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Finally, thank you to all the readers of MUSIC. OLOGY. ECA. Your support of this journal allows for greater visibility of musicologists in the early stages of their career and is deeply appreciated by the authors and editors of this journal.

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From the Editors

As the 2022-2023 school year begins, we would like to present you with the newest issue of MUSIC.OLOGY.ECA. Since its founding by Rebecca Waxman and Abi McQuater in 2019, this journal continues to provide postgraduate students doing research in music with the opportunity to publish their work. Last year, under editors Melissa Morton and Ashley Stein, the journal became part of the university’s open access site and gave authors the option to have their work peer-reviewed, to give young scholars insight to the world of academic publishing. As MUSIC.OLOGY.ECA enters its third year of publication, the journal has expanded in size to four editors, each providing their varied perspectives and valuable contributions to the journal creation process.

In this third issue, we reflect on the various means in which musicology can be understood, applied, and studied, through five peer-reviewed works that challenge and expand the limits of what musicological research can be. Musicologist Gilbert Chase (2014) once wrote that this field of study serves as a bridge in several different manners. It allows for travel in time and space, as well as connecting disciplines. Indeed, musicology tasks scholars to take on this travel then explain the phenomenon of music’s place in society. The works that comprise this issue take on this assignment and together suggest that music is not a static piece of culture – it demands interactivity, built on centuries of individuals sharing and re-inventing the meanings of music. From Kat Taxidou’s research of orientalism in piano pedagogy, to Sarah Smith’s study of opera, feminism, and the musical canon, to Theo Foley’s analysis of how sound design can contribute to political commentary, to Liam Clark’s study of the sociability of music in the video game *Mother 3*, to Ioannis Panagiotou’s interactive performance piece, this issue spans centuries, continents, and fields of study. This selection of works thus not only explores a past or present moment, but also demonstrates the potential future trajectory of musicological research.

It has truly been a pleasure to serve as editors of this issue. When we sent out our call for papers, we received so many responses with many different angles to musical research. We also experienced a great amount of interest for future contributions to the journal. Thus, we know that for now and the future, MUSIC.OLOGY.ECA will remain in good hands, continuing to report on the cutting-edge research done by young musicology scholars. In the past year, we thoroughly enjoyed working with all the authors who have reached out to us with their research. As the limits of musicological research expand, we look forward to seeing how the journal grows in the future. But for now, we thank you for reading and hope you enjoy these works.

Your co-editors,
Natasha Anderson, Claire Gray,
Sio Pan Leong and Menchie Leung

“Egyptically:” Orientalism Within Piano Pedagogy

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Abstract

When learning a piece of music, we are often given a performance direction to better understand the mood or style of the piece. In Kevin Wooding’s piece, “The Egyptian Level,” featured in the 2019-2020 ABRSM Piano Exam Syllabus, the performance direction given is “Egyptically.” This poses an important question: how do we play “Egyptically?” The various styles and musical cultures that a student is exposed to in their instrumental lesson, and the language surrounding it, can be seen to affect their overall view of what is the “serious” music to learn, and what can be viewed as a joke. Edward Said’s work on orientalism is referenced in order to fully comprehend the distinctions created between the West and the “other.” In addition, using recent research from Dr Erin Johnson-Williams, we can fully understand the ABRSM’s colonial past, and if there have been any changes in how they operate today.

Recommended Music to accompany this article

Kevin Wooding, “The Egyptian Level,” *Piano Exam Pieces 2019 & 2020 ABRSM Grade 1* (London: ABRSM, 2018), 10.

“Egyptically:” Orientalism Within Piano Pedagogy

“Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”

Edward Said [1]

Edward Said developed the term Orientalism, and believed that it questioned the foundations of Western representation alongside the “social construction” of the “Other” in history, music, popular culture and art.^[2] This can be seen as problematic when traits of Orientalism are embedded in educational works, as it subtly creates a distinction between “us” and “them.”^[3] Shehla Burney proclaims that Orientalism exposes the “underlying structures of power, knowledge, hegemony, culture and imperialism.”^[4] This is not merely a historical phenomenon belonging to the past, but is mirrored in the context of post-colonialism and contemporary politics.

According to Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, “Other exists in relation to self, hence one’s own musicology offers an exegetical starting-point that becomes an acknowledgment of agency.”^[5]

What is delivered as our “starting-point” creates and embeds a certain standard and expectation. By analysing “The Egyp-

[1] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Pantheon Books, 1970), 3.

[2] Shehla Burney, “Orientalism: The Making of the Other,” *Counterpoints* 417 (2012): 26.

[3] Burney, 24.

[4] Burney, 24.

[5] Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, “Other Musicologies: Exposing Issues and Confronting Practice in India,” in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everest (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 312.

tian Level”, a recent piece from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music’s piano syllabus of 2019-2020, we can perhaps evaluate how entrenched these issues have become within instrumental pedagogy.

Said’s work laid down the foundations for critical discourse on how the “Other” is portrayed, and we can view the development of this ideology in Edith Hall’s *Inventing the Barbarian*,^[6] which analyses the ways the Ancient Greeks conceptualised and invented the term “barbarians” for the Persians. This in turn was more of an “exercise of self-definition,”^[7] rather than fully appreciating and understanding the Persians, which can be used as a framework for better understanding and interpreting “otherness.” The Greek term *barbaros*, created through onomatopoeia, was initially “simply an adjective representing the sound of incomprehensible speech.”^[8] This was developed, and became the main method by which the Greeks defined themselves against all “Others.”^[9] Therefore, the “barbarian” is understood “as the universal anti-Greek against whom Hellenic – especially Athenian – culture was defined.”^[10] This is crucial in comprehending Orientalism, as this was perhaps one of the first instances in which European culture considered itself superior to all “Others,” through binary opposition. Said suggests that to be European implies “to be a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer.”^[11] This involvement is a “discourse by which the European imagination has dominated Asia... by conceptualizing its inhabitants as defeated, luxurious, emotional, cruel, and always as dangerous.”^[12]

“Egyptically”

The ABRSM has become a recognized symbol, associated with British instrumental pedagogy and prestige.^[13] David Wright states that over the course of 120 years, “few institutions can be said to have had a greater effect on people’s musical lives across the world.”^[14] The ABRSM offer exams for both performance and theory, and can be seen to be an integral part of a musician’s journey of learning.^[15] As the ABRSM are an exam system, many of the pieces at

[6] Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition Through Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 312.

[7] Hall, 1.

[8] Hall, 4.

[9] Hall, 4.

[10] Hall, 1.

[11] Said, *Orientalism*, 78.

[12] Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 99.

[13] David Wright, *The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music: A Social and Cultural History* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 5.

[14] Wright, 5.

[15] Wright, 5.

“By analysing “The Egyptian Level”... we can perhaps evaluate how entrenched these issues have become within instrumental pedagogy.”

the lower grades are composed and arranged for educational purposes, and therefore published by the ABRSM. Therefore, what the ABRSM includes in their syllabus and how they choose to portray certain works, may then affect how students perceive them. Likewise, this is perhaps true for teachers, as the ABRSM may “shape” the manner in which teachers teach.^[16]

Recent research from Dr. Erin Johnson-Williams highlights the colonial history of the ABRSM, in their first international venture to South Africa for examinations in 1894. The examiner was tasked with the job of dispersing “good” music, and therefore creating “commodifiable imperial hierarchies.”^[17]

The ABRSM themselves stated that their international exams were “producing a result which is most useful to the dispersal of music education not only over all England, but over the Colonies, which may be said to represent the whole world.”^[18]

This perhaps highlights the ABRSM’s orientalist attitude, as they believed they had a duty to educate the “Colonies” with Western music. Dr. Johnson-Williams’ analysis can be seen to contextualise the original ideas of Said and help us further understand the ABRSM’s colonial past. However, by analysing the piece “Egyptically” we can perhaps find evidence of this colonial attitude in present day.

Often, we are given further insight to a piece of music by the use of performance directions. This helps provide the student and teacher with context on how to approach the work, and may indicate a certain mood, atmosphere or tempo that the composer wishes to be expressed. As we can see in Example 1 from the ABRSM Grade 1 core piano syllabus 2019-20, for the majority of the works there are either musical concepts used such as Andante, or an adverb such as furtively, given

[16] Wright, 6.

[17] Erin Johnson-Williams, “The Examiner and the Evangelist: Authorities of Music and Empire, c. 1894,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 145, no. 1 (2020): 56.

[18] Johnson-Williams, “The Examiner and the Evangelist,” 52.

to describe the work. However, for “The Egyptian Level,” the performance direction given by composer Kevin Wooding is “Egyptically.”^[19]

List/Number	Composer	Piece	Performance Direction
A1	Thomas Attwood	Theme and Variations, Sonatina No.4 in D	Andante
A2	William Duncombe	Minuet in C	N/A
A3	Anon	15th-century English Agincourt Song	Quick
B1	Johannes Brahms	Wiegenlied	Andante
B2	Theodor Oesten	The Echo	Pastorale
B3	Felix Swinstead	The Lonely Road	Andante
C1	Ian King	Happy Day	Swing
C2	J. M. Last	Who Said Mice?	Furtively
C3	Kevin Wooding	The Egyptian Level	Egyptically

Example 1. ABRSM Grade 1 core piano syllabus, 2019-20.^[20]

The performance directions (See Example 1) provided for the remaining pieces of the Grade 1 core piano syllabus are indeed real words and musical terminology. These give further clarification about the style and mood of the piece. The term “Egyptically” on the other hand, immediately creates a distinction between so called “Egyptian” music and Western traditions. How do we indeed play “Egyptically?” Although Wooding may think this is an appropriate performance direction to use, it highlights issues of how the West views Egypt, and what the West perceives Egypt to sound like. When music is presented to us that does not fit within the confines of Western norms, at first it may seem to be celebrating the differences in style. However, Said asserts, that it has “less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world.”^[21] Was there no other appropriate adverb that Wooding could have used to describe the piece? This could have been avoided by perhaps indicating the tempo for the piece, which is likewise the case for many of the other pieces at this level. Perhaps to Wooding, the only defining characteristic of this work is that it is apparently Egyptian, and therefore different. Said states that Orientalism is

[19] For more insight from others on this term, see twitter discussion <https://twitter.com/annalapwood/status/1103934676308094978>.

[20] Performance descriptions for the pieces in the ABRSM Grade 1 core piano syllabus 2019-20.

[21] Said, *Orientalism*, 12.

not a "Western plot" to control the Orient, but an "elaboration,"^[22] a gradual, complex ideological process, which has become "entrenched in the modern imagination as an accepted fact."^[23]

This piece is selected from *Spooky Piano Time: Terrifying Pieces, Poems, and Puzzles* by Pauline Hall and Kevin Wooding. Wooding was born in Australia, but now works in Britain, teaching and composing. His piece is prefaced by the following poem:

Mummies here, mummies there, Mummies in their underwear. Drinking coffee, eating pie, Lying in sarcophagi. No, not mothers (as you thought), But mummies of the other sort.	Bandaged beasts from Khartoum, Yes, Egyptians in this room. Although they may be eating pie, I think that you had better fly... For ravenous relics love to munch And might mistake you for their lunch!
--	---

Wooding advises the player: "To keep all those hungry mummies happy, you must make this piece as smooth and snaky as you possibly can!" The scale he uses, with its augmented 2nd, B♭ to C♯, gives the piece a distinctly Middle Eastern character.

