

Time and Space in Words and Music

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Introduction

The articles collected in this book explore the interaction between conceptions of time and space on the one hand and the intermedial relationship between words and music on the other. Addressing a large variety of music examples and texts, they seek to contribute to the growing field of word and music studies, an interdisciplinary area that encompasses the work of musicologists and scholars of literary and cultural studies. Word and music studies takes as its subject matter the manifold interactions between these two media in a wide range of forms, from narrativity or “programs” in non-vocal music and musical imitation in works of literature confined to the printed page, in which only one medium is physically present and the other is intermedially invoked, to forms such as songs and opera, which multimedially combine words and music in a literal sense. These two categories have been variously labeled by critics within the field of word and music studies. The first was grouped by Steven Scher under the heading of “music *in* literature” and “literature *in* music,” respectively, as opposed to “literature *and* music.” Werner Wolf, in his systematic approach to defining the field,¹ proposes the terms “covert” and “overt intermediality,” while Irina Rajewsky in her work on intermediality speaks of “intermedial references” when one medium refers to or gestures toward another and of “media combination” when two or more media are physically present. These main categories, however they are labeled, form the basis for grouping the essays in the present volume into two parts.

Part I explores the musicality of literature, focusing on the many ways in which literary texts use music. The first two articles attend to time-space relationships in Irish literature, where “music abounds,” as John McGrath puts it in his contribution. **Adrian Paterson**’s article provides an investigation of the intrinsic musicality of James Joyce’s 1927 volume of poetry *Pomes Penyeach*. As Paterson demonstrates, Joyce’s poetry is characterized by an intricate and referential musical playfulness that invites the poems’ readership to exceed their roles as mere readers and become an audience instead. While Paterson provides a close reading, or rather a close listening, of a single volume of poetry, **John McGrath**’s article offers a larger contextual framework for the concern of Irish writers with music before concentrating on Samuel Beckett’s 1981 *Ill Seen Ill Said*, a work whose leitmotifs and repetitions contribute to a high level of musicality and, as he argues, a “semantic fluidity.” Beckett’s aesthetics can be described as an “aesthetics of intangibility,” where spatial boundaries are

1 See also the volumes published since 1999 in the Word and Music Studies Series, such as Bernhart et al.

transcended – an elaboration of the Schopenhauerian conception of music as “the Idea itself.”

By contrast, **Isabel Wagner**’s article challenges Schopenhauer’s conceptualization of music as a non-spatial entity. According to Wagner, the preoccupation of Gerd Jonke’s *Schule der Geläufigkeit* with the “harmony of the spheres, the aeolian harp, and music produced by nature” exemplifies his rejection of Schopenhauer’s conception of music as a medium that exists only in time. Finally, Wagner places Jonke in a tradition of self-reflexive writers who not only use music in order to expand the possibilities of literature, but also employ literature to contribute to a different understanding of music. Rather than asking how literature can enhance our understanding of music, **Emily Petermann**’s article is interested in the ways in which writers adapt and modify musical structures in their works. Looking at four different novels based on Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, Petermann argues that their employment of the theme-and-variation form corresponds to a preference for cyclical and iterative time. Thus, the novels not only hark back to Bach’s masterwork for thematic inspiration, but also translate its musical techniques to the medium of literature.

If according to Petermann literary texts can employ musical structures to suggest a sense of timelessness, **Markus Huss** and **Christin Hoene** extend the idea that music can challenge and modify limited conceptions of temporality to its transcendence of both temporal and spatial boundaries, concentrating on the intermedial aestheticization of displacement. Huss’s article is interested in the relationship between the experience of exile and intermedial art, arguing that the prose of Peter Weiss, in such works as *Im Schatten des Körpers des Kutschers*, creates a “veiled soundtrack of exile.” Similarly, Hoene attends to the ability of music to transcend spatial and temporal limitations, focusing on the representation of British-Asian characters in Amit Chaudhuri’s *Afternoon Raag* (1993) and Suhayl Saadi’s *Psychoraag* (2004). In their states of in-betweenness, Chaudhuri’s and Saadi’s characters use music as a medium of orientation where spatial and temporal nodal points fail. In a similar vein, **Sarah Fekadu** demonstrates in her analysis of *The Pisan Cantos* that Ezra Pound saw music not solely or even primarily as a temporal art, but that the musical score can be taken as a model of spatio-temporal unity and an extension of his own Imagist and Vorticist poetics.

