I explain how questions of expression and expressivity led into my practice-based work, I would like to start by highlighting some of the key points around the concept of expression. These constitute the conceptual ground from which emerge my reflection and the practice that I implement in this research. I will therefore examine and review the approaches to expression at the heart of the aesthetic writings that have directly influenced my questioning and my work as a musician: in order, Augustine, Eduard Hanslick, Theodor W. Adorno and Nelson Goodman.

For musicians, the concept of expression can alternatively be considered either within a semantic frame or as an intrinsic determination of a musical 'discourse' free from any semantic addition. This specific character of music makes it a very demanding task for a researcher to confront expression in an artistic environment full of acquired characteristics. The dualist opposition that painters face between composition on the one hand and semantic interpretation on the other tends to stiffen the aesthetic reflection on painting and its inherent qualities, and establishes a polemical situation between partisans of one side or the other.²⁰ On the contrary, the situation of a musician cultivates the possibility of passages between not only ambiguous, but also contradictory, concepts. The inherently equivocal character of expression, the variety of meanings used to account for it throughout the ages and in various forms of arts, might very well explain the resignation of some musicians in their attempts to define the concept in a more critical manner.

In his informative chapter on 'Empirical Methods in the Study of Performance', Eric Clarke names one of his sections 'Expression in performance: its definition and analysis'.²¹ This heading conveys the notion that expression might

²⁰ I am thinking here for example of the antagonist approaches of surrealism and formalism.

²¹ Clarke, p. 84. See also Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, whose work offers original perspectives on the notion of meaning: for instance Leech-Wilkinson, 'Compositions, scores, performances, meanings', *Music Theory Online* 18/1 (2012), at <<http://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.12.18.1/mto.12.18.1.leech-wilkinson.php>> [accessed 1 June 2020].

also be referred to outside of the experience of the performance, although the question is not explicitly raised. If there is such a thing as expression in performance, it has to be defined as the 'presentation' of a more conceptual understanding of the notion, based on compositional features, which are not exclusively the expressive markings. As Clarke writes:

The problem comes down to whether expression should be regarded as the specific contribution of an individual performer, or in more social terms – as the combination of widely shared cultural norms with the particular input of the individual performer.²²

In both cases however, one would not be able to define expression in a tangible way, because the alternative suggested here consists in determining the meaning of expression by confining it, by means of another plausible definition. Expression would thus become an image that could ultimately be only negatively defined, as a form of 'concept which cannot be conceptualised'.²³

As regards an examination of the authors whose thought has caused the emergence of my problematic and of my work as an interpreter on this question, I will now return to the four authors mentioned above: St Augustine, Eduard Hanslick, Theodor W. Adorno and Nelson Goodman. The importance of their contribution to the study of the notion helped mark out the discussion, insofar as it shows the essential stakes, and does so from different perspectives (it is enough to think of the incommensurable hiatus between the philosophy of a father of the church – Augustine – and a nominalist – Goodman). For this reason, one of the sources of interest when considering the concept of 'expression' is the observation of its transhistorical character.²⁴ We can observe antecedents of the concept already in the fifth century in Augustine's *Confessions*, and this within the framework of a

²² Clarke, p. 84.

²³ Notwithstanding, the essay is remarkable in that it offers insightful views on different aspects of methods in empirical musicology. It offers significant material for the possible further development of a methodology of the discipline itself.

²⁴ This aspect is all the more interesting and necessary to know, considering that I try for my part to define the essential contours in a particular and specifically contemporary repertoire.

reflection of musical nature. It would, however, be difficult to try to trace the concept as far as pre-Platonic philosophers, as the immanent polysemic content of key concepts of Greek philosophy makes it impossible to unify the lexicon, not to mention the impracticality of establishing correspondences between modern languages referring to the same Greek concepts.²⁵ I will briefly discuss here Augustine's text insofar as it is one of the sources of my musical and conceptual preoccupations. The *Confessions* also touches upon the impact of the human voice, which plays a key role in my research, both conceptually and in terms of repertoire.

In the tenth book of the *Confessions*, Augustine succinctly exemplifies the dialectical movement between the sensuality of sound – especially of a human voice – and the apparition of a specific meaning through the use of a text.²⁶ What is most striking in this passage is the way Augustine characterises expression as an attribute both of the human voice and of the text he hears. However, he emphasises the fact that the mysterious correspondence between the human voice and his feelings enhances those feelings, thus preventing him from experiencing a serene contemplation. He also refers in this text to the coalescence of voice and meaning as producing expressive qualities.

This excerpt can be perceived as the origin of all of the subsequent texts written on the relation between a verbal component and music, and the way their interlacing creates an independent level of expressivity, whose distinctive feature is to articulate heterogeneous elements into a single unified quality which carries the aesthetic experience. It alludes to three different components: the effects of music on Augustine's entire constitution and specifically on his intellect; his apprehension of the meaning of the text set to music and presented by a human voice; and the singular and rare experience of the moment in which he is listening to music.²⁷

²⁵ Potentially, 'expression' could refer to *logos*, *prosōpon* and *rhēma*, to mention just a few possibilities. However, it makes more sense, in the context of this study, to refer to the Latin verb *exprimere*, on which the terms *expression* (both in English and French) and *Ausdruck* (in German) are based.

²⁶ St Augustine, *Confessions*, with English trans. by William Watts (London: W. Heinemann, 1912), Vol. 2, pp. 164-168.

²⁷ As mentioned earlier, the second level described here is central to my research.

The discussion of Augustine's inaugural reflection brings me necessarily to address the nature of both *expression* and *expressivity*, and to seek a possible way to clarify the relation in which they stand to one another. This attempt to delineate the contours of those concepts contains a degree of speculation, by means of which, each concept differs slightly from the other. This can potentially be seen as an aspect of the methodology required by the subject, i.e. distinguishing concepts in order to determine and discriminate most effectively what has previously been perceived as agglomerate.²⁸

The idea that expression develops itself in parallel with the form of the work – composition referring here not to the compositional process but to the formal aspects and overall disposition – is a parameter that applies to various fine arts;²⁹ however, the essential breach that one has to touch upon here (which is further explored in Chapter 3) is the inherent relationship between music and text. I have observed that expression is not the antithesis of formalism, that it does not refer to a semantic appreciation of art, but, on the contrary, that it makes explicit the internal coherence of an artistic idiom; this raises the issue, specifically for musicians, of the relation between text and music as both acting as factors of expression in each work one considers.³⁰

With the primary source of my work and the context in which my research originates thus highlighted, I now turn to two authors whose respective thoughts

²⁸ In this context, it is preferable to use the term 'speculation', as it already denotes reflection, rather than 'hypothesis', as the latter has overtones of experimental sciences.

²⁹ One might think in particular of Henri Matisse who, in his 'Notes of a Painter' (1908), develops a vision of his art that one could call formalist while seeing expression as residing precisely in the formal relations – the opposite of an 'expressionist' understanding, whereby expression is bound to the represented subject rather than to the free formal play of the elements of the painting. See Roger Benjamin, *Matisse's 'Notes of a Painter': Criticism, Theory, and Context, 1891–1908* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), pp. 205–212.

³⁰ There is an immediate understanding of the text being, to various degrees, responsible for the formal development of the work, but how should contemporary pieces be understood, when the underlying text is a hermetic text, whose relation to the music cannot be perceived in a way that would help the listener find an orientation in the piece? How does this problem inform the conditions of current artistic creation? This last question involves an interrogation of a poietic nature. I will necessarily come back to the linking together of aesthetic and poietic concerns in Chapter 3.

offer a dialogue, the stakes of which it is imperative to identify in the framework of my research. The conceptual development of my research is nourished by the comparison of their perspectives.

These two authors' views may be considered antecedents to a modern understanding of *expression*. In that respect, they can also be considered to a degree as tutelary figures of my work as regards practice-based research, in that they gave credit to the sonic aspect of music itself to strengthen their speculative thoughts: Eduard Hanslick and Theodor W. Adorno.³¹ Both epitomise an aesthetic reflection aimed at asserting the particularity of musical aesthetics independently of a philosophy of art.³²

Hanslick's essay can be seen not only as an opposition to Wagner's contribution to the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but furthermore as an early attempt to propose a taxonomy of musical means employed to define the 'beautiful in music'. It is therefore a radical attempt to refer music and musical expression to intra-specific features, thus straying from all reduction of music to extra-musical conceptual means. It can thus be seen as a critique of semantic signs when applied to reflecting upon music in an unquestioned manner. In contrast with such signifiers, music refers solely to itself; it cannot be derived from nor refer to anything else but its identity in itself. In an aesthetic context, I would suggest that its most fertile aspect is to clearly define the split between 'representation' and 'presentation'. I would therefore call attention to the fact that Hanslick's views must be dealt with in a

³¹ Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (originally published in Leipzig in 1854) is available in English as Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, trans. by Gustav Cohen (London: Novello, 1891).

As far as Adorno is concerned: although I will be dealing in this introduction principally with his *Aesthetic Theory*, I should point out the importance of *Der getreue Korrepetitor: Lehrschriften zur musikalischen Praxis* (not as yet available in English translation). This latter is, in my opinion, a seminal work in practice-based research, as Adorno's ideas are reshaped through the process of interpretation. It is instructive to compare this text with his *Philosophy of New Music*, which is its conceptual counterpart. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. and ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2002); *Der getreue Korrepetitor: Lehrschriften zur musikalischen Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1963); and *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. and ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

³² In this, they are obviously radically different from Augustine, whose purpose does not belong to an aesthetic discipline understood as an autonomous sphere of reflection. If the dynamic of the meaning of Augustine's text is based on sound as a sensible phenomenon, his purpose is not primarily aesthetic.

classically informed artistic context, starting with the Romantic repertoire from the mid-1850s. It can offer only limited insight if it is to be employed in the context of the *Figurenlehre* or *Affektenlehre*, in which ‘expression’ is a key concept. ‘Expression’ is seen here as ‘expression of something’, i.e. a certain affect, while Hanslick’s ideas help us focus on an expression whose aim is to assign no predicate beyond itself. It is particularly interesting to observe that, in order to promote such a view, Hanslick had to stiffen his position, as it cannot and should not be seen as a general, transhistorical characterisation of music. This apparent rigidity, however, is exactly what was required in the initial stages of my research to help determine what is specific to a purely instrumental understanding of expression, and how it is intertwined with an independent poetic *and* semantic expression of the text. The choice of the pieces forming the main focus of this study was based on these problematics; the performance and analysis of these works will therefore aid in determining how this interlacing is responsible for a renewed understanding of the concept of expression. This interlacing of these concepts illustrates the crucial importance of the human voice in my research, as either literally or metaphorically present in these pieces.

One of the major points of interest of Hanslick’s essay lies in the fact that it can be considered an anticipation of a non-semiotic music criticism: musical forms and sound are not signs and they denote nothing beyond their own utterance. Even though Hanslick is not mentioned a single time in Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*, which contains crucial contributions to defining expression, I shall argue that he can be considered a precursor of Adorno’s views. This is an effective example of how an autonomous musical intellectuality can develop itself without being subjugated by the prestige of human sciences, whose discourse has often been transferred to artistic disciplines in an unquestioned manner.³³ In Hanslick’s attempt to avoid any common-sense comprehension of the concept he is trying to define – i.e. the beautiful in music – he is keeping his distance from the ‘beautiful’ as analysed by

³³ The problem I have just mentioned is still relevant and raises the issue of the way musicians, in institutions of higher education such as universities, are potentially dependent upon concepts and ideas whose origins are initially purely non-musical.

Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*.³⁴ It is difficult for a researcher not to be under the influence of Kant's readings, due to the proximity of both vocabularies. The vocabulary used by Kant has been extended by idealist philosophers, while Hanslick's use of a similar terminology testifies to the fact that he intends to develop an intrinsic understanding of art, in the vein of a musical aesthetic that is distinct from the philosophy of art. By doing so, he is pre-empting modern aesthetics. Hanslick is thus providing evidence for an aesthetic which would no longer be supported by the analysis of 'pleasurable emotions' produced by music, a view which was prevalent at the time. What appears here is the reformulation of the dialectic of form and content, to the benefit of an autonomous understanding of form.

I have mentioned that the immanent substance of Hanslick's ideas can be regarded as the predecessor of modern aesthetics, as far as music is concerned. In order to make that point fully explicit, I would like to note here that *aesthesis* refers to *esthesis*, which means 'sensation'. Aesthetics is understood here as the specific intellectuality attached to the sensations originating in the work of art and enabling an authentic aesthetic experience.³⁵ It is therefore a distinct discipline from philosophy of art. This fact is optimally exemplified by Hanslick as follows:

The reason why people have failed to discover the beauties in which pure music abounds is, in great measure, to be found in the *underrating*, by the older systems of aesthetics, of the *sensuous element*, and in its subordination to morality and feeling – in Hegel, to the idea. Every art sets out from the sensuous and operates within its limits.³⁶

It has emerged in the course of studying Hanslick's contribution that 'expression' should be referred to as a determining element, which coincides with and participates in the autonomous sphere of music. It is a factual component of a piece

³⁴ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. by Werner S. Pluhar (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

³⁵ 'Only *that* music can yield truly aesthetic enjoyment which prompts and rewards the act of thus closely following the composer's thoughts, and which with perfect justice may be called a pondering of the imagination. Indeed without mental activity, no aesthetic enjoyment is possible.' (pp. 135-136)

³⁶ *The Beautiful in Music*, p. 69.

that has to be dealt with as such, and not to be considered a mere evocation of an alleged representational content of music.

Having highlighted and interpreted the elements in Hanslick's thought that have contributed most to the formation of my problematic, it is possible to turn to Adorno to see in what way his thought, which shares with Hanslick's a Hegelian background, constitutes an asset to my work. It is therefore necessary to think about the articulation of their respective thoughts in order to be able to shed light on the way in which my work is anchored and emerges from the thought of these two authors. I have already referred to Adorno's close proximity to Hanslick's ideas regarding their respective developments on 'expression'. This is apparent right at the start of the chapter devoted to semblance and expression in his *Aesthetic Theory*: 'Construction inheres tautologically in expression, which is its polar opposite.'³⁷ The antinomic formulation is typical of Adorno, and testifies to the decisive influence exerted on him by Hegel. What is remarkable here, and links his views to those of Hanslick, is the recognition of construction and expression as a single moment of the piece, even though differing in nature from one another. It is worth noting that expression is given a primary role over construction in his original formulation: 'Konstruktion wohnt der Expression tautologisch inne, der sie polar entgegen ist.'³⁸ It is also noteworthy that not only are Adorno's views on expression an acknowledgment of the autonomy of the work of art, in a world of heteronomy, but this autonomy is reinforced by his use of Benjamin's category of mimesis: 'The mimesis of artworks is their resemblance to themselves.'³⁹ It is always a thin line for Adorno to remain consequent with his personal view of expression as something denoting the autonomy of the artwork. His consistent (although heterodox) Hegelian background makes it demanding to reconcile antithetical components and maintain at the same

³⁷ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 100.

³⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). Adorno's influence can particularly be noticed in the writings of Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, who is the author of an article key to my reflection: 'Zur Relation von Ausdruck und Konstruktion in der Musik', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 156/6 (1995), pp. 18-21.

³⁹ *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 104.

time an open interpretation which leaves space to heteronomous elements within a one-to-one context.⁴⁰ This can easily be observed in his first attempt to define expression:

What makes existing art works more than existence is not simply another existing thing, but their language. Authentic artworks are eloquent even when they refuse any form of semblance, from the phantasmagorical illusion to the faintest auratic breath. The effort to purge them from whatever contingent subjectivity may want to say through them involuntarily confers an ever more defined shape on their own language. In artworks the term expression refers to precisely this language.⁴¹

In light of this, it is interesting to compare Hanslick's views with those of Adorno. Hanslick may have supported the view that expression and form denote nothing beyond themselves, and can by no means be seen as a sign aiming at a signification. Adorno's view is somewhat more complex. What in Hanslick's words appeared as a subjectivity that falsely affected the 'content' of the artwork, is recognised as such by Adorno, but elevated to an 'objective' content in which subjectivity is submitted to a process of mediations, a process through which it reaches objectivity.⁴² This can be exemplified in an almost didactic manner as follows: 'Art is expressive when what is objective, subjectively mediated, speaks, whether this be sadness, energy or longing.'⁴³

It is essential to understand here that mediation is a key concept that runs across the entirety of Adorno's production, from his early essay on Wagner.⁴⁴ This concept is comprehensively tackled in the *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*.⁴⁵ The idea of an artwork being autonomous, while reflecting at the same time in itself

⁴⁰ 'Aesthetic expression is the objectification of the non-objective, and in fact in such a fashion that through its objectification it becomes a second-order nonobjectivity: it becomes what speaks out of the artefact not as an imitation of the subject.' (p. 111)

⁴¹ *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 104.

⁴² 'The materials are shaped by the hand from which the artwork received them; expression, objectified in the work and objective in itself, enters as a subjective impulse; form, if it is not to have a mechanical Relationship to what is formed, must be produced subjectively, according to the demands of the object.' *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 166.

⁴³ *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 111.

⁴⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Versuch über Wagner* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1952).

⁴⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. and ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (New York: Seabury Press, 1979).

the relations of production within the social field, and reflecting them as their opposite,⁴⁶ is the essential contribution that Adorno made to aesthetics. It has led as far as recognising how social production affects the psyche, i.e. the artistic production itself.⁴⁷ The recognition and denunciation of this matter of fact is enabled by micrological discourse which highlights the various constituents of the artwork.⁴⁸

At this point in the discussion, it is particularly instructive to confront Adorno's perspective with that of Nelson Goodman. One may well argue that Goodman and Adorno have offered the most ambitious and insightful reflections on the idea of expression in art of the latter half of the twentieth century, in works elaborated in roughly the same period. Goodman's essay *Languages of Art*, first published in 1968, is based on the John Locke lectures the author gave in 1960–61. Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* was published in 1970, but conceived in the late 1960s. These two authors could not be more dissimilar, and yet both epitomise the respective aesthetical and philosophical environment in which they worked and produced. Goodman can be considered a figurehead of epistemological nominalism, a tradition whose prerequisites differ from Adorno's rooting in Hegelian philosophy. It would therefore be somewhat inappropriate to offer a comparative view of their respective theories of expression. I will therefore endeavour to observe instead what insights a musician may glean from Goodman's work, which is not solely devoted to music, but as the title indicates, to the 'languages of art'. In Goodman's theory, languages equal

⁴⁶ 'The more total society becomes, the more completely it contracts to a unanimous system, and all the more do the artworks in which this experience is sedimented become the other of this society.' *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 31.

⁴⁷ This aspect allows us to measure the extent of Adorno's Marxist legacy.

⁴⁸ By doing so, the critical content of a piece coincides with its content of truth. What can be learnt from this is that the political and critical impact of the piece is to be obtained in the piece itself, within its core materials. What is being said about a piece does not equal what the piece 'speaks' in its own idiom, and only the latter is of relevance in terms of aesthetics; it is only from the latter that a critical standpoint may be elaborated. The artwork is not the sum of the intentions put into it – not only for the reasons mentioned above, but more importantly because an artwork is rarely the realisation of the initial intentions of the composer. On the latter point see Alois Riegl's idea of *Kunstwollen*, in Riegl, *Problems of Style* [orig. *Stilfragen*, 1893], trans. by Evelyn Kain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

symbolic systems.⁴⁹ This single fact prevents Adorno's and Goodman's views from being considered collectively. According to Adorno: 'By the autonomy of their form, artworks forbid the incorporation of the absolute as if they were symbols.'⁵⁰ It is quite obvious that Goodman and Adorno do not mean the same thing by 'symbol', but it testifies to the fact that their respective vocabulary makes it impossible to observe any analogy.⁵¹

Goodman refuses to give an account of reality without first taking into consideration the frame in which this reality is described. He therefore uses a complex network of terms used to apprehend the way they might reciprocate to one another depending on the context in which they are used, such as 'denotation', 'imitation', 'figures', 'function', 'ostentation', 'exemplification'. He links expression with the exemplification of a content to which one metaphorically refers: 'What is expressed is metaphorically exemplified'.⁵² The exemplification of expression can be seen as a distinctive feature which confirms its separation from representation, denotation, possession and exemplification:

The boundaries of expression, dependent upon the difference between exemplification and possession and also upon the difference between the metaphorical and the literal, are inevitably somewhat tenuous and transient.⁵³

The distinctions he makes between terms often used in an equivocal fashion will be useful in analysing the relationships between text and music in the pieces which form the subject of this research project. In that respect this research will benefit from his output, as it is clearly linked with a comprehension of art which relies on

⁴⁹ It is thanks to this distinction that the difference I make between language and metalanguage is best explained. A system of symbolic logic is a system of signs with the rules of their use, i.e. a language. These signs, which apply to natural languages as well as to the arts, must be understood according to different levels of language. A natural language (here the metalanguage) is thus distinct from the objective language, the one that is taken as object (the musical language). I do not consider music as a formal science in the sense of a symbolic logic, but to confuse the levels of language diminishes the claims to research of artistic disciplines.

⁵⁰ *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 104.

⁵¹ The very different premises on which their respective philosophies are built would make a comparative approach an object of study in itself.

⁵² Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), p. 85.

⁵³ *Languages of Art*, p. 90.

the assimilation of pictorial, musical and literary 'images'. This proves to be a particularly fruitful approach in the case of a research like mine which works 'between' musical figures, and linguistic images.

Having reviewed the thoughts that help delineate the conceptual framework within which I conduct my research and from which that work emerges, it is now possible to propose a definition of the expression as I pursue it in my research. This definition offers a sort of synthesis of the authors who drew my attention to the questions of expression, as much as it anticipates the musical practice which will bring this expression to the level of its sensitive manifestation.

If I try to draw some transitory conclusions from these authors, before coming to my actual definition, I immediately observe that submitting the notion of expression to analysis is a challenge for various reasons. It is a term that belongs both to the vocabulary of the philosophy of art and to the specific terminology of music. In the first case, it is defined differently depending on whether it is used by this or that author at this or that time (in contrast, for example, to a notion such as 'apperception' which, from Leibniz to Heidegger via Kant, remains essentially stable), and it covers elements that each author is free to redistribute each time. It would be hard to find similarities among the authors I mentioned in section 1.1 (Deleuze, Langer, Lyotard, Merleau-Ponty, Ruyer) in their use of the term, but aligning dissimilar authors in the same perspective, as I have just done here in section 1.2, can by revealing implicit links between texts help to focus the nature of my musical and hermeneutic interrogation. By integrating the salient points of the authors to whom I refer, while exposing them to the light of musical interpretation, I now have the elements to assert what precisely is meant by expression as I approach the practical part of my research. Such a definition seeks to articulate the strictly aesthetic part of my subject: the use of sounds as a source of reflection, and a reflection of a conceptual nature. Once again, what must be insisted on is that offering a definition of the term is only possible in metalanguage. The definition of

expression is not itself musical expression, and the latter is only acted out in the particular figures of musical discourse. The distinction I make is of the same order. A definition is the interpretation of the thing, the reflection on its object of study. For this reason, I consider my practice-based research as a distinct discipline in the same way that the logician distinguishes rule and law, logic and metalogy; or the mathematician, since Hilbert, mathematics and metamathematics.

As for its use in the vocabulary that musicians are accustomed to, there it takes on a connotation tinged with subjectivism, and this weakens the attribution of a positive meaning to the term independent of its private use. The whole difficulty consists in harmonising two spheres and two requirements that one might think are difficult to reconcile: that of a research that cannot escape the subjective impulse that motivates it, and that of an elaboration of the notion that lives to convey the value of objectivity of its results.

The *expression* – in the strictly common sense of the term, as used by musicians – is a function of the personal restitution of the concrete data of the score. It is the ‘reading’, the putting in order and the hierarchisation of these data for the benefit of a hermeneut-interpreter.

A practice-based research like mine has its origin in somewhat different premises. It seeks not to untie the expression of the dynamics of meaning. This dynamic of meaning is not simply riveted to the setting to music of an existing text before the composer uses it. It is the element that illuminates the reciprocal interaction of the text with the music and vice versa. It is determined by the hiatus between the expressiveness of the musical material and that of the poetic expressiveness. It is in this difference that something is said about the singularity of a composer’s approach, at least as much as in observing the coalescence of musical and poetic meaning when it exists.

My approach thus consists in underlining the immanent expressiveness of the works, the interplay of the formal constituents in relation to each other, the object itself, and in seeing how it is renewed, modified, thwarted by the poetic

impulse. What I tend to do is to observe the nature of the relationship between form and affect, and to see how this interweaving creates a unique expressivity in the pieces under consideration. Contrary to a conventional approach to expression (the expression *of* something), here expression is autonomous – it is the free expression regulated by the parameters that ensure its development. It is of a tautegoric nature. We can therefore say that it is not a representation of a thing in its absence, of an original text whose interpretation would be the expression. Expression is understood here as presentation; it refers only to itself. In this way, I testify to a conceptual heritage that refers as much to Adorno as to Matisse, and which can be said to still be part of a certain modernist project.

From all these different points follows my definition of expression: that expression, considered as the presentation (as opposed to representation) of ideas whose nature is strictly musical,⁵⁴ is *the medium by which those musical ideas are uttered in a performance, without the support of a non-musical idiom.* The salient element here for my research is the conclusion that expression is neither ‘expression of something’, nor an undetermined term enveloping a musical performance or resulting from a musical utterance. It is a concept whose features rely on intra-specific components,⁵⁵ exhibited in a successful performance. The ambiguous nature of expression can therefore be seen as a medium and as an aim *per se*.

⁵⁴ Hanslick's influence is also present here: ‘To the question – what is to be expressed with all this material [referring to sound]? The answer will be: *musical ideas.*’ *The Beautiful in Music*, p. 67.

I will point out here that the essence of music, according to Hanslick, is *sound and motion*.

⁵⁵ This aspect resonates with Hanslick's words: ‘Hence, instead of enlarging on the vague and secondary effects of musical phenomena, we ought to endeavour to penetrate deeply into the spirit of the Works themselves, and to explain their effects by the laws of their inherent nature.’ *The Beautiful in Music*, p. 24.

1.3 On practice-based research

Now that the aesthetic context for my conception of expression has been established, I wish to turn to the particularities of practice-based research as I will be pursuing it. For this purpose, I will start by discussing recent practice-based literature and some polemics and controversies that have recently taken place in British academia. These need to be addressed in order for me to be able to situate my work within the practice-based production and to bring out the specifically aesthetic content of my work, that is, specifically reliant upon practical and interpretative means.

A recent article by the composer John Croft has drawn attention to the legitimacy of composition as research within the community not only of composers but also, more generally, of all those involved in practice-based research.⁵⁶ The article is particularly interesting in that it throws light on issues that are, apparently, still a subject of inquiry. The article's peremptory tone, its hasty reasoning and its wealth of unquestioned borrowings from a large philosophical corpus make it unclear whether it is of academic content or more of a mood piece. Nevertheless, it requires its reader to take a stand on its controversial substance. I shall first give an account of the main ideas represented in the text, before providing my views on these issues. In doing so, I will have the opportunity to situate my own approach within the frame of practice-based studies.

Croft's article is an attempt to dispute the integration of composition into research. The opposition Croft makes between these categories is problematic, in that he opposes research to a startling multiplicity of concepts, whose intrinsically polysemic content does not leave space for discussion or counterargument. Music is thus pithily presented as a 'domain of thought whose cognitive dimension lies in embodiment, revelation or presentation, but not in investigation and description'.⁵⁷ It is not my intention to contradict those assertions, except to observe that each and

⁵⁶ John Croft, 'Composition is not research', *Tempo* 69/272 (2015), pp. 6-11.

⁵⁷ Croft, 'Composition is not research', p. 6.

every one of the concepts evoked would require a closer look. Revelation refers to a hereafter, while presentation is a secularised, ersatz version of Divine Grace. Embodiment, if not thoroughly articulated, might refer to the Gnostics as much as to Antonin Artaud, or to Croft's own definition, which is not to be found at a later stage in the article.

Composition itself is a concept that does not appear to be cogently approached, as its definition depends on social as well as aesthetic determinations that are also not questioned in the article. At this point, the article might as well have been called 'Music is not research'. The direct equivalence between composition as an activity and music as art is highly problematic and can only lead to a binary opposition with research. In that regard, I might as well point out the common misunderstanding of research that is presented here. The vocabulary used in the article refers for the most part to the expectations expressed in the Bologna process. I think it would be far more productive to investigate the possible flaws of the Bologna process than to claim falsely that this is about composition and research *per se*. As my own research is being pursued within the same frame, I can only accept those expectations, but it is my responsibility to perform research that I think is authentic and innovative, whatever the institutional spirit of the day is.

Since Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Categories* it has been clear in the domain of art that the *aisthêton* (the sensible object) and the *aisthêtikon* (the sensible subject) are liable to investigation and that the type of knowledge they provide is not second-hand knowledge.

Regarding the large philosophical borrowings present in Croft's article, it is intriguing why the author would rely on Gadamer, who has consistently testified to the need to question art in its making.⁵⁸ In that regard, Croft's use of the German philosopher sounds suspicious more than it serves his cause. I will not comment on his use of Wittgenstein (or in the form of a preterition), whose ideas exceed what

⁵⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

can be found in back-cover texts, or single statements from the *Tractatus*. It is methodologically inadvisable to separate any of Wittgenstein's statements in this book from his overall demonstration. Furthermore, Wittgenstein frequently wrote on music. One should credit him for being one of the very few philosophers able to go beyond generalities about music in the modern era, especially with regard to the concept of notation. For a composer, it would certainly have been more fertile to refer to those texts than to the *Tractatus*, in such a way that the community of musicians might have been able to objectively engage with the issues presented in Croft's article.⁵⁹

I will take a single example of a topic that lends itself to research for a composer: the question of judgment. Croft mentions music 'that is utterly conventional, or just not very good'.⁶⁰ According to what criteria is a composer able to assess a piece of music; that is, are we talking of a theoretical judgment? Yet if criteria are missing (as is the case in an aesthetic judgment), how is a judgment possible at all? Should Kant's categories of judgment I just used be considered relevant to contemporary musical practice? This is a simple example of a research question that could be challenged by composers as part of their activities at universities. Again, one may well not want to submit one's compositions to such a process of interrogation (which is perfectly legitimate), but this attitude is not sustainable within a university. I shall just recall that, according to the author's belief in revelation in music, the question of judgment is irrelevant; in which case, however, so is the question of 'just not very good' music. Revelation happens or does not, independently of the merits of the work. That being said, one might as well argue that composition is just about producing music, which seems to be implied in the text.

It would certainly have been interesting to challenge practice-based research in an article built on an in-depth study of the kind of knowledge at which music and

⁵⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

⁶⁰ Croft, 'Composition is not research', p. 10.

a fortiori composition aims. However, in failing to do so and by using philosophical statements for the sound they make rather than for the meaning they produce, this article remains a simple opinion (*doxa*) and not even a 'valid opinion' (*endoxa*).

An article by another composer, Piers Hellawell, on composition and research is not only similar in content to Croft's, but likewise gets bogged down in an unimaginative understanding of the concept of research.⁶¹ Leaving aside Hellawell's nostalgia for the Victorian era (Anglican hymns are worthy of study, but why they should set the standards for today's compositional horizons remains unclear), the criticism I would like to make consists of highlighting his stance on what he thinks is a binary opposition between composition and research. Once Croft's philosophical references (which however do not yield any particular insight to his reasoning) are set aside, both articles appear to be based on the same unquestioned premises, and the trains of reasoning given by Hellawell and Croft are one and the same. Hellawell, though, to his credit, has tried to articulate what he means by research, going so far as to give the definition from the Oxford Dictionary. I tend to think that we could legitimately expect more, in terms of addressing this issue.

