

Introduction

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Starting point

For many years I have been attracted to the fusion of speaking and playing on stage. Exposed to it first in the form of lecture concerts, I have discovered not only a new and fascinating way to communicate with the audience, but also a sense of fulfilment. I was varying my performance, which made it feel more complete. Afterwards, whenever I had the opportunity, I turned to perform my concerts involving speech, together and without music. These few performances became less and less explanatory and inclined towards stories and Story-telling. Their fusion with music became more and more conscious, as I was fitting the (now written) text to the music.

For my master research I was trying to find evidences of musical traditions that included narration and music. It was then that my supervisor, Bart van Oort, told me about the *melodrama*, of which I have never heard before. When I listened for the first time to *Egmont* by Beethoven, and the Romantic accompanied recitations, it made a very strong impression on me: There is such a thing! My stories could now have a historical basis. Even if I did not understand the German, to me such fusion of arts made so much sense. I found that Music has power over the words, and that the words in return colour the music with specific ideas. Something that is to some extent simpler and clearer than vocal music. Especially interesting I found the moments when the music and the recitation coincided.

For my research paper I have decided to investigate the *melodrama*, and write a story that would incorporate melodramas according, and in relation to the melodramatic tradition. This paper is thus divided into two: (1) research component and (2) artistic output that is made in relation to the research.

Research questions

What are the different ways in which text and music are put together in a melodrama?

What are the characteristics of the late classical melodramas? How did they change in the Romantic era?

Overview: *To be Melodramatic*

Part One: Research on the melodrama between 1775 and 1826

Part Two: My melodramas, including a prologue, epilogue and analysis of the technique used

Part one

In the first chapter I define what melodrama is and differentiate its technical use from its existence as a genre. There are significant differences between the late Classical melodramas and the Romantic ones and thus the paper looks at these in turn. Chapters two to four present the late classical Melodramas, from Benda to Beethoven, 1775-1809. Chapters five to seven present the early Romantic melodramas – from a later Beethoven to Schubert, 1811-1826. Within this frame I examined the way text and music are joined in these pieces, through the artistic and contextual factors of the time.

Chapter two represents an overview of the melodrama within its stylistic and pragmatic contexts, trying to follow the background for its characteristic text-to-music relations. In the subsequent chapters, number three and four, I present two examples of the *late classical melodrama*; *Medea* by Benda, one of the most famous and influential melodramas of all times, and *Egmont* by Beