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In literary studies, according to Wolf Schmid, there exist two distinct concepts of narrativity. On the one hand is a strand from “classical narrative theory” which focuses on the “mediator between the author and the narrated world” as “the defining feature of narrativity” Schmid (2003: 17–19; cf. Schmid 2010: 1–5). On the other is a concept, developed by the structuralist study of narrative, which focuses on “temporal structure” and the representation of “changes of state” (Schmid 2003: 17–18; cf. Schmid 2010: 2).<sup>1</sup>

As Schmid demonstrates, these two fundamental positions, conveyed in various theories, rarely occur in pure form. For an initial foray into such an elusive topic as art music in western cultural (hereafter “music”), I find these primary categories very well suited to delimiting genuine musical-aesthetic issues. As will be shown, the specific questions, constraints and problems of musical narratology, together with their scholarly discourse and aesthetic premises, are analogous.

To find an orientation in the vast field of musical phenomena, it is important to bear in mind that most narratological research in the field of musicology is devoted to western classical music, and more precisely European art music of the classical and romantic eras up to the so-called classic modernists in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> To delineate the topic, I will explore the border areas of the subject field, notably atonality and new music, in an interdisciplinary discourse between narratology and musicology. An important aspect of my approach to this subject is the temporality of music, for as it will be seen, temporality forms a nexus in the music-narrative relation. To clarify this situation in detail, it will be necessary, among other things, to take account of certain claims and issues in Anglo-Saxon musicology, especially in the so-called new musicology dating from the early 1990s, an undertaking I cannot take up in detail here.

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<sup>1</sup> I am deeply indebted to Glenda Dawn Goss (Helsinki) for her substantial help with the English translation. I am also most grateful for the discussion that followed my talk at the 3rd ENN (European Narratology Network) Conference Paris 2013, particularly to Jan Christoph Meister for his remarks on fictionality.

<sup>2</sup> Among the most important texts in this debate are Abbate (1989, 1991), Nattiez (1990) and Micznik (2001). See also the workshop “What Kind of Narrative Theory for Musical Narratology?” at the 3rd ENN Conference Paris 2013, where papers were given by Márta Grabócz, Vera Micznik and Christian Hauer. I am grateful to Christian Hauer who was so kind as to send me his paper which sheds new light on the question of performativity in music. See in the present collection his article “The Contribution of Musical Narratology to Contemporary Narratology: On Monika Fludernik’s Concept of ‘Experientiality’”. For one of the few analyses in the area of new music, see Dack (1999).

## 1. Subjectivity and development as aesthetic premises

In the historical development of musical classicism and romanticism, two aspects coincide which, in certain respects, recall the two systematic and therefore non-historical concepts of narrativity identified by Schmid. Although they seem to be mere analogies, they are, as will be shown further on, crucial for the reception of music as narrative.

On the one hand, we encounter in the writings on music aesthetics during the nineteenth century the nurturing of a bourgeois aesthetic of genius in the wake of the contemporary Beethoven reception. According to romantic music aesthetics, instrumental music is able to tell us something about our existence which cannot be told in other art forms. Therefore, (instrumental) music is considered the highest form of art. The composer is the mediator between the real world and the art world; he is able to give us a glimpse into this 'other' world of art. This concept of creating art resembles the concept of mediation between the author and the narrated world.

On the other hand, we also witness a trend toward structuralism in the theoretical and analytical writings about music during the nineteenth century. In this trend, authors differentiate between musico-structural characteristics in order to place all musical parameters in the service of organic musical development. Most often this organic development and its musical objects are anthropomorphized and described in terms of storytelling, as though we were to hear "musical figures" become figures of a story or to hear "musical motives" which seem to be "motivated" by a physical or psychic event.

One of the leading figures in these debates was Franz Liszt. Dahlhaus summarizes his concept as follows:

Liszt's outspoken conviction that a "tonal language" was constituted not only by the strong imprint of motifs, but also through their characteristic transformation, which was capable of expressing feelings along with thoughts and outlining actions, can be construed as a consequence of the insight that the intelligibility of a language depends to an even higher degree on external and internal context, on the indefiniteness of word meanings in their own right. (Dahlhaus 1976: 123, translation mine. On this discussion, cf. Holtsträter 2008: 135)

Interestingly – and probably contradictorily to the field of narratology – in music aesthetics of the nineteenth century, one concept cannot exist without the other: narrative cannot establish itself without the structure and vice versa.

