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## From the Editors

On behalf of the Editorial Board, we are pleased to present Volume Nine of *Musicological Explorations*, a journal published by the graduate students in music of the University of Victoria. The intent of the journal is to enrich musicological discourse at the university level, providing a forum for scholarly work by graduate students and faculty.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the board for their work and dedication this past year. We would also like to thank our Faculty Advisor, Dr. Susan Lewis Hammond for her invaluable assistance and guidance in producing this year's journal. For their generous funding contributions, we gratefully acknowledge the Faculty of Fine Arts, the Faculty of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Student's Society, and the School of Music at the University of Victoria. Moreover, proceeds from the sale of books generously donated by the University of Victoria Library greatly assisted this undertaking. Many thanks are also extended to Bill Livant for his valued donations.

We look to the continued success of the journal and of the authors whose work is published herein. We hope that our readers will continue to support the journal through subscriptions and submissions.

David Cecchetto and Deborah Hopper  
Managing Editors



## Distracting Music

*Dylan Robinson*

I deplore ‘stunts’. Those tediously meandering compositions that endeavor to distract the listener from the lack of musical content by various gimmicks such as flashing lights and projections! <sup>1</sup>

- Interview with Canadian composer Barbara Pentland

Music in a concert-hall must rely on itself and the perfection of its execution; it is, as it were, under glass.<sup>2</sup>

- Ezra Pound

Barbara Pentland’s statement demonstrates a typical modernist distaste for interdisciplinary influence, a tendency representative of the larger modernist project to distill each art form to its purest essence. Pentland here rejects the inclusion of visual elements in concert music performance as a mere strategy to draw the listener’s attention away from a lack of compositional skill and toward the sensational and dazzling content of visual disruption. Her statement, moreover, implies that proficient composers should require only the purity of musical content in order to communicate their ideas. To raise the infamous musicological spectre of “the music itself,” music is here understood as self-sufficient, then, while the extra-musical elements are relegated to frivolous ornamentation, as “gimmick”.

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<sup>1</sup> “Barbara Pentland: a Portrait,” *Musicanada*, no.21 (1969): 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> R Murray Schafer, ed., *Ezra Pound and Music. The Complete Criticism*, (New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1977): 82.

Ezra Pound's dictum provides a similar conceptualization of artistic autonomy. Pound's image, however, takes Pentland's case for musical purity a step further, depicting a scene wherein the event of performance itself is secured against outside influence. The latent imagery in Pound's description is suggestive of the stage and musicians behind the glass of a museum display case or a Petrie dish. These controlled and contained environments will, in Pound's conception, allow the listener to objectively evaluate the music they hear. These examples of the ideal concert experience describe situations of 'pure contemplation', in which the listener may examine the musical object in order to pinpoint its essence. Indeed, this idealized (purist) performance aesthetic could be considered an aural microscope, allowing the listener to hear the form and structure to the same degree of detail. The ascetic environment of the concert hall becomes the ideal space for pure contemplation.

This article will focus primarily on the development of autonomous reception across the arts and music, and the associated assumption that the alternative to this pure contemplation, distracted reception, promotes a disengaged attitude toward the work under consideration. The particular conceptualization of distraction in the context of this article contrasts the term's standard characterization as lackadaisical or careless, instead using the term in its capacity for critique of tacitly approved systems of reception as processes for uncovering truth claims. In essence, this article proposes a re-inscription of distracted reception as a foil to directed and authoritarian viewing practices, acting in opposition



to normative, teleological, and structural regimes of contemplation. This article thus purposefully re-deploys distraction as a practice that actively critiques the very assumed values of creative and critical production and reception that it also relies on. In effect, distraction is an act of complication, complicating both the efficiency and primacy of ‘clear communication’ promoted in formalist and structural listening practices, and objectivist discursive traditions. Ultimately, distraction acts as a method for wresting agential power from the artist in order to increase the agency of the spectator, who thereby is able to engage in reception as a continuous dialectic process of examination in which contradiction and polysemy are embraced instead of eliminated. Related to the Situationist practice of the *dérive*,<sup>3</sup> distraction provides a method to circumvent normative structures for reception, propelling the viewer to enter into self-determined dialogic relationships. The autonomy of pure viewing practices, directed by the spaces of viewing themselves (the petrie dish under the microscope, the glass case of the museum), fetishizes art-as-object and curtails the possibility of reading the event, the syntax of the overall

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<sup>3</sup> “One of the basic Situationist practices is the *dérive* [literally: “drifting”], a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll. In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there.” Guy-Ernest Debord, “Theory of the *Dérive*,” *Internationale Situationniste* #2, (1958): 1.

presentation, as a practice of critical inquiry and meta-cognition. Distraction thus promotes perception of the object as part of a system of presentation: the spectator is not only able to contemplate the object, but to read the work as a part of its periphery.

To begin, I will situate distraction in relation to structural listening, the privileged listening regime (and fantasy ideal) for the autonomous contemplation of Western Art music. Despite structural listening's arguable usage in actual listening practices, the discourse that surrounds this practice hangs heavily over both non-specialist and specialist audience engagement, and is reinforced through the physical immobilization of non-embodied listening that takes place in the concert hall. Following my conceptual examination of structural listening, I will examine the larger historical and epistemological contexts of distraction, while paying particularly close attention to early modernist debates surrounding the effects of distracted reception in film and theatre as exemplified by the writings of Walter Benjamin and Bertold Brecht. Though of limited use to my final formulation of *viewer-centered distraction* due to their emphasis on the teleological synthesis of the dialectic, these early modernist writings do provide a useful framework in their description of the 'shock' of distraction; they gesture toward the re-appraisal of juxtaposition, difference, and otherness of context as an important factor in understanding the object itself. Benjamin and Brecht's theorizations of what can be called techniques of *forced distraction*<sup>4</sup> are a direct assault upon

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<sup>4</sup> Acknowledgement is given to David Cecchetto for first suggesting the terms forced distraction and viewer-centered

historical theories of distraction constructed not merely a passive form of reception, but condemned as immoral and degenerate behaviour. Benjamin and Brecht thus provide a useful starting point for theorizations of distraction as an effective method to heighten critical awareness and the spectator's engagement with the artwork. Extending these theories further, I will argue that, within the (anti)genre of interdisciplinary performance, of which works by John Cage and R. Murray Schafer will be considered as representative, distracted reception provides a model for viewer-centered interpretation. This paradigm cultivates distraction's value as a state of peripatetic critical inquiry, as a process of creation wherein the viewer participates in an authorial capacity.

Implicit in such a mobilization of reception in distraction is the simplistic construction of current practices of artistic engagement as wholly privileging authoritarian teleological regimes. Though I will begin this article with a survey of the development of these regimes, and end with two artists that critique these through their artistic practices, it is important to clarify that my aims here are not simply to renounce all forms of formalism in analysis and reception, nor to promote distraction as unqualified play. I will also here clarify that I do not of course subscribe to distraction as apathy or dis-engagement. The argument I make here is rather for a (re)engagement with distraction as a model of deconstructive

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distraction in response to the first presentation of this research, to clarify the distinction between these modes of engagement.

reception (and listening in particular).<sup>5</sup> Distraction, as argued in this paper, is thus itself a form of attention, though in contradistinction to what has become the commonly held understanding of ‘attention’ in normative listening and viewing practices. The point, then, is not to present distraction as the binary opposite of attention, but rather to draw out the ways in which the two are co-implicated in one another. Thus distraction is always attention, and attention always distraction.

### **Autonomous Listening, or ‘Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain’**

Despite some very recent attempts to move music performance into site-specific contexts,<sup>6</sup> alternative formats for engaged or close listening remain under-implemented in performance and almost completely un-theorized in research. Although a great deal of recent musicology, most notably Lydia Goehr’s *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, has critiqued the concept of the autonomous musical ‘work,’ within the realm of performance itself the dominant tradition of structural listening continues to dominate the curriculum of Western Art Music education, and is a strong indication that this

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<sup>5</sup> Though not developed in this paper, my broader intention with this line of research is to provoke dialogue on what modes of perception formalist approaches “in distraction” might engender.

<sup>6</sup> The Canadian Music Centre’s *New Music in New Places*, in operation in cities across Canada since 2003, is one such program that seeks to challenge the dominant paradigm wherein the audience is immobilized in the concert hall.

autonomy of the musical object is still upheld in contexts of musical practice.<sup>7</sup> Rose Rosengard Subotnick describes the development of structural listening in the writings of Adorno, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky as the aural recognition of musical structure from which one apprehends musical unity as musical meaning. As the imaginary real-time aural equivalent of formalist analysis, Subotnick shows how structural listening has often been privileged in musicological discourse as the ideal strategy for comprehending the unity of a musical work. In this paradigm, the structural development of a compositional idea operates as an organic metaphor that guarantees greatness under a transcendental rubric regarding the perfection of its autotelic ineffability. Thus, the work's organicism, represented through its unified systems and structural integrity, becomes the essence of 'musical meaning', obviating an understanding of the work's multiple social contexts and extra-musical significances. Despite Adorno and Schoenberg's claims that structural listening entails a heightened engagement with the work, Subotnick suggests that it may actually reinforce passive listening, as it is based in a reception strategy of type recognition. This is to say that structural listening, in its emphasis on acknowledging works as instances of, or clever deviations from 'masterstyles', plays a game of matching works to what they exemplify generically or stylistically. Such a

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<sup>7</sup> Goehr traces the emergence of the concept of the autonomous 'work' of music as an object conceived by composers in the eighteenth century. Composers began to consider their compositions discrete, perfectly formed, and completed products.

practice is unmistakably apparent in program notes, for example, which clearly align the trajectories of the works in relation to style, genre, or historical period. The value of structural listening is thus its ability to aid listeners in recognizing how a work demonstrates a specific form in its various levels of structural development, rather than reflecting on the work as part of the broader intertextual network it exists within. Moreover, as in other spaces for autonomous reception, including the white cube of the gallery, the space itself blinds the subject toward all matter extraneous to the object of contemplation itself; the illuminated stage and darkened periphery here act as an obvious metaphor of concealing the presentation apparatus. Not only, then, does structural listening elide the broader social and cultural contexts of music, but its dominance is reinforced by the actual situation of the work's presentation in which the contextual elements of the event are eliminated from the field of perception. While there is indeed much writing on the eighteenth century reception practices wherein music and theatre were only a small part of a larger event, the tendency of these writings is to whimsically dismiss disbursed listening. These traditions, in which the music alternates between foreground and background to social activities, are viewed as antiquated remnants of the past, before the birth of the modern listener.<sup>8</sup> True listening, according to these writings, does not occur in situations where the attention is divided. Disbursed attention is equivocated to inattention.

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<sup>8</sup> J.H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris, A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford, 1992).

The general mistrust of distraction's polyvalent nature also spills over into the often-encountered aesthetic response from those not trained as expert structural listeners. The statement of frustration, that one doesn't 'get it', frequently made in response to anti-teleological contemporary works, is revealing not so much as a comment on the difficulty of these works' accessibility, but is instead indicative of the myth of understanding a singular 'it' as the ideal outcome of an aesthetic experience. Shifting the discourse of distraction from its current connotations of inattention, to a polyvalent, de-centered method of reception allows us to re-conceptualize reception from a goal-oriented search for understanding a product (disrupting the flow of information as stable commodity) to an understanding of reception as a continual process. This process then feeds back to reconstitute the viewer as de-centered, implicated in the becoming of the work.

### **The Threat of Distracted Viewing**

It is difficult to consider distraction as a positive framework for contemplation. Why should we want to introduce something into our processes for reflection that threatens the clarity of perception?

Everyday sight, as described by James Elkins, is already naturally:

...irrational, inconsistent, and undependable. It is immensely troubled, cousin to blindness and sexuality, and caught up in the threads of the unconscious. Our eyes are not ours to command; they roam where they will and then tell us they have only been where we have sent them. No matter how hard we look, we see very little of what we look at. ... Seeing is like hunting and like dreaming, and even like falling in love. It is entangled in the passions, jealousy, violence, possessiveness; and it is soaked in affect, in pleasure and displeasure, and in pain.<sup>9</sup>

The development of the Gaze then, according to interdisciplinary scholar Norman Bryson, can also be understood as a coping mechanism that develops in response to the unrestrained process of the distracted Glance. Unlike the focus of the Gaze, with its promise of reliable information,

The flickering, ungovernable mobility of the Glance strikes at the very root of rationalism...unable to participate in the unitary mysteries of reason, the Glance is relegated to the category of the profane, of that which is outside the temple. Before the geometric order of pictorial composition, the Glance finds itself marginalized...Against the Gaze, the Glance proposes desire, proposes the body...<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: on the Nature of Seeing*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996): 11.

<sup>10</sup> Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of The Gaze*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983): 121.