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AB 3903

Example 2. Accompanying poem to *The Egyptian Level*.^[24]

As we can see in Example 2, the commentary and poem associated also exhibits signs of Orientalism, as there is a sense of fear and difference created. The way in which Egypt is portrayed solely focuses on their history of mummies, which is romanticised in Western popular culture. This can be viewed through films such as *Tomb Raider* (2011) and *The Jewel of the Nile* (1985), which, according to Aintzane Legarreta Mentxaka, exist for Western "consumption."^[25] Mentxaka claims that this is exploited through the "Western Gaze," which continues to eroticize and fantasize over former European colonies.^[26] This is also apparent in documentaries about ancient Egypt, in which the Western archaeologist is seen to be heroic, further exemplifying the dominance and "imperial mind-set" of the West.^[27] Although this is indeed a prominent part of Egypt's history, the West fails to acknowledge modern Egypt, and chooses to still view this country as primitive and ultimately as a fantasy.

Throughout the poem by Wooding, we can see the influence of popular culture, as the Egyptians are portrayed as savage and uncivilized ("bandaged beasts"), creating further distinction between "us" and "them." As Said suggests, one of the main

[22] Said, 13.

[23] Burney, "Orientalism: The Making of the Other," 26.

[24] Poem and commentary associated with Kevin Wooding, "The Egyptian Level," *Piano Exam Pieces 2019 & 2020 ABRSM Grade 1* (London: ABRSM, 2018), 10.

[25] Aintzane Legarreta Mentxaka, "Egypt in Western Popular Culture: From Bram Stoker to 'The Jewel of the Nile,'" *Otherness: Essays and Studies* 2, no. 6 (2018): 189.

[26] Mentxaka, 189.

[27] Mentxaka, 181.

issues around the language used to portray the East, is not the embellished or "inaccurate" comments, but that there is no real intention to indeed provide accurate information. Furthermore, the outcome of this characterizes the Orient as "alien," to suit the expectations of a Western audience.^[28] Although the book *Spooky Piano Time: Terrifying Pieces, Poems, and Puzzles* from which this piece originally came, may be viewed as light-hearted for kids, composers such as Wooding and Hall must be careful as to what messages these publications may send. In this political climate, the Middle East is often associated with terrorism and violence, therefore creating a sense of fear when supposedly portraying works of the Middle East can feed into negative assumptions and ignorance. This perhaps draws our attention to how entrenched this Western view of Egypt has become, as we now find it embedded in educational works. Why did the ABRSM think it was appropriate to include this piece in 2019-20?

"The Egyptian Level" does not only play on the stereotypes of Egypt, but also the Middle East more generally. In the commentary, our attention is drawn to the augmented 2nd, which is said to give the piece a "distinctly Middle Eastern character." This motive is frequently used throughout soundtracks in popular culture, in order to signal a sense of difference and peculiarity. This can be viewed throughout Disney's film *Aladdin* (1992), which is loosely based on the novel *The Arabian Nights*, presenting South Asian and Middle Eastern folk tales.^[29] Leslie Felperin claims that *Aladdin* is a "projection in the psychoanalytic and cinematic senses of the world, of Western fears and desires for the Orient."^[30] It may be of significance that the story of *Aladdin* was not originally part of *The Arabian Nights*, and was incorporated into it by French translator Antoine Galland.^[31] Therefore, from the outset, the story of Aladdin has been misconstrued and visualised through the expectations of the West. From the opening number of *Aladdin's* "Arabian Nights," the music is littered with augmented 2nds, which are highlighted through the use of ornamentation.^[32] In addition to this, the lyrics further mimic and draw attention to the apparent savageness of the Middle East by saying, "It's barbaric, but hey it's home."^[33]

[28] Said, *Orientalism*, 71-72.

[29] Katherine Bullock, "How the Arabian Nights Stories Morphed into Stereotypes," *The Conversation*, September 23, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/how-the-arabian-nights-stories-morphed-into-stereotypes-123983> (Accessed 23 March 2022).

[30] Leslie Felperin, "The Thief of Buena Vista: Disney's Aladdin and Orientalism," in *A Reading in Animation Studies*, ed. Jayne Pilling (Sydney: John Libbery and Company Ltd, 1997), 137.

[31] Felperin, "The Thief of Buena Vista," 139.

[32] Alan Menken, Howard Ashman and Tim Rice, "Arabian Nights," *Aladdin (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*, Walt Disney Records, CD, 1992.

[33] It may be of significance that in the 2019 Disney remake of *Aladdin*, the lyric "barbaric" has been replaced with "chaotic." Although this may be an effort to step away from the stereotypes created from the original *Aladdin* film in 1992, "chaotic" has similar connotations to "barbaric."

These characteristics and observations are not far removed from Wooding's "The Egyptian Level," as the entire piece is centred around this augmented second idea (shown in red), visible between the repetitive B flat and C sharp motif (see Example 3). This is indeed exaggerated in bar 12 through the *poco rit.*, as the decrease in speed draws our attention to this interval. The selection of this interval is significant, as Scott suggests that the augmented 2nd immediately indicates "cultural Other."^[34]

[34] Derek B. Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," *The Musical Quarterly* 82, no.2 (1989): 319.

10

C:3 The Egyptian Level

Kevin Wooding (born 1964)

Egyptically [$\text{♩} = c.116$]

f

f

poco rit. *a tempo* *poco rit.* *pp* *pp*

Ped.

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Example 3. Sheet music from *The Egyptian Level*.^[35]

This interval is often used to represent a wide range of traditions, for example, Spanish, Turkish and Hungarian music – in other words, anything different or foreign.^[36] The use of the quavers in bar three and seven may be an accessible way of approaching an ornament at a beginner Grade 1 level (shown in blue, see Example 3). The use of the pedal, spanning over the last three bars of the piece (shown in pink, see Example 3), sustains dissonance by blurring the harmonies, amplified by the high register and the pause. Overall, these musical characteristics can be seen to create a sense of mystery and illusion, which ties in with the expectations of the West, which as we have seen through the indicative example of popular culture, views the East as an uncivilised and mysterious foreign land.

Conclusion

Throughout Wooding's composition, great generalisations are made as there is a strong reliance on stereotypes. This is problematic, as it further propagates inaccurate information, through the perspective of the "Western Gaze." This ultimately creates a caricature of non-Western styles, exhibiting an imagined Western fantasy of the location, in line with the perceptions and assumptions that popular culture assimilates. The West fails to acknowledge the complexities of Egyptian music, and chooses to see them as primitive, upheld in the depiction of these pieces within an educational framework. Lucy Green states that the music classroom can act as a "microcosmic version of the wider society."^[37] This may alert us to the integral role that education plays in perpetuating ideologies and our views of society as a whole. As the ABRSM is an educational institution, we would perhaps expect more care in their portrayal of any culture. However, this is not the case as the main characteristic which is continuously highlighted is that the piece is different, and therefore not Western.

[35] Wooding, "The Egyptian Level," 10. Displaying the techniques used to evoke Orientalism in "Egyptian Level." Annotations are all my own for educational purposes. Please see Appendix 1 for original untouched copy.

[36] Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," 320.

[37] Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 229.

These distinctions ultimately create what Scott describes as a "homogenous Oriental culture."^[38] The culture or location in which the music originates from is unimportant, it is simply the fact that the works are different and not Western.^[39] This in turn means that "Orientalist styles relate to themselves rather than to ethnic practices,"^[40] which is shown by the generalised approach in how "The Egyptian Level" is presented and composed. Unfortunately, this piece is not a unique case within the ABRSM institution, as there are many other pieces throughout previous piano syllabi such as "Asian Tiger Prowl" and "African Dance," which also portray a general impression of "otherness." Due to the popularity of this examination system, many teachers may unknowingly be feeding into these stereotypes. As these works are at beginner level, this perhaps ignorant attitude, may inherently create hierarchies and negative perceptions in their view of music outside the West. Perhaps these works and the problems they create can be seen as evidence of the ABRSM's colonial past, existing in the present day. Overall, we can witness the problems that Orientalism creates within instrumental pedagogy, and there is much work needed in order for change to occur. Perhaps more education for the institution itself is required in order to avoid further appropriation of cultures. Of course, there is no simple method of approaching this. More research, the use of additional, non-western materials, and awareness of the socio-political issues involved will hopefully avoid the future use of terms such as "Egyptically" by the ABRSM, and the confusion and problems that they create.

[38] Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," 320.

[39] Scott, 320.

[40] Scott, 320.

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Wright, David. *The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music: A Social and Cultural History*. London: Boydell & Brewer, 2013.

Appendix

10

C:3 **The Egyptian Level**

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Egyptically [$\text{♩} = c.116$]

Kevin Wooding (born 1964)

poco rit. **a tempo** **poco rit.**

pp **pp**

Ped.

This piece is selected from *Spooky Piano Time: Terrifying Pieces, Poems, and Puzzles* by Pauline Hall and Kevin Wooding. Wooding was born in Australia, but now works in Britain, teaching and composing. His piece is prefaced by the following poem:

Mummies here, mummies there, Mummies in their underwear. Drinking coffee, eating pie, Lying in sarcophagi. No, not mothers (as you thought), But mummies of the other sort.	Bandaged beasties from Khartoum, Yes, Egyptians in this room. Although they may be eating pie, I think that you had better fly... For ravenous relics love to munch And might mistake you for their lunch!
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Wooding advises the player: "To keep all those hungry mummies happy, you must make this piece as smooth and snaky as you possibly can!" The scale he uses, with its augmented 2nd, B \flat to C \sharp , gives the piece a distinctly Middle Eastern character.

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AB 3903

Schumann, Holmes & Smyth: A Lineage in Female Authorship

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Abstract

This article looks at the relationship between Clara Schumann, Augusta Holmès, and Dame Ethel Smyth and how their knowledge of one another's place in history informs our understanding of their compositional output. The canonic significance attributed to Clara Schumann and the idea of "the first woman to compose large symphonic works" will be discussed in relation to modern writings on female canons in creative writing. In addition, this essay will present an analysis of the feminist and political implications of Augusta Holmès's opera *La Montagne Noire* and Dame Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers*. How Smyth and Holmès chose to depict the women in these operas will be examined against feminist musicological criticism of the genre and the composers' own politics.

Recommended Music to accompany this article

Holmès, Augusta, *La Montagne Noire*, Paris: February 8, 1895.

Smyth, Ethel, *The Wreckers*, Leipzig: November 11, 1906.

Schumann: Holmes & Smyth: A Lineage in Female Authorship

Clara Schumann has long been heralded as a composer of inventive structure and style, proving ever more popular as Isata Kanneh-Mason champions her work for a new generation.^[1] This essay will detail the impact of Schumann as a predecessor to the creativity of Augusta Holmès and Dame Ethel Smyth. In addition to illustrating these women's integral roles in the development of their own musical output, this essay will present an analysis on the feminist and social implication of Holmès' opera *La Montagne Noire* (1895)^[2] and Smyth's *The Wreckers* (1906).^[3] This essay will begin by contextualising Holmès and Smyth's operatic output in the wake of Schumann being culturally understood as the first woman to create concert music. The role of women in these operas will also be examined in relation to the contemporary discussions on the operatic tradition and misogynistic tropes. The myth of Schumann and the canonic significance attributed to "the first female" will also be examined in relation to these women's creative output. This essay will explore the roles these women fulfilled in developing a female canon, how they existed in the public music-making sphere, and Smyth and Holmès' representations of women in their operas.

False Firsts and Canons

"I once believed that I had creative talent, but I have given up on this idea; a woman must not wish to compose—there never was one able to do it. Am I intended to be the one? It would be arrogant to believe that. That was something with which only my father tempted me in former days. But I soon gave up believing this."^[4]

[1] Isata Kanneh-Mason, "Clara Schumann Was the Beyoncé of Her Day," *The Guardian*, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/sep/12/clara-schumann-was-the-beyonce-of-her-day-she-needs-to-be-heard-more>.

[2] Augusta Holmès, *La Montagne Noire*, Paris: February 8, 1895.

[3] Ethel Smyth, *The Wreckers*, Leipzig: November 11, 1906.

[4] Quoted in Marcia Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Oxford: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 57.

This infamous quotation from Schumann's diaries paints a depressing picture of the isolating world of female creative musicianship in the early nineteenth century.^[5] Its poignancy is not only gleaned from the composer's lack of faith in her own creativity, but from the statement's overwhelming falsity.^[6] In contrast to Schumann's pessimism, Virginia Woolf's letter to her friend Smyth presents a similar level of ahistoricism, touting "Why shouldn't you... be the first woman to write an opera?"^[7] Once again this is demonstrably false.^[8] The fact that composers, and wider society, were unaware of prior female compositional output, and that their history was excluded by historians has been discussed by late-twentieth-century feminist musicologists already, and the ignorance on this subject is not necessarily what I find most interesting here. Rather, it is the conscious understanding of their unique place in history that is of most interest. This understanding of being shoehorned into a niche seems to disempower Schumann, feeling that she is ill-equipped to tackle this historic responsibility, and even feigning, depressingly, that perhaps it is not a women's place at all to compose. Smyth's response to Woolf, however, can perhaps be seen as embracing the idea of "the first" (with regard to opera) as despite Smyth personally knowing Holmès and her compositional output, which included four operas at the time of writing, Smyth does not correct Woolf here. Woolf later reveals in a letter to her friend that she had refuted Smyth's romantic feelings towards her, so while a cynic might read Smyth's unwillingness to correct Woolf as an implicit white lie in an attempt to impress a potential romantic partner, I think this more related to Smyth's position as an instrumental first-wave feminist.

The poignancy of Woolf's ignorance is further emphasised by Smyth's active and well-documented interest in the music and life of Holmès – whose ground-breaking opera *La Montagne Noire* premiered over twenty years before Smyth's *The Wreckers*.

^[9] However, the reality of who was or wasn't truly "the first" are irrelevant (if symptomatic of a larger problem): it is the "temptation," (as Schumann so tellingly puts it) the allure of being "the one," "the first" woman (as far as they or their contemporaries are aware) to excel in an area of compositional practice and the canonic significance promised by doing so.^[10] When comment-

[5] For a broad overview of the double standards relayed by critics at the time, see Claudia MacDonald, "Critical Perception and the Woman Composer: The Early Reception of Piano Concertos by Clara Wieck Schumann and Amy Beach," *Current Musicology* 55 (1993): 24-55.

[6] For a wide and encompassing overview of women in western music, see Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, eds., *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 90-161.

[7] Quoted in Christopher Wiley, "Music and Literature: Ethel Smyth, Virginia Woolf, and 'The First Woman to Write an Opera,'" *The Musical Quarterly* 96, no. 2 (2013): 263.

[8] This foible proves just as monumentally false as Schumann's, with operas written by: Holmès (as mentioned); Pauline Viardot; Tekla Griebal Wandall; and Cecile Chaminade all performed within sixty years of Woolf's letter. This is of course to say nothing of the operas also written by: Felicity Casella; Marie Grandval; Amalie, Princess of Saxony; Maria Antonia Walpurgis; Wilhelmina, Princess of Prussia; Mlle Duval; Jacquet de la Guerre; and Francesca Caccini, spanning a timeframe between 1625 and 1865. For a visual representation of women's history in music, see "Women in Music Timeline," *Oxford Music Online*, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/page/women-in-music-timeline> (Accessed 20 February 2020).

[9] Wiley, "Music and Literature," 271.

[10] Harold Bloom's "Anxiety of Influence" theory proves uniquely inapplicable as (to their knowledge) there is no "great" woman for them to Oedipally (or rather, in the manner of Electra) symbolically "destroy." See this author, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

ing on contemporary authorship Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar remarked that as a consequence of the literary canon's lack of women, "today's female writer feels that she is helping to create a viable tradition which is at last definitively emerging."^[11] Holmès and Smyth were certainly aware of an emerging musical tradition – as mentioned Smyth knew of Holmès' work, Holmès had been introduced to Schumann, etc. – in addition to partaking in active discussions around feminism and its associated lineages.^[12] Therefore perhaps it is more interesting to analyse this sentiment from the perspective of Schumann. It is more than apparent that Schumann has no reference to an "emerging female tradition" (despite conscious efforts during her lifetime to highlight female musical histories).^[13] So what does this make of Gubar and Gilbert's theory? Schumann's reference to her own "arrogance" implies a self-awareness of the monumentality and symbolic significance her presence in the musical canon would possess, whereas Gubar and Gilbert's idealistic portrayal of a woman assisting a canon already in motion glosses over the anxiety of being the true "first" (or at least, "true" to her knowledge). This anxiety is a product of a false canon, littered with hidden, forgotten "firsts." This narrative allows a disproportionate number of women to take on the role of the revolutionary "first," creating a looping sense of history as female stories are told from a sense of novelty, and rarity again, and again, and again.

Opera, and the Transformation of Mezzos

Opera and its notoriously poor treatment of women has been long debated and discussed in musicological writings.^[14] Catherine Clément's landmark text *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (1988) holds a critical lens to the nineteenth-century fad of soprano femicide with analysis on how composers orchestrated these heroines' deaths to be musically and thematically necessary.^[15] Meditating on the most popular and well-known operas of our time, it is unsurprising that no women composers' works feature in Clément's text. The lineage of Schumann-Holmès-Smyth nevertheless bears witness to the adoption of large-scale form in female composers' repertory. The earliest women composer Smyth and Holmès cite in their writings is Schumann, with Smyth citing her directly as

[11] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 50.

[12] For Holmès, see Jann Pasler, *Writing Through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 218-48. For Smyth, see Christopher Wiley, "When a Woman Speaks the Truth About Her Body": Ethel Smyth, Virginia Woolf, and the Challenges of Lesbian Auto/Biography," *Music and Letters* 85, no. 3 (2004): 388-414.

[13] See Mme de Bawr's first attempt at authoring a female history of music, complete with critiques of contemporary composers: Alexandrine Sophie Bawr, *Histoire de la musique* (Paris: Audot, 1823).

[14] For a rounded perspective, see Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Besty Wing (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1988); Ruth A. Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (London: University of California Press, 1993), 225-59.

[15] Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 50-71.

the earliest composer of large-scale form (something Smyth placed utmost importance in).^[16] While Schumann's oeuvre predominantly consists of chamber works, she was clearly viewed by Smyth and Holmès as pivotal precedent to women composers creating in a public male-dominated sphere where the "sexual aesthetics" of their participation was a seemingly improper, a precedent even more important when delving into the coveted genre of operatic writing.^[17] How these composers engage with the women in their texts through their music and themes reflects the transformation of feminist thought through fin-de-siècle Europe and its impact on further social and personal values.

"This narrative allows a disproportionate number of women to take on the role of the revolutionary "first," creating a looping sense of history as female stories are told from a sense of novelty, and rarity again, and again, and again."

Holmès' only publicly performed opera *La Montagne Noire* at first appears to teeter dangerously on the edge of the shadow of femicide. The libretto – which Holmès is also the author of – tells a story set in the seventeenth-century Balkans, with a forbidden love affair between Mirko, a Montenegrin soldier and Yamina, a Turkish slave, camp-follower and prisoner in Montenegro. Yamina plays the role of the seductress,^[18] luring Mirko away from his fiancée Helena and convincing him to join her in the life of the "infidel." The story of the "exotic," sexually powerful woman (who sings in the mezzo-soprano register) stands very comfortably in operatic convention conflation. Ideas of the "exotic" and the feminine often come together under this banner.^[19] During the final battle scene Yamina runs on stage, brandishing gold and jewels she has stolen from the Turkish camp amidst the chaos. When Mirko reaches out his hand shouting her name she retorts, "Moi?... J'ai peur!" before leaving Mirko and fellow soldier Aslar

[16] Wiley, "Music and Literature," 272.

[17] On sexual aesthetics and their consequences, see Eugene Gates, "Damned If You Do and Damned If You Don't: Sexual Aesthetics and the Music of Dame Ethel Smyth," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 31, no. 1 (1997): 63-71.

[18] Karen Henson, "In the House of Disillusion: Augusta Holmès and 'La Montagne noire,'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 9, no. 3 (2020): 233-62.

[19] See Rebecca Larissa Rockwood, "Augusta Holmes: 'Les Argonautes' and 'La Montagne Noire,'" (PhD diss., Rice University, 2002); Sanna Iitti, *The Feminine in German Song* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 61-80.

to die on the battlefield. As she leaves the stage Mirko continues to call after her, while Aslar continues to chastise his friend's foolishness in trusting her (See Example 1).

MIRKO (tendant les bras à Yamina.) *f* Ya - mi - na!

ASLAR *f* Vois! elle fuit, la misé - ra - - - ble! *ff* Ya - mi - na!

YAMINA *più f* Moi?.. J'ai *ff* Ya - mi - na! Ya - mi - na!

Y. (elle sort.) peur! *ff*

M. Non!

ASLAR *f* Pour la dernière fois, viens! *ff*

Example 1. *La Montagne Noire*, Act IV Scene II, 385-386.

To begin, the opera appears to tap into routine topoi of exoticism and dangerous female sexuality. There are already an abundance of similarities with Georges Bizet's *Carmen*: the mezzo-soprano lead; the exotic location; our female lead being "foreign" even with regard to the opera's "foreign" setting;^[20] a militaristic love interest; and social status (*Carmen* works a low paid job in a cigarette factory, is discriminated against by the law and threatened with prison time).^[21] The most prominent difference is of course their endings: Clément's self-proclaimed "favourite" dies alone, murdered by her former love, whereas Yamina – free and indiscriminately wealthy – awaits her life of prosperity offstage. Meanwhile our male protagonists are martyred in battle. However, the feminist scholar is left in an uncomfortable position when analysing Yamina: James Parakilas remarked it could "scarcely" be called a feminist opera, while acknowledging the "striking" gendered inversion of its denouement.^[22] While the feminist implications of whether it is more problematic to vilify or kill a female character prove contentious to Parakilas, it is the self-sacrifice of the Christian Montenegrin soldiers that the final scene truly spotlights. Holmès' feminism was deeply rooted in patriotism as was that of many French republican feminists at the time.^[23] The role of motherhood became valued by far-right leaders such as Paul Déroulède who viewed such practices as integral to the development of the French army. Jann Pasler illustrates how these ideologies influenced not only Holmès' compositions and their reception but also their production – as she described the ideal *Ode Triomphale* (1889) performance being executed with white, blond performers: the character Amphitrite is supposed to be represented as "very white, and very blond;" the character Apollo is "very all, very young and very blond;" the character that plays the Sea is also "a young blond woman;" the two romantic protagonists of the work are also "blond, white, and beautiful." Pasler describes this as an example of Holmès "promot[ing] white and blond women as the ideal of French society."^[24] An understanding of Holmès' nationalism and racism helps us understand another hypothesis for Yamina's vilification outside of Parakilas's "un-feminist" argument – as a symptom of her far-right tendencies, not an anomaly in her feminism.^[25]

One of Smyth's most famous works, *The Wreckers* plays an interesting counterpart to both Holmès' nationalism and her feminism.

[20] Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 30-44.

[21] Both operas also co-incidentally premiered at the Opéra-Comique and were published by Choudon.

[22] James Parakilas, "The Soldier and the Exotic: Operatic Variations on a Theme of Racial Encounter," *The Opera Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (1994): 43-69.

[23] Pasler, *Writing Through Music*, 222-23.

[24] Pasler, 242.

[25] Iitti, *The Feminine in German Song*, 61-80.

The Wreckers revolves around an adulterous affair between Thirza and Mark, who live in a religious Cornish town of wreckers (people who scavenge goods from wrecked ships). In this depiction of wrecking, the Cornish residents deliberately target passing ships, luring them onto the rocks to plunder.^[26] Shortly after Mark begins luring the ships away from the dangerous rocks and people, Thirza too becomes complicit in their community's betrayal. The couple make plans to run away together in the midst of their rebellion. However, when a show trial takes place prosecuting an "innocent" citizen for Mark's noble intervention, Mark confesses. Thirza too professes her share of guilt; and despite Thirza's husband and Mark's admirer attempting to respectively excuse their actions or lie to protect them, they are both consequently sentenced to death by drowning.^[27] Suzanne Robinson has read this opera as a critique of imperialism, a portrayal of a principled (Mark and Thirza) over fundamentalist (Cornish community) Christianity, and a championing of "sexual anarchy" – particularly with concern to women. Robinson states "[i]n Thirza and Mark she created modern heroes whose attitude to the church, to Christianity, to marriage and to femininity cast their opponents as relics of a bygone era of prudery and conservatism."^[28] The symmetry between Mark and Thirza in Act III add to these idealisations a vision of marriage of equal partners. They are both sentenced to death by the same means and they both reject the feeble attempts of their admirers to save them. It is only in comparison to what has come before that this power dynamic bears significance for the operatic canon, whether the imbalance be between: who lives and who dies (*Carmen* and *Don José*); the prisoner and the captive (*Tristan and Isolde*); the vilified "exotic" and the martyred soldier (*La Montagne Noire*); the artist and his muse (*La Bohème*). The operas listed all end tragically, with a combination of dead men and women and the power dynamics that are produced from that. *The Wreckers* ends tragically, but its portrayals of its characters as equally consenting, equally complicit and ultimately equally punished for their rebellion. Smyth pre-emptively prescribed the cure for Clément's dead rebellious women as an equal contribution of dead rebellious men.

[26] Find biographic similarities highlighted through: Elizabeth Wood, "Lesbian Fugue: Ethel Smyth's Contrapuntal Arts," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 164-84. And direct conflation of Smyth's voice and her Mezzo Thirza can be found in Elizabeth Wood, "Sapphonic," in *Queering the Pitch: A New Gay and Lesbian Anthology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C Thomas (London: Routledge Francis Taylor Group, 2006), 45-102.

[27] Suzanne Robinson, "Smyth the Anarchist: 'Fin-de-siècle' Radicalism in 'The Wreckers,'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 20, no. 2 (2008): 149-80.

[28] Robinson, 179.

To Conclude

As previously touched upon, Schumann was far from being the first female composer of large-scale forms, but as we can see the truth of that was in fact unimportant for the composers Holmès and Smyth. Regardless of their opinions on her, she is mythologised as an epicentre, a springboard for fin-de-siècle female creatorship.^[29] And while this falsity had its benefits then, what of its consequences now? The lie that the nineteenth century is when women become "active" in music history is perverse and it is echoed incessantly. Nicholas Cook's *A Very Short Introduction* (2000) and Donald Jay Grout's *A History of Western Music* (2019) are just two examples of rudimentary pedagogical texts that peddle this story.^[30] *Women in Music* (1982) by Carol Neuls-Bates is just one example of a contradictory narrative, in one chapter illustrating the pervasiveness of composers in Europe's abbeys – hypothesising that their reasonable creative freedom stemmed working outside the legally and societally restrictive role of marriage.^[31] This hypothesis works alongside all women who existed outside of what can be defined as "a traditional marriage" for their time: Barbara Strozzi as a concubine and possible courtesan; Holmès' as an unmarried woman with children born outside wedlock; Smyth as a lesbian; Schumann could even exist on this list as the primary bread-winner in her household.^[32] But what impact does excluding the Barbara Strozzi, and Isabella Leonardas from our history books and "introductions" have? It implies by omission that at best that they are irrelevant and at worst they did not exist. Moulding a narrative where women composers are only cited alongside the artifice and unnatural assertions of the industrial revolution creates implicit teleological associations. Men have been written as something that was always essentially creative, whereas for women it is something they have become. The implication is that this is not a natural process. This issue is largely unique to music among the arts; literature witnessed the "Sappho renaissance" in 1800s Europe and its effects and influences of women writers have been well documented.^[33] She was viewed as a figure of antiquity who appeased the trope of the romantic sublime,^[34] while simultaneously igniting scholarly controversy and scandal into the discussion of (what was perceived as) female sexual "im-

[29] Wiley, "Music and Literature," 278.

[30] Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 104-8. J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 10th ed. (London and New York: W.W Norton and Company, 2019).

[31] Bowers and Tick, *Women Making Music*, 116-62.

[32] Beth L. Glixon, "New Light on the Life and Career of Barbara Strozzi," *The Musical Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (1997): 311-35; Anna Beer, *Sounds and Sweet Airs: The Forgotten Women of Classical Music* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2017), 205-42.

[33] Susan Gubar, "Sapphistries," *Signs* 10, no. 1 (1984): 43-62.

[34] Margaret Reynolds, *The Sappho Companion* (Random House, 2010), 252, 311.

morality” – all while under the palatable guise of natural antiquity, a teleological marker.^[35] The terrible irony here lies in the field of art. She was routinely painted, drawn and sculpted with a lyre or another instrument that was en mode. Sappho has always been portrayed as a musician, but rarely is she prescribed her own authorship as a writer of lyric poetry. Sappho as a composer is delegated to niche areas of feminist musicology (even the University of Oxford’s extensive *Women in Music Timeline* begins as late as 810 AD)^[36] but alas the era where her admission to the musical canon would hold the most prominence has surely passed. Nevertheless, there is something poetic in gaps left in her Fragments, a symbolic reminder of the lack of our incomplete histories and the consequences of their absence.

Sappho, *Fragments on Love and Desire*

VIII

.....but you have forgotten me...

[35] Reynolds, 134-49.

[36] “Women in Music Timeline,” *Oxford Music Online*.

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“Through Antiquity Springs Modernism:” The Multifunctional Influence of Sound Produced by Lawrence Abu Hamdan’s Forensic Listening

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Abstract

As modernity develops it distances itself from the past. This rings true for working methods, which in turn must develop as times change. This paper discusses how the spheres of Science, Engineering, Design and Art are interlinked, and to use multifaceted approaches in any one of these topics may benefit them all. This paper examines the interdisciplinary approach of designer and professor Neri Oxman and applies it to the new practice of Forensic Listening developed by Sound Artist and “Private Ear” Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Abu Hamdan’s work demonstrates a clear amalgamation of these topics which ultimately results in an impactful and meaningful artistic product that is used to raise awareness about the social and legal injustices on which his work centres. The accessibility of Abu Hamdan’s art is a huge asset to his work that allows the viewer to not only absorb it but to interact with it. This blend of artistic presentation and practical use is an example of how the interdisciplinary approaches of modernity can in turn create diverse and dynamic products.

Recommended Music to accompany this article

Abu Hamdan, Lawrence, “Conflicted Phonemes,”

<http://lawrenceabuhamdan.com/conflicted-phonemes> (Accessed 8 December 2020).

——, “Earshot,”

<http://lawrenceabuhamdan.com/earshot> (Accessed 6 December 2020).

——, “Rubber Coated Steel,” Forensic Architecture, 2014,

<https://www.youtu.be/FIvUV5vmMU>.

——, “The Hummingbird Clock,”

<http://www.hummingbirdclock.info/about> (Accessed 4 December 2020).

"Through Antiquity Springs Modernism:" The Multifunctional Influence Produced by Lawrence Abu Hamdan's Forensic Listening

The birth of any movement is hallmarked by a detachment from a preceding prevailing practice. Jürgen Habermas claims that this detachment is achieved by claiming power over the former epoch, which by default deems the new practice as "modern."^[1] Habermas' definition of this practice can be summarised with: "Through antiquity springs modernism."

Within auditory perception, hearing provides key sensory context which enables us to make more accurate judgements in particular situations. For example, in *The Audible Past*, Jonathan Sterne creates an "Audiovisual Litany" which claims that "hearing tends toward subjectivity, vision tends toward objectivity."^[2] This essay centres on the birth of a new auditory movement entitled "Forensic Listening" coined by sound artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Forensic Listening derives from "Forensic Phonetics" which surfaced in Britain in 1984 with the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.^[3] This Act imposed mandatory recordings for all police interviews, meaning that the subject's spoken voice was captured in full, in place of mere transcriptions. Forensic Phonetics "focuses on the analysis of spoken communication... It includes speaker identification, enhancing and decoding spoken messages, analysis of emotions in voice, authentication of recordings."^[4]

Returning to the delineation between modern and antiquated, recorded interviews evolved from the transcriptions that preceded them, and a

[1] Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity - An Incomplete Project," https://platypus1917.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/habermas_modernityproject.pdf (Accessed 30 November 2020).

[2] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003), 15.

[3] Lawrence Abu Hamdan, "What Now? - The Politics of Listening," Keynote Speech, The New School, New York, NY, April 24, 2015, (<https://youtu.be/kvpunh2ew6s&t=2614s>), 04:17.

[4] Harry Hollien, "About Forensic Phonetics," *Linguistica* 52, no. 1 (2012): 1, (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307445282_About_forensic_phonetics/fulltext/57d79e0008ae5f03b494eb5d/About-forensic-phonetics.pdf).

new era of listening with a legal platform was born. Abu Hamdan amplifies the practice of Forensic Phonetics by applying its listening processes to subjects that are not strictly vocal. He uses sound to create evidence that influences legal decision making that would have otherwise been left unnoticed. In a similar style, Professor Neri Oxman combines the interconnected spheres of science, engineering, design, and art. She notes:

"Usually, art is for expression, science is for exploration, engineering is for invention, and design is for communication. And I thought "Why can't we take these four squares and create a circle out of them? A clock... Where you're constantly moving or shifting from one domain to another. And the input for one domain becomes the output for another." So, if you think of science, science converts information into knowledge, and engineering converts knowledge into utility, and design converts utility into cultural behaviour and context, and then art is taking that cultural behaviour and then questions our perception of the world."^[5]

This practice, which for the purposes of this essay will be referred to as *Oxman's Clock*, uses a systemic approach which acknowledges the state of modernity at the time of the art's creation. Abu Hamdan's creative process follows a similar structure to *Oxman's Clock*, presenting the scientific and legal data collected on artistic platforms.

This essay will analyse how three of Abu Hamdan's works, namely *The Hummingbird Clock*, *Earshot*, and *Conflicted Phonemes* demonstrate his use of sound to influence legal decision making and to create art by following *Oxman's Clock*. The methodology of discussing each work will be divided into three sections. Firstly, the legalities of the subject of the work. Secondly, the art piece created by Abu Hamdan. Thirdly, how the process of creation abides by *Oxman's Clock*.

"Abu Hamdan amplifies the practice of Forensic Phonetics by applying its listening processes to subjects that are not strictly vocal."

[5] Julia Reagan (prod.), "Neri Oxman: Bio-Architecture," *Abstract*, Season 2, Episode 2 (Netflix, September 25, 2019), 20:27.

The Hummingbird Clock

Modern nations' electricity is powered by a central electrical grid. This grid emits a hum as a byproduct of creating the electricity. This hum is inaudible to the human ear though is detectable in recordings. In 1986, Dr. Catalan Grigoras discovered that the sound of the electrical grid changes over time, making it sing.^[6] The frequency pattern and cadence is unique to the time it is recorded. As a result, the recorded hum creates an electrical timestamp which therefore gives the grid surveillance power to substantiate or discredit legal evidence. This timestamp is then used as a control for analysing and comparing recordings. According to Abu Hamdan, the U.K. police have been recording the grid since 2006 so they can use it to validate evidence.^[7] The use of the grid's recording has proven useful in the legal system. For example, in 2012 three men were found guilty for being involved in the supply of firearms. Undercover police had purportedly recorded the accused participating in an arms deal. However, the accused appealed, alleging that the evidence had been tampered with. By comparing the hum of the grid at the time in question with the hum of the recording supplied in evidence, the court concluded that the evidence had not been tampered with as the grid recordings matched.^[8] In this case, sound's subjectivity validated the evidence and influenced the legal ruling over the accused. *The Hummingbird Clock* is a project that was developed by Abu Hamdan in 2016 for the Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art. It is a public timepiece which exists both as a physical structure (where it can be experienced in person), and online (where it can be accessed at <http://www.hummingbirdclock.info/>). Visually, the work is a camera-like structure positioned opposite Liverpool's law courts. The public can peer through the camera-like binoculars to focus on the clock of Liverpool's town hall and read the numeric frequency of the hum of the United Kingdom's electrical grid at that moment. Abu Hamdan calls this a "counter-surveillance project"^[9] as it reverses the roles of surveyor and subject: the public inspecting the state. Online, users can listen to the perpetual yet unique humming of the United Kingdom's electrical power grid. The website also allows the public to submit enquiries on the legitimacy of a recording at a particular point in time. Coupled with the visual installation, Abu Hamdan's dual approach seeks to bring the concept of

[6] Lawrence Abu Hamdan, "The Hummingbird Clock," <http://www.hummingbirdclock.info/about> (Accessed 4 December 2020).

[7] Lawrence Abu Hamdan, "The Hummingbird Clock," interview by Liverpool Biennial, 2016. <https://vimeo.com/179050391> (Accessed 4 December 2020).

[8] Rebecca Morelle, "The hum that helps to fight crime," *BBC News*, December 12, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-20629671> (Accessed 4 December 2020).

[9] Abu Hamdan, "The Hummingbird Clock."

counter-surveillance to the wider public.

This piece has followed the structure of *Oxman's Clock* as the outputs for science, engineering, design, and art flow into each other to create a holistic product. The science involved in creating *The Hummingbird Clock* is the electrical grid itself. As a byproduct to powering the United Kingdom, it emits a fluctuating hum. The engineering element of *The Hummingbird Clock* is the recording of the grid. It takes the knowledge provided by the output of the grid and converts it into utility. The design element is the *Hummingbird Clock's* website and physical structure outside the courts of Liverpool. Abu Hamdan has shown how this utility has been used in modernity's cultural behaviour. The artistic message of the piece makes us question our perception of privacy and exposes what is usually unheard. Physically, the piece gives the public the opportunity to survey the courts and read the numeric frequency of the hum at that particular moment. Online, the work allows them to substantiate or discredit audio and visual recordings, which forces the public to question the validity of evidence. Perhaps most importantly, the piece is accessible to anyone with an internet connection which creates a useful resource as well as makes an artistic statement on surveillance.

Earshot

In 2014, two teenagers, Nadeem Nawara and Mohammed Abu Daher, were killed in the occupied West Bank, Palestine. The teenagers had suffered fatal wounds fired by Israeli forces from supposed rubber bullets. Abu Hamdan was invited by "Defense for Children International" to investigate the incident. Israeli forces are permitted to fire rubber bullets but not live ammunition. The incident took place on the 15th of May, known to Palestinians as "Nakba." This is the day which commemorates the establishment of Israel and is marked by protests in Israeli occupied areas of Palestine.^[10] The fatal shots were recorded by news stations' recording cameras. Abu Hamdan used these recordings to investigate the ballistics. Visually, it appeared the Israeli officers were firing rubber bullets, as they had rubber bullet extensions on their weapons. Abu Hamdan could not audibly detect a difference between the recordings of the fatal shots and control recordings of rubber bullets being fired. Therefore, he displayed the recordings of the fatal shots, together with recordings

[10] Forensic Architecture, "The Killing of Nadeem Nawara and Mohammed Abu Daher," <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-killing-of-nadeem-nawara-and-mohammed-abu-daher> (Accessed 6 December 2020).

of rubber bullets and live rounds, on Spectrograms. These are visual portrayals of sonic frequencies. The spectrograms visually displayed findings which were imperceptible to the human ear.

The fatal shots broke a frequency barrier that ordinary rubber bullets could not, though they did not break through this barrier to the same extent as live rounds. Abu Hamdan concluded that due to the rubber bullet extenders on the soldiers' guns, the sound created was not simply rubber bullets or live rounds, but a fusion of the two: "The sound of live ammunition fired through a rubber bullet extender."^[11] Abu Hamdan showcased his audio-ballistic findings from this investigation in 2016, with the exhibition *Earshot*. This exhibition consists of a video entitled *Rubber Coated Steel*,^[12] and displays the spectrograms from his research. *Rubber Coated Steel* follows the proceedings of a fabricated court case on the murder of Nawara and Abu Daher. His findings were broadcast by news channels such as CNN to draw attention to this case and presented before the U.S. Congress as an example of a breach of the the American - Israeli arms agreement and they forced the Israeli army to retract its original statement of denial.^[13] Ben Deri, a member of the Israeli border police, was arrested as a bullet found in Nawara's bag was discovered to have been fired from Deri's weapon. Abu Daher's body was buried on the day of his death in accordance with the Islamic faith and his family did not exhume the body for evidence. In 2017, Nawara's father claims he was pressured by a government representative to sign a deal which would see Deri admit negligence by admitting to mistakenly firing a live round "which accidentally fell into his magazine."^[14] Following a trial of nearly four years, Deri was charged with manslaughter and sentenced to a total of nine months.

Applying *Earshot* to the practice of *Oxman's Clock* demonstrates the fluidity between science, engineering, design, and art. Military Science is the science and methodology behind warfare. It converts information into offensive and defensive tactics to be used to a country or region's advantage. Israeli forces were using military science to create and advance settlements in the West Bank. The engineering element is the recording of the fatal shots, which were captured by news stations' reporting cameras. The recording of regular rubber bullets and live rounds as controls are another product of engineering. The design element of *Earshot* is the portrayal of the sonic evidence on the visual spectrograms. By capturing the data gathered from the

[11] Abu Hamdan, "What Now? - The Politics of Listening," 27:50.

[12] Lawrence Abu Hamdan, "Rubber Coated Steel," Forensic Architecture, 2014, <https://www.youtube.be/IFivUV5vmMU>.

[13] Lawrence Abu Hamdan, "Earshot," <http://lawrenceabuhamdan.com/earshot> (Accessed 6 December 2020).

[14] Forensic Architecture, "The Killing of Nadeem Nawara and Mohammed Abu Daher."

recordings, the spectrograms displayed a key feature of *Oxman's Clock*: breaking the accepted cultural behaviour. Abu Hamdan presents the findings of the science, engineering, and design elements to the public to create his piece, *Earshot*. The art points out how easy it is to blur the lines between "institutionalized violence and wanton bloodshed."^[15] The public must question what other criminal activities can slip through the cracks of the law when allowances are made. *Earshot* exhibits a combination of science, engineering and design using detailed audio-ballistic analyses to create a diverse artistic product which has had impact beyond the arts.

"Applying *Earshot* to the practice of *Oxman's Clock* demonstrates the fluidity between science, engineering, design, and art."

Conflicted Phonemes

Since the implementation of the aforementioned "Police and Criminal Evidence Act," the entirety of the voice has been considered as evidence in police investigations. Professor Peter French developed this methodology of 'Forensic Phonetics' further, providing independent, research-led expertise to criminal justice systems worldwide.^[16] The recordings of interviews from 1984 and of emergency calls from 1997 accumulated a vast library of accents, intonations, and audio-based evidence. The emergency call recordings were also used to identify other peripheral sounds, such as gunshots.^[17] In particular, this audio archive has been used to identify the accents of people seeking international protection. By using the accent archive as a control, authorities can compare asylum seeker's accents and further their case investigations to discern whether the individuals in question are truly in need of international protection. However, this methodology contains certain inherent flaws. Firstly, the accents on file do not cater for the personal differences of individual applicants. Secondly, they are not always contemporaneous with the diaspora of people from particular regions: they represent timestamps, which easily become outdated or inaccurate. This leads authorities to occasionally make inaccurate

[15] Abu Hamdan, "What Now? - The Politics of Listening," 30:10.

[16] JP French Associates, "Professor Peter French," <http://www.jpfrrench.com/peter-french/> (Accessed 8 December 2020).

[17] Abu Hamdan, "What Now? - The Politics of Listening," 07:45.

decisions as a result of the information which is available to them. To illustrate this by way of example, Abu Hamdan shares a story about a man named Mohammed from Palestine who was denied international protection based on the way he pronounced the word "Tomato."^[18] In 2012, Abu Hamdan hosted a discussion in Utrecht on the use of Forensic Phonetics on applicants for international protection. The research of this discussion created Abu Hamdan's piece *Conflicted Phonemes*. Among those present were linguists; immigration authority personnel; and twelve Somali refugees who were denied asylum applications by the Dutch immigration forces. The immigration authorities understood that these refugees were from a Northern area of Somalia which was not recognised as overtly dangerous, meaning that they were not deemed in need of asylum. Based on these discussions, a graphic designer produced a map which sought to illustrate how different accents may have been affected by the diaspora of Somali people in response to the country's history, particularly its instances of mass movement of population. The map displays the variety of influences on the Somalian accent and the vast linguistic combinations which were created as a result. Abu Hamdan's piece displays the map, together with the outcomes of the applicant's linguistic analysis interviews for the spectator to view. The portrayal of this linguistic variety sends a message to immigration bureaus around the world, as it shows how history affects a country's vernacular and what additional factors could be taken into account if accent assessment is to be used as a form of identification. The research collected from *Conflicted Phonemes* was brought before a UK Asylum Tribunal and presented to a chief judge working within the Dutch immigration authority.^[19] The creation of *Conflicted Phonemes* demonstrates the interlinked relationship of science, engineering, design and art. The science used is the practice of Forensic Phonetics. This method is implemented to discern whether an applicant is in need of international protection. The engineering element is the recording of the applicant's voices, creating a utility from the database of information collected in the linguistic interviews and the discussion held. The design component of this piece was the creation of the map. This map displayed the information gathered through discussions with the asylum seekers and critically framed this knowledge against the practice of Forensic Phonetics. By drawing awareness to the niche differences in accents created by a country's history, the map illustrates the cultural behaviour that traditional Forensic Phonetics fails to account for with respect to individual applicants. The art exhibition of *Conflicted Phonemes*

[18] Abu Hamdan, 36:16.

