

Part One

Chapter One: Melodrama - Definitions

The term *melodrama* is used to define different genres in the world of performing arts and cinema. This research paper will discuss the Melodrama in music – a musical drama that developed at the end of the 18th century. Even after referring to this ‘musical melodrama’, a definition of Melodrama was required to distinguish itself clearly from the other forms of fusion between music and theatre.

Here are a number of definitions of music within a dramatic context that are similar to each other and yet have different characteristics.

Incidental music:

The term Incidental music (Fr.: *musique de scène*; Ger.: *Bühnenmusik*; It.: *musica di scena*), being essentially music written for theatre: therefore also incorporates the Melodrama.

“Music played during a performance of a spoken drama... It embraces both the music ‘outside’ the drama, including the overture before the play and the ENTR’ACTES, INTERLUDES, or ACT TUNES between the acts, as well as the music performed as part of the action (fanfares, songs, dances, marches, and supernatural and mood music) whether on or off the stage. Such music was first used to accompany plays in ancient Greece”¹

Singspiel:

“German ‘play song’. An opera in which relatively simple musical numbers are interspersed with spoken dialogue in German². “Beside the opera genre during which it is performed and the German language nature of the piece, *Singspiel* is very similar to Incidental music. One could even say that *singspiel* is theatre with incidental music put within an opera.

Melodrama:

“(from Gk. *melos*, drama; Fr. *mélodrame*, It. *melologo*; Ger. *Melodram*) A kind of drama, or a part of a drama, in which the action is carried forward by the protagonist speaking in the pauses of, and later commonly during, a musical accompaniment.”³

Melodrama joins together⁴ unsung-text and music, keeping a close relation between the two. In its theatrical form, the text can be a form of acting - with roles and various actors. It can also have a more declamatory, almost storytelling character. In its smaller setting of accompanied recitation, it is closer to the poetic genres and singing, having its own dramatic quality.

So what is the difference between Melodrama and incidental music? Essentially the close relation between the music and the text, in terms of timing and character. In a Melodrama there is an evident, close and continuous interplay between the music and the text.

¹ Roger Savage. “Incidental music”. Oxford Music Online. February 2017

² Peter Branscombe. “Singspiel”. Oxford Music Online. February 2017

³ Peter Branscombe. “Melodrama”. Oxford Music Online. February 2017

⁴ The term *joining together* is used in a broad sense, not inferring synchronization of text and music.

Most of the Melodramas in the 18th and 19th century are in German, although there was a large number of French ones (many translated to German) and fewer Italian Melodramas.

The manner in which the music and the text are put together differ from composer to composer, due to the context and period.

Methods within melodrama

Essentially the methods to join the text and music are reduced to two, from which few possibilities can derive:

1. Music and text alternate but keep a close relation in terms of time and affect. Mostly the music would be stretched over few bars, to be followed by a text that will not last much longer than the music. In many cases there will be music written over the text but very often it would only be a rather inactive accompaniment like long notes etc.

The image displays a musical score for L.W. Beethoven's melodrama in *Egmont*. It is divided into three distinct sections, each with its own tempo and dynamic markings.

- Section 1:** Marked "Nº 8. Poco sostenuto." It features staves for Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello, and Basso. The music consists of long, sustained notes, primarily in the lower registers, creating a somber and inactive accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the staves.
- Section 2:** Marked "Vivace, Tempo I." This section shows a more active musical texture with moving lines in the upper staves. The lyrics continue, describing the state of the characters.
- Section 3:** Marked "Più moto, a tempo." This section also features more active musical accompaniment. The lyrics conclude with a reflection on the characters' fate.

The score illustrates the first method of melodrama, where music and text alternate but maintain a close temporal and affective relationship. The music is often stretched over several bars, providing a backdrop for the text.

L.W. Beethoven melodrama in *Egmont*. Music and text alternate. The little music that is written over the text is a rather inactive accompaniment of long notes etc.

2. Music and text coincide thus the two art forms are performed simultaneously. Mostly they will not be synchronized - having a syllable-to-a-note-relationship (like in a song), but rather will occur *around* the same time. In the score, the text is written above the staff with a relation to the bar (not to a given beat) rather than to the notes.



F. Schubert *Abschied von der Erde*. Music and text coincide. The text fits within the bar, with no direct relation to any note.

The first way of joining the text and music together is very characteristic to the earlier Melodramas. This alternation of text and music, where they interrupt one another, was used to create a dramatic effect. This can be seen in most of the Melodramas from Benda to Schubert. Music and text hardly *really* coincide. The second way of joining music and text occurs in the later Melodramas, from Schubert to Liszt. Except that they are very often not named melodrama by the composers, rather *accompanied declamation*, *accompanied ballads* etc.

Melodrama a technique or genre?

The definition of melodrama is ambiguous when attempting to categorise it. For if it is ‘only’ a matter of joining text and music, without any specific characteristics, then Melodrama is a technique and not a form or a genre. P. Branscombe writes: “It is more fruitful to consider melodrama as a technique that seeks a particular kind of balance between words and music than to look upon it as an independent dramatic genre”. He explains: “...since many of the best-known examples...are effective by reason of the contrast they provide with the rest of the work.”⁵ According to such an approach a melodrama cannot be the title of a piece of music (or a movement when in a bigger context) as is the case with sonatas, symphonies and operas or even arias, recitatives etc. However this is not necessarily how some of the melodrama composers treated it. It seems that Beethoven calls a movement (always within a bigger dramatic context) a Melodrama only when it has the characteristic alternation between the text and music, and when stage action is involved. This is the case in all of his dramas which he labels Melodramas, being *Egmont*, *Fidelio* and *König Stephan*:

In *Die Ruinen von Athen* text and music coincided in a most elaborate way. However no movement is called a melodrama. In *König Stephan*, the music and text coincided actively and inactively and even alternate for a short while⁶. However only the fifth movement, containing these characteristics is called a Melodrama. In *Egmont*, the one Melodrama-movement includes only 9 bars of music-and-text alternating, the rest (80 bars) is only stage actions that the music illustrates⁷. This suggests that a melodrama is more than a technique, but something that is circumscribed and has its own characteristics. Indeed these melodramas provide a contrast to the other numbers of the piece, but so do arias and *recitatives*. The Melodramas within a larger

⁵ P. Branscombe. ‘Melodrama’. Oxford Music Online, February 2017

⁶ See chapter 6. *König Stephan*

⁷ See chapter 4. *Egmont*

dramatic context may not be able to stand on their own, but not all Melodramas are part of a bigger drama. Benda's *Medea*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Seckendorff's *Proserpina* are Melodramas that are not part of a bigger dramatic piece. These composers, and especially Benda, who had their pieces often performed in Vienna⁸, might have bequeath to Beethoven these Melodrama characteristics. In the Romantic melodramas (*or accompanied poetry*) the joining of words and text is much more elaborative. Sometimes they would keep the old Melodrama characteristics, and often not. These are pieces which stand alone as a genre of its own and are too developed to be labelled as a mere technique.

Summary

Melodramas are thus divided into two:

(1) Melodrama as a dramatic tool and (2) with relation to the period, a musical genre in its own right.

⁸ See chapter 3. *Medea*

Chapter Two: The late Classical Melodrama

History

It is said that the tradition of text recited over music dates back to ancient Greece and the birth of the drama⁹. Records from the late 18th century show that amateur theatrical-pieces were sometime accompanied by a pianist who improvised through the plays, reacting to action and text.¹⁰ This practice might very well date from earlier times. Such fusion between text and music, being written down to its various details, appeared only at the second half of the 18th century. Although contributed to Rousseau and his *Pygmalion* (1762), the first known Melodrama was written almost ten years before Rousseau, as part of *Sigismundus* by Johann Ernst Eberlin (Salzburg, 1753). Where in Eberlin's case the use of a melodrama seems to be means of compositional diversion,¹¹ in Rousseau's case it is part of his artistic and linguistic approach, using his piece to present his ideas about the French recitative¹².

Within a bigger dramatic context

The Melodrama at the second half of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century belonged exclusively to the theatre and the drama scene. In this theatrical world the use of the Melodrama is either as a piece on its own, like Benda's *Medea*, or as part of a larger dramatic context. Such is the case with the Melodramas of Beethoven, all of them being a part of his incidental music compositions (such as *Die Ruinen von Athen*) or opera (*Fidelio*). As P. Branscombe suggests,¹³ early melodramas are often a mean of contrast and diversity within their bigger dramatic frame. In the Melodrama of *Egmont* the part where the text and the music are joined is only for nine bars. The rest is only wordless-actions on the stage¹⁴. That small text-music part comes after long dialogues (or narration in the later versions). The music then joins as the reciter speaks in the rests. This music alteration is subtle so that the listener might not realise the change from the previous music-less section. In the early Melodramas the musical accompaniment to the dialogues, being very minimal and usually not over the text, provides another colour. The interchange between the music and the recitation creates a dramatic affect.