Against the scopic regimes of the Gaze represented by the disembodied 'eye' of Cartesian Perspectivalism, the distracted Glance, then provides an alternative:

To dissolve the Gaze that returns the body to itself in medusal form, we must willingly enter into the partial blindness of the Glance and dispense with the conception of form as con-sideration, as Arrest, and try to conceive of form instead in dynamic terms, as matter in process...<sup>11</sup>

Norman Bryson's call to action, against Descartes' presentation of vision as a capturing device for knowledge acquisition, proposes a more process-oriented visual mobility. He urges us to consider the poly-scopic practice of the Glance that correspondingly results in polysemic interpretation. The distracted quality of the Glance should not, however, be equated with unengaged reception. This is perhaps the most important point I would like to make in my introduction to distraction: I do not suggest we adopt reception practices that reject rigorous reflection, but indeed that distracted reception can act as such a form precisely through its suspension of form itself. Distraction thus performs a relational troubling of the limited formalist-based procedures for purposeful reception that are privileged in institutional and pedagogical frameworks. In its state of constant suspension, distraction undermines the established notion of rigour itself precisely by insisting on rigour as an active form of relation; as a 'rigouring'. In contemporary society, where, as Richard Schusterman

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<sup>11</sup> Bryson, 131.

writes, “art increasingly [has come] to function as a locus for our habits of sacrilization,”<sup>12</sup> to embrace distraction then also implicitly entails moral judgment wherein the rejection of pure contemplation becomes immoral. The threat of distraction thus becomes the threat of elements that lead the viewer astray from the word of the author-god. Here one is reminded of the rules of sacred music, wherein ornamentation, harmonic innovation, and other generic deviation (as distraction) were disallowed for these very reasons. Art historian and founding member of the Art and Language Group Charles Harrison describes how the ‘proper proceeding’ for the modernist concept of ‘beholding’ in gallery space “was to stand before the work of art, passive, alert and dis-engaged from all interests and preoccupations.”<sup>13</sup> Harrison relates how this method engendered “a kind of formality or closure within Abstractionist discourse, functioning much like the notion of ‘seeing the light’ in the discourse of a religious believer.”<sup>14</sup> As similarly noted by Christopher Small and Leon Botstein, the role of the concert hall has, for the general public, replaced the role of the church, where spiritual edification is received within the silent space of contemplation.<sup>15</sup> Here the composer-god is revered; the metonymy in

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Shusterman, “Entertainment: A Question for Aesthetics,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 43, 3 (July 2003): 13.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991): 154.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998); Leon Botstein, “The Audience,” *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 83, 4 (Winter 1999): 479-486.

hearing 'Mozart', becomes hearing the word of Mozart.

### Historical Contexts of Attention and Distraction

As articulated by Rousseau, "all the fine arts have some unity of object, a source of pleasure they give to the mind: for the attention divided settles nowhere, and when two objects occupy us, it is proof that neither of them satisfy us."<sup>16</sup> This statement is reminiscent of the familiar axiom that great works of art transfix the beholder in a sublime state. It logically follows that the art that promotes distraction is not successful because it does not possess sufficient presence to provoke a meaningful or pleasurable reaction in the viewer. As earlier demonstrated by Pentland's admonitions, distraction is a result of art that lacks coherence. Distraction is here portrayed as the terminus to artistic experience; as soon as the viewer's contemplative state is broken, the meaningful interaction with the work is terminated. Distraction is thus condemned, as it precludes the spectator from properly assessing the singular truth of a work. Reception is positioned as an autonomous act in which the viewer avoids meta-cognitive inter-perceptiveness between content and context.

The beginnings of this fixed viewing practice can be located in the development of perspective in Alberti's treatise *Della Pittura* of 1436. As Norman Bryson notes, prior to the development of perspective

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<sup>16</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, quoted in Matthew Riley, *Musical Listening in the German Enlightenment*, (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004): 48.

“...the construction of the viewing subject is in fact multiply determined; the desired homophony devolves into the polyphonic zigzag of voices mutually out of phase.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, pre-Albertian painting condenses multiple viewer vantage points within the same work. Reacting against painters who “...fail to practice composition, and instead scatter everything about in a confused and haphazard fashion, so that the narrative seems rather to be disordered, than enacted,”<sup>18</sup> Alberti formulated a method which enabled the painter to “locate and measure in perspective all the figures and objects in his picture, which would then appear to the spectator placed at the predetermined viewpoint as a real scene.”<sup>19</sup> This statement also understands the epistemology of painting as an act of locating and measuring through fixed perspective. Although writers sometimes also discuss this tradition of positioning the viewer as if s/he was looking out of a window, it is equally apparent that the perspective that the viewer participates in is also that of the painter who records the scene. The viewer is directed by the painting. Consequently, once the viewer stands in the place of the painter, s/he can then retrieve the painter’s perspective. The fixed position of the viewer can be correlated with the single statement the viewer is meant to discern from the work.

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<sup>17</sup> Bryson, 102.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Harold Osborne, "Perspective, 7. The perspective constructions of Brunelleschi and Alberti," in *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*. Ed. Hugh Brigstocke. Oxford University Press, 2001, available at Grove Art Online, <http://www.groveart.com/> Oxford University Press, 2005, accessed on 28 January, 2006.

The etymology of the word distraction can be traced to the latin *distractus*, past participle of *distrabere*, to “draw in different directions,” from *dis-*, “away” and *trahere*, “to draw.” Although neither of the definitions “to draw in different directions” or “to pull apart,”<sup>20</sup> suggest any particular evaluative judgment, the word has, through the years, come to acquire many negative connotations. Firstly, as a noun it implies frivolous pleasure. Here one may think of seventeenth century French *divertissement* and the later *divertimenti*, both forms of ‘table music’ or background music that provide a pleasing diversion to a main event. These forms reflect the social function that music played in gatherings where it was customary to let one’s attention move between conversation, eating, listening, and even singing along with (or sometimes against) the music. Similarly, the sense of distraction as light entertainment is also reflected in Brecht’s description of the German word *Zerstreuung*. Although the term has a similar etymology to distraction, with *streuung* meaning to scatter or spread, Brecht defines it as a passive form of viewing for the “sated class”.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, the term distraction suggests a potentially hazardous action (such as when driving a car) or a vice such as laziness. As noted by William Bogard, distraction is also a threat to the social

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<sup>20</sup> William Bogard, “Distraction and Digital Culture,” available at [http://ctheory.net/text\\_file.asp?pick=131](http://ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=131), accessed on 22 March 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Howard Eiland, “Reception in Distraction,” *Boundary 2*, 30, 1 (2003): 51.

control desired by institutions:

In Catholic theology, for example, a world without distraction is one where nothing disturbs one's prayers to God – distractions, such as uncontrolled or impure thoughts, are a sign of man's imperfection and inherent sinfulness. For bureaucracy, it is a world of dutiful, law-abiding, on-time citizens; for the school, a classroom of focused and docile students; for Capital, a shop of committed workers.<sup>22</sup>

Distraction, as opposed to these forms of control, provides a site of resistance.

Nineteenth century writings in psychology demonstrate how what was taken to be distraction's binary opposite, attention, became the moral standard by which proper contemplation was judged. The late nineteenth century psychologist Max Nordau thus links degenerate behaviors with distraction:

Untended and unrestrained by attention, the brain activity of the degenerate and hysterical is capricious and without aim or purpose. Through the unrestricted play of association, representations are called into consciousness and run riot there. Weakness or want of attention produces, then, in the first place false judgments respecting the objective universe, respecting the qualities of things and their relations to each other. Consciousness acquires a distorted and blurred view of the external world...Culture and command over the powers of nature are solely the result of [focused] attention; all errors the consequence of defective attention.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bogard, [http://ctheory.net/text\\_file.asp?pick=131](http://ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=131) accessed 5 December 2005

<sup>23</sup> Max Nordau, quoted in Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999): 17.

This quote, taken from Nordau's 1892 book *Degeneration* paints a clear portrait of normative attentive behaviour in the nineteenth century. It presents distraction as an intellectual deficiency, as a symptom of illness, or, as Théodule Ribot claims, of cultural inferiority.<sup>24</sup>

As early as Descartes' writings on attention as the key to "intellectual illumination [that] brings our ideas out of obscurity", focused perception, in the tradition of Cartesian Perspectivalism, has been aligned with moral standards and the precision and clarity of knowledge.<sup>25</sup> These claims are difficult to dispute, as it is commonly assumed that attention (here used in its commonly misconstrued form as a combination of time and energy spent) applied to study most often results in some form of appreciation of the work in question; however, in relation to the understanding of distraction as an unacceptable or immoral model of reception within the positivist paradigm, the concept should be analyzed as a viable form of artistic reception. As a mode of critical reception and inter-perceptiveness, distraction is a tool that compliments other forms of artistic reception through the very process of undermining them; the constitution of the 'appreciation' that is gained through the (traditional) concept of attention is itself attended to through the mobilization of distraction. Again, then, I posit a definition of

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<sup>24</sup> Crary notes that Ribot *Psychologie de L'Attention* (1889) was a primary source for Nordau's *Degeneration*. In *Psychologie de L'Attention* Ribot classifies distraction as the characteristic of "children, prostitutes, savages, vagabonds and South Americans," 35.

<sup>25</sup> Riley, 11.

distracted reception that promotes moving between, as an inter-perceptive mode that de-privileges hierarchical, autonomous, and teleological regimes of reception. Even further, I posit distraction as the very foundation (sic) that interdisciplinary scholarship is built upon.

### **Techniques of *Forced Distraction***

Although the response to distraction has been historically linked to a lack of control over one's perceptual abilities, Benjamin and Brecht argue (against prevailing modernist attitudes) for distraction as a positive method of heightening perception and increasing engagement. These methods are what could be called methods of forced distraction: distraction used as a structuring device to provoke the viewer into adopting a critical attitude to the work at moments of jarring juxtaposition.

In Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", the concept of 'reception in distraction' is treated not only as a method of appreciating cinema, but also as a defining feature of modern society. As Frederic Schwartz describes,

Benjamin defines distraction by contrasting it with the immersion of traditional aesthetic contemplation; he sees the latter as passive and the former, in its dispersal of attention, characteristic of the cognitive state of the competent, experienced practitioner of a trade or profession.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Schwartz, 420.



Coinciding with the constant barrage of advertising images, the fast-paced nature of city life and the rapid transitions of mass media, Benjamin presents distraction as a form of perception demonstrated most clearly in cinema's use of montage, the technique by which a single pictorial composition is made by juxtaposing several sequences. In film, Benjamin reasons, "reception in distraction" finds its true training ground because of its suitability for capturing the fast-paced essence of modern life.

Benjamin continues his essay with a critique of the French writer Georges Duhamel, who expresses anxiety that the cinema is:

...a pastime for helots, a diversion for uneducated, wretched, worn-out creatures who are consumed by their worries...a spectacle which requires no concentration and presupposes no intelligence...which kindles no light in the heart and awakens no hope other than the ridiculous one of someday becoming a 'star' in Los Angeles...<sup>27</sup>

Like Descartes, Duhamel assumes that while the masses seek distraction, pure concentration is an essential requirement in order for the spectator to appreciate the full message of a work. Moreover, Duhamel treats the genre of cinema itself as a distraction, as a frivolous activity opposed to the serious act of artistic contemplation. Cinema, as distracting entertainment, is built from an array of

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<sup>27</sup> Duhamel, quoted in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Hanna Arendt, ed. *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968): 239.

distractions used in montage. Since cinema promotes viewing a quick succession of visually pleasing images that interrupt each other, the viewer does not need to engage in the artistic act of contemplation. His argument presupposes that for the work to be of value, the viewer needs to engage with it in a focused and uninterrupted meditation. A later quote reveals Duhamel's reaction to the futility in contemplating cinema, for as soon as his eye has grasped a scene it is already changed: "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images."<sup>28</sup>

To counter Duhamel's distaste for the shock effect of the film, Benjamin argues that montage instead creates a heightened presence of mind *through* distraction. The moment of shock, or interruption of one image by another causes the viewer to fuse together the two meanings into a single reading. Benjamin thus argues that distraction through montage from one image to another results in a dialectical transformation and a more complex engagement with the work as a whole. Notwithstanding Benjamin's thesis, it is important for us to distinguish between the uses of montage in specific works as well as to place the reception of montage in a historical context. As with any utterance, the speed and intensity of the material (in this case the juxtaposed film clips) determines the legibility of the language. Moreover, whereas a greater intensity of montage is legible now, the inceptive stage of montage's development was more similar to the point at which one tries to understand a full conversation of

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<sup>28</sup> Duhamel, 238.

a language they are just learning. The reactionary critiques of Duhamel and Kracauer should ultimately be read in this light.

What further complicates Benjamin's theorization of distraction is the inconsistency of a second characterization of the concept.<sup>29</sup> Later in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin discusses the concept of distracted viewing as similar to the *tactile appropriation* that occurs in the reception of architecture:

Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception - or rather, by touch and sight...the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.<sup>30</sup>

The viewer, in effect, understands the work through embodied reception, though passing through the art/architecture and contemplating and exploring its form through experience of attentive distraction. In viewing film, Benjamin reasons that the viewer develops a kind of virtual tactile appropriation in response to the sensuous and overwhelming nature of

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<sup>29</sup> As further noted by Howard Eiland in his discussion of Benjamin and distraction, due to a simultaneously "positive" and "negative" attitude toward the concept, a clear understanding remains particularly elusive. Although, as with the meta-conceptual aspect of Benjamin's *Arcades*, it could be argued that the lack of continuity mimics the concept of distraction itself.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Hanna Arendt, ed. *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968): 240.

the form. In this, Benjamin calls to mind the previously discussed critique of beholding and of Duchamp's rejection of the retinal effect of painting in favour of activating critical thinking in his presentation of 'undecidable' situations and objects. Although we may critique the power of film to create the jarring disjunctions that provoke the viewer into critical reflection in the current shock-centered violence of movies today, in the historical context of the early 1930s this technique would have had a much different effect. It is clear from both of Benjamin's essays that the new role of the viewer was to be that of an examiner, a role also advocated by Bertold Brecht.