Both concepts of musical understanding are particularly pronounced in the discussion about the sonata form and its varieties and hybrids in the current genres of instrumental music like the piano sonata, the concerto, the symphony and the overture. These concepts underlie the journal debates on symphonic program music or the symphonic poem, which were at their peak in the nineteenth century. This musico-aesthetic paradigm pervades discussions about all relevant genres of instrumental music. Even the vocal genres of classic and romantic music such as the aria, the art song, opera and oratorio were unable to escape this aesthetic discourse.

Closely connected with the operative aesthetic or ideological premises are such factors as emphasis on musical rhythm and meter, thinking in musical motifs and themes, contrasting and varying treatment of motifs and themes – that is, the so-called motivic-thematic work which forces all music in this era into the primacy of development. Beethoven's instrumental compositions, especially his symphonies, are the first musical works in which musicology locates the "musical subject" (cf. von Massow 2000, 2001) or the "aesthetic subject" (Dahlhaus [1978] 1989: 134). This assumed artistic subject was often identified with the biographical subject and its expression of emotions, transmitted to us in documents with accounts of Beethoven's historiographically or anecdotally conveyed "suffering," "will" and "redemption."<sup>1</sup> The aesthetics of genius of this time had and continues to have immediate effects on the reception attitudes encountered by this music. In this sense, Beethoven's own comment on the opening of his Fifth Symphony – "Thus Fate knocks at the door" – could be a way to understand his symphony properly.<sup>2</sup>

The subjectivity of the artistic process is communicated in music, more so than in the field of literature, by a mechanism of authorization. This is assumed in the compositional process, and it affects the act of musical performance (by musicians), from reading the score and the physical perception of listening to music up to aesthetic appreciation. Interestingly, this shared working process in producing and receiving music appears not to diminish the general feeling of the immediacy of subjective expression we assume in classic-romantic music, but rather to strengthen

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. von Massow's (2001: 77-78) discussion of Hans-Heinrich Eggebrecht's ([1996] 2000: 575) astute observation on Beethoven reception in the nineteenth century. Dahlhaus ([1978] 1989: 132-134) exemplified this problem with Richard Wagner's conviction that Beethoven's music could testify to something of the composer's "inner biography" and criticized it, saying that Wagner obviously did not yet operate with the authority of the "aesthetic subject."

<sup>2</sup> "What a life of poetry this work unfolds before our senses, allowing us to see into its depths! The composer himself provided the key to those depths when one day, in this author's presence, he pointed to the beginning of the first movement and expressed in these words the fundamental idea of the work: 'Thus fate knocks at the door!'" This statement, attributed to Beethoven, is one of numerous anecdotes recounted by Schindler ([1860] 1972: 146).

it. Here as well, Beethoven serves as a suitable example. Because of his deafness, he was no longer able to function as an active musician and was dependent on the composition of music and its publication. Yet this shared-work discourse of notated music, with the artistic process of composing as an act of writing, is not taken into account in most musical analyses. The assumption behind most narratological approaches is that the composer is the only artist: he is the author of the “music.” Jean-Jacques Nattiez seemed to have this problem in mind when he spoke in a narrower sense of the “work”: “Through the work, the composer speaks to us.” (1990: 240)

If, in contrast to literature, one regards music as an art form that lives through its performance, then this premise inevitably leads to other conclusions: the performer, both as the medium of the music and as an artistic entity in his own right, is regarded as the interpreter of the musical work. He “executes” a score rather than “plays” the music; he navigates his instrument or voice along a narrow path of freedom to decide between the right or wrong execution of the given text, the score, *Partitur* or *Werk*. For the narratological approach to music, this fundamental scope (which I see as interpretive in nature and thus a topic for further historical research) ensures that the master narrative, or *Meistererzählung* of classic-romantic music, including absolute music, concepts of genius, suffering-redemption, nostalgia and dialectical thinking, such as the model of two worlds,<sup>1</sup> etc., remains valid and successful. This master narrative is effective not only in the historiography of its genre and in the biographies of composers (i.e., the authors), but also in the (presumed) artistic expression of composers: the music itself. To hear classical music against this background enables us, both listeners and scholars, to talk about “musical language,” to hear, and not just read, music as “texts,” to study its structures in a narratological or hermeneutical manner as a “story” or a “plot” and to interpret musical “texts” in relation to other texts.