I will take this opportunity to explain further what the peculiarities of practice-based research are in light of the knowledge a musician and researcher (we might as well say a hermeneut-musician) is tending towards. I would like to place emphasis on one sentence that reveals the extent of the misunderstanding: 'The judgment of music as a work of art cannot be reliably conducted by prioritising innovation or discovery, for art is not a science.' What could have been a legitimate critique of the assessment of research, that is, the priority given to innovation, thus turns into an illegitimate criticism of research *per se* as opposed to composition. What is to be observed here is the mere assimilation of the requirements of today's academia, within the Bologna process, under the label of research. I find it

⁶¹ Piers Hellawell, 'Treating composers as researchers is bonkers', *Standpoint* (29 April 2014), at <<https://standpointmag.co.uk/critique-may-14-treating-composers-as-researchers-bonkers-piers-hellawell/>> [accessed 26 August 2019].

regrettable that intellectually and musically highly trained individuals are not able to protect themselves from making such mistakes.⁶²

Even if ‘art is not a science’, it can nevertheless be inquired into with research protocols that enable the divulcation of results. Both Hellawell and Croft make the same mistake. They refer solely to an *epistēmē*, generally understood as ‘theoretical intelligence’, and appear not to know that another branch of research, *technē*, refers to a ‘poetic intelligence’. But within *epistēmē* alone, a distinction has to be made between *epistēmē praktikē* and *epistēmē poietikē*. The link between *technē* and *epistēmē poietikē* has to be interrogated further (in my case, based on the concept of expression), but it is crucial to be able to identify this link as a possibility for practice-based research to lay claim to research and knowledge. I concede that musicians may be unfamiliar with the concepts I have just mentioned – in which case, though, it is inappropriate to lapse into controversy. Another example, closer to us chronologically and familiar to anyone who has studied in the UK, is J. L. Austin’s description of science as a ‘method of processing’ in order to reach a ‘unanimous assent’.⁶³ Such a humble and modest, yet fertile, view of research is invaluable to researchers trying to strengthen their ability to perform an inquiry. One may even renounce the too ambitious claim to unanimity. My purpose here, in referring to various ways research and science can be addressed as a musician, is to show that in order for someone to perform research, it is necessary for them to situate themselves and their research within a broader context than that of the expectations set by the Bologna process.

To summarise, the flaws of both articles are significantly the same. Neither author addresses the various types of knowledge that are aimed at in various research fields. The hasty opposition both authors make between music and

⁶² On the Bologna process, see the Declaration on the European Space for Higher Education (1999), available at <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/BoLoGna_DECLaRaTion1.pdf> [accessed 25 March 2018]. For a critique of the reforms instigated in the humanities by this process, see Jacques Poulain, ‘Notre liberté n’est pas à vendre : pour des états généraux des universitaires’, in *Cahiers critiques de philosophie* n° 8, ed. by B. Cany (Paris: Hermann, 2009), pp. 215-220.

⁶³ John Langshaw Austin, ‘Performatif-constatif’, in *La philosophie analytique*, ed. by Jean Wahl (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1962), p. 355.

research betrays a lack of understanding of the divisions of science. *Technē* is distinct from *epistēmē*, but it is not 'inimical' to it. I would like to add at this point that considering the great importance that introductory texts to contemporary pieces have acquired, composers must necessarily submit to procedures of justification in order to support the alleged bond between what they say of their piece and what the listener experiences of it. An introductory text might as well be more of a metaphorical introduction or description, in which case, of course, it need submit to justification. But it is significant to observe that in recent decades there has been an inflation of scientific concepts imported by artists into their introductory texts. I would like to point out, however, that it is not a matter for the composer to present the *epistēmē* of their own work. But it is necessary to establish a type of discourse that benefits the community of musicians.

It might be interesting at this point to mention Henk Borgdorff's article 'The production of knowledge in artistic research',⁶⁴ which I consider an excellent introduction to the problematics I have inquired into in the previous paragraphs. Implicitly, he places himself in the situation of a hermeneut, suggested by his use of the expression 'unfinished thinking'. I mentioned above the concept of the hermeneut-musician. I think it can only be a transitory concept (as hermeneutics does not apprehend the issue of judgment in a way that I think is sufficiently eloquent), but it certainly demonstrates a will to engage with the complexity of the task. It is worth mentioning that Borgdorff's idea of research *in and through* practice is also to be found in Darla Crispin's article 'Artistic research and music scholarship: musing and models from a continental European perspective'. Crispin proposes an interesting division between 'musical practice' and 'research in and through musical practice' (also called artistic research), with 'informed musical practice' and 'informed, reflective musical practice' as intermediary steps. Both Crispin and Borgdorff offer taxonomies of practice-based research. According to their terminology, I consider my research on expression to fall under the category of

⁶⁴ Henk Borgdorff, 'The production of knowledge in artistic research', in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, ed. by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 44-64.

'research in and through music' in that an account of expression relies on both intrinsically musical means and influences from other disciplines. Crispin also questions the concept of interdisciplinarity when she addresses the issue of the 'new modes of research dissemination'.⁶⁵ I believe that these two articles, published in the last decade, offer very insightful views and add significantly to the discussion.

It is important to note that authors involved in practice-based research have in fact undertaken significant efforts to develop common views on terminology and method. This makes Croft's and Hellawell's articles seem unaware of the level of discussion reached by the community of musicians, a fact which further undermines their views on that subject. It is no longer possible to speak *in abstracto* about practice-based research, as one has to engage with the quantity of knowledge that has now been exposed and 'sedimented'. The basis of current research enables younger practitioners to refer to authoritative sources. This might not have been the case even just a few years ago. In that regard, the leading role of UK academia has to be stressed. One should reflect upon the necessity to engage in artistic and institutional collaborations that would help spread the development of practice-based studies abroad.

I have already discussed studies that prescribe interpretative choices based on analytical considerations. I might add to that category Wallace Berry's *Musical Structure and Performance*.⁶⁶ I will not comment further on this body of work, as it is arguably the corpus that is the most familiar, as it is chronologically the first to have shown interest in performance issues. In the area of musical analysis, an informative and significant contribution is offered by the studies led by Schmalfeldt.⁶⁷ Her investigation of the pieces she deals with, in the light not only of her performances, but also of the performances by various artists, informs the analytical process in such a way that concepts like 'gesture' or motion can be ideally exemplified.

⁶⁵ Darla Crispin, 'Artistic Research and Music Scholarship: Musings and Models from a Continental European Perspective', in *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice*, ed. by Mine Doğantan-Dack (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), p. 57.

⁶⁶ Wallace Berry, *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁶⁷ Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming: Analytical and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Two more recent and highly innovative ways of reflecting upon practice-based studies can be further identified. On the one hand is the inspiring work undertaken by Amanda Bayley. The software DVD that she and Michael Clarke conceived, devoted to Michael Finnis's Second String Quartet,⁶⁸ is one of the most efficient presentations I have encountered of a practice-based research. Similar approaches have been initiated at the Institute of Musical Research under the direction of Paul Archbold. The numerous publications of the Orpheus Research Centre are variously interesting for practice-based research, but they challenge transdisciplinary approaches that are of great interest for my research.⁶⁹

On the other hand, Mine Doğantan-Dack has developed an original approach to practice-based studies, presented under the name of the 'Alchemy Project'. Instead of considering the rehearsal process to be the appropriate moment for research to occur, she lays particular emphasis on the performance itself, recognising it as 'a site of knowledge production' and an 'aesthetic and epistemological point of reference'.⁷⁰ Her views on performance as producing knowledge raise the issue of musical utterance – music as a *performative utterance*, so to speak – and have led me to think that I should tackle this issue as well, reflecting afterwards on the performance process. Investigating the 'cognitive and affective processes involved in live music making' in the light of the concept of expression may in that way reveal a fertile contribution.

In order for me to further contextualise my work within the field of practice-based research and develop a personal approach to it, I must note how the analytical means pertaining to the various art forms have increasingly been expanded through the emergence of practice-based research as an academic discipline. It is important

⁶⁸ Amanda Bayley and Michael Clarke, *Evolution and Collaboration: the composition, rehearsal and performance of Finnis's Second String Quartet* (Huddersfield: CERENEM, 2011). [DVD-ROM.]

⁶⁹ See for instance *Artistic Research: Charting a Field in Expansion*, ed. by Paulo de Assis and Lucia D'Errico (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

⁷⁰ Mine Doğantan-Dack, *Preparing Beethoven for Live Performance: The 'Alchemy Project'* (2008), at <<http://www.minedogantandack.com/assets/pdf/AHRC.pdf>> [accessed 1 October 2018].

for an informed reading of the practice-based literature to bring to the fore a few elements that may appear at first as self-evident, but that should be kept in mind for a later, more considered acceptance or rejection.

If it appeared at first that practice-based research lends itself to the various so-called 'fine arts', then other creative disciplines have also recently been able to assimilate it into their academic discourse. The main areas represented are: plastic arts, dance, music (the latter varying in substance depending on whether conducted by a composer or a performer), theatre, architecture, design, film and photography. Practice-based research emerged in these different fields over a long period of time. While one may want to consider the writings on dance by the choreographer and dancer Serge Lifar from the late 1930s as a point of departure for practice-based research in dance,⁷¹ design and film have emerged as areas of practice-based research only in the past three decades.⁷²

In my experience, the particularity of practice-based research lies in its intrinsically interdisciplinary nature. The notion of expression that is at the core of my research is not specific to music, as I have shown with the example of Matisse in section 1.2, even though I am attempting to define and exemplify it as precisely as possible within this medium alone. Precisely to strengthen that attempt, I may have to confront similar attempts made by scholars in the fields of literature or painting, for example, and determine whether and how analogies might be made. What is at stake here is the need to confront my research with that of other disciplines, but in a way that narrows down the meaning of expression – and not, conversely, one that dilutes it in the breadth of comparative approaches.

The purpose of the written text is to reflect on the way practice helps redefine and sharpen the initial interrogation, which is essentially artistic. I can summarise this view by saying that the heterogeneity of scientific and artistic

⁷¹ Serge Lifar, *Le Manifeste du chorégraphe* (Paris: Étoile, 1935).

⁷² An article considered foundational for practice-based research in design is Christopher Frayling, 'Research in Art and Design', *RCA Research Papers* 1/1 (1993/4), pp. 1-5. I will return to the categories introduced by Frayling in this article – research *for* art, research *into* art, and research *through* art – when discussing the ideas of John Freeman, later in this section.

discourse must be assumed. This is not in the least an obstacle; and should it present itself as one, it must be overcome *in* and *through* the practice. This observation appears to be of great significance for the methodology of research itself: the research protocol cannot be given beforehand, but has to be reflected upon at every moment of its progress.

Among the artists of the twentieth century whose writings I would consider practice-oriented for the reasons given above, I would mention Giorgio de Chirico and Sergei Eisenstein – the former for developing a metaphysics of vision concurrently with his paintings of the early 1910s, the latter for establishing the idea of a ‘total image’.⁷³ Both artists strove to articulate reflection and practice in such a way that one cannot distinguish whether the practice leans on an earlier verbal theorisation, or if theorisation comes afterwards, as a way of justifying the results gained in practice. By doing so, they were able to elaborate original conceptual frameworks in addition to their artistic output. In this regard, it would be fair to consider their bodies of work as consisting of both their artistic contribution and their essays. A similar claim could be made for Antonin Artaud and his ‘théâtre de la cruauté’.⁷⁴ By considering those forerunners in practice-based research, I was able to extract a common interrogation, which I would express as follows: what is being given to reflect upon *in* and *through* painting (de Chirico), *in* and *through* a cinematographic image (Eisenstein) and *through* the body of an actor (Artaud)? I would extrapolate from those questions the following: if one considers expression a phenomenal as well as a conceptual notion, what is being reflected upon in music, in the light of expression?

I will therefore proceed through the literature, keeping in mind that the studies especially pertinent to my own task may be those which are able not only to

⁷³ Paolo Baldacci, *Chirico, la métaphysique 1888–1919* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997); Giovanni Lista, *Giorgio de Chirico* (Paris: Hazan, 1999); Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, trans. by Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, 1942); Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. by Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, 1949).

⁷⁴ See Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).

recognise the discrepancy between practice and its written counterpart, but also to overcome this intrinsic difficulty and turn it into an asset, that is to shed light on an original interrogation stemming from practice itself. At this point of the discussion, having mentioned the necessary coalescence of conceptual and phenomenal approaches, I would like to quote Marco Stroppa, who was able to convincingly point out what is here at stake in reference to practice-based research in composition: 'Because, if the work embodies an implicit knowledge, this knowledge needs to be made explicit through a verbal form.'⁷⁵ What I think is particularly interesting here is Stroppa's acknowledgment of the heterogeneity of the forms of knowledge conveyed by practice-based research. The crucial notion is represented by the word 'explicitée' (made explicit). This explanation consists of saying that practice-based research is not about the creation of concepts or theories, but primarily serves to elucidate the peculiarity of an inherently musical knowledge. In this respect, practice-based research helps define a musician and researcher who can be characterised as musician-hermeneut.

The first book I would like to consider here is *La recherche en art(s)*, a collection of essays covering the entire range of disciplines that lend themselves to practice-based research, with the exception of photography and film.⁷⁶ What makes it particularly interesting for me, and the reason I consider it first, is that the essays are contextualised within a broader frame of both methodological and conceptual impact. The book's main asset is that it operates on two levels. On the one hand it questions the nature of the connection between art and research in each of the disciplines I have mentioned previously. On the other hand, it investigates the intersection of the studies carried out in those different disciplines in the light of practice-based research. By doing so, it proves itself a constant reminder of the need for practice-based research to develop a methodology that helps develop both a deeper musical understanding and a protocol of research that may be significant in

⁷⁵ Marco Stroppa, 'Entretien avec Cyril Beros, Jehanne Dautrey et Nicolas Donin', in *La recherche en art(s)*, ed. by Jehanne Dautrey (Paris: Éditions mf, 2010), p. 176; my translation. [« Car, si l'œuvre incarne une connaissance implicite, cette connaissance a besoin d'être explicitée par une forme verbale. »]

⁷⁶ Jehanne Dautrey (ed.), *La recherche en art(s)* (Paris: Éditions mf, 2010). The book is the result of a transdisciplinary seminar that took place in 2007–2008 at the Collège International de Philosophie.

the other arts. What can be learnt from this tenet is I think the need for practice-based research to make use of various competences that will eventually enable an interdisciplinary assessment of the research. This is not a general requirement. But in the case of a study such as mine, whose substance lies in clarifying a notion that encompasses various areas, it is a prerequisite.

I mentioned earlier in my research the paradigm shift from a discursive approach to a qualitative approach. This has made peer-reviewed assessment more challenging and requires panels of experts in the field. Nevertheless, in a practice-based study devoted to the inquiry into a notion, outsider viewpoints can offer insightful perspectives that not only feed the reflection but also necessarily reinforce interdisciplinary collaborations. I would like here to give an example in regards to one interdisciplinary notion: notation. In their article 'Recherche en danse/danse en recherche', Aurore Després and Philippe Moal mention the concurrent birth of modern dance alongside theoretical attempts to characterise it. This was also when early attempts were made to develop systems of notation for dancers.⁷⁷ For musicians too, notation has become a matter of concern in contemporary practice. Notation, in the context of practice-based research, is a notion, therefore, that can be best inquired into if the researchers pursuing it know about similar concerns in related artistic areas. The corollary of this approach leads me to an interrogation that is liable to an epistemological analysis. What is the nature of a knowledge acquired through a scientific approach, whose protocol is interdisciplinary and qualitative? This question, which I have been able to lay out after dealing with this book, is of crucial importance to my own research and approach of a practice-based research.

⁷⁷ 'The birth of the currents of what is generically called modern dance is indeed fertile in new statements, some of them duly formalised: we think here of the important corpus constituted by Laban (including a system of notation).' Aurore Després and Philippe Le Moal, 'Recherche en danse/danse en recherche', in *La recherche en art(s)*, ed. by Jehanne Dautrey (Paris: Éditions mf, 2010), p. 86; my translation. [« La naissance des courants de ce que l'on appelle génériquement la danse moderne est en effet fertile en nouveaux énoncés dont certains dûment formalisés : on pense ici à l'important corpus constitué par Laban (dont un système de notation). »]

I will return to this point below when I discuss the research of Seth Parker Woods, which is based on a formalisation of the expressive parameters of his gesturality as a performer and dancer.

I would like to turn now to *The Practice of Performance*, edited by John Rink, which is a collection of essays grouped under three different topics: fundamentals; structure and meaning in performance; and performance as process. Focusing on this book will help me put into perspective my own positions and the *a priori* assumptions of my own research. Eric Clarke, in his essay 'Expression in performance: Generativity, perception and semiosis', succinctly presents three more or less common ways of apprehending expression: the generative theory, expression as integrated energy flux, and semiotics. Summarising these three approaches is salutary. His critique of the first category (generativity) is very convincing, as he recognises the difficulty of defining expression as a deviation from an alleged norm. Doing so would first require the development of a common understanding of what normativity means in music.

When it comes to the musical examples, however, the link between the author's initial categories and the musical text becomes hard to follow. Instead of observing in the musical text what coincides with the categories he has presented, Clarke engages in comparative studies of various instrumentalists performing the pieces under analysis. By doing so, he has to renounce the coherent and sharply profiled notions that were presented at the beginning of his essay. The notion of expression is applied in a very unspecific manner once it comes to the sonic manifestation of the pieces he is considering. What began as an insightful approach turns into a comparative performance study. Comparative performance studies are needed, but only once the notion has already been sharpened enough so as to be coherently submitted to analysis (i.e. according to determining criteria previously defined) as it is musically presented. For this reason, the text's conclusion leaves the reader with an impression that it is unfinished, even though one is forced to conclude with the author that 'progress can gradually be made towards a less fractured understanding'.⁷⁸ From a methodological point of view, it is necessary to explain either why a conclusion remains open, or, should it be impossible to

⁷⁸ Eric Clarke, 'Expression in performance: generativity, perception and semiosis', in *The Practice of Performance*, ed. by John Rink (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 55.

conclude, why a conclusion is aporetic. The only options here consist of either refining at least one of the initial definitions of expression or deciding to engage further in studying one of them. Postponing a conclusion is not a methodological option. What I learn from this text is the requirement not to risk heading towards an impasse by having comparative studies occur too early in the dissertation.

In most chapters from Rink's collection, the way speculative inquiry and empirical case-studies are intertwined is inspiring for my own research. However, unlike most authors I will try to avoid laying stress on the theoretical part, as it appears eventually in most articles that the musical pieces are merely exemplifying the speculative part. The latter should not have any *prescriptive* significance; it should proceed concurrently with the interpretative process. This aspect should distinguish my own approach and methodology. In that regard, William Rothstein is right to remind the reader that the idea of 'bringing out' the result of analysis is not per se the goal an interpreter should pursue.⁷⁹

Ronald Woodley's essay 'Strategies of Irony in Prokofiev's Violin Sonata in F minor, Op. 80' – also in the volume edited by Rink – proved to be of great interest, as it shares similar concerns with my own research.⁸⁰ The author attempts to define a notion, in this case irony. What is challenging here is the way Woodley articulates a close inquiry into the notion of irony using a constant consideration of corresponding musical elements. By doing so, he avoids using the musical as a mere illustration of a theoretical content. This research protocol appears similar to my own approach.

The last item I would like to mention here that proved significant to my work, is Rudolf Kelterborn's *Analyse und Interpretation*.⁸¹ Its peculiarity lies in the fact that it pursues several goals. Not only does it provide a source for students to become familiar with the analytic vocabulary of the classical and modern era, but it also

⁷⁹ William Rothstein, 'Analysis and the act of performance', in *The Practice of Performance*, ed. by John Rink (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 218.

⁸⁰ Ronald Woodley, 'Strategies of Irony in Prokofiev's Violin Sonata in F minor, Op. 80', in *The Practice of Performance*, ed. by John Rink (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 170–193.

⁸¹ Rudolf Kelterborn, *Analyse und Interpretation* (Winterthur: Amadeus, 1993).

deeply investigates a 'work-specific' (*werk-spezifisch*) way of analysing, which occurs concurrently with the interpretative process. In that regard, it helps measure the interpretative liberties that can be taken by the interpreter (e.g. tempo variations, dynamics, articulation, etc.) while remaining coherent and faithful to the text. What I learn from this text is the plasticity and extension that Kelterborn gives to the notions he makes use of, while remaining focused on his initial interrogations. A highly sensitive approach to musical analysis is conveyed in this book, which reaches its end results in the interpretation of the piece. It is, in that respect, a very inspirational source, whose research protocol I will mention further in the course of my research.

From each of the items I have mentioned, I have been able to extract elements that have led me to define the way I proceed in my own research, from both speculative and practical perspectives. Even though no authors ever directly address the methodological aspects of practice-based research, it is possible to develop one's own access to a methodological reasoning on practice-based research.

A significant part of my approach to practice-based studies has been informed by John Freeman. Although the case studies he examines in his book *Blood, Sweat & Theory: Research through Practice in Performance* are part of *Modern Drama Studies*, their benefit to the musician is substantial. Indeed, they cover most of the issues facing the researcher/performer, from the initial questioning to the way in which the work is disseminated. The systematic approach Freeman adopts makes his book an enduringly topical work in a field that is highly susceptible to change in the face of the accumulation of research in the discipline.⁸² The care he takes in defining the terms involved and the issues they cover has provided us with a sure-fire tool for refining our understanding of the place my research occupies in current productions as a whole, that is to say, for identifying more effectively its issues and specificities.

⁸² On this topic see Peter Thomson, 'Stop Press: The Intellectual Consequences of the Research Assessment Exercise', *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 20/2 (2000), pp. 114–120.

The primary merit of Freeman's approach is to offer a definition of practice as research before embarking more specifically on an investigation of the different variations of the genre:

Practice as research can be seen to be a process through which performance makers are able to develop and deepen the abilities they already possess to make reasoned, autonomous and often professional judgments.⁸³

While I have previously addressed the musical shortcomings of many performances in the contemporary repertoire, Freeman's words resonate surprisingly well here.

Let us return for a moment to the typology Freeman borrows from Frayling (see fn. 72), which meticulously delimits the scope of application of the categories put forward by the latter. By research into performance he means 'the study of performance as a live event [that] brings its own peculiarities of observational analysis, subjectivity and application, but it is nevertheless the study of an event rather than study through an event'.⁸⁴ He says of the research for practice that it 'is concerned with application: with the ways in which research can be used to develop performance'.⁸⁵ As for the last term, whose contours he endeavours to define, research in or through practice, it is the one that coincides most significantly with my own enterprise. He explains it in these terms:

It is research in or through performance that is the most problematic of our three suggested approaches. It is so because it works in denial of any clean delineation between the practitioner and the researcher, between the researcher and the researched. The preferred aim here is to regard performance as an indivisible element of both research and result.⁸⁶

If my work fits into this definition, it should nevertheless be noted that the recurrent process in my research, which consists of rethinking the very terms and definitional approach in each of the case studies that make up my work, also directs it in the direction of what Freeman, following Frayling, calls research for

⁸³ John Freeman, *Blood, Sweat & Theory: Research through Practice in Performance* (Faringdon: Libri, 2010), p. 57.

⁸⁴ *Blood, Sweat & Theory*, p. 64.

⁸⁵ *Blood, Sweat & Theory*, p. 64.

⁸⁶ *Blood, Sweat & Theory*, p. 65.

performance. This circular process places my research between the latter two categories; it does not distinguish between researcher and performer, as it serves at the same time interpretative purposes, especially since in my case it is expected that practice should, in Freeman's words, 'speak for itself'.⁸⁷

The final aspect of Freeman's work that caught my attention was the very meticulous points he offers to keep in mind both at the beginning of the research and performance work and throughout the work. This structure is articulated in twenty-five points. Some of these, while only imperfectly raising the question of the relationship between performance and the semantic content of the research, have the real merit of having it in mind and seeking to articulate it. I quote points 13 and 14, which address this issue directly:

13. How (and why) might embodied performance knowledge be disseminated in print?

14. What are the notions of equivalence? What is the word equivalence of a performance and to what extent is this measured by the time and length of a performance?⁸⁸

The notion of equivalence is certainly naive here, equivalence operating in the same linguistic register according to its logical definition, whereas practice-based research relies on different registers of meaning production, semantic or in my case sonic, in the way a metalanguage accounts for a language. The heterogeneity of the forms of meaning production must be assumed, otherwise the research would run the risk of simply becoming opinionated.

Since my research is interdisciplinary, drawing on my musical practice as well as musical aesthetics, it was necessary to find the appropriate context in which it could most efficiently be carried out, and in the most probing way possible. For this reason, I considered different fields of artistic investigation, as they have been expressed since the 1980s through the development of practice research, in the hope that the confrontation of sources would allow, by contributing to frame and contextualise my work in the existing production that uses artistic methods, to

⁸⁷ *Blood, Sweat & Theory*, p. 77.

⁸⁸ *Blood, Sweat & Theory*, p. 274.

increase its potential effectiveness with the reader. If the plethoric lexicon of practice research does not present any particular unity, varying according to the researchers and the institutions that use it, it is beneficial to question certain assumptions in order to expose more effectively the scope of one's own work.⁸⁹ Whatever the terms discussed here, it should be kept in mind that these different approaches essentially describe methods built on practice as a mode of inquiry as well as a means of presenting research.⁹⁰ As Hervey writes:

Through the creative process, the artistic researcher discovers new ways of doing research in hopes of finding new meaning in subjects that may have been previously examined with old methods. A creative research process is one that does not follow a prescribed method but evolves from a consciousness changed by emerging information.⁹¹

I have largely subscribed to such an approach, which consists in determining what in the object of study calls for a mode of inquiry that is not reducible to predetermined forms of investigation. This approach appeared to me as the only one likely not to crush the object of study under pseudo-positivist forms of knowledge.

The aim here is to show how my approach has been influenced both by reflections on the nature of practice research as well as by examples of practice-based research conducted by instrumentalists. At the same time, this allows me to observe the specific form of intellectuality that practice-based research calls for as

⁸⁹ Since this research was undertaken, under the generic statement 'Practice Research', I have frequently encountered in my readings the syntagms *practice-based research*, *practice as research*, *practice through research*, *practice-led research*, and *creative research*, to name the most common. Whatever the terms discussed, it should be kept in mind that these different approaches essentially describe methods built on practice as a mode of inquiry as well as a means of presenting research.

⁹⁰ I will not address here the question of what is meant by the term 'creative' in the statements 'Creative Practice Research', 'Creative Arts Research', as they seem to refer to the notion of performance. More theoretical approaches are expected to be equally creative. It is in this sense – that of an opposition between research as theory and as creation (performance) – that Lenore Wadsworth Hervey remarks: 'Somewhere in the formative phases of this conference [she is referring here to a conference entitled 'Research as a Creative Process' that was held in 1981, organised by the American Dance Therapy Association], someone recognized the potential for research to be creative, but in the actual manifestation, the creative element was all but missing.' Hervey, *Artistic Inquiry in Dance/Movement Therapy* [see fn. 14], p. 21. Later, she adds: 'I am challenged to imagine what a non-creative approach to research might be!' (p. 59).

⁹¹ Hervey, p. 60.

well as the form of knowledge that it promotes. If my practice has its origin in reference to texts by philosophers reacting to and reflecting on an aesthetic experience, the relationship that practice-based research has with certain philosophical contexts is the first thing I considered when approaching the literature devoted to practice-based research.

Another source that has been a constant source of reflection in my own work is Shaun May's book *Rethinking Practice as Research*. May inscribes his work in a movement he calls the 'cognitive turn', following the interest already shown by Robin Nelson for Gilbert Ryle in his classic study *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*.⁹² Although May's primary focus is on Drama Studies, his work can nevertheless prove to be a valuable tool for a musician in terms of the consistency and overall scope of his statements. If many aspects of this research are not new in light of the already existing literature, it is nevertheless presented in a limpid and comprehensive way to the reader. In a manner close to Freeman, and in complete resonance with the pitfalls my research seeks to guard against, May indicates that: 'The fundamental question being addressed is whether or not practical knowledge, such as that produced by PaR, is a species of – or even reducible to – propositional knowledge.'⁹³ This statement concerns him enough to return to it: 'We must acknowledge that it is simply wrong-headed to think that what we discover through practice can, let alone should, be fully explicated in propositional terms.'⁹⁴ What his reflection shows here is indeed a constant concern for the relegation of the aesthetic object to a semantic object, which testifies to a sharp sense of the different linguistic registers in which research is presented. It is indeed not enough to observe the heterogeneity of theory and practice to overcome the obstacle, and it is to May's credit that he states it with full clarity.

⁹² Robin Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁹³ Shaun May, *Rethinking Practice as Research and the Cognitive Turn* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), p. 43.

⁹⁴ May, *Rethinking Practice as Research*, p. 56.

I also value May's book for bringing clarity to the distinction between a practice that is driven by research and questioning and one that is devoid of the latter, the two ways leading to different results:

I would add that the practical component must be necessary to answer the research question – in other words, it could not be adequately answered, for example, through an extensive study of the extant literature or previous performances. Clearly, previous performances that were created without a research question in mind can inform the research, but as a *case study* or example.⁹⁵

Although the part played by philosophy of mind in the work is not systematically organic with the author's purpose, it is nevertheless worth noting the importance of the current trend that places philosophy of mind at its centre, as we will also see shortly in the work of Mira Benjamin.

At this point in my research, and before coming back to speculative considerations on certain points of practice-based research, I feel it is important to devote a few moments to three recent studies that are not primarily *reflections* on practice-based research, but fully embody the notion in action: three writings by young scholars who each devote themselves to practice-based research as performing musicians. They exemplify aspects of practice-based research from which I could draw lessons for my evolution in this type of research.

In the context of a very active academic interest in practice and research in all its variations and in various sub-disciplines (practice-based research, practice as research, practice research, practice by research, etc.), it might be interesting to address not solely the literature immediately germane and relevant to my enquiry, but also to take a few steps back so as to be able to observe my work, within the very large research output available, from beyond the limits that it clearly sets and delineates for itself. I limit myself here to writings whose influence on the development of my reflection is tangible and, if I use sources from disciplines other

⁹⁵ May, *Rethinking Practice as Research*, p. 66.

than music in practice-based research, it is because their influence must be exposed for the intelligibility of the subject.

I would like to note here a couple of aspects from recent practice-based researches, all of which are from the English-speaking academic sphere. I consider these exemplary of practice-based literature in the context of contemporary music, as they succeed at conveying a sense of their author's artistry while not flattening their sensibility under the weight of an academic apparatus that wasn't conceived in the first place to welcome a research output that does not solely express itself in the form of a written text.⁹⁶

Seth Parker Woods' PhD thesis 'Almost Human: The Study of Physical Processes and the Performance of a Prosthetic Digital *Spine*' offers insights that reveal points of convergence with the ambition that underlies my work. Summarised at its core, Woods' research is about embodied expressions and sonic expressions that the use of wearable technology allows, in the form of a digital prosthetic, referred to as *Spine*.⁹⁷ These points of convergence, taken in their most general sense, are set out eloquently in the introduction to his work. The research is presented in the form of an 'investigation of interdisciplinary performance through music that looks to the self to try to further understand subjective performance practices in expression, gesture and sonic output.'⁹⁸ Woods studies a set of pieces that 'positions movement and embodied expressivity at the forefront of the discussion'.⁹⁹ The main part of the work concerns the use of a prosthetic digital spine as a generator of artistic possibilities and how this device relates to the body's

⁹⁶ I am thinking here particularly of institutions whose interest in practice-based research makes it possible to have a transdisciplinary reflection on the topic, as they promote practice and research in various disciplines. Canterbury Christ Church University, for example, is active in promoting practice-based research through the Center for Practice-Based Research (CPBRA) and the Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE). The same university also engages in international collaborations, such as with Orpheus Institute, Belgium. The Leeds Arts and Humanities Research Institute fosters research across the faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures (University of Leeds), and similarly offers a suitable and propitious environment for such transdisciplinary approaches.

⁹⁷ Seth P. Woods, 'Almost Human: The Study of Physical Processes and the Performance of a Prosthetic Digital Spine' (PhD thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2016). Available at <<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/28422/1/Thesis-finalsubmission%20-%20WOODS.pdf>> [accessed 15 May 2021].

⁹⁸ Woods, 'Almost Human', p. i

⁹⁹ Woods, 'Almost Human', p. i.

expressive features as it performs. The ambition of this work is to conceptualise the expressivity in the narrow framework of a collaboration between dancer-performer (cellist), composer and researcher.¹⁰⁰ The similarity of the semantic field used by the author as by us must be underlined here, although we focus our attention on very different parameters, and do not share the same premises. The understanding of the notions that he implements remains determined by the horizon that he assigns himself, that of Rudolf Laban's kinetography, and its adaptability to the analysis of expressive movement. Woods' reflection here articulates conceptual aspects as well as practical aspects from the field of computer music. For this reason, he also uses motion capture processes. This aspect is particularly interesting for my research. It is a contemporary declension of a very old question but familiar to any person versed in rhetoric. Namely, the notion of gesture is related to that of eloquence, oratory, affect, and by extension expression. This aspect is amply described in book XI of Quintilian's *De Institutione Oratoria* of the 1st century AD. Where my research is more concerned with the question of the articulation of concept and sound presence in the form of an aesthetic investigation, Woods develops in his methodology an approach that could be described as performative. His ambition differs from mine in other ways as well. His goal is the use of digital music instruments for interactive performance.¹⁰¹ Its ambition is thus resolutely practical; it consists in capturing the expressiveness and in achieving a sonic expansion mediated by a digital instrument. His work is an exemplary continuation of the initiatives that since the early 2000s have focused on the practice-based research for electronic and electro-acoustic.¹⁰² In the plethora of recent publications, this work stands out as a source of inspiration, as much for the written

¹⁰⁰ 'Throughout the thesis, the analysis of movement has been at the forefront of discussion as it relates to performance practices and ways to heighten a performer's (inter-)subjective relationship with their instrument and in participatory group settings.' Woods, 'Almost Human', p. 104.

¹⁰¹ 'The analysis and critique of this practice has steered me towards finding new expressive avenues in the form of digital-age performance to express that which caused such frustrations in the past. The concise background given on the birth of digital musical instruments, and how that has fuelled current creations in the way of championing physicalised sound brought the research to the discovery of the Spine'. Woods, 'Almost Human', p. 111.

¹⁰² NIME (New Interfaces for 'Musical Expression), an international conference dedicated to scientific research in musical and artistic performance, was created in 2001 and now takes place annually.

part and its questioning as for the portfolio and the valorisation of the musical result.

Heather Roche's PhD research at the University of Huddersfield investigates the dialogical and collaborative dynamics on which the creation of new works relies.¹⁰³ Roche engages in a practice-based exploration of the cognitive and musical dynamics that underlie the collaborative process. The origin of this approach is, therefore, eminently personal, based on the author's vast experience as a performer of the music of our time.¹⁰⁴ Her research is very fruitful as she not only describes the facts that characterise the collaborations as she has experienced them but also submits her experience to the criticism of what she considers to be a consistent and successful collaboration with composers. It is also meritorious in that it does not summon any theory outside the exercise of its only practice could come close to a definition of collaborative work. It thus avoids the pitfall of superficial use of sources. Her proposal is all the more effective as she sets herself a limited set of points to investigate within the framework of a practice-based research: to explore the outcome of dialogue in a collaboration between a performer and a composer; allow themes to arise that were not foreseen as such in the collaborative process; and not simply to test the truth of a collaborative approach, but to create the workspace in which new collaborative approaches can emerge.¹⁰⁵ In the same way that Woods sought to rethink gestural expressivity in the light of the use that can be made of it musically, Roche seeks to identify what, of the verbal and gestural elements, tends to communicate information in the service of collective musical production. Thus, she is dependent on the idea of gesture as a carrier of meaning, an assumption she shares with Woods. While Roche focuses on the dynamics of meaning and informational exchange, what is implicitly at the heart of her work, though not thematised, is as much a description of collaborative stages as an outline of a theory of collaborative listening, a theory of collaboration as 'listening to

¹⁰³ Heather Roche, 'Dialogue and Collaboration in the Creation of New Works for Clarinet' (PhD thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2011). Available at <<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/17512/1/hrochefinalthesis.pdf>> [accessed 16 May 2021].

¹⁰⁴ 'The research is subjective: it stems out of my own dialogue and collaborations with composers'. (p. 7)

¹⁰⁵ Roche, 'Dialogue and Collaboration', p. 10.

listening', in some way. What she seems to be doing brilliantly is risk alienating herself in the other, testifying to the communicative failure of unsuccessful collaborations, as many contemporary music performers know them.¹⁰⁶ This approach, however practical it may be, is nevertheless also the bearer of very welcome aesthetic extensions. Her desire for collaborations that are likely to make her grow as an artist goes beyond the aesthetic cleavages over-determined by national affiliations.¹⁰⁷ Another unique aspect of this research is that it offers a quasi-sociological description of the social contexts in which his practice of collaboration and creation takes place.¹⁰⁸ Once these elements are gathered, we can then fully identify the claimed ambition of the research: 'a creative practice that engages with the work and the relationship between the collaborators in order to create'.¹⁰⁹

While this thesis stands out for the interest that can be attributed to the observation of an interpreter as seasoned as Roche, it nevertheless remains, for the most part, focused on the sole experience of its author and does not address head-on the question of a methodology that could be followed in future collaborations, and the goals pursued by a reasoned approach. In this respect, one could almost speak of a form of auto-ethnography. This ambition is implicitly claimed: 'It is the aim of this project to contribute as a researcher-practitioner, to the growing body of work by social theorists that have applied themselves to collaborative practices'.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the author indicates a series of points to which the reader should pay attention in his own collaborations, and which prove to be very useful, as they are the fruit of the author's rich experience. They could be considered as the outline of a methodology that remains to be developed in all its implications.

¹⁰⁶ 'For the creative potential of the project to flourish, both partners of a collaboration must know that their ideas are heard and considered.' Roche, 'Dialogue and Collaboration', pp. 13–14.

¹⁰⁷ 'As I intend for my own repertoire not to be limited by location, it is important to have a broad view, to attempt to build a contemporary repertoire that is unique to my own performative aesthetic.' (p. 16)

¹⁰⁸ 'Despite the obvious bias due the participation of the researcher in this course or research, this thesis owes a significant debt to the practice of social theorists in this field.' (p. 18)

¹⁰⁹ Roche, 'Dialogue and Collaboration', p. 37.

¹¹⁰ Roche, 'Dialogue and Collaboration', p. 18.

At the end of her research, Roche, in addition to evaluating her conclusions in light of her initial assumptions, also takes care to reflect on what her object of study, collaboration, has brought her in her practice as an instrumentalist. She also provides many tips on how to conduct successful collaborative work. Like my research, it is interesting to observe that one of the essential factors she emphasises is the time to be given to such collaborations, to have working conditions that allow for work that is not primarily dictated by a performance imperative. The time of research and the time of creation rarely coincide, and it is very appreciable that the author gives her readers an idea of this hiatus. This hiatus is also at the origin of my practice of research in a musical context.

A third instance of practice-based research by a performing musician has also been influential for how I wanted my own research to take shape, and continues to be important for my current practice. Mira Benjamin's doctoral thesis, despite its ostensibly utilitarian purpose (a typology of learning and teaching about the relationship between microtonality and instrumental tuition), reveals issues that are properly aesthetic in nature. Her work is in line with the current enthusiasm for the philosophy of mind. The very title of her thesis reflects this, denoting a Rylean tropism in the expression 'thick relationality'.¹¹¹

We are indebted to Shaun May for drawing up an exemplary inventory of the growing place of the philosophy of mind over the last fifteen years in the practice as research specific to theatre studies,¹¹² borrowing from McConachie and Hart the expression 'cognitive turn' in practice as research.¹¹³ Research in aesthetics and philosophy of mind owes much to the pioneering work of Gregory Currie, who

¹¹¹ Mira Benjamin, 'Thick Relationality: Microtonality and the Technique of Intonation in 21st Century String Performance' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2019), p. 11. Available at <<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/35116/1/FINAL%20THESIS%20-%20BENJAMIN.pdf>> [accessed 15 May 2021]. The aspect to which I refer is clearly exemplified in proposals such as: 'This research develops a relational epistemology of musical pitch via various ways of modelling, practising, representing, and ultimately knowing pitch.'

¹¹² Shaun May, *Rethinking Practice as Research and the Cognitive Turn* (Palgrave MacMillan: London, 2015).

¹¹³ Bruce McConachie and Elizabeth Hart, *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn* (London: Routledge, 2006).

focused his efforts on film analysis.¹¹⁴ For my part, I hold that it is necessary for aesthetic research to constitute its object at the same time that it submits it to study. Benjamin, borrowing to the vocabulary of Desmond Bell, situates her research within a 'discovery-led approach'.¹¹⁵

I consider that the difference between a practice-based research like mine and a discovery-led approach results from the essentially practical concern of the latter: namely, the setting in order of a field still (probably) insufficiently covered by the musical practice and the artistic research. While these differences may seem substantial, they should not obscure how research like Benjamin's has helped me to clarify certain issues in my own work. I would like to focus on two points in particular, that of Benjamin's relationship to the text and to notation, and that of the relationship she establishes with the audience to which her work is addressed. The questioning that leads her research seems to coincide with some of my own concerns in one essential aspect. One major impetus of her work is to question the way(s) in which a musician interacts with a notational system, so that the interpretive choices made during the preparation are informed, legitimate, and contribute to bringing to light the most appropriate expression of a given piece. The relationship of notation to the sound of the musician is necessarily a question of expression. On this point Benjamin's entire enterprise constitutes for me a source of confrontation as well as a source of stimulating inspiration.

In the same way that its concern is that of experimentation and discovery, it supports its research with the acquisition of a positive knowledge.¹¹⁶ At the end of her research, Benjamin was able to establish a typology of musical functions making it possible to isolate the aspects of instrumental practice requiring a particular effort, likely, in the long run, to develop harmoniously all the aptitudes necessary for

¹¹⁴ Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹¹⁵ Desmond Bell, *Mind the Gap! Working Papers on Practice-based Doctoral Research in the Creative Arts and Media* (Dublin: Distiller's Press, 2016).

¹¹⁶ 'Without categorically disallowing any of the received traditions or conventions that accompany canonical artefacts, genres or performance traditions, an experimental practice, for me, foregrounds active listening and an ultimate curiosity about how music can potentially be *known*.' Benjamin, 'Thick Relationality', p. 18.

an informed practice covering all the difficulties offered by experimentation and notation. I will stop for a moment on this aspect because it is exemplary of the distancing she applies to the object of her research in order to make it accessible to the community, not only of researchers, but of young musicians eager to familiarise themselves with the specific problems of intonation. First, she proposes to develop what she calls active listening, in reference to Pauline Oliveros' own deep listening, based on her work *Out of the Dark*.¹¹⁷ Benjamin then devotes a second time to the specific study of harmonics, based on the piece *Threads of the Social* by Scott McLaughlin.¹¹⁸ Hearing proportions is the next aspect she focuses on, following the example of Taylor Brook's *Ptolemy's Observation*.¹¹⁹ Benjamin continues her investigation by addressing the issue of reading notation, making decisions based on Linda C. Smith's *Orient Point*.¹²⁰ Although I have not attempted to systematise my work in the form of a typology of musical gestures found in the works that make up my portfolio, as Benjamin does, the idea of seeing pieces with certain specific traits as studies whose approach can be systematically developed and used to cultivate an instrumental technique as well as a taste for the music of our time is an initiative that deserves to be highlighted. For my part, it is indeed in my methodology that lies the invitation to discovery by other musicians.

At the end of this review of theoretical works, as well as practice-based research in action, it seems useful to return to certain aspects relating to the definitions in presence as well as to the various readings of the notion of methodology, in order to fix in the mind of the reader the essential stakes and problems; and this before tackling myself to the description of the methodological paths that I have established at the threshold of my research.

Carole Gray describes practice-led research as follows:

Firstly, as research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, and challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; secondly, the research

¹¹⁷ Benjamin, 'Thick Relationality', p. 202

¹¹⁸ Benjamin, 'Thick Relationality', p. 203.

¹¹⁹ Benjamin, 'Thick Relationality', p. 204.

¹²⁰ Benjamin, 'Thick Relationality', p. 205.

strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners.¹²¹

It would be useful to supplement this with the final definition for practice-led research given by Brad Haseman:

As this progresses, it will become sharply evident that while practice-led research builds directly out of a researcher's professional practice, it is more than an individual's professional practice alone. With its emergent, but nevertheless systematic approach, practice-led research promises to raise the level of critical practice and theorise around practice in a more rigorous and open way than professional practice alone is able to achieve.¹²²

The question of method, on which it seems impossible to reach a consensus, insofar as it is the object of study which dictates it – although certain guidelines seem to be able to be put forward – is the object of a work which has the merit to present a whole range of reflections covering various artistic disciplines, thus allowing the setting in comparison and the cross-fertilisation.¹²³

It is in this final section of Leavy's *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*, in which the author questions the division between art and science, that the stakes of the methodological approach as it commands the research are most clearly exposed:

Research objectives and the corresponding research design need to click. By *clicking together*, I mean to suggest that research methods should be selected and adapted to meet particular research questions that are embedded within a framework of epistemological assumptions and theoretical commitments.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Carole Gray, 'Inquiry Through Practice: Developing Appropriate Research Strategies' (1996). Available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260512592_Inquiry_through_Practice_developing_appropriate_research_strategies/link/5a8ead56458515eb85ad6d90/download> [accessed 25 May 2021]. One may also wish to consult Carole Gray and Julian Malins, *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2004).

¹²² Brad Haseman, 'Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the Performative Research Paradigm', in *Practice as Research Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, ed. by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), p. 156.

¹²³ Patricia Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (New York: Guilford, 2009).

¹²⁴ Leavy, *Method Meets Art*, p. 258.

I would like to contrast Leavy's reflection with what Ben Spatz distinguishes as the specificity of a methodology in the field of practice as research and which completes the previous quote. It is precisely in the context of a discussion on methodology that Spatz allows himself to draw a distinction between practice as research and performance as research.

Methodology cannot concern itself directly with the public sphere. It can, however, concern itself directly with practice, which can be both object and method of research. On these grounds, we might draw a conceptual distinction between performance studies, which can study 'almost anything' as performance, but only by relying upon relatively traditional methodologies, and practice as research, which suggests a field of experimentation as large as that of performance studies, but which treats practice as methodology rather than object of study.¹²⁵

Sue Joseph has developed a very singular reflection on the notion of methodology that is worth noting in the context of my own research.¹²⁶ We owe to her the term 'enactive methodologies', which she inscribes in the wider scheme of autoethnography, a methodological approach also represented in creative research (as in Benjamin's thesis).

Joseph gives the following definition:

Enactive methodology is best described in terms of 'doing practice' with a quasi-scientific edge. Basically, the practice can be repeated, compared, and then the results documented exegetically.¹²⁷

While her remarks are primarily about creative writing, her reflections are nevertheless relevant in the case of my research. If we stick to the fact that the practice can be repeated and compared, this means that the interpretation claims to

¹²⁵ Ben Spatz, 'Mad Lab', in *Performance as Research: Knowledge, Methods, Impact*, ed. by Annette Arlander, Bruce Barton, Melanie Dreyer-Lude and Ben Spatz (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 214.

¹²⁶ Sue Joseph, 'Enactive Methodologies', in *Old and New: Tried and Untried Creativity and Research in the 21st Century*, ed. by Jeri Kroll, Andrew Melrose and Jen Webb (Champaign, IL: Common Ground, 2016), pp. 107–122.

¹²⁷ Sue Joseph, 'The Exegesis, Autoethnography and the Ethical Management of Enactive Practice', in *Old and New, Tried and Untried Creativity and Research in the 21st Century*, ed. by Jeri Kroll, Andrew Melrose and Jen Webb (Champaign IL: Common Ground Publishing, 2016), p. 111.

be 'objective' in terms of the expressive means used as well as in terms of the result of the analyses carried out in the first instance during the personal and collective elaboration (at the time of rehearsals) of the interpretation. In the long run, the question that this approach raises, and which is consubstantial in my eyes with that of expression, is the question of aesthetic judgment. The question that this methodological approach raises is that of the canonical difference between reflective and determining judgment.

Dylan Robinson's approach has also proved to be a source of inspiration in my reflection on the implementation of the methodological, conceptual and practical premises of my own research. The most striking aspect of his approach, proposing a research model that emphasises how 'theorisation and research might take place in a non-academic context: the context of music performance and with its audience', is the idea of an 'expansion of musical epistemologies', which, in the case of the methodology he proposes, would be played out between performer and audience members in the form of a dialogue.¹²⁸ The cardinal idea of his proposal comes from the analytical pragmatism already observed in Goodman. Its stakes are those of the definition and the essence of the work of art, since there is work in the pragmatic thought only in the link between enunciation, recipient and work (referent). This aspect, bringing the reflection to the level of dialogue, is central to the way I myself proceed in the work of rehearsal in which the voice of my colleagues is raised to the level of a consubstantial part of the reflection on the nature of the expression that we seek to make audible and knowable. On this point, Erika Fischer-Lichte brings valuable elements to the reflection in a perspective itself inherited from a pragmatist vision: 'Most importantly, the spectators generate meaning in a performance by virtue of the peculiar fact that they themselves partake in creating the process they wish to understand'.¹²⁹ If its approach is too pragmatic with regard to what I propose to do, namely to put forward the content of objectivity of the

¹²⁸ Dylan Robinson, 'Musical Epistemology', in *Inside Knowledge: (Un)doing Ways of Knowing in the Humanities*, ed. by Carolyn Birdsall, Maria Boletsi, Itay Sapir and Peter Verstraete (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), pp. 245–246.

¹²⁹ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 155.

expression specific to a considered work, it has nevertheless the very great merit of highlighting the dynamics of communication and construction of the sense that the performance allows.

The question of the audience that my work aims at, from my colleagues as well as from the educational community, constitutes the heart of the collective work *Arts-Based Research in Education: Foundations for Practice*, work from which it was possible for me to draw some profit, in particular the chapter written by Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor.¹³⁰ She first identifies four principles that should guide practitioners and readers of Arts-Based Researches: the principle of subjectivity and public good, the principle of attribution and ethical good, the principle of impact and aesthetic good, and the principle of translation to scientific good. It is this last aspect that I would like to focus on for a moment. This principle is the one by which the author formalises her reflection on the impact that what she calls scholarartists are likely to make in the political, social and aesthetic spheres. The translation to scientific good is thought of as going beyond the principle of impact and aesthetic good. In a certain way it includes and exceeds the three previous principles, in that it offers them to reflection, that is to say to the community of researchers, artists, readers and educators.

If what we are doing is merging arts and science traditions, then we must not only pursue aesthetic good, we must also find ways to communicate the value and processes of our work to education audiences. In light of the diversity of our origins, we all reach to translate how and why ABR matters in social science.¹³¹

Cahnmann-Taylor's reflection has been most influential in this regard on the path my research is taking as it comes to a close (see conclusion), namely, questioning those aspects of the research, beyond the question of expression, that are in turn likely to inform the practice not only of my musical colleagues but of the educational community at large. It is becoming increasingly clear to me that a

¹³⁰ Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, 'Four Guiding Principles for Arts-Based Research Practice', in *Arts-Based Research in Education: Foundations for Practice*, ed. by Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor and Richard Siegesmund (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 247–258.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

practice-based approach still relentlessly questions the fundamental assumptions of what is the traditional way to disseminate research. This question will be taken up again and deepened, not in this work, where it is not the immediate issue, since it is part of a precise institutional framework, but in the research that will follow it.

Henk Slager's contributions to Artistic Research offer a singular approach to the question of methodology. He highlights the cardinal role played by methodology when he states that 'the soundness of the method determines the value of the results, whereby continual control should demonstrate to what extent the conditions of methodology have been applied adequately'.¹³² His reflection leads him to the neologism of 'methododicy', which he opposes to the idea of methodology as a rigid protocol. Certainly the most important aspect of Slager's contribution lies in the distinction he makes between the research itself as it progresses and the critical perspective on the means and methodology employed in conducting the research: 'One could conclude that artistic research (and the institutions admitting such research in their curriculum) should continually insert a meta-perspective enabling critical reflection on both the position and temporary situation of the research project'.¹³³ While Slager sees that two registers can (and to a certain extent must) coexist, he does not however warn against the risk of arbitrariness and confusion that follows from the confusion of these levels in research, a confusion already touched upon in my introduction in the form of an analogy between language and metalanguage (the interpretation of the consistency and completeness of research). Such reflections, like the ones mentioned above, have the primary merit, despite differences in approach, of working to overcome the simplistic alternative between theory and practice. On this subject, Gertrud Sandqvist reports:

There is a pair of concepts that I would never be able to use with regard to artistic research: the division into theory and practice. I see all areas of knowledge, and also of art, as involving practical, artisanal moments of know-how, along with the more speculative meta-thinking

¹³²Henk Slager, 'Methododicy', in *Artistic Research, Lier en Boog, Series of Philosophy of Art and Art Theory*, ed. by Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 12-14.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

that can be called theory. I think it leads us astray if we apply the old, well-worn conceptual pair of theory-practice to the new and interesting field known as artistic research.¹³⁴

These reflections each work to create the problematic by which to seize precisely these two instances, theory and practice, in the moment of their coalescence and of their overcoming. All of them have thus influenced the way in which I myself have envisaged inscribing my work in this particular perspective that constitutes practice-based research. It is through them that the conceptual edifice, thanks to which I was able to put my own practice at a distance in order to question it tirelessly at the same time as I was implementing it, crystallised in the course of my ongoing reference to the research that accompanied my work.

¹³⁴ Gertrud Sandqvist, 'New Knowledge from the Artist's Perspective: On Artistic Research', in *Artistic Research in Music: Discipline and Resistance*, ed. by Jonathan Impett (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017), p. 185.

1.4 Methodology

In this introduction, I have laid down the conceptual foundation on which my research project is constructed. By relating the notion of expression to contemporary currents of research in the field of practice-based studies and aesthetic research more generally, I am endeavouring to highlight the relevance and efficiency of the idea of expression as a conceptual framework and as a qualitative component of the interpretative process.

The ambition of my methodology is twofold: on the one hand, I will address the methodological means that I think are necessary to optimally highlight what practice-based research consists of in the field of applied aesthetics; on the other, my methodology will aim at sharpening the definition of the concept of expression as a determining criterion in contemporary music stemming from poetic texts.

The fact that practice-based research has only been formally recognised in academia fairly recently poses the problem of a possible malfunction: practice-based research has an object upon which to concentrate its investigation, but lacks the conceptual means to reflect itself in the mirror of those endeavours. It also lacks an adequate apparatus to carry out its results. The question then follows, as to how practice-based research may be rendered accessible to the community of musicians and researchers in music. The question arises as to how it can be effectively presented (if by effectiveness, one means the opportunity not only to be heard but also carried out), and whether publication is the medium which would best suit the nature of the research, or if it is just the most convenient or conventional one. One can also wonder whether the knowledge gained by such a research helps to inform our faculty of judgment, as the necessary end result of our appreciation of art. These questions are of crucial importance in defining the methodology, on a conceptual as well as practical level.

The methodology I developed to carry out this study has been the object of constant care. It was not only a question of determining before beginning the

research which path was best suited to the resolution of the object of my research, but also, in the course of the research, of constantly updating its form, so that it could best serve the singularities offered by the works studied – singularities to which a method established once and for all beforehand would not have done justice.

Establishing a methodology that does not preempt the expected results of the research implies, especially in the case of practice-based research, that the method must also be allowed to emerge from within the practice itself. This double movement requires constant attention, in order, on the one hand, to maintain the presuppositions on which the methodology has been conceived; and on the other, to ensure that the process remains open – that it is not a function of an experimental method, in which a protocol is defined and adhered to, but rather depends on all the actors in the research, namely the interpreters whose participation is the living matter of the research.

The methodology I have used exemplifies and develops various aspects: methodology of research itself; practical methodology for the performances and ways of documenting and analysing those performances; and conceptual methodology regarding ways of refining my understanding of the concept of ‘expression’. The probity I have just described regarding the way of linking together arguments is easily amenable to demonstrating the third aspect of methodology (the conceptual aspect). In advance, I would like to stress that unifying these three aspects is the most suitable methodology for practice-based research. Therefore the discussion of methodology will be present at every stage of my research. The idea that a pre-existing methodology would spare one the effort of some thinking is a naïve understanding of the concept, as it confounds the concept of ‘methodology’ with that of ‘system’, which can be pre-existent. Each text that I work on will provide an opportunity to touch upon a methodology that will unveil itself as the concept of expression becomes more precise.

The methodology or *modus operandi* consists in performing and analysing the contemporary compositions pertinent to this research, activities in which I participated as conductor, chamber-music and vocal coach, and pianist/accompanist. In addition to coordinating and documenting these activities is my analytical role, studying these examples and the emergence of new and original expressive qualities of the music in relation to the assumed autonomy of the poetic substance, and how the setting of poetry to music as a more general project can be considered with regard to these issues.¹³⁵

I describe here the steps to follow, as they are presented in an ideal scenario, that is, free from collective practice, but as I had to follow it in order to have the necessary flexibility and the capacity to react in the moment in front of the musicians.

First of all, I determined the essential qualities of the poem: images, rhythms, sounds, formal organisation, at a level below stylistic analysis but beyond a purely candid and aimless reading. It was a question of reading the text specifically as a musician, not as a writer, in order to understand which of its aspects could take on a musical eloquence. I was, therefore, looking for salient qualities that might be likely to be taken up by the composer, or that might even lend themselves to word-painting, in the case of the poetic image.

I then proceeded to a musical analysis which did not take into account the action of the poem on the musical development. Here I considered such qualities as: movement (metre; pulse; tempo and changes of tempo; density of movement, e.g. lull or acceleration; long/short ratios and their modifications; interruption of movement; stasis), harmony (cadences; diatonic or chromatic character; etc.), dynamics (including dynamic contrasts, and crescendos/decrescendos), sonic space (entry and use of different registers), the type of musical discourse (number of

¹³⁵ My purpose in doing so is specifically to address the type of knowledge and the approach to analysis that a performer can provide, using stylistics and aesthetics, i.e. the performance itself will be considered in the light of what it can provide for further reflection, and not merely as an end result. My concern is not merely to exemplify through interpretation what has been gained through analysis, but to observe how interpretation itself bears intrinsically a requirement to thinking.

voices; function of individual voices; chordal or linear writing), repetition and novelty (the extension or recall of material already heard, whether with or without variation; the relationships between motifs; the appearance of new gestures or of new thematic, rhythmic, harmonic or timbral motifs).

Once the two autonomous spheres of expression – musical expression and poetic expression – had been studied independently, I then proceeded to cross-check the data collected in the analyses. In doing so, the aim was to see if the music underlines the poetic purpose and, if so, in what way. The outcome of this stage was a first level of text/music relationship, in which the means of one coincided with the means of the other.

By continuing in the same way, I could observe the points of divergence between musical and poetic substance. Was the natural accentuation of the language modified in favour of a later or earlier musical accentuation? If so, which element was to be prioritised, and what criteria could allow me to decide this question? I concluded in the course of my practice that the resolution of this difficulty often resided in the choice of a third option: one that sought to escape the dichotomy of an opposition between musical and poetic content.

In practice, this meant that the two above-mentioned analyses were carried out before any meeting with the musicians with whom the piece was to be worked on. This first stage had to be firmly anchored in my mind so that I could adapt the resulting conceptual framework when it was put to the test during rehearsals.

The final aspect of the methodology – the most delicate to describe as it is the most intangible – resides in the dialogue that I established with either the soloist, the singer or the musicians of the ensemble. The resolution of questions that remain open during the preparation of the rehearsals is brought about by living practice and dialogue. The aim of this practice is to find a way of doing things that is not a middle way between musical analysis and poetic analysis, but is qualitatively based on an expressiveness that is more than simply the difference between those two.

With this last observation I would like to underline the predominant place given to the 'human factor' in the final part of the methodology. It is impossible to fix this element in advance, or to anticipate it. One can only let it happen after making sure that one has done the preparatory work perfectly. However, and crucially, this is the element that allows us to eventually leave the methodology, and to address the research questions initially asked. It is impossible not to rethink the initial question in the light of the new questions that emerge in practice.

The articulation of tangible elements (an interpretative approach thought out in advance) and intangible elements (a musical interpretation that emerges in the dialogue of several musicians, each with a different understanding and sensitivity) is testimony to the singularity of a practice-based approach. The methodology precedes, accompanies and renews itself in practice. As such, the methodology is itself an essential part of the research outcomes.

2 Expression and gesture

In Chapter 2, I will attempt to shed light on the way form and expression intertwine with one another, and how they may be employed in addressing questions of *meaning* in music, thus enabling my research to deal with these concepts as concomitant rather than operating on heterogeneous levels. According to Christian Accaoui, four different approaches to the concept of meaning have predominated over the course of musical history: 1) meaning attached to numbers, such as in Johannes de Muris *Notitia artis musice* (1319-1321) or in Philippe de Vitry's *Ars nova musicae* (c.1320); 2) meaning attached to imitation, through the mediation of the verb; 3) formal meaning, including Eduard Hanslick and the Romantic idea of absolute music, and 4) meaning attached to connotations, exemplified by Bernd Alois Zimmermann's use of numerous quotations which have their own independent meaning in his *Requiem für einen jungen Dichter* or *Photoptosis*.¹³⁶ Although this classification corresponds to some extent to a chronological development, those four categories of musical meaning have been present throughout the history of music in various degrees, and remain applicable to contemporary musical practice. As expression is generally understood as including the possibility of carrying or conveying meaning, these categories are important to consider in relation to the topic of expression.

A further step towards understanding the way meaning, expression and form may relate to one another is to raise the issue of the link between meaning and expression. The question as to whether or not meaning can be heard remains open. This depends to some degree on which of the four forms of producing meaning are at play. The use of quotations, for example in the third movement of Berio's *Sinfonia*, offers the possibility for the listener to become aware of a given meaning, while meaning residing solely in the symbolic and iconic use of a musical sign on paper

¹³⁶ Christian Accaoui, *Éléments d'esthétique musicale* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2011), p. 371. See also Ghislaine L'Huillier, *Le 'Quadripartitum numerorum' de Jean de Murs* (Paris: École des Chartes, 1991), and Leo Plantinga, 'Philippe de Vitry's *Ars nova*: a translation', *Journal of Music Theory* 5/2 (1961), pp. 204-223.

presents totally different prerequisites for transmission.¹³⁷ Thus the nature of musical meaning and its relation to perception may be problematic, and need to be addressed differently in each specific case. The most persistent difficulty here lies in the fact that intertextuality may come into play even in musical situations in which one may least expect it: it may occur in purely instrumental pieces whose content is characterised principally by formal qualities, such as a Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven piano sonata or string quartet.¹³⁸ The listener may be able to observe the variations between what s/he is listening to and other pieces known to him/her having a similar form; the likelihood of this happening is increased if the listener is a trained musician. The perception of variations is therefore an element participating in creating meaning, a meaning based in this case on intertextuality.

Both expression and meaning are philosophical concepts; it is, therefore, appropriate that both be philosophically elaborated. The process of philosophically reflecting upon these concepts, however, is clearly not sufficient for my purposes here: their relation to sonic components must necessarily be interrogated. I will therefore focus in this section on observing how these concepts may be relevant to musical research. Expression, on the other hand, highlights the particularity of an interpretation, in that it helps us hear the subtleties of an interpreter's understanding of the piece being performed. In that regard, expression manifests what may be considered to be an independent sphere of reflection upon music; and furthermore, one that is particularly appropriate to a practice-based approach linked to performance.

In order to further illustrate this point, I will now investigate the relationship between construction and meaning.¹³⁹ In order to do so, I will introduce other

¹³⁷ An example of a symbolic meaning would be the use of E flat major in Mozart's *Thamos, König in Ägypten* or *Die Zauberflöte*: the three flats of the key are linked in Masonic numerology with ideas of ascension and illumination.

¹³⁸ I am using Gérard Genette's definition of intertextuality, as 'all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts'. Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 1. This definition is particularly apt in a musical context as it does not refer solely to a semantic utterance, but to any kind of text that relates to another text. Genette distinguishes between intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality and hypertextuality.

¹³⁹ By construction, I mean form and/or structure.

concepts which may prove to be useful in the course of my research in its practical 'performative' aspect, such as the concept of gesture, which may be defined in various ways. Gesture may refer to rhetoric, or to an anthropological concept, just as it may refer musically to a motif, cell, or development over a longer time period.¹⁴⁰ What these different applications of the term have in common is the way they all refer to a process oriented towards the production of a certain meaning: imitative (figurative) or musical (figurative in an analogic manner). The term 'meaning' may be applied more broadly than simply referring to programmatic aspects.¹⁴¹ The example of Alban Berg may be instructive in this regard: most of his instrumental pieces have a programme, either openly referenced in the title, as for the Violin Concerto 'To the Memory of an Angel' (1935), or kept secret, as in the *Lyric Suite* (1926). This programme, however, is coextensive with the highly determined organisation of the musical material, which, in some cases, may reveal a meaning that might not coincide with that of the 'programme'.

Gesture on the local level does not necessarily correspond to formal aspects. A clear example of this is provided by the second movement of Berg's *Chamber Concerto* (1925), which has the form of a palindrome. One would expect a palindrome to present expressive correspondences by nature, but in this case, the local gestural character of the piece does not underline the articulations of the overall form. This differential exemplifies the limits of an analysis that relies principally on the articulation of formal components.

Another example of this disparity is Pierre Boulez's *Structures I*, which epitomises the impossibility of reconciling gestural perception with a structural framework when that framework is not articulated at the surface level. This is neither a fault of the analytical framework, nor a compositional failure, but inherent to the nature of the composition. It is a particularity of structural serialism that the series functions in determining the overall architecture of a piece, rather than being

¹⁴⁰ I.e. a rhetorical figure may also be called a *gesture*. Interest in this concept has increased over the last years: it is now a theme present not only in Anglophone but also in French and German musicology.

¹⁴¹ As in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* for instance, in which the meaning of the piece coincides with its programme, the '*drame musical*'.

presented merely as thematic material.¹⁴² These formal aspects cannot necessarily be apprehended in perception. This is also the case for pieces such as Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstück X* or Pierre Boulez's Third Piano Sonata. One can deduce two complementary analytical categories from these examples: a gestural approach, based on content easily identifiable without a score, or 'phrases'; and a more quantitative approach based on structure. Particularly in the music of the post-war period, these categories may operate on independent levels.¹⁴³

A fairly straightforward example, in which gestural and quantitative approaches lead to different interpretations of the theme, can be found in the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 26. The analysis below is intended to illustrate how expression may be affected by the analytical approach an interpreter chooses.¹⁴⁴ The first occurrence of the theme helps the listener identify it as consisting of three parts, reinforced by the tonal stability in sections I and III (see score extract in Appendix):

Section I	A+A'	8+8 bars (period) A _b major (stable)
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The first sixteen bars is organised as a period ending in the same tonality as the beginning, instead of leading to the dominant, thus reinforcing the stability of the overall thematic content.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² I am using the term 'structural serialism' here to describe a generalised application of the series to all parameters, including structure, as opposed to 'dodecaphony', which only indicated the use of a twelve-tone row. The term 'total serialism' may also be used; however, as I am more concerned here with the structural function of the series, rather than its application to parameters such as dynamics, 'structural serialism' is being employed in its place.

¹⁴³ In general, gestural approaches were either absent or, at best, neglected in musical analysis of the immediate post-war era (from the late 1940s through the 1950s). This state of affairs changed somewhat with Stockhausen's introduction of the notion of 'moment form' in pieces such as *Momente* (1962) and *Kontakte* (1961), while in France, François-Bernard Mâche introduced a perceptual approach to complex contemporary pieces. See Mâche, *Musique-Mythe-Nature* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1983).

¹⁴⁴ This analytical approach is of course a preliminary step in practice-based research. I am not thus directly addressing the issue of performance, as I will do so in Chapter 3, devoted to the pieces included in my portfolio. But it is crucially important that this preliminary analytical step be as rigorous as possible.

¹⁴⁵ I am using Erwin Ratz's terminology. See Ratz, *Einführung in die musikalische Formenlehre: Über Formprinzipien in den Inventionen J. S. Bachs und ihre Bedeutung für die Kompositionstechnik Beethovens* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1951).

Section II B 10 bars (harmonic expansion)

This section consists of a two-bar model, which is repeated before being expanded over six bars of development.

Section III A'' 8 bars 'reprise' A_b major (stable)

This section is a repetition of the second part of the first section: A_b is thus confirmed, but the fact that this section is the shortest tends to reduce the impression of those 4/4 bars consisting of three sections.

However, a more 'formalist' approach based on quantitative properties might yield this result:

Section I A+A' 8+8 bars (period)

The result for the first section is the same as in the above analysis. This section can be seen as independent as it has the same tonality and does not lead to the second part harmonically.

Section II B+A'' 10+8 bars

The dynamics which introduce this section (*sforzando* in the left hand), the harmonic extension and the abbreviated return in A flat major balance the form such that it consists of only two parts rather than three.

What conclusions may be drawn from this example? Both options are legitimate, but the differing approaches suggest contrasting interpretative options in terms of organising the musical discourse, for instance through expressive articulation of phrasing.

Another example of the same problematics is provided by the theme of the variations of Mozart's Piano Sonata in A major, K331, in which the formal ambiguity is reinforced by the repetition of each part. This is exactly the same formal principle as in the example listed above, with the noticeable difference that the repetition signs make it harder to perceive. Based on content, a more 'gestural' approach yields:

Section I	[: A (4) A' (4):]
Section II	[:B (4)
Section III	A'' (4) prolongation (2):]

Whereas a more 'formalist' approach, based on quantitative properties, yields:

Section I	[: A (4) A' (4):]
Section II	[:B (4) A'' (4) prolongation (2):]

It is important at this stage to state that this comparison of analytical approaches is not intended to favour one over the other.¹⁴⁶ The point of presenting these examples is to show that the coexistence of various formal layers experienced in various ways are a decisive element to take into consideration in relation to concepts of meaning. Thus, formal complexity and perceptual comprehension are related to one another in ways that needs to be questioned anew for each given piece.

¹⁴⁶ I acknowledge, of course, that I am writing from an interpreter's point of view, which may arguably differ from that of a theorist or composer.

In the discussion of gesture in this and the following chapter, I will illustrate: 1) how a gestural approach may help the interpreter engage with a contemporary piece both on intellectual and practical levels; 2) how a gestural approach underlies an implicit interrogation of the 'meaning' of a piece; and 3) how expression is made audible (and potentially, visible) through gestural elements. These interrogations will contribute to refining the definition of the term 'gesture' in this research, as its meaning cannot be presented *a priori*. From a methodological point of view, it will be necessary in the course of my research, when attempting to progressively define the concept of *expression*, not to reduce it to what is being observed in and deduced from the printed score, but rather to constantly relate it to the experience of it, as it is musically produced.

One of the goals of this research project is to use practice-based methods to determine criteria in interpretation and a specific way of conceptualising musical material which might eventually be informative for researchers and practitioners outside of the field of practice-based studies. This is made possible by the nature of *expression* itself, which deals with the constructive dimension of the piece in addition to being linked to the materiality of the sonic phenomenon. I will therefore be exploring the relation between *expression*, the articulation of sound and meaning, and gesture, with an understanding of the latter is as bearing meaning inscribed in the materiality of sound. A certain multiplicity of concepts of gesture will be considered: there will be a consideration as to whether it is a culturally determined component within a given repertoire or style, whether it deals with a problematics related to musical time and memory, or if it is possible to codify its meaning outside of the context in which it appeared.

This multiplicity of concepts of gesture is reflected by the work of two musicologists, Vera Micznik and Jean-Paul Olive, who have attempted to propose a definition of it in the context of Berg's orchestral music. Both views are convincing, but are difficult to reconcile with one another, as they apply divergent paradigms: Micznik's relies on semiotics, while Olive's understanding of gesture takes into

account its temporal progression.¹⁴⁷ The lack of consensus in the use of the same term, even when dealing with the same repertoire, is striking.

We have seen in this chapter how concepts of expression and gesture are intertwined, and how applying gesture in analysis may influence interpretation and, thereby, expression. In Chapter 3, I explore concepts of expression in relation to Schoenberg's *Erwartung* and Debussy's *Chansons de Bilitis*, then reintroduce the concept of gesture, which has the merits of being a synthetic concept that encompasses discrete elements of interpretation. In that regard, it has to be enquired into in conjunction with expression.

I will now proceed with the pieces at the core of my research. I will first exemplify my approach using one of the *Bilitis* songs by Debussy and a short excerpt from Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, in that both pieces lend themselves appropriately, as will be audible from the recorded material, to shed light on certain aspects of the questions that are to be addressed in the contemporary repertoire of my portfolio.

¹⁴⁷ Micznik defines musical gestures as 'any musical unit that can be identified as a unit not only by virtue of its musical parameters, but even more because of its association with more general, conventionally recognized concepts'. Vera Micznik, 'Gesture as Sign: A Semiotic Interpretation of Alban Berg's Op. 6 No.1', *In Theory Only* 9/4 (1986), pp. 19-35 (p. 22).

According to Olive: 'From a topological and agogic point of view, it seems that one can define a gesture (in music) as the exhaustion of a certain material in a given context: a generative element (or several) gets enriched by its own variations, on a melodic level or on the level of superpositions – the whole intensifies, leading to a climax or coming to a standstill (stasis) provisionally, or falling back into immobility.' Jean-Paul Olive, *Alban Berg : Le tissage et le sens* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), p. 21; my translation.

[« D'un point de vue topologique et agogique, il semble qu'on puisse définir un geste comme l'épuisement d'un matériau dans un dispositif donné : un élément génératif (ou plusieurs) s'enrichit de ses propres variations, sur le plan mélodique comme sur le plan des superpositions ; l'ensemble s'intensifie, amenant à un climax ou s'immobilisant en stase provisoirement, ou encore retombant vers l'immobilité. »]

3 Practice-based research

3.1 Debussy's *Chansons de Bilitis* and Schoenberg's *Erwartung*

The first element in this practice-based research project is a brief study involving pieces by Claude Debussy and Arnold Schoenberg.¹⁴⁸ While the other repertoire of this project all dates from after 1950, these two works will serve as an example of modern composers whose influence on this later repertoire is undeniable, in terms of musical language, form and relations between text and music. In this first session, I have placed the emphasis on the reciprocal relation between music and text. The vocality of Debussy in his *Chansons de Bilitis* and of Schoenberg in *Erwartung* are irreconcilably diverse; it is therefore particularly challenging to reflect on them in the light of common problematics shared by these two examples which are contemporaneous yet take very different approaches.

In order to explore interpretations of these works, I have rehearsed with soprano Alice Fagard, with whom I have an ongoing collaboration. During the rehearsal process, I worked on elaborating a common view of both pieces with her, providing the opportunity for her to actively engage with the perspectives offered by my research. It has proven extremely fertile to my research to react to her ideas, as she had developed her own perspective on these works somewhat independently. Her viewpoints were mainly focused on the expression of the texts and the various ways they could be rendered. This reflects the most common option for interpreters of vocal music, which consists in having the text dominate interpretative decisions. However, both in Debussy and Schoenberg, the formal articulations of the texts rarely coincide with those of the accompaniment. The idea I had developed for this session consisted in paying close attention to the moments in which musical progression and text do coincide, so as to shape them with particular

¹⁴⁸ The documentation can be accessed at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK6HHnIr1is>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5PNfsNjm28>> and <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7IBHz1EqIM>>.

expressive weight. As a result, we ended up elaborating versions that are quite dissimilar to more 'traditional' or 'conventional' interpretations. Retrospectively, the major interest of this session has not been to illustrate what I thought I would find in the score through the rehearsal process, but rather to sharpen my ability to develop ideas during the process of interpretation itself.

It is worth noting that the *Chansons de Bilitis* are among the only 'songs' of Debussy based on *poèmes en prose*. One of three such cycles,¹⁴⁹ they were composed in parallel with the elaboration of his 'drame lyrique' *Pelléas et Mélisande*, the first sketches of which date back to late 1893.¹⁵⁰ These musical settings epitomise the principles demonstrated by Debussy's 'songs' up to that date and bring them to a new level of musical expressiveness. The question which arises here is that of the key compositional features that would lead the interpreter towards a legitimate rendition of the pieces while offering the listener an opportunity to grasp the musical depth and intrinsic expressiveness of a poem in prose.

I would first like to point out that the aesthetic premises of poetry in prose, and Debussy's own vision of what drama should be, echo one another. In a letter to Arsène Houssaye, Baudelaire wrote:

Who among us has not dreamt, in his days of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and rhyme, supple and staccato enough to adapt to the lyrical stirrings of the soul, the undulations of dreams, and sudden leaps of consciousness?¹⁵¹

Baudelaire's influence is apparent in Debussy's remark about his intentions for his unfinished piece *Le diable dans le beffroi* (1902-12):

¹⁴⁹ The other two cycles based on prose-poems are *Proses lyriques* (1892-93) and *Nuits blanches* (1898), both to Debussy's own texts. The texts of *Chansons de Bilitis* are by Pierre Louÿs.

¹⁵⁰ In its first version, the composition of *Pelléas et Mélisande* spreads over a period of two years (1893-95). Thus, *Chansons de Bilitis* and *Nuits blanches* are later than the original version of the opera.

¹⁵¹ Charles Baudelaire, *Petits poèmes en prose* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), p. xxxi; my translation.

[« Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience ? »]

What I would like to realise is something more divided, detached and impalpable - inorganic in appearance, and yet fundamentally organised.¹⁵²

The particular interest of using prose is that it does not impose a given scansion. A more flexible expression, possibly a more complex one, can thus be achieved.

Debussy's use of the voice in *Chansons de Bilitis* is perhaps the clearest example in his production, along with *Pelléas et Mélisande*, of an almost spoken use of the voice.¹⁵³ It is also worth noting that Debussy restricts his use of figuralism,¹⁵⁴

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's *La flûte de Pan*, bars 22-25. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with the text "...mence avec la nuit." and "Pressez un peu". The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and is marked "ppp". The second system continues the vocal line with the text "Ma mère ne croi - ra ja -" and the piano accompaniment, which is marked "pp". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Example 3.1 Debussy, *La flûte de Pan*, bars 22-25

¹⁵² Quoted in Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, trans. by Rollo Myers (London: Ernst Eulenburg, 1976), p. 104.

¹⁵³ André Boucourechliev calls it a 'parole figurée en musique' in his *Debussy: la révolution subtile* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1998), p. 69.

Note that there is another composition by Debussy also called *Chansons de Bilitis*, in which two flutes, two harps and a celesta punctuate the recitation of twelve poems from the same cycle. This is a *musique de scène*, in which the voice is exclusively spoken; therefore I am not considering it here.

¹⁵⁴ The usual term in English for evocative correspondences in music of text is word-painting; however, I am using 'figuralism' as an equivalent of the German term *Figurenlehre*.

except for a naturalistic evocation in bars 22–25 which is related to the poetic text two bars earlier: ‘voici le chant des grenouilles vertes qui commence avec la nuit’. The repeated triplets and the left-hand appoggiaturas seem to evoke the croaking of the frogs (see Example 3.1); this evocation is similar to that of the repeated figures in *Wozzeck*’s fourth scene of the last act, in which the protagonist drowns in a lake.

This raises the question of the hierarchical relation of the voice to the piano part, in contrast to Debussy’s *Five Poems of Baudelaire* (1889) in which the two are completely intertwined. Nevertheless, the autonomy of the piano part, whose formal articulations do not coincide with the articulations of the text – whose prose-poetry may be seen to contain verse-like aspects¹⁵⁵ – tends to question this apparent priority. The only moment when the piano part and the organisation of the text coincide is at the end of the second strophe, in bars 10 and 11 (see Example 3.2).

Example 3.2 Debussy, *La flûte de Pan*, bars 9-12

¹⁵⁵ According to Roger Nichols, ‘[Louÿs] prose can be reset as three more or less respectable alexandrines, crowned by an octosyllabic *envoi*.’ Nichols, ‘The prosaic Debussy’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. by Simon Trezise (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 84-100 (p. 97).

Interpreters might wish to make a *ritardando*, which I believe is not necessary, as it is already ‘composed’ in the piano part, as longer rhythmic values are used. I identify this moment as compositionally crucial: its importance is reinforced by the G major modulation. Moments such as these constitute an opportunity for the interpreter to notice that contradictory elements are being suggested by the composer – the organisation of the text, the constant use of one note per syllable, the piano accompaniment whose progression seems to be independent – are elements which, instead of concurring in a unified expressive musical texture, differ from one another and work at cross purposes. It is the pianist and the singer’s task to collaboratively endeavour to produce a coherent rendition of the piece, which reflects an awareness of these contradictions.

As stated above, the formal articulations of the text may as well not coincide with the harmonic and motivic substance. In the fourth stanza, the vocal part is a mere layer of a more dense musical substance, which has started two bars earlier in the piano part and is developed by the accompaniment. The major formal articulation is to be observed in bar 17 (see Example 3.3), when the end of the third stanza overlaps with the rhythmic figure, which will be used in the fourth stanza.

The image shows a musical score for Debussy's *La flûte de Pan*, bars 17-18. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics 'flû te.' and 'Il est'. The piano part includes a sixteenth-note figure with a '6' above it and a triplet figure with a '3' above it. Dynamics include 'pp' and 'sempre pp'.

Example 3.3 Debussy, *La flûte de Pan*, bars 17-18

I consider bar 17 to be the actual beginning of the fourth stanza, even though the text starts only two bars later. In this regard, it is interesting to observe that all but the first phrase of the poem start with an upbeat in Debussy's setting. By having only one harmony in each bar, the music optimally reflects the semantic content, the idea of torpor and drowsiness. In this fourth stanza, Debussy has thus used a subtle and sophisticated way of varying the relation between the piano accompaniment and the voice.

Another element that has to be taken into account for the interpreters, in order to determine what expressive feature they will try to convey or what general interpretative approach they will choose, are the archaisms present throughout the piece. Those archaic features are a significant aspect of Debussy's symbolist approach to the relation between text and music. Various elements can be considered archaisms in this context. One of these is the use of a whole-tone scale (see Example 3.4, which we consciously tried to perform in such a way as to underline the textual content, with time appearing to stop on the words 'nos bouches s'unissent sur la flûte').¹⁵⁶

Example 3.4 Debussy, *La flûte de Pan*, bars 15-16

¹⁵⁶ Since a whole-tone scale has no referential degree, it can be considered as a favourable means to express musical stasis (as for example in Debussy's piano prelude *Voiles*). See Christian Accaoui, *Le temps musical* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2001), pp. 233–262.

Another such archaism is the Lydian scale with which the piece starts. In this context, it serves as an evocation of the Pan flute, and appears in bars 1, 4, 12 and 27.

Lent et sans rigueur de rythme

Example 3.5 Debussy, *La flûte de Pan*, bars 1-2

The dialectic of pentatonic and whole-tone scales is the major component of musical symbolism in Debussy's work until *Pelléas et Mélisande*. In this opera, certain semantic associations are illustrated by a whole-tone scale: the character of Golaud, for example, is reflected by the low-register instruments and is associated with the symbol of the hand. By contrast, Pelléas is associated with the pentatonic scale, the light and the symbol of the eye (and vision) throughout the piece. These references, which go through the entire piece, are a significant element of a purely musical production of meaning. Thus, the use of such various compositional means in a small scale piece as *La flûte de Pan* echoes the somewhat mythical poetic content. An approach of the musical time that I would tend to call 'mythical' is also at work here. The harmonies are changing at a rhythmic pace ranging from one quaver (such as in the second stanza) to an entire bar (such as in the fourth stanza). The form being compartmentalised in elements easily recognisable, the impression of a teleological development and growth of musical time are checked/stopped. I have therefore purposefully tried to minimise the agogic modulations so as to not underline the sections of the piece and deliberately 'shaded' the strong articulations, so as to reinforce the disorientation in temporal organisation. This is a simple

example of the way the reciprocal relations of form, musical substance and poetic content tend to offer expressive features that help us escape a more common way of interacting with singers when it comes to accompanying songs.

Applying a similar approach to a more recent repertoire, based on poems by Paul Celan and János Pilinszky, will necessarily lead to a reevaluation of musical expressiveness and expressive means. Unveiling the expressive qualities in the relation between music and text will help me determine whether the musical substance reinforces or lightens the inherent difficulty attached to those texts.¹⁵⁷ I will then address the issue of the originality of this expressiveness, thus gaining not only musical understanding but also aesthetic insight. By doing so, I intend to illustrate how practice-based research is not merely reflection on a given musical *corpus* but consists primarily in posing aesthetic problems that can be addressed in the performance process, as the import of a work of art cannot be paraphrased. In that regard, practice-based research appears to be an ideal access to an aesthetic reasoning in accordance to its etymological meaning (*aisthēsis* meaning sensation).

In the second *mélodie*, 'La chevelure',¹⁵⁸ we have tried to exemplify the differences between an interpretation based on the 'formal' variations of expressiveness, and a more conventional interpretation based on a cursive musical illustration of a poetic substance. The piece clearly offers two layers of expressiveness. The first one consists of the narrator's own words in the beginning of the first stanza and in the fourth stanza. The second one sets forth the words of her lover, as portrayed by the narrator. In both cases, the pace of the diction remains unchanged. Each syllable is bound to one single note. But the different expressive features are made audible by the range of the vocal part on the one hand, and additionally of that existing between the vocal part and the piano accompaniment: the most lyrical moment of the piece is thus achieved when the rhythmic animation is at its peak and the range fully deployed, in bar 12 (Example 3.6).

¹⁵⁷ Even when the text appears to be hermetic, as is often the case with Paul Celan.

¹⁵⁸ 'La chevelure' as a poetic theme is a *topos* in French-language poetry of the period. Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Maeterlinck exercised their art on it on numerous occasions.

En pressant *mf* *Cresc.* *f*

par la mê-me che - ve - lu - re la bou-che sur la bou - che,

mf *Cresc.* *f*

.. 10 Tamara

Example 3.6 Debussy, *La chevelure*, bar 12

The lyricism of this passage in G major is reinforced by the fact that it immediately follows two and a half bars based on a whole-tone scale (see Example 3.7).

ne. Je les ca - res - sais, et c'étaient les miens;

et nous é - tions li - és pour tou - jours ain - si,

F 4417? F

Example 3.7 Debussy, *La chevelure*, bars 10-11

The whole-tone scale optimally illustrates the text here ('Et nous étions liés pour toujours ainsi') as it stresses the idea of stasis – 'toujours'. I have mentioned previously that the whole-tone scale is a means frequently used by Debussy to convey the feeling of musical time stopping. This is exactly the process which can be observed here.

The dreamlike atmosphere of the piece springs from the use of chromaticism and constant syncopations (reminiscent of Mussorgsky's *Berceuse*, just as in Debussy's first *Nocturne* for orchestra) which are only interrupted when the expression increases to a *forte* dynamic in bars 12 and 18, and in the fourth stanza.

In this second 'song', as can be observed from the audio documentation, the soprano and I have tried to apprehend and pass on expressive features within the formal development of the piece. By doing so, we ended up with interpretative solutions that are quite different than the more usual approach of emphasising musically each inflection of the text. This latter perspective, when applied alone, is in my view a pitfall in interpretation, as it relies solely on the priority of the voice.

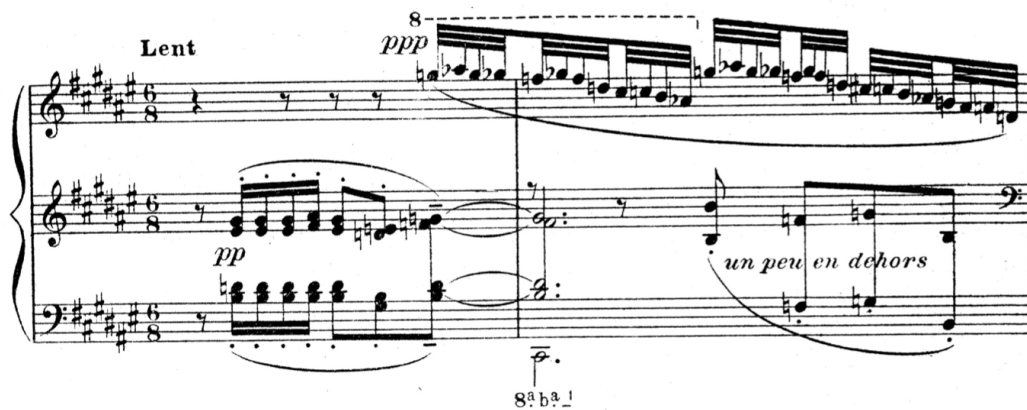
Studying Debussy's settings to music, not only in his *mélodies* but also in *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Le martyre de Saint-Sébastien* (1910-11), offers numerous examples of an expressiveness intertwined between voice and orchestra or piano accompaniment that makes it a prerequisite in my attempt to explore the import of poetry by Celan, Pilinszky and others in post-World War II compositions. Not only is Debussy's compositional approach forward-looking whenever he is setting a text to music, but the remains of his experiences as a composer of *mélodies* are still active in his purely instrumental late pieces.¹⁵⁹ The impact of symbolist compositional procedures within a purely instrumental piece is a significant aspect of Debussy's late style. I am arguing that such procedures are exemplary of the work that has

¹⁵⁹ I am thinking of his *Sonate pour piano et violoncelle* (1915), *Sonate pour flûte, alto et harpe* (1915) and *Sonate pour violon et piano* (1916-17), in which a form of encrypted symbolism is to be observed in the musical material, in the absence of any semantic association.

evoked as lacking thematic material, which would facilitate recognition of formal elements.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, for the listener who understands German, there are frequent elements which cause the musical discourse to slow down to a stasis that serves as a musical illustration of a semantic content. In bar 16 for example (see Example 3.8), the descending motif of the harp is an archetypal element of musical expression to evoke moonlight, also found in Schumann's 'Mondnacht' from the cycle *Liederkreis* (see Example 3.9) or Debussy's piano prelude *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune* (Example 3.10).



Example 3.9 Schumann, 'Mondnacht', bars 1-6



Example 3.10 Debussy, *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*, bars 1-2

¹⁶¹ See Charles Rosen's discussion of this aspect in his *Schoenberg* (University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Coming back to Schoenberg, what distinguishes his use of this figure is the tormented contours of the line and the fact that it is played in a lower register, making it more difficult to identify. Two bars later, the rhythmic pattern evokes the crickets mentioned in the text (see celesta and second violins in Example 3.11). The problematics of such fragmented motifs in the piece undermine the overall formal organisation. This fragmentation, however, is balanced by longer poetic phrases in

Fl.

Ar.

(A)

(B)

Vg.

G.

(F)

Tr.

Hr.

Tg.

P.

1

im - mer die Gril - le.. mit ih - rem Lie - bes - lied.. Nicht spre - chen.. es ist so süß bei dir.. der Mond ist in der

2. Hr. (F) m. Dpf. *pp*

3. 4. Pos. m. Dpf. *pp*

pppp

rit.

20

1. Solo Gge. m. Dpf. *p*

am Steg trem. *3*

pizz. *3*

3fach get. m. Dpf. *p*

1. Solo Br. *pp*

sehr warm aber zart

1. Solo Vcl. *pp*

Vcl. get. u. 1. Solo Vcl. m. Dpf. *p*

1. Solo Vcl. *pp*

alle get. m. Dpf. *p*

alle 3fach get. m. Dpf. *p*

arco, Dpf. ab

11 11 5284

Example 3.11 Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, bars 18-21

the voice. This complementary use of fragmentation and lyricism presents a formal ambiguity between the atomisation of the musical material and a longer-scale semantic organisation, requiring the interpreter to decide which should be emphasised by the accompaniment. Should it interfere with the solo voice, or should it envelop the voice, only emerging occasionally when the musical texture allows it?

There is a form of periodicity in the overall disposition of expressive moments, as coherent musical patterns mainly consist of two- to four-bar passages. This enables a certain continuity to be achieved, which nonetheless depends upon the local discontinuity. Another important unifying aspect of expression resides in the singer's diction. The vocality consists of both monosyllables and longer vocal gestures. Depending on the register, this difference can be emphasised by the way the singer adjusts and varies her diction: i.e. the relative use of a more 'bruitist' *parlando*-like technique. Those elements, which depend solely on interpretation, and a gestural comprehension of the material, actively engage with the perception of formal articulations. Those articulations are independent from the compositional thematic work. In that regard, independently from the inherent difficulty of performing the piece as an instrumentalist, the piece is an opportunity to defend an interpretation which enables a great deal of initiative from the interpreters.

The most challenging aspect for an interpreter and/or researcher, in Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, is to develop an overview of the piece despite the apparent lack of continuity within the musical substance, i.e. the lack of a development that can be perceived as such. This argument can be summarised as a lack of a teleology. I think it is relevant to mention that by 'lack of a teleology', what is meant is an intrinsic difficulty for the beholder to engage with a piece which relies on its own compositional means, independently from any extrinsic reference. A common criticism addressed to Schoenberg's use of classical forms in the early stage of twelve-tone compositions did not take into account the necessity to maintain a sense of musical development.¹⁶² Such criticism relies merely on a syntactic

¹⁶² For example Pierre Boulez, *Relevés d'apprenti* (Paris: Éditions Seuil, 1966), pp. 265-274.

understanding, i.e. on the relations musical 'signs' have to one another, independently from their temporal occurrence. This common criticism is also predominantly represented within the aesthetic sphere of contemporary musical practice. For this reason, Schoenberg is a suitable reference for my research as it exemplifies the beginnings of the musical modernity we are still dependent on.

The lack of a perceived teleology does not necessarily mean a formal deficiency. There are numerous elements which help the listener find an orientation within the piece. I would tend to think that the text plays a key role in apprehending the musical substance. The apparent athenatic character of the beginning of *Erwartung* is reminiscent of what Schoenberg himself called an *obligate Rezitativ*.¹⁶³ Even though the vocal part is very extensive, it can be considered as a mere exposition of the argument of the piece, as the prosody is monosyllabic at this stage. This single aspect makes Schoenberg close to Debussy in that the recitative-like prosody mitigates the expansion of expression. That is one of the reasons why the soprano and I have laid special emphasis on the text in this beginning, furthermore as the orchestra develops chamber-like qualities. A factor which helps in delineating expressive contours is the use of instruments for their 'pure' orchestral colour, unlike Schoenberg's blending of timbres, which can be observed in his earlier pieces. This aspect is of course hardly audible in the piano reduction, even though I have been aware of the orchestration and tried to evoke it.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ See the last of his *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 16 (1909).

¹⁶⁴ By 'evoking' the orchestra as I perform a piano reduction, I am thinking specifically of the type of piano playing that one develops as an accompanist who has gathered experience playing in an orchestra pit. It consists of paying much closer attention to notions that tend to be forgotten in solo performance, in which all components are brought 'to the front'. Key notions for an accompanist who cultivates a sense for 'orchestral' sounds on the piano are: spatiality, rendition of the sound volume of different layers, values and colours. I wish to point out here that I am using these notions based on my perspective as an interpreter, i.e. I approach them on a metaphorical level, without regard to the meaning they may have in musical acoustics.

The initial bars of *Erwartung* offer a particularly eloquent example, in that the pianist, in order not to produce a mixture of sound that would go against the finely delineated orchestral texture, has to work on the dynamics in a more meticulously attentive way than what the indication on the printed page calls for. Let us consider the first three bars of the score, just before the singer enters. An 'evocation' of the orchestral sound implies making a clear distinction between the initial G# performed by the bassoon and the accompanying figures on the clarinets, the muted horn and the flutes. In bar 1, the triplet motif, on the basis of the printed dynamic (*ppp*) would be performed much more lightly by a pianist who has no knowledge of

* * *

In these two brief examples I have sought to illustrate how actively engaging with concepts of expression may influence the interpretative process. In the following sections, I will perform a closer investigation of the pieces comprising the main repertoire of this study in relation to this and associated issues of gesture and meaning.

the orchestra score, than if they knew that it is performed by the bassoons in their low register. In bar 2, we have the low strings playing in the same register the bassoons were previously playing their triplet motif. Even though the dynamic indication is similar (*pp*), the fact that we now have strings playing *divisi* and *am Steg* requires, from the pianist, that they make a substantial distinction – one, again, which is invisible on the printed page – in how they interpret this component. Thus, by knowing in detail the orchestral score and by turning pianistic information (on the printed page) into orchestral information (that which the pianist hears in his mind as he performs on the piano), it becomes possible to convey a stronger impression of how the piece sounds with an orchestra, even though it is performed solely on a piano.