[19] Lawrence Abu Hamdan, "Conflicted Phonemes," <http://lawrenceabuhamdan.com/conflicted-phonemes> (Accessed 8 December 2020).

amalgamates these findings and presents them to the public. The piece seeks to create public awareness of the limitations of this methodology, counterpointed against the significance of these decisions for the individual applicants. The combination of science, engineering and design produced a unique art piece which exposed how language can be used (or indeed, misused) as a tool of identification. The utilisation of sound to unearth truths has produced many revelations in the legal sphere. Abu Hamdan believes that for as long as freedom of speech is a human right (while freedom of silence is not), the scales will be perpetually imbalanced. This is because he claims that self-expression is forced upon us, whereas silence implies that we are hiding something.^[20] He extrapolates by saying "We need more listening, ...because the truth which is being extrapolated by the recordings which concern us will always be somehow partial."^[21] Abu Hamdan's fusion of science, engineering, design and art through sound ensures that his work is politically active, artistically engaging and above all else, accessible. The widespread reach of his work draws attention to human rights issues, while also contributing to the development of art and illustrating how activists can promote their causes through art. If, by Hagermas' terms, movements are to claim modernity through detachment of antiquity, then Abu Hamdan's approach to sound art has created a new methodology which draws upon many disciplines before creating a final product. This methodology is similar to Systems Theory, which can be defined as "an interdisciplinary study of systems as they relate to one another within a larger, more complex system."^[22] Systemic approaches broaden the parameters of research and artistic practice, which consequently widens the scope of possible outcomes. These experimental and interlinking methods can work together to make art and science more versatile, relatable, and accessible to wider audiences which they otherwise may not have reached.

"Abu Hamdan's fusion of science, engineering, design, and art through sound ensure that his work is politically active, artistically engaging and above all else, accessible."

[20] Martina Raponi, "Lawrence Abu Hamdan: The Political Implications of Sound and Silence," <http://digicult.it/articles/lawrence-abu-hamdan-the-political-implications-of-sound-and-silence/> (Accessed 8 December 2020).

[21] Raponi.

[22] Online MSW Programs, "Introduction to Systems Theory in Social Work," <https://www.onlinemswprograms.com/social-work/theories/systems-theory-social-work/> (Accessed 3 December 2020).

Conclusion

Neri Oxman tells her team:

“You have to be ready for your project to appear in the atrium of The Museum of Modern Art, and at the same time on the cover of *Nature and Science*. We don’t do either, it’s only both.”^[23]

Abu Hamdan’s modern approach follows the structure of *Oxman’s Clock*, and has proven its versatility by using sound’s subjectivity to influence legal action and highlight human rights issues, all through the medium of accessible art. *The Hummingbird Clock* allows people to submit claims on the legitimacy of recordings while making a visual statement against state surveillance. *Earshot* draws the world’s attention to human rights violations that slipped through the cracks of the eye of the law. *Conflicted Phonemes* demonstrates the flaws in the practice of Forensic Phonetics which fails to cater for individual applicants, and thus can result in unjust rejection of asylum. The common thread between these works is the use of listening to highlight what otherwise goes unnoticed. The arts and the law must be in a constant state of evolution, otherwise they risk repeating the movements of the past which no longer reflect the world. By detailing how Lawrence Abu Hamdan’s work follows the interdisciplinary approach of *Oxman’s Clock*, this essay evidences how the subjectivity of sound can influence legal action and how this content can be translated into art.

[23] Reagan (prod.), “Neri Oxman: Bio-Architecture,” 20:27.

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Strange, Funny and Heartrending: Music and Shared Experience in *Mother 3*

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Abstract

This essay discusses how music in video games can create a shared experience between the player and the characters within the diegesis by using the game *Mother 3* as a case study. Doing so further explores how empathetic music is used in gameplay and narrative contexts. This is done by using Ben Winters' framework of music and shared experience with added insights from academic literature on video game music and composition. Several key points that arise include the use of leitmotif to catalyse shared experience by changing instrumentation and melodic fragmentation, encouraging interaction with music via sound battles, and the relationship between music and the state of player agency during gameplay. These points serve as a few examples of how music in video games create shared experience, especially in consideration of the ludic nature of video games.

Recommended Music to accompany this article

Sakai, Shogo, *Mother 3 Official Soundtrack*, Nintendo, 2006.

“Mom’s Hometown” <https://youtu.be/Ovadt5ZDwGc>.

“A Railway In Our Village!” <https://youtu.be/-VstzjFCIjI>.

“Going Alone” <https://youtu.be/rB3jtIFuVjs>.

“Happy Town?” <https://youtu.be/pcRaDJ9HUdE>.

“And Then There Were None” <https://youtu.be/M5chy26ik0s>.

“Battle Against The Masked Man” <https://youtu.be/njUSB4Ifxg8>.

“Memory of Mother” <https://youtu.be/vvMm4h1D-pg>.

“It’s Over” <https://youtu.be/Qqv2hnVX6r4>.

Strange, Funny and Heartrending: Music and Shared Experience in *Mother 3*

Have you ever played a video game and felt complete empathy with a character? This question is not exclusive to the cinematic moments as it also includes the moments where we are in their shoes controlling their actions. Writings on music in visual media have accommodated for this potential for empathy such as Michel Chion's concept of "empathetic" music by appealing with our cultural codes for emotions.^[1] By the means of empathetic music, the audience can be drawn in to feel the same emotions as the characters on screen. If we can hear the underscore that compels us, can we say the same for the characters? Traditionally, this is not the case considering that the underscore is considered as non-diegetic, meaning that it exists outside the world which the characters inhabit.^[2] When considering empathetic music in video games, the discussion must be stretched out to accommodate for how it affects both narrative and gameplay aspects.

In this essay, I will be discussing how music in video games can create a shared experience between the player and the characters within the story world, both in narrative and gameplay contexts. To do this, I will discuss examples from Shogo Sakai's soundtrack to the Japanese role-playing game (JRPG hereafter) *Mother 3*,^[3] drawing upon Ben Winters' theoretical framework of music and shared experience. *Mother 3* has the player play as numerous characters throughout the story's eight chapters but primarily focuses on a boy named Lucas who experiences a series of tragic events in the early narrative caused by the game's antagonists, the Pigmask army: his mother Hinawa tragically dies while defending her sons against a cyborg drago, a

[1] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 8.

[2] Chion, 73.

[3] Brownie Brown, and HAL Laboratory, *Mother 3*, Kyoto, Japan: Nintendo, 2006.

dinosaur-like creature; his twin brother Claus goes missing, after vowing to take vengeance against the drago, and his father, Flint spends years searching the wilderness searching for Claus, leaving Lucas to take care of himself.

Released on the Game Boy Advance in 2006, the game sports a 16-bit aesthetic as per the graphical limitations of the system. In terms of audio, the Game Boy Advance makes use of digital to audio converters allowing for instrumentation surpassing the programmable sound generators from the 8-bit era.^[4] Featuring an expansive soundtrack – its in-game sound player consisting of 250 music cues – the game's music has a strong degree of agency that conveys the narrative to the player. Considering this with the fact that the game frequently has moments of fourth wall breaking, the game is a suitable case study of which Winters' theory can be used to unpack the examples herein.

Music, Narrative and Shared Experience

In his book *Music, Performance, and the Realities of Film*, Winters presents the central idea that music that is heard by the audience can also be heard by the characters who reside in the story world,^[5] and that to imagine even in the most synchronized of moments that these characters cannot hear the music shatters this shared experience.^[6] A prime example that can be discussed from the game is from a scene in chapter two which places the player in the shoes of Duster who, alongside his elderly father Wess, sets out to recover an important item from a haunted castle as part of his thief training. After navigating the castle, a cutscene occurs in which the player encounters an underground cave with a door resembling a face to which Wess requests that Duster averts his gaze. What follows is a sequence of dance manoeuvres pulled off by Wess followed by an over-the-top underscore. Following this sequence, the face bursts out in laughter revealing the path forward for the player to proceed.

It would be difficult to deny that this scene is played out for comedic value, but what if this scene was played out without the underscore? We may disconnect ourselves from the

[4] Karen Collins, *Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory, and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2008), 76.

[5] Ben Winters, *Music, Performance and the Realities of Film* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 174.

[6] Winters, 183.

ludicrousness of what we, and the door, witnessed. It should be then argued, as Winters did, that music belongs within the diegesis: it is not invisible nor inaudible, and it exists within the same space as the events we see on screen.^[7] It is these ideas that establish the potential for shared experience between player and game character.

A major feature of *Mother 3*'s soundtrack is how it contributes to shared experience via the use of musical ideas known as leitmotifs. Winifred Phillips discusses this compositional device in detail in her book *A Composer's Guide to Game Music* in which they accompany elements of the narrative including characters and locations.^[8] Using leitmotifs clearly and appropriately can 'attach concrete meaning to abstract musical expression' allowing the composer to use a selection of melodies to communicate different meanings to the player.

^[9] She continues her discussion by saying that these motifs can allow the player to "interact with in-game characters in an emotionally satisfying way" and "develop deeper sentiments about their surroundings."^[10] Summers argues that video game music use just as much leitmotifs to represent locations as they do for characters.^[11] On the note of musical agency, Summers continues with the argument that video game music carries more agency than film music and stated in the context of early JRPGs that audio carries the most precedence in textual delivery since, lacking audible dialogue, the music tends to be mixed at a loud volume. In turn, Summers continues, this music becomes the primary means of setting both locations and characters, more often than any other part of the game's media.^[12] Despite Summers discussing a different game within the same genre, what he says accurately describes *Mother 3* as the dialogue is delivered through text only and the music is the primary means of signifying the narrative.

An example of leitmotif and shared experience can be discussed using two examples of music that are anchored to the home locations of Lucas and his family. The first example is in the prologue with the player playing as a young Lucas, waking up one morning at his grandfather's cabin and going out to play with the dragos with Claus. The first instance of the Love Theme is heard in the track "Mom's Hometown"^[13] which plays

[7] Winters, 183.

[8] Winifred Phillips, *A Composer's Guide to Game Music* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014), 58.

[9] Phillips, 60.

[10] Phillips, 72.

[11] Tim Summers, *Understanding Video Game Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 162.

[12] Summers, 163-164.

[13] Shogo Sakai, "Mom's Hometown" *Mother 3*, Nintendo, 2006. <https://youtu.be/Ovadt5ZDwGc>.

as soon as Lucas leaves the cabin. This motif is used to depict a home setting, his grandfather's remote cabin in this instance, and to anchor Lucas and his family to the motif, as we are introduced to his mother and brother. As this is a very innocent point in the storyline as we have yet to be introduced to the Pigmask army, the Love Theme appeals to the sentiment of innocence.