This new role of the audience member as an examiner is reflected in the didactic potential of art that is a consistent theme in the writings and Epic Theatre creations of Bertold Brecht. In Brecht's concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*, loosely translated as alienation effect, but also referred to as defamiliarization, distanciation and 'making strange', the sudden interruption of the narrative with non-naturalistic elements such as song, placards, and gestures promotes conscious reflection through breaks in the realism of narrative. Like montage, the interruption of the image with another causes the viewer to step back from viewing the work as a pleasing entertainment and adopt a more critical stance to the fractured moment of abstraction. As

Howard Eiland notes:

Whether by means of sudden intervention of song, the use of caption, or what Brecht calls the gestic conventions of the actors, the interruption of sequences creates gaps that undermine the audience's illusion of a 'world' on the stage and make room for critical reflection...it brings the action to a halt, occasioning surprise, and hence compels the spectator to adopt an attitude toward the situation in question.<sup>31</sup>

Through this technique, Brecht sought a kind of reception in which the audience would experience discovery through alienation, though the shock of otherness. Rather than soothing or warming the audience, the 'alienation effect' defamiliarizes ordinary actions and objects and consequently promotes contemplation through distraction from realism. In Brecht's writings he describes this break in narrativity as a type of distraction with a pedagogic function, promoting critical reflection. The alienation effect has the ability to counteract "the 'witchcraft' (*Magie*), the 'hypnosis,' 'the fog,' the state of trance induced in spectators of bourgeois theatre – a state which Brecht compares to that of "sleepers dreaming restlessly with their eyes open."<sup>32</sup> Brecht viewed his technique of distraction as a positive method able to enhance the didactic nature of theatre. Again to historically contextualize this practice, we must make note that, as with the effect of film montage, Brecht's alienation technique would also have had greater currency in its time. Since the inclusion of non-narrative or absurdist

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<sup>31</sup> Eiland, 53.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 34.

elements of contemporary theatre is more commonplace, an audience member may not be distracted at all when an 'out of place' element is introduced into a performance. The overall success of *Verfremdungseffekt* as distraction is dependent on the preceding seamlessness of the work. The audience needs to be enrapt before this rapture can be broken.

Unlike Wagner's conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, where the arts are unified in service of developing the dramatic narrative, Brecht promotes the radical separation of artistic elements so that they can be used as tools to break the narrative. This idea of disparate media working in conjunction, or what Sergei Eisenstein would later call 'polyphonic montage' is here understood as an attempt to create a system in which all the elements would be equal, as if each were functioning as a circus attraction, contributing to the whole. In his 1923 essay on theatre, "The Montage of Attractions," Eisenstein proposed a system of 'attractions' – aggressive actions in the presentation of a theatrical work – that subjected the audience "to emotional or psychological influence... calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator," an idea that Eisenstein relates to the model of Grand Guignol and the traditional circus.<sup>33</sup> Eisenstein's metaphor of circus attractions as polyphonic montage is somewhat misleading, however, for circus attractions are often experienced as discrete events within a larger whole, and within this structure it is the viewer, not the artist, who ultimately determines how these events are enjoined. More importantly, the spectator of

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<sup>33</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, "The Montage of Attractions," in Richard Taylor ed., *The Eisenstein Reader*, (London, BFI, 1998): 30.

attractions at a circus-fair is less likely to experience distraction as an abrupt confrontation, or an instance of alienation or shock that leads to a heightened critical reflection toward a *particular* end. In experiencing a circus, attention is engaged in the 'flow' of distraction rather than punctured by artist-dictated montage. Thus, the carnival experience of viewer-centered distraction is more likely to function as a method whereby the spectator is unceremoniously distracted by the proximity of simultaneous events; the spectator allows him/herself to move freely though the artwork, using distraction as a sorting machine to gather meaning. As Umberto Eco would argue, the alienation effect and montage, as conceived by Brecht and Eisenstein, are techniques of the 'closed' artwork, while viewer-centered distraction techniques belong to the 'open' work as a perpetual mobile.

### Viewer-Centered Distraction

The distracted mind, more susceptible to external influence, no longer addresses the world in terms of its own subjective concerns, but now is capable of a more dialogic, less authoritarian, engagement with the world.<sup>34</sup>

Montage and the alienation effect, as techniques of author-controlled distraction, operate as structural devices in the writings of Benjamin and in Brecht's

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<sup>34</sup> Kathy Walker, *Dreaming, Working, Mourning: The Role of Teleology in Early Twentieth Century Marxis*, available at <http://www.yorku.ca/jspot/5/kwalker.htm>, accessed 28 May 2006.

Epic Theatre practice. In contrast with this kind of artist-planned distraction is that of viewer-centered, chance-determined distraction models advocated by John Cage and R. Murray Schafer. Cage and Schafer present us with theorizations of distracted reception that allow for spectatorial freedom to create the macro-structure of the work, while the artist retains control over the micro-structure. Cage's *Musicircuses* and R. Murray Schafer's *The Greatest Show* present clear examples of aleatoric, chance-based methods for viewer-centered distracted reception.

Cage's early happenings and events with Kaprow, Rauschenberg and Cunningham at The Black Mountain College in the 1950's eventually led to the development of his first *Musicircus*, first performed at the University of Illinois in 1967. Without providing scores or other performance instructions, he invited artists, musicians and performers to simultaneously present their works within the same space, while the audience was free to move throughout the space at their leisure. Cage intended that these works have "no unique sonoric source, or for that matter, any aesthetic element...privileged over another."<sup>35</sup> The individual music works within the *Musicircus* were dispersed in random order; string quartets playing in administrative offices and sitar players, pianists, and harmonica players within hallways. Despite Cage's acknowledged preference that the spectator create the links between the music and find the meaning within the chaos, the very opposite of this would frequently occur. Jazz musicians in particular, with many years of

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<sup>35</sup> Simon Shaw-Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagner to Cage*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002): 12.



training in improvisation would naturally begin to respond to and join together the various pieces around them.

The collaborative role in the *Musicircuses* was also extended to the spectator. Cage created the *Musicircuses* to generate a field in which the spectator was required to use distraction as a tool to “make an individual whole”<sup>36</sup> from the materials s/he was presented with. Cage believed that the mere presentation of simultaneous sound events would motivate the spectator to devise individual meaning of the work instead of responding with frustration. Indeed, the results of the work, documented by Charles Junkerman in “nEw / foRms of living together’: The Model of the *Musicircus*” and following a presentation in Chicago in 2003 show an overwhelming positive reaction to the open form of audience-determined interpretation;<sup>37</sup> however, in analyzing the reception of these recent performances it should also be noted that Cage’s status might significantly have influenced the legitimacy of the process. Furthermore, at the Stanford presentation in 1992,<sup>38</sup> it is necessary to take into account that the audience was engaging with the presentation within the walls of highly respected academic institution, and in proximity to Cage’s own performance of *Muoyce*.

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<sup>36</sup> Shaw-Miller, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Junkerman, “nEw / foRms of living together’: The Model of the Musicircus,” in *John Cage: Composed in America*. Perloff, Marjorie and Charles Junkerman, eds., (Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); <http://musicircus.chicagocomposers.org/>, accessed 21 April 2006.

<sup>38</sup> The performance was designed as part of Stanford’s Department of Music’s 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary celebration.

These factors would add an even greater legitimacy to both the macro- and micro-events of the *Musircus* and thus influence the degree to which one would approach work with the intent of vigorous examination.

No such atmosphere of reverence is apparent in R. Murray Schafer's *Patria 3: The Greatest Show*, devised as a village fair to be held in a large outdoor space. Influenced by Marinetti's "Variety Theatre" written in 1913, Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" and Cage's ideas of simultaneity and audience participation, the composer R. Murray Schafer began to conceive of what he came to call the *Theatre of Confluence*:

...a transformable environment like a circus...I would call such an arrangement *a form of possibilities*. By rearranging some of the time and space zoning, by allowing improvised blocks to modulate within a highly organized whole, a theatre would be created that would be truly a 'theatre of first nights only.'<sup>39</sup>

Schafer's *The Greatest Show* is just such an attempt. The setting of the performance is outdoors at night where a network of booths, towers, tents and kiosks is grouped about like at a small-town fair. The other performance areas include a large stage, called the Odditorium, at which the show opens and closes, and three large coloured tents called the Rose Theatre, the Blue Theatre, and the Purple Theatre. These venues contained "restricted shows", so-called because one cannot obtain entry with normal coupons but must win entry by playing a game or participating in other

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<sup>39</sup> R. Murray Schafer, *Patria and The Theatre of Confluence*, (Indian River, Ont.: Arcana Editions, 1991): 40.

activities offering tickets as prizes. There is even a University Theatre where professors discuss the significance of Schafer's other *Patria* works before a single bench seating four people at most, as a parody of the nature of musicological discourse. Schafer's overarching image for all of these areas is the maze:

One feels at the epicentre of a great and uneven disturbance of colours, noise and music erupting everywhere throughout the grounds. Yes, all this is similar to walking down a busy street in one of the more cockeyed towns of the modern world. Both are colourful, simultaneous and haptic. But the fair is not contoured for quick passage. It leads you out in all directions and holds you back at the same time; it demands participation.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, *The Greatest Show* represents a retrospective of the artistic issues that Schafer had been reflecting upon until 1986. The performance is a collage of Schaferian ideology: his beliefs of the role of music to stimulate community-based interaction, thoughts on Canadian identity, on the soundscape and the neglected art of listening, an amalgamation of performances of works from his *Patria* cycle, his thoughts on opera, and the theories of C.J. Jung. The show also creates a meta-structure wherein his earlier *Patria* works are deconstructed, "literally pulverized to pieces, shaken down scene by scene and action by

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<sup>40</sup> This description of this work is taken from Schafer's notes found on Jerrard and Diana Smith's costume, set and mask design webpage: *The Greatest Show: Site-specific The search for a Location* available at <http://www.patria.org/pdp/ORDER/SSGS.HTM>, accessed 5 December 2005.

action until only the siftings remain.”<sup>41</sup> As further described by Schafer:

Here is a very special ritual - completely without a sense of striving, and promising no rewards. You wandered about amused and amazed, never sure whether you were there to be entertained or entertaining - for the moment you won a balloon or lost your money while upside down on a sky ride, you became an actor, watched by others and excited by their watching.<sup>42</sup>

Later, Schafer restates that the work “the hooks, yanks, lunges, and thrusts of the hawkers and hucksters make *you the centre of attention*.”<sup>43</sup> Finally, Thom Sokolosky, the director of the Peterborough festival production in 1988, describes how “the performer should understand that it is the spectator who becomes the surrogate hero or heroine [or victim] once the volunteer hero and heroine have disappeared and been chopped up respectively during the opening unit.”<sup>44</sup> Of note in these statements is Schafer’s intent to redirect the audience’s attention away from the performance of the work and toward the roles they are playing within the ritual. Thus Schafer’s practice approaches the meta-cognitive aspect of distraction earlier discussed. Instead of a singular focus on music as object, the listener is urged

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<sup>41</sup> Schafer, *Patria and The Theatre of Confluence*, 121.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.patria.org/pdp/ORDER/SSGS.HTM>, Schafer’s emphasis, accessed 5 December 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Schafer, *Patria and The Theatre of Confluence*, 129.

to move between mobile sound sources:

The real musical interest of *The Greatest Show*, its final excitement and satisfaction, is not to be found in the individual attractions, but in the interaction between them, the interstices, the sound spill, the cross-talk – what one hears peripherally as much as directly.<sup>45</sup>

*The Greatest Show* envisions the listener as a *flâneur* who enjoins the ‘pulverized pieces’ of *Patria*, and indeed creates meaning through a kind of interstitial listening.

*The Greatest Show* can also be understood as a variation on Sergei Eisenstein’s concept of montage as “circus of attraction” actualized as interdisciplinary performance. *The Greatest Show* is a clearly developed form of Schafer’s *Theatre of Confluence*, in which “all the arts are fused together, but without negating the strong and healthy character of each other.”<sup>46</sup> Drawn from the metaphor of tributaries flowing into a river, the idea relates to my definition of viewer-centered distraction, in which attention flows from one tributary into another, gradually swelling with the meaning of the larger whole. Attention flows from one thing to the next and is “not forced, but nevertheless inevitable.”<sup>47</sup> Opposed to the uncontrolled sensory overload he felt Cage’s *Musicircuses* engaged in, Schafer wanted the audience to be able to experience each module in a “discrete act of discernment.” Schafer’s interdisciplinary works are a direct response to what he perceived as the “messy excretions” of happenings and ‘mixed media’ works he criticizes as an “intra-psychic ‘trip’ [that] is

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<sup>45</sup> Schafer, *Patria and The Theatre of Confluence*, 130

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 28.

no more a work of art than a trip to the dentist.”<sup>48</sup> Although Schafer felt that “chance promotes new modes of perceiving...[and] delight in the unexpected,”<sup>49</sup> he also believed that a balance was necessary between total chance and total control. Schafer’s devising practice for this work, and others, what he terms *form of possibilities*, consists of mediated, loosely structured modules that are, in themselves, chance based. *The Greatest Show* is an attempt for confluent relationship between control and indeterminacy. Just as “one understands nothing when one is totally involved,” the audience of *The Greatest Show* is given opportunities to move between states of participation and contemplation. Continuing Schafer’s metaphor of confluence, at times the spectator’s attention moves with the gentle flow of a brook, at other times it is swept away by the intensity of the rapids.

