

## Musique, que me veux-tu? Music, Meaning, and Narrative<sup>1</sup>

### Part 1

John A. Sloboda wrote that meaning and emotions are the most important elements of a musical experience<sup>2</sup>. This essay addresses both elements and is focused around three basic questions: 1) when can we speak of narrativity in a musical piece? 2) when does music “mean”? 3) how are our emotions translated into meaning and to what degree do they influence our interpretation?

Seeking the answers in the works of representatives of various areas of knowledge and methodological stances, I mainly focus on classical music in its two dimensions: absolute music (purely instrumental) and program music (of which the starting point is non-musical states of world). I am not concerned here with compositions that combine music with traditional narrative media (text), treated as a carrier of particular content (in the case of vocal, as well as vocal and instrumental music: song, opera, musical, etc.), in which – generally speaking – we deal with transposition of a certain non-musical narrative to the medium of music<sup>3</sup>.

I shall begin my article with an analysis of *Faust Symphony* by Franz Liszt, focusing on the interpretative clues that appear in reference works meant for non-professional listeners (musical guides). Then I will move on to the issue of a reception process (concepts borrowed from psychology of music will serve as an interpretative context for a fragment of *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust), and, finally, to various methodological voices that describe the experience of listening and define the meaning and narrativity of a musical composition.

Program music, which includes instrumental compositions created for a non-musical program<sup>4</sup>, is the first issue that is made apparent when one is considering music in a narrative context. The function of the program is usually played by a literary commentary (as in Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*), but it can also be restricted to a certain aspect of reality or inspiration by literature, philosophy, art etc., as is the case with Bedřich Smetana’s *My Country, Romeo and Juliet* as well as *Also Sprach Zarathustra*

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<sup>1</sup> Project funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as part of the National Programme for the Development of Humanities between 2014 and 2016.

<sup>2</sup> J.A. Sloboda, *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music*, Oxford 1985.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, which is an opera adaptation of Pierre Beaumarchais’s work and is based on a dialogue with the original through partly adapting and transferring it.

<sup>4</sup> I understand a musical composition to be an acoustic wave interpreted by the listening subject as a musical or linguistic phenomenon.

by Richard Strauss and *The Isle of the Dead* by Sergei Rachmaninoff, which references Arnold Böcklin's painting. I exclude from the area of programmatic music both pieces based on imitation (*Le Coucou* by Louis-Claude Daquin or the popular *Flight of the Bumblebee* by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov) and ones in which the program element is reduced to setting the mood (such as Witold Lutosławski's *Musique funèbre*). I assume that the essence of program is not imitation, but a singular interpretation of a certain thing or idea<sup>5</sup>. In my article, I would like to distinguish between two concepts of program: one defined by Berlioz and the other by Liszt.

Hector Berlioz paid enormous attention to the program, meticulously constructing a literary text that was supposed to define the issues raised by the piece. Before the premiere of *Symphonie fantastique: Épisode de la vie d'un artiste* in 1830<sup>6</sup>, the French composer published a commentary in "Le Figaro", in which he states:

The author imagines that a young musician, afflicted by the sickness of spirit which a famous writer has called the vagueness of passions, sees for the first time a woman who unites all the charms of the ideal person his imagination was dreaming of, and falls desperately in love with her. By a strange anomaly, the beloved image never presents itself to the artist's mind without being associated with a musical idea, in which he recognises a certain quality of passion, but endowed with the nobility and shyness which he credits to the object of his love.

This melodic image and its model keep haunting him ceaselessly like a double *idée fixe*. This explains the constant recurrence in all the movements of the symphony of the melody which launches the first allegro. The transitions from this state of dreamy melancholy, interrupted by occasional upsurges of aimless joy, to delirious passion, with its outbursts of fury and jealousy, its returns of tenderness, its tears, its religious consolations – all of this forms the subject of the first movements<sup>7</sup>.

Clearly, certain autobiographical elements are illuminated here, along with an introduction to the plot and connection between the figure of a beloved woman and a characteristic melodic phrase – all these elements are indicated in the composition plan. The commentary and other extradiegetic elements can prompt a modern critic to interpret Berlioz's symphony as a story about an artist suffering from unrequited love, who decides to poison himself as a result.

In Berlioz's works, *idée fixe* describes the object that I understand to be an intentional representation of a certain figure. On some level, the work functions as a story constructed with leitmotifs (recurring phrases related to a certain figure, place, idea) or melody, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, articulation etc. What is important, a "roper" interpretation

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. P. Kivy, *Sound and Semblance: Reflection on Musical Representation*, Princeton 1991, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> The abundant coloristic possibilities of the orchestra made it possible for the symphonic genres to be perceived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the most appropriate for an evocative representation of the program's details.

<sup>7</sup> H. Berlioz, *Symphonie Fantastique. The Symphony's Programme*. Extracts from the *Memoirs*, <http://www.hberlioz.com/Scores/fantas.htm> [accessed: 09.08.2015].

is imposed by the program note, and the awareness of the “outline” of the musical piece conditions its reception. Thus, the program written into the score creates an integral part of the composition and functions both as a plan of the already-finished symphony and fulfilment of the “gaps” created by the nature of the medium. However, we should note here that not all program music compositions were defined in terms of entertainment and designed in such way. In the introduction to Franz Liszt’s *Années de pèlerinage* (1855) we read:

As instrumental music progresses, develops, frees itself from first fetters, it tends to become more and more imbued with that ideality which has marked the perfection of the plastic arts, to become not only a simple combination of sounds but a poetic language more apt perhaps than poetry itself to express all that within us oversteps the accustomed horizon, everything that escapes analysis, everything that attracts itself inaccessible depths, imperishable denizens, infinite presentiments. It is in this connection, with this tendency that I have undertaken the work published today, addressing myself to a few rather than the crowd; ... the small number of those who conceive of art a destination other than ... the futile distraction of a passing amusement.<sup>8</sup>

The Hungarian composer preaches about the “absorption” of literary masterpieces by music. He does not, however, share Berlioz’s worries about inaccurate interpretations of his works and assigns a separate function to the program. As he eschews an excessive representation, the composer indicates the imperative idea only, and directs emotions that reveal themselves in contact with the musical piece. In this interpretation, a title or a literary commentary should not summarize the plot, but simply suggest a certain sphere of ideas, which concern a certain person or phenomenon. This postulate is realized, for example, in *Faust Symphony*.

*Eine Faust-Symphonie in drei Charakterbildern (nach Goethe) für großes Orchester, Tenor-Solo und Männerchor* immediately introduces listeners to the plot of a certain literary work. Furthermore, the titles of three parts – Faust, Gretchen and Mephistopheles – are the names of the main characters, which suggests the psychological nature of the work<sup>9</sup>.

But Liszt does not illustrate specific fragments of the literary work, and that brings him closer to works such as Robert Schumann’s *Manfred* or Richard Wagner’s *Faust*. “Characterological study”, “characteristic pictures”, “pictures-characteristics”, “musical psychological portraits” – these are only some descriptions we encounter in commentaries of *Symphony* published in encyclopaedias or in guides for non-professional listeners.

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<sup>8</sup> B. Morrison, *Franz Liszt: Illustrated Lives of the Great Composers*, London 2014, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> J. Chomiński in his *Wielkie formy instrumentalne* argues for “picture” as a separate genre (related to poem) which is concerned with nature mostly, e.g. Aleksander Borodin’s *In the Steppes of Central Asia*, Modest Musorgsky’s *Night on Bald Mountain* or R. Strauss’s *Alpensymphonie*. See: J. Chomiński, K. Wilkowska-Chomińska, *Wielkie formy instrumentalne*, Kraków 1987, pp. 798-807.

Before we ponder on the function of such interpretations, we should take a closer look at the first part and its relationship with part III on the construction level.

The *Faust* and *Mephistopheles* parts are connected by an analogous, quite loosely developed sonata-allegro form. Yet, appearance of the themes and their development is ruled not by tradition, but by a poetic idea. Due to the structure, it seems that Liszt's symphonies are much closer to a symphonic poem than to a sonata form. It allows us to treat each part of the work as an autonomous poem<sup>10</sup>. The very name is already significant here: although the symphonic character is retained, the piece itself is much shorter, more "closed"<sup>11</sup>. What is also missing is a division into pieces. Instead, we find numerous sequences contrasted with each other according to their character and tempo; some of the themes are repeated, expanded or loosely developed<sup>12</sup>. Both theme and form have been inspired by a literary text, but, when transposed onto a musical plane, they are not supposed to summarize it, but to create a new quality. Thus, it is not the text, but the theme that gains the most importance here: it is possible to identify the source of inspiration only due to the title or the program.

As I have already mentioned, the first part (*Faust*) is a sonata form with boldly expanded scale, the second (*Gretchen*) derives to a small extent from Faust's part, becoming its fulfilment, a kind of *intermezzo*. The third part is an entirely different case, as the material it contains there comes from the themes of the previous parts, constructing the figure of the Mephistopheles-parodist – Faust in a crooked mirror<sup>13</sup>. Along with the final chorus, the symphony plan goes as follows: ABA1B1<sup>14</sup>. The manner in which the Faust figure is created is already an example of the mastery of Liszt's developments, which could comprise an entire symphony: the first part lasts for almost half an hour and is based only on a few intermingling themes, various in accordance to their character, but with similar motifs.

Separating individual themes from the *Faust* parts turns out to be difficult, and discrepancies in encyclopaedias and popular science books immediately appear when one tries to determine their number. Most authors speak of them sparingly and in a vague manner<sup>15</sup>. Most often they refer to four themes, however, there are authors who

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<sup>10</sup> Writing about Liszt's piece, Abraham uses the concept of a triptych composed of three symphonic poems. See: G. Abraham, *The Concise Oxford History of Music*, Oxford 1979, p. 684; *New Oxford History of Music*, op. cit., p. 581. See also: B. Schaeffer, *Dzieje muzyki*, Warszawa 1983, p. 300.

<sup>11</sup> Por. B. Schaeffer, op. cit., s. 298.

<sup>12</sup> In this respect, symphonic poems become constructs analogous to written poems, which, as works of an arbitrary genre character are released from any genre conventions. See: B. Russano Hanning, "Concise History of Western Music", in: D.J. Grout, C.V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, New York-London 2002, pp. 395–396.

<sup>13</sup> Liszt might have drawn inspiration from Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, where the *idée fixe* is a subject of a caricature development. See: *Ibidem*, p. 398; *New Oxford History of Music...*, op. cit., p. 581.

<sup>14</sup> In 1857 Liszt included in the symphony *Chorus Mysticus*, a hymn for a male chorus and solo tenor, in praise of the Eternal Feminine [das Ewig-Weibliche], based on the Gretchen's theme and setting out the final ideological message of the whole.

<sup>15</sup> R.D. Golianek gives two examples of "themes-attributes"; K. Pahlen writes of three that are not controversial (however, giving only two musical references), not to mention "others," about which we read in e.g. E.O.D. Downes: "These and other themes reflecting various facets of the hero are developed in free symphonic sonata form," see: R.D. Golianek, op. cit., p. 141; K. Pahlen, *Sinfonie der Welt*, Zürich 1967, p. 189–190; E.O. Downes, *The New York Philharmonic Guide to the Symphony*, New York 1976, p. 503.

suggest the existence of five<sup>16</sup>. Despite the problems with indicating particular fragments of a composition, it is becoming common practice among musicologists to assign specific meaning to the phrases. The editors of *Przewodnik po muzyce koncertowej* [A Guide of Concert Music] give examples of the themes in the following order: a philosopher searching for truth; a bachelor enjoying life; a tender lover and a man of action<sup>17</sup>. Christian Rueger refers to Faust as thinking, desiring something, enamoured and a person who makes things happen<sup>18</sup>. Kurt Pahlen writes of the theme of fear and doubt, seeking tenderness, and finally – about the theme of heroism<sup>19</sup>. Another distinction is postulated by Jean-Jacques Soleil and Guy Lelong, who indicate two topics assigned to Faust in the introduction to the first part of the symphony: chromatic, sometimes atonal “anxiety” and, announced through bassoon, “love”. Their entwining is supposed to lead to a “quick section” – a turbulent topic played on strings and a “heroic” one, entrusted to metal plate<sup>20</sup>. We should emphasize here that it is important to ask what means were used by the composer (rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, dynamic, agogic, coloristic, articulative) that convince scholars to make such a distinction.

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The symphony's opening fragment quoted above draws listener's attention through extremely bold harmonics. Liszt forgoes the major and minor scale, using diatonic scale instead (it is suggested, for example, by lack of a central sound and indetermination of key), intensively using then-rare major harmonic triad<sup>22</sup>. Ryszard Golianek writes about

<sup>16</sup> See: H. Searle, "Liszt", in: *The New Grove Dictionary...*, op. cit., p. 44: "The Faust movement ... based on only five short phrases".

<sup>17</sup> See: *Przewodnik po muzyce koncertowej*, part I, ed. T. Chylińska, S. Haraschin, M. Jabłoński, Kraków 2003, p. 590.

<sup>18</sup> See: Ch. Rueger, "Poesie total – die Sinfonischen Dichtungen", in: *Franz Liszt, Des Lebens Widerspruch. Die Biographie*, München 1997, pp. 152–154.

<sup>19</sup> See: K. Pahlen, op. cit., pp. 189–190.

<sup>20</sup> See: J.-J. Soleil, G. Lelong, *Najśłynniejsze dzieła muzyki światowej. Leksykon muzyki instrumentalnej*, trans. J. Łętowski, Łódź 1994, p. 171.

<sup>21</sup> F. Liszt, *Eine Faust-Symphonie in drei Charakterbildern (nach Goethe) für großes Orchester, Tenor-Solo und Männerchor. Partitur*, Moscow 1958. All page numbers in parentheses will refer to this edition.

<sup>22</sup> See: *Przewodnik po muzyce koncertowej*, op. cit., p. 590; K. Pahlen, op. cit., pp. 189–190: "Interessant ist hier die starke Verwendung des ... übermäßigen Dreiklangs: G-H-Es und Fis-B-D, der einige Jahrzehnte später (bei Debussy und vor allem bei Puccini) in ganz ähnlicher, wenn auch zumeist ins Räumliche übertragener Bedeutung – als «Sehnsuchtsakkord», als Symbol der Ferne, der exotischen Länder".

the lack of a definitively expressive character to the quoted “narrative formula”, which is supposed to differentiate it from “themes-attributes” of the respective heroes. However, if we define “narrative formula” as an “omnipresent”, constantly returning sound material, entwined with other motifs, it is easy to notice the key relationship between the quoted fragment and other themes. C minor is the key of the whole symphony, while the finishing praise of the “Eternal Feminine” is conducted in C major. Faust themes in the exposition of parts I and III undergo a special kind of dualism: C minor – E major, while the key of Gretchen theme is A-flat major, dominating the second part of the symphony. Juxtaposition of the keys of the whole composition (C-E-A-flat) creates parts of the major triad: material of the “narrative formula”. In this sense, it becomes an essence of the whole harmonic construct, which is an extremely interesting example of compositional organisation. But let us return to musical themes of Liszt’s composition as interpreted by the critics of his composition.

According to musicologists<sup>25</sup>, the opening fragment of the composition introduces a pensive and melancholic mood, while at the same time – possibly due to repossession of the melody by consecutive instruments – a mild variability, a subconscious uneasiness<sup>24</sup>. Both dissonances gain the form of major triads, mostly in the first inversion (first in alto and viola voices, then violin), which in the musical rhetoric suggest behind-the-scenes dealings with the forces of evil, a demonic presence. The dynamics are formed in *piano*; oboe, bassoon and clarinet are supposed to join the strings *dolente* – painfully. Teresa Chylińska, Stanisław Haraschin and Maciej Jabłoński describe this phrase as the theme of a truth-seeking philosopher<sup>25</sup>. John Warrack calls it questing and searching, while German literature puts emphasis not on the search for knowledge, but rather on yearning for knowledge and settling the account with life so far. The composer is supposed to create in his work a remembering man [*der Grüber*]<sup>26</sup>, reflective and melancholic<sup>27</sup>. The progressions of triad from the first theme, appearing numerous times in the course of the symphony, are supposed to connote the feeling of resignation, the disproportion between dreams and frustration stemming from unfulfillment.

<sup>25</sup> See: E. O. D. Downes, *op. cit.*, p. 503.

<sup>24</sup> An interesting context seems to be a chart of profiles of selected keys, according to music theoreticians:

Key	Schubart (1806)	Hand (1837)	Ertel (1896)
C minor	love confession, yearning, tears	sadness, lamentation	poignant, belligerent, grievance, hero
C major	pure, innocent	humanity, trust, joy of life	purity, innocence, gentle glow, solemnity
E major	joy, satisfaction	joy, festivity, female character	the brightest and the most radiant; cheerfulness, cordiality
A-flat major	death, the Final Judgement	beyond-sensual aspect, infinity, piety	gentleness, ceremonial dignity, nocturn

Selected keys from: R. D. Golianek, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–128.

<sup>25</sup> See: *Przewodnik po muzyce koncertowej*, *op. cit.*, p. 590.

<sup>26</sup> Por. Ch. Rueger, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>27</sup> J. Pahlen writes of an internal battle fought by the truth-seeking hero. “Der erste Satz zeigt den suchenden, den ringenden Menschen. Das Anfangsthema scheint voll Zweifel, voll Wissensdrang, voll Sehnsucht nach Erkenntnis”. See: K. Pahlen, *op. cit.*, p. 189; See also: E.O.D. Downes, *op. cit.*, p 503: “The first movement opens with a striking, pensive theme”.