⁹ See Peter Branscombe, 'Melodrama' Oxford Music Online: "indeed the use of music as an adjunct to dramatic action is probably almost as old as drama itself"

¹⁰ P. Branscombe. "Schubert and the Melodrama." *Schubert Studies. Problems of Style and Chronology*. Cambridge 1982 p. 105

¹¹ See Reinhard G. Pauly/Ernst Hintermaier "Eberlin, Johann Ernst", Oxford Music Online: "...Eberlin...composed at least 91 dramatic works for the court theatre, the university and the Nonnberg convent... From 1742 he supplied music for numerous school plays and oratorios... Comic intermezzos are frequent in the school plays, with passages in Salzburg dialect and occasional use of melodrama. *Sigismundus Hungariae rex* (1753) was performed in 1761 in honour of the archbishop, with 146 participants, among them the five-year-old W.A. Mozart..."

¹² See K.G.Holmstroem. *Monodrama, attitudes, tableaux vivants. Studies on some trends of theatrical fashion 1770-1815*, Diss. Amquist & Wiksell, Stockholm/Uppsala, 1967. p.40

¹³ "... since many of the best-known examples (of melodramas Y.G)...are effective by reason of the contrast they provide with the rest of the work "

P. Branscombe. 'Melodrama'. Oxford Music Online

¹⁴ See *Egmont* chapter

Music and text relations

When it comes to the coexistence of text and music at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, there was a somewhat general artistic approach to the matter: music and text should not interfere with one another. To quote the words of Edward Kravitt: "...early-nineteenth-century composers of this form were... strongly influenced by the eighteenth-century classicistic principle according to which each art must remain autonomous"¹⁵. Though the early melodramas did contain a recited text over music, it did not occur often. In fact these were rare and carefully chosen moments. This is highlighted by what Mozart wrote to his father: "...Now and then words are spoken while the music goes on, and this produces the finest effect..."¹⁶ I. Raykoff writes: "These eighteenth-century theatrical melodramas were further innovative because they incorporated newly composed musical underscoring to set the scene and mood, mark characters' entrances and establish their personality types, enhance actors' elocution and physical gestures, and facilitate spectators' emotional involvement in the scene."¹⁷

Artistic conventions

What is the background for the autonomy that recited text and music were given?

J.J Rousseau believed that the French language had lost its natural music character. He said that French is no longer musical and became abstract. To his view, music was not abstract and could express many things that his language could not. Thus music and recited text, as in recitatives, could not go together.¹⁸ Pantomime, on the other hand, fits music well as "music and gestures are man's original means of expression"¹⁹. It is when the text reaches a certain emotional level that the music and pantomime take over.²⁰ His *Pygmalion* (1762) has been written as part of his theoretical views on the French recitatives. He called it a *scene lyrique* where "words and music, instead of working together, are heard successively, and the spoken phrase is, to some extent, announced and prepared by the musical phrase"²¹. Thus he devised a form of early Melodrama where the music and the text alternate and the gesture and the melody integrate.

¹⁵ Edward F. Kravitt "The Joining of Words and Music in Late Romantic Melodrama." MQ 62, 1976. P. 574

¹⁶ Anderson (ed.), Letters of Mozart (2/1966), ii, 630-1

¹⁷ Rethinking Schumann / edited by Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge. I. Raykoff "Schumann's Melodramatic Afterlife". P. 160

¹⁸ K.G.Holmstroem. Monodrama, attitudes, tableaux vivants. Studies on some trends of theatrical fashion 1770-1815, Diss. Amquist & Wiksell, Stockholm/Uppsala, 1967. P. 40

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ "J'ai imaginé un genre de Drame, dans lequel les paroles & la Musique, au lieu de marcher ensemble, se font entendre successivement, & où la phrase parlée est en quelque sorte annoncée & préparée par la phrase musicale." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre a M. le Docteur Burney et Fragments d'observations sur l'Alceste de M. Gluck*, Collection complete des oeuvres de J. J. Rousseau, Geneve, 1782, tome XVI, p 408

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Pygmalion

Il n'y a point là d'ame ni de vie :
ce n'est que de la pierre. Je ne ferai
jamais rien de tout cela.

a. MF 1771, SLND, VD 1775 : [pas de §] [1^{re} 2^{ve}]

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3. *Allegro maestoso*

b. MF 1771, SL 1772, SLND, JM 1773, VD 1775 : [pas de §]
c. MF 1771, JM 1773 : Pygmalion tu ne fais plus
d. SL 1772, VD 1775 : fait
e. SLND : de Dieux
f. JM 1773 : artiste. [§] Vils
g. MF 1771 : plus
h. JM 1773 : ses outils &
i. MF 1771 : en levant

Ô mon génie, où es-tu? mon talent
qu'es-tu devenu? Tout mon feu s'est
éteint, mon imagination s'est glacée,
le marbre sort froid de mes mains.

Pygmalion, ne "fais" plus "des Dieux" :
tu n'es qu'un vulgaire "artiste"... Vils
instrumens qui n'êtes plus ceux de
ma gloire, allez, ne deshonnez "point"
mes mains.

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Il jette avec dédain "ses outils, puis"
se promène quelque tems "en rêvant"
les bras croisés.

4. *Andante*

Pygmalion by Rousseau. He throws with disdain his tools, then walks for some time with his arms crossed. The music here accompanies Pymalion's pantomime. João Luís Paixão suggests that some motives in the music are synchronised with the actions made by Pygmalion. Here for example,

according to Paixão, the first chord of the *Andante* can be the moment of throwing of the tools.
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Rousseau claimed that the union of declamatory and musical arts would always be unpleasant to the ears²³. This, he writes, derives from the ‘‘contrasts that rules between the linguistics of the actor and those of the orchestra.’’ He then goes on and almost contradicts himself as he opens a door to the coexistence of text and music. According to him that can be done in a subtle way, transmitting to the audience a fine *blend* where the two arts are no more distinguished: ‘‘...but a sensitive and intelligent actor... brings these foreign colours [of declamation and music] with such art that the audience cannot discern the nuances’’²⁴.

In his ideas of joining text and music, Rousseau seems to reflect the approach taken by the early Melodrama composers. They, departing from his *Pygmalion*,²⁵ kept a much closer relation between the music and the text and inserted (parts of) monologues to be recited over music. Here still, whenever brought together, the music only provided a stable ground for the spoken text. Goethe wrote in the introduction to his *Monodrama* (Melodrama with one actor) *Proserpina*: ‘‘It is now time to think of music, which in this context can be regarded as the sea upon which that artistically decorated boat [of drama] is carried, as the favourable breeze which gently but sufficiently fills the sails and willingly obeys all the sailor’s movements in whatever direction.’’²⁶ Such ambiguous quote suggest a rather new and still reserved way to join text and music at the early 19th century²⁷: The metaphor of music being the sea that carries the drama illustrates music accompaniment that is not too active, providing at times a static harmony upon which the text is recited. Kravitt writes: ‘‘... the music, [Goethe] stressed should be confined only to the function of cementing blocks of dialogue...’’²⁸ The second part of Goethe’s quote treats music as yet another metaphor. The breeze that fills the sails seems to suggest a more active part the music can have in a Melodrama helping its flow (if together with the music or if alternating with it) but still aware of its subordinate place by obeying all the *sailor’s* movements. With the words ‘‘it is now time’’ (*Nunmehr aber ist es Zeit*) Goethe underlines the innovation and new spirit that accompanied the early Melodrama years, when breaking from the old ideas of the independence of the two arts.

²² . João Luís Paixão. ‘‘Historical singing and declamation from a performer’s point of view’’. pending publication among the proceedings from the series of seminars ‘‘Déclamation, chant et danse en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles’’, Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, 2014

²³ ‘‘... Cette réunion de l’art déclamatoire avec l’art musical, ne produira qu’imparfaitement tous les effets du vrai récitatif, & les oreilles délicates s’apercevront toujours désagréablement...’’ Ibid.

²⁴ ‘‘... mais un acteur sensible & intelligent, en rapprochant le ton de sa voix & l’accent de sa déclamation de ce qu’exprime le trait musical, mêle ces couleurs étrangères avec tant d’art, que le spectateur n’en peut discerner les nuances.’’ Ibid.

²⁵ On the diffusion of the piece and its various adaptations see P. Branscombe ‘‘Melodrama’’ Oxford Music Online.

²⁶ Rethinking Schumann / edited by Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge. I. Raykoff ‘‘Schumann’s Melodramatic Afterlife’’. P. 159

²⁷ See Rethinking Schumann / edited by Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge. I. Raykoff ‘‘Schumann’s Melodramatic Afterlife’’. P. 159 for Raykoff’s interpretation of Goethe’s quote

²⁸ Edward F. Kravitt ‘‘The Joining of Words and Music in Late Romantic Melodrama.’’ MQ 62, 1976. P. 574

Technical concerns

What are the technical issues composers had to deal with when writing music to be played over a declamation?