Just as light and dark shades, and the transitions between them, help to create spatiality and layers of perspectives in painting, a refined and broader use of dynamics helps to give a sense of distance and proximity that is evocative of the role of different timbres in delineating the impression of orchestral space. In painting, with perhaps the notable exceptions of Vermeer and Cézanne, it is well known that shades and colours work against one another. In music, though, as we perform a piano reduction of a piece scored originally for an orchestra, we can evoke instrumental colours by a more active focus on the single parameter, dynamics, that is to music what nuances or shades are in painting, in that it emphasises a sense of space that is the primary marker of an accompanist's approach to their instrumental practice.

3.2 *Lim's Voodoo Child*

I turn now to a piece that adds considerable complexity to the questions I have addressed so far. My initial attempt has consisted in describing criteria that would enable me to consider the meaning of expression on both formal and semantic levels, and to observe the impact that renewed approaches of expression in post-World War II poetry may have had on compositional practices influenced by those poets. One musical development introduced a paradigm shift in the way expression might be envisioned, such as it had been in the late Renaissance and early Baroque era. In the aftermath of World War II, it became increasingly apparent that, at least in Europe, a more formalist approach was being fostered, thus renouncing the interdisciplinary dialogue that had proven so productive in the early twentieth century. This fact gains significance in light of the variety of sources that composers have become acquainted with in the course of their musical development. This occurs either by will, through higher education, or by accident, through the cultural environment in which they grow up. By acknowledging the prominent role that non-western music may have had on composers, and, accordingly, by making use of those influences in their personal musical idiom, one can observe – since at least the 1960s when more diverse compositional practices came to the forefront in place of serialism – an increasing variety of musical sources being considered, not only as inspiration but also as compositional material.

Liza Lim contributes a multicultural element to the contemporary musical landscape.¹⁶⁵ Her fondness for highly diversified cultural sources flourishes in pieces that convincingly arrange those sources into a sharply defined musical discourse. The challenge she presents to the canonical instrumentarium and pre-approved sonorities make it difficult for the musician to find an analytic path towards expression in her music. I will argue – drawing on Lim's most extended text about her compositional practice, 'Patterns of Ecstasy', and her piece *Voodoo Child* for soprano and seven instruments – that expression can be considered a driving

¹⁶⁵ The documentation can be accessed at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWh2molc3es>>.

force for any aesthetic inquiry into an understanding of her work, and it can be traced from her earliest pieces from the late 1980s to her current works. *Voodoo Child* was performed by the student ensemble of the ESM Dijon and is documented in my portfolio. Hence, the aesthetic reflections that follow are based not only on an analytical approach to the piece, but also on the rehearsal process. This in itself increasingly reshaped and reoriented my thinking process as we approached the final performance. I will therefore in the course of section 3.2 give evidence of the processual nature of my reflections on expression.

As we can see in 'Patterns of Ecstasy', expression provides Lim with an underlying category to how she describes her music, even though the word itself is rarely found and is never addressed as such in her writings, at least in those to which I have had access. It can be argued that concepts derived from a broad understanding of expression are consistently at work in some of her major pieces. As Lim writes:

In my formation as a composer, I notice that I have sought out cultural places and practices that arise from epistemological views or 'ways of knowing' that recognise a deep interrelationship between realms of the *visible and the invisible*.¹⁶⁶

Typically, the dialectics of the visible and the invisible, of that which is veiled and that which is unveiled, is used as a marker of expression. In this regard, *Voodoo Child* – based on a poem by Sappho and composed in 1989 – happens to coincide by analogy with the aforementioned underlying dynamics of meanings.¹⁶⁷ As I argued

¹⁶⁶ Liza Lim, 'Patterns of Ecstasy', *Darmstädter Beiträge zur neuen Musik* 21 (2012), pp. 27-34 (p. 27). Emphasis added.

Here are further quotations from the same article, all related to the same imagery of 'inner' representation (invisibility) and 'outer' projection (visibility): 'When I look at the various kinds of ritual forms that I have been interested in, what interests me most is the way ritual constructs a space in which ordinarily invisible forces or phenomena can become visible.' (pp. 27–28) "'The invisible'" is given visible form whereby it can be dealt with, perhaps propitiated, acknowledged, examined, struggled with and momentarily integrated before being released again.' (p. 28) 'The shimmer both reveals and conceals.' (p. 30) 'The music is a tracing of the flow of intertwining lines of force, of layers that are veiled and revealed in sequences of fluidly evolving phenomena.' (p. 39)

¹⁶⁷ I placed emphasis in my introduction on the relationship between expression and meaning. In that respect, it is especially striking to observe that meaning plays a very conscious role in Lim's thought process, aligned with the imaginary of the veiled and the revealed. 'Despite the diversity of cultural reference, these works [*The Oresteia*, *Moon Spirit Feasting* and *The Navigator*] could be described as being

in section 1.2, the etymology of expression leads us to *prosōpon* (face, visage), which in archaic Greece (the period during which Sappho composed her work) meant 'mask' – that which veils. There is every likelihood that this correspondence was unintended by Lim, but the idea that there are commonalities that further justify the dialogue between Lim and Sappho is especially appealing. Given the fact that Lim's article makes constant use of visual evocations to describe her approach to composition, specifically with regard to the dialectics of the visible and the invisible, it appears legitimate that expression (in the form of the invisible or inaudible being foregrounded) should be regarded as a compositional metaphor.¹⁶⁸

The text is made largely unrecognisable through extended unconventional singing techniques (guttural sounds, overtone singing, glottal stop, jaw vibrato, choking) that emphasise the physical action of producing the sound more than they convey the sonority and meaning of the text itself. Likewise, the extensive repetition of single syllables and extended instrumental interventions that split the words into various elements that in turn are used for their own independent expressive and gestural qualities render the text hardly recognisable.¹⁶⁹ The integration of the voice with the ensemble goes so far as to use instructions associated with instrumental writing (such as 'quasi-*jeté*'). This aspect makes it particularly challenging for the performer to maintain the clarity of individual voices, meticulously defined and delineated by the composer, while obtaining at the same time a result that is 'homophonic' in terms of overall sonority. What can be observed from the documentation of the piece is a certain need for the ensemble to be able to prioritise different pieces of musical information over a long period of time, according to the

about "threshold spaces" where linear narrative coherence gives way to a ritual disjuncting and re-jointing of categories of meaning.' (p. 27) 'That which is unseen, that which exists in an unfixable or ungraspable mode, rises to the surface where it can react in a dynamic way with embodied structures in a defined present temporality to produce meanings.' (p. 28) 'To fix the meaning of something also suggests a kind of closure, whereas there is a power in the unstable, stuttering tensions of ambiguity, contradiction and contingency. These are powerful portals through which one can proliferate meaning-making in art.' (p. 28)

¹⁶⁸ Lim's evocation of the visible and the invisible is not merely a conventional trope in the art of our era. In her case, it is strongly related to her interest and knowledge of Australian Aboriginal cultures in which she observes these dialectics at work.

¹⁶⁹ For example, the word *pepage*, whose last syllable is repeated, spans more than 29 beats (from bar 6 until bar 16) and the word *upadedromēken*, 48 beats and one eighth-note, from bar 28 to 44.

overall sonority of a section of the piece, so as to maintain a coherence between the various factors that constitute expression (formal component, semantic expression). An all too frequent bias in the interpretation of contemporary repertoire consists in considering interpretative issues merely on a local scale; considering interpretation in the light of expression, by contrast, forces the interpreter to maintain consistency throughout the piece with regard to which preliminary interpretative decisions best convey the expressive parameters. In that sense, working with a student ensemble is ideal as the time required for preparing for a concert allows enough space in which to experiment and reflect upon a coherent rendition of the piece, while avoiding certain automatisms of professional music making which all too often, and mostly due to time restrictions, sharpen the contrasts and highlight the vivacity of the writing. The result of the latter is a frequent impression of a binary type of expression. This time was also an opportunity for the soprano to grow accustomed to singing techniques that she was not able to relate to her previous experience, thus offering a more convincing interpretation since she was still insecure about her ability to perform her part adequately.

As regards expression, poetic text, compositional peculiarities, and the vocal component, one aspect of Lim's compositional thinking process remains unclear. The indication 'dervish', starting in bar 45 and associated with the sections performed in tempo = 80 (see Example 3.12), strongly connotes Islamic mysticism. It is clear that one of the axes of Christian, Islamic and Jewish mysticism is expression (as exemplified by Eckhart's sentence: 'Now all that God asks of you, is to get out of yourself according to the type of creature you are'). But I was not able at this point to integrate this aspect into my approach as I was not able to musically identify how it translates in the actual piece. I might argue, however, that this reference to Islamic mysticism works as a religious counterpoint and possible sublimation (a discourse to which Lim is not insensitive, as is apparent in her article 'Patterns of Ecstasy') of the secular statement made in Sappho's third line, at the exact point where the tempo associated with the 'dervish' influence occurs. 'I no

Example 3.12 Lim, *Voodoo Child*, bars 45-47

longer see anything with my eyes' cannot but evoke Hafez's line 'My eye is the mirror of His grace', as an inversion of Sappho's proposition.¹⁷⁰

Another aspect that I have not yet been able to convincingly grasp is whether the intrinsic rhythm associated with the verses of Sappho has been lost in the process of setting the poem to music or whether it has been transformed or transposed onto another level of expression.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Hafez's verse begins: 'My soul is the veil of His love', which is unequivocally evocative of Lim's statements regarding the dialectics of the veiled and the unveiled.

¹⁷¹ The rhythm of the poem epitomises the structure of a Sapphic stanza:

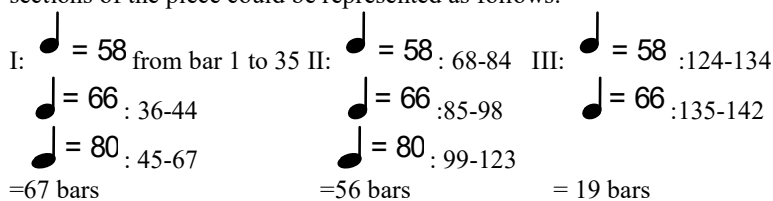
- u - x - u u - u - - / - u - x - u u - u - - / - u - x -
u u - u - - / - u u - u

- stands for a long syllable, u for a short one, while x can be either long or short.

Working with the students has not only been an opportunity to experiment with my initial thoughts on the pieces in light of my enquiry into expression, but has also decisively influenced my current reflection as to how expressive features are to be conveyed. I initially thought I would differentiate the various sections of the piece by making the tempo changes as obvious as possible so as to stress the strong formalist structure of the piece.¹⁷² Based on that structure, I believed, an independent vocal and semantic expression would evolve more freely and emphasise Lim's interest in expressive ambiguities. But this approach was fairly rapidly defeated as I understood that a certain sound continuum had to be created based on an instrumental logic (the ability to produce certain effects may require a slower or faster tempo than the tempo indication at a given moment).¹⁷³ I realised that the tempo markings had more to do with delineating the various parts of the piece and showing an interpretative tendency than they were injunctions to the performer. However, in order to maintain a sense of tempo relationships, I started the initial tempo = 58 a touch slower, a decision that was not motivated by instrumental challenges, but was taken merely so as to increase the initial sound coherence and richness, and to maintain the possibility, or impression, of further tempo changes.

Another factor of expression that I had to revise when I conducted the piece was the relation of the soprano part to the ensemble. I initially thought of it more in

¹⁷² The intertwining of three layers of tempi, each associated with a certain texture, is reminiscent of Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, which ideally exemplifies the notion of formalism. The three sections of the piece could be represented as follows:



It is interesting to notice that the two longest sections, the first and second, contain the least amount of text (respectively three and two lines), while the shortest section is comparatively voluble. This coincides with a constant acceleration in the flow of the text. Thus, there are two types of development at work occurring at the same time: a formalist frame consisting in same tempo patterns being repeated, and a more active and proliferating layer, the vocal part. Dealing with the intertwining or colliding of these two models is an example of the way decision-making and interpretative views are still very much at work in a type of repertoire in which the conductor's input is considered less critical.

¹⁷³ What led me to this understanding was a dissatisfaction with a sound result whose contrasts were too sharp to fit with Lim's continuous and homogenous texture. I therefore came to realise that, in the interest of sound production, the contrasts between tempi had to be lessened to some degree.

terms of a soloistic part, even though the writing was very instrumental, but the clarity of the text seemed to be a prevalent factor of expression to me. I ended up alternating this approach with moments in which the voice was simply another instrument in the ensemble.¹⁷⁴ I was thus able to diversify, legitimately, the intertwining of the vocal part and the instrumental part, which eventually led to a rendition of the piece that was much more detailed (in terms of quantity and quality of information provided) and diversified, thus offering the listener a more challenging and multi-layered experience.

Having the opportunity to reflect upon and perform Lim's piece has provided a possible part of an answer to my initial research question: to what extent have we musicians witnessed (or are currently witnessing) a paradigm shift in terms of expression, as was the case in poetry from Tsvetaeva, Bachmann and Celan to Brodsky and Miłosz?¹⁷⁵ What musical components and features would help us determine where we musicians currently are in terms of our understanding of a concept that has typically been considered music's principal one?

Performing Lim has made it clear that the concept is much more playful than I expected. All the elements I gathered prior to rehearsing the piece have transmitted differently to how I thought they would. By that, I mean that only a relatively scarce number of interpretative decisions remained unchanged between my initial learning of the score and the actual performance. But the process by which those decisions were transferred into the practice so as to be present after they have been reshaped, is revealed to be the most productive part of the reflection. However, in order for an interpreter to be open to such modifications,

¹⁷⁴ See the first fifteen minutes of the video file. The reason behind my approach was to compensate the lack of contrast that resulted from slowing down the part written in tempo = 80 by increasing the inner qualitative information within each part.

¹⁷⁵ The reflection process, now that I have some distance to formalise it, was divided into two parts: I first developed an understanding of the piece and my views on expression based on the printed score alone. As the rehearsal process began, I started to realise that parallel strategies had to be elaborated. I therefore tried to maintain my initial views by modifying the means of achieving them. The most profitable aspect for my research was observing how my reflections, once submitted to the rehearsal and performance process, were subsequently nourished with a variety of data that are due to the rehearsal process itself, and make it even more challenging, as reflecting upon expression is a dynamic process.

they must have a clear idea and (transitory) definition of what expression is about in a given piece so as to have a personal, legitimate take on it. This far exceeds the kind of consensual expressive means that normally accompany limited preparation and rehearsal time. It certainly can have a virtuous impact on a performer's task to redefine or re-question this task in the light of a research that forces one to address questions of meaning and of the transmission of this meaning.

The rich polyphony of expressive means at work in Lim's piece (a strong formalist component; the semantic content of the poem on which the piece is based; the metrics of that poem; and a latent expressivity that subsists in the reference in two sections of the work to Sufism, or Islamic mysticism) have certainly provided a personal view of a modern understanding of expression, as convincing as it is interesting and challenging. It is conceptually consistent, poetically eloquent, and musically rewarding (both as a listener and as a performer), and thus contributes to a better understanding of an expression that coalesces with our time.

3.3 Kurtág's *Three Songs to Poems by János Pilinszky*, Op. 11a – expression, rhetoric, meaning

György Kurtág's settings of poetry appear to be a particularly challenging area of research, as the music unfolds in a narrative way that seems to get rid of, or at least veil, the more traditional correspondence between musical substance and poetic substance.¹⁷⁶ I have so far in this dissertation discussed a possible understanding of expression in contemporary repertoire that relies on a formalist approach. Kurtág's almost aphoristic settings make that hardly possible. I intend in this section to account for this assertion.

Before I consider in detail Kurtág's settings of three poems by János Pilinszky – 'Alcohol', 'In Memoriam F. M. Dostoevsky' and 'Hölderlin'¹⁷⁷ – I would like to contextualise Pilinszky's work in the light of post-1945 poetry and its relation to Paul Celan's lyricism, and to expose its most salient poetic features. By doing so, I aim to highlight Pilinszky's relevance within the scope of my inquiry into a contemporary understanding of expression as it manifests itself in the most recent repertoire. Statements made by Celan and Pilinszky, as well as their poems, reveal commonalities in their aesthetic aims.¹⁷⁸ In a similar fashion, Celan's influence on Pilinszky can be observed both on a thematic and a poetic level in the latter's notorious poem 'On the wall of a KZ Lager' ('Speechless, speechless, you testify against us'), which unmistakably evokes the former's 'Ashglory' ('No one bears witness for the witness'). Both authors present the experience of anxiety that overwhelms an individual facing the depletion of experience caused by their experience in the camps. Moreover, they overcome communicational infelicities by testifying to the unimpaired truth that lies in the poetic language and by objectifying

¹⁷⁶ The documentation can be accessed at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0jx8h1ayRo>>.

¹⁷⁷ Taken together, and in their versions for male singer (baritone or bass) with piano, these three songs form a set of three published together as Op. 11a. They are in fact voice-and-piano versions of the first three of the *Four Songs to Poems by János Pilinszky*, Op. 11, for voice with an ensemble comprising piano, horn, two cimbaloms, violin, viola, cello and bass zither *ad lib*.

¹⁷⁸ Paul Celan, *The Meridian* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); János Pilinszky, *Conversations with Sheryl Sutton* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992).

it in their work, while exposing the deceitful nature of language as it is used under totalitarian regimes.

To what extent can this existing situation be reflected in the musical settings by Kurtág? In other words, how does musical expression reflect that poetic situation and how is the poem itself source of musical expression? I will first consider the expression that can be revealed on an analytical level, in that it sheds light on the way Kurtág has read Pilinszky's poem and helps us understand what specific kind of expression Kurtág leans toward. I will then consider expression as it has been revealed during the rehearsal process with students and how it has in return influenced the initial ideas I had concerning expression, as it emerged from reading the score alone. This process opens the broader question as to whether or not the interpretation enacts or illustrates a pre-interpretative thought process or if it makes audible a musical knowledge that is heterogeneous with a semantic formulation. In addition to that particular difficulty, which is intrinsic to practice-based studies, it is equally important to keep in mind that each interpreter's musicianship will highlight certain aspects of the piece that, as I perceive them, will lead me to certain reflections that could well have been different, had another student performed the same piece. As a result, the research outputs do not aim at a normative, prescriptive or regulatory aim in research.

Kurtág's relation to Pilinszky forms a significant thread that winds through his output. Not only has he set to music some of Pilinszky's texts – in the work under present discussion and in *Clinical Picture and Swan-Song* (1978/81, rev. 2005), a setting of a Pilinszky poem for choir – but several of his instrumental pieces also refer to the poet. *Szálkák*, Op. 6 (1973), for cimbalom, and *Szálkák*, Op. 6d, for piano – a transcription of the cimbalom work – are based on a poem by Pilinszky. The name of the poet appears in the title of a piece for solo cello, *Pilinszky János: Gérard de Nerval* (1986). The sixth item in the fourth part of *Kafka-Fragmente* (1985-87) for soprano and violin is entitled 'In Memoriam Joannis Pilinszky', and Kurtág's unfinished piano concerto *Confessio*, Op. 21, was conceived as a requiem for Pilinszky. Finally, a 'Waltz to the Poem by János Pilinszky' can be found in Volume 8

of Kurtág's series of short piano pieces, *Játékok (Games)*; indeed, an early version of this piece included spoken text, and in fact featured Pilinszky himself as reciter.

Kurtág was already experimenting compositionally with Pilinszky's texts in the 1960s: 'The first traces of the composer's active engagement with the poet's work date back to the 1960s, well after his Parisian years.'¹⁷⁹ The ensemble version of Op. 11 was composed between 1973 and 1975, with the voice-and-piano version dating from the mid-1980s; in a text from 1988, Kurtág gives some indications as to the importance of the work in his compositional development: 'What the four poems represent for me are four stations of pain, or more exactly, of suffering.'¹⁸⁰

The first setting deals with building an expectation that is based on using a single note, D, and with the transition between the 'bestiality of inarticulated sounds' to a meaningful but lean speech. While the repetitions of the D create an expectation, it resolves with a descending semitone from D to C# and C# to C natural that coincides with the becoming human of expression, as it gives shape to a musical articulation that is coherent in itself, as opposed to the inebriated previous repetition.¹⁸¹

Such a texture can be seen as an attempt to crystallise an intense expression in the most tenuous musical gesture, that one would expect to be inadequate to convey such an intense expression. As unspectacular as the music might initially appear, it deliberately integrates the aesthetics of eloquence and affects. Even though the aphoristic disposition of the song is reminiscent of Webern, the musical gesture it portrays remains reliant on the aesthetics of passions.

¹⁷⁹ Péter Laki, 'G. Kurtág et J. Pilinszky : une affinité spirituelle', in *Gestes, fragments, timbres : la musique de György Kurtág*, ed. by Martá Grabócz and Jean Paul Olive (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), pp. 73-80 (p. 75); my translation.

[« Les premières traces d'un engagement actif du compositeur vis-à-vis de l'oeuvre du poète datent des années soixante, longtemps après ses années parisiennes. »]

¹⁸⁰ György Kurtág, *Entretiens, textes, dessins* (Geneva: Éditions Contrechamps, 2009), p. 193; my translation. [« Les quatre poèmes signifient pour moi quatre stations de la douleur (*des Leidens*), ou plus exactement de la souffrance (*des Erleidens*). »]

¹⁸¹ See the last two systems of the appended score. The change from prolonged Ds to a C# sounds to my ears as a resolution, but it could also be argued that as a leading note to the subsequent C natural that ends the piece, the descending movement increases the tension. Based on the semantic content, however, the interpreters and I decided not to do so.

The fact that this opening setting, in its initial version for voice and four instruments, is based solely on the note D prompts one to question the note's symbolic meaning. Such stubborn repetition makes it hard for the listener not to recollect the pitch's funereal connotations, as is the case in works by Bernd Alois Zimmermann who likewise, in *Photoptosis* or his opera *Die Soldaten*, retains the funereal evocation of the note D.¹⁸²

It is worth noting that among composers born in the 1920s, Kurtág not only drew inspiration from the syntactical peculiarities of Webern's way of developing musical material, as was the case with other prominent composers of the same generation (Boulez's and Stockhausen's theoretical contributions optimally illustrate this aspect), but also succeeded in maintaining in his own writing a strong affective load from interval to interval.¹⁸³ For both Webern and Kurtág, expression as such is at the centre of their concerns as they work with the interpreter.

One could assert that in Boulez's music for instance (especially in his Third Piano Sonata, as it epitomises structural complexity extended to the work on form itself), expression relies more on consecutive formal, 'polyvocal' developments or ambiguities where form and substance concur. This latter approach could best be compared with Adorno's own appreciation of expression – as a refusal of representation, of anything extrinsic to the piece as it unfolds formally. Conversely, Kurtág offers a 'representation' of the poem: he assumes and translates affects that he has previously identified in the texts.

The second song echoes the mock execution to which Dostoevsky was submitted before he was sent to Siberia. It alternates between imperative sentences and laconic descriptive supplement. The mode of address of the song is thus clearly

¹⁸² In that regard, it would certainly be informative to compare Ligeti's and Kurtág's references to musical symbolism, in the context of their own work, as well as in the light of the young Bartók who similarly experimented with musical symbolism. In Zimmermann's case, the association between the note D and the funereal element can be made by listeners without perfect pitch, as he quotes at several moments a 'Dies irae' that starts with this note.

¹⁸³ This aspect is clearly exemplified in the recent edition of Webern's *Variations* for piano, Op. 27, which contains the composer's indications to the performer who premiered the piece. These indications clearly make it possible to identify an underlying Romantic gesture to Webern's interpretative wishes.

a narration. Just as in the previous setting, the rhetorical substance is here of primary importance, in that expressive means are reliant on symbolic connotations associated with the intervallic structure: the chromaticism localised mainly in the lowest register of the piano part testifies to a dolorist affect and oppressive mood that not only illustrates the links between Kurtág's music and the longer history of rhetoric in music, but also mirrors a more modernist use of musical symbolism in the same vein, such as in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* as both protagonists make their way down to the caves.¹⁸⁴ A particularly striking effect, exemplifying the relevance of rhetoric and the multilayered expressive connotations that it helps to reveal, is to be found in bar 4. The left hand of the piano part plays a crucifixion motif (D^b -C-E-E^b), which suffices in this poetic context to evoke dolorism.¹⁸⁵ At the same time, the male voice sings a descending semitone, here a musical representation of stigma, on the words 'Rises slowly up'. The scene depicted is that of a cross being erected. One can only be struck by the evocative strength that lies in such apparently 'simple' material.¹⁸⁶

Despite the distinct expressive harshness that prevails throughout this second song, and its hieratic pose, it crystallises expressive qualities that could only be brought to life by the intrinsic poetic peculiarities of Pilinszky's precariously lyrical yet powerful poetic image. In this regard, the following exchange between Kurtág and his interviewer might bring further clarity:

Bálint András Varga: In other words, even if you do not write music theatre, your works are not devoid of a stage aspect.

¹⁸⁴ That example refers to the use of the register as a representation of psychological constraint and oppression only, as in Debussy's music, the pitch material in that specific scene exclusively based on the whole-tone scale. One could draw another comparison between Kurtág and Debussy in terms of texture and harmonic resources in the *Cinq chansons sur des poèmes de Baudelaire* and the *Bornemisza Péter Mondasái*, or in terms of harmonic scarcity and prosody in the *Chansons de Bilitis* (see my section 3.1) and the *Four Songs to Poems by János Pilinszky*.

¹⁸⁵ In itself, a motif historically loaded with certain connotations, as a crucifixion motif is loaded with dolorism, is not always necessarily evocative of that primary association. The crucifixion motif that opens Debussy's *Le martyre de Saint-Sébastien* does not seem to bear any trace of affliction.

¹⁸⁶ I am not assuming that a semitone in itself represents stigma. I refer here to the intertwining of symbolic common associations and expressive features in the pieces under consideration.

György Kurtág: Not necessarily a stage aspect. Rather what Pilinszky said: for him, a Roman Catholic mass embodied the perfect dramatic genre.¹⁸⁷

The material on which the third song, 'Hölderlin', is based has since been reused in the fourth volume of Kurtág's *Games* for piano as a piece for two pianists, entitled 'Studie zu Hölderlin'. The consistent use of related musical materials and poetic sources of inspiration in Kurtág's music raises the particular question of intertextuality as a source of expression within a coherent and homogeneous compositional idiom such as Kurtág's. By dealing with intertextuality as a primary source of creation, Kurtág succeeds in multiplying the expressive relationships, on a local scale, as well as on the scale of his entire production. One could almost say, on an aesthetic level, that in Kurtág's vocal production, intertextuality comes first, in that it is a marker of expression, through constant references, associations, echoes.

Judging from the way Kurtág sets Pilinszky's verses to music, it feels as if the songs sketch an attempt to aestheticise communicational infelicities. Drunkenness overshadows the loss of experience that the symbolism of the pitch D clearly states throughout the first song, while the obstinate repetitions of D fail to conjure what the pitch symbolically implies, as expressed in the final descent, in two consecutive semitones, at the very end. For this reason, I think that the diminuendo in the last two lines ('a silent, silent creature and / a trouser leg in falling darkness') has to be thought of as an increase in expressive intensity, thwarting the actual dynamics (*pp* – *ppp* – *pppp*) in such a way as to convey the illusion of arriving at some kind of abyssal Rilkean 'Open'.

Returning to communicational infelicities as denounced by Pilinszky (hence his kinship with Celan), the second song can be heard as underscoring the perversion and travesty of human language, as exemplified in the orders received by the inmate. They do not only represent an increase in the subordinate relationship, but the dressage-like use of language in that it is inherently conducive to

¹⁸⁷ Bálint András Varga, *György Kurtág: Three Interviews and Ligeti Homages* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009), p. 44.

subordination. This later aspect testifies to the fact, just as in Celan's poetry, that language is immanently faculty of judgment.

The first descending semitone functions in this context as word-painting ('Bend down'). The second motif, another descending semitone, assumes another meaning, that is, not merely the physical action of the inmate bending to the ground. As this indication is written in brackets, it serves to abstract the action that is being described from the real course of events. Hence, we can interpret this aspect at a symbolic level: the descending semitone implies the defeat of language itself.

From an interpretative perspective, and in the context of the relation between the text and the poet's own experience of camps, it is of utmost importance to realise that by denying speech to the inmate, his humanity is negated. At the same time, the guard's voice and the narration in brackets have to be perfectly independent. Even if they are part of the same melodic line, they should convey an expressive substance that is specific to each level of discourse, i.e. imperative sentences as opposed to descriptive narration.

The third song is another form of variation on the theme of communicational infelicity. I mentioned earlier the importance of intertextuality in Kurtág's vocal production. Considering Pilinszky's poem in the light of Hölderlin's last poems was key to understanding the overall layout/organisation of the cycle as a whole, following the thread of expressivity in the context of communicational infelicity. The thematic content is strongly reminiscent of the quatrain that Hölderlin wrote in an advanced state of illness:

*I have enjoyed this agreeable world,
The joys of youth, how long! how long gone away!
April and May and July are distant,
I am nothing now, I wish to live no longer.*¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ „Das Angenehme dieser Welt habe ich genossen / Der Jugend Freuden sind wie lang! wie lang verflossen / April und Mai und Julius sind ferne / Ich bin nichts mehr, ich lebe nicht mehr gerne.“ From Friedrich Hölderlin, *Gedichte 1806–1843*. Translation slightly modified from that of John H. Campbell at <http://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=8075> [accessed 24 August 2019].

Compare the text by Pilinszky which Kurtág sets:

*December's fervour summer's flailing hailstorm
Wild bird encumbered with clogs,
This and more I've been. Willingly I die.*

The narrator's isolation here is as arid as it was in the second song. But solitude here has to do with remembrance, and confinement with Hölderlin's madness, that is alienation from himself. Madness as a way of experiencing radical otherness, as the confrontation between the self and the Other in oneself. Similarly, expressive means of interpretation require this polyvocality intrinsic to the fragmented self of the narrator. The instrumental and vocal texture in this song are very exuberant, the rhythmic structure very elaborate, and the whole setting sounds antithetical to the previous two, in which expression remained statue-like.

In all of these first three songs, the presence of self is never fully, or successfully, realised. The cycle can be perceived as a progression in alienation – from a state of drunkenness, towards radical otherness as exemplified by madness, via alienation by incarceration as a preliminary step to mental isolation. Such a progression also emerges from Kurtág's brief comment regarding the work and its texts: 'Here, for the first time, Pilinszky also uses "rough" expression; that is the reason why I had to expand the recited or quasi-spoken character of the voice in the two previous songs, right up to measureless melisma.'¹⁸⁹

The song which concludes the original voice-and-instruments cycle is not included in Op. 11a. (It is almost as if the principle of communicational failure had been reapplied at yet another level of structure.) This fourth song, 'Beatings', implies a nascent dialogism in which 'I' and 'you' interact at the very end of the poem, but it remains precarious and ambivalent as the two words are sung in opposite registers, reaching the highest and lowest note of the song's range.

¹⁸⁹ Kurtág, *Entretiens, textes, dessins*, p. 193; my translation.

[« Ici, pour la première fois, Pilinszky utilise aussi des expressions « rudes » ; c'est pourquoi je devais également élargir le caractère récité ou quasi parlé de la voix dans les deux chants précédents jusqu'à une mélismatique démesurée. »]

From the very start of the video documentation, the singer Cyrille Laik and I are working on determining the importance of the inebriated glossolalia.¹⁹⁰ These opening sounds ('Eee----Eee----Eeeee') have been added by Kurtág. The poem in itself does not necessarily imply drunkenness (it starts directly with the line 'I conjure up the impossible'), and it is noteworthy that Kurtág has taken such freedom with the original text. This led us to thinking that, although no thematic connection as such could be observed between the songs of the cycle, there was nonetheless a common thread: the concept of estrangement by lack of possession of language. This idea, which underpins my entire approach to this work and which has proven to be coherent as an explanatory factor, can be ascribed to my experimentation with the singer, trying out different ideas for the first moments of the cycle.¹⁹¹

We thus decided that we would focus on the roughness of expression, so as to optimally illustrate the communicational inconsistency in which the work evolves. Re-examining the rehearsal process, it strikes me that expression could also be defined in that context as a 'lack of expression', if by expression we think of an element that comes in addition to the printed score. The singer performed with emphasis and accentuation, but on a conceptual level, we had to interpret it as a 'lack of expression'. From this point, I was forced to realise that expression was a split concept, whose definition can best be pursued in conflicting directions. The emphasis consisted in extending the pauses between the notes, accentuating the effort of production of the sound, as if a drunk person was pretending not to be drunk by overarticulating so as to hide the confusion in delivering a meaningful utterance. I also asked the singer to vibrate the third 'Eeeee' so as to offer more timbral diversity in the context of what had come earlier [from the beginning of the video until approximately 02:00]:

¹⁹⁰ The rehearsal took place on 18 May 2018 at the École Supérieure de Musique Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, as part of the concert series *Musique pour le temps présent*. It was the second rehearsal that I had with this ensemble, and we had had no previous discussion about the pieces.