Anxiety in the first theme finds a rapid implementation in the string fragment (enriched with French horn), in which the hero's will, his intentions, desire for all-encompassing power [der Willensmensch], "superhumanity"<sup>28</sup> are brought to the fore:

The image shows a musical score for five string instruments (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Kontrabaß) and a French horn. The tempo is marked 'Allegro Impetuoso' and the instruction 'ohne Dämpfer' (without mutes) is written above each staff. The music features rapid, chromatic runs in the strings, with the French horn playing a melodic line that includes a 'get.' (grace note) in the second measure.

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Yearning for life is lost in the quick movement and dynamics. Pahlen, who indicates three topics that interweave with the ones postulated by other researchers, ignores the phrase of chromatic "anxiety"<sup>29</sup>. It could be explained by the return of the sound material from the beginning of the symphony: progressively rising violin runs turn after a while into an accompaniment for the phrase of the first theme. Interrupted by pauses<sup>30</sup>, rapid, chromatic figures in forte, along with the "crunchy" half-notes played *marcato* can create an impression of a hero who cannot control his racing thoughts and desires (Rueger)<sup>31</sup> – or "using life"<sup>32</sup>.

When a turbulent string fragment plays out with the strokes of the timpani, we can hear – in *mezzo forte* dynamics - warm, matte sounds of a solo bassoon, which, decelerating and hushing the phrase, is supposed to represent Faust enamoured [der Liebende] and seeking tenderness:

The image shows a musical score for a Bassoon (Fag.). The tempo is marked 'Lento assai' and the instruction 'I solo' is written above the staff. The music is in a low register, featuring a melodic line with a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking. The notes are connected by a long slur, indicating a sustained, expressive phrase.

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<sup>28</sup> See: Ch. Rueger, *op. cit.*, p. 152. *Übermensch* expressed by the Ghost deriding Faustus's cosmic aspirations is only an ironic epithet. Goethe does not use it to describe the titanic efforts of the hero, but rather suggests that most are misguided. See: L.M. Berman, *Faust Goethego: tragedia rozwoju*, [in:] *ibidem*, "Wszystko, co stałe, rozplywa się w powietrzu". *Rzecz o doświadczeniu nowoczesności*, trans. M. Szuster, introduction by A. Bielik-Robson, Kraków 2006, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> See: K. Pahlen, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–190.

<sup>30</sup> As one can observe in the quoted part of the score, in the beginning pauses have duration of a dotted crotchet, while later it is only a quaver. In the end silence is substituted with the sound of woodwind instruments, which creates an impression of an increased tempo and intensity of the harmonic texture.

<sup>31</sup> See: Ch. Rueger, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–154.

<sup>32</sup> See: *Przewodnik po muzyce koncertowej*, *op. cit.*, p. 590.

*Lento assai* is a peculiar foreshadowing of the later representation of the “love-r’s” feelings, suggesting calmness, escape into the inner world of emotions and peace. At the same time, it is the ending to the fragment described by Soleil and Lelong as an introduction to the first part of the symphony<sup>33</sup>. The lyrical phrase, intermingled with the theme of “anxiety”, leads to the theme represented by strings:

**Allegro agitato ed appassionato**

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Violin I (Vl. I), Violin II (Vl. II), and Basses (B.). The title above the score is "Allegro agitato ed appassionato". The Violin parts are marked "molto rinfz." and the Bass part is marked "g. et.". The score consists of four measures of music in 4/4 time, featuring chromatic patterns and dynamic markings.

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Virtuoso phrases are mitigated by figures that, despite their metre (4/4) give away an impression of being waltz-like. Possibly, this is also caused by gentle *sforzando* conducted from *piano* in small sections (within a bar or two) and the viola, cello and double bass *tremolo*, ending with a short movement of the bow. Small values (quavers and semiquavers) give away an aura of lightness. Meanwhile, bows and amplified dynamics (*molto rinforzando*) cause the increase in “density”, intensity. The phrase becomes more melodious: chromatic groups of semiquavers increasing *piano* and *dolcissimo* (which can suggest femininity or angelic qualities connoting being in love) and subsequently bright, falling passages of violins are accompanied by whole notes filling the bars of flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn.

All these elements lead up to *pianissimo*. The metre becomes  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and the melody is overtaken by the warm, lyrical sounds of the clarinet, bassoon and horn, for which the triplet sounds of viola and cello, along with spare drums, become only an addition. “Sweet”, “graceful”, “majestic”. This *affettuoso poco Andante*, appearing directly after *Allegro agitato ed appassionato*, is based on the sound material of *lento assai* cited above. This particular inseparability (similar succession can also be found in Gretchen’s part) can suggest a kinship of both thoughts: through chromatic, rising string parts that create a background filled with tension and sweet expectation for the woodwind instruments, and through light, falling passages and creating an angel-like aura, the “theme of love” is fully developed here.

*Ardente* of the trumpets leads directly to the last Faustian theme (a man of action [der Tatmensch], “heroic”), entrusted to the brass section. As Pehlen writes, a fight is written into it, as well as eventual conquest over the hero’s doubts<sup>34</sup>. It is much easier

<sup>33</sup> Authors of the lexicon highlight the foreshadowing character of the “love” phrase. Emphasizing its intermingling with the theme of “anxiety”, like K. Pahlen, they do not separate a theme of will and desire. See: J.-J. Soleil, G. Lelong, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>34</sup> See: K. Pahlen, *op. cit.*, p. 190: “ein heldisches, glänzendes Thema (wie strahlend sind diese Themen bei Liszt stets!) den kämpfenden, zuletzt siegenden Faust, der über die irdischen Zweifel triumphiert”.

to agree with giving this phrase a meaning of victory, primarily due to attribution – instrumentalization that gives the sound of fanfares and lingering *fortissimo* and *marcato*:

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Trp. (E), Pos. Tb., Pauk., and -1 Vl. The score is in 2/4 time and features a fanfare-like passage. The Trp. (E) part starts with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, then a half note G4. The Pos. Tb. part starts with a half note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3, then a half note G2. The Pauk. part starts with a half note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3, then a half note G2. The -1 Vl. part starts with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, then a half note G4. The score includes markings such as *ff marcato* and *f marcato pesante*.

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It's plain to see the tendency among authors of concert guides and encyclopaedia entries to summarise the idea of the Liszt symphony as a description of the “psychological portrait” of Faust. This description is created using music, by referencing particular fragments of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s poem and explaining respective sound/harmonic structures in terms of the hero’s deeds, emotions and situations which he is forced to face. The most balanced interpretation is postulated by Lelong and Soleil<sup>35</sup>, who name only the themes attributed and rhetorically-charged – whether it is due to harmonic measures (dissonances, major intervals) or colouristic ones (instrumentation). Other critics prefer to write colourfully of emotions, change and the conversion of the hero.

Liszt’s interpretation of Faust and Mephistopheles’ relationship is already apparent on the basic construction level: both parts are based on a modified sonata form. It is a novel approach, as the “classical” finale was supposed to introduce a brand-new sound material. However, this idea becomes apparent only when we analyse the themes of “the Mephistopheles part”.

The devil enjoys a whole range of equivalents in musical rhetoric<sup>36</sup>. We only have to recall the medieval diabolus in musica formula, referencing the sound of triton<sup>37</sup>,

<sup>35</sup> See: J.-J. Soleil, G. Lelong, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>36</sup> Including microstructures consciously introduced by composers, which role is to give certain conceptual content to fragments of the composition, eg. motifs, chords with their progression, and even single sounds. Mephistophelean element is also reflected in specific orchestral tone color (prevalence of instruments with low, infernal sound and dark timbre, especially trombones) and the key of the composition, which clarifies the sphere of representation (according to 19th century theoreticians, F minor key is related to the sphere of death, fear, hell and demons). See: R.D. Goliānek, *Muzyka programowa...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 112, 127–128; *ibidem*, *Mefisto na pieciolinii...*, *op. cit.*, p. 508.

<sup>37</sup> Interval of augmented fourth or diminished fifth, consisting of six semitones (*nota bene* this is the number attributed to satan).

or the immensely popular – from 17th century onwards – falling chromatic runs (so-called *passus duriusculus*). Although Liszt uses these means, taking particular liking to dissonant sounds, the rhetorical figures are not the most important aspect of the third part of the symphony, giving way to the very concept of Mephistopheles. Namely, the themes of the third part are derived directly from the themes of Faust and presented in a grotesque form<sup>38</sup>. It allows us to interpret Liszt's portrayal of Mephistopheles as Faust's reflection in a crooked mirror. Thus, in place of a separate Mephistopheles theme we are given a brilliant anti-Faust. His musical self does not become a demonic character, but rather an imp, which is a consequence of using semiquaver runs, as well as acciaccaturas, which are used to comic effect. The third part of the symphony is a game of registers, chromatics and colours; Faustian phrases gain dynamics due to small turns and trills.