The two concluding articles of part one deal with the ways in which writers employ music in order to re-tell historical events and the lives of historic figures. As **Beate Schirmacher** demonstrates, Günter Grass’s work uses music to achieve his concept of *Vergegenkunft* (paspresenture), “a fourth tense in which past, present, and future can meet.” To Grass, this concept is especially important in a German context, where the past should never become a self-contained history, but should rather be an elementary part of both present and

future; fiction can serve to keep the past vivid and fluid rather than fixed and concluded. The porosity of the border between fact and fiction, between history and hearsay, is taken up by **Hannah Ianniello** in her article on the theme of violence in literary works about jazz musicians. In her examination of Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter*, whose main character Buddy Bolden is both a historic figure and one of the most mythologized characters in the history of jazz, Ianniello differentiates between three types of violence – systemic, intimate, and performative violence. She argues that the latter concept is fundamental to understanding the role of Bolden as someone who combines both creativity and destruction, who disrupts time and reassembles it.

In contrast to the first part of this book, which investigates the use of music in literary texts, Part II is centered around the way in which musical works and musical settings of literary texts create and modify meaning. In her article on Gabriel Fauré's settings of Charles Baudelaire's poem "Hymne," **Helen Abbott** looks at what she calls the poem's settability, arguing that composers select certain poems not merely for their aesthetic value, but also because of the ways in which the poems lend themselves to a musical adaptation, thus coinciding with the respective composer's interests. As Abbott makes clear, Fauré consciously manipulated Baudelaire's "Hymne," modifying its structure and semiotics not only to assimilate the poem to his own style, but also to adapt it to a changed historical context. **Burkhard Sauerwald**'s contribution expands on the idea of the conditioning impact of historical contexts on the perceived semiotic range of intermedial artworks. Focusing on musical settings and historical performances of the poem "Der gute Kamerad" ("The Good Comrade") by the German Romantic writer Ludwig Uhland, Sauerwald traces what may be called the poem's semiotic sea change, from a text which was initially received as democratic and liberal to a de-contextualized emblem of National Socialist propaganda in the form of a song.

From a similarly musicological perspective, **Diana Kupfer** investigates the Korean-American composer Earl Kim's song cycle *Now and Then*, which adapts literary works by Anton Chekhov, William Butler Yeats, and Samuel Beckett. While Petermann in her contribution accentuates the importance of musical works for literary evocations of cyclical time, Kim's conceptualization of time was inspired by both musical and literary works, harking back to the Romantic lieder of Franz Schubert and modernist literary texts. Kupfer is especially interested in Kim's use of what she terms "recursive intertextuality" as a technique for processing his traumatic experience of the American nuclear attack on Nagasaki, whose devastating effects he witnessed as a US Air Force Intelligence officer in 1945. **Maria Ristani**'s article concludes this volume's investigations of the work of Samuel Beckett, focusing on similarities in the modes of temporality between Beckett's late plays on the one hand and the compositions of such experimental postmodern composers as Terry Riley, Steve

Reich, Philip Glass, and La Monte Young on the other. According to Ristani, parallels can be found in the works' rejection of linear time and their use of "additive and circular rhythmic progression."

Judith Crispin argues that it is important to distinguish between different ways in which composers have suggested the transcendence of linear time. In her article, she focuses on two alternative approaches to time. As she demonstrates, Ferruccio Busoni's *Doktor Faust* exemplifies the sharp conceptual distinction between a temporal and a nontemporal realm, whereas Olivier Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* suggests a "sliding scale of temporality," where the difference between a temporal and a nontemporal sphere is gradual rather than absolute. **Tyler Cassidy-Heacock's** article concludes this book with an investigation of Philippe Leroux's *Voi(rex)*, a work for seven-person chamber ensemble supplemented by several electronic devices, computer software, and seven loudspeakers. *Voi(rex)* complicates any clear distinction between such categories as time and space, or words and music. In the piece's introduction, a word is sung, recorded, and manipulated by music software while the vocalist makes gestures that correspond to the loudspeakers' real-time playback of a modified recording of her own voice. At times, the vocal part "vacillates between the more-spoken and the more-sung," playing with the ostensible difference between music and sound. Cassidy-Heacock makes use of Julia Kristeva's theory of verbal gesture to illuminate the work's ideological and philosophical implications.

Taken together, the fifteen essays collected here offer a sketch of the interrelations between words and music, space and time. Whether the evocation or imitation of the sister art serves to appropriate or adopt the spatio-temporal attributes of another medium or to comment on a form's own mediality, intermedial experimentation has much to say about processes of literary and musical composition and reception, about the role of tradition and intertextuality, and about the medial constellation in which these works situate themselves. If according to Rajewsky intermedial research is characterized by an "urge for the crossing of borders, for cross-fertilization and a hybridization of discourses," this volume hopes to contribute to a greater recognition of a profound and productive exchange not only between analogous media but also between related academic disciplines.²

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2 "Drang nach Grenzüberschreitungen, nach gegenseitiger Befruchtung und Hybridisierung der Diskurse" (*Intermedialität* 4, our translation).

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