¹⁹¹ If I had to reflect upon my personal impression after the three of us came to that common understanding of the cycle, I would have to admit that it felt like the first time I was able to draw conclusions, based on the use of the category of expression as a unifying factor, that extended to an entire piece composed of apparently heterogeneous texts, and not merely to sections of a piece.

What I think is great now is the variety of sound production you display at the beginning. As for the 'drunkenness' side, you can bring it out a bit more, already by the time taken between the ... here ... you know? That's to say: you hear it very well and therefore you do it very well. But you need to feel the effort of producing these different sounds more, that is, increase the pause and imagine that you're the one making the effort, being drunk ... Exactly. And then I think you have to make the pause show feeling, and equally the effort of going from one D to another. See, that's the guy trying to behave. So vocally it's great, but there's something in the timing to look for, so that one sound leads to another, even though they're different colours. More time but also more lines in the dramaturgy. Let's go back to the beginning to find that. (*He sings*) It's not bad at all.¹⁹²

Similarly [02:15 onwards], we worked on avoiding the impression of regularity between the notes, so as to prevent the listener from developing a structural hearing. It is interesting to observe that in transcribing the work for a piano-voice duo, the composer has increased the harmonic diversity, since in the original version, one instrument alone (double bass *con sordino*, viola da gamba or bass guitar) holds a D to accompany the soloist. But I tend to think that the harmonies have no impact on the work's expressive substance. These minor changes are merely variations of colour and do not affect the reasoning.

In the course of rehearsing the first three notes, we reached a perfectly satisfactory moment, from which I derived observations that helped me begin to understand the concept of expression as it is at work here. Listen to 02:50 onwards, as we work on the *molto vibrato*. One can clearly distinguish the moment when the singer stops doing his best to interpret the score as a sum of signs and indications, and reaches for an expressive naturalness. From 03:00 to 03:05 I mention that it should sound like an improvisation that nonetheless remains perfectly organic

¹⁹² « Ce que je trouve super maintenant, c'est la variété des sonorités que tu as au début, mais le côté "ivresse" tu peux le faire ressortir un peu plus, déjà par le temps pris entre les premiers... ici. Tu vois?... c'est-à-dire, tu l'entends très bien, et donc tu le fais très bien mais il faudrait qu'on sente plus l'effort de la production de ces sons différents, c'est-à-dire, accroître un peu la pause, et imagine que tu es celui qui fait l'effort, en étant alcoolisé... exactement... et donc en fait, je pense qu'il faut faire sentir aussi bien la pause mais que l'effort pour aller d'un ré à un autre... vocalement c'est impeccable, mais il y a quelque chose dans le timing peut-être encore à chercher, qu'un son entraîne l'autre quand bien même ils sont différents de couleur. Donc plus de temps mais aussi plus de ligne dans la dramaturgie. On peut refaire juste ce début pour essayer de trouver ça ? (*Il chante.*) C'est pas mal du tout. »

(‘This avoids giving the impression of an overly safe metric’),¹⁹³ and from 03:25 to 03:40 one can hear the result of the previous work. The rhythmic pace, a crucial component of expression, sounds so convincing that I realised one could speak of ‘appropriate’ expression. Comparing the pre-rehearsal analysis and the reflections that arise from performance, one could think of them as somewhat independent. I think that the pre-rehearsal steps have to be as meticulous as possible to precisely be open to the unexpected aspects that will emerge during the actual rehearsal process. Only an in-depth preparation of the piece can make it possible for the performers to recognise the originality of the form of expression that arises at a particular moment, and validate it. Therefore, there need not be continuity between the analytical and aesthetic consideration and the musical output, as the discontinuity itself will have been considered a possible output.

In the context of traditional repertoire, expression can often be seen as a variation from a previously known norm (harmonic, structural, etc.). In the case of contemporary repertoire, much more diverse in terms of formal, textural, timbral and harmonic components, expression is perceived and experienced as the coalescence of the substance of the poem and what presents itself (or reveals itself) as the immanent rightness of the musical setting as it is being performed by the musicians. Expression would imply here to inquire into the listening capacity or ability to perceive it, to grasp the moment when it is being disclosed. In this light the act of interpretation can be seen as the disclosure of the communicational nature of any musical utterance.

From 03:30 onwards,¹⁹⁴ we reach the conclusion that in more recent repertoire, such as Kurtág, especially in setting texts to music, a closer

¹⁹³ « Ça permet d’éviter l’impression d’une carrure trop sûre. »

¹⁹⁴ ‘This is always the difficulty with authors who have such a meticulous relationship to the text and a real knowledge of poetry, of modernist poetry ... once they set it to music ... you have to be able to invest much more in the idea of the poem and be able to see what the indications refer to even before the subject becomes musical – it’s a poetic question, of searching for the embodiment of the text – and then you will understand why he wrote the music this way or that way. You have to get out of the text to touch the poetic vein.’

[« C’est toujours la difficulté dans ce genre de choses, surtout chez les auteurs qui ont une vraie connaissance de la poésie, une vraie connaissance de la poésie moderniste... une fois qu’ils tentent de les

understanding of the underlying connotations of the poem informs the interpretative process *as such*, that is, the way in which the performance markings that the composer uses, are no more sufficient to understanding his or her 'reading' of the poem.¹⁹⁵ As a performer, I can hardly think of contemporary settings that I consider as transparent, as to what the composer's understanding of the poem is. It is likely that a clearer determination of expression has to do with the ability to elaborate what I think were the views of the composer.

What I think can be seen as a research outcome is the recognition of the importance of the 'pre-compositional' phase: that is, the phase of the poetic process. By reflecting upon this phase, one might as well end up reconstructing a mere fiction, but it appeared to be a fecund inquiry both on an interpretative level and on an aesthetic level. It is also meaningful to observe that, should the formal aspects of the piece be indecisive in informing the analytical process, as is the case with this cycle, the concept of narration, usually dependent upon form, has to be reconsidered. It is interesting to note that this recognition occurs both in the pre-rehearsal and rehearsal phase, as this narration as to be brought to expression for what it is.

In the second song, 'In Memoriam F. M. Dostoevsky', and keeping in mind the theme of expression, how is the first interval (G#-A) to be interpreted? In the light of the failure of communication that is being presented, I think it should be seen as a basic, crucial dissonance, an almost native *Spaltung*. Listening to the video made with the musicians, I realise that all of my comments were made solely with the aim of bringing expression to the surface, by focusing on a deeper understanding of the text, in what would be a theory to practice case. This aspect nevertheless sheds light on the difficult task, as I reflect upon the piece itself and the rehearsal process, of being able to recognise which aspect of the interpretation is addressed by which

mettre en musique... il faut arriver à investir beaucoup plus l'idée du poème, et arriver à voir en quoi les indications musicales renvoient avant même que ce soit un propos musical, c'est un propos poétique, donc il faut vraiment chercher l'incarnation du texte et ensuite on comprend pourquoi il a écrit la musique comme ci ou comme ça. Il faut sortir du texte pour toucher la veine poétique. »]

¹⁹⁵ This could arguably be said for any performance of a texted music. But the degree to which it is achieved here by Kurtág is, to my knowledge, unique.

aspect of the performer's activity. The dialectic between ideas that emerged during preparation for rehearsals and ideas newly acquired during the rehearsal process can be very difficult to delineate. I tend now to think that Pilinszky's poetry, just as much as Celan's, has in itself an expressive vein (or an expressionist tone) that makes it appropriate for composers to set to music their texts. I came to realise, working on Kurtág and Pilinszky, that hermeticism in poetry is not simply synonymous with abstraction. The word 'hermetic' seems to imply that a certain key would make it easier for the listener to elucidate the content of the text. This impression is similarly false. Expression finds its place between those two aporias. If one listens to the rehearsal [09:33 onwards], one notices that both musicians were very adequately rendering the score.¹⁹⁶ I had virtually nothing to say. In the context of that which is being expressed in the poem, that is, not a mere oppressive scene, but a symbolic representation of communicational failure, and negation of humanity, it appeared that expression could be more emphatic. Dissonance thus had to be as harsh as possible [from 09:38 to 09:50 as I discuss with the pianist]. It was a particular challenge to confront expression with the short descriptions that are put in brackets in the text. I mentioned earlier that the brackets are a representation of the impossibility for the inmate to gain access to language. That is the reason why I asked the singer to be particularly expressive in singing those bars, as expression was meant to take charge of the humanity of the inmate as he is being denied humanity. One could make an analogy between the singer impersonating the humanity of the inmate as he is denied humanity and poetry itself which took charge of the task of philosophy which was denied access to language as well under totalitarian regimes, as Pilinszky, Celan, Bachmann, Tsvetaeva have experienced them.

But in those brackets, expression is even more difficult to obtain, as it is sung in the lowest register of the male voice. Performing is almost physically impossible, and this aspect makes the piece even more beautiful. It is as if expression were

¹⁹⁶ 'This is dissonance par excellence. That's the radical dissonance you play on this *forte*.' [« C'est la dissonance par excellence, là, sur ce *forte*. »]

censoring itself. And this quasi-impossibility of performance is in return symbolised in the crucifixion motif that can be heard in the piano part in the fourth bar. Listen to our discussion from 12:18 onwards:

What I find interesting is the hiatus between the fact that you have this very low note on the asides, where there is almost a physical impossibility that you tend, like the prisoner, to maintain this space of individuality. It was more varied, perhaps because there is a greater effort to be made and it's counterintuitive.¹⁹⁷

The third song immediately reveals very particular expressive features, which offer a strong contrast to the previous two. If we consider the second song as an exercise in censoring expression, the third sounds very exuberant and has a certain harmonic lushness. Expression is here exteriorised, but based on its symbolic meaning, as discussed earlier, it remains solipsistic. The melismas only refer to Hölderlin's 'night of the spirit'. Emphatic as expression can be perceived here, it remains helpless. This expressive process is the opposite of the one that was being displayed in the second song, where the intensity of expression was relying on the most tenuous elements, elements which I thought of as barely able to be markers of expression.

Another gain of this research is to observe that fullness of expression is not equivalent to rhythmic, textural, or harmonic activity. Those aspects can be inversely proportional to expression. This aspect was explored in further detail in Chapter 2, concerning gesture (as a concept treating such domains as synthetic and not as discrete) and expression.

In conclusion, the peculiarity of expression as it can be inquired into in Kurtág's settings relies on his use of intertextuality as a determining criterion for the listener to fully be able to relate to the expressive substance of his music. That peculiarity is reminiscent of the work of Bernd Alois Zimmermann, who was also

¹⁹⁷ « Ce que je trouve intéressant c'est le hiatus entre le fait que tu aies ces notes très graves en aparté, et c'est justement là où il y a quasiment une impossibilité physique, que tu tends, comme justement le prisonnier, à maintenir cet espace d'individualité. C'était plus varié. Il y a un effort plus grand à faire et presque contre-intuitif. »

influenced by Webern's compositional approach, even though he and Kurtág, as far as I know, have not been studied jointly. In both cases, intertextuality within their own body of work and as well with the entire history of the western classical tradition is at the core of these composers' creative practice. Through this inquiry and my work with the musicians, I came to a broadening of what I thought was necessary to examine more closely the concept I am studying:

- 1) Expression cannot be deduced alone from the printed score: if this were true, a formalist approach in which form and substance are equivalent would be sufficient to give an account of expression (as exemplified by Adorno).
- 2) The performer's own expressive means and musicianship are not sufficient to 'objectivise' the immanent expressive qualities of a text set to music.

Thinking of expression in terms of an intertwining of concept and affect (as represented by Helmut Lachenmann, for example) appears equally unsatisfying, as what is at stake is to understand how the concept is made audible. That is the path (or method; the etymology is the same) that I will be following in sections 3.4 and 3.5. In doing so, I will also have to address the articulation of expression and meaning, as a necessary corollary of intertextuality.

3.4 Rihm's *Vier Gedichte aus 'Atemwende'*

Composed in 1973, the same year Kurtág started work on his Pilinszky settings, Wolfgang Rihm's *Vier Gedichte aus 'Atemwende'* for voice and piano show similar compositional concerns about setting the original text to music in a way that not only can be considered an aesthetic success from a musical point of view, but that also sheds light on the poems in such a way that their linguistic and pre-musical existence remains autonomous.¹⁹⁸ That is to say, they do not abolish themselves in the process of being turned into music; the composer does not seem to seek a comprehensive rendition of the texts he is using. By 'comprehensive rendition', I refer to a compositional approach that aims to consume the particularity of an author's poetry by referring extensively to the critical discourse that surrounds that poet's production, without the composer testifying to a personal and unique reading of the author that he or she sets to music. Such an approach could be exemplified by Boulez's pieces written on texts by Mallarmé or Char, in that they convey the feeling that a predominantly formalist compositional approach is for the most part similar to the type of research that was being performed in those days by literary critics on these same authors. In the context of my research, considering pieces that were composed under this paradigm could only have led to either misunderstandings as regards expression, or to a lessening of the particularity of the intrinsically musical type of expression into which I am inquiring. The uniqueness of a composer's reading of a certain author is key to ensuring that the type of expressivity that underlies a composition based on this author's words will be unique as well, and prone to enable the performer to identify signs of expressivity that will help him or her assume a personal reflection upon the piece, thus leading to a personal interpretation of it. 'Personal' must be understood here in the strong sense of the word, namely, as a dialogic process between the piece and the interpreter, so that it can lead to views that can objectively testify to their relevance, while at the same time adding value to the objectivity required in practice-based research, in that, as

¹⁹⁸ The documentation can be accessed at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2FfnDtvqQQ>>.

shown in the preceding sections, it aims to share a common knowledge that remains nevertheless deeply rooted in a very personal interpretative approach. The dialectic between one's own sensibility as an interpreter and the value of objectivity of one's research therefore has to be kept in mind at every moment. This tension may well constitute an unsurmountable interval, but acknowledging it is a precondition to developing one's own, personal take on practice-based research.

In that regard, Rihm's settings of Celan are an adequate place from which to develop the elements that I have just mentioned. In 1973, Rihm could not have been overwhelmed by secondary sources on Celan as we are now, as most of the main authors I am considering in my essay published their commentaries from the mid-1980s on.¹⁹⁹ Rihm's settings can also be considered exemplary in that they give the researcher clues as to how to engage with his violin concerto, *Lichtzwang*, composed two years after, in 1975, in homage to Celan. I will not consider this piece here, as my concern lies in the relation between music and text. It would nevertheless be interesting to observe what elements in Rihm's songs have enabled him to confront similar material in a radically different context, that of a concerto for violin and large orchestra.

The first aspect of Rihm's song cycle that immediately strikes the interpreter lies in its title. Rihm named it *Vier Gedichte aus 'Atemwende'*, not *Vier Lieder*, or *Four Songs*. By doing so, that is, by emphasising the linguistic lyricism of the work, and not referring to any pre-given musical genre, he acknowledges the prevalence of the initial source.²⁰⁰ This aspect alone is meaningful, in that it gives clues about the aesthetic intentions of the composer. It tells us that the cycle, even though it refers

¹⁹⁹ The first authoritative publication on Celan to have gained worldwide recognition is Jacques Derrida, *Schibboleth pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1986). Peter Szondi's *Celan Studies* was published in 1972, one year after the poet committed suicide, but it is a fragmentary and unfinished work. (Szondi, *Celan Studies*, trans. by Susan Bernofsky [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003].) It is unlikely that Rihm's compositional approach would have been greatly influenced by it, even though I cannot positively guarantee that this was not the case.

²⁰⁰ Whenever Rihm mentions the author's name in his setting of poetry, he uses the word *Gedichte* instead of *Lieder* (Rilke: *Vier Gedichte*, *Drei Hölderlin-Gedichte*). On the other hand, should the name of the author be missing in the title, he uses the word *Lieder*, such as in his unpublished *Drei Lieder* from 1967 or *Eins und Doppelt* from 2004.

to a musical genre that has been well established since the early eighteenth century, that of the *Lied*, does not make explicit reference to this genre; namely, it does not *a priori* recollect the sum of knowledge and associations that an informed listener carries with him or her. This aspect testifies to the particularity of the compositional approach and compositional ambition of the composer: we are hearing a piece that makes use of an iconic instrumentation, piano and voice, that sets to music a poem; yet we are not hearing *mélodies* or *Lieder*.

One might want to raise the question of how this particular approach translates into the composer's own sonic world, and also, to what extent Celan's poetry has been made use of in an intrinsically musical fashion, that is, in a context where the coalescence of sound and meaning enable a unique expressivity to be presented to the listener.

In answering these questions, I will thus be able to observe the commonalities and differences between the expressive features of Rihm's music and that of the other authors presented in this dissertation. By doing so, I will be able to identify the salient features that help define expression in post-World War II western music based on poetry.

The first poem of the cycle, 'In den Flüssen', does not offer easy access to its elucidation and to the determination of its expressive singularity. It consists of a complex interlacing of textures and motifs, in an actual sonic space and in an evocative poetic space, animated solely by the resonance of depressed keys. In addition to the polyphonic complexity, the dynamics range from *ppp* to *fff*, while the shortest rhythmic values are sextuplet 64th-notes. With little exception, the dynamics and the rhythmic values are tied together, in such a way that shorter notes are played at louder dynamics. In contrast with the diversity of the piano accompaniment and its juxtaposed formal components, the vocal line consists of one musical line, which corresponds to the single phrase of the poem. Listening to the piece, it feels as if several layers are developing at the same time in different tempi, with occasional focal points during which the expression crystallises. These focal

points will eventually take on a pivotal role as they will be reused in different contexts throughout the cycle, enabling the listener to experience the piece not as a mere collection of settings but as a unified whole. Nevertheless, these focal points do not carry with them an unequivocal meaning, as they are used in contexts between which no apparent similarities can be observed. One could say that the same musical material can take on various meanings as it is used in different contexts. What is interesting for me in terms of delineating the expressive features of the piece is to observe that a constituent tension lies between the univocity of a certain musical occurrence and the plurality of its meanings as a marker of expression. Let us take as an example the chord that appears initially in this first poem in bar 9, C–G–E–F♯–B–G♯. The same chord can be found in bar 9 of the second piece of the cycle as well, in the same disposition and the same register. In bar 13 in the third piece, the same chord appears as an anticipation of the expressive accent that is to be found in the vocal part. In the fourth song, it appears slightly modified in the form C–G–E♭ –F♯–B–G♯ – that is, with a minor chord in the left hand rather than a major chord. Three further chords in the piece can be seen as related to the original form. In the second song, in bar 11, F–B–F♯–C–G can be heard as an inversion of the initial chord. What appeared initially in the right hand appears now in the left hand and vice versa, with two minor modifications. The E of the original left-hand triad is suppressed, and the F♯ in the original right hand becomes an F. Just a few bars later in the same piece, at bar 15, the chord B♭ –B♭ –F♯–C–A♭ is the same as the initial chord, with the bass shifted one whole step down. It can also be said that the chords in the first piece, starting at bar 11, are based on a fragment of the original chord, with the upper major sixth being turned into an augmented fifth or minor sixth. A few other motifs can be distinguished that contribute to creating a strong sense of continuity throughout the cycle, yet remain difficult to hear as such for the listener. The last chord in the right hand in the first piece becomes the first chord in the second piece. It can also be found in the third bar and in the thirteenth bar. It also closes this second piece, but starts the third piece *attacca*. In bar 18 of the third piece, it is to be heard with an accent, transposed and in the left hand, and that same transposition is to be heard in the last piece, in bar 14, with a major third this time, just after the

original chord in its minor version (C–G–E \flat –F \sharp –B–G \sharp) has been played. This modification (the first chord being performed with its minor third and the second chord with its major third, as opposed to their respective original forms), stressed by the *sfz* in bar 14, coincides with the most expressive line the vocal part has to perform in this cycle. These few examples help us understand how connected the harmonic and contrapuntal elements of the piece are, in such a way that the interpreter is confronted with a limited set of expressive gestures that he or she has to perform with specific intentions in different contexts. They show what appears to me a particularity of Rihm's compositional approach. This is that the more 'open', non-teleological, a text is, and the more hermetic it is, the more the compositional material will take on an opposite tendency, so that the semantic demands of the text can rest on a musical material that is polymorphic yet easy to perceive as such. By contrast with Kurtág's settings of texts by Pilinszky, in which the composer aimed at a fusion between poetic and musical eloquence, Rihm composes an accompaniment that is illustrative of the poem, yet does not attempt to strengthen the verbal musicality of the original source. What the piano part expresses is thus something that the voice cannot articulate on its own. This aspect is particularly interesting with regard to expression, in that the piano part not only plays the role of supporting the semantic content and mirroring it in a symbolic way, as was the case for example in Debussy's *Chansons de Bilitis*, but also develops an autonomous sphere of expression that brims with potential developments that cannot be reduced to a mere attempt to illustrate the poem. The piano part thus seems to be a kind of matrix of expression that is amenable to a diversity of poetic expressive features. It is as if the piano part were on occasions clarifying islets of poetic meaning, but in such a way that both piano and voice do not coincide temporally. One can say that the dialectic tension between I and You, a tension that underlies Celan's entire cycle, is mirrored in the relation between piano and voice.

Looking more closely at the first song, we immediately see that several layers are juxtaposed in the exordium, which thus takes on the role of a marker of expression for the rest of the piece. The chord that is silently performed in the left

hand and held with the third pedal has the function of anticipating the notes on which the singer will start her part – that is, it has a harmonic function – but it also represents aspects of the poem symbolically. First, it works as a figuralism referring to the river that is mentioned at the beginning of the poem, a form of unchanging presence that shines at the surface (00:20).²⁰¹ Second, the 64th-note rhythm in the right hand will be used later as a musical symbol representing the stones that help ballast the nest. The evocation of the stone can be more clearly heard in bar 13, this time *martellato* and *sfffz* (01:23–01:34, bars 13–14). And third, this silently held chord also depicts musically the *Schatten* ('shadows') that are evoked at the very end of the poem (01:40–01:50).

With this example, we can observe how a simple compositional model – attack and resonance – can serve several expressive functions. By doing so, the composer multiplies the possibilities of expressive relationships and helps create a virtually unlimited network of relations between all the compositional parameters. As opposed to Kurtág's settings of Pilinszky's poems, which could be described as an overdetermined attempt to deal with tenuous traces of expression, Rihm's settings can be described as an open work, a work in which the coalescence of sound and meaning does not seem to be fixed once and for all, while being regulated by binding initial expressive gestures.

Observe the first time the soprano sings 'das Du zögernd beschwerst' (01:05–01:22). There is no reason to consider that it would not be satisfying to perform the way she did, but keeping in mind the plurality of relations that are a criteria of expression, I had to work on it and suggest another way of singing that line. What she did was entirely legitimate from a musical perspective. She followed the overall descending gesture, from the F in bar 9 to the B \flat in bar 12, not paying particular attention to 'das Du' in bar 10. At the same time the piano is holding the chord that I have mentioned earlier, so there is no particular pianistic activity at this point. This is why the soprano sings that line as a concluding gesture. Nevertheless, I suggested

²⁰¹ It can be considered an initial form of that same brilliance that will be expressed at the end of the poetic cycle in the form of 'Breath Crystal'.

that we took an opposite view with regard to expression as I am trying to define it in Celan's poems set to music, that is, as a plurality of compositional and poetic relations that are embodied in a single, univocal sonic event, just as the poetry of Celan itself is conceived. I asked the soprano to rearticulate the 'Du' so as to emphasise its unconventional place in the line. By placing this word at the end of the second line, and not at the start of the third, Celan clearly tells us that it has to have a particular expressivity and a slight caesura must precede 'zögernd' (as if one were literally hesitating because of the pause; this is a perfect example of an unconventional typography that fits with the semantic content and the performance of the poem as it is being read out loud) – as can be heard in the recording that he himself made in which he reads some of the poems from *Atemwende*.²⁰²

I made exactly the same requirement in bar 6, as the soprano sings 'Werf ich das Netz aus, das Du ...' (00:45–01:05, bars 6–9), and for exactly the same reason: that is, the place of 'ich' in the original line. The inversion of subject and verb in German is considered a reinforcement of the subject. Therefore, even if the overall shape of the phrase is to be performed diminuendo, it is obvious that 'ich' has to be articulated with particular care. But as can be heard in the documentation, the soprano is clearly focusing on the diminuendo alone, without any particular concern for the poetic inflections of the text. At 03:10–04:50, I give the aesthetic explanation as to why 'ich' and 'Du' have to be musically stressed:

Here, however, you need to make the sound a little louder. And don't forget the Ich, it is not insignificant in Celan. It is Ich compared to Du. You don't just narrate what you're doing. So you have to accentuate it a little bit.²⁰³

And at 05:50–06:45:

Rihm gives no indication of versification, but nevertheless you can sing 'Du' as the most important word in the second line.²⁰⁴

²⁰² It is worth noting that Celan reading his own poetry is otherwise very inexpressive. There is very little to be learnt in that regard from his reading of his texts.

²⁰³ « Là, il faut, par contre, que tu renforces un peu le son. Et n'oublie pas le Ich, il n'est pas anodin chez Celan. C'est le Ich par rapport au Du. Tu ne fais pas que narrer ce que tu fais. Donc, il faut accentuer un petit peu. »

It can be heard that the singer performs very eloquently in the first of these passages of the documentation (i.e. also at 03:10–04:50); and see 07:45–07:50 for our best musical rendition.²⁰⁵

In this first song, the articulation of ‘ich’ and ‘Du’ seems to be the primary expressive feature that calls for the attention of the performers. Other aspects of this first song should be mentioned, however, in that they also provide clues to the performers’ interpretative and expressive options. Similarly to Schoenberg’s *Erwartung* (as discussed in section 3.1), the *Vier Gedichte aus ‘Atemwende’* make extensive use of word-painting in a very classical way. By this, I mean that Rihm’s use of this compositional procedure is not symbolic, as it is with Debussy or the young Bartók. In Rihm’s case, it is a transfer of a visual component that gets translated musically (as was the case with the frogs croaking in Schoenberg’s *Erwartung*, represented by alternating triplets). I will just give a few examples, not merely to list the compositional techniques that Rihm is using, but in order to show the tension between different aesthetic approaches within the same work, that is, between compositional procedures that are specific to the composer as he deals with Celan’s poetry, and compositional procedures that have a much more generic connotation and have been sedimented throughout the centuries, independently from any author in particular.²⁰⁶

Two different chords are to be performed silently and taken with the third pedal so as not only to add a harmonic component, but also to create a timbral

²⁰⁴ « Rihm ne donne pas d’indication de la versification, mais néanmoins, tu peux chanter “Du” comme étant le mot le plus important du deuxième vers. »

²⁰⁵ It is particularly interesting to observe that Rihm was able to choose, from among the twenty-one poems that comprise Celan’s *Atemwende* cycle, four texts that make the tension of You and I particularly audible. This tension is the driving force of the expressivity so unique to Celan. The mere fact that he chose specifically those four poems is a clear sign that whenever the relation between You and I is at work, it has to be made very audible by the performers.

²⁰⁶ Despite the historical separation, it would not be impossible to make use of Joachim Burmeister’s *Musica Poetica* (1606) to give account of Rihm’s relation to the text. The same can be said about Schoenberg’s *Erwartung*, and more precisely about his *The Book of the Hanging Gardens*, Op. 15 (1908–9). By saying that, and not knowing what Rihm’s opinions are, I am suggesting that there is every likelihood, if one considers his works from the 1970s, that the atonal Schoenberg has been much more influential on him than the serial Schoenberg, which in itself is remarkable as he is from the generation of the pupils of the serial composers.

illusion, reminiscent of the concept around which the entire poem is gravitating: the idea of shadows (*Schatten*). The silently depressed chord at the beginning of the piece also functions as an evocation of the rivers (*Flüssen*) mentioned in the first line. The lyricism of the poem is cold and reserved. The rivers are evoked not because of their movement and fluidity, but for their fixity and immobility.²⁰⁷ A harmonic resonance was therefore the ideal way of rendering their shimmering aspect. In bar 2, as the voice starts its part, the rhythm that it uses is also a clear musical depiction of the content of the poem. The typical balancing movement of 16th-/8th-/16th-notes evokes the sound of the waves, something that Mendelssohn in *Die schöne Melusine* and Wagner in *Das Rheingold* were already familiar with. See 04:00–04:10 for our performance of this passage and 02:00–03:00 for my comments:

You just have the evocation of the wave, or of the reflection on the water, and your part repeats exactly the same notes as those of the piano. Try to do something much more horizontal. That way, I can play the chords in a more pronounced way. The chords also indicate the weight of the net being thrown.²⁰⁸

The 32nd-note motif in bar 8 (00:55–01:00) can be interpreted, in the context of the previous stillness of motion, as a musical illustration of the mesh of the fishing net that is being thrown and thus covers the rivers, represented by the C–Eb –B chord that is the first musical event in the piece in the left hand. In bar 12, the verb *beschweren* is accompanied by a figure of four descending chords in a half-step motion, which likewise represents the idea conveyed by the verb, which means ‘burden’ in English (01:15–01:22/04:40–04:50, better executed this time as we have explicitly mentioned the rhetorical function of these chords).

²⁰⁷ Compare with Schoenberg’s first song from Op. 15, where the liveliness of the stream is evoked by a 32nd-note motif, to be performed *flüchtig*, as a concrete musical rendition of a visual aspect. The score of this song is included in the Appendix; see the first bar of the third page for the passage to which I refer.

²⁰⁸ « On a juste l’évocation de l’onde ou de la réflexion sur l’eau, et ta partie reprend exactement les mêmes notes que celles du piano. Essaie de faire quelque chose de beaucoup plus horizontal. Et comme cela, ça me permet de jouer les accords d’une manière plus marquée. Les accords indiquent également le lestage du filet lancé. »

The notes mentioned in bar 13 directly turn into a rhythmic *martellato* motif in the accompaniment, a typical musical figure used by Lully and Bach. Bar 15 is certainly very evocative, in that the *geschriebenen Schatten* ('written shadows') are literally written into the score in the form of a 4:3 rhythmic relation, creating a shifting effect that is an exact musical rendition of what the poem is about at that point (01:35–01:45/05:03–05:13; the second time, after mentioning the particularity of the compositional idea underlying that bar, one can hear that both the singer and I are more convincing).

All of the aspects that I have just mentioned, which I consider to be typical procedures of the *Affektenlehre*, could have been employed by composers of the late Renaissance or the early Baroque, that is, around the time of Burmeister developing the typology of rhetorical figures that he will summarise in his *Musica poetica*. The compositional idioms are of course different, but the conceptual matrix is similar.

What is at stake is the elucidation of the question that I raised in the introduction to this dissertation. Determining the particularity of a contemporary understanding of expression can only be achieved, whenever there is a text set to music, by referring to older compositional practices and by rethinking the concepts of affect and of gesture (if we keep in mind that *gesture* is another word for rhetorical figure).

The second setting, 'Die Zahlen', encapsulates different aspects of the reflection I have had so far in my work on expression. It is a very dense composition that encompasses both word-painting and musical symbolism. Rihm seems to have been able to set to music one of the key aspects of expression as I am dealing with it, that is, the aesthetic perception of that which is semantically concealed but musically exposed to the listener, as long as the interpreter is aware of this aspect. In connection with this second song I will highlight three moments where I find the relationship between text and music especially interesting, and will then look in detail at a particular verbal phrase and its treatment.