**Sempre allegro**

Klar. (C) *a2*  
Fag. *a2*  
2 Vl.  
Br. *p*  
Vlc. *pizz.* *p*

*p scherzando*

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1 Vl.  
2 Vl. *p*  
Br. *p*  
Vlc. *arco*

*pizz.* *arco*

(170)

A quick interpretative sketch indicates several issues important for a musical composition's reception. A natural reaction of every listener is to assign meaning to the piece, especially when we receive clear clues from the author concerning the non-musical

<sup>38</sup> Like Zofia Lissa I understand the category of musical grotesque as a "destruction of systems we perceive as normal" and in the case under our consideration – as a destruction of Faustian quotes. Specific kind of grotesque is destruction of old compositions, closely related to eloquence of the listener, which brings this category close to a musical parody. See: Z. Lissa, *Szkice z estetyki muzycznej*, Kraków 1965, pp. 45-47.

inspirations of the piece. Authors of notes and articles that are supposed to explain the character and meaning of the composition in a simple manner postulate a similar model of interpretation.

Goethe's drama is not the plot of the composition, but its theme<sup>39</sup>. The concept of Liszt's symphony – indicated, for example, by depicting Mephistopheles as a reflection of Faust in a crooked mirror – is to present a musical interpretation of the German writer's work. It is an important distinction. Carl Dahlhaus writes in his *Aesthetics of Music*:

And a subject is not model to be imitated but rather a sort of material that the composer elaborates. A supply of tones and a subject ... constitute two kinds of material. Only from the interaction of subject and 'forms moved in sounding' does the musical content arise; a wish to narrate the content involves a misunderstanding about its mode of existence. If the subject specifies meanings for musical themes and motives, the opposite is equally valid: the broad significance and import of the subject is newly minted by the musical themes and motives. Program music rests on the interdependence of its components.<sup>40</sup>

Confrontation of program and absolute music derives from an attempt to systematize certain issues and to juxtapose, on a basic level, two different ways of thinking about music. However, in practice, it turns out that the two poles are not as distant as we would like to think.

I do not only mean the so-called hidden programs (Dahlhaus calls it a "secret program"), which can be caused by the aesthetic views of the composer or his fear of a critique<sup>41</sup>, but also different ways of "directing" the listener towards the context and meaning of the piece, guiding / steering their interpretation. We could mention, for example, using mottos and quotes or characteristic figures of another composer (Tristan chord, B-A-C-H motif etc.). Numerous composers cite other musical compositions in order to play with tradition or the conventions or another author's style. The culture in which they create often has an enormous influence on their work. For example, in the work of Frédéric Chopin we encounter numerous references to folk music. *Fantasy on Polish Airs*, Op. 13 contains three main themes, two out of which contain / reference traditional melodies. The first one, *Już miesiąc zaszedł, psy się uśpiły*, is a fragment from Franciszek Karpiński's ballad *Laura i Filon* (Chopin's mother's favourite song)<sup>42</sup>. The second melody

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<sup>39</sup> Carl Dahlhaus defines "content" as, on one hand, a theme that exists outside of music, and on the other hand, as "an ingredient of the musical work itself." C. Dahlhaus, *Aesthetics of Music*, Cambridge 1982, s. 59.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59.

<sup>41</sup> C. Dahlhaus, *op. cit.*, p. 59. The scholar mentions Arnold Schering, who looked for esoteric programs even in symphonies and chamber music of Beethoven, although less questioned research in this area is based on the works of Haydn, Weber or Mahler.

<sup>42</sup> See: the folk tune and Chopin's transposition: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbY95g4XaO4>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4Gm9zDlcOI> [accessed: 15.08.2015].

that appears in *Fantasy on Polish Airs* is a kujawiak *Idzie Jasio do Torunia*. Ukrainian kolomyjka, written by Karol Kurpiński in his *Elegy on the Death of Tadeusz Kościuszko* appears here as well, giving the piece its patriotic character. It is important to note here that I describe Chopin's piece as such not due to a text or an authorial commentary, but in reference to melodies, which I recognize and interpret as culturally significant.

We could also note that a common denominator appears in the abovementioned examples – either in program music, in pieces that use rhetorical figures, symbolics or ones that contain intertextual references. It is a presence of codes, the decoding of which should not be difficult for a competent listener. In case of Liszt's piece, knowledge of Goethe's *Faust* is especially important, as it allows us to read *Faust Symphony* as a musical interpretation of a literary work. However, in case of Chopin's composition, it is essential to have some knowledge of Polish culture and folk music, without which one would not register intertextual references.

## Part 2

In *Swann in Love*<sup>45</sup>, the second part of the first volume of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, we read that:

### [Ex. 1]

The year before, at an evening party, he had heard a piece of music played on the piano and violin. At first he had appreciated only the material quality of the sounds which those instruments secreted. And it had been a source of keen pleasure when, below the delicate line of the violin-part, slender but robust, compact and commanding, he had suddenly become aware of the mass of the piano-part beginning to emerge in a sort of liquid rippling of sound, multiform but indivisible, smooth yet restless, like the deep blue tumult of the sea, silvered and charmed into a minor key by the moonlight. But then at a certain moment, without being able to distinguish any clear outline, or to give a name to what was pleasing him, suddenly enraptured, he had tried to grasp the phrase or harmony he did not know which that had just been played and that had opened and expanded his soul, as the fragrance of certain roses, wafted upon the moist air of evening, has the power of dilating one's nostrils. Perhaps it was owing to his ignorance of music that he had received so confused an impression, *one of those that are none the less the only purely musical impressions, limited in their extent, entirely original, and irreducible to any other kind* [emphasis – J.B.].

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<sup>45</sup>. All the quotes from: M. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, vol. 1. *Swann's Way*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and T. Kilmartin, rev. by D.J. Enright, New York 1992. Page numbers are in parentheses; emphases mine – JB.

An impression of this order, vanishing in an instant, is, so to speak, *sine materia*. Doubtless the notes which we hear at such moments tend, according to their pitch and volume, to spread out before our eyes over surfaces of varying dimensions, to trace arabesques, to give us the sensation of breadth or tenuity, stability or caprice. But the notes themselves have vanished before these sensations have developed sufficiently to escape submersion under those which the succeeding or even simultaneous notes have already begun to awaken in us. And this impression would continue to envelop in its liquidity, its ceaseless overlapping, the motifs which from time to time emerge, barely discernible, to plunge again and disappear and drown, recognised only by the particular kind of pleasure which they instil, impossible to describe, to recollect, to name, ineffable did not our memory, like a labourer who toils at the laying down of firm foundations beneath the tumult of the waves, by fashioning for us facsimiles of those fugitive phrases, enable us to compare and to contrast them with those that follow. And so, scarcely had the exquisite sensation which Swann had experienced died away, before his memory had furnished him with an immediate transcript, sketchy, it is true, and provisional, which he had been able to glance at while the piece continued, so that, when the same impression suddenly returned, it was no longer impossible to grasp. He could picture to himself its extent, its symmetrical arrangement, its notation, its expressive value; he had before him something that was no longer pure music, but rather design, architecture, thought, and which allowed the actual music to be recalled. This time he had distinguished quite clearly a phrase which emerged for a few moments above the waves of sound. It had at once suggested to him a world of inexpressible delights, of whose existence, before hearing it, he had never dreamed, into which he felt that nothing else could initiate him; and he had been filled with love for it, as with a new and strange desire.

With a slow and rhythmical movement it led him first this way, then that, towards a state of happiness that was noble, unintelligible, and yet precise. (292–294)

**[Ex. 2:]**

[Swann] would enter the drawing-room [...] sent [...] to the place kept for him beside Odette, the pianist would play to them for their two selves the little phrase by Vinteuil which was,

so to speak, the national anthem of their love. He would begin with the sustained tremolos of the violin part which for several bars were heard alone, filling the whole foreground; until suddenly they seemed to draw aside, and as in those interiors by Pieter de Hooch which are deepened by the narrow frame of a half-opened door, in the far distance, of a different colour, velvety with the radiance of some intervening light the little phrase appeared, dancing, pastoral, interpolated, episodic, belonging to another world. It rippled past, simple and immortal, scattering on every side the bounties of its grace, with the same ineffable smile; but Swann thought that he could now discern in it some disenchantment. It seemed to be aware how vain, how hollow was the happiness to which it showed the way. In its airy grace there was the sense of something over and done with, like the mood of philosophic detachment which follows an outburst of vain regret. But all this mattered little to him; he contemplated the little phrase less in its own light in what it might express to a musician who knew nothing of the existence of him and Odette when he had composed it, and to all those who would hear it in centuries to come than as a pledge, a token of his love, which made even the Verdurins and their young pianist think of Odette at the same time as himself which bound her to him by a lasting tie. ...