At the beginning of chapter four, set three years after the previous chapters, we are exposed to the use of "fragmentation,"^[14] in which a small melodic figure from a leitmotif is taken and a new melody is composed, branching off from the end of that fragment.^[15] At this point, Tazmily, the setting where the player had been inhabiting beforehand, is metropolitanised at the hands of the Pigmask army from a small humble town into one rife with modern technology such as cars and televisions. As we are introduced to this familiar setting in a different time, we are subject to a track called "A Railway In Our Village!"^[16] which starts off almost identical to "Mom's Hometown" in every way: same key, same instrumentation and the same bassline which precedes the melody (Fig. 2).

[14] Phillips, *A Composer's Guide to Game Music*, 69.

[15] Phillips, 69.

[16] Shogo Sakai, "A Railway In Our Village!" *Mother 3*, Nintendo, 2006. <https://youtu.be/VstzjFCIjI>.

The image shows a musical transcription of two tracks from the game Mother 3. The first track, 'Love Theme (Mom's Hometown)', is in 4/4 time and features a simple melody with a bassline. The second track, 'A Railway In Our Village!', is also in 4/4 time and features a similar melody with a different bassline. Both tracks are transcribed in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major/D minor).

Love Theme ('Mom's Hometown')

Chords: C, Em, Am, Dm

1. G C Am Dm G | 2. G G/F C/E E^bdim Dm G C

'A Railway In Our Village!'

Chords: C, F, C, Gm, C7

Chords: F, Em, Dm, A^b, G

(Fig. 1: Transcription of "Mom's Hometown" and "A Railway In Our Village!")



(Fig. 2: Transcription of bassline introduction.)

It is when we hear the melody that the two pieces diverge (Fig. 1). Drawing from the first two notes of both pieces which are identical, using a perfect fourth, the player can be forgiven for being lulled into a false sense of security before hearing the fragmentation. It can be suggested therefore that “A Railway In Our Village!” can sound almost twisted especially when taken into context with the story at this point: we have seen from multiple character perspectives what the antagonists have been up to. We can especially believe this from Lucas’ perspective: his home is the only building in Tazmily that is ungentrified. The antagonists are seemingly aware of this as his house has sustained a lot of suspiciously frequent lightning strikes in proximity. From this, I therefore suggest that a tighter bond is created between Lucas and us, the player, as we both know who is responsible behind the metropolitanism, as opposed to the residents who are fooled by the antagonist’s veil.

The second example uses a completely different motif but changes arrangement throughout the story to deliver different contexts which is done primarily through instrumentation. Phillips writes that ‘changing the instrumentation is the simplest of all thematic alterations, but can be highly effective.’^[17]

The first instance that we hear this motif is in chapter one, playing as Flint, aptly named “Going Alone.”^[18] Playing very soon in the gameplay after Hinawa’s death, this piece features a juxtaposition between on-beat synth chords and a syncopated but intertwined kick and bass which speaks of the characterization of Flint as a man who resolves to press on with his affairs, despite losing his wife the night before and only recently hearing of his son Claus’ disappearance.

In chapter four, we can hear this same motif when playing as Lucas. This sound cue, “Happy Town?”^[19] features the exact same melodic content against a funk instrumentation with an upbeat rhythm section which coincides with the metropolitan location that Tazmily village is becoming. Considering that we are clued into the corruption that the Pigmask army had

[17] Phillips, *A Composer’s Guide to Game Music*, 67.

[18] Shogo Sakai, “Going Alone,” *Mother 3*, Nintendo, 2006. <https://youtu.be/rB3jtIFuVjs>.

[19] Shogo Sakai, “Happy Town?” *Mother 3*, Nintendo, 2006. <https://youtu.be/pcRaDJ9HUdE>.

inflicted upon Tazmily as well as Lucas’ household being the only ones in the village not tainted by this influence, both Lucas and the player are seeing the state of Tazmily from the same lens.

This only becomes more foregrounded as we near the end of chapter seven. Lucas returns to the shores of Tazmily only to be greeted by the track called “And Then There Were None.”^[20] Here, the chirpiness of “Happy Town?” is absent: the pop band instrumentation is far removed, and we are left with a sombre orchestral arrangement. At this point, the population of Tazmily seems to have substantially dropped, and conversing with whomever we can find reveals that the villagers have packed up and moved to the big city, another location where the Pigmask army reside. As this point, it can be suggested that we are mourning for Tazmily and what it used to be, through our own eyes, and those of Lucas and his friends.

Sound Battles: Player Agency and Shared Experience

So far, I have discussed examples that are purely narrative driven. As such, it is important to address how player agency is a contributing factor to music and shared experience. The fusion of ludic, “play-/rule-based” aspects, and narrative aspects has been suggested by Summers to be a tendency in video games,^[21] and *Mother 3* is no exception. Its soundtrack also accounts for the ludic aspect since music that accompanies battles against enemies can be used to the player’s advantage. Referred to in-game as a “sound battle,” this is an optional feature in which the player can press a button along to the beat of the music to deal additional points of damage to the enemy. This is a feature that is unique to each character as they each have an instrument assigned to them when this quasi-rhythm game attack is in effect. For example, Duster’s attacks are accompanied by bass guitar licks whereas Flint’s attacks are accompanied by saxophone licks. This musical feature only solders the bond on a ludic level between us and the character that initiates the attack.

Mother 3’s soundtrack contains examples of character motifs

[20] Shogo Sakai, “And Then There Were None,” *Mother 3*, Nintendo, 2006. <https://youtu.be/M5chy26ik0s>.

[21] Summers, *Understanding Video Game Music*, 145.

overriding the music of the location that the player is in; these overrides are often a result of player agency. Take for instance the beginning of chapter four when we play as Lucas just recently out of bed. When we try to leave the house, we are shown a flashback sequence of his mother, Hinawa, telling him to get changed. When we proceed to inspect the mirror, we are shown another flashback of Hinawa combing Lucas' hair in front of the same mirror. Despite the location music still being mixed in with the audio, we can hear Hinawa's leitmotif sneaking in as we witness her combing Lucas' hair. As a result of player agency, we trigger a memory of Lucas and his mother which both he and we experience. It is a rather transient entity, music and all, that passes in and out without overstaying its welcome.

The idea of player agency and overriding music is culminated in the game's final battle, solely between Lucas and the Masked Man. At this point of the narrative, it is revealed that the Masked Man, who Lucas has seen and battled once before at the end of chapter seven, is Claus who became cybernetically augmented against his will by the Pigmask army. During the initial stage of the battle, the music is more ambient than other pieces of music – it sacrifices structure and tonality to focus on setting an ominous atmosphere – that we have experienced. Earlier battles contained music that is more rhythmically grounded meaning that you can naturally clap along to a beat that stays the same throughout, therefore making the sound battle possible. On the other hand, this music, “Battle Against The Masked Man,”^[22] is a chaotic soundscape alternating between a lack of rhythm to rhythmic ideas that, even then, disconnect themselves from each other. There is a strong use of modulation in which the tonal instrumentation substantially speeds up and slows down. As a result, any sense of rhythm is unstable here. This is an interesting choice of musical direction, especially considering that any attempt to attack in the initial stage of this battle will result in a message stating that Lucas cannot bring himself to do so. I would like to suggest that this music serves to limit the agency that we have as a player, which mirror's Lucas' inability to fight his brother.

Throughout the battle, there are moments where we are

[22] Shogo Sakai, “Battle Against The Masked Man,” *Mother 3*, Nintendo, 2006. <https://youtu.be/njUSB4Ifxg8>.

exposed to narrative exposition. Occasionally, the track “Memory of Mother”^[23] sneaks in. The battle music remains constant and yet we hear something gentle and melancholic, not overriding but coexisting. By the time we get to this point in the story, we will have heard this piece of music enough times to know that it is Hinawa's motif, therefore signifying her presence calling out from beyond the aether and pleading for Claus to come to his senses. Her presence radiates her motif and vice versa. Her motif coexisting with the battle music only reinforces the idea that this music exists within the diegesis. We hear this, Lucas hears this, and we can see that even Claus hears this as he covers his ears and in the final moments of the battle looks around as if he is trying to find the source.

In the last part of the battle, I would like to echo a point earlier on in this essay that to imagine that the characters are oblivious to music breaks the shared experience. It is this part of the battle that the track “It's Over”^[24] plays. It is the Love Theme, but it starts tonally obscured with the instrumentation being an eerie and airy synth. The melody is played in G major fighting against a harmony that strays away from the melody's key as well as the chord progression as heard previously in the game.. It eventually makes use of audio dissolving in which the music crossfades between instruments whilst seamlessly delivering the music.^[25] This can imply a change between levels of the diegesis, such as a dream for example.^[26] As the first dissolve happens, we become tonally grounded into the key of C major perhaps as a signifier that Claus is starting to awaken from his brainwashed state. From ours and Lucas' perspective, it can be suggested that the music is a sign that we are approaching the end of this nightmarish scenario. Throughout this final stretch, I would like to suggest that the music glues us into the moment emotionally, especially as the battle finally culminates in Claus finally removing his mask and inflicting mortal damage unto himself. The music dissolves to a lone electric piano playing over a drawn-out moment between Lucas and Claus finally embracing.

Conclusion

If we assume non-diegetic music to exist within the diegesis, we

[23] Shogo Sakai, “Memory of Mother,” *Mother 3*, Nintendo, 2006. <https://youtu.be/vvMm4h1D-pg>.

[24] Shogo Sakai, “It's Over,” *Mother 3*, Nintendo, 2006. <https://youtu.be/Qqv2hnVX6r4>.

[25] James Buhler, David Neumeyer, and Rob Deemer, *Hearing the Movies: Music and Sound in Film History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 82.

[26] Buhler, Neumeyer, and Deemer, 82.

are presented with an interesting way to look at the degree of agency that music has in creating shared experience. The leitmotif can catalyse this as we have heard in the motif used for Tazmily village. As we have heard variations of leitmotifs in moments of gameplay, playing as different characters per variation, we are further placed into their shoes both in a narrative and ludic sense. Though we have seen examples of music triggered by player agency, from the final battle, we have seen an example of music used to limit the amount of agency that the player has so that we feel equally as powerless as Lucas. Finally, we have looked at the use of audio dissolving to take the characters and ourselves in and out of dream states to encourage the player to take in the moments within the narrative. In this essay, I have only discussed shared experience in a narrowed scope. Using the JRPG as a focal point discussing both narrative and ludic contexts, there is room for more discussion on this concept in the field of ludomusicology using examples of other genres of video games and how they contribute to this concept.

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“PLAY ME:” The Narrator as the Threshold Between Informal and Formal Voices

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Abstract

Created during the COVID-19 pandemic, “PLAY ME” is a video work that discusses the difference between physical-perceptual experience and our limited understanding of the outer world. The artwork uses a first-person walking practice in combination with narration and sound as a mapping tool, and public pianos as a guide for exploring our cities and the aesthetics of digital culture.

The purpose of this short manuscript is to analyse the role of the narrator in the self-referential storytelling of my video work “PLAY ME.” I will discuss self-referentialism as a creative tool, and the role of the narrator as a portal for connecting materials with ideas. To do this, it will be helpful to divide and analyse the plot of this work into parts, so the following analysis in artist’s voice will be clearer.