This metaphorical use of narratological terms may cause horror amongst scholars of literature. But these premises have their origins in historical phenomena, and the scientific approach in musicology is largely determined by this way of perceiving music.

## 2. Musical structure, musical development

Up to now, the narratological approach to music – from a musicological as well as from a narratological point of view – has been a highly specialized affair with a limited set of aesthetic and analytical means and a highly canonized set of musical

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<sup>1</sup> For further reading on this topic, see Dahlhaus ([1978] 1989), Eggebrecht ([1996] 2000) and Geck (2001).

works. This is in no way to disparage significant work that has been carried on in the field. It is, rather, an appeal to undertake further discovery of a largely unexplored domain.

Basically, the problem is to distinguish between what can be conveyed “extramusically,” in a narrative way, and what cannot. This is bound up with the question of what this “extramusical” is and how it is expressed. Nattiez defined narrative mainly through action relative to the so-called plot or “narrative thread” (1990: 243). Under certain circumstances, action can be caused by musical development, but this issue cannot be specified more precisely. Nattiez observes that the idea of development as “suffering-redemption” is a “typical schema of behaviour, a cultural scheme and a way of being” (249–250), and thus a cultural topos or cultural paradigm that does not allow for further differentiation.

Nattiez describes this more or less “topical” aesthetic process of *per aspera ad astra* in connection with Beethoven’s music as an illusion of narrative which is not more precisely determined (248–249). He assumes that musical development (i.e., motivic-thematic work, the sonata form) and the narrative of a plot demonstrate structural similarities, so that the musical development found in a composition creates the illusion or suggestion of a narrative. The impression that this process is subject to narrative treatment would thus result from the degree of communicability.

Nattiez’s approach does not proceed from the question of whether music is “narrated” (a story) or “narrating” (the act of telling a story). He accepts musical processes as already narrated. For him, a “narrative structure” consists of “existents” and “events” which are brought into relation with one another by the linear dimension of a temporal sequence and by the causal connections of these existents and events (242). These terms are borrowed from Seymour Chatman (1978: 43–145), where “existents” are action-enabled subjects and objects (characters, persons, identities), while “events” are the actions themselves (sequences, causalities). (Nattiez nevertheless has reservations about Chatman’s “minimum ingredients for a narrative”; 1990: 241, n. 12). Moreover, according to Nattiez, two conditions must be met before a “narrative treatment” or “thread” can be created: 1) at least two objects of any kind must be offered, and 2) both of these objects must be presented in a linear and temporal dimension so that a relationship can be established between them (246).<sup>1</sup> Transferring these principles to music and combining Chatman’s idea of the “objects” of narrative with the general idea of “musical object” in music aesthetics (cf. Barry 1990: 43–59) allows musical features such as motifs and themes (as musical

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<sup>1</sup> Note, however, that Nattiez does not distinguish systematically between the author – that is, the composer – and the narrator.

objects) to be described as existents. Furthermore, the compositional treatment of existents in the course of the musical development and thematic development (e.g., the motivic or thematic juxtaposition of two different types of motifs and their combination and synthesis into a third type) constitute the musical “event.” Through action, the subject or the object of action undergoes changes: it experiences a transformation in the process of the musical passage.

However, if we apply this idea to the interpretive analysis of music, it proves difficult to distinguish between existents and events, even in compositions with a single theme, since themes are often a combination of different motifs. If we consider a simple theme, such as the unison at the beginning of the first movement of Béla Bartók’s Fifth String Quartet (1934), it is clear that inherent in the musical contour is

an impetuous or metrically irregular movement that seeks to break out of the initial note repetition but is always unpredictably stopped (see example).

Example: Béla Bartók’s Fifth String Quartet Sz 102, Movement 1, measures 1–8

The clearly distinguishable impetus of the musical motif does not only characterize this “musical object” (in the sense that the object is described as an “existent”), but it also bears the motivation for further musical development and determines the motifs and the general musical passage that follow. The impulsive, almost aggressive movement of the insistent eighth note repetitions leads first to a leap in ever larger intervals until the driving movement of the melodic line finally appears to be spent and flows into a melodic motif from which, later, there comes a gliding motion through all the instruments.