... the little phrase, as soon as it struck his ear, had the power to liberate in him the space that was needed to contain it; the proportions of Swann's soul were altered; a margin was left for an enjoyment that corresponded no more than his love for Odette to any external object and yet was not, like his enjoyment of that love, purely individual, but assumed for him a sort of reality superior to that of concrete things.

... And the pleasure which the music gave him, which was shortly to create in him a real need, was in fact akin at such moments to the pleasure which he would have derived from experimenting with perfumes, from entering into contact with a world for which we men were not made, which appears to us formless because our eyes cannot perceive it, *meaningless because it eludes our understanding, to which we may attain by way of one sense only*. There was a deep repose, a mysterious refreshment for Swann whose eyes, although delicate interpreters of painting, whose mind, although an acute observer of manners, must bear for ever the indelible imprint of the barrenness of his life

in feeling himself transformed into a creature estranged from humanity, blinded, deprived of his logical faculty, almost a fantastic unicorn, a chimaera-like creature conscious of the world through his hearing alone. And since he sought in the little phrase for a meaning to which his intelligence could not descend, with what a strange frenzy of intoxication did he strip bare his innermost soul of the whole armour of reason and make it pass unattended through the dark filter of sound! (305–306, 330–331)

**[Ex. 3:]**

Meanwhile the concert had begun again, and Swann saw that he could not now go before the end of the new number. He suffered greatly from being shut up among all these people [...] ignorant of his love ...

But suddenly it was as though she [Odette] had entered, and this apparition was so agonisingly painful that his hand clutched at his heart. The violin had risen to a series of high notes on which it rested as though awaiting something, holding on to them in a prolonged expectancy, in the exaltation of already seeing the object of its expectation approaching, and with a desperate effort to last out until its arrival, to welcome it before itself expiring, to keep the way open for a moment longer, with all its remaining strength, so that the stranger might pass, as one holds a door open that would otherwise automatically close. And before Swann had had time to understand what was happening and to say to himself: "It's the little phrase from Vinteuil's sonata I mustn't listen!", all his memories of the days when Odette had been in love with him, which he had succeeded until that moment in keeping invisible in the depths of his being, deceived by this sudden reflection of a season of love whose sun, they supposed, had dawned again, had awakened from their slumber, had taken wing and risen to sing maddeningly in his ears, without pity for his present desolation, the forgotten strains of happiness.

In place of the abstract expressions "the time when I was happy," "the time when I was loved," which he had often used before then without suffering too much since his intelligence had not embodied in them anything of the past save fictitious extracts which preserved none of the reality, he now recovered everything that had fixed unalterably the specific, volatile essence of that lost happiness; he could see it all: the snowy, curled petals of the chrysanthemum which she had tossed after him into

his carriage, which he had kept pressed to his lips the address "Maison Dorée" embossed on the note-paper on which he had read "My hand trembles so as I write to you" the contraction of her eyebrows when she said pleadingly: "You won't leave it too long before getting in touch with me?"; he could smell the heated iron of the barber whom he used to have singe his hair while Loredan went to fetch the little seamstress; could feel the showers which fell so often that spring, the ice-cold home-ward drive in his victoria, by moonlight; all the network of mental habits, of seasonal impressions, of sensory reactions, which had extended over a series of weeks its uniform meshes in which his body found itself inextricably caught. (472–473)

Proust's hero, Charles Swann, is enamoured with painting, not music. When he hears Vinteuil's sonata, he is stunned and lost – just as every inexperienced listener would be when faced with an unknown composition. Listening to "pleasant" music, Swann succumbs to it. He tries to conceptualize in some way what he is listening to, he paints sensual pictures in his mind: the piano part becomes a flowing tide, the melody surges above the substantial and governing violin part. It's is multiform, breaking everywhere like the deep blue tumult of the sea, charmed into a minor key by the moonlight, etc.

The hero cannot tame the sonata with rational thinking, does not know the melodic line, harmonic changes or what he can expect from each consecutive bar. He cannot name different aspects of the piece that bring pleasure to him, or even recollect particular sequences. He can only see his own enchantment and create poetic, synthesised images, which he attempts to use to interpret the piece and express the non-materiality of the music, its evanescence and rapid succession of impressions. Vinteuil's sonata remains a "secret, murmuring, detached, [...] airy and perfumed" sphere (296), it sketches arabesques, it is both wide and thin, stable and whimsical, fluid, violet. "Perhaps it was owing to his ignorance of music that he had received so confused an impression, one of those that are none the less the only purely musical impressions, limited in their extent, entirely original, and irreducible to any other kind" (292-293). This is one of the remarks Proust makes about the impossibility of translating music into the language of any other art form – this motif resurfaces numerous times in the course of the novel.

When Swann hears the familiar phrase again, he is now able to recognize it, and even describe its melodic line and character, which consists of dynamic, articulation, tempo etc. He recognizes "design, architecture, thought" (293) hidden within it, logically ordered sequence, composed with the intention of evoking particular emotions and ideas. We know from later fragments that for Swann it is a melancholic warning about the evanescence and finiteness of happiness and the feeling between the hero and Odette. Vinteuil's sonata is played during a party at the house of the Verdurins, where the hero is invited along with his lover. The familiar phrase gets unambiguously interpreted as "their melody,"

a representation of the relationship and feelings that connect the pair. Party regulars know about it and allow the pianist to ignore fragments in which the familiar motif does not appear. Swann keeps trying to “transcribe” the music into something that can be described: he comes up with analogies to paintings, light, colours; he treats the sequences of sounds as a gift in which one can recognize one’s worries, emotions, experiences. The search for meanings unavailable to the mind ends with pleasurable capitulation and immersion in a sound “[stripped] bare [...] of the whole armour of reason” (331).

In the last of the quoted fragments, the act of listening to the piece is no longer pleasurable. Sometime after parting with Odette, Swann finds himself at a party, during which the pianist unexpectedly includes in the repertoire the familiar Vinteuil’s piece. For the hero the concert becomes painful, as the once beloved musical phrase reminds him with double force of all the unpleasant emotions and events connected with his past love.

The melody of the violin – “essence of that lost happiness” (473) – becomes a pain much more striking than verbal acknowledgement of their parting. During the performance, Swann continues to ponder the way in which the composition affected him, “like a perfume or a caress, it swept over and enveloped him” (478). The hero finds the most fragment dearest to him and subjects it to analysis, knowing full well that it does not concern only the phrase as a representation of love and happiness, but a few of its technical aspects as well:

He had observed that it was to the closeness of the intervals between the five notes which composed it and to the constant repetition of two of them that was due that impression of a frigid and withdrawn sweetness. (478)

Music, for Swann, has nothing to do with indetermination, freedom to interpret. On the contrary, the hero treats it as a logical language that allows composers to express their truths: “The suppression of human speech, so far from letting fancy reign there uncontrolled (as one might have thought), had eliminated it altogether; never was spoken language of such inflexible necessity, never had it known questions so pertinent, such irrefutable replies” (481).

As mentioned previously, Swann finds himself in a situation commonly experienced by every listener who has consciously and acutely listened to a new musical piece, without knowing anything about its design and the rules which govern it. By “conscious” listening I do not mean the passive perception of a sequence of sounds that is either chaotic or of varied quality while drinking coffee or shopping, but an act of arranging a sequence of sounds into a larger (coherent and musically plausible) whole.

Zofia Lissa writes of a human tendency towards a holistic understanding of any real phenomena: listening to music, we instantly perceive certain musical wholes (musical representations), and the ability to distinguish smaller elements that encompass it (sound impressions) is only secondary<sup>44</sup>. These impressions allow us to individually take a stance

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<sup>44</sup> Z. Lissa, *Wybór pism estetycznych*, wprowadzenie, Z. Skowron (ed.), Kraków 2008, pp. 173–186.

on the piece. The particular whole and its elements interact with each other and even a single sound can change the character of a melodic motif in which it appears (eg. from dissonant into consonant or vice-versa).

This dependence is apparent in Proust's description of the perception of music. The melodic line from Vinteuil's sonata is felt by Swann as a movement of sounds of a specific drawing. The hero recalls it and can recognize the phrase, even if it returns in transposition (so the same musical tones are not repeated). Only much later, after listening to the composition many times, Swann notices that the musical phrase that moves him is created out of a precise succession (small distances between intervals) of five sounds, two out of which are repeated. This formal measure focuses the hero's attention and is of utmost importance to him. Thus, at first bewildered by the richness of the impressions, Swann attempts to spontaneously organise stimuli into a whole with the help of poetic and sensual descriptions. After that, he distinguishes the successions of sounds' smaller structures, reaching the most moving musical theme.