The text

The text for the early romantic Melodrama is usually a drama. Unlike poetry, drama includes monologues, dialogues and a telling of a story that are mostly not metric. Without a fixed amount of syllables per sentence, it is more difficult to make the music coincide with the text. An organised, strict and accurate 'meeting' between certain syllables and notes is almost impossible. The fusion is made thus *around* areas where it occurs and not by precise metric and harmonic calculations. Such a composition that cannot be thoroughly planned is something that was very much against the artistic notion of the period²⁹. In an enlightened era where everything lays on scientifically proofs and clear calculations, the stage is no place for accidents and vague interpretations. Everything is written with extreme precision and needs to be performed in that way. Consequently music and recited text should not be written one over the other. When these rare moments occur and text and music meet, one should look for a synchronisation of the two, by using the rhythms of the words.³⁰

²⁹ See Boisquet's approach to a well calculated performance: "...Il ne s'agit plus alors que de le jouer et de le chanter comme vous l'avez calculé." F. Boisquet. *Essais sur l'art du comédien chanteur*. Longchamps, Paris, 1812. p. 188

C.P.E Bach on assuring the perfect condition for an accurate performance:

"Those passages which are troublesome in private and come off well only occasionally should be omitted from public performance... Also, the instrument should be tested beforehand with trills and other ornaments. There are two reasons for these several precautions: they will assure an agreeable, flowing performance; they will help to remove the anxious mien which, far from enlisting the listener's sympathy, will only annoy him." William J. Mitchell. *C.P.E. Bach. Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. W. W. Norton & Company; 1st edition (November 17, 1948). Chapter III, 14.

³⁰ See chapter *Benda's Medea* for an example of interpretation according to the meter when music and text coincide

The accompaniment

The use of orchestras in Melodrama is another factor when joining words and music. Orchestral accompaniment to Melodramas before Schubert is usually a given fact: Dramas (operas and plays) of which melodramas were part, went hand in hand with orchestras for centuries; the big theatres in Vienna, who experienced the peak of Melodramas at the first half of the 19th century³¹, had big orchestras that were used, among other performances, for incidental music. The use of an orchestra creates an obvious balance problem for coexistence of music and recited text. Unlike singing, reciting over an entire orchestra³² is a complicated task.

Summary

The early Melodrama was born from theoretical ideas and early Romantic spirits of innovation. Shaped by the artistic approach of this period and the given qualities of its environment, the early Melodrama gained its characteristics that made it into a musical genre.

³¹ See P. Branscombe, "Melodrama" Oxford Music Online: "...The genre was indeed particularly popular in Vienna..."

³² at the beginning of the 19th century orchestras in Vienna had around 40 players

Chapter Three: Benda - Medea

(Georg) Jiří Antonín Benda (Staré Benátky, 1722 – Bad Köstritz, 1795)

Background

Text by Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter. Written for the Seyler theatre company, *Medea* was premiered on May 1st 1775 in Leipzig. The piece knew a great success and was performed in Dresden, Mannheim, Hamburg, Berlin and Vienna well into the 19th century. Although it is not the first Melodrama, it introduced the genre to a wide audience, influencing a generation of composers to write Melodramas.³³

In this chapter I will refer to an arrangement of *Medea* done by Benda himself for a string quartet³⁴. The story of *Medea*, a play written originally around 431 BC, inspired centuries of authors, playwright and composers to write different adaptations and variations to the classical masterpiece.

Synopsis

Medea helps her husband, Jason to get the Golden Fleece. He then announces to *Medea* of his love and marriage to another, Glauce (Kreusa in German), princess of Corinth. Hurt and enraged she plots to revenge and defend her and her family's honour. She then kills everything that Jason treasures: Their common 2 children; his new wife; and Glauce's father, king of Corinth. *Medea* then runs away to start a new life in Athens.

The examples of *Medea* that are brought here are from the first scene: *Medea* comes back to the house that once was hers, remembering the life she once had with her husband, Jason who now left to marry Kreusa, princess of Corinth. *Medea* feels betrayed. She is mad and jealous for her husband who left her, thinking how she should act in return

Text and music relations in *Medea*

Throughout most of the piece, the music and the text are alternated. In rare occasion they coincide but for a short time, usually no longer than three bars. When the music and the text alternate, the former is not an *action-pantomime music*, in other words it does not illustrate *Medea*'s motions. Most of her monologues are emotional and internal and that is what the music illustrates. The opening of the piece presents a motive in d minor (bars 1-2) and the first theme (bars 3-7), also in d minor. Benda sets a serious and tragic atmosphere with the tempo indication, *Grave* and *Largo*; the theme with its large jumps and rests; and the *tender* and *melancholy* key of d minor³⁵. The theme is composed of four and a half bars. It is divided into

³³ Mozart was exposed the first time to a Melodrama when attending Benda's *Medea*.

See: John D. Drake "The 18th-Century Melodrama". *The Musical Times*, Vol. 112, No. 1545 (Nov., 1971) pp. 1059-1069

³⁴ It's presentation was made possible thanks to the courtesy of Enrico Gatti who made an edition of the original manuscript and allowed the use of the score here

³⁵ Sir William Jones and C.F.D Schubart on Key Characteristics as found in R.Steblin. *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. The University of Rochester Press, Rochester NY, 2002. Appendix A P. 242

two periods of two bars each with another little period at the end. The two first periods are again divided into an *antecedent* and a *consequent*. The third one is not subdivided in this way. All together, these 7.5 bars are intensified. The second antecedent is more intense than the first, as the second period is more intense than the first one. Every period is made like a *hairpin*, the second half of it (the consequent) is more intense than the next beginning of the next period:

Theme: Period I (louder) Period II

Bars 3-6 < > < >

Antecedent (louder) Consequent Antecedent (louder) Consequent

The *consequents* are more tensed than the antecedents. These *consequent* bars, in relation to their *antecedent* have the high points with *diminished* and *diminished 7th* dominant chords, and the higher notes. They resolve to the following antecedent (bars 4-5) or to the weaker beat of the bar (bar 6). Then follows an *andante* with a theme in F major, a return to the first tempo and its d minor motive; and then a *brilliant*³⁶ and grand theme in D major, illustrating Medea's apparition on a wagon of clouds (*wolkenwagen*) and her sign for it to disappear. In this first scene she stands outside her old house, wondering if she'll dare to go in it again.

Breaking the musical line to serve the text

The first interchange of music and text is made in bars 70-85. The text, conceived for this melodrama, is written with many pauses as the sentences have a loose connection to one another:

“Wohnsitz! vormals den Schutzgöttern frommer Eintracht, häuslichen Glücks, der unverbrüchlichen Treue heilig! – – ... So wag ichs, dich wieder zu betreten? – ... Freystadt unaussprechlicher – – für mich auf ewig verlohner Freuden! ... Haus meines Gatten, der mich von sich stößt! ... Meine Kinder! – – – ... Ach, die nicht mehr mein sind!”

Such sentences would not make much sense when recited alone. The music then fills the gaps.

³⁶ Jean Jacques Rousseau on key characteristics in his *Dictionnaire* as found in R.Steblin. *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. The University of Rochester Press, Rochester NY, 2002 . Appendix A P. 237

Benda uses his d minor theme from the beginning and breaks it to fit in between the sentences. While the text is cut by its nature, the broken musical phrases that are played in alternation are the ones that create a sense of continuity, making the connections between Medea's sentences. This continuity allows the actor to benefit from the pauses, in order to *act out* every new sentence. Medea's sentences, albeit the loose connection they have from one another, are written in pairs. The second sentence "So wag ichs, dich wieder zu betreten?" refers to the first "Wohnsitz! vormals den Schutzgöttern frommer Eintracht..." and likewise the sentence "Ach, die nicht mehr mein sind!" refers to the sentence "Meine Kinder!"³⁷. They are like the antecedent and the consequent in the d minor theme (see above), as every two sentences, like the periods, are intensified. In such a way every second sentence is followed by a tension-full *consequent*. The later with its high points intensifies the dramatization present in the text. This structure is evident also in the way the *periods* relate to a group of two sentences. The *periods* (see example above) are stronger in relation to one another, starting on a higher register. The third and last period³⁸ of the theme, starting with the high d in the violins (bar 83), is the most dramatic. Following the text "Meine Kinder! Ach, die nicht mehr mein sind!". It ends with a dissonant *augmented 6th* played after the sentence: "Ach, die nicht mehr mein sind!".

The image shows a musical score for four staves. The first staff is labeled 'Meiner Kinder!' and contains a single note. The second staff is labeled 'Ach, die nicht mehr mein sind!' and contains a single note. The third and fourth staves contain musical notation for the theme, with dynamic markings like [p], p, and f. The score is in D minor and features a dramatic theme in the violins starting at bar 83.

Bars 82-85. The end of the first section with music and text alternations.