These works of Schafer and Cage provide models that allow the viewer to explore the space that they share with the work, a space wherein distraction becomes the method by which the viewer creates a whole from the parts. Unlike a concert hall where these interdisciplinary works would be presented in a highly contained environment in which they are to be observed from a fixed perspective, the fluid forms of circus and installation create a space for an embodied viewer, a terrain in which the listener can move between fragments (and where the fragments move between listeners). The practices integrate the simultaneity of concepts and structures that, like distraction, pull the viewer’s attention between layers

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<sup>48</sup> Schafer, *Patria and The Theatre of Confluence*, 29.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 32.

because these layers are themselves always in a state of in-between; they are properly a 'layering'. The *micropolyphony* of a work, to re-appropriate the composer Gyorgi Ligeti's terminology, creates tension within the very act of viewing that produces engagement of its own. For when one's focus is distracted, they may be missing something equally important; the hierarchy of the most important thing to view is dismantled. Thus, these works tend to engender a peripatetic rather than paralytic model of distracted reception. Or, as Schafer asserts, "so what if instead of a five-act *fautenil* monstrosity we produce a confection of 100 atrocities; amusing, ironical, linked only in the head of the wandering visitor."<sup>50</sup> As has been demonstrated in my examples, these confections of atrocities, built around distracted reception, effectively critique the concept of the music performance as an autonomous object, and as a mere instantiation of a score and style.<sup>51</sup> The question thus opened, and which I will here leave to be answered by the reader, is to what extent this deconstruction of the musical object extends to a deconstruction of music itself? And, further, to what extent we might look in the future to distraction as a concept through which we might engender a new music that is not constructed within the walls of the imaginary museum of authorial dominance.

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<sup>50</sup> Schafer, *Patria and The Theatre of Confluence*, 123

<sup>51</sup> For a further analysis of object-status of music, and the objectifying discourse of musicology see Dylan Robinson, "Musicology Objects," in *Collision: Interarts Practice and Research*, (London: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008).

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### Abstract

This article focuses primarily on the development of autonomous reception across the arts and music, and the associated assumption that the alternative to this pure contemplation, distracted reception, promotes a disengaged attitude toward the work under consideration. The particular conceptualization of distraction in the context of this article contrasts the term's standard characterization as lackadaisical or careless, instead using the term in its capacity for critique of tacitly approved systems of reception as processes for uncovering transcendental signifieds. Distraction acts as a counteractive to normative, teleological, and structural regimes of contemplation.

To re-cast distraction as a foil to directed and authoritarian viewing practices, the article provides a historical overview of distraction, tracing its development from the moralistic rhetoric of 18<sup>th</sup> century writings, to the modernist debates on distraction in film and theatre. By way of conclusion, the article considers works that employ distraction: John Cage's *Musicircuses*, and R. Murray Schafer's *The Greatest Show*. In effect, distraction is here examined as an act of complication; complicating both the efficiency and primacy of 'clear communication' promoted in formalist and structural listening practices, and objectivist discursive traditions. Ultimately, distraction acts as a method for wresting agential power from the artist in order to increase the agency of the spectator, who thereby is able to engage in reception as a continuous dialectic process of examination in which contradiction and polysemy are embraced instead of eliminated.



## **The *Prefiguratio Christi*: Prefiguration in Introit Tropes of Southern Italy**

*Siu-Yin Mak*

This paper examines the prevalence and variety of prefigurative techniques in the medieval troping practices of southern Italy. For well over a century, the subject of the trope has commanded a mélange of theories and an apposite degree of controversy. Yet, a number of issues concerning its very identity and early development remain surprisingly unresolved. The term “trope” is generally used to refer to a piece of new material, inserted as either an introduction or an interpolation, to supplement a preexisting chant. But even this simplistic definition demands qualification. For example, does this “new material” refer specifically to music, text, or a combination of the two? This question leads to the confusion of “trope” with “sequence” or “prose.”

Paul Evans clarifies this ambiguity, reserving “sequence” for the jubilus of an Alleluia, “prose” for the new words that are added to a preexisting melody, and “trope” for pieces in which both music and text are original.<sup>1</sup> Richard Crocker, however, suggests that the term “trope” could be used to encompass “the ruling idea of a process whereby all medieval music was necessarily and intimately tied to pre-existing materials.”<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, any addition of

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Evans, “Some Reflections on the Origin of the Trope,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 14, No. 2 (1961): 120-121.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Crocker, “The Troping Hypothesis,” *The Musical Quarterly* 52, No. 2 (1966): 184.

borrowed music or text could be construed not only as a sequence or as a prose, but also, in the larger sense, as a trope.

Such discrepancies fuel the continuing elusiveness of a precise categorization for the trope. To compound the equivocality, it has proved virtually impossible to determine precisely when or where tropes originated. The major collections are currently housed at two major abbeys: that of St. Gall in Switzerland, and that of St. Martial in southern France. The oldest manuscripts at these abbeys and other locations throughout the world date from the early- to mid-tenth century, indicating that troping practices were in existence by the late 800s. However, it has yet to be determined how much earlier and from which regions the tradition actually originated. Additionally, tropes can serve in a variety of roles and functions that further exacerbates the ambiguity.

In a study examining tropes and their compositional processes, Gunilla Iversen briefly discusses one of these functions: that of *typological prefiguration*.<sup>3</sup> This technique is based on the Christian belief that components of the Old Testament are prophecies or symbols of those events in the New Testament that constitute the main tenets of the Christian faith. Specifically, prefiguration within the context of the Mass alludes primarily to the existence of Jesus Christ, believed by Christians to be the Son of God. In particular, the major events that receive the most prefigurative treatment are Christ's birth, crucifixion, and ascension to Heaven.

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<sup>3</sup> Gunilla Iversen, "Compositional Planning and Tropes ...," *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 39, Fasc. 2/4 (1998): 203.

The latter portion of the Mass centers around the Communion, a commemoration of the Last Supper and the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. It is thereby obvious that the majority of these texts, beginning with the conception of Christ, are taken from the New Testament. Tropes in a prefigurative function manipulate the Old Testament texts used in the parts of the Mass preceding Communion, setting them in a prophetic context. Most commonly, this occurs in tropes of the Introit, in which both psalm and antiphon texts are derived primarily from the Old Testament.

In considering the importance of prefiguration in the compositional processes of Introit tropes, this article will focus on a sample of medieval Introit tropes from southern Italy that may be considered representative for two primary reasons.<sup>4</sup> First, the prevalence of foreign elements in Italian tropes suggests that troping practices infiltrated northeastern Italy from the French and Germanic regions. The approximate equidistance of the southern Italian peninsula from both of these regions indicates that the tropes of this region represent a developed synthesis of these external influences. Second, this hypothesis is supported by the delayed appearance of troping practices in southern Italy, which further suggests that these tropes might even be considered a culmination of medieval troping practices.

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<sup>4</sup> All texts and translations in this paper have been taken from the *Beneventanum troparum corpus: Tropes of the Proper of the Mass from Southern Italy, A.D. 1000-1250*, ed. Alejandro Planchart, vol. 16 of *Recent Researches in the Music of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, ed. Charles Atkinson (Wisconsin: A-R Editions, Inc., 1989).

Given the uncertainties in our understanding of the taxonomy and origin of the trope, it should not be surprising that the details of its development also engender controversy. To begin with, Evans refutes a long-standing theory concerning the development of the trope. The theory, which Evans terms the “St. Gall theory,” purports that texted tropes originated as melismatic additions to items in the liturgy. It continues that after a time, the melismas were syllabically texted, and at some point, the melodies were altered or dropped, and the previously-syllabic text setting adopted a neumatic or melismatic character of its own.<sup>5</sup> However, Evans argues that this reasoning fails to account for those manuscripts predating the earliest compilation at St. Gall (Vienna 1609). Furthermore, he contends that the theory is undermined by the absence of works in the intermediate stages (i.e. the texted versions of the initial melismatic tropes), and that it contradicts existing evidence by operating on the fallacious assumption that tropes serve as extensions rather than introductions.<sup>6</sup>

Tangentially, Evans draws another distinction within the trope genre based on the insertion techniques of Introit tropes: specifically, whether they preface or interpolate the original chant.<sup>7</sup> Although the prefacing tradition chronologically preceded the other, he asserts that it is questionable whether

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<sup>5</sup> Evans, “Origin of the Trope,” 126.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Evans, *The Early Trope Repertory of Saint Martial de Limoges*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 20-23.



internal tropes were derivatives or simply independent counterparts.<sup>8</sup>

In another work, however, Evans points out that even interpolating Introit tropes serve an introductory function; that is, the insertions are appended to the beginning, rather than to the end, of each line.<sup>9</sup> Semantic evidence, such as the use of connecting words (e.g. progressive verbs or conjunctions) linking the trope to the following line of chant, corroborates his observation.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, such connections may be discerned in the Introit tropes of this present study, which will focus on the function of these tropes, examining not only their relationship to the original antiphons, but also their role within the larger scheme of the liturgy. In my discussion, I identify four fundamental methods of prefiguration that I will hereafter refer to as *nominal*, *analogical*, *contextual*, and *prophetical*. A brief discussion of non-prefigurative tropes will conclude the discourse.

***Nominal prefiguration*** is the simplest of the four forms. In these tropes, the name of Christ is mentioned, often in tribute to Him or to His teachings, but no further discussion of His life ensues. An example of nominal prefiguration appears in *Ad laudem beati martyri* (In Praise of the High and Blessed Martyr). This trope incorporates the antiphon text of *Letabitur iustus* (The Just Shall Rejoice), an Introit for the Feast of Saint Vincent. Both antiphon and psalm texts are taken from the Book of Psalms (Ps. 64:10 and 64:1, respectively) in the Old Testament.

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<sup>8</sup> Evans, *The Early Trope*, 20-23.

<sup>9</sup> Evans, "Origin of the Trope," 128.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

In this context, Christ is merely mentioned as the divinity to whom Vincent pledges his allegiance. From a prefigurative perspective, this trope serves the purpose of acknowledging Christ and “modernizing” the Old Testament text by aligning it with the Christ-centered Communion that is to come. (See Example 1.)

**Example 1: *Letabitur iustus* and *Ad laudem beati martyri***

*Letabitur iustus* (untroped antiphon and psalm)

Letabitur iustus in domino et speravit in eo et laudabuntur omnes recti corde.	The just shall rejoice in the Lord and shall hope in Him; and all the upright in heart shall be praised.
<i>Ps.</i> Exaudi deus orationem meam cum tribulor a timore inimici eripe animam meam.	<i>Ps.</i> Hear, O'God, my prayer when I am troubled, deliver my soul from the fear of the enemy.

*Ad laudem beati martyri* (trope, with antiphon in italics)

Ad laudem beati martyri summi uoces canite cuncti. <i>Letabitur iustus in domino.</i> O uincentius kristicolus mirabilis amificus uirtutes fecit notas pro quo. <i>et speravit in eo.</i> Pangat corda resonent fibris altitonen armonia uoces quia <i>laudabuntur omnes recti corde.</i>	In praise of the high and blessed martyr, sing ye all [these] words: <i>The just shall rejoice in the Lord.</i> O'Vincent, admirable and generous dweller in Christ, for whom he has made his virtues known <i>and shall hope in Him.</i> Let the hearts sing, let strings resound, let the voices rise high in harmony, for <i>all the upright in heart shall be praised.</i>
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Another example of nominal prefiguration appears in *A patre procedens* (Proceeding from the Father), which tropes the Pentecostal Introit *Spiritus domini* (The Spirit of the Lord). In this example, the antiphon text is taken from the Wisdom of Solomon (Ws. 1:7), and the psalm text appears in Psalms 68:1.

Here, the antiphon extols the Holy Spirit, and the trope emphasizes the Spirit's place in the Holy Trinity. Because this concept of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit appears only after the death and resurrection of Christ, this trope again shifts the Old Testament antiphon into a later context (See Example 2).

**Example 2: *Spiritus domini* and *A patre procedens***

*Spiritus domini* (untroped antiphon and psalm)

Spiritus domini repleuit orbem terrarum alleluia et hoc quod continet omnia scientia habet uocis	The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole earth, alleluia; and that which contains all things has knowledge of the voice,
alleluia alleluia alleluia. Ps. Exurgat deus et dissipentur inimici eius.	alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Ps. Let God arise and His enemies be scattered;
et fugiant a facie eius qui oderunt eum.	and let them that hate Him flee before His face.
<u><i>A patre procedens</i> (trope, with antiphon in italics)</u>	
A patre procedens unus natiue patrisque.	Proceeding from the Father, one with the Son and the Father,
<i>Spiritus domini repleuit orbem terrarum alleluia.</i>	<i>The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole earth, alleluia.</i>
Numinis et gentes dedit unius esse colentes.	He has accorded to the gentiles to be worshipers of one God.
<i>Et hoc quod continet omnia scientia habet uocis.</i>	<i>And that which contains all things has knowledge of the voice,</i>
omnia nam fecit regit omnia et omnia nouit.	for He has created everything, rules everything, and has known everything.
<i>Alleluia alleluia alleluia.</i>	<i>Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.</i>

Tropes using the technique of *analogical prefiguration* draw parallelisms between Christ and the subject matter of the antiphon. In the southern

Italian tropes, this technique generally assumes one of two forms. In one approach, it may draw a comparison between the main action of the antiphon and an action committed by or pertaining to Christ. For example, a troped Introit may take the form of “Just as *A* was done by or to Christ, so also was *B* done by or to the subject of the antiphon.” Or, in the second method, it may frame the antiphon text to suggest that its subject is following in the footsteps of Christ, asserting that “By doing *C*, the subject of the antiphon is following the example of Christ, who did *D*.”