In every phase of experiencing a composition we are able to perceive currently emerging structures – writes Lissa – but we both relate it to previously heard ones and anticipate in our imagination the ones which are to come. ... Aside from a projection back there is also a projection forward, expecting something that is to happen, anticipating the next part of a developing whole. In a musical experience we can never have a pure 'now,' it is always an intersection of the current, past and future musical structures.<sup>45</sup>

These considerations lead us to ask how we structuralize a composition. Does every listener follow the same rules? Is this act always going to be subjective? According to Lissa, this manner of structuralizing is dependent on the cultural background: if we are used to certain type of melodic lines, harmonies and cadential resolutions since childhood, we create in our memory certain ready-made schemas that organise our concurrent musical experiences<sup>46</sup>. We treat music that does not fulfil our expectations as a chaotic set of sounds that are not connected with each other and do not have a logical sequence. Unless we expand the repertoire of our musical representation, certain pieces will not be able to become part of our aesthetic experience – whether we speak of medieval works, 20th century avant-garde or music that is exotic to European listener (Hindu, Arabic, etc.)<sup>47</sup>.

The issue of a musical piece and whether it exists independently of the experiencing subject remains an object of a debate. One can distinguish between two main irreconcilable views. The first, formal one, questions the possibility of any content other than sound structures existing in music (e.g., Eduard Hanslick perceives content in music only

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 177.

<sup>46</sup> See: *Ibidem*, pp. 177–179. Obviously not every music can be structuralized along these categories and not everything we encounter in music belongs to the area of musical representations of an ordinary listener.

<sup>47</sup> See: *Ibidem*, p. 179.

in the shape of its sounds)<sup>48</sup>. The second view allows for the existence of meaningful qualities. Lissa, far removed from the poetic optimism that gives meaning to every musical phrase, disagrees with Hanslick, looking instead for the ability to reveal non-musical themes in musical structures beyond program music as well, although these are not real, concrete structures. Music – he writes – speaks to the listener not only as a pure sound construct, but also as arabesques of melodic lines and co-sounds. However, in the act of listening another thing reveals itself, one that Lissa cannot define:

It does not mean that ... there is a sphere of represented items in music, as though sound structures were appointing some subject content, just as in a painting. But sound structures are an expression of a certain content ... which the listener understands intuitively.<sup>49</sup>

An interesting interpretative context is brought by Nelson Goodman's category of exemplification<sup>50</sup>. According to the American philosopher, musical meaning is mainly connected to exemplification, as music does not have as fully-fledged denotative abilities as, for example, literature. However, a musical piece references not the set of qualities it possesses, which we deem important just as we do with the layout of verses in a sonnet or the counterpoint changes in a fugue. As Goodman puts it, Charles Baudelaire's *La musique* is an exemplification of a poem with a sonnet-like layout of rhymes or a poem consisting of alexandrines, which are important for its meaning. At the same time, its profiling is dependent on the subjective act of interpretation.

In this case, the problem yet again concerns the awareness of musical structure, indicating musical "symbols" which should be gathered into a meaningful whole (by whole I mean both cadences, modulations, inversions as well as a more general level). Generally speaking, the key feature of a Baroque *concerto grosso* is the dialogue between a group of soloists and the orchestra. If Alessandro Stradella is the author, we can attempt to find a characteristic way of connecting the *concertino* and *ripieno* parts; if we are listening to *concerto da camera*, we can focus on the suite that follows the prelude and look in there for popular dance forms. When we are listening to jazz, the basis of its understanding is improvisation, while aleatoric music (Luciano Berio, John Cage, Witold Lutosławski) puts the emphasis both on the level of composition and reception of the piece, where accidental events can be crucial to its interpretation. Again, familiarity with convention seems to be incredibly important here, as it grants knowledge about the elements one should look for during the analysis of a score or listening to a composition.

Recognition makes communication possible here, as "exemplification" is understood as determination of formal characteristics of the piece, while exemplification quality concerns the area/class to which the piece belongs. Sometimes exemplification gains

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<sup>48</sup> See e.g.: E. Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revisal of Musical Aesthetics*, trans. G. Cohen, Kessinger Publishing 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Z. Lissa, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>50</sup> See: N. Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, Indianapolis 1968.

an aspect of freshness, of moving past the previous rules (e.g., the groundbreaking *Coffee Cantata* by Bach).

Although Goodman profiles representation, denotation and narrative in a linguistic manner (just as scholars who question musical meaning do) and ignores emotional and psychological aspect of musical perception, his concept can turn out to be fruitful for research. Goodman proposes tools that allow to perceive musical meaning in categories other than negative (considering relationship between denotation and general meaning of the piece) and makes it possible to interpret in semantic categories even an absolute music (exemplification, just as denotation, connects symbol to object).

### Part 3

The listener's subjective, individual interpretation and his competences have been emphasised by all the authors cited above. This also becomes the key concept in the case of post-classical narratology, where we situate cognitive narrative theories. For Marie-Laure Ryan narrative becomes a cognitive construct. The scholar distinguished between "being a narrative" and "possessing narrativity"<sup>51</sup>:

I propose making a distinction between 'being a narrative' and 'possessing narrativity.' The property of 'being a narrative' can be predicated on any semiotic object produced with the intent of evoking a narrative script in the mind of the audience. 'Possessing narrativity,' on the other hand, means being able to evoke such a script. In addition to life itself, pictures, music, or dance can possess narrativity without being narratives in a literal sense.<sup>52</sup>

This is how the act of representation is related to creating in the listener's mind a mental image, which I understand as a kind of mental representation, a set of interconnected information that expand due to associations and recollections which accompany reception of the piece and always carry an emotional baggage<sup>53</sup>. "Mental imaging," writes Magdalena Rembowska-Pluciennik, "is not supposed to construct a clear-quality quasi-perceptual images of the world based on a description, but rather to give the process of reading [or, generally speaking: of perception – JB] and understanding a sensual character"<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> M.-L. Ryan, "On Defining Narrative Media", *Image & Narrative. Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative*, no. 6, <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/mediumtheory/marielauryan.htm> (published 27.05.2015).

<sup>52</sup> Ryan understands script as a mental construct of certain qualities. However, she uses construct synonymously to the mental image, which results in lack of precise terminology. Treating the category of representation as wider and superior to a mental picture, in the following part of my article I shall be referencing the last term. *Eadem*, *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, Lincoln and London 2004, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> For the inseparability of mental imaging and emotional aspect see: T.B. Rogers, "Emotion, Imagery and Verbal Codes. A Closer Look at an Increasingly Complex Interaction", in: *Imagery, Memory and Cognition: Essays in Honor of Allan Paivio*, ed. J. Yuille, New York 1983, pp. 285–305. Rembowska-Pluciennik treats this relationship between the piece, mental image and emotion as a dynamic, multidirectional interaction between three mental codes that coexist in the process of reception. See: M. Rembowska-Pluciennik, "Wizualne efekty i afekty. Obrazowanie mentalne a emocjonalne zaangażowanie czytelnika", *Teksty Drugie* 2009, no. 6, p. 124.

<sup>54</sup> M. Rembowska-Pluciennik, *op. cit.*, pp. 132–133.

Ryan's mental image consists of certain elements: the scholar writes of a world (setting) in which there are intelligent agents (characters), that are subject to non-random changes, and about characters that act and have their own motives. Such a picture also needs to allow for a reconstruction of these motivations and cause-effect relationships<sup>55</sup>. Reception of a musical composition is more dependent than, for example, a literary work, on historical and cultural factors. Its interpretation is based in a larger part on connotation rather than denotation<sup>56</sup>. Cognitive representation, created in the listener's mind, is dependent on his knowledge, but also appears in every situation of reception – so the act of its appearance will not be dependent on competences in this approach<sup>57</sup>. The listener, who gets to know the program or another extradiegetic element, can derive pleasure from recognizing the sequences which represent the story and return to description in order to experience pleasure again. Interpretation that sticks closely to the program can be perceived as an example of a constraint, in which a statement is an example of an attempt to guess the authorial intentions. However, what is important here is not only a specific reference to non-musical content, which enforces a certain way of listening, but also the set of possible ways of reading the piece in the context of its reception<sup>58</sup>. Authorial hints can also be an incentive to discover the interpretative possibilities.

Depending on his competences, in the act of listening (and/or reading the score) the listener recognizes the musical signs and individually places music in a context. This way, the piece is structuralized and consistent. According to Fred E. Maus, it can connect music to a story:

The notion of a musical story is not an alternative to the notions of musical experiences or musical worlds. They are related as follows: a listener may have a unified experience, and that experience may include the imagining of a fictional world, and the events within that fictional world that may form a story.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, in the act of listening (and experiencing) music, treating the piece (its structure) as a story turns it into a consistent whole. Practices of narrativizing a musical piece are

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<sup>55</sup> Eadem, *On Defining Narrative Media...*, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> See: Werner Wolf's model, where the scholar introduces the sequential nature of various areas in the context of their codification: W. Wolf, "Das Problem der Narrativität in Literatur, bildender Kunst und Musik: Ein Beitrag zu einer intermedialen Erzähltheorie", in: *Erzähltheorie transgenerisch, intermedial, interdisziplinär*, ed. Vera Nünning and Ansgar Nünning, Trier 2002, pp. 23–104.