Thus Benda uses his thematic material, with its shape and harmony to fit and illustrate the text. The use of the theme helps to carry the text through the rests, as the breaks in the music and text create a dramatic effect.

³⁷ In the original text, written for an orchestra, the words "Meiner Kinder!" do not repeat.

³⁸ It is more of a closure motive than it is a period. It is shorter than the other periods and it does not have an antecedent and consequent

Benda - Medea

6

Medea
 Vertrauter Wohnsitz!
 vormals den Schutzgöttern
 frommer Eintracht, hituslichen Glücks,
 der unverbrüchlichen Treue heilig!

Tempo primo

So wag ich,
 dich wieder zu betreten?

Freystadt unaussprechlicher -
 für mich nun auf ewig
 verlornen Freuden!

Haus meines Gatten,
 der mich von sich stößt!

Meiner Kinder!

Meiner Kinder!

Bars 70-82. While every sentence is a new beginning, the music has one line, cut to its smaller parts.

Text and music coincide

The full of sadness and despair *F minor* part ³⁹, begins with one of the most dramatic points of the drama when Medea says 'Mutter ohne Kinder'. Then, still in *F minor*, a new theme is presented (bar 115), composed of two motives:

³⁹ Jean Jacques Rousseau on key characteristics in his *Encyclopédie* and *Dictionnaire* as found in R.Steblin. *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. The University of Rochester Press, Rochester NY, 2002 . Appendix A P.265



Bars 115-119: First motive (twice)

Bars 119-121: Second Motive

- First motive as in bars 115-116 (and then repeating in the two consecutive bars)
- Second motive as in bars 119-121

In bar 124 this theme (of bars 115-121) is decomposed to its two motives. Here the first motive is used to accompany Medea reciting: ‘Hier lieg ich jetzt – Jetzt lieg ich hier’. This is the first time when music and text coincide in this piece. According to Benda’s directions (*Hier richte sich die Musik nach den untergelegten Worten*) the music is to follow the text closely. The underlined word could suggest a sort of an upbeat (in this case here the downbeat) to the players. The underlined word here is ‘lieg’. Choosing only one-syllable words (Hier, lieg, ich, jetzt) Benda is using the meter of the sentence to fit into the bar.



Bar 124. One way of interpreting the text to fit the bar. The word ‘lieg’ is the underlined one.

In the way it is written here, The word ‘jetzt’ (now) gives the impulse to the two sixteenth notes-upbeat to bar 125

Then the word ‘revenge’ (*Rache*) is the one that sets bar 132 with the second, *storm*-like motif (like in bars 119-121) of the F minor theme.



Bars 131-133. The word *Rache* is the one that sets bar 132 with the storm-like motif

In the *Adagio* in bar 142 comes a ‘nostalgic’ moment as Medea remembers herself in previous years: ‘usually I was here, imploring blessings upon him’⁴⁰. The first half of the sentence (‘usually I was here’) is recited over the music, having again only one syllable per word (*lag, ich, sonst*). In the original full orchestration this part is played by a *solo* violin. The orchestration and the violin theme in A flat major, create this nostalgic atmosphere. The second half of the sentence (‘*imploring blessings upon him*’) is again recited over the music, but the words here do not have one syllable – ‘*Seegen auf ihn herab*’. The underlined word here is *Seegen*. Here’s a suggestion for placing the words within the bar, to fit the meter:

⁴⁰ ‘Hier lag ich sonst – Sonst lag ich hier – Und flehte Segen - Flehte Segen auf ihn herab’



Bar 150. A suggestion for placing the words within the bar. The last word - 'herab' (down, upon) falls on the down beat of the middle bar

The rhythm of the words here, derives from the sentence's stressed syllables and meaning. The sentence here is iambic, made in order of strong-weak syllables. That's why the word 'ihn', having a weak syllable, is placed on a weaker beat. The meaning of the word 'herab' (down, upon), being the second most important word of the phrase - is emphasized when placed onto the second strongest beat of the bar.

Summary

Benda uses the qualities of his musical material; the subdivisions, harmonic tensions, orchestration, rests, intensifications and high points to illustrate both the outer and the inner emotional state of Medea. Her outer emotional state is expressed with the text, reflected and intensified by the music, whereas her inner emotional world is illustrated by the entire musical setting. In the rare moments when music and text coincide it is important, according to the stylistic approach of the time, to make sure that they are smoothly combined, using the parameters (meter, rhythm, meaning) of the two arts.

Chapter Four: Beethoven - Egmont

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770, Bonn – 1827, Vienna)

The play and its music

In 1787 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) wrote one of his most acclaimed dramas named *Egmont*. Goethe wrote the piece with a clear idea for music that will accompany the play, including one favourite genre of his, the melodrama. The composer Philipp Christoph Kayser (1755-1823) was commissioned by Goethe to write the incidental music for the play. It is thought that the play with Kayser's music was performed, though nothing is known of this version⁴¹. Ludwig van Beethoven, commissioned by the Viennese imperial court theatre, wrote music for the piece in 1809⁴². This incidental music includes an overture, two soprano arias (sang by Egmont's lover Klärchen), a Melodrama, 4 entr'actes and a 'victory symphony'. The 7th movement *Clärchens tod*, conceived according to Goethe's idea, was meant to accompany the female protagonist's sorrowful suicide.

The subject of the play is the story of the 16th century count *Egmont*, a Netherlander-Dutch nobleman and his tragic fight for freedom. For Beethoven, a liberal and a residence of Vienna, Egmont's fight meant much more than another piece of music: It reflected his enlightened ideas and the local Austrian emotions as Europe was under the Napoleonic occupation. An admirer of Goethe, Beethoven had agreed to compose the work without receiving a pay. In its time the piece was highly praised and Goethe himself found that Beethoven 'has done wonders matching music to text'⁴³. Originally including 17 actors, the play was revised and reduced by numerous authors well into the 20th century.

Adaptations

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) adapted the play in 1794 (first performance in 1796) according to the earlier's political and artistic views. It was Goethe himself that encouraged Schiller to do so.⁴⁴ Schiller's version was eventually performed with Beethoven's music in 1841⁴⁵. Friedrich Mosengeil (1773-1839) in 1821 wrote an adaptation to Goethe's *Egmont*, writing a shorter version (instead of a full 5 acts play) in order to facilitate Beethoven's music. His idea was that the public knows the play and so the text can be rendered as points reminding the story and allowing the music to be better appreciated⁴⁶. Being essentially a concert version to the play, this adaptation has only one male narrator instead of the entire cast. To Mosengeil's version followed few more adaptations, but they all kept the concept of one narrator.

⁴¹ Polheim, Karl Konrad. *Zwischen Goethe und Beethoven*. Verbindende Texte zu Beethovens *Egmont*-Musik. Bouvier, Bonn, 1982. Chapter A, 'einführung', P. 11

⁴² Julia Ronge. 'Beethoven Music for the Theatre'. From the album *Resound Beethoven*. Alpha. 2016

⁴³ Quote found in www.Gramophone.co.uk

⁴⁴ Lesley Sharpe 'Schiller and Goethe's "Egmont"'. *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (Jul., 1982). pp. 630-636

⁴⁵ Polheim, Karl Konrad. *Zwischen Goethe und Beethoven*. Verbindende Texte zu Beethovens *Egmont*-Musik. Bouvier, Bonn, 1982. Chapter C 'Anmerkungen', P. 131

⁴⁶ Ibid. Chapter A, 'einführung', P. 19

Movement VIII - *Melodrama*

Sitting in his prison cell awaiting his death sentence to be executed, Egmont welcomes a sweet sleep that's comes upon him: " Sweet sleep! Like the purest happiness, thou comest most willingly..."⁴⁷

Already in his first version from 1787 Goethe wrote this scene to be accompanied by music. The text of this Melodrama is the only Monologue (as well as dialogue etc.) of the original play that is written in the score of Beethoven. In most of the adaptations to the play that were made after Beethoven's music⁴⁸, Goethe's text is kept as it is.

Action on stage illustrated in the music

The Melodrama has only 9 bars of text, alternating with the music. The rest of this movement is music, adapted to the original play, illustrating happenings on stage. There, during Egmont's dream, Freedom is appearing on a cloud. Her face (Freedom's) is the one of Clärchen, Egmont's lover (that had killed herself). She inclines towards sleeping Egmont and encouraging him that his death will "secure the freedom of the provinces"⁴⁹. She then approaches to him with a laurel wreath suspended over his head. When a martial music is heard in the distance, first light of dawn comes in the cell, the vision disappears and Egmont awakes. Some of these stage happenings are indicated in the score where the music illustrates them:

- In bar 15 where "the appearance gradually recalls from the clouds"⁵⁰ the music changes quite abruptly from B major to A major with 16th notes in the winds-part marked in *p*.