Let us consider first *ein irrlichtender Hammer* ('a will-o'-the-wisping hammer'), in bars 15–16. The rhythmic vivacity of the piano accompaniment contrasts sharply with the slow pace of the previous bars. It thus helps to evoke the flickering presence of the will-o'-the-wisp. This aspect is emphasised by the appoggiatura in bar 16. Yet it appears to me that of primary importance is the unconventional rhythm of the prosody. Rihm sets the word 'irrlichtender' to music in such a way that it conveys the feeling that the word has two consecutive accents. The first one falls on 'irr-', a stressed syllable that Rihm turns into a quarter-note. But the fact that the next syllable of the word, '-licht-', falls on a downbeat gives it natural musical expressivity. This aspect is emphasised by the fact that the downbeat is prepared by the piano by the appoggiatura C–E–C#. That is, instead of simply stressing as '**irr**lichtender', we have now '**irrlicht**ender' (21:15–21:38/24:35–24:45). The reason for this lies in the way the original poem fits on the page: Celan himself cuts 'irrlichternder' in two. 'Irr-' is the last syllable in line 7, followed in line 8 by '-lichternder'. In this way, Celan lends the word a very unconventional aura of expressivity. This aspect, although subtle, makes a decisive contribution to the particularity of Rihm's music, in that he was able to observe the particularity of Celan's prosody, and to suggest it to the listener in such a way that this particularity can be recognised as such.

The last two lines of the poem are both of individual interest. The penultimate line, 'all das im Welttakt', is composed as if it were a madrigal. The notes of the accompaniment and the way they are articulated clearly evoke the rhythm of a hammer, and the regularity of the hammering corresponds with the concept of *Welttakt*.

The last line consists of a single word: 'besingt' (extol, praise, celebrate). But it also contains the concept of singing (*be/singen*), which is addressed subtly by Rihm. Instead of having the voice represent the lyricism that goes with the idea of singing, Rihm writes for the soprano a descending half-step motion, while the piano takes on a more lyrical role, with the arpeggio (B \flat –D \flat –C–E). This inversion of the roles does not seem at first to mean anything in particular, but if one remembers

that in Celan's poetry in general, and in this cycle in particular, a breath crystal represents the need for truth that language alone is able to fill, this means that an analogue of language can be represented another non-speaking instrument, in this case the piano. As 'besingen' also refers to 'dichten' (composing, singing poetry, just as in Schumann's 'The poet sings'), it becomes obvious that this very simple gesture in the piano accompaniment has to be interpreted with particular care and not merely as a closing gesture (22:05–22:25/24:50–25:05 for the last two lines of the poem, and 25:33–26:40 for my comments):

Without putting any particular emphasis on 'besingt'. And here what's interesting, it's not the singing that's 'besingt', it's the piano, and you really have to be connected at that moment.²⁰⁹

If one agrees with this interpretation, the last bar also gains tremendous expressive eloquence. The repeated chords B–A–G–B \flat –F \sharp , in that context, can be heard either as the distant pounding of the hammer, or as the cold expressivity and shimmering aspect of the breath crystal.

I would like now to turn to bars 9–10, which are musically and conceptually central to the entire cycle. Just as I observed that 'irrlichternder' gains a particular expressivity by being cut in two, the same thing can be said about the word *Gegenverhängnis* ('counter-fatality') in these bars (16:57–17:10; and after we have been working on it 24:00–24:10). I referred in sections 1.2 and 3.2 to the etymology of 'expression' and to the fact that an archaic form had to do with *prosōpon*. *Prosōpon*, as we know, means face, but initially, it had to do with unveiling, just as a prosopopoeia gives an inanimate object the ability to speak: that is, it unveils an object's voice and its access to speech. Something quite similar can be said about what is being portrayed musically in bars 9 and 10. The words *Verhängnis* and *Gegenverhängnis* initially mean 'fatality' and 'counter-fatality', but the verb *verhängen* in German also means 'to veil'. One could therefore understand *Gegenverhängnis* as the act by which something is unveiled. It would not be correct to go so far as to translate *Verhängnis* or *Gegenverhängnis* with any explicit

²⁰⁹ « Sans mettre d'accentuation particulière sur "besingt". Et là ce qui est intéressant, c'est pas le chant qui est "besingt", c'est le piano, et il faut vraiment qu'on soit connecté à ce moment-là. »

reference to the secondary meaning that I have just mentioned. But it is possible for the composer to set these words to music in such a way that the idea to a certain extent can be conveyed by non-semantic means. On a single word, 'Gegenverhängnis', accompanied by a regular eighth-note motif and a variant of the original chord mentioned earlier, that is, on a deliberately poor accompaniment, the soprano sings the most extended melisma that she has to perform in the song. To this are added the agogic details that are required by Rihm – three short decrescendos on single syllables – that increase the impression of the duration of the word and its intrinsic expression. As I explain (comments from 19:00–19:42):

You need to be able to make the disjointed intervals more noticeable. Do a little more of the internal diminutions ... exactly ... so that you can feel the difficulty of emitting the sound.²¹⁰

Whether Rihm has been conscious of the multiple connotations of the word *Gegenverhängnis* or not is in itself unimportant. It is enough for a composer to have been able to observe that the very peculiar division of the word between third and fourth line and its specific role in the first of the two sentences of the poem calls for a particular musical treatment. Just as Kurtág proved to be a very sophisticated reader of Pilinszky, one can argue that Rihm has been able here to extract the substance, the key message, of Celan's poem.

The third song, 'Stehen', makes use of a similar process to the first song, making present and audible the content of the poem as such by unfolding the expressive resources of the poem in the actual sonic space.²¹¹ The second line of the poem consists of the syntagm 'des Wundenmals in der Luft'. There is no syntactic separation between 'der' and 'Luft'. What Rihm does, though, is make a clear break after 'der', consisting of a quarter-note rest, while the piano part has a caesura that symbolically represents the act of breathing. After such a distinct separation, the word 'Luft' gains a completely different expression that has to do with the way it has

²¹⁰ « Il faudrait que tu puisses plus faire sentir les intervalles disjoints. Fais un petit peu plus les diminutions internes... exactement... qu'on sente la difficulté à émettre le son. »

²¹¹ See bars 15–16 in the first song, on the words 'geschriebenen Schatten' (08:15–08:25 for our best musical rendition).

been musically prepared, by making a rest the key element of the entire phrase. The coalescence of semantic meaning, typographic disposition and musical interpretation is very striking, and to some degree related to the second of the four Pilinszky settings by Kurtág, especially the crucifixion motif in which, as I have shown, the symbolic meaning, the musical expression and the typography are brought to the same level of expressivity (29:03–29:13).²¹²

Rihm seems to think of 'all das im Welttakt' in the second song and 'Für-niemand-und-nichts-stehen' as being related. He uses in both places the same agogic rhythm and the same note values. But the analogy between both phrases leaves it unclear what Rihm had in mind when composing in such a way that he created this common feature.

The last song is remarkable in that it summarises the previous three, making use of motifs that had had primary importance in the other songs and that remain present here as a mere trace of expression, as an evocation of previous expressive states. The general atmosphere is one of desolation and solitude. This is evoked musically by the fact that the initial chords appear to be frozen in their register, while the entire sound space in which the piece occurs is delimited by a single sonority consisting of the same note B \flat repeated over eight octaves. I would like to pay particular attention to bars 17–18, which are for me specifically interesting with regard to expression. For the very first time in the piece, piano and voice perform in unison, on 'Es sind noch Lieder zu singen'. Keeping in mind that the entire cycle *Atemwende* is about trying to determine how 'ich' and 'Du' stand for one another, and how each one constitutes itself in the process of constituting at the same time its otherness, the junction of the two expressive spheres, that of the piano and that of the voice, represents symbolically on the written page and musically in the sonic space the achievement of what the poem describes. At the same time, Celan's poem represents the need for thinking to occur in order for someone who will receive the

²¹² As unorthodox as this may sound, this aspect (the importance given to the typographic and symbolic details, and the musical expression) is reminiscent of the compendium of musical experimentation that Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber released in 1678, the *Rosenkranzsonaten*.

verbal message to be addressed, even if this other to whom one speaks is this other in oneself. These two bars can be considered the culmination of the cycle in terms of expressive means (42:30–42:50 and 43:20–43:30, both times not very satisfying with regards to expression). This is why the singer and I were very consciously making sure that the particularity of this place can be heard (43:15–43:30 followed by an explanation of the two bars; 46:20–46:40, clearly our best version, as we were able to perform based on an achieved mutual understanding of the two bars). It is remarkable that such a conventional writing process, the mere doubling of a voice, would play such a leading role in building the expressive tension with which the cycle ends, but it is at the same time a great learning experience to observe that the expressive requirements of a text enable proven compositional methods, hardly usable by today's composer, can take on a new expressive role that makes reference to the past in a subtle way, while claiming a new expressive meaning.

The fact that the last syntagm in the piece, 'der Menschen', is *halb gesprochen* ('half-spoken') should be understood as embodying the possibility of dialogue that enables thinking as such to occur – that is, as the possibility of singing what remains fundamentally human in humans. The cycle ends on the evocation of the crystal breath that lends its name to the cycle, repeated seventy times (from 47:18 until the end). The chord that is repeated was already present in all the previous songs. It appears in retrospect as that which has enabled a certain poetic truth to find its access to language.

* * *

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise the articulation of ancient rhetorical means and genuinely modern ones that help build an expressive tension which I think is quite unique. Some aspects (the recognition of the dialogue as a requirement for thinking) are similar to some of the compositional concerns that Kurtág had himself expressed in his Pilinszky settings. The question of the articulation of 'ich' and 'Du', a particular feature of Celan's poetry, and its musical rendition by Rihm provides a successful example of a composer confronting an author and being able to

determine the core elements, the particular aspects that make the lyricism of the poet what it is. I think we can speak in this instance of a successful cycle of songs that stands out from other settings of Celan, in that the type of musical expression that it provides the listener is tailored to the musical and expressive demands of Celan's poem. This aspect makes the expressivity of these songs so unique.

I have to mention, however, that, given the intrinsic polysemy and hermetic, even cryptic features of Celan's poetry, the reflections that I have had so far were more the result of the rehearsal process with the singer – in that dealing with the words musically helped me develop my ideas – than they were the product of a reflection that occurred before starting to work with the singer. The secondary literature on Celan was unable to provide me with insightful ideas that could have been mirrored in the rehearsal process. What I have learnt from confronting this cycle is ultimately the autonomy of practice-based research, in that it forces the interpreter and researcher to develop reflections provoked by the musical and poetic text alone, and not by any pre-given knowledge, even if this anterior knowledge is necessary. It forces the researcher and interpreter (or the hermeneut-musician) to develop ideas that are intrinsically aesthetic, that is, rooted in sensibility, and, in part, irreducible to verbal formalisation. But this difficulty and dissatisfaction is certainly the sign that genuine research has been performed.

3.5 Kurtág's 'Tübingen, Jänner' (from *Hölderlin-Gesänge*, Op. 35a)

Kurtág's *Hölderlin-Gesänge*, Op. 35a, for solo baritone, trombone and tuba, composed between 1993 and 1997, are contemporaneous both with his Beckett settings (*...pas à pas – nulle part...*, 1993–97) and his Lichtenberg settings (*Einige Sätze aus den Südelbüchern Georg Christoph Lichtenberg*, 1996).²¹³ His renewed interest in composing for the voice occurred simultaneously with his return to composing for large orchestra, such as in *Stele*, Op. 33 (1994). This decade can certainly be considered one of the most productive in Kurtág's compositional evolution, and one whose aesthetic singularity is the most particular, in part due to his intense confrontation with vocality. It would be captivating to offer a cross-study comparison of Kurtág's use of the human voice and its relation to the text in all three aforementioned pieces, but this would draw me away from the particular questions that are at stake in the sixth song from the first part of the Op. 35a cycle – the only song that is not based on a poem by Hölderlin, but on one by Celan: 'Tübingen, Jänner', from his cycle *Die Niemandrose*, published in 1963.

The mere fact that Kurtág did not compose an all-Celan cycle contributes a great deal to understanding what the particularity of his approach to Celan is, as we can contextualise this song in the light of the other songs in the cycle, based entirely on Hölderlin. It is also an opportunity to observe whether Kurtág has read Celan in the context of his readings of Hölderlin and vice versa.²¹⁴

²¹³ The documentation can be accessed at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6l9IeA7QpI>>.

²¹⁴ It is hardly possible, due to the numerous secondary sources devoted to Celan's poetry that predominantly suggest a Heideggerian tropism, to read Celan without being reminded of the spectral presence of Hölderlin in his poetry. Nevertheless, I think it does a disservice to Celan's work to read it in the light of the 'unanswered question' that he addressed to Heidegger in Todtnauberg, as it is factually wrong to consider Heidegger's philosophy as Celan's primary philosophical source of reaction. Moreover, emphasising the importance of the encounter between Celan and Heidegger as a *historical event* is already a Heideggerian reflex. Both Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in *Poetry as Experience (La poésie comme expérience)*; Paris: Éditions Christian Bourgois, 2004) and Peter Trawny (*Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015) made that mistake. Their attempt to blur the irreducible distance between the two authors only results in lessening Heidegger's political role under the Nazi regime, which in itself is highly problematic.

Compared to Rihm's settings, in which I observed occasional differences between the original prosody and the musical rendering of the text (an aspect of Rihm's highly personal approach to the text's expressivity), it is immediately noticeable that Kurtág took great freedom with Celan's text. Compared to Celan's extremely discontinuous lineation, in which punctuation coincides with line endings on only five occasions (lines 2, 8, 11, 22 and 23, the last two being composed solely of a separable prefix and an interjection: 'Pallaksch', a neologism created by Hölderlin), Kurtág's setting is conceived as very ductile, organising the semantic material in broader phrases. For example, Celan's first stanza consists of eight lines forming two sentences. Kurtág instead groups the poetic material in three distinct musical phrases. Interesting for us is to observe that the dashes in lines 3 and 5 are musically personified by a pause of approximately the same duration, thus creating a form of equivalence with the poem's typography. That element, both visual and musical, is probably the first one that any interpreter would notice if he or she tries to observe the possible similarities between Celan's poem and Kurtág's setting. It is also important, as regards expression, to observe that Kurtág did not merely subdivide this first stanza according to Celan's lineation, by simply making bigger groupings of Celan's lines. His groupings are based on his reading of the poem, enabling him for example to cut a line in half (line 5: *entsprungenes*" - ,*ihre* becomes 'entsprungenes' as the last word of the previous semantic unit and 'ihre' as the start of a new grouping). This aspect requires very meticulous work by the interpreter, because the initial enjambment has to enable the flow and the musicality to occur freely, while at the same time the initial division of the poem has to be heard somehow, i.e. the interpreter has to evoke discontinuity (that of the original lineation) from within a continuous musical flow (that of Kurtág's setting). One might ask why it is necessary to keep track/retain elements of the original lineation once the poem has been turned to a musical piece. As an interpreter, I tend to think that one has to create some kind of expressive equivalence between the intrinsic polysemy of the poem, although it is at times cryptic, and the polyphonic content of the music. Each and every aspect of the score should thus be emphasised so as to multiply the richness of all possible relations between all its elements. The tension

between these various layers of organisation is a determinant criterion when it comes to working on expression, because it is a crucial indicator that expression, as I develop my understanding of it in this essay, is not a rejuvenated ersatz of twentieth-century formalist theories.²¹⁵ Kurtág's settings, for this reason, can be considered a sublimation of the factual situation described in the poem, a situation of communicational infelicity, symbolised here in the form of the stuttering of the narrator.²¹⁶ Therefore, the hiatus between shorter poetic gestures and musical expression displayed over longer phrases has to be interrogated during the performance process, in order to observe to what extent this tension can be conveyed during the performance of the piece, thus creating an inner expressive polyphony within a relatively simple homophonic part.

Let us first consider the initial rendition of the baritone (00:13–03:05). He had been working on his own without any further input from me. What he did was what certainly every other classically trained musician would have done, should he or she be unfamiliar with contemporary music in general, or a contemporary composer in general: organising the expression of his/her performance by prioritising the agogic properties of the music. The relation between text and music in his initial rendition does not sound to be particularly well thought out, and the pauses sound more like mere pauses, rather than expressive gestures whose importance for the overall expressive eloquence of the piece is crucial.²¹⁷ In other

²¹⁵ There is, to my knowledge, no unified definition of formalism. It can be said that Hanslick's *The Beautiful in Music* is a founding figure of it. After him, the two most notorious composers and thinkers of formalism have been Stravinsky in his *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, trans. by Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), and Boris de Schloezer in his *Introduction à J. S. Bach : Essai d'esthétique musicale* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009). As I was becoming more familiar with the concept, I realised that it was often misunderstood as being similar to 'l'art pour l'art'. Formalism and 'l'art pour l'art' seem to be synonymous as Stravinsky uses them; for de Schloezer, on the other hand, 'l'art pour l'art' is a pejorative notion that sharply contrasts with formalism. In broad terms, one could say that for all three aforementioned authors, the notion of order (which does not necessarily appear as such in their writings) dismisses the notion of meaning, the latter having expressive overtones that Stravinsky, more than the other two authors, rejects.

²¹⁶ It takes a certain time before understanding that the final stuttering (verse 22, 'zuzu') stands for the possible collapse of communication, but it seems to make sense, as it sheds light in retrospect on why the poem is, even for Celan, so unconventionally composed.

²¹⁷ Kurtág takes great care in the foreword to explain the relations between durations of notes and rests. These indications should not simply be followed because the composer said so, but they have to be reinterrogated so as to bring them to the fore for their expressive quality.

words, the particularity of Kurtág's approach to expressivity is not recognised as such and what the listener ends up hearing is a generic rendition. Should the interpretation remain at that stage, i.e. as we commonly experience contemporary music, there would be no reason not to think the piece rudimentary. After reading three different French translations of the poem, we started working on the first musical phrase (bars 1–2), which encompasses the first two lines of the poem. The fact that Celan splits the word 'überredete' in half at the end of the first line is a clear sign that the first syllable of the second half, 'redete' has to be stressed. By doing so, by adding a slight accentuation on the syllable 're', we modify the flow of the phrase as Kurtág composed it.

I can be heard explaining this aspect from 08:50–09:45 in the documentation:

Give more on 'zur Blindheit überredete Augen', as if you had a little accent on the '-re-' of 'überredete'. So: *Sehr bewegt, unruhig*, but nevertheless not too much. And then a pause during which I don't want to hear you think about what comes next, and only at the end of the pause you do 'Ihre'. And for "Ein Rätsel ist rein(-)entsprungenes" you have to find a way, I think, to make the quotation marks heard.²¹⁸

Instead of 'Zur Blind-heit ü-ber-re-de-te Augen', we now hear 'Zur **Blind**-heit-über-**re**-de-te **Au**-gen'. Instead of accentuating two syllables, there are now three that are bearing an accent. But as explained in the video documentation, the accents are different in nature. The accent on 're' in 'überredete' only has to do with the pronunciation, while the accents in 'Blindheit' and 'Augen' help primarily to shape the phrase musically. As every accompanist knows, the *bewegt, unruhig* indication can be conveyed more efficiently if the pronunciation plays the predominant role in achieving this indication, rather than the actual speed. As is often the case with Kurtág's indications, I assume *Sehr bewegt, unruhig* refers more

²¹⁸ « Donner plus sur "zur Blindheit überredete Augen", comme si tu avais un petit accent sur le "-re-" de "überredete". Donc *Sehr bewegt, unruhig*, mais néanmoins pas tant que ça. Et ensuite une pause pendant laquelle je ne veux pas entendre que tu penses à la suite, et à la fin de la pause seulement tu fais "Ihre". Et pour "Ein Rätsel ist rein(-)entsprungenes", il faut trouver une manière, je pense, de faire entendre les guillemets. »

to a character than to an actual tempo. The fact that this first sentence is followed by a 'very long rest', as Kurtág says in the foreword, seems to confirm my understanding of the longer musical phrases as having the primary role in the musical shaping of the piece. Nevertheless, based on this first sentence alone, one can observe that a secondary layer of expression, that of the lineation alone, develops its spectral presence under the surface of the musical signs.²¹⁹

The next six lines are composed as a single musical phrase, interrupted only on two occasions by a 'längere Pause' (long rest, but the duration of the pauses is always relative in Kurtág's solo music, which is why he uses a comparative form in German, 'längere Pause' meaning 'longer' or 'longish', and not merely 'long' as the English foreword puts it). As I mentioned earlier, these two pauses stand for the two dashes in the original text. The expression of "*ein Rätsel ist Rein-entsprungenes*" clearly has to be differentiated with regard to the colour of the voice (09:45). This expression is a direct quotation from one of Hölderlin's best-known poems, 'Der Rhein'. But Celan does not write the line the same way as Hölderlin does, and this fact gives the interpreter a clear clue as to what the interpretative options are. Here is Hölderlin's version: 'Ein Rätsel ist Reinent sprungenes'. The sentence only has one main accent, on 'Rätsel'. Celan's lineation is different: he cuts 'Reinent sprungenes' in half and makes use of an enjambment for the second half of the word.²²⁰ By doing so, Celan clearly sets apart the syllable 'Rein', which, furthermore, gets accentuated because of its place mirroring the initial R of 'Rätsel'. The alliteration has to be consciously underlined, as the syllable 'Rein' is homophonous with 'Rhein', the name of Hölderlin's hymn. (After the baritone and I have been working on this beginning, one can clearly hear at 09:25 on 'Rein' that the complete musical phrase makes more sense as regard to expression. It is also worth observing that the colour change in the voice that I had asked the baritone to think about contributed greatly

²¹⁹ This aspect exists of course in other songs, *mélodies* and *Lieder* throughout the history of the genre, but I cannot think of any other pieces where this aspect bears the possibility of the realisation of the entire piece. This tendency could be observed though to a lesser degree in Rihm's settings, discussed previously.

²²⁰ Ihre – "ein
Rätsel ist Rein-
Entsprungenes" – ,ihre...

to sharpening the expressive contours of this phrase.) Another interesting aspect consists in performing 'entsprungen' in an imitative way, with momentum, which the interval, a fifth, enables to depict clearly. If the syllable 'Rein' that comes just before is performed adequately, then it is completely natural for the voice to perform 'entsprungenes' with the suitable momentum that helps to evoke the idea conveyed by the word (meaning 'arisen').

I will briefly discuss lines five to eight, which are similar to the first two lines when it comes to understanding the expressive particularity of that musical phrase. Where Kurtág makes one extended musical phrase, Celan had initially composed different lines. Just as in the first two lines one can distinguish a spectral presence of the initial lineation and accentuation in the ornament F-G^b -F, with the accentuated syllable 'über-re-dete' on G, one should be able in lines five to eight to guess what the original lineation is.²²¹ The idea is not merely to hear what the possible initial lineation was, under the surface of the music; rather, what is at stake here is the possibility for the listener to experience a polyphony of expressivities that are intertwined, independent, yet reinforce each other to provide the listener with a unique feeling of layers of expression that seem to contradict the apparent ease and explicit aspect of an homophonic piece.²²²

The next musical phrase covers the complete second stanza of the original poem ('Besuche ertrunkener Schreiner bei diesen tauchenden Worten'). The first three words are sung in what seems to be a sort of *Sprechgesang*, but as the foreword does not specify how this is to be realised, it remains unclear whether the *parlando* quality has to be accentuated or if the intervals should be exact to some degree. 15:39–17:30 in the documentation includes a discussion that I have with the

²²¹ Here is Celan's original lineation:

*Ihre
Erinnerung an
schwimmende Hölderlintürme, möwen-
umschwirrt*

By contrast, Kurtág's reading and phrasing is simply: 'Ihre Erinnerung an schwimmende Hölderlintürme Möwenumschwirrt.'

²²² In that regard, the piece is reminiscent of Berio's *O King* for small ensemble (1967), which can be heard as a canon 'within' one and the same melodic line.

baritone about bringing together the expressivity prescribed by the poem and the expressivity prescribed by the score and the extent to which it is possible or not to blend their specific requirements, or whether the tension that these different requirements create is or is not what we should be aiming at:²²³

What I find interesting by way of trying to find a cross between Kurtág's proposal and Celan's is that it emphasises the first syllables while keeping the line and the enjambments – it already imposes an interpretative idea.

We clearly have two different expressive spheres, but is there a way to make them coincide? Is it possible to have a coalescence of the two? Is it necessary to maintain the tension of two irreconcilable things?²²⁴

The interesting feature of 'Besuche ertrunkener Schreiner bei diesen tauchenden Worten' lies in the imitative relationship that exists between music and text in this sentence. Just as I previously mentioned 'Reinentsprungenes' in bar 5 as exemplifying the imitative quality of the setting, the same thing can be said about 'bei diesen tauchenden Worten'. It is also striking that the intervallic structure is almost identical and uses the exact same span of a major ninth (A \flat – B \flat in bars 4–5 and G \flat – A \flat in bars 14–16). The impression of similarity is created as well by the initial interval that introduces the motif, a minor third (A \flat – C \flat in bars 4–5 and G \flat – A natural in bars 14–15). The fact that the melodic line uses a descending minor sixth, in two steps on the word 'tauchenden', together with the *ritenuto* that comes just after the *accelerando* on the words 'bei diesen', seems to clearly indicate that Kurtág's compositional idea was to offer a musical analogue to a poetic image, i.e. that he was referring to a figuralist approach to the compositional material. In the documentation, 22:22–23:20 represents for me the most convincing version of our

²²³ In other words, if we consider Schoenberg as a pioneer of *Sprechgesang*, we have to decide whether we want to realise it such as he described it in the foreword to *Pierrot lunaire*, or based on the explanations that he gave for the performance of *A Survivor from Warsaw*.

²²⁴ « Ce que je trouve intéressant dans la manière d'essayer de trouver un croisement entre la proposition de Kurtág et de Celan, ça met des premières syllabes en valeur, tout en conservant la ligne et les enjambements, ça impose déjà une idée interprétative.

On a clairement deux sphères expressives différentes, mais y a-t-il un moyen de les faire coïncider? Possibilité d'avoir coalescence des deux? Faut-il maintenir la tension de deux choses irréconciliables? »

many attempts at this stanza, after we work on it at 20:50–22:06 in the light of my comments at 18:15–20:22:

Try to do it a little more *flüchtig* at first, and with a little more breath, and the little caesura after ‘Schreiner’ but you have to go to ‘diesen’, which is the only word in this line. More of the ‘d-’ [of ‘diesen’].²²⁵

It is worth recalling that this type of figuralism was also present in Kurtág’s Pilinszky settings, just as it was too in Rihm’s cycle. This aspect leads me to think that the concept of eloquence, as it was understood at the time of Burmeister’s *Musica poetica*, can still apply in contemporary compositions. It may be veiled, or concealed, as we saw in the Pilinszky settings, or can be part of a symbolic use of the material, or it can be a feature in its own right, with certain easily identifiable poetic tropes standing for certain musical motifs. I will address in my conclusion the relation between eloquence and expression in post-1945 settings, but it appears more and more clearly that the musical views of the late Renaissance and early Baroque remain relevant to music composed today.

I would like to discuss one more aspect of this piece that I have just briefly mentioned: the use of musical symbols that provide a subtext to the poem, and an indication for the interpreter that will help him determine the affect that he has to perform or at least think about at that particular moment. The text in bars 18–19, ‘Käme, käme ein Mensch’, an evocation of Christ, together with the motif B–A#–G–A#, encourage me to think that the motif is typical of a crucifixion motif. This type of symbolism can be found in Biber, Debussy, Huber, and – as I mentioned in section 3.3 – in the second of the songs that Kurtág composed on his texts. The same thing can be said about bars 21–22, which depict another crucifixion, this time using wider intervals, B \flat –F \flat –E \flat –A \flat . The text and its religious content (‘Mit dem Lichtbart der Patriarchen’) make it legitimate to consider this motif a crucifixion, and at 27:25–28:15 and in the following discussion I am asking the baritone to try to

²²⁵ « Essaie de le faire un peu plus *flüchtig* d’abord, et avec un petit peu plus de souffle, et la petite césure après “Schreiner” mais il faut aller jusqu’à “diesen”, qui est le mot unique de cette ligne. Plus de “d” déjà. »

look for a type of expression that would be more evocative almost of the Evangelist in a Bach Passion). This is due to the rhetorical organisation of the lines and the typical repetition 'Käme, käme ...'. It is also due to the fact that the first note of this part, a C natural, is the longest note in all of the song, which conveys a strong expressive contour to this line. At 28:20–35:00 I explain the almost theatrical expressivity required here, and the baritone suggests that this unique expressivity in the piece also lies in the fact that the register in which he sings is in itself more lyrical than the previous low and medium register:

I wonder if *arioso molto largamente* shouldn't be done in even broader gestures. [It's] *pianissimo*, but I feel there is something of a scenic aspect in the musical setting; with this very long note, it's a bit like the narrator in a Passion. There should be something that breaks with the expression of what goes before – as if you were actually embodying something else.

JP (baritone): I think there's also something that goes in that direction in purely vocal terms. It's the very changeable tessitura, and also the slightly longer rhythmic values. But here we're clearly in the medium to high [register] – that's to say the way the sound is held and the timbre practically impose a change. Before, we're in the medium to low, and now we're exclusively in the medium-high ... except for 'Patriarchen' in fact.

HK: There's one thing that still makes me think of a narrator's role; it's very small and not necessarily very eloquent, but still, Kurtág does it and knows why he does it (and the same thing is there in the second of the songs on Pilinszky's poems) – it's the crucifixion motif.²²⁶

These bars best summarise what is at stake in setting Celan's poetry to music.²²⁷ Not only have I observed a hiatus between lineation and musical phrasing,

²²⁶ « Je me demande si *arioso molto largamente*, ça doit pas être plus dans les grandes largeurs. *Pianissimo*, mais à mon avis, il y a quelque chose dans sa mise en musique du poème qui a un aspect scénique, avec cette note très longue, c'est un peu comme un récitant dans une Passion. Il doit y avoir quelque chose qui rompt avec l'expression qu'il y avait précédemment. Comme si tu incarnais quelque chose d'autre.

JP (baryton) : Il y a un truc qui va aussi dans ce sens en fait, en termes purement vocaux, c'est la tessiture très changeante, et aussi les valeurs rythmiques, un peu plus longues, mais là on est clairement dans le medium aigu en fait, c'est-à-dire que la notion de soutien et de timbre impose de fait un changement. Avant on est dans le medium grave et là on est que dans le medium aigu, sauf pour "Patriarchen" en fait.

HK : Il y a un truc qui me fait penser encore un peu à un rôle de récitant, c'est tout petit et peut-être pas forcément très parlant, mais quand même Kurtág le fait en sachant pourquoi il le fait (et la même chose dans la deuxième mélodie sur des poèmes de Pilinszky), c'est le motif en croix, le motif de crucifixion. »

²²⁷ In the rest of the video, I am working with the baritone on aspects that are not specifically provoked by the expressive features of Celan's lyricism. I could mention the repetitions of 'zu-zu' in bar 31 and the

but also imitative compositional procedures, reminiscent of musical rhetoric, and a powerful and highly expressive use of musical symbolism, together with an intrinsically musical formal expression (the final run-through starts at 56:57, and unlike the first run-through, I think it successfully renders most of the aspects we have discussed during the rehearsal and makes the elements I have addressed in the present discussion convincingly audible). Raising the question of the relation that all these aspects have to one another is the obligatory step that I will have to take in my conclusion, in order to eventually give form to a definition and a more informed understanding of expression in post-1945 music based on poetry.

repetitions of 'Pallaksch' in bars 33–35, but this expressive feature is determined solely by musical reasons that cannot be derived from Celan's text. They are more to be considered in the light of the piece climaxing and its material running out of energy.

4 Conclusion

At the end of this research, and having inquired into the nature of the relation between text and music in pieces as diverse as Lim's *Voodoo Child*, Kurtág's *Songs to Poems by János Pilinszky* and *Hölderlin-Gesänge*, and Rihm's *Four Poems from 'Atemwende'*, a provisional conclusion can be drawn as to the extent to which expression has proven a productive concept by which to highlight the particularity of post-World War II composition regarding its use of poetry – a poetry that has itself renewed its expressive means since 1945. It is also possible to determine some specific aspects that expression has taken on in the context of contemporary composition, which help describe the particularity of the concept of expression in today's practice, be it compositional, interpretative, or aesthetic. The first aspect that I would like to highlight is that, unlike poetry, which needed after 1945 to rethink its poetic material in order to derive a renewed understanding of expression, music has been keen to apply proven compositional means to give account of this emerging poetic particularity. It can be said that in order for music to better characterise the novelty of the poetic substance, it had to follow an opposite direction, consisting in a reiteration of compositional means that had prevailed in the late Renaissance and the early Baroque.