In Example 3, *Quos manna pavit* (Those He Fed Manna), using the first analogical approach, tropes *Aqua sapientie* (Water of Wisdom) to establish a connection among the allegorical water, the manna, and Christ, the Lamb of God. The prefiguration alters the context of this Introit by signifying that just as the water of wisdom was a gift from God, so also was the manna and the ultimate sacrifice of His own son. Here, the antiphon is taken from the Old Testament Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 15:3-4, and the psalm can be found in Psalms 101:1. It should be noted that the final line of this trope also serves as an example of nominal prefiguration, as it simply mentions Christ’s principles as those to which adherence will be rewarded.

Similarly, *Martyr Laurentius* (Lawrence Martyr), which tropes *Probasti domine* (You Have Tested [My Heart]), uses the second analogical method to relate the execution of St. Lawrence to that of Christ. Although Lawrence was burned to death, and Christ was crucified, the trope stresses that, like Christ, Lawrence willingly accepted his tribulations and paid

**Example 3: *Aqua sapientię* and *Quos manna pavit****Aqua sapientię* (untroped antiphon and psalm)

Aqua sapientię potavit eos alleluia.	He gave them the water of wisdom to drink, alleluia.
Firmabitur in illis et non flectetur alleluia	She shall be made strong in them and shall not be moved, alleluia
et exaltauit eos in ęternum alleluia alleluia.	and she shall exalt them forever, alleluia, alleluia.
Ps. Confitemini domino quoniam bonus quoniam in sęculum misericordia eius.	Ps. Give praise to the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.

*Quos manna pavit* (trope, with antiphon in italics)

Quos manna pavit quos agni carne cibavit	Those He fed manna, those He fed the flesh of the Lamb,
<i>aqua sapientię potavit eos alleluia.</i>	<i>he gave them the water of wisdom to drink, alleluia,</i>
Quę fugat errorem diuinum quę dat amorem.	which drives out error, which gives divine love.
<i>Firmabitur in illis et non flectetur alleluia.</i>	<i>She shall be made strong in them and shall not be moved, alleluia.</i>
Nunquam deficient quos christi dogmata replent.	They shall not want, whom the precepts of Christ replenish,
<i>et exaltauit eos in ęternum alleluia alleluia.</i>	<i>and she shall exalt them forever, alleluia, alleluia.</i>

the ultimate price for his allegiance to God (see Example 4).

Both the psalm and the antiphon of *Probasti domine* are taken from the Book of Psalms (Ps. 17:3 and 102:1). Although the antiphon text ascribed to Lawrence by the trope is not actually a valid attribution, this does not affect the analogical prefiguration discussed here. The intentional misattribution of this antiphon text will be addressed later in the paper, in the discussion of prophetic prefiguration.

**Example 4: *Probasti domine* and *Martyr Laurentius****Probasti domine* (untroped antiphon and psalm)

Probasti domine cor meum et uisitasti nocte igne me examinasti et non est inuenta in me iniquitas.	Thou hast proved my heart, O Lord, and visited it by night; Thou hast tried me by fire, and iniquity has not been found in me.
<i>Ps.</i> Exaudi domine iustitiam meam. intende deprecationi mee.	<i>Ps.</i> Hear, O'Lord, my justice; turn to my prayer.

*Martyr Laurentius* (trope, with antiphon in *italics*)

Martyr laurentius qui unicum patris sequendo filium dixit.	Lawrence Martyr, following the only Son of the Father, said,
<i>Probasti domine cor meum et uisitasti nocte.</i>	<i>Thou hast proved my heart, O Lord, and visited it by night.</i>
Victrix laurenti triumphans hostibus uictor fruens celestibus beatus leuita certando ita dicebat.	As Lawrence's victory was about to come upon the enemy, and the victor was about to enjoy the celestial [prize], the blessed levite, struggling, said,
<i>Ignem me examinasti et non est inuenta in me iniquitas.</i>	<i>Thou hast tried me by fire, and iniquity has not been found in me.</i>

*Contextual prefiguration* manipulates the meaning of an Old Testament antiphon text by placing the antiphon within a context that is either more explicit or entirely new. The added text of a trope sometimes serves only an elaborative function, but more frequently, it introduces a different framework that redefines the meaning of the antiphon. This technique often frames the antiphon with events that transpire at a later point in time. As a result, the antiphon may be temporally shifted, to occur within the general time frame of Christ's presence on earth. Example 5 clearly illustrates this contextual application. In the Advent Introit *Rorate caeli* (Drop Down Dew), the antiphon text comes once again from the Old Testament (Isaiah 45:8), and the psalm text is taken from Psalms 19:1.

In the Bible, the words of the antiphon are broad mandates spoken by God. *Tellus arescit* (The Earth Becomes Dry) tropes *Rorate caeli* to place the antiphon in a specific context. The integration of the trope with the final, segmented line of the antiphon, “Aperiatur terra et germinet saluatorem” (Let the earth open and bud forth a savior) results in a direct application to the upcoming birth of Christ. This corresponds with the Advent proceedings surrounding the use of this Introit. The temporal position of the antiphon is adjusted in accordance with the prevailing theme of Advent, and the resultant troped Introit serves the purpose of prefiguring Christ, whose ultimate sacrifice is to be celebrated later in the Mass.

Example 5 serves simultaneously as a classic example of analogical prefiguration. The Latin text yields a semantic relationship between a line of the trope, “Virgo sit et pariat ...” (May she be a virgin and give birth ...), and the aforementioned line of the antiphon, “Aperiatur terra” (Let the earth open). The root “pario” has two derivatives. The first, “parere,” means to open, or to give birth. The second, “pariare,” means to pay something that is owed (i.e. a debt.), or to recompense. It is possible that the linkage between these literal meanings may have Biblical roots associated with the sins of Eve in the Garden of Eden and the price that women are condemned to pay in the pain of childbirth, as a result of their Original Sin. At any rate, the trope uses this link to draw an analogy between the antiphon’s petition for the “opening” of the earth and the trope’s petition for the “opening” of Mary in childbirth. As the opening of the earth implies fertility and the

provision of food as a form of salvation, so also does the “opening” of Mary center around fertility and the deliverance of salvation, which, in this context, arrives in the form of Christ the Savior.

Returning to contextual prefiguration, *Suscepimus deus* (We Have Received, O God, Thy Mercy), containing antiphon and psalm texts both originating from the Book of Psalms (Ps. 48:9-10 and 48:1), is an Introit of standard praise that is troped by *Adest alma uirgo parens* (Here Is the Gentle Virgin Giving Birth) to apply specifically to the context of Christ’s birth. Here, the trope equates God’s mercy, as mentioned in the antiphon, with the eternal light of Christ. The text of praise in the antiphon, originally firmly entrenched in the Old Testament, is now incorporated into a new context celebrating the Virgin Mary and the birth of God’s son, the Savior. (See Example 6.) As in *Tellus arescit* (Example 5), the original antiphon, by virtue of its new context, is temporally realigned in concordance with the new text about the birth of Christ.

***Prophetical prefiguration*** sets the antiphon texts as quoted prophecies, spoken by prophets or by Christ Himself. As in contextual prefiguration, the original Introit is shifted to a later time frame; this occurs in one of two ways. First, the antiphon text may be framed as though it were spoken in the past. Independently, the temporal point of any given text is treated as the “present.” For example, if an untroped Introit text directly espouses a passage from the Old Testament, this place in the Bible is the established temporal point of the Introit component of the Mass. However, when an antiphon is temporally displaced



**Example 5: *Rorate caeli* and *Tellus arescit****Rorate caeli* (untroped antiphon and psalm)

Rorate caeli desuper et nubes pluant iustum.	Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just;
aperiatur terra et germinet saluatorem.	let the earth open and bud forth a savior.
<i>Ps.</i> Caeli enarrant gloriam dei et opera manum eius annuntiat firmamentum.	<i>Ps.</i> The heavens show forth the glory of God; and the firmament declares the work of His hand.

*Tellus arescit* (trope, with antiphon in *italics*)

Tellus arescit. Non rore nec imbre madescit.	The earth becomes dry, softened not by dew or rain.
Quid nubes agitis. Aut quid olimpe facis.	What dost bring clouds? And what dost Thou do, O heaven?
<i>Rorate caeli desuper et nubes pluant iustum.</i>	<i>Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just.</i>
Non tellus germen defert. Non femina semen.	The earth bears no sprig, the woman no seed. May she be a
Virgo sit et pariat clausa sit et pateat.	virgin and give birth, may she be closed and lie open.
<i>Aperiatur terra.</i>	<i>Let the earth open.</i>
Pullulet in uirgam iesse. Generetque mariam.	May Jesse put forth a shoot, and may Mary beget. May the shoot
Virga nazareum. Uirgo feratque deum <i>et germinet saluatorem.</i>	bear the Nazarene, and may Mary bear God <i>and bud forth a savior.</i>

(e.g. treated as a quotation from the past), the established temporal point is no longer that of the quoted antiphon but is instead aligned with the temporal point of the trope text (i.e. its chronological point in religious history).

**Example 6: *Suscepimus deus* and *Adest alma uirgo parens****Suscepimus deus* (untroped antiphon and psalm)

Suscepimus deus misericordiam tuam.	We have received, O God, Thy mercy,
in medio temple tui.	in the midst of Thy temple,
Secunum nomen tuum deus	According to Thy name, O God;
ita et laus tua in fines terre	so also is Thy praise unto the
iustitia plena est dextera tua.	ends of the earth; full of justice is Thy right hand.
<i>Ps. Magnus dominus et laudabilis nimis</i>	<i>Ps. Great is the Lord, and</i>
in ciuitate dei nostri in monte sancto eius.	exceedingly to be praised; in the city of our God, in His holy mountain.

*Adest alma uirgo parens* (trope, with antiphon in italics)

Adest alma uirgo parens	Here is the gentle virgin giving birth,
adest uerbum incarnatum	here is the word made flesh,
proclamemus omnes laudes	let us all proclaim the praises
in excelso patri.	of the Father on high.
<i>Suscepimus deus misericordiam tuam.</i>	<i>We have received, O God, Thy mercy,</i>
lumen eternum christum	the eternal light, Christ, our
dominum	Lord,
<i>in medio temple tui.</i>	<i>in the midst of Thy temple.</i>
Gaude uirgo beatissima que de	Rejoice, O most blessed Virgin,
uerbo nobis hominem offers infra	for from the Word thou
templi menia,	presentest a man to us within the temple walls,
<i>secunum nomen tuum deus</i>	<i>according to Thy name, O God.</i>
Offers die ista in templo senis	This day, in the temple, old
symeonis brachio.	Simeon offers his arms.
<i>Ita et laus tua in fines terre</i>	<i>So also is Thy praise.</i>
Hinc erigendo capita pro signo	Hence, raising the head as a
tibi laudes et odas uoce publica	sign, [we offer] Thee praises
rex sabaoth,	and song with a strong voice, O
<i>iustitia plena est dextera tua.</i>	God of Hosts, unto the ends of the earth; <i>full of justice is Thy right hand.</i>

The second method of temporally shifting the Introit is to position the antiphon text as a quotation recited in temporal concordance with the trope. In other words, if the trope is considered to be in the “present,” the antiphon text is also framed as such. The words may be ascribed to prophets or to Christ, and attribution to their Old Testament origins may or may not be given. As the result of this method, the entire troped text shifts into a redefined “present,” generally within the period immediately before, during, or after Christ’s presence on earth. Example 7 illustrates the first of these methods of temporal displacement. In *Multae tribulationes*, both psalm and antiphon texts originate from the Book of Psalms (Ps. 34:19-20 and 34:1). The antiphon proclaims the salvation awaiting God’s followers, and the first line of the trope posits these words as a past prophecy. The second line of the trope, “Creator celi et terre ...” (Creator of Heaven and Earth ...), addresses the fulfillment of this prophecy: God sent the sick world His promised deliverance, in the form of Christ. In this way, the Old Testament text is treated as a quoted prefiguration of Christ, and the Introit temporally shifts into the New Testament, to the period following Christ’s descent to Earth.

*Filius ecce patrem* (Behold, the Son, [Calling Unto the] Father) provides another example of prophetic prefiguration and illustrates the second method of temporal displacement. This trope reframes the text of *Mibi autem* (To Me), temporally aligning the Old Testament antiphon text (Ps. 139:17) with that of the trope by ascribing its words to

Christ.<sup>11</sup> In this case, no attribution is given to the antiphon's Old Testament origins. The first line of the trope treats the remaining three lines (two lines of antiphon text and one line of new text) as a unified quotation spoken by Christ. In this way, the primary effects of the trope are to elaborate on the original message of the antiphon and to temporally shift the antiphon text itself. The result is a message from Christ, partially derived from the Old Testament, proclaiming that those who continue to serve God will be strengthened in their morality and righteousness. Here, the antiphon itself moves into the trope's "present," yielding, as with the first method of displacement, a temporal repositioning of the entire Introit. (See Example 8.)