The gradual descending figure on the cloud, is illustrated by the change from 16th notes to descending triplets. The rhythm change creates the illusion of a slower tempo, illustrating the gradualness of the descent.

⁴⁷ Anna Swanwick, "Egmont" - translation of. Harvard Classics, Vol. 19, Part 3. New York: Bartleby.com, 2001. Act V, scene IV

⁴⁸ Mosengeil, Grillparzer, Bernays, Tuerschmann, Mayer and Linke – 1821 to 1976 – all kept the original text of the Melodrama untouched.

⁴⁹ Anna Swanwick, "Egmont" - translation of. Harvard Classics, Vol. 19, Part 3. New York: Bartleby.com, 2001. Act V, scene IV

⁵⁰ *Beim Anfange dieses Stücks erblickt man die Erscheinung. Welche nach und nach aus den Wolken hervordringt*

Beim Anfange dieses Stückes erblickt man die Erscheinung, welche nach und nach aus den Wolken hervordringt.

Poco vivace.

Flauto.
Oboe.
Clarinet in A.
Bassoon.
Cor Anglais.
Tromba in B.
Tromba (solo con Ystobor).

Andante con moto.

Andante con moto.

Bar 15-19. The gradual descending figure on the cloud, is illustrated by the change from 16th notes to descending triplets in the woodwinds.

- In bar 51 Egmont's death indication⁵¹ is illustrated by the abrupt change from the pastoral-like theme marked *p* in D major to a descending figure in d minor played *unison* by the strings in *f*:

The image shows a musical score for Bars 51-54 of Beethoven's Egmont. The score is written for a full orchestra, with staves for strings, woodwinds, and brass. The key signature changes from D major to d minor. The strings play a descending figure in unison in f. The score is marked 'TUTTI.' and 'Egmonts Tod andeutend.'.

Bars 51-54

In bar 55 the entrance of the trumpet illustrates the ‘liberty gained for the homeland’⁵².

⁵¹ *Egmonts Tod andeutend.* It might refer to the stage indication of the Freedom reconciling Egmont that his death will help his people.

⁵² *Der Eintritt der Trompete deutet auf die für das Vaterland gewonnene Freiheit*

- In the *Piu Allegro* of bar 85 the apparition (Freedom) disappears⁵³.

The apparition's *motive* (as in the bar 18) of triplets in the woodwinds is repeated here.

Her leaving of the stage and going back to the sky is illustrated by the ascending lines of 16th notes in the violins and violas, capped by a pizzicato in the basses who stay alone:

Hier verschwindet die Erscheinung.

B. 12.

‘‘Here the apparition disappears’’. Bars 85-89

The movement ends with a monologue by Egmont being a speech about Liberty, encouraging his people to go on with the fight for their freedom.

His speech is accompanied by a drum, amplifying the military and patriotic feelings.

The dream. With and without text

The actions on stage are played by two actors who embody Egmont and Clärchen. However what happens when there is only one narrator? In version by Mosengeil apparently no text was recited and nothing happened on stage while the dream-music was played⁵⁴. It is possible to think that no text was recited during the dream, as the audiences knew the original play, and they imagined the scene while the dream was illustrated by the music.

What about modern performances of the piece? It seems rather unlikely that audiences today will know the story of *Egmont* as it was written by Goethe in 1781

⁵³ *Hier verschwindet die Erscheinung*

⁵⁴ Mosengeil's text only starts after Egmont awakes.

Moritz Mayer (1885-1958) ⁵⁵ who adapted the play in 1927, wrote a text to be recited over the music of the dream, depicting the dream's happenings. In his version he writes where in the Melodrama every phrase should be said, according to Beethoven's music. This way for example in the *Poco Vivace* in bar 15 the narrator, in Mayer's version, tells of the (prison's) wall that opens and the divine image of a woman in the clear sky⁵⁶. To every tempo indication in the Melodrama Mayer has written his text, according to the original play and Beethoven's music. This is the earliest examples in the genre of Melodrama, for text to be written on existing music. The only few recordings of the whole piece used Mayer's idea of inserting text into the *dream* part⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ Polheim, Karl Konrad. *Zwischen Goethe und Beethoven*. Verbindende Texte zu Beethovens Egmont-Musik. Bouvier, Bonn, 1982. Chapter A, "Einführung", P. 32

⁵⁶ "Die Mauer öffnet sich – auf einer Wolke schwebt Ein göttlich Frauenbild in Himmelsklarheit"

⁵⁷ See recordings by: George Szell, Wiener Philharmoniker, December 1969; Claudio Abbado, Berliner Philharmoniker, March 2005; Martin Haselböck, Orchester Wiener Akademie, June 2016.

Case study in performing Egmont

Recently I approached a performance of *Egmont*. In order to complete the missing actions during the *dream*, I wrote in the score the text that describes the action on stage. I used the stage indications written originally by Goethe in his play, and with slight amendments I wrote it into the score, to be recited over the music. This was an exercise in matching text into existing music. For practical reasons I had to keep the text shorter and occasionally to slightly change it. This was the only room I had for adjustments, as both the text and music are already given. With every change I made I still kept the meaning of the text. I have indicated in the footnotes the changings I did to the original stage indications by Goethe.

Details and method

The actual placement of the words in relationship to each bar is written in the score.⁵⁸

Bars 11-19

*Er entschläft*⁵⁹; *Hinter seinem Lager*⁶⁰ *die Mauer öffnet sich*⁶¹ (until the *poco vivace*), *eine glänzende Erscheinung zeigt sich. Die Freiheit in himmlischem Gewande, von einer Klarheit umflossen, ruht auf einer Wolke.*

Translation⁶²: He sleeps; *Behind his couch the wall opens and a brilliant apparition shows itself. Freedom, in a celestial garb, surrounded by a glory, reposes on a cloud.*

I placed the words *Er entschläft* (*he sleeps*) in bar 11 because of the harmonic resolution of this bar and being the beginning of the phrase (bar 10 ends with a *dominant* chord and the three quarter notes starting on the second beat are like an upbeat to the next bar).

As suggested in the stage indication written in the score and as M. Mayer did in his adaptation – I wanted bar 15 to be the place where the wall opens.

In that way having the phrase - *die Mauer öffnet sich* – to be recited into bar 15 with the word *öffnet* (opens) on the down beat of bar 15. This down beat which is a 16th note rest for the winds, gives the impulse to their entrance. It is as if the narrator orders the opening of the wall.

Bars 20–35 (33,34,35 are without text)

Sie hat die Züge von Klärchen und neigt sich gegen den schlafenden Helden. Sie drückt eine bedauernde Empfindung aus, sie scheint ihn zu beklagen.

Translation: *Her features are those of Clara and she inclines towards the sleeping hero. Her countenance betokens compassion, she seems to lament his fate.*

I placed the word *Klärchen* - here being both the symbol of love and freedom - on bar 23.

⁵⁸ See Appendix

⁵⁹ Cut - *die Musik begleitet seinen Schlummer*

⁶⁰ Cut - *scheint sich*

⁶¹ instead of - *zu eröffnen*

⁶² The English version brought here is by Anna Swanwick, ‘Egmont’ - translation of. Harvard Classics, Vol. 19, Part 3. New York: Bartleby.com, 2001. Act V, scene IV

This bar within the context of the four bars - 20-23 - is a high-point.

It has the high g in the flutes and it is a harmonic resolution chord to the previous bar.

After I placed the word *Klärchen*, I have arranged accordingly the beginning of the phrase (*Sie hat die Züge von*). Following the musical phrase I wanted to have the words *schlafenden Helden* ('sleeping hero') on bar 25, when the theme goes half a tone down to resolve to the tonic. The place where the flute elaborates its part into a beautiful melody in bar 28, is the place that I choose to have the narrator tells of the compassion *Freedom* has for Egmont.

The words *sie scheint ihn zu beklagen* starting after a comma, are placed here after the 8th note rest.

Bars 43 – 60 (In bars 36-42 I did not use any text)

Bald faßt sie sich, und mit Bestärkender⁶³ Gebärde zeigt sie ihm das Bündel Pfeile, dann den Stab mit dem Hute. Sie heißt ihn froh sein⁶⁴. indem sie ihm andeutet, daß sein Tod den Provinzen die Freiheit⁶⁵ werde, erkennt sie ihn als Sieger und reicht ihm einen Lorbeerkrantz.

Translation:

Quickly she recovers herself and with an encouraging gesture exhibits the bundle of arrows, then the staff and cap. She encourages him to be of good cheer, and while she signifies to him that his death will secure the freedom of the provinces, she hails him as a conqueror and extends to him a laurel crown.

The *arrival point* in which I wanted to have a specific text and music was bar 51.

Then presumably on stage, the *apparition* indicated that Egmont's death will secure the freedom of his people. It is the word *death* (*Tod*) that is the most striking in such a phrase. Therefore I wanted to place it just before the descending scale of bar 51. In this way the word *death* is the one that gives the impulse to the big change in character, present in the music.