<sup>57</sup> Rembowska-Pluciennik emphasises that in case of mental imaging (e.g. visualization while listening to a composition) we can speak of an experiential character of the very moment of listening. Thus the process of reflection, interpretation or aesthetic evaluation is excluded in the moment of first contact with the composition, as it requires a multiple contact. In this case, however, such an interpretation or reflection can happen at the very moment when the listener learns, for example, the title of the musical composition (which gives him an idea of the genre conventions or inspirations etc.). See: M. Rembowska-Pluciennik, op. cit., pp. 132–133. For more in individual differences in mental imaging see also: A. Paivio, "Individual Differences in Coding Processes", in: *Mind and Its Evolution: A Dual Coding Theoretical Approach*, Psychology Press 2006, pp. 317–325.

<sup>58</sup> See: D. Attridge, "'Wykonywanie' metafory. Jednostkowość literackiego obrazowania", trans. B. Lutostańska, M. Nowicka, *Tekstualia* 2012, no 4 (31), p. 187.

<sup>59</sup> F. E. Maus, "Concept of Musical Unity", in: *Rethinking Music*, ed. N. Cook and M. Everist, Oxford 1999, p. 183.

very often encountered in literature, critique or concert programs. Let us quote a short fragment of a program of a performance of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Eroica* from 1843:

This great work was commenced when Napoleon was first Consul, and was intended to portray the workings of that extraordinary man's mind. In the first movement, the simple subject keeping its uninterrupted way through harmonies that at times seem in almost chaotic confusion, is a grand idea of Napoleon's determination of character. The second movement is descriptive of the funeral honors paid to one of his favorite Generals, and is entitled Funeral March on the Death of a Hero. The winding up of the movement represents the faltering steps of the last gazers into the grave, and the listener hears the tears fall onto the coffin. ...<sup>60</sup>

We can see clearly here that the author of the "explanation" relates aspects of Beethoven's piece (solemn character of the theme, irregular rhythm) to his own interpretation of the content (hero's determination, faltering steps of the funeral attendees). Creating interpretations of musical "events" and constructing a story around them allows listeners to grasp them, and *can be perceived as a typical activity of a listener while listening to music*. "As accounts of what happened to particular people in particular circumstances," writes David Herman, "stories are found in every culture and subculture and can be viewed as a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, proces, and change"<sup>61</sup>.

This is followed by Kitty Klein, who describes narrative as an effect of a human need for communicating and making sense of the world<sup>62</sup>. Essential here is the ability to create a linguistic interpretation of the composition, as well as to structuralize one's own experience, which allows to gather these recognitions into a whole and present it to the listener<sup>63</sup>. Stories are both cultural artefacts and a way of speaking about a composition. They become a presentation of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, desires, and imagination. Examples cited above prove that narratives that emerge in the process of listening make it possible to reach events that are distant in time and space, and, most of all, to reach an experience of another person<sup>64</sup>. Thus, it becomes obvious that listening to music is not an objective process.

The process of constructing a narrative happens in at least two directions. When observing single motifs and harmonic and rhythmic changes, the listener can already build basic knowledge about the piece and state interpretative hypotheses. Identifying

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<sup>60</sup> Excerpt is taken from the New York Philharmonic Society's performance program for 18 February 1843; it can be accessed through New York Philharmonic Digital Archives: <http://archives.nyphil.org/>.

<sup>61</sup> D. Herman, "Introduction", in: *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*, D. Herman (ed.), Stanford 2003, pp. 1–30.

<sup>62</sup> See: K. Klein, "Narrative Construction, Cognitive Processing, and Health", in: D. Herman, *Narrative Theory*, op. cit., pp. 56–84.

<sup>63</sup> See: V. Meelberg, "Sounds Like a Story: Narrative Travelling from Literature to Music and Beyond", in: *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*, ed. S. Heinen and R. Sommer, Berlin-New York 2009, pp. 246–247.

<sup>64</sup> D. Herman, "Introduction", op. cit., p. 8.

the elements deemed important (structurally, as well as semantically; e.g., rhetorical figures, symbols, intertextual references), he/she puts them in context based on his/her own presuppositions – knowledge about the piece, its program, author, period etc. The more there are simple tropes and symbols that can be agreed upon on the intersubjective level, the more there are hypotheses that fill in the blanks, and create the final interpretation of the piece: in this case, the narrative.

A wider approach is presented by Mieke Bal, who approaches a narrative as a representation of a temporal development. She uses as an example the act of constructing a house; it can be treated as a sequence of events – if it is possible to record the process of construction. In this way, the structure of a musical composition will always remain a process – and I mean here not only the act of composing a piece, but also the act of performing/(re)creating it every time. Bal's approach indicates a twofold understanding of a narrative: as an internal characteristic of a musical piece and as a feature that only actualizes during the act of reception<sup>65</sup>. It is also compatible with Ryan's approach.

Interpretation is an inseparable aspect of the act of listening. Such an "aural reception" becomes the source of meaning: a musical piece, separated from the composer, is created in the act of listening and depends on the individual predispositions of the listener<sup>66</sup>. In this article, I have signalled the existence of two types of musical compositions, presented as opposites: the first of these is exemplified by compositions which "meaning" *actualizes in the individual interpretation* of each listener. This type is represented, for example, by etudes, fugues, and sonatas – that is, compositions without a title, a comment and another signal connected to the attempts at *assigning them meaning*. However, due to their key, rhythm or harmony, they can become an incentive for the memories, emotions or perceptions of the listener. The other type are pieces that *possess an intention to tell a story* or even to signal certain ideas, moods, emotions. In this case, the listener also plays a key role. Just as important as the compositional aspects of the composition is the ability of the listener to narrativize music and the cultural context in which it appears. In other words, narrative reception of a musical composition is based both on the narrative clues in the piece itself, as well as on the interpretative strategy of the listener, which is also dependent on the cultural aspect.

In this approach the act of narrativizing a composition (presented as a performance or in a written form) could be related to 1) recognizing in the text a formal rule and important symbols, quotes, intertextual and rhetorical tropes, genre conventions etc., 2) combining these elements into a coherent whole (in the case of program music that would be finding the most important meaningful structures for the program), 3) filling in the places of uncertainty with connecting a coherent vision at this level with emotions, as well as created mental images.

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<sup>65</sup> See: M. Bal, "The Point of Narratology", *Poetics Today* 1990, vol. 11, pp. 727–753.

<sup>66</sup> Talking about predispositions of the listener, I mean the ability to read notes, decode important symbols and rhetorical figures, analyse motifs and larger parts; knowledge about the musical history context, form, etc. Non-professional listener is not able to build as rich mental image as a professional. He will concentrate on the mood of the piece and assign emotional dimension to his own interpretational narrative. In other words, his commitment to the narrative depends mostly on the emotional level.

## Part 4

Works from the area of postclassical narratology and intermedial studies allow us to treat music as a medium of little narrative potential, but they emphasise the role of the listener and his activity in the process of listening (and reading notes). Narrativity is supposed to actualize itself in contact with the recipient: by narrativizing the piece, we are interpreting it as narrative<sup>67</sup>, and through that we reconstruct the structures in which temporal relations are identified and perceived. Karlheinz Stockhausen wrote that music represents relations in a temporal order<sup>68</sup>. He probably had in mind the subsequent sequences: changes of themes in fugue or variations, changes happening after the exposition in sonata form etc. However, we should specify the understanding of “temporal development” of a musical piece.

Music creates an impression of tension, of sequencing, thus the conviction that one musical event is a result of another<sup>69</sup>. Let us reference here the structure of a dominant seventh chord, which is usually resolved to the tonic. The opposition between the growth of tension and its diffusion is one of the most important form-creating means in tonal music. The listener has certain expectations concerning the resolution of the dominant. I also think here of an amateur listener, who will not be able to name the dominant structure, but will also certainly expect a resolution. This is how we can explain expectations created by music and the impression that musical events on the structural level are connected by cause-effect relations<sup>70</sup>. In this approach, musical performance is accompanied by an *impression* of its linear development in time and purpose.

In *The Meaning of the Body* Mark Johnson draws our attention to the metaphors we use to define our own experience of listening to a musical composition. All the non-professional (non-musicological) conceptualizations and descriptions of music make use of metaphors with roots in our sensorimotor perception of the piece of music<sup>71</sup>. Johnson repeatedly states that music references emotions. Looking at the situation in two dimensions seems interesting: stories evoke certain emotions, but emotions also contain stories. Patrick Colm Hogan defines emotions as mini-narratives because they consist of a casual aspect

<sup>67</sup> See: M. Fludernik, “Natural Narratology and Cognitive Parameters”, in: D. Herman, *Narrative Theory*, op. cit., pp. 243–267.