We thus witness how a simple impulse of musical notes (the repeated eighth notes) mediates ‘presentness’ through its irregular insistence. The impulse has broken out of its given essence before (in intervallic steps and leaps), obviously with the goal that this change will be sustainable (new pitches will be introduced).<sup>1</sup> Finally, this succeeds, and the tonal motion finds its contoured form in a small yet complex structure, a small motif. We witness how the melodic motifs emerge from the three components of rhythm, melody and harmony.<sup>2</sup> Thus the musical subjects and objects lead us to the impression that they interact with the musical processes to which they are exposed or that they cause, but to isolate them from each other is difficult. They appear before the mind’s eye like the forms that are constantly in flux in an abstract film study by the animated film artist Oskar Fischinger: only at the moment in which the specks of light come to rest are they recognizable as round or square and thus reveal their identity, their essence or their *gestalt* as objects.

To what extent we, as readers of the score or as listeners, ascribe the property of subject or object to the motifs and themes depends on the musical structure and the degree of relationship made possible by this structure. A stand-alone motif can be considered an object in itself if, in the overall musical context, it sounds “inserted”; yet it can also function as a subject if it has the appearance of acting for itself. (In the example above, I have interpreted the initial motif as a subject which, still unfinished,

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<sup>1</sup> Bartók works less with keys than with tonal centers which he often adopted from the *topoi* of the folk music of his Hungarian homeland and with which he was well acquainted through his ethnomusicological fieldwork. The tonal coherence at this point initially has a B-flat as the starting point, whereupon in the tonal context, a harsh minor with many dissonant passing tones, ensues. The lines proceed in small steps which are in part no longer tonally bound but act only through their linear context and rhythmic gestures. Even the other tonal centers, which will be addressed later (and could in fact offer a new orientation), stand in extreme intervallic dissonance. In this music, the harmonic relationships appear to be vertically static vis-à-vis one another, not in an orderly fashion of tension and release. Here, nothing more ordered is brought to rest but only replaced by new, continuous motion, the only musical moment that seems important.

<sup>2</sup> This observation is based on Ernst Kurth’s (1947) energetic approach to music analysis, about whom Tarasti prophesied that his “theoretical thinking will one day attain a status in musical semiotics equal to that of Heinrich Schenker in contemporary music theory” (Tarasti 1994: 98). Kurth defined tone and the tonal step above all through motion.

was “placed in the world” and is now left to its fate even though it possesses sufficient properties for further development. But this could be interpreted otherwise.) This fundamental difference between subject and object can be detected by a small nuance in musical interpretation through, for instance, hesitant or distinctive rhythmic phrasing. It is therefore important to observe at this point that in music it is generally possible to adopt the role of a subject or object.

In this example, the prerequisite for the impression of an act of narration is the structural arrangement of the music. In the Fifth String Quartet by Bartók, we still find the classic-romantic idea of motivic-thematic working out fully developed. If this motivic-thematic work is no longer present, such that the contingent musical structure is lacking, then the subjects and objects cannot be interpreted as related to one another. However, the interpretation of a “plot” is difficult. In this regard, Nattiez nevertheless firmly emphasizes that music alone cannot fulfill the task. Rather, the listener’s interpretation must do the lion’s share of the work; it is the “gap-filler” between two components of meaning independent of one another. Only the listener can make a connection between these components.

### 3. “New sounds”... old stories?

The same problem can also be found in the interpretation of twentieth-century music such as the American-European avant-garde music which formed around the “Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik” in Darmstadt in the 1950s (Karel Goeyvaerts, Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage, Pierre Boulez, etc.). The so-called serial music, which is organized according to a series of numbers and ratios, followed a radical aesthetic that negates the romantic concept of creative subjectivity and musical development. In this music every musical event can serve as an object or a subject or as an event which is exposed in a quasi-sounding temporal space, like exhibits in a (probably poorly curated) museum show.<sup>1</sup> These isolated quasi sound-points function as sound objects which no longer interact in relation to each other as subjects. This kind of composing can be compared with the pointillistic techniques employed in the fine arts, with the difference that the “points” which are created in music form no representational image but remain abstract as a whole. Here an interpretation as narrative according to Nattiez’s criteria no longer seems possible, because it is not possible to distinguish between the musical objects (the “existents”) and the “musical events” that link them together.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Dahlhaus ([1965] 2005) which provides a comparative analysis of the music of Igor Stravinsky and Anton Webern and also speculates on the new music.