**Example 7: *Multae tribulationes* and *O quam gloriosa solemnitas***

*Multae tribulationes* (untroped antiphon and psalm)

Multae tribulationes iustorum	Many were the afflictions of the just,
et de his omnibus liberabit eos dominus.	and out of all these the Lord delivered them;
dominus custodit omnia ossa eorum	the Lord keeps all their bones, not one of them shall be broken.
unum ex his non conteretur.	
Ps. Benedicam dominum in omni tempore.	Ps. I will bless the Lord at all times;
semper laus eius in ore meo.	His praise shall ever be in my mouth.

It should be noted that *Martyr Laurentius* (Example 4) is not an example of prophetic prefiguration as defined here. Although the trope quotes and temporally displaces the text of *Probasti domine*, the quoted material does not pertain to Christ

<sup>11</sup> The psalm can be found in Psalms 139:1.

and therefore does not independently serve a prefigurative function. As such, the trope relies solely on the analogical prefiguration discussed previously.

**Example 8: *Mihi autem* and *Filius ecce patrem***

*Mihi autem* (untroped antiphon and psalm)

Mihi autem nimis honorati sunt amici tui deus. nimis confortatus est principatus eorum.	To me Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable; their principality is exceedingly strengthened.
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<i>Ps.</i> Domine probasti me [et cognouisti me. tu cognouisti sessionem meam et resurrectionem meam].	<i>Ps.</i> Lord, Thou has proved me, and known me; Thou hast known my sitting down and my rising up.
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Notably, tropes of the few antiphon texts derived from the New Testament generally serve only an elaborative function, providing additional detail or furthering the message of the original text. Because the antiphons themselves often already incorporate Christ, no manipulation or framing of the text is necessary. Such an instance occurs in the antiphon of *Viri galilei* (Ye Men of Galilee), which takes its text from the New Testament (Acts 1:11), directly referencing Christ's ascension into Heaven. The introductory section of the trope, *Ex numero frequentium* (Out of the Large Number), does not present a new context; rather, it summarizes the passage directly preceding the antiphon text in the Bible. Unlike in tropes manipulated by prophetic prefiguration, here the first line of the antiphon is *rightfully* treated as a quote, with the correct attribution and temporal position. The final line of new text, "Ne pseudochristi ..." (That you may not accept false

Christ's ...) interjects the concept of Christ's ascension to Heaven as a confirmation of His divine identity; but even so, it may be asserted that all of the new text of *Ex numero frequentium* is disposable, in the sense that it does not significantly alter the meaning of the original antiphon text. (See Example 9.)

However, despite the apparent triviality of purpose involved in the composition of these tropes, it must be remembered that Introits deriving their texts from the New Testament are in the distinct minority.

It may be concluded from the foregoing study that, within southern Italy, troping of Old Testament Introit antiphons frequently served a prefigurative purpose. In contrast, troping of New Testament Introit antiphons generally did not, for reasons discussed in the preceding paragraph. However, if tropes of the Old Testament antiphons are primarily prefigurative, and if the vast majority of Introit antiphons are taken from the Old Testament, it logically follows that the majority of Introit tropes serve a prefigurative function. As demonstrated, the categorized techniques of prefiguration, designated here as nominal, analogical, contextual, and prophetic, may be applied independently or conjointly. The existence of these multiple techniques, each with their various intrinsic complexities, offers insight into the heavy role of the prefigurative function in troping practices. Further study encompassing Introit tropes originating from other areas, such as northern Italy, Sicily, Switzerland, France, and England, should yield a more comprehensive understanding about the size and significance of the role of prefiguration in medieval troping practices throughout Western Europe.

**Example 9: *Viri galilei* and *Ex numero frequentium****Viri galilei* (untroped antiphon and psalm)

Viri galilei quid ammiramini  
aspicientes in cælum alleluia.

Quemammodum uidistis eum  
ascendentem in cælum ita ueniet  
alleluia alleluia alleluia.

*Ps.* Omnes gentes [plaudite manibus  
iubilare deo in uoce exultationis].

Ye men of Galilee, why wonder  
you looking up to Heaven?  
Alleluia.

As you have seen Him going up  
to Heaven, so shall He come,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

*Ps.* O clap your hands, all ye  
nations; shout unto God with  
the voice of joy.

*Ex numero frequentium* (trope, with antiphon in *italics*)

Ex numero frequentium  
qui obuierunt domino  
duo subsistent angeli  
dicentes ad apostolos.

*Viri galilei quid ammiramini*  
Quasi qui incredibiles uel  
inopinatum fieret.

*aspicientes in cælum alleluia.*

Iure celos petiit qui de celis ad  
terram uenit.

*quemammodum uidistis eum ascendentem  
in cælum*

Ne pseudochristi pro uero christo  
suscipiatis.

*Ita ueniet alleluia alleluia alleluia.*

Out of the large number  
of them that met the Lord,  
two angels do remain,  
saying to the apostles,

*Ye men of Galilee, why wonder you,*  
almost as though He had done  
something incredible or  
unexpected,

*looking up to Heaven? Alleluia.*

He has asked the power of  
Heaven, who came from  
Heaven to Earth.

*As you have seen Him going up to  
Heaven,*

That you may not accept false  
Christs for the true one.

*So shall He come, alleluia, alleluia,  
alleluia.*

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### Abstract

The concept of typological prefiguration is based on the Christian belief that components of the Old Testament are prophecies or symbols of those events in the New Testament that constitute the main tenets of the Christian faith. Within the context of the Mass, tropes in a prefigurative function manipulate Old Testament texts used in the parts of the Mass preceding Communion, reframing them to forecast the upcoming commemoration of Jesus Christ. Most commonly, this form of prefiguration occurs in tropes of the Introit, in which both psalm and antiphon texts are derived primarily from the Old Testament.

My paper focuses on a representative sample of medieval Introit tropes from southern Italy. In my analysis, I identify four primary forms of prefiguration that I have termed *nominal*, *analogical*, *contextual*, and *prophetic*. Essentially, tropes may alter the original context of an antiphon in one or more of the following ways: by making a textual reference to Christ, by drawing parallelisms between Christ and the antiphon's original subject matter, by resetting and/or temporally displacing the antiphon, or by presenting the antiphon text as a quoted prophecy.

Textual examples provided throughout the discussion illustrate these different methods of prefigurative technique and the resulting relationships created retroactively between original antiphons and the subsequent Communion. The diversity of these techniques, each with their various intrinsic complexities, offers insight into the heavy role of the prefigurative function in medieval troping practices.



**Bassa Selim: Mozart's Voice of Clemency**  
**in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail***  
*Kristina Baron-Woods*

The character of Bassa Selim, the Turkish Pasha in Mozart's Singspiel *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, has inspired debate since the opera's premiere. Scholars have offered varied interpretations of the role's importance as a political tool, and as philosophical symbol of an enlightened late-eighteenth-century Vienna and, by association, the emperor Joseph II. Some historians consider that Mozart's contribution (including the changes he made) to the libretto he was originally offered is evidence that he sincerely wished to compose an opera that painted Joseph II as an enlightened leader. Others argue that the motivation behind the characterization is a blatant attempt to ingratiate himself with Joseph. Other scholars look to Joseph's choice of subject matter – one which depicts the power and danger of the Turks – as a key political move that would be noticed and appreciated by the Russian guests for whom it was originally intended to be performed. Further, since the opera's premiere, the merit of the Pasha's act of clemency has been debated, with scholars considering its artistic implication within the Singspiel genre, and its philosophical implication within the framework of the Enlightenment. Thomas Bauman sees the role as an important successor to the narrative lineage of "nobles savages" who inhabit the exotic "rescue" operas that were popular in Europe in the eighteenth century, while both Bauman and Daniel Hertz consider Selim as a glorification of Enlightenment

virtues.<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Till asserts that while Mozart may have wished to hold Joseph up as an idealized Enlightenment ruler through his depiction of the Pasha, Joseph's motivation for having the libretto set may not have been to espouse Enlightenment virtues at all, but rather as a political move to keep reminding the Viennese of their dangerous enemies – a sort of operatic call-to-arms.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most popular and comprehensive description of the Pasha, however, is given by Brigid Brophy, who writes that Selim represents "the Voltairean ideal: a noble, pagan, philosophical, exotic, benevolent despot who is amenable to education in the Enlightenment ideals."<sup>3</sup>

This paper will consider these various opinions, offering a close reading of the role of Bassa Selim in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and a survey of the major scholarship on the role. Three major areas of research on the character of Bassa Selim guide this study: the importance of narrative lineage to our understanding of Selim, the lack of music composed for the role in Mozart's version, and the debate over clemency as an Enlightenment virtue.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Bauman, W. A. Mozart: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Cambridge Opera Handbook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); also Bauman, *German Opera in the Age of Goethe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Bauman's chapter, "Coming of Age in Vienna," on *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Daniel Heartz, *Mozart's Operas*, Thomas Bauman, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 108.

<sup>3</sup> Brigid Brophy, *Mozart the Dramatist: The Value of His Operas to Him, to His Age and the Us* (New York: Da Capo, 1988), 223.

<sup>4</sup> This article comes partly from work done in a graduate seminar on Mozart and the Enlightenment led by Professor Edmund

When Mozart arrived in Vienna in March 1781, the National Singspiel Company had just finished its third season in the Theater nächst der kaiserlichen Burg, or the Burgtheater, as it was called. The presence of Mozart in Vienna at this time was propitious. He had been teamed with the librettist Stephanie der Jüngere, who was assigned the task of writing or adapting a libretto for a Singspiel for which Mozart would provide music. They settled on an existing libretto, *Belmonte und Constanze, oder Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, a work written by Christoph Bretzner that had already been set to music a few years earlier by Johann André, the resident composer of the Döbbelin Company in Berlin.<sup>5</sup> As Mozart set about his work, rumours abounded that Joseph II would ask him to prepare his work to be performed during a state visit to Vienna that winter by the Grand Duke Paul Petrovich, heir to the Russian throne, and his wife the Duchess Sophia Dorothea.<sup>6</sup>

Four months earlier, Emperor Joseph II had been advised to impress the grand duke and duchess with "the power of this monarchy" and "to present the court and the city with as much brilliance as

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Goehring at the University of Western Ontario. Thank you to Professor Goehring and the seminar participants for their insights. Other aspects of this article (regarding vocality and the role of Konstanze) were taken from my master's thesis; my sincere thanks to Professor Michelle Fillion of the University of Victoria for her guidance on this work.

<sup>5</sup> Bauman, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Cambridge Opera Handbook, 8.

<sup>6</sup> John A. Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1998), 307.

possible."<sup>7</sup> The writer of this advisement, Prince Kaunitz, suggested that Joseph hire magnificent singers from Italy to perform opera seria, and to engage the best possible ballet troupe. Joseph, however, intended to display his German Singspiel and theatrical companies, and ordered Count Rosenberg to supervise the production of Mozart and Stephanie's new opera, as well operas by Ignaz Umlauf, the resident Kapellmeister for the Singspiel.<sup>8</sup> These intentions never came to fruition, as Joseph ultimately ordered new productions of three operas by Gluck, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Alceste*, and *Orfeo ed Euridice* – the first performed in German translation, and the latter two in the original Italian.<sup>9</sup> Joseph had apparently not forgotten the effectiveness of Gluck opera as a symbol of the power, wealth, and good taste of the Habsburg court. Musicologist John Rice suggests that despite Joseph's assertions to the contrary, he was still affected by a lack of confidence in German opera and its ability to impress aristocratic company.<sup>10</sup>

For Mozart, the honour of having his opera performed in such company would have presented an opportunity to have his work heard in the Viennese court, an important event that, if successful, could potentially ensure royal patronage for years to come;

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<sup>7</sup> Kaunitz to Joseph, 22 July 1781, in *Joseph II, Leopold II, und Kaunitz: Ihr Briefwechsel*, Adolf Beer, ed. (Vienna, 1873), 92.

Trans. John Rice in Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera*, 307.

<sup>8</sup> Bauman, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Cambridge Opera Handbook, 4-5.

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Einstein, *Mozart: His Character, His Work*, Arthur Mendel and Nathan Broder, trans. (London, Oxford University Press, 1945), 123.

<sup>10</sup> Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera*, 308.

therefore, it is understandable that he wished to edify Joseph before his guests. To achieve this end, Mozart and Stephanie created in the role of Bassa Selim, the Turkish Pasha, a character of great nobility, who displays the ultimate show of power, that of mercy towards his worst enemies. As it happened, however, the opera was not performed before the Russian guests. Still, the depiction of the Pasha has long been understood to represent Joseph, or at least to personify some of the ideals of clemency that Joseph held dear. While Mozart's disappointment at not having his opera performed before the royal guests must have been palpable, the additional time he had to compose it and make changes to Stephanie's libretto ultimately allowed him to create a more enlightened character of the Pasha than the original production schedule would have allowed.