The words *daß sein* are placed thus in the rests after the down beat and before the upbeat to the next bar. The word *Tod* should fall on the second beat of the bar, giving the upbeat cue to the strings' unison⁶⁶. The same I did with the word *Freiheit*⁶⁷ (*freedom*) - making it the impulse to the last 16ths-note-unison-motive in bar 54, and the words *den Provinzen* are placed on the break in bar 53 to match the later placement. With the rest of the text I tried to follow the musical phrases built in 4 bars and to contextualize the text accordingly:

- 44-47 (bar 43 is an upbeat)

- 48-51

In this way the sentence *Bald faßt sie sich....dem Hute* is placed over the *period* in 43-47.

The sentence *Sie heißt ihn froh sein* - because of the *arrival point* in bar 51 - is placed over the *antecedent* (bars 48-49). Over the *consequent* (50-51) is placed the beginning of the sentence *indem sie ihm andeutet*.

No text in 60-84

⁶³ Instead of - *aufmunternder*

⁶⁴ Cut - *und*

⁶⁵ Cut - *verschaffen*

⁶⁶ I was influenced here by the interpretation of George Szell and the Wiener Philharmoniker, using partly the M. Mayer adaptation. There too the word *Tod* acts as an upbeat.

⁶⁷ within the phrase it is *Freiheit werde* – to do with the grammatical order of the sentence.

In the *fermata* of bar 84 the drum is played. It illustrates the martial music heard from the distance, awaking Egmont. As it grows and before the orchestra enters in bar 85, the reciter says: Egmont Erwacht⁶⁸. Here end the stage directions⁶⁹ and the rest of reciting starts. As soon as the reciting finishes (and with it also the original acting-part) the orchestra plays the last *victory symphony*.

⁶⁸ ‘‘Egmont awakes’’

⁶⁹ The following sentence is left out: *das Gefängnis wird vom Morgen mäßig erhellt. Seine erste Bewegung ist, nach dem Haupte zu greifen: er steht auf und sieht sich um, indem er die Hand auf dem Haupte behält.*

Chapter Five: The Early Romantic Melodrama

The days of the Romantic era knew a different approach to representations of music and drama. Manifested in the works of the Romantic composers, the musical forms and genres were now changing into a hybrid of the different musical and dramatic techniques. It was a Romantic approach that sought to unite the different arts in order to achieve a bigger and higher level of drama. They believed, as Matthews wrote, that: "...the supreme expression of artistic genius occurred only when the arts were fused"⁷⁰. These artistic views had direct influence on the *melodrama*. Just like in other musical genres, the Romantic composers, using new and different techniques, sought to unite the music and the text of the *melodramas*.

The accompanied recitation

In 1826 Schubert composed his *Die Abschied von der Erde*. Written to a text of Adolf von Pratobevera, it might be the first piece of its kind – a recited poem accompanied by a piano. Here the text and music coincide all the time, as the music illustrates the content of the verses. Schumann thought he was inventing this type of composition⁷¹ when composing his own accompanied ballades in 1853, eventually influencing other Romantic composers to 'take' on the accompanied recitation. The melodrama became like a little sister to the Lied, and music was composed to poems and ballads. By doing so the Romantic composers were now creating a different world, not the one in between theatre and music, but rather between poetry and music, where the text has meter but it is not sung. Still in the realm of the dramatic as many romantic poems are, the later melodrama composers were shifting away from their 'Melodramatic ancestors'. The characteristics of the early Melodrama, mainly the alteration between music and text, did not define their melodramas anymore. Although they sometimes used this dramatic technique, especially in dramas, it was now less evident, and not a prerequisite. To that they have added a whole body of melodramatic composition, *flirting* at times with songs (or Lied) and at times with recitation and drama.⁷²

New possibilities

These new melodramas enabled a larger spectrum of artistic freedom and space to manoeuvre both for the composer and the performers, often including the same people on both sides of the creation. These poems and ballads, having a meter, permitted music to be more easily adapted to it. Treated as a song⁷³ the composers were able to write their music in function of the textual rhythm and in that way were able to join together recited text and music over longer phrases. The use of poems, suggested to Schumann and his followers the presenting of his melodramas⁷⁴

⁷⁰ R. Matthews and D. Platt. *The western humanities*. McGrawHil Publishing Company, 2004. Chapter 18. "The triumph of the Bourgeoisie" p. 520

⁷¹ Rethinking Schumann / edited by Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge. I. Raykoff. Chapter 9. "Schumann's Melodramatic Afterlife". P. 157

⁷² In Schubert's case with the *Abschied von der Erde*, The poem is taken from a play – *der falk*.

Thus the separation between drama-music-poetry is made less clear - a very Romantic idea indeed

⁷³ but not written as one – see later analysis in Schubert's *Die Abschied von der Erde*

⁷⁴ Schumann called these pieces Declamation Ballads. I am basing my writings here on the general scholastic notion that any recited text accompanied by music is a Melodrama. See also Raikoff:

"Despite Schumann's claims to innovation, both *Manfred* and the declamation ballades fit into the larger historical context of melodrama already established in theater and opera by the mid-nineteenth century". Ibid

in the social circles⁷⁵. Such change of performance setting, including a more intimate presentation, helped to base the genre around the piano accompaniment. The writing for the piano, instead of an orchestra, allowed a different range of dynamics, which facilitated the synchronisation of recitation and music. It created an easier balance between the actor and the music, allowing a more active musical role to be played with the text. The use of one musician also permitted a bigger flexibility when following the text. Thus even when written to fit the meter, both the actor and the pianist were allowed a freedom in interpretation. Finally it is possible to think that many of these *accompanied ballads* were performed with the composer at the piano, as can be understood from the word *we* (*wir*) in Schumann's words: "It is something which has not yet existed ... as was manifested in social circles, where we sometimes performed the ballad"⁷⁶.

New and personal definitions

Schubert doesn't title his only *declamation with piano accompaniment* a melodrama. But when referring to such a joining of words and music he writes melodrama⁷⁷. It is so when his piece is mentioned too⁷⁸. Schumann writes explicitly that his accompanied ballads are not a Melodrama⁷⁹, but critics refer to it as one. It seems that the excitement from a creation of such "entirely novel type of composition" as Schumann wrote, made some of the Romantic composers to treat their melodramas as special creation, not like any other. History, though, remembers them as *melodramas*⁸⁰.

⁷⁵ Rethinking Schumann / edited by Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge. I. Raykoff. Chapter 9. "Schumann's Melodramatic Afterlife". P. 160

⁷⁶ Es ist etwas, wie noch nicht existirt und von sehr eigenthümlicher Wirkung, wie sich das in geselligen Kreisen kundgab, wo wir die Ballade manchmal aufführten

R. Schumann, letter to Kistner, December 17, 1852, in *Briefe: Neue Folge*, 478. Found in Ibid footnote no. 13

⁷⁷ Schubert answering to an offer to write music accompaniment to a recited text: "...but as in this way it would be a melodrama rather than an oratorio or cantata..." Quote found in P. Branscombe. "Schubert and the Melodrama." Schubert Studies. Problems of Style and Chronology. Cambridge 1982

P. 141

⁷⁸ H Kreissle in Schubert's biography: "...We must mention a pianoforte accompaniment by Schubert which is combined with the final strophe of a dramatic poem...to form a Melodrama".

Ibid. P. 139

⁷⁹ "...The whole thing should not be advertised to the public as an opera or Singspiel or melodrama, but rather as a dramatic poem with music...". R. Schumann, letter to Franz Liszt, November 5, 1851, in *Briefe: Neue Folge*. Quote found in Rethinking Schumann / edited by Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge. I. Raykoff. Chapter 9. "Schumann's Melodramatic Afterlife". P. 157

⁸⁰ See melodrama definition and mentioning of accompanied ballads as melodramas in P. Branscombe. "Melodrama". Oxford Music Online. February 2017

Acceptance

Together with the development of the Melodrama and albeit the Romantic ideas of fusing of the arts, the Melodrama was often criticized and never fully accepted in the Romantic era into the family of dramatic effects and musical genres. Edward Hanslick, a music critic and a friend of the Schumann's, on a performance of two of Robert Schumann's declamation ballads (*Schön Hedwig* and *Ballade vom Haideknaben*) performed by Clara Schumann: "Although we are fundamentally opposed to the genre of melodrama—in which the music primly separates from the spoken word like oil from water, and the two arts interfere with instead of supplementing each other—in this case we were nevertheless able to enjoy a relatively unsullied impression."⁸¹

Richard Wagner who mastered the fusion of the different musical and dramatical genres, dismisses the Melodrama in his 1851 treatise *Opera and Drama*: "Indeed music would behave in relation to a staged literary drama almost exactly as it would if played to a painting in an exhibition, thus the so-called melodrama has been justifiably dismissed as a genre of the most unedifying mixture"⁸²

In the next two chapters I examine melodramas by Beethoven and Schubert, melodramas that marked the dawn of the Romantic Melodrama.