Vincent Meelberg took up these problems in his study *New Sounds, New Stories* (2006), a recent attempt to make the area of contemporary music accessible to a narratological reading. In this book he applies findings from recent narrative research to trace narrativity even in such extremely slow and uneventful works as Morton Feldman's *Rothko Chapel* (1971) and Kaija Saariaho's *Petals* (1998). He refers to the writings of cultural theorist and narratologist Mieke Bal when he writes that "a narrative is the representation of events that succeed each other in time" (Meelberg 2006: 39). Currently, this is probably the widest possible definition of a narrative and also the lowest common denominator on which the different subjects and disciplines dealing with narratology can agree. Meelberg emphasizes, as does Nattiez, the temporality of music as an important criterion of narrativity in music, thus taking into consideration that this question is generally associated with narrative in musical aesthetics and reception research.<sup>1</sup> According to Meelberg, and in contrast to Nattiez who states, with Abbate (cf. Abbate 1989: 230), that music "has no past tense" and can only "evoke the past by means of quotations or various stylistic borrowings" (Nattiez 1990: 244), music can give the impression of "tense" if, for example, it includes repetitions on the micro-level as well as on the macro-level – repetitions in the sense of the recurrence of sounds, noises, soundscapes, etc. (Meelberg 2006: 95–112).

The second important criterion for narrativity in music, and perhaps the decisive one for Meelberg, is the characteristic of representation:

Thus, the construction of a house, say, can be regarded as a succession of events, but it is not a narrative. Rather, it is a process. But as soon as I record this process on video, for instance, this recording can be regarded as a narrative. After all, now we have a representation, namely a video recording, of a temporal development, i.e. the construction of a house. (Meelberg 2006: 39)<sup>2</sup>

Could music as a temporal art also portray action and thus qualify as narrative, thanks to its capacity to represent temporal processes and its character of "form created by sound"? And where would the limits of the diegesis be? Where would the

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<sup>1</sup> In the debate over new music, the problem of form is expressed in many ways, whether it be in Bernd Alois Zimmermann's concept of *Kugelgestalt der Zeit* ("spherical shape of time"), Mauricio Kagel's confrontation with the rhetorical quality of musical form in several writings, or the theoretical expressions of Karlheinz Stockhausen on his concept of *Momentform* ("moment form"). See also Auhagen, Busch and Mahrenholz (1989), especially the section by Mahrenholz on the twentieth century (2239–45), as well as the literature consulted by Svetlana Neytcheva (2001). On Stockhausen and Kagel, see Holtsträter (2010: 94–107).

<sup>2</sup> Nattiez notes something similar when he assesses the independence of the medium (based on theories of English-language literature) as a dichotomy between "story" and "discourse": "The content of a narrative, the story which is told, can be 'unglued' from its linguistic support in order to be taken on by another medium, another kind of discourse, film or comic strip" (1990: 244).

limits of the extramusical be? In cases in which music behaves as pure sound and, for example, through its signal effect startles or frightens us, it indeed seems, in its unmediated way, to act as operative instance.

A good case in point is the twelve-tone sound field at the beginning of the second part of Alban Berg's Violin Concerto which, with its dynamics swelling to *fortissimo*, can make the hair of the most jaded and well-prepared listener stand on end at every hearing. In the sense of the opposites "showing vs. telling," this music is presented to us as "showing," as theatrical. According to Meelberg, the condition created would no longer be one of representation and therefore no longer one of narration:

Drama, however, is not narrative, although it can contain narrative moments. Drama might in many cases be regarded as a temporal development, thus as a transformation from one state to another, but it is not a representation. Rather it is a presentation, or a demonstration, of this development. (Meelberg 2002: 39)

On closer examination, and in view of common theories of acting and theater, this argument is not sustainable, as Monika Fludernik has demonstrated in an astute analysis of dramatic texts (2008).<sup>1</sup> The problem of representation in music could consequently be one that touches on the qualities of music as a medium constrained only by aesthetic norms, as indeed this was the case during the nineteenth century with the argument over program music or the symphonic poem.

#### 4. The presentness of music

Why does musical narratology have such problems with contemporary art music, and with new music in particular? In my opinion, the crux of the problem lies in reception, and more particularly in the reception of the rhythmic structure of music. To address this issue, a detour on the problem of atonality may be permitted.