Narrative lineage plays an important role in our understanding of Mozart and Stephanie's depiction of the character of Selim. The major literary and theatrical predecessors to *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* opera show markedly different depictions of the main "Eastern" male character from source to source. Turkish and other "Oriental" themed operas and plays were extremely popular in Vienna, London, Paris, and other centres in Europe during the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Typical scenarios for these Oriental operas included a set of westerners transported, often by shipwreck, to some part of the eastern world. There they were immediately kidnapped into a harem if female, or sold into slavery if male. The locale was often Turkey, India, or Egypt,

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<sup>11</sup> Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera*, 310-15.

or simply some vague composite of all three, the only requirement for the setting being a distant, exotic, and reputedly decadent land. Other standard elements to these dramas and operas included a harem – a titillating garden of earthly delights, escape as the only hope for the western beauty who sought to retain her virtue, threats of death or torture, and a complete inability on the part of the Muslims to understand European values and manners. Michael Evenden finds the various plot devices popular in these operas so pervasive in eighteenth-century comic opera that he classifies such works into the sub-genres of "rescue opera" and "exotic opera."<sup>12</sup> *Die Entführung* and Bretzner and Andre's *Belmonte und Constanze*, the opera on which *Die Entführung* is directly based, fit both categories.<sup>13</sup>

The two features of Mohammed's life for which he was traditionally reviled in the west –

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Evenden, *Silence and Selfhood: The Desire of Order in Mozart's Magic Flute* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 54.

<sup>13</sup> It must be noted that while Evenden calls *Die Entführung* a rescue opera, as do Bauman and others, R. Morgan Longyear believes that the rescue opera is a specific genre that postdates *Die Entführung* by some years. Longyear contends that a true rescue opera contains few comic elements, that it has a strong political message with plots that indicate the social protests of the time, and that realism is the keynote of the genuine rescue opera. Also, rescue operas are Romantic in style, not Classical. According to his specifications, the most exemplary rescue opera is Beethoven's *Fidelio*, an opera which bears little resemblance to *Die Entführung*. However, numerous scholars do call *Die Entführung* a rescue opera, and find many examples of the genre in comic opera of the eighteenth century. See R. Morgan Longyear, "Notes on the Rescue Opera," *The Musical Quarterly* 45/1 (1959): 49-66.



sensuality and cruelty – were projected onto the Muslim characters in these works, especially the male characters.<sup>14</sup> One of the most important elements of these oriental operas is the main male role, a lascivious, bloodthirsty, dangerous character – the Sultan, or worse, his first underling, a character with an over-inflated sense of his own power. Many of the plays that could be considered predecessors to *Die Entführung*, however, had two eastern men in the cast of characters, portraying the two extremes that would be seen in the roles of Osmin and Bassa Selim, both in Bretzner's and in Mozart and Stephanie's librettos. The figure of the crude, lascivious, bloodthirsty man who threatens nearly everyone with tortures such as being boiled alive in oil is a clear antecedent to Osmin, Selim's caretaker. Osmin turns out to be a rather ineffectual, powerless creature in *Die Entführung*, as seems to be the case with many of the male servant characters in the predecessors to *Die Entführung*, however, not all the violent-tempered characters in these plays were servants. In the case of the English play, *The Captive* by Isaac Bickerstaffe from 1769, the powerful male character was extremely violent, and threatened all who crossed him with death by impaling.<sup>15</sup> The other end of the spectrum to these aggressive males are a number of noble, merciful easterners seen as enlightened

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<sup>14</sup> Timothy D. Taylor, "Peopling the Stage: Opera Otherness, and New Musical Representations in the Eighteenth Century," *Cultural Critique* 36 (1997): 55-6.

<sup>15</sup> Isaac Bickerstaffe, *The Captive, a comic opera; as it is perform'd at the Theatre-Royal in the Hay-Market 1769*, Music by Charles Dibdin (London: Printed by W. Griffin, 1769; Facsimile: Eighteenth Century Collections Online).

renegades, clear predecessors to the Pasha character. Few of the characters who turn out to be merciful exhibit such characteristics throughout the play or opera; it is the kindness, pathos, or appealing fidelity of the captive western woman that softens his heart and appeals to his higher nature.<sup>16</sup>

No single work has been isolated among the Oriental operas preceding Bretzner's *Belmonte and Constanze* as Bretzner's direct source or model, although various scholars have proposed a number of works among the English, German and Italian traditions. The libretto seems to draw on various elements and characters associated with a number of works. Bauman, who mentions numerous possibilities of inspiration for Bretzner, sees clear antecedents to *Belmonte and Constanze* in the English plays and operas of the earlier eighteenth century. Notable among the many English plays and operas with exotic settings and plots that involves rescue are two by English playwright Isaac Bickerstaffe. His two-act comic opera libretto *The Captive* (1769) is taken from the comic subplot of John Dryden's tragedy *Don Sebastian* (1689). In Dryden's play, a young Portuguese man, bought into slavery by an Algerian Mufti as a present to please his wife, escapes with the master's daughter and his jewels, the fruits of the Mufti's embezzling and extorting.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Gretchen Wheelock's discussion of the appeal of the faithful Konstanze in Wye Allanbrook, Mary Hunter and Gretchen Wheelock, "Staging Mozart's Women," *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, Mary Ann Smart, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 47-66.

<sup>17</sup> Bauman, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, 28.

Bickerstaffe altered several features in his comic opera libretto from Dryden's play: here, the hero becomes Spanish instead of Portuguese, and he loses his rather unsympathetic, opportunistic character (in Dryden, he tries to seduce the daughter rather forcibly, despite her wishes to marry him and become Christian). Bickerstaffe's Ferdinand is not a slave, but a presentable young man working in the master's garden – similar to Belmonte, whose good breeding and manners allows him a higher rank and more trust and freedom than is afforded a typical western slave. In *The Captive*, human defects and excesses lie solely in the Eastern characters. The Mufti's wife is portrayed as shockingly libidinous to the callow young European whom she tries to tempt into her bed, while both Bickerstaffe's and Dryden's Mufti is ready to flay and impale anyone who crosses him. The one favourable Eastern character is the Mufti's daughter, a character seen as gentle and virtuous. She falls in love with the Christian Ferdinand and wishes to marry him in church, a declaration that she feels cleanses her soul, allowing her to renounce her Muslim birth in order to become Christian. As the lovers attempt to escape and are caught by the Mufti, the Mufti's embezzling and extortion is discovered and he is forced to accept help from the Spaniard. In his gratitude, he allows Ferdinand to go free and gives his daughter to the young man with his blessing.<sup>18</sup>

In 1775, Bickerstaffe wrote another comic opera on an exotic theme, titled *The Sultan, or a Peep*

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<sup>18</sup> Bickerstaffe, *The Captive*.

into the Seraglio.<sup>19</sup> In this opera, the captive character is female; however, as a spirited Englishwoman, and not the typical Iberian captive, she appears to be more a forerunner to Bretzner's saucy Blonde, rather than the more earnest Constanze.<sup>20</sup> In *The Sultan*, as in *The Captive*, the music is a pastiche of melodies from popular opera buffa arias by such Italian composers as Galuppi and Anfossi, and songs specially composed by English composer Charles Dibdin.

In the mid-1970s, musicologist Rudolf Angemüller brought to light an obscure French play (author unknown) written in 1755, titled, *Les Époux esclaves ou Bastien et Bastienne à Alger* (*The Married Slaves or Bastien and Bastienne in Algiers*).<sup>21</sup> In this play, Osman, the commander of the Algerian Navy, endeavours to win the heart of Bastienne, a French slave captured and brought to his household, along with her husband Bastien. The character of Osman defies the stereotypes of bloodthirsty or lusty Muslim ruler as he struggles with more complex emotions of his desire for Bastienne and consequent hate for her husband, and his purer love for her, and pity for both of the enslaved pair. While Osman wrestles with these feelings, Bastien plots along with the other slaves to overthrow and assassinate Osman; Bastienne takes pity on the man who has tried to woo her, and

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<sup>19</sup> Isaac Bickerstaffe, *The Sultan, or a Peep into the Seraglio; as it is perform'd in Drury Lane 1790*; Music by Charles Dibdin (London: printed by D. Everthrow, 1790; Facsimile: Eighteenth Century Collections Online).

<sup>20</sup> Bretzner spelled the heroine's name with a C, while Stephanie used a K.

<sup>21</sup> Rudolph Angemüller, " 'Les Époux esclaves ou Bastien et Bastienne à Alger': Zur Stoffgeschichte der *Entführung aus dem Serail* " *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1978/79): 70-88.

divulges, the plot, saving his life. In return for her kindness, he shows clemency towards Bastien, and releases the couple.<sup>22</sup>

While Bauman finds clear parallels between these librettos and Bretzner's, he questions whether Bretzner could have known of these English and French stage productions. The Bickerstaffe plays were popular in their own country, but it is not known whether they ever received translations and performances elsewhere. The French play currently survives in only a single manuscript in a Paris library, but Bauman has implied that the play may have received more performances than such sparse record would suggest. In addition to the French and English plays, numerous Italian and German plays and operas follow similar themes, although again, the direct influences on Bretzner cannot be determined unequivocally.<sup>23</sup> The parallels with *Belmonte and Constanze* indicate, nonetheless, how the elements of shipwrecked Iberian lovers, a powerful Muslim, and his underling, an escape plot and a generous deed to bring about the happy ending, came quickly to many writers contemplating a drama about westerners thrust into the eastern world. The French play in particular could be seen as an important inspiration for Bretzner's Bassa Selim character, who truly appears to have respect and affection for Constanze, and not just lust. If the play in some incarnation was known to Mozart or Stephanie, or inspired other similar (but not currently known) plays or opera libretti, then the clemency shown by Osman towards

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<sup>22</sup> Bauman, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 32.

the couple could have provided inspiration for the enlightened rendition of the Pasha character in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.

A major feature of the two late-eighteenth-century operatic versions of the story that differs from the earlier French and English plays and operas is the issue of vocality for the Pasha. One of the most remarkable features of the character Bassa Selim in *Die Entführung* is the omission of a musical voice for him, in the midst of some of Mozart's most performative and excessive vocal compositions in his comic operas. One might question why Mozart did not choose to allow him a singing voice, particularly in response to Konstanze's two virtuosic arias that she delivers to him. After all, if the Pasha were a musical role rather than just a speaking role, the aria "Märtern aller Arten," sung by Konstanze, that requires the Pasha to stand and listen to her for almost ten minutes, would demand a musical response. It would be an opportune time for a ruler's "rage aria," a chance to answer back to the indignity with which Konstanze has just subjected him with her unleashing of vocal fireworks; however, this lack of a musical voice does not weaken the Pasha. Rather, his response, a well-measured monologue in the tradition of fine German spoken drama, lends further gravitas to an already-dignified character. There is a stillness created by the lack of music, especially in response and in contrast to Konstanze's extreme vocalizing. Because Konstanze is a formidable creature at this point, the Pasha must exhibit an equal, but opposite, strength, in order to not seem overpowered by her.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Wheelock in Allanbrook, Hunter and Wheelock, "Staging Mozart's Women," 50.

Mozart and Stephanie knew that they would need both a strong actor playing the role, and added strength to the character in order to provide a worthy adversary for their Konstanze. She needs a foil – a balance and justification for her vocal outburst.

In his monologue following Konstanze's aria and exit from the stage (Act 2, Scene 4), he appears stunned at first by her dramatic outburst of coloratura:

Ist das ein Traum? Wo hat sie  
auf einmal den Mut her, sich so  
gegen mich zu betragen? Hat sie  
vielleicht Hoffnung mir zu  
entkommen? Ha! Das will ich  
verwehren! Doch das ist's nicht,  
dann würde sie eher verstellen,  
Mich einzuschläfern versuchen –  
Ja! Es ist Verzweiflung! Mit Härte  
richt' ich nichts aus -- mit Bitten auch  
nicht -- also, was Drohen und Bitten  
nicht vermögen, soll die List zuwege  
bringen.

(Is this a dream? Where does she get  
the courage to go against me with  
this behaviour? Does she have  
hope, perhaps, to get away from me?  
No, that's not it, she would have  
disguised herself earlier, and attempted to trick me.  
Yes, it is desperation! With  
harshness I cannot make it right; not  
with begging either. Therefore,  
what threats and pleas do not  
accomplish, cunning should bring quite well.)<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> English adaptation and translation by Morton Siegel and Waldo Lyman. Mozart, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Original German text by C. F. Bretzner, adapted by Johann Gottlieb

This is an important scene for the Pasha, because prior to this, he has played both the role of the patient lover and the angry tyrant, to no avail. Realizing that Konstanze's resolve is strong, he concludes that he must resort to using cunning and intelligence, since neither force nor pleading have worked. This portrayal of a conflicted ruler foreshadows the final scene in which we see the Pasha wrestling between the bloodthirsty vengeance of a despot and the clemency of an enlightened, magnanimous ruler.

Mozart's depiction of Selim as a nonmusical role is not entirely without precedence, however; in the German opera from the previous year, Selim is also musically silent. His parts are all spoken, an acceptable and not-unheard-of feature of the Singspiel genre. (Numerous Singspiels from this time, including Mozart's one-act Singspiel *Der Schauspieldirektor*, feature roles that are spoken only.) Such musically silent roles were, according to Ivan Nagel, normally reserved for the most powerful character in the Singspiel.<sup>26</sup> Nagel writes, "the Singspiel reserves all its sympathy for the common man. Because of such partisanship, [the opera] has no music for the noble Pasha Selim."<sup>27</sup> (This is also the

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Stephanie der Jünger. New York: International, n.d. This translation reflects an amalgam of this source and my own translations. All examples of dialogue in this article are taken from this source.