Summary

The Romantic Melodrama composers presented new techniques into the Melodrama and devised the new *accompanied declamation*. But above all, they have created a unified genre, of which its components – recitation and music – could not be taken apart.

⁸¹ Hanslick, *Sämtliche Schriften* (1995), 203. Quote found in *Rethinking Schumann* / edited by Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge. I. Raykoff. Chapter 9. "Schumann's Melodramatic Afterlife" P. 158

⁸² Wagner, *Oper und Drama*, 111–12. Quote found in *Ibid.* P. 159

Chapter Six: Beethoven - König Stephan

Overture and Incidental Music, was written in 1811 for a drama by August von Kotzebue. The piece together with another drama by Kotzebue, *Ruinen von Athen*, was performed at the opening of a German theatre in Budapest in 1812⁸³. The drama tells the story of the legendary King Stephan I (975-1038), the first Hungarian Monarch and the one to introduce Christianity to the nation. The play goes through the main events in Stephan's life. From the nomination of his father to be his successor; through his fight in paganism and pagan traditions (human sacrifice etc.); the meeting/wedding with his wife Gisela of Bavaria; and the future of the monarchy.

Though *König Stephan* was written only two years after *Egmont*, its melodramatic material is much more elaborate, containing various ways of treating words and music, some of them are quite rare in the melodramas of that time. These different techniques of bringing together the text and the music are discussed in the following section using three scenes as examples.

Further analysis will be made using three scenes from movement 8, the most complex for melodrama. In this movement Beethoven uses different melodramatic techniques presented both separately and then as the movements develops, simultaneously. Their inter-relations create a progress through the movement that marks a stylistic transition between the late classical melodramas to the Romantic ones. There are several melodramas that are spread throughout the piece⁸⁴. In each one Beethoven treats the words and music differently. Most of the spoken text and the words of the choruses are written in verse. These are rhymed in structure of abc, abab or abcb.

Different techniques of joining text and music

Parts with static music played over a recited text:

The image shows a musical score for a scene from Beethoven's *König Stephan*. It features a recited text over a static musical accompaniment. The staves are labeled: Violins I, Violins II, Viola, Violoncello, and Bass. The text is in German and is recited over a static musical accompaniment. The score includes a tempo marking 'B. 207 1/2' and a note 'Das Wort Ungarn nicht grade auf das D kommen.'.

Bars 5-8. Allegro vivace of the 8th movement

⁸³ "König Stephan" The Oxford Dictionary of Music

⁸⁴ Beethoven only calls the 5th movement a Melodrama. For my thoughts on his definition to Melodrama see chapter *Melodrama - Definitions*

In this scene

The king receives a golden crown sent by the pope. He then speaks to his people (bar 5-8) dedicating his crown to the Hungarian nation⁸⁵. Stephan's speech, written in verse of abab, is accompanied with a *tremolo*, illustrating the excitement suggested in the text.

In the melodramas within movements 7 and 8 the music and text alternate:

The image shows a musical score for bars 5-9 of the 8th movement. The score is written for a piano (p) and features a tremolo accompaniment. The lyrics are in German and are written in a melodrama style, alternating between music and text. The lyrics are: "Doch welche Begeisterung ergreift mich plötzlich, indem der goldne Reif die Schläfe mir berührt? Ich fühle meine Brust erglühen, vom Geist der Weissagung erfüllt". The score includes dynamic markings such as *dim.* and *ppp*.

bars 5-9 of Grave risoluto of the 8th movement

In this scene

After receiving his holy crown, Stephan is excited and is filled with spirits of Prophecy⁸⁶.

⁸⁵ "Ich schmücke ehrfurchtsvoll mein Haupt mit dieser Krone, sie bleibe spätem Enkeln noch ein Heiligthum; der Vater sandte sie dem Sohne, ich widme sie der Ungars Glück und Ruhm!"

⁸⁶ "Ich fühle meine Brust erglühen, Vom Geiste der Weissagung erfüllt"

In the Melodrama Movement the music and text alternate, the text is accompanied by static music:

The musical score is for the 5th movement, Melodrama. It is written for a full orchestra and vocal soloists. The score is in 2/4 time and features a variety of instruments including strings, woodwinds, and brass. The lyrics are in German and are written in a rhymed structure. The music is static, meaning it does not change as the text is spoken.

5th movement. *Melodrama*

In this scene

This melodrama is a love dialogue written in rhymed verses. Stephan is grateful for his new wife, Gisela princess of Bavaria, to have left her family and crown and joined his new kingdom. He grants her - her new crown. She replies that sharing his heart with his people will make her forget her departure. Stephen part is a verse rhymed in structure of *abab*. Gisela's is rhymed in structure of *aba* and *abcb*. When the king grants his new wife her crown – the music is played without a text (bar 5, the second stave here above). The music thus illustrates an action.

The 8th movement

Written in an intensifying way this movement accumulates tension and volume towards the end of the play. The use of melodrama for this intensification introduces some less used melodramatic techniques.

Andante Mosso

Beethoven uses for the first time in this piece rhythmic lines against the text. He writes triplets in the strings and bassoon, and the reciter is indicated to speak with ecstasy⁸⁷.

Andante mosso.

In Verückung
Da steigen sie herauf der Schutzgeist Ungarns die nach dem Ruhme was ich mit schwarzer
die edlen Fürsten, führt sie an. zu vollenden dürsten. Kraft begann.

First five bars of the Andante Mosso. *Triplets against the text*

In this scene

King Stephan talks about images from the future that he sees. He goes forward in time in his prophecy and sees different kings that influenced the Hungarian history, until the great king Mathias Hunyades⁸⁸. During these visions the harmony stays the same for ten bars (bars 1-11. G major) and then it changes for the first time as Stephan speaks of the liberty of the Hungarian people that he sees (c minor). It changes again as Andreas⁸⁹ and his place in history is mentioned (bar 14 - A flat major). When Ludwig⁹⁰ is mentioned, the harmony stays the same for five bars (A major) and through d minor (bar 21. resolution to the A major chord) Beethoven goes to B flat major, to accompany that "figure that goes out of the mist"⁹¹ (bar 22), a

⁸⁷ *in verückung*

⁸⁸ aka Mathias Corvinus, Mathias I (1443-1490), king of Hungary and Croatia reigned 1458-1490

⁸⁹ Andrew I, II, or III. Kings of Hungary in the years 1046-1301.

⁹⁰ Louis I (1326-1382), also called Louis the great, king of Hungary, Croatia and Poland

⁹¹ "Wer tritt mir aus dem Nebel entgegen"

‘splendid figure’⁹² (bar 23), Mathias Hunyades! (bar 24). The king goes in his image up in the scale of history and the bass-line goes up in half tones from d to f (bars 1-23). When the 15th century king is mentioned, the clarinets and the oboes join (bar 24 - now on B flat), to create a great effect. The ascending bass line together with the harmony and the instrumentation create an intensification that illustrates the excited voice of the first king of Hungary looking at his dynasty, blessing the future king.

The image shows a musical score for bars 22-25 of the *Andante Mosso*. The score is written for a full orchestra and includes vocal parts. The instruments shown are Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Clar.), Bassoon (Fag.), Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The lyrics are: (Der Horizont rülhet sich.) Wer tritt mir aus dem Nebel entgegen? Halwelche glänzende Gestalt! Mathias Hunyades! Segen! Segen! Wo deine Bahn vorüberwallt! Es möge untergehn der Ruhm der Waffen in des Zeitenstromes Lauf; doch ewig bleibt, was du für dürstende Geister erschaffen, du führtest die Morgenröthe herauf!

Bars 22-25 of the *Andante Mosso*. Notice the adding of the Clarinets and Oboes on the third bar when a high point in the text (*Mathias Hunyades*) is reached.

The instrumentation then gets bigger and the dynamics are stronger as on stage the sun is shining⁹³ (bar 36). This only gets bigger into the last part of the 8th movement, the *presto*.

Presto

Starts in *ff* and for 13 bars it only accumulates more intensity as the register in the violins and winds only rises. Between the reciter and the orchestra it is divided to groups of two bars: Two bars of an octave jump and a descending scale landing on a *dominant chord* in the orchestra; two bars of recitation over the dominant chord; and again two bars orchestral playing with the same pattern and higher in register.

⁹² ‘welche glänzende Gestalt’

⁹³ *Die Sonne geht auf*

Presto.

Cassonst will
Zwietracht ihren
Bogen spannen.

B. 2014

First six bars of the Presto. Alternating text and music in a pattern

This alternating pattern happens 3 times (bars 1-12) stopping on a fermata in bar 13.