Meelberg adopts the narratological categories of Nattiez and Tarasti and states, with a broader look at the literature on contemporary music, that the problem of developing narration is inherent in atonal music because it tends to create a "now," a "present" (Meelberg 2006: 101-102). With this argument, he adopts Nattiez's above-

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<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of performance theory, it can be added that the actor always serves in multiple functions as a mediator between the character role and his own corporality. David Graver (2003), for instance, describes seven forms of representation of the actor that are to be considered in a performance.

mentioned assumption that music “has no past tense” for the realm of the atonal music.<sup>1</sup>

According to Tarasti, there was a loss of narrativity in the transition from tonal to atonal music, and thus a loss of a “unified tonal language inherited from Classicism” (2002: 43). This argument is opposed to Adorno’s observation that atonal music has a much greater ability to express itself, as he wrote in connection with Webern’s String Quartet, op. 5:

A shudder surrounds each of these dissonances. They are felt as something uncanny, and are introduced by their author with fear and trembling. Right into the treatment of sounds it is possible to follow how carefully Webern took hold of them. Only with hesitancy does he separate himself from each and every sound; each one he holds fast until its expressive values are exhausted. (Adorno 1956: 148; trans. qtd from Iddon 2013: 111–112)

Moreover, I believe that a more differentiated view of the various “musical languages” of the twentieth century, which Tarasti subsumes under the heading of “Modernism,”<sup>2</sup> would be worthwhile. After all, nearly 100 years of music history have yielded such distinct phenomena as expressionism, neoclassicism, serial and post-serial music, aleatoric music, minimalism, spectral music, and so on. These musical styles are mostly atonal, although they can sound very different. And in Meelberg’s sense, they tell “new stories.”

While the music of Arnold Schönberg and Alban Berg cannot hide their provenance from the motivic-thematic thinking of the classical and romantic era, and therefore still sounds “romantic,” the music of Anton Webern marks a paradigmatic change in the development of twentieth-century avant-garde music. Particularly in the works of the Darmstadt School of the 1950s and 1960s, the formative element of formal structure (i.e., the motivic contour) is not guaranteed even by tone rows and other procedures. As a result of the serialization of durations and pauses, the classic division of metric units into musical bars, which in Beethoven’s late works and among the romantics such as Robert Schumann and Richard Wagner, was at least questioned, has now completely disintegrated. With that, the framework for rhythmic design, which is dependent on meter and the division into strong beats and weak beats (thesis and arsis), is lost. In this reception context, each tone can no longer be understood as potentially bound but rather as potentially unbound, as a

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<sup>1</sup> Meelberg also refers to Neytcheva (2001: 102), where she reflects on contemporary music and music theater vis-à-vis opera. For fundamental reflections on the question of representation in music, see also Berger (1994).

<sup>2</sup> See the chapter “Modernism” in Tarasti (2002: 43–50).

continuous surprise and as a signal. The complex order of rhythmic structures which is intended by the composers of new music, and which could probably be identified easily through scholarly research, turns into chaos in the process of perception.<sup>1</sup>

The impression of the narrative “now,” of the presentness in the various forms of (atonal) “new” (i.e., avant-garde) music, which Neytcheva, Berger and others describe and which, according to Meelberg, can be regarded as a narrative quality, has to do with this continuous impression of being surprised. In my view, however, the moment of surprise is not due to atonality but rather to the lack of a clear rhythmic structure that enables us to position the sound events vis-à-vis one another.<sup>2</sup> Here, an upbeat motif can only be understood by its contour and its expressive value as a signal, as though the “Fate motif” of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, unexpected the first time, were to recur repeatedly with a knocking at the door, always with the same effect. The resulting increased awareness of hearing, being in the here-and-now, strongly influences receptive attitudes and thus the ability of music to continuously surprise.

If we ascribe an action to such music, it cannot be situated anywhere else than in the here-and-now, and thus it more likely belongs to the sphere of “showing” or presenting than it does in sphere of “telling” or representing.

Finally, in a narratological reading of music, the problem is to recognize musical moments that create relationships with other moments. Since music is a temporal art, and since we too are subject to the laws of temporality, relations can emerge only in retrospect, retroactively. This means that in the current experience of music, events must sound that can be brought into a relationship with past occurrences. These musical events are either 1) linked with events in the music just received, 2) linked with events known from other music or 3) recalled from other extramusically-connoted experience. The first would apply to any music that works with repetition, with clearly recognizable themes and motifs, thus music which the authors of the new musicology have studied.<sup>3</sup> This listening would be an analytical hearing, standardized and objectified by expert discourses, and would be placed on an enthusiast’s or an expert’s level. The second category would relate to the respective listening biography of the listener; in this hearing, subjective-biographical listening

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<sup>1</sup> For a further and a systematic discussion of meter and measure with respect to bar and beat, see London (2001: 278–287).