<sup>68</sup> Vincent Meelberg points out that we are acting in the area of individual interpretation, while the cause-effect relations, which function in research that deals with the problems of narrative in music, have to be treated metaphorically. Musical events are not the reason for consecutive events, but they can be *interpreted* as their cause; listener can treat the sequence of events as cause of the development and change from one state into another. Creating such projections allows us to achieve an impression of a better “understanding” of music. See: V. Meelberg, op. cit., p. 247; M. Grant, *Serial Music, Serial Aesthetics: Compositional Theory in Post-War Europe*, Cambridge 2001, p. 135.

<sup>69</sup> Talking about an event, I have in mind the second approach by Peter Hühn [event II]; the scholar defines an event in respect to an unexpected change of state that is dependent on the interpreter’s decision. Thereby narrative is treated as a representation of changes with particular properties. In the context of a musical composition I treat an event as a separate whole, perceived as such by the listener, possessing boundaries in the musical piece. See: P. Hühn, “Event and Eventfulness”, entry in: *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, [http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Event\\_and\\_Eventfulness](http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Event_and_Eventfulness) [access: 30.06.2015].

<sup>70</sup> These cause-effect relations appear to the recipient as one of the most important ways of structuralizing experience in a narrative.

<sup>71</sup> M. Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, Chicago 2007, pp. 235–262.

(are reactions to an event) and express certain events (reaction evoked by the emotions)<sup>72</sup>. In contrast to professionals, who can listen to a piece and closely analyse, for example, its rhythmic and harmonic changes, most listeners treat a composition in an imaginative and emotional manner, reacting to perceived changes in tempo, rhythm, articulation, dynamics, key<sup>73</sup>. Music influences the corporeal reaction of the listening subject: pulse, nervous system, muscle work etc. Accelerated rhythm is related to excitation, while slow tempo and steady rhythm relates to calmness. Musical pieces can be easily classified into a group of compositions that allow us to relax before sleep, influence our concentration during work, and compositions that are dynamic, and organize rhythm during physical exercise. Music can move us, influence our emotions or even stimulate changes in our behaviour. The act of listening is related to feeling a musical movement: experiencing interval skips, waving, rising and falling, tension and release, rush and calmness. Each sequence of the composition is characterised by an appropriate key, dynamics, articulation and is mirrored by the reception of the piece, which includes our own muscular and nervous reaction<sup>74</sup>. We are moved because music orders our experience through musical qualities, which we feel corporally. Here is where Johnson seeks his inspirations; according to him, a musical piece is both a corporeal and intellectual experience<sup>75</sup>. Writing of music as a movement, the scholar references a well-known thesis by Austrian music critic Eduard Hanslick, writing in the second half of the 19th century. He was of the opinion that music exists only while it is being experienced; it is not a musical score, but a complicated experience of sounds, grouped into succeeding sequences<sup>76</sup>. Thus, everything that we feel as real – musical time and space – exists only through actual experience.

When Johnson relates the meaning of music to a certain way of experiencing – not with program or other non-musical qualities – and with the manner, in which musical sequences and their relationships evoke an emotional and intellectual, individual reaction of the listener, he remains true to the conception of Derek Attridge. Attridge defines a piece of art in the categories of alterity, invention and singularity. Alterity in time happens not only on the level of generations and periods, but also on the level of single acts of recreation (in the case of music it is listening), while the listener takes part in the process of the composition's development<sup>77</sup>. Alterity thus relates to the identity of the composition, while invention and understanding of singularity depend on the willingness for change and new contexts. These three features create a challenge for the expectations and habits of a listener<sup>78</sup>. A musical piece is considered here in the context of individual performances, which happen through, firstly, reading the score in silence (we recreate the melodic line, harmonic sequences etc. in our imagination), secondly, individual

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<sup>72</sup> See: P.C. Hogan, *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories*, 2011, pp. 30–69.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 247–255.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>76</sup> E. Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, transl. G. Payzant, Indianapolis, IN 1986.

<sup>77</sup> M. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, London 1982, p. 202.

<sup>78</sup> D. Attridge, "Wykonywanie" metafory. Jednostkowość literackiego obrazowania, *op. cit.*, pp. 183–197.

performance of the piece or its fragment, thirdly – experiencing someone else’s performance. In all these cases, as Attridge claims, it will be in fact our own performance of the piece, because our reaction always demands creativity. The element that constructs a musical event is an element of freshness and surprise. As Donald Davidson explains<sup>79</sup>, it is a built in aesthetic function which we experience in a new way, as, for example, a deceptive rhythm or a surprise in Joseph Haydn’s *Symphony No. 94*. The essential element of experiencing musical events is reading their sequentiality. This brings new semantic possibilities – and with them emotional, somatic ones – that become the result of recognizing the relationship between one sequence and another. This is an example of a continuum, in which individual sequences, which fulfill to a greater or smaller extent the expectations of a listener, are related to the interpretation/invention of the listener. Davidson would say that the experience of music is related to deriving pleasure from decoding these sequences<sup>80</sup>. As we consider a musical piece in the act of its performance, we need to reference in the same manner both the piece (as the artefact that had been created) and the process of its creation in the act of performing<sup>81</sup>.

We should reference here John Cage’s *4’33’’*, the famous 1952 composition in three parts. The first performance by David Tudor<sup>82</sup> consists of the following sequences: the pianist sits at the piano, opens the fallboard and sits in complete silence for thirty seconds, after which he closes the fallboard. He opens it again and proceeds to sit in silence for another two minutes and twenty-three seconds. After that he closes and opens the fallboard once again, this time sitting in silence for one minute and forty seconds. All this time he is accompanied by a ticking clock, which helps the pianist to measure subsequent parts of the piece. Finally, the artist closes the fallboard and leaves the scene. Interpretative suggestion made apparent in a TV coverage of the premiere was to turn off the sound, which was supposed to help perceive all the sounds from the surroundings during the concert. The listener would experience the singularity of the piece (performance) and its uniqueness in time and place. This way, the experience of the piece’s temporality had been emphasised. Such a gesture from the composer brings forward questions about the concept of silence and its meaning, as well as the situation of the listener, who is confronted with such a performance<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> D. Davidson, “Co oznaczają metafory”, in: *O metaforze*, Sh. Sacks (ed.), Chicago 1979, p. 36.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 191.

<sup>81</sup> Attridge claims that a piece of art possesses features of individuality, invention and variability. It carries the need to find a way of reacting with similar individuality, invention and variability in the process of reception. See: D. Attridge, “Wykonywanie” metafory: *Jednostkowość literackiego obrazowania*, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HypmW4Yd7SY> [access: 30.06.2015].

<sup>83</sup> Inspired by Zen Buddhism and Indian music, Cage understands the practice of music as a way of calming the mind, opening up to the world and everything that happens, to a process. I omit the *4’33’’* interpretations in context of the Fluxus group aesthetics, minimalism, new communications paradigm, preferring to focus my attention on signaling a new manner of looking at acoustic space, on the singularity of the performed piece, singularity of the acts of listening, and finally – on the contact with emotions of an observant listener. See: W. Duckworth, *Talking Music. Conversations with John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Andreson and Five Generations of American Experimental Composers*, New York 1999.

Derek Attridge writes that he perceives “performing” a piece of art as recreating it into the individual Other, which influences the cultural and historical situation of the performing subject. Each performance is singular because of aspects such as narrative dynamics or emotional possibilities of the sounds. Attridge emphasises that, instead of passively observing a performance, *he lives through it*<sup>84</sup>.

A musical composition exists in the process of performing it. Experiencing it is related to the aspect of temporality, processuality. The act of listening to music becomes a participation in an event that engages the listener on a rational level (knowledge, superstitions), emotional, associative and somatic<sup>85</sup>, a participation through the process of narrativizing the music. Such an approach makes the experiencing subject the centre of attention. Narrative becomes an account of an experiencing subject, a reading of his/her individual experiences, cognitive and communicative process of creation, identification and interpretation of the piece experienced in time<sup>86</sup>. The study of musical narrative can be treated as a framework for searching for methods of reading a musical piece. Narrativizing makes it possible to reflect on the temporality of a composition and to reach various modes of its reception. It shall always remain related to the act of active listening and to the listener’s personal contribution to the created work – and, through that, to attaining a new understanding of the work.

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<sup>84</sup> D. Attridge, “Wykonywanie” metafory: Jednostkowość literackiego obrazowania, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>85</sup> I deliberately do not speak of this level as “affective”. Although in psychiatry and psychology it is directly related to the expression of emotions, in musicology it has much larger connotations. Affective theory usually concerns an accepted code, created out of rhetorical and musical figures, imitating, representing, which are assigned a certain term or feeling – which allows to strengthen on an intersubjective level the meaning of the compositions.

<sup>86</sup> It remains in agreement with David Herman’s approach. See: *idem Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Science*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.