Agitato

Here the dynamics and orchestration are reduced again. The violins play a motive accompanied by the basses in *pp*. This motive is written in a sequence going up in register. The bassoons and the oboes join after one bar (bar 15) as the reciter does as well, reciting a rhymed verse over that motive in the violins: ‘Mir will die Brust vor hoher Wehmuth springen’⁹⁴. After a bar of rest, and the violin motive going up in the sequence (bar 17), the reciter speaks again: ‘den Edelsten Wettkampf erblick’ ich schon!’⁹⁵. In the next bar the second violins will join. A *crescendo* sign is written for all the parts and the next line of the text: ‘Ich seh’ Euch um den Preis’⁹⁶. The ancient king goes on to encourage his future people as the orchestra plays louder and the timpani joins. This all leads to a one bar of *piu allegro* in *ff* and an expanding of the orchestration and one of the drama’s culmination:

⁹⁴ ‘My chest wants to jump of great melancholy’

⁹⁵ ‘I already see the noblest competition’

⁹⁶ ‘I see you being in a struggle with faith as the price’

‘‘Ihr zogt das Schwert mit edler Ungeduld, und diese Treue wird vergolten durch Eures Königs liebende Huld!’’⁹⁷

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. poco a poco

den edelsten Wettkampf er- Ich seh' Euch um den Preis der Treue ringen, und Euer Ihr zagtet nicht, wenn auch
blick ich schon! Herz trägt ihn davon! die Donner rollten,

Bars 16-19 of the *Agitato*. Sequential motive in the first violins, Crescendo, instrumentation thickens

This Melodrama and the movement end in an *Andante* and *Maestoso* when the futuristic image disappears from the ancient King's eyes⁹⁸.

The nature of the text

With every line having a different amount of syllables it is not the usual rhymed verse. The music that is played with the text doesn't seem to have a rhythmic connection to it. The motive in the violins is repeated and grows within the sequence. Other than the atmosphere that is brought both by the text and the music, the two do not match.

Although he uses poetry, essentially easier to combine with music, Beethoven writes music that does not fit the text metrically-speaking. In that way, Beethoven differentiate himself also from the later composers, leaving his piece standing almost alone⁹⁹ in the history of Melodramas.

The musical accompaniment

It seems that another matter to do with the fusion of the two arts (as described in *the early romantic Melodrama* chapter) – the orchestration – is not regarded as a problem for Beethoven. Active music and text, especially at the end of the 8th movement, coincide.

⁹⁷ ‘‘ You unsheathed the sword with noble impatience and this faith is rewarded by the hand of lovely grace of your king!’’

⁹⁸ ‘‘ Du schwindest mir, herrliches Bild’’

⁹⁹ Schubert's *Der Vierjährige Posten* has a similar melodrama in no.6 where a short 11 bars dialogue is spoken during a march

Summary

Beethoven's *König Stephan* is a piece that stands between the earlier and later Melodramas. The 'rules' to do with the fusion of text and music seem to be less evident in Beethoven's creation. Beethoven uses the alternation of music and text in the melodramas to vary the dialogues and monologues of the play. As the piece progresses he diverts from this text-music relations and as a dramatic tool he combines the two arts in a way that might not have been done before, breaking the classicistic notion of autonomy to declamation and music.

Chapter Seven: Schubert - Abschied von der Erde

Franz Schubert (Vienna, January 1797 – Vienna, 19 November 1828)

Schubert composed his last melodrama at the request of the poet Adolf von Pratobevera, as part of his dramatic poem *Der Falke*. This melodrama was first performed at the house of the poet on 17th of February 1826¹⁰⁰. It is an early example of the accompanied recited poems.

Lyrics¹⁰¹

Fare you well, you lovely world!
Only now do I understand you,
when joy and when sorrow
are passing away from us.

Fare you well, master sorrow!
I thank you with moist eyes!
With me I take joy,
you I leave here behind me.

Just be a gentle teacher,
lead everyone to God,
show them in the gloomy nights
a little streak of dawn!

Let them feel love,
and they will give thanks
sooner or later,
they will give tearful thanks.

Then life will be serene,
And every grief will smile placidly,
Joy will enfold
The clear and tranquil heart.

Content

The poem appears to deliver two messages: a theme on serene life and joy, and a second, darker theme on departing from life and the sorrow of love. These two atmospheres are mirrored in the music. The serene quality is audible in the arpeggiated triplets in F major key. The darker theme is illustrated by the music with the use of intensified harmonies.

¹⁰⁰ P. Branscombe. "Schubert and the Melodrama." *Schubert Studies. Problems of Style and Chronology*. Cambridge 1982. pp. 139

¹⁰¹ Translation Copyright © by Emily Ezust, From the LiederNet Archive – <http://www.lieder.net/>

Fitting structures and content

- The poem has five verses. Each verse has four lines, with a rhyming structure of abcb.
- Every line is in iambic meter (a weak syllables followed by a stressed one).
 - First and third lines have seven syllables, three stressed ones and four weak¹⁰². The last syllable is weak, breaking the paired iambic meter.
 - Second and fourth lines have six syllables. Three stressed and three unstressed.
- The piano part is written in common time with triplets throughout the piece, alternating between the left and the right hands.

The result is a triple meter subdivided into pairs in the text, and a common time divided into triplets in the music, making the rhythmic synchronisation of the words and music very hard, or irrelevant.



Bars 7-9. Triple meter subdivided into pairs in the text and a common time subdivided into triplets in the music.

As Branscombe says: "...Schubert's choice of common time for the reciting of lines each of which has only three stressed syllables and three unstressed syllables...is an obvious warning against imposing a strict rhythmical pattern on the recitation"¹⁰³. The musical phrases are built, like the poem, in groups of four bars, each bar matching a line. After every verse there is one bar that is played alone, and then again four bars matching four lines. The high point of every musical phrase played with the text is at the second half of the third bar¹⁰⁴. There, are the highest notes and the most tensed chords (*minor 7th* or a *diminished seventh* chord) within the phrase. This musical pattern fits the text recited over bars 8 and 18 (being the third bar of their

¹⁰² P. Branscombe. "Schubert and the Melodrama." Schubert Studies. Problems of Style and Chronology. Cambridge 1982. pp. 140. Branscombe claims that are four stressed syllables

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ The only exception to that is the 4th verse where the high point comes at the last bar. This might be a little game that Schubert plays:

On the down beat of the 3rd bar, instead of the half bar, comes a *minor 7th chord*. This happens where the text says "sooner". The word "later" (full phrase is "sooner or later") could refer to the high point that will come directly after, in the 4th bar.

respective phrases). In bar 8, the last word is ‘sorrow’, when the second half is a *minor 7th* chord and a long A5b-note. In bar 18 the two last words are ‘gloomy night’¹⁰⁵, where in the music the second half of the bar has an F# *diminished 7th* chord with a c6 on top.



Bars 16-18. Note the third bar with the highest note of its phrase and the *diminished 7th* chord.

In these two cases Schubert creates the effect not with the exact synchronisation of the text and the music but rather with the colour given to that *area* of the bar. The other two times where the ‘third bar’ is fused with the text are when the text talks of Joy. In bar 13 the text is ‘with me I take joy’, the word joy is accompanied with a Fb *minor 7th* chord, with a c6b on top. In bar 28 the phrase is ‘joy will enfold’, and the second half of the bar has a B *half diminished* chord. In both cases, the music colour doesn’t reflect the direct meaning of the words. Instead it suggests a rather sarcastic or tragic, hinted meaning.



‘With me I take joy’. Bar 13



‘Joy will enfold’. Bar 28

¹⁰⁵ ‘trübsten nächten’

Music and text coinciding

In his *accompanied declamation* Schubert breaks from the classical approach. Not only the music is played over the text, it is written explicitly so that the two do not match rhythmically. However as present in Benda's *Medea*, the music relates to the emotional context. Schubert, like Benda, illustrates a spectrum of emotions, not always apparent in the text. When Benda does it in the pauses between the textual lines, Schubert does it here together with the text. He thus suggests another level of emotional context, apparent in a deeper layer of the poem.

A genre

Being an early example of its kind, Schubert makes of the Melodrama a thing of its own. A genre. Unlike the early Melodramas where the music can often be played without the recitation¹⁰⁶, this piece without the text might sound empty, like a song without the singer part. The piano part, though beautifully written, sounds too repetitive without the text. It is meant to amplify the qualities found in the text, and cannot make a sense without it¹⁰⁷. One may find that the recitation, being 'lifted' by the music, helps the music in return.

Summary

By not using the cuts and pauses that are very much a characteristic part of the classic melodrama, Schubert gets away from the genre's early tradition. On the other hand, his accompanied recitation is not using melodrama as a technique. The *Abschied von der Erde* is a piece where the arts of reciting and playing are combined to create a genre. A Romantic *melodrama*.

¹⁰⁶ In Modern times many of the Melodramas in pieces are often omitted. Even in *Medea*, one might not feel the lack of text if the pauses are shortened. This is not to talk in favour of such interpretation that take the music completely out of its context.

¹⁰⁷ See link to a recording of the song without the recitation