Recommended Music to accompany this article

“PLAY ME”

Composed, filmed, narrated, and performed by Ioannis Panagiotou
Music performed by Plus-Minus Ensemble

<https://www.ioannispanagiotou.com/play-me>

“PLAY ME:” The Narrator as the Threshold Between Informal and Formal Voices

- Part A (the map and Glasgow’s public pianos/conspiracy theory-myth)

“PLAY ME”^[1] starts with the phrase “I’ve seen a lot of pianos, some of them were in concert halls, some others in public spaces telling me...” approaching pianos as living entities. The narrator/composer of this video work, invents a conspiracy theory or a myth, based on a map he found online. Misreading that map, it appears that there are not any instruments in the world apart from public pianos. The narrator starts following the map by filming different public pianos in Glasgow and seeing how people interact with them. Part A ends with the disappointment of the narrator when he realises that there is not a satisfactory and sufficient interaction between pianos in Glasgow and the public.

- Part B (Aarhus’ public pianos/pilgrimage)

After his disappointment, the narrator starts looking for pianos in other countries. Using the same map, he realises that there are not any pianos in Demark. The narrator decides to travel to Aarhus, making a trip that seems like a pilgrimage. Misreading and misunderstanding the same map, filming his experience from a first-person point of view and dislocating himself in another country, the narrator tries to find something that seemingly does not exist. His search for public pianos in Denmark turns out to be successful. Part B ends with the same feeling of dissatisfaction appeared in Part A.

[1] Ioannis Panagiotou, “PLAY ME,” 2020, <https://www.ioannspanagiotou.com/play-me>.

- Part C (the narrator as creator, the role of music ensemble)

Along with the above narration, the audience can listen to music being performed by a piano trio (piano, violin, bass clarinet). This instrumentation feels strange as the artwork appears to be all about public pianos. However, before the final scene of the work, once the narrator finds a piano in Denmark, he narrates that “It turns out that lonely pianos had nothing to say to me, so I decided to invent some new instruments.” This is when he starts narrating the fictional invention of every single instrument of the piano trio. The invention of the instruments starts with one of the performers finding a violin in her bed. The narrator names this instrument “The First Violin.” Another performer finds a bass clarinet in her garden, named “Clatireno.” Having created his instrumental set-up, the narrator creates different experiments and combinations of the instruments. The work finishes with an instrumental part composed by the narrator, which works like a Coda.

Self-referential Narration

Music is an abstract medium, it is often difficult to create a story with sounds unless they are associated with something non-musical, for example a tuba mimicking the sound of a whale. In “PLAY ME,” self-referential narration is a key element which gives a purpose to the existence of music, musicians and musical instruments. The compositional process, the existential reasons of the materials (video, story, music), and the relationship between them, are being explained through this type of narration. As this was a commissioned artwork, the instrumentation was given and not chosen by the artist. The instrumental limitations of the commission, hence the limited artistic palette of the composer, is being used conceptually through self-referential narration in order to enhance the narrator’s limited understanding of the world.

We can see that music interacts conceptually with the plot, and it is being approached as a character in a play,^[2] due to

[2] Ioannis Panagiotou, “Proposal for a Dance Performance,” *MUSIC. OLOGY.ECA* no. 2, 11 October 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2218/music.2021.6484>.

the existence of the narrator. This approach can be found in my previous work “Proposal for a Dance Performance,” where self-referential narration guided the play and revealed the mechanism behind the work.^[3] As the narrator is also the composer of the music of this artwork, his narrative explores his compositional process and the choice of his compositional materials.

The Narrator as Medium

In this work, the narrator/composer becomes the medium or the threshold, which connects formal with informal voices. The formal and the informal, the official and the unofficial, the true and the forged, the literal and the metaphor, the real and the surreal, are two flip sides, which could not exist without one another. In “PLAY ME,” an unreliable narrator, appears as a medium that connects the real with the surreal, creating a very blurred perception of the world. This perception involves elements of reality, imagination, exploration and fraud. The “forged” map of my video work and the myth that is being created out of it, could not make sense without our real experience of the world. The narrator as medium or threshold, connects unofficial voices/entities that (seemingly) do not exist and make them interact with the official/real ones. The narrator appears to be the only person who can interact with the pianos and understand their value. Public pianos are being approached as spirits/unofficial voices which can talk to the medium/narrator “telling him...PLAY ME.” The narrator, who is also the composer of the music, would not be able to write the music if he could not interact with the unofficial voice of the piano. The narrator transposes the unofficial (living piano/piano spirit) into the official, creating something that exists in the real world, an artwork/a music composition.

We can see this connection between the formal and the informal in the first act of *Hamlet*, scenes iii-iv.^[4] The ghost of Hamlet’s father is the main cause of all the interactions that happen in the play. Hamlet is the only person who interacts with this ghost, an entity that might be the ghost of his father, a demon or just

[3] Panagiotou, “Proposal for a Dance Performance.”

[4] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* / William Shakespeare, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Revised edition, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016)

something made up in his head. Although we cannot be sure about the silent ghost’s identity, Hamlet is the threshold or the portal, who transposes the unofficial and is responsible for the circulation between the official and the unofficial. In “PLAY ME,” this circulation creates a performance between official and unofficial voices, it provides an artistic palette, which involves both the real and the surreal, a situation, where both material and ideas are characters in the same play. The narrator creates two new instruments that the audience know already exist. The interaction between the audience’s perception of the real instruments and the forged creation of them, followed by their new names, creates a metaphysical and ironic situation.

Music Representing the Unofficial

The choice of musical instruments as the main characters of “PLAY ME,” which represent the unofficial is not accidental. For Nicolas Bourriaud – referring to Karl Marx – social interstices (art is one of them) are those spaces of free interaction that provide opportunities for social engagement outside of the socioeconomical norm.^[5] All representations/social interstices refer to values that can be transposed into society.^[6] Music as a form of art, as well as an “unofficial” character in “PLAY ME” interacts with the society, while at the same time, is being approached as an alien entity, placed outside the social norm. We can witness the presence and the value of the unofficial ghost of music through the objects, in this case the musical instruments. The value of the unofficial is being transposed into the society through official media (a music composition performed by a piano trio). The intention of my work and the role of music can be understood in relation to Bourriaud’s phrase: “Artistic practice is always a relationship with the other, at the same time as it represents a relationship to the world.”^[7]

[5] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002), 16.

[6] Bourriaud, 18.

[7] Bourriaud, 39.

Pilgrimage as a Method

In the second part of my work, the narrator travels to Denmark to find a public piano. This trip seems like a pilgrimage, where pianos as unofficial voices, set the rules of the performance,

and the way the narrator will behave in the space as he follows them wherever they are. For Michael Tausig, pilgrimage is the process analogous to the translation between home and shrine, profane and sacred, official and unofficial voices.^[8] Apart from his properties as a portal, the narrator with his new pilgrim identity connects the world of imagination and metaphors with reality. The literal meaning of the Greek-root word metaphor is transportation.^[9] The narrator’s pilgrimage can be understood as the transportation of his everyday body into an imaginary/metaphorical situation. Pilgrimage is a method, which circles between the profane and the sacred.^[10]

In his video work, “Albert’s Way,”^[11] Francis Alÿs uses pilgrimage as a method for connecting an everyday walking practice with the myth of Albert Speer. The story says that while in prison, Albert was walking in circles, covering a distance equivalent to that of the Camino Ingles, a route walked by pilgrims from the port of El Ferrol to the Atlantic coast. In his work, Alÿs walks the same distance inside his studio, translating the profane everyday walking activity into a sacred imaginary trip. However, if “PLAY ME” narrator’s identity as a medium already creates a connection between official and unofficial voices, why do we also need pilgrimage as a method in this work? The answer is that narrator’s effort and the fatigue followed by the pilgrimage to Denmark are the elements that bring value to the unofficial, so he can then transpose these values to the society through his compositional practice.

Narration and Values

- Self-referentialism and the value of the artwork

Self-referentialism has been used widely in philosophy and the arts in order to discuss different values. These include the verbal paradox of Epimenides the Cretan, who said: “All Cretans are liars”^[12] or the phrase from *Midsummer Night’s Dream* “If we shadows have offended, / think but this, and all is mended.”^[13] This phrase in Shakespeare’s work reminds the audience that these “shadows” are actors and the magic they experience is a

[8] Michael T. Tausig, *The Magic of the State / Michael Tausig* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 197.

[9] WordReference.com, “μεταφορά,” <https://www.wordreference.com/gren/%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%AC> (Accessed 25 March 2022).

[10] Tausig, *The Magic of the State / Michael Tausig*, 198.

[11] Francis Alÿs, “Albert’s Way,” n.d., <https://francisalys.com/alberts-way/>.

[12] Winfried Nöth and Nina Bishara, *Self-Reference in the Media* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 75.

[13] “Midsummer Night’s Dream: Entire Play,” <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/midsummer/full.html> (Accessed 25 March 2022).

theatrical play. In “PLAY ME,” self-referentialism gives value to objects, approaching them as living entities, and describing narrator’s personal experience of them. This is clear in the very beginning of the work, where the narrator informs us that pianos talk to him. However, the narrator also undervalues the whole artwork, making it feel unfinished, as the narration ends with the phrase “or not...” The work always balances between narrators’ effort to approach the unofficial and create an artwork, and his continues dissatisfaction during the compositional process. In addition to this, a performance of elements of value is being created, where the audience is called evaluate the work.

- Value of the unofficial

We can think of the unofficial voices of my work in the same way Karl Marx describes the first chief function of money. Money supplies commodities with the material for the expression of their values.^[14] For the sake of metaphor, we can think of commodities as the official voices and money as the unofficial voices of “PLAY ME.” The unofficial elements in my work, might not exist or have an obvious value, but they are able to circulate and express the values of the official voices, in the same way money expresses material values. In practice, approaching pianos as living entities (unofficial), expresses the pleasure/value of poetry, metaphor and failure excising during the music composition process (official). The piano spirit gives energy to the narrative to begin and unfold. Things might not exist; however, they can have a value and be part a performance.

- Value of the official and the mundane

Through this fictional scenario, I created instruments, which behave as actants. Actant, as a semiotics term, refers both to human and nonhumans; an actor/actant is any entity that modifies an entity in a trial.^[15] The instruments of the piano trio are actants as they are the evidence for a story which will be co-created by the audience. These instruments work as debris, which reveal hidden stories behind them and animate all actions. There must be a story of someone putting a violin on

[14] Karl Marx, *Marx’s Capital* (London: Electric Book Company, 2000), 96.

[15] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 237.

the bed and the bass clarinet in the garden, or a story where the narrator created the instruments, and they went there be themselves as if they were living organisations. Objects, in this case musical instruments, gain value through their transformation into actants and contribute to the story telling.

Conclusion

To conclude, "PLAY ME," because of its self-referential nature, creates an environment where different media and materials interact as if they were characters in a play. In this type of narration, the narrator becomes the portal between official and unofficial voices, between ideas and their artistic implementation. The unofficial voices enhance their value through the tiring pilgrimage of the narrator. Self-referential narration creates a game and an exchange of values between the everyday, the ideal, the audience, the artwork itself and the process of its creation. This circulation of values can be used to widen an artist's palette, including both material and non-material elements.

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