Equally interesting is the observation that Lim also, in her setting of an ode by Sappho, reconciles the Sapphic stanza with compositional means that can be considered to derive from the *Affektenlehre*. I have pointed out in my discussion of Rihm's and Kurtág's settings a few aspects of their compositional idiom of that time that can best be characterised as word-painting. The fact that these composers make use of compositional means that have circulated since the late Renaissance and early Baroque era is an inversion of the high degree of abstraction that is so typical both of Celan and, to a slightly lesser extent, Pilinszky. In making this aspect particularly audible in my performance of the pieces, I realise now in retrospect that it helped me specify a determining feature of expression in the context of this research. Accordingly, as the degree of compositional abstraction is not as high in the musical

compositions as it is in the poems, this aspect led me to understand that expression as I was inquiring into it was not an updated version or a surrogate of twentieth-century formalism, as can be seen clearly in my discussion of Rihm's settings. In the pieces I have investigated, expression can best be traced at a local level, and not on the scale of an entire piece, as it relies on rhetorical means that fragment the musical enunciation into smaller discrete components.

Thus, the first conclusion I can draw is that musical settings based on Celan and Pilinszky have not renewed musical expressive means to the same degree that the original poetry has achieved in its own genre. But this apparent criticism should not be considered a mere limitation, as this aspect – as can be seen in the video documentation of my work – has contributed to a complete renewal of my approach to the pieces through addressing the text in ways with which I was previously unfamiliar. Being familiar with working with singers both as an accompanist and a conductor, the type of work that my methodology required meant setting new challenges in my practice and asking for a different focus to the expressive result at which the singers and I were aiming. By focusing my attention on this concept alone and referring all the musical parameters to my reflection on it, I realise that the thinking and interpretive processes have been quite different from the type of work I would have delivered in a typical professional situation, in which the aesthetic aims might differ from those of a research that enables me to devote more time to the pieces I am considering.

Ideas that emerged during the preparation process were not only proven right or wrong in the rehearsal process, they were also altered and expanded by it. It is as if a sonic, concrete response had been brought to a problem that was at first only intellectual and determined by analysis of the score alone, as expression can as much be considered a concept as it is a tangible component of music practice. This aspect can be considered the most beneficial outcome of my research as it has helped bring me closer to the requirements and expectations intrinsic to practice-based research, in that the practical and performance parts of it are not a mere illustration of the work performed during the preparation. This specific aspect of

practice-based research is particularly challenging in that the sonic response brought to the research question has to be retrospectively formulated and reinjected into the initial question, as it has helped clarify the contours of the inquiry. This blend of intellectual research and aesthetic response created during the rehearsal and the performance constitutes the most difficult aspect of a practice-based research. But it has shown my methodology to be suitable for approaching an abstract concept as it is expressed through interpretation. I pointed out in my Introduction the lack of a common set of aims and methods in practice-based research as I have come to know it based on the literature with which I was acquainted. At the end of my research, I still consider this aspect to be true, although I do realise how tentative this endeavour is: the aim of a methodology in practice-based research in the case of the study of an abstract concept is to tailor that methodology to a very specific matter. This proved efficient in my case, but can hardly be generalised to any type of practice-based research. Nevertheless, I still consider that a typology of approaches to practice-based research should be attempted collectively. Another aspect that I would like to mention here is how the methodology that I have used led me to develop an understanding of both my research activity and my activity as a performer as being one hermeneutic practice. The methodology that I developed throughout this research has helped me see my role as what I would call a hermeneut-musician.

The second conclusion I would draw is that a question raised individually is answered collectively. The importance of the discussions that occur during the rehearsal process is tremendous. It is not necessary for all partners involved to share the same knowledge to help one another develop critical means that are collectively amenable towards the same artistic result. This aspect is evidenced in the documentation to my research.

Even if the compositional approach was not drastically transformed by the novelty of the poetry that I was investigating, the approach to the piece that I proposed was renewed. This aspect confirms the hypothesis found in my introduction about the transhistorical feature of expression. In my case, it proved on

both a poetic and a musical level to link well-known musical tendencies to avant-garde poetry. The extent to which an uninformed audience can be made aware of all the historical references that these pieces bear in terms of expressive means, while listening to the pieces themselves, remains questionable.

For all these reasons, an attempt to define expression in terms of language alone can only be unsatisfying, as the main result of my research consists in showing that, in this repertoire in particular, the sonic materiality and the dynamics of meaning are consubstantially dependent upon one another. Only after this aporetic aspect has been recognised as such can a musician find an orientation in practice-based research. This orientation relies on both subjective means (as the musician judges them) and objective means, as they command the ways to proceed. The dialectics of abstraction and materiality help me understand the autonomy of musical expression, as opposed to the expression of something. In the light of my research, the following sentence by Adorno proves to be not mere speculation, but a fact that can be traced in musical experience itself:

Art is imitation exclusively as the imitation of an objective expression, remote from psychology, of which the sensorium was perhaps once conscious in the world and which now subsists only in artworks. Through expression art closes itself off to being-for-another, which always threatens to engulf it, and becomes eloquent in itself: This is art's mimetic consummation. Its expression is the antithesis of expressing something.²²⁸

* * *

After having brought to light the expressive singularities of the composers whose works I have subjected to an aesthetic and musical investigation, it seems essential to underline certain conclusions of a practical nature which I hope can be developed or reflected upon by the sort of interpreters and educators I mention in my introduction, that is, the core audience for which this research is intended.

²²⁸ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 112.

The elements that that audience will hopefully use and develop amount to a number of propositions that I adopt, at the end of this research, as if they were axioms of interpretative probity. I mean interpretative here in its performative sense as well as in its hermeneutic one. I will begin by distinguishing those elements addressed to the interpreters themselves, whose scope is thus more specific, from those that are more general in scope and addressed to those who share with me a pedagogical practice.

What emerges at the end of this work, from a conceptual point of view, is that expression is not 'expression-of' in the manner of the relationship between signifier and signified. Thus, it escapes any semantic dimension, as formulated in my attempt at a definition (see Introduction, p. 25). There are two consequences to this point.

The first is a deviation from the traditional expectations of the work performed as pianists accompany songs. This practice, which a pianist inherits at music conservatory, consists of looking for the correspondences between poetic content and musical rhetoric and making them audible. My research has taught me to grant a more important place to the poetic image understood on the scale of the whole of a piece, as an aesthetic intention that one discovers to be that of the author. Whether the author expresses him- or herself in this sense or not is of no importance, as long as the reading that the interpreter makes of the piece is coherent with what he or she, based on a defined methodology, declares to be factually present in the piece. The interpretive means by which contemporary music is approached and performed are still largely dependent on rhetorical thinking inherited from the music conservatory.

There is a second consequence that I believe it is valuable for colleagues immersed in vocal and contemporary music to take note of. The aspects I just mentioned (as part of the first consequence) can be placed in the background, in favour of an expression that emerges from the free play of the formal components and the stylistic components of the poem. This practice is the one that by nature is likely to benefit from the contribution of any musician who seeks to develop a

means of expression specific to the repertoire I have inquired into, as it is open to personal interpretation and can rely on a methodology similar to the one I have developed.²²⁹

These two aspects combine in one final point that the audience to which this work is primarily addressed can take away. Thinking of the dialectic between heterogeneous forms of expressivities, that of the music alone and that of the poetic matter alone, makes it possible to think of expressivity as a fundamental heterogeneity made audible and not as an inherence of a predicate, the word, to a substance, the sound. It is this aspect that allows us to open the reflection to a rethinking of the question of the aesthetic judgment, not in the form of an adequation, but in the form of a multivalent musical logic. This aspect – certainly the most demanding realised by my work – is also the one that is most specifically addressed to the community I am writing for. Rethinking expression in certain post-World War II musics calls for a re-evaluation of aesthetic judgment as much as for the development of a sensibility which does not rely on classically informed assumptions.

The following concluding remarks, of a more general nature, are addressed to those who, like me, bring a public of students to taste the stakes of musical creation on a daily basis. They contain some recommendations and perspectives on the practice of this repertoire.

A thorough knowledge of the work, although it is an imperative prerequisite, cannot substitute for the interpreter's primary responsibility to restore expressive qualities that are irreducible to the indications contained in the score. The musical expression towards which I have systematically tended in this research is at a level other than that of the factual restitution of the composer's indications. It has been,

²²⁹ To briefly recapitulate the methodology as described in section 1.4, it consists of: searching for the qualities of the poetry most likely to lend themselves to musical expression; considering the musical utterance in itself apart from those poetic considerations; and observing where these two elements either overlap or diverge to determine the expressive relationship between text and music.

throughout, a question of understanding how a composer reads a poet and creates a sonic image of the poetry – an image that he or she will try to reproduce in their music. It is in search of this initial image that my research is situated, because it is this image that indicates the aesthetic wellsprings of the work. For the interpreter, this means that all interpretative decisions will be motivated by the restitution of this sound image, by which the score acquires a relief and a direction that assures the interpreter of the legitimacy of their work.

There are several aspects that I would like to see generalised. The first consists in changing the nature of the initial approach an interpreter takes to the work, often inherited from years of conservatory training. Rather than groping around, trying to make sense of the disparate elements that appear in the score as one assimilates them both intellectually and instrumentally, I suggest decoupling these two activities.

After following the methodology I had developed, and by concentrating my efforts on the different interpretative possibilities available, I developed a much more diversified sound imagination than that which typically accompanies the discovery of a piece at one's instrument. I hope to have shown that by this means, a plurality of interpretative paths opens up to the performer, as opposed to a more conventional single path, which rarely leads to results other than those to which the instrumental effort almost necessarily leads.

A non-negligible merit of this approach is the time-saving it enables. If initially learning at the table and forging a sound imagination independent of the instrument is a long process that requires adaptation (insofar as this type of work is uncommon in an instrumental curriculum), it eventually becomes an almost irreplaceable way of working.

The second benefit of such a way of working lies in the efficiency of the work of memorisation. A piece learned independently of the instrument is more likely to remain present in the memory for an extended period of time, and it will be easier to

repeat the piece in the future because its essential features will have remained present in the mind.

The final benefit of this methodology that should be emphasised is that a more assured prior understanding of the piece will iron out many technical difficulties. This last aspect leads me to think that a technical difficulty is the better resolved the more one understands the singularity of the musical statement at that precise moment of the piece. If this last aspect is not immediately accessible to players still learning their instrument, it will nonetheless be a precious help for more seasoned musicians.

The results I have enumerated should, in my opinion, be able to help not only performer colleagues searching for working conditions different from those they encounter in institutions that give them very limited time to learn pieces, but also educators and teachers who seek give their students both access to a better knowledge of their instrument and at the same time a sense of intellectual discovery.

By following the approach and methodology I had developed, I became more efficient in my learning until I finally managed to considerably reduce the time spent solving instrumental difficulties. The ideal is to be able to perfectly tune one's intellectual means and one's instrumental practice to one another, so as to minimise the time spent wandering without an aesthetic object as goal. One of the merits of this research has been to make me more aware of how instrumental practice and an aesthetic understanding of the work feed each other. I hope that this report of my experience can nourish the practice of my fellow performers and teachers.

Meanwhile, the future perspectives of my research consist in transferring some of its output to pieces that neither make use of a text nor are purely instrumental. I have in this research to date considered solely the relation between text and music, but the relation between the visual and the musical, or the purely gestural and the musical could be inquired into with a similar methodological framework, that would nonetheless be adapted to the particularities of these

different idioms. Ideally, I should now be able to turn to collaborative pieces or those involving new media, so as to determine how different artistic idioms and their specific expressive means can help me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of expression in the light of present-day and future compositions. By thus enlarging my field of enquiry, a more comprehensive understanding of the concept's contemporary meaning will eventually emerge.

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SONATE

Op.26.

Dem Fürsten Carl von Lichnowsky gewidmet

L. van Beethoven

Andante con Variazioni.

The musical score is presented in a grand staff format, with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/8. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes several dynamic markings such as *cresc.*, *sf*, and *p*. The score is divided into measures, with specific measures (4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 26, 30, 34) circled to indicate the start of new variations. Fingerings (1-5) and articulation marks (accents, slurs) are clearly indicated. The piece concludes with a final cadence in measure 34.

1) The pedal indications are Beethoven's.
 2) Short appoggiatura.

3) 4)

SONATE

W. A. Mozart
Köchel Nr. 331

Andante grazioso

11

First system of musical notation, measures 1-4. The treble clef part features a melodic line with a fermata on the final note, and the bass clef part provides a steady accompaniment. Dynamics include piano (*p*) and a triplet of sixteenth notes in the final measure.

Second system of musical notation, measures 5-8. The treble clef part continues the melodic line, and the bass clef part features a more active accompaniment with slurs and dynamics like *sf* and *p*.

Third system of musical notation, measures 9-12. The treble clef part has a flowing melodic line, and the bass clef part has a rhythmic accompaniment with *sf* dynamics.

Fourth system of musical notation, measures 13-16. The treble clef part features a melodic line with a fermata, and the bass clef part has a steady accompaniment with *sf* and *p* dynamics.

Var. I

First variation (Var. I), measures 17-20. The treble clef part features a complex melodic line with triplets and slurs, and the bass clef part has a steady accompaniment. Dynamics include piano (*p*).

TROIS CHANSONS DE BILITIS

P. LOUYS

C. DEBUSSY

I
la flûte de Pan

CHANT *Lent et sans rigueur de rythme*

PIANO *pp*

Doux et soutenu

p

Pour le jour des Hy-a - cin - thies, — il m'a don-né u-ne sy-

-rinx fai - te de ro - seaux bien tail - lés, u - nis a -

avec la blan - che ci - re qui est douce à mes lè - vres com - me le miel.

Retenu

Il m'apprend à jou - er, as - si - se sur ses ge - noux; mais je suis un peu trem -

p

- blan - te. Il en joue a - près moi, si dou - ce - ment que je l'en - tends à

pp

Très dim.

pei - ne. Nous n'avons

pp *Rit.* *a Tempo 1°*

E.4417! F.

rien à nous di - re, tant nous sommes près l'un de l'au - tre; mais nos chan-

-sons veu - lent se ré - pon - dre, et tour à tour nos bou - ches s'u - nissent sur la

flû - te. Il est

tard; voi - ci le chant des grenouilles ver - tes qui com -

Plus lent

-mence avec la nuit.

ppp

Plus lent

pp Léger mais sans sécheresse

Pressez un peu

pp Presque sans voir

Ma mè - re ne croi - ra ja -

pp

- mais que je suis res - tée si longtemps à cher - cher ma cein - tu - re per -

più pp

a Tempo

- du - e.

Très lointain

Très retenu

pp

ppp

E. 14417. F.

TROIS CHANSONS DE BILITIS

P. LOUYS

C. DEBUSSY

II
la Chevelure

Assez lent

CHANT

Il m'a dit:

PIANO

p Très expressif

Moins lent *p* Très expressif et passionnément concentré

"Cet - te nuit, j'ai rê - vé.

J'a - vais ta che - ve - lure autour de mon cou.

E. 1417³ F.

En augmentant peu à peu

J'a - vais tes che - veux comme un col - lier

noir au - tour de ma nuque et sur ma poi - tri -

- - ne. *p* "Je les ca - res - sais, et c'étaient les miens;

et nous é - tions li - és pour tou - jours ain - si,

E. 1417³ F.

Eu pressant
mf *Cresc.* *f*

par la mē-me che - ve - lu - re la bou-che sur la bou - che,

a 1^o Tempo
p subito

ain-si que deux lau-riers n'ont sou - vent qu'u - ne ra - ci - ne.

En pressant peu à peu et 3 on augmentant

"Et peu à peu, il m'a semblé, tant nos membres é

3 *f*

-taient confondus, que je de-venais toi-mē - me ou que tu entrais en moi comme mon

E. 4417² F.

1^o Tempo, plus lent

son - ge.' Quand il eut achevé —

f *p* Très expressif

il mit dou - ce - ment ses mains sur mes é - pau - les, et il

pp *très pp*

me re - gar - da d'un re - gard si ten - dre, que je bais -

pp

Très lent

-sai les yeux a.vec un frisson.

pp *pp*

Schoenberg
 Unterm Schutz von dichten Blättergründen
 (George)
 Op. 15, No. 1

Mäßig (♩ ca 54)*)

*) Die beigesetzten Metronomzahlen dürfen nicht wörtlich genommen werden, sondern sollen bloß die Zähleinheit (♩) des Grundtempos andeuten, aus welchem das Tempo frei zu gestalten ist.
 Les chiffres de métronome indiqués ci-dessus ne devront pas être respectés avec exactitude. Ils ne donnent qu'une idée générale de la vitesse qui servira de base à un développement libre des „tempis“.

rit.

schnei-en. sach - te Stim - men ih-re Lei - den kün-den,

pp espress. *rit. - - - flüchtig*

Fa - bel - tie - re aus den brau - nen Schlün -

pp

- den Strah - len in die Mar-mor-bek - ken spei - en, draus die klei - nen

p espress.

etwas drängend

Bä - che kla - gend ei - len, ka - men Ker - - - zen

f *flüchtig* *f*

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are "Bä - che kla - gend ei - len, ka - men Ker - - - zen". The piano accompaniment is written in two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat. It features a sixteenth-note triplet marked with a '6' and the word "flüchtig". The piece concludes with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

wieder beruhigend

das Ge - sträuch ent - zün - den, wei - ße For - men das Ge -

pp

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "das Ge - sträuch ent - zün - den, wei - ße For - men das Ge -". The piano accompaniment features a series of chords in the right hand and a more active bass line. The piece concludes with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic.

wäs - ser tei - len.

sf *p*

The third system of the musical score concludes the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "wäs - ser tei - len.". The piano accompaniment features a series of chords in the right hand and a more active bass line. The piece concludes with a sforzando (*sf*) dynamic followed by a piano (*p*) dynamic.

poco rall. . . . fließend

1. gr. Fl. *sehr hart*

1. Ob.

E. H.

2. 3. Klar. (A)

1. 2. Fg.

1. Hr. (F) o. Dpf. *sehr hart*

1. 2. Trp. (B) m. Dpf. *m. Dpf.*

2. 3. 4. Pos. o. Dpf. *pp*

Hrf. *stacc.*

Frau *(vertieft zu Boden schauend)*
 schimmern... wie Bir-ken!... oh un-ser Gar-ten... Die Blu-men für ihn sind si-cher ver-welkt... Die

2. Solo-Br. o. Dpf. *poco rall. Solo Br. o. Dpf. fließend*

Vell. *1. 2. 3. Solo Vell. o. Dpf. alle Vell. o. Dpf. alle geteilt am Steg. 1. Solo Vell.*

Ktrbss. m. Dpf. *pp*

10 rit. . . . rascher ♩ = 76

1. 2. 3. gr. Fl. *rit. . . . rascher*

1. 2. Ob.

D-Klar.

1. Klar. (B)

Bss-Klar. (B)

1. 2. 3. Fg. *2. allein 2. allein 1. allein 1. 2. 3. Fag.*

Ktr-Fg.

1. 2. 3. Hr. (F) m. Dpf. *1. 2. 3. Hr. m. Dpf. 1. allein m. Dpf.*

2. 3. 4. Pos. m. Dpf. *a 3 m. Dpf. m. Dpf.*

Bss. T♯

Hrf. *deutlich sehr deutlich*

Frau *(in plötzlicher Angst)* *hart!* *(horcht in den Wald, bekommen)* *(ringt die Hände, sieht zurück)*
 Nacht ist so warm. Ich fürch- te mich. was für schwere Luft herausschlägt. Wie ein Sturm, der steht. So

I. Geige m. Dpf. *1. Solo Geige rit. Flieg. alle spiccato m. Dpf. ohne Nachschlag rit.*

1. 2. Solo-Br. o. Dpf. *1. Solo Br. o. Dpf. am Steg. am Steg.*

Vell. *1. Solo Vell. o. Dpf. alle o. Dpf. 3fach get. 1. 2. Solo Vell. m. Dpf. Klang Flieg.*

Ktrbss. m. Dpf. *3 fünfsaitige pizz. m. Dpf. arco alle. 1 fünfsaitiger Solo Ktrbss.*

Terzenflang auf der C-Saite eventuell C auf D oder E auf D stimmen

U. E. 5364

molto rit. . . . 15 viel langsamer (♩ = 50) noch langsamer (♩ = 48)

1.2.3. gr. Fl. *p*

D-Klar. *p*

1. Hr. (F) m. Dpf. *p* sehr *sart*

1. Trp. (B) m. Dpf. *pp*

Hrf. nicht *arpeggiert* *pp* sehr deutlich

Cel. sehr deutlich

Frau *p* (sicht *hinan?*) (kauert *nieder, lauscht, sieht vor sich hin*)
 grau-*evoll* ruhig und leer. Aber hier ist *wenigstens* hell. der Mond war *früher* so hell. Oh noch

1. Solo-Gge. o. Dpf. *ppp* sehr *ruhig und sart* noch langsamer

II. Gge. m. Dpf. *pp* am *Steg* m. Dpf. *geteilt* I. Hälfte *trem.*

1.2. Solo-Br. m. Dpf. 1.2. Solo Br. m. Dpf. *pp* II. Hälfte *pizz.*

1.2. Solo-Vell. m. Dpf. 1. Solo Vell. m. Dpf. *pp*

Ktrbss. m. Dpf. *pizz.* arco 3 andere Ktrbss.

rit. . . . 20

3. gr. Fl. *p*

2. Ob. *pp*

E. H. *p*

D-Klar. *p*

2. Klar. (A) *pp* *espress.*

Bss-Klar. (B) *pp*

1.2.3. Fg. *pp*

Ktr-Fg. *pp*

2. Hr. (F) m. Dpf. *pp*

3.4. Pos. m. Dpf. *pp*

Cel. *ppp*

Frau im - merdie Gril - le. mit ih - rem Lie - bes - lied. Nicht spre - chen. es ist so süß bei dir. der Mond ist in der

1. Solo-Gge. m. Dpf. *pp* am *Steg* *trem.* *pizz.* *arco, Dpf. ab*

II. Gge. m. Dpf. *pp* 3fach *get. m. Dpf.* 1. Solo Br. *pp* *sehr warm aber sart*

Br. m. Dpf. *pp* Vell. *get. u. 1. Solo Vell. m. Dpf.* 1. Solo Vell. *pp* 1. Solo Vell.

Vell. m. Dpf. *pp* alle *get. m. Dpf.* alle 3fach *get. m. Dpf.*

Ktrbss. m. Dpf. *pp*

♩ = 72 ♩ = 96 ♩ = 58

molto rit. sehr rasch heftig (♩=96) wieder langsamer

2.3. gr. Fl. 1.2. Ob. 2.3. Klar.(A) Bss. Klar.(B) 1.2.3. Fg. 1.Hr.(F) m.Dpf. 1.Trp.(B) m.Dpf. Frau I.u.II. Gge. o. Dpf. Br. o. Dpf. Vcll. m.Dpf. Ktrbss. m.Dpf.

(auffahrend)
Däm-merung.. feig bist du.. willst ihn nicht su-chen?.. So stirb doch hier..

alle I.u.II. Geigen, o. Dpf. alle Br. o. Dpf. alle m. Dpf. trem. am Steg. alle get. m. Dpf. trem. am Steg. alle get. m. Dpf. trem. am Steg. die I. Hälfte m. Dpf. trem. am Steg. m. Dpf.

25 rit. langsam

kl. Fl. 2.3. gr. Fl. 1. Ob. D-Klar. 2. Klar.(A) 1.2. Fg. Ktr. Fg. 3.4. Hr.(F) m.Dpf. 1.Trp.(B) m.Dpf. Hrf. Cel. Tamt. Frau II. Gge. Br. m. Dpf. Vcll. m. Dpf. Ktrbss. m. Dpf.

(wendet sich gegen den Wald) *(sieht sich schreu um)*
Wie dro- hend die Stil-le ist.. der Mond ist voll Ent- set- zen.. Sieht der hinein?..

nicht arpeggieren pizz. arco alle, m. Dpf. flüchtig Dämpfer weg pizz. arco



HÁROM DAL PILINSZKY JÁNOS VERSEIRE DREI LIEDER AUF GEDICHTE VON JÁNOS PILINSZKY THREE SONGS TO POEMS BY JÁNOS PILINSZKY

1

ALKOHOL – ALCOHOL

KURTÁG György
Op. 11/a

Deutsche Übersetzung von G. Engl
Translated by L. T. András

(szájpadláson)¹⁾ *mf* (préselt hang)²⁾ [] (vibrato molto)

Canto

Eee Eee Eee
Eee Eee Eeeee
Ey Ey Ey

Pianoforte

f

mf

E - lő - hí - vom a le - he - tet - lent,
Ich ruf her - bei das Un - denk - ba - re,
I con - jure up the im - poss - ib - le,

f

sf mf

Eeee
Eeee
Eh

1) am Gaumen on the palate
2) gepreßter Ton pressed sound

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mf

egy ház áll raj- ta
 drauf steht ein Haus und
 a house stand on it

8...

f

Eaee u o a eee s egy bo - kor,
 Eaee u o a eee steht ein Busch,
 Eh a i o u eh and a bush,

8...

[torokhangon]³⁾
mp [mf]

áá poco a poco mmmm
 aa poco a poco mmmm
 i poco a poco mmmm

mp

8...

3) Kehllaut
 gultorally



pp

egy né - ma, né - ma ál - lat és egy
 ein stum - mes, stum - mes Un - tier und ein
 a si - lent, si - lent crea - ture and a

pp tenuto - legato

8.....

ppp

nad - rág - szár a szür - kü - let - ben.
 Ho - sen - bein im trü - ben Dam - mern.
 trou - ser leg in fall - ing dark ness.

pppp

Ped. _____

ppppp

üü
 uu
 oo.

ppppp *ppppp* *ppppp*

IN MEMORIAM F. M. DOSZTOJEVSZKIJ
IN MEMORIAM F. M. DOSTOJEWSKI — IN MEMORIAM F. M. DOSTOEVSKY

Hajoljon le.
Verbeugen Sie sich.
Bend down.

(Földig hajol)
(Er beugt sich tief.)
(Bends to the ground.)

f *meno f*

All - jon föl.
Stehen Sie grad.
Stand e - rekt.

(Fölemelke - dik.)
(Er richtet sich auf.)
(Rises slowly up.)

f *meno f*

Vegye le az ingét, patyóját.
Hemd und Hose her-unter.
Take off your shirt, and underpants.

(Mindkettőt leveszi.)
(Beides lässt er fallen.)
(Takes them off one by one.)

f *meno f*

[tompán]⁴⁾

4) *dampf*
hollow, dull

Nézzén szembe.
Blick: grad - aus.
Turn and face me.

(Elfordúl.)
(Dreht sich weg.)
(Turns away.)

Szembenéz.)
Blickt dann hin.)
Faces him.)

f *meno f*

f *più f*

Öltözzön föl.
Ziehn Sie sich an.
Put on your clothes.

(Föltöztök.)
(Er zieht sich an.)
(Puts them back on.)

[quasi falsetto]

p, quasi dolce

Ped.

[attacca: Hölderlin]

Ped.

dim. molto

där, mi nem vol - tam én?
 Pfahl. All das war ich mal.
 clogs, this and more I've been.

f

dim. e string.

pppp, quasi legato

con ped.

Più mosso

sottovoce⁵⁾

Bol - do - gan ha - lok.
 Nun ist ster - ben gut.
 Will - ing - ly I die.

ppp

quasi gliss.

pochissima

pppp

quasi gliss.

8.

1/2 Ped.

8.

3

8.

FIN

⁵⁾ flüsternd
 whispered

Vier Gedichte aus „Atemwende“

von Paul Celan

für Singstimme und Klavier (1973)



Wolfgang Rihm

(* 1952)

I. (IN DEN FLÜSSEN)

Langsam, frei

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal line starting with a rest, followed by the lyrics "In den Flüssen". The piano accompaniment features complex textures with dynamic markings like *ff*, *fff*, and *pp*. The second system continues the vocal line with "nördlich der Zukunft werf ich" and the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the vocal line with "das Netz" and the piano accompaniment with various dynamic markings and fingering indications.

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2

9

aus, das du zö - - - gernd be - -

p *mf*

12 *rit. poco* *a tempo*

schwerst mit von Stei

ppp *fff* *pp* *sffz* *fffz*

martellato!

14

nen ge - -

mf *fff* *mf* *p*

15 *cresc. poco* *rit. poco*

schrie - be - nen Schat - - - ten.

fff *p* *ppp* *p* *sffz in p* *p* *pp*

UE 32 647 *attacca*

II. (DIE ZAHLEN)

Ruhig

Die Zah -

5 - - - len, im Bund mit der Bil - - - der Ver -

9 häng - nis und Ge - - - gen - ver-häng - nis. Der

12 dri-ber-ge-stülp-te Schä - del, an des-sen schlaf - - - lo - ser Schlä - - -

pp, *mp*, *pp*, *ppp*, *fff*, *p*, *rit.*, *accel. poco*, *etwas bewegter*

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4 **Langsam**

15 *f* *p* *mf* *p* *fff*

- - fe ein irr - - - lich-tern-der Ham - - mer

17 **Sehr ruhig** *pp* **Kein Rit.!**

all das im Welt - - takt be - singt.

ppp *pp* ruhiges Stacc.

III. (STEHEN) *pp* **attacca**

Völlig nach innen, äußerst ruhig und einfach

Ste - hen, im Schat-ten des Wun-den-mals in der

5 *ppp* *pp* *ff*

Luft. Für - nie - mand - und - nichts - Stehn.

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10 *pp*
Un - - er - kannt,
pp

14 *f*
für dich al - - lein. Mit
ff

17 *ff*
al - - - lem, was da - - - rin Raum
ff

20 *p* *pp*
hat, auch oh - - ne Spra - - che.
pp sub. *pp* *ppp*
attacca

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6

IV. (FADENSONNEN)

Öd

ppp pp

4

7

halb gesprochen (◡) ord. pp

Fa-den-son-nen ü - - - ber der grau - - schwar - zen Öd - - -

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10 gliss. *etwas erregt* *mf*
- - - nis. Ein baum - ho - - her

(Ped.)

13
Ge - - dan - - - ke greift sich den Licht -

8

15 *fp* *f*
- - ton: es

8

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8

17

sind noch Lie - der zu sin - - gen

f poco

20

pp

24

pp

jen - - - seits

etwas schneller
halb gesprochen

28

der Men - schen.

pp secco

Akkord insgesamt
70x spielen

etc.

etc.

28. VIII. 1973

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Paul Celan: Tübingen, Jänner

21

Robert Klein in Erinnerung


Sehr bewegt, unruhig Küstäg Spörn

mp




Zur Blind-heit ü-ber-re-de-te Au-gen.

[poco stentato]
PPP, dolcissimo




Ih-re - "ein Rät-sel ist Rein-ent-sprun-ge-mes"-

Zögernd - allmählich im Tempo zurückkehrend
p




Ih-re Er- in-ne-rung an schwim-men-de

[*equanimoso*]
flüchtig
PPP




Höl-der-lin-tür-me Mö-wen-um-schwirrit. Be-

sub. a tempo gehalten
p-mp



su-che er-tum-ke-mer Schrei-mer bei die-sen



tau-chen-den Wor-ten:

Andante
Molto largamente

[poco più andante]

pp-pizz.

poco

Kä-me, kä-me ein Mensch, kä-me ein

Mensch zur Welt heu-te, mit dem Licht-bart der

Pa-tri-ar-chen: er dürf-te spräch er von

die-ser Zeit, er dürf-te nur lal-len und

lal-len, im-mer, im-mer zu-zu, zu-zu.

Im äussersten Wut und Verzweiflung: Pal-lak-sch, Pal-lak-sch, Pal-lak-sch,

[geräuschvoll,
gleichsam erstickend
einatmen]



[beinahe brüllend] plötzlich flüchtig pp

b \flat 7 b \flat

Pal-laksch! Pal-laksch."]

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