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, in his book *On the Beautiful in Music*, Eduard Hanslick emphasizes rhythm over harmony and melody. The latter two would not occur in nature, while rhythm is “the only musical Ur-element”: “Only a third element in music, that which is borne by the first two, existed before and outside of mankind: rhythm” ([1854] 1991: 85, translation mine).

<sup>3</sup> This kind of hearing is mentioned by Barry (1990: 50), where she speaks of “temporary storage.”

experiences are mixed. This process can be achieved through specialization, on the one hand, but also by the enrollment of preferences, on the other. The third category is the one in which the inexperienced listener and the expert hear birds warbling in Joseph Haydn's *The Creation* (1796–98) or a UFO landing in Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Kontakte* (1958–60). Such a listening experience, built on musical painting, does not require short-term memory; one does not even need to listen carefully but merely cover one's extra-musical auditory perceptions with musical events.

As incomplete and simple as this tri-partite division seems, it nonetheless points to the dilemma of narrativity in music, namely the problematic requirement of an analytical listening in order to recognize the obvious. At the same time, this division also indicates the possibilities that musical narratology offers when one is free of the "master narrative" (*Meistererzählung*) of the sonata and program music and, following the example of the above-mentioned authors, when it is applied to new music or to vocal genres such as the art song and to the theatrical genres of opera and music theater or *Hörspiel* (radio play). One might also consider what would happen if not just one author but several appeared on stage and interacted with one another, as happens in improvised music, for instance.

## 5. Music and the perception of time

Music as a temporal art can be understood as a sequence of expressions (or metaphorically: utterances) produced by artists (composers and musicians) in an artistic context that is not bound by the laws of the factual world. Yet these utterances may have an autonomy determined by the artist with a particular focus, for instance, the perception of time. Composing music is also an artistic process which can focus on the temporal structure of music and, in general, on the way time is perceived.

In literature the perception of time occurs in a different form. Thus, it can be observed that there are many passages in fiction with neither a story nor development. For example, Thomas Mann's novels contain long passages that do not contribute to the story or that involve no story at all. Likewise, in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) some actions are so drawn-out and detailed that they are read only as descriptions. Hermann Hesse proceeds in exactly the opposite way in *The Glass Bead Game* when he presents Joseph Knecht's first two-year stay in the monastery of Marienfels as a single, cumulative perception ([1943] 2002: 154–174). Expressed in terms of narrative theory, the conflict here is found between "narrative time" (*Erzählzeit*), or the time it takes to tell or read a story, and "story time" (*erzählte Zeit*), the time during which the actions take place (cf. Genette [1972] 1980: 33). In music, as

I understand Nattiez, these problems of temporality would be provided with the disposition of necessary musical “existents” and “events,” musical motifs which are foregrounded and combined in a manner such that the listener can distinguish them and relate them to a musical development. This exerts an influence on the process of perception: I can, as Kretzschmar does for Beethoven’s symphonies (cf. Kretzschmar 1898: 130–187), understand an entire heroic destiny in a half-hour sonata form as such only if I accept the conflict between narrative time and story time as already invested in the genre of the symphony. Or I can hear Liszt’s *Mazeppa* (first performed in Weimar 1851), a symphonic poem with a performance length of about 17 minutes, as a representation of Victor Hugo’s poem whose “story time” is about three days. In such cases, it would therefore be a question of whether this conflict of temporality is even more important for the adoption of a narrative than it is for the actual syntactical nature of music.

In the relations between narrative time and story time lies another general objection to the claim of narrative in music. According to Nattiez, music in its directness – and here it stands close to drama and theater – can speak predominantly only “in the present.” Against this argument, however, is the objection that fictionality generally touches on this problem of temporality. Thus, the sentence “Yesterday it rained in Cologne”<sup>1</sup> in a novel is as little determined temporally as a “remembered sound” motif in a Beethoven sonata or a wistful clarinet sigh in the work *Osten* from *Stücken der Windrose* by Mauricio Kagel which recalls the bygone music culture of East European Jews and sounds as though it “is” from the past.