<sup>26</sup> Ivan Nagel, *Autonomy and Mercy: Reflections on Mozart's Operas*, Marion Faber and Ivan Nagel, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 14.



case in *Der Schauspieldirektor*, in which the role of the opera company's impresario or artistic director, surely the most powerful person in the company, is given the spoken role.) Stephanie's libretto indicated that the Pasha should be a speaking role and specifically discusses the lack of need for Mozart to compose music for him; in fact, both Stephanie and Mozart had in mind for the role Dominik Jautz, a fine actor who was popular on the Viennese dramatic stage, and who was on salary with both the Singspiel and the National Theatre.<sup>28</sup>

While Nagel sees the Pasha as being above the other characters in the opera in terms of social status, such status being the reason for him not engaging musically with others, or even having a musical voice, Timothy Taylor gives as a reason for the Pasha's lack of music his Otherness, or his existence outside the social sphere of the European characters in the opera. Taylor looks to anthropologist Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger*, a classic monograph in the field of anthropology, in which the author describes society as potent in its own right to control or stir men to action to support his argument. Douglas writes, "This image [of society] has form; it has external boundaries, margins, internal structure. Its outlines contain power to reward conformity and repulse attack. There is energy in its margins and unstructured areas."<sup>29</sup> Taylor considers the Turk, banished from the centre of the social sphere, as posing a threat to it from his

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<sup>28</sup> Bauman, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, 16.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 137. See Taylor, "Peopling the Stage," 82.

marginal position.<sup>30</sup> Thus, within the music of the opera, the Pasha has no place. Even at the end, when he is shown as sympathetic to the Westerners, he has not achieved a social accordance with them. He is still in power, as is evidenced by his lack of joining in the singing which celebrates him. He allows those he rules to sing a song of praise to his magnanimity while he watches over both his household and the distant departing ship carrying the Europeans back to their homeland. Throughout the opera, he remains an Other, even within his own household.

Mozart agreed that the Pasha should remain musically mute, as he was in the Bretzner libretto; however, he felt that Stephanie, who had planned to follow Bretzner's model closely, should change the ending. He wished to elevate the libretto beyond Bretzner's rather sentimental narrative by changing the Pasha's motivation for releasing Belmonte and Konstanze, rather than using the then-common plot contrivance of reunited family members, a narrative feature that appears in numerous comic operas. In Bretzner's libretto, the Pasha discovers that Belmonte, Constanze's lover and rescuer, is actually his own long-lost son. In Mozart and Stephanie's opera, however, the Pasha discovers that Belmonte is the son of his worst enemy, the man who forced his banishment from Spain. He tells Belmonte (Act III, scene 5):

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<sup>30</sup> Taylor, "Peopling the Stage," 83.

Dein Vater entriss mir eine Geliebte,  
die ich höher als mein Leben  
schätzte. Er brachte mich um Ehrenstellen,  
Vermögen, um alles. Er zernichtete mein  
ganzes Glück."

(Your father tore from me a beloved  
whom I treasured above life itself.  
He robbed me of honours,  
property, everything. He destroyed my  
whole happiness.)

As Belmonte prepares for expected death, the Pasha  
reveals his true nature:

Ich habe deinen Vater viel zu sehr  
verabscheut, als dass ich je in seine  
Fuss stapfen treten könnte.  
Nimm deine Freiheit. . . Berichte deinem  
Vater, dass du in meiner Gewalt warst,  
dass ich freigelassen, um ihm sagen  
zu können, es wäre ein weit grösser  
Vergnügen, eine erlittene Ungerechtigkeit  
durch Wohltaten zu vergelten,  
als Laster mit Laster tilgen.

(I hold your father in too much contempt  
to ever be able to tread in his footsteps.  
Take your freedom. . . And tell your  
father that you were in my power  
and I set you free so that you could tell him  
it is a far greater pleasure  
to repay an injustice  
with a favour  
than an evil with an evil.)

With the little-known 1755 French play *Les Époux esclaves ou Bastien et Bastienne à Alger* depicting the only known precedence of a show of mercy on the part of the powerful Pasha, Mozart and Stephanie's ending is a remarkable departure from its antecedents. Other than the decision to end the opera with the act of forgiveness, the "*clemenza* ending" (to borrow Ivan Nagel's phrase), their version of *Die Entführung* is faithfully borrowed (Nagel would say plagiarized) from Bretzner and Andre's.<sup>31</sup> Some scholars feel that the ending is not in character with the opera's genre, while others write that this ending, in fact, elevates the genre. In changing the ending from that of a domestic drama in which families are reunited to that of high drama with an almost *opera seria* theme, Mozart and Stephanie, Nagel writes, alter the entire aesthetic of the Singspiel, a move "which would allow for such 'high seriousness' in the future as Beethoven's *Fidelio*."<sup>32</sup> Critics in Mozart's time, however, questioned the seriousness of the clemency theme, with one writing: "Instead of a picture of life, we are given here adventure novels, whose only use is to teach us to admire false greatness."<sup>33</sup> Schink, the author of this review of *Die Entführung*, criticizes the high-mindedness of the revised ending, claiming that it was inconsistent with the Singspiel genre's aesthetic.

The issue of clemency and its potential implication as a virtue of the Enlightened ruler, is much debated in the literature of *Die Entführung*. Many scholars, including such musicologists as Neal Zaslaw and Thomas Bauman, have asserted that Mozart

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<sup>31</sup> Nagel, *Autonomy and Mercy*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>33</sup> Johann Friedrich Schink, qtd. in Nagel, *Autonomy and Mercy*, 15.

intended the Pasha to represent Joseph II, and to flatter him in the depiction that showed the Pasha to be an enlightened ruler, citing his kindness and clemency as major evidence of his enlightenment.<sup>34</sup> They also argue that Mozart's insistence that Stephanie change the ending of Bretzner's libretto as evidence that Mozart felt that clemency is an Enlightened virtue. Daniel Hertz (although in this instance discussing *La Clemenza di Tito* and not *Die Entführung*) writes: "Clemency was a virtue ardently espoused by the Enlightenment, an age during which Montesquieu, Beccaria, and Voltaire led the fight against penal torture."<sup>35</sup> Other scholars, however, equally vocal, disagree that displays of clemency define a character as enlightened. Derek Beales, for example, writes that clemency cannot be considered an enlightenment virtue. Tolerance, yes, he writes, but not clemency. In fact, Beales believes that clemency in individual cases is a virtue of Christian rulers and non-Christian rulers throughout the ages, and has nothing to do with the Enlightenment. He questions Hertz's citing of Beccaria as a proponent of clemency, believing that Hertz has misinterpreted Beccaria. According to Beales, Beccaria disapproved of rulers showing clemency on an individual basis, believing that consistency was important, and that a ruler should punish as needed to deter a criminal

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<sup>34</sup> Neal Zaslaw, ed., *The Complete Mozart: A Guide to the Musical Works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* (New York: Norton, 1990), 79; also Bauman, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, 25.

<sup>35</sup> Hertz, *Mozart's Operas*, 272.

from committing future crimes:

Beccaria . . . thought that the punishment appropriate to a certain crime could and should be determined by calculating precisely how much pain had to be inflicted on the criminal to deter him and others from committing the same offense in the future. The ruler has no business to disturb the arithmetic by merciful caprice.<sup>36</sup>

While Beales makes a convincing argument with this point, his assertion that Enlightened rulers must be *shown* proposing reforms in order to be truly enlightened, is certainly less convincing. In the case of *Die Entführung*, we cannot know what the Pasha does with his time, when not attempting to woo Konstanze. Additionally, one must admit that watching a ruler propose political reform would not make for a very exciting opera libretto. Beales also seems to ignore the fact that Joseph was considered to be an ardent believer in Enlightenment teachings during his lifetime, and that he abolished the death penalty in Habsburg territories in his reign. Nicholas Till writes that Joseph was very pleased to be granted a meeting with Voltaire in 1769; the philosopher was assured by Grimm that the young emperor was "one of us", and was sympathetic to his beliefs. Further evidence of Joseph's belief in the teachings of

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<sup>36</sup> Derek Beales, "Mozart and the Habsburgs," online article drawn from first drafts of Beales's book, *Enlightenment and Reform in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 7; JSTOR, accessed 10/30/06.

Enlightenment philosophers is seen in Pompeo Batoni's double portrait of the young Joseph II and his brother Leopold, in which a copy of Montesquieu's *L'esprit des lois* rests on a table beside them.<sup>37</sup>

The main tenet of Enlightenment philosophy – that personal merit supersedes birth or social stature – is clearly upheld in this opera. Characters are not rewarded for gifts not of their earning, such as their social status, but are rewarded for intelligence, fidelity, accomplishments, and inner nobility. Likewise, in the Enlightenment spirit, the characters are not punished for the family into which they are born. The Pasha sees the fine character and intelligence of Belmonte and the noble fidelity of Konstanze, and frees them. He does not punish Belmonte for his birth, choosing to not let Belmonte's father's shortcomings, sins, or misdeeds become Belmonte's, thereby allowing the young man to succeed in spite of his birthright. In upholding this philosophy, even more so than carrying out the actual act of clemency, Till considers *Die Entführung* Mozart's "most deliberately Josephinian opera, written in the full flush of the new ideals of the rationalist Austrian enlightenment."<sup>38</sup>

However, as Till offers this assessment of the opera, he acknowledges that the intention for *Die Entführung* to reflect Enlightenment ideals may have come from the librettist and composer, and not Joseph at all. He writes that the use of Turkish music may have been an intentional way for Joseph to keep the Turks in the public eye – a necessary reminder to

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<sup>37</sup> Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, 86-87.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 101.

Austrians who would be called to service in the event that he and Catherine the Great of Russia managed to seize some of the Ottoman territory.<sup>39</sup> Taylor also argues *Die Entführung* and the role of the powerful Pasha had political ramifications for Joseph II. During the composition of the opera, and for nearly a decade after, Joseph was reforming the Habsburg Empire at every level. The power of state was increased, mainly at the expense of the church, and conscription was introduced in 1771, primarily to allow Joseph to increase troops in the event of war against Turkey. The Emperor was also attempting to expand his domain by trying to acquire Bavaria and the Balkans, where he tangled with the Ottoman Empire. Joseph also conducted covert negotiations with Catherine about quietly annexing parts of the Ottoman Empire. *Die Entführung* was scheduled to have its premiere while her emissary, Grand Duke Paul Petrovich, was in Vienna, presumably to discuss such matters.<sup>40</sup> Further, Volkmar Braunbehrens writes that by the time Mozart had begun work on the opera, preparations had begun in Vienna to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the Austrian victory over the Turks in 1683 – the siege of Vienna.<sup>41</sup> While Joseph wrote simply that he wished to present a Singspiel to his esteemed guests to show off the talents of his composers and authors, and prove the worthiness of German theatrical art, the topic of the

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<sup>39</sup> Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, 108. Also in Taylor, "Peopling the Stage," 65.

<sup>40</sup> Taylor, "Peopling the Stage," 65.

<sup>41</sup> Volkmar Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Vienna, 1781-1791*, Timothy Bell, trans. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 74.



Singspiel was fraught with more meaning and greater motivation.

While the motivations for the composition of the opera and the portrayal of an enlightened, magnanimous ruler may appear conflicting, the role of the Pasha undoubtedly offers a study of extreme power. There are numerous possibilities in how one might interpret this final scene in which the Pasha displays the grand gesture of pardoning the Europeans. Perhaps he is showing off the ultimate sign of power – the ability to be above all laws or social norms, and to release the prisoners who are all too-aware of the fact that their lives were in his hands. Perhaps one could interpret the act as the final victory over Belmonte's father in a competition of one-upmanship. When the Pasha asks that Belmonte remember this show of mercy, does he merely want Belmonte to report to his father, or does he want Belmonte to be beholden to him? Or should we see this as a truly altruistic act of mercy, perhaps one that the Pasha hopes will serve as an example to Belmonte and Konstanze, inspiring the couple to follow his enlightened path. Perhaps the important issue to consider is not whether clemency was an ideal of Enlightenment philosophers, but whether Mozart believed it to be so. In choosing to portray a powerful, magnanimous ruler in an opera that was to be performed before Joseph's guests, it appears that Mozart felt that clemency was a virtue of humanity at its most ideal and noble.

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### Abstract

Initially requested by Emperor Joseph II as entertainment for visiting Russian royalty, Mozart's Singspiel *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* represents the first comic opera of the composer's mature career in Vienna. For Mozart, the honour of having his opera performed in such company would have presented an opportunity to present his work to the Viennese court, an important event that, if successful, could potentially ensure royal patronage for years to come; therefore, it is understandable that he wished to edify Joseph before his guests. To achieve this end, Mozart and Stephanie created in the role of the Turkish Pasha an "Enlightened renegade," a character of great nobility who displays the ultimate show of power, that of mercy toward his worst enemies. By insisting on changes to Stephanie's libretto – including a new scene for the Pasha that shows him wrestling with himself over how forceful to be with his captive Konstanze, and the final scene which depicts his noble act of clemency – Mozart can be seen as attempting to curry favour with Joseph II and espouse ideals of the Enlightenment. However, since the opera's premiere in 1782, scholars have debated the merit of the Pasha's act of clemency, and have considered its artistic implication within the Singspiel genre, and its philosophical implication within the framework of the Enlightenment. While the motivations for the composition of the opera and the portrayal of an enlightened, magnanimous ruler may appear conflicting, the role of the Pasha undoubtedly offers a study of extreme power.



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