Nevertheless, there remains an important difference between literature and music on these issues in that the perception of music is subject to a particular constraint. Although the listener can interrupt the reception process and turn off the car radio or leave the concert hall, he can neither influence the tempo nor interrupt the reception of the micro-structure in the same way that a reader, at any time, can quickly re-read or pause if he does not understand something. This problem is categorical in nature and distinguishes music from literature or the plastic arts, bringing it close to film and theater which also have the ability to “tell and show” simultaneously or, to be more precise: to present “forms moved by sounds” (cf. Hanslick [1854] 1991) as inner and outer experiences. Even when reading a musical score, a person cannot determine the speed of a piece of music without altering or distorting its aesthetic intention, which is indicated by a complex and rigid system of signification employing a system of notation (like tempo markings), any more than he can determine the general playability of a musical passage or the types of texture which emerge from different tempos, etc. This other-directedness of the reception process

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<sup>1</sup> “Gestern regnete es in Köln” (Petersen 1993: 5).

affects the perception of music: music is conceived of as an entity that is able to deploy itself by virtue of its narration in real time, while it is being performed.

## 6. Conclusion

It appears to me that, as regards narrativity, the structural aspect, the story, the plot or the development alone cannot be taken into account in the transfer of narrative to music. Since music is always an expression of an artistic subject, it is useful to examine the different compositional strategies used by the composer in the musical discourse with the opportunity to evaluate them as different approaches of an assumed author, a narrator or another instance that relates to the music. The historical figure Beethoven served as a role-model for the following generation of composers like Robert Schumann and Franz Liszt, and their writings can be viewed from a narratological perspective. Composers of the twentieth century like Karlheinz Stockhausen or Mauricio Kagel adapted these positions to modernism and postmodernism.

Communicability would then result from the closeness/distance between the author and the work and from the closeness/distance of the work vis-à-vis the recipient. On these levels could be located such instances as “author” or “narrator,” which Edward Cone (1974: 94) describes in “absolute music” (i.e., instrumental music) as yet “unidentifiable.”

From this perspective, music analysis which operates with the terms of narrative theory is able to highlight aspects of communication that emanates from the fringe of the actual subject: the musical genre and its underlying concepts of form, the compositional technique and its role in the aesthetic discourse of its time, or the explicit poetics of the composer and their realization in his work. Seeking out common perspectives and methods such as the comparison of music with language, the “reading” of story out of music or the interpretation of a musical development as “drama” should be encouraged. But at the same time, we must take into account the variety of aesthetic concepts in the history of composition and aesthetics which determine the artistic process in all steps.

These assumptions will combine the questions of systematic disciplines like musical analysis and music theory with questions of aesthetics, culture, genre and their historical development in the area of historical musicology. Considering that the concepts of subjectivity and organic development are largely determined by the bourgeois culture of the nineteenth century, I assume that these concepts are still commonplace in current musicology. (In this respect, I take the concepts of musical

narrativity to be merely a product of cultural processes, not a matter of the human condition.)

What methods and questions would be appropriate to achieve this goal? To give but one example, compositional sketches (autographs, etc.) can be examined to trace the poetic process in the genesis of a work. If we truly wish to discover an author's intention, we should not look at statements by authors (composers) but rather at creative processes as they emerge in documents in order to understand composition as a poetic process.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, we must consider that in each reception process there also exists a possible "identified wish to be" that interrogates the higher and lower intentions of one's own choice of context in which to listen to music, whether for entertainment, for solace during difficult moments or as a means of questioning social distinctions (cf. DeNora 2004: 109–150). This concerns the "longhair music" of Haydn and Beethoven, for instance, but also popular music such as that of Jean Michel Jarre and Justin Bieber.

Literature and literary theory are topics that musicologists have dealt with since the beginning of their discipline in the eighteenth century, particularly when it comes to questions about aesthetics and philosophy. I believe that we as musicologists can profit from the "boost" offered by narratology because it can enable us to express our knowledge intelligibly. It will also help us avoid the risk of lapsing into the jargon of formal analysis, incomprehensible to outsiders, and shift the burden of proof to twenty pages of musical score with a terse "as one can clearly hear."

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<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, this would presuppose that subjectivity, which in music can also be expressed as identity and thereby provide modes of identification, is a construct; the illusion of an "authorial intention" and of a "story" would then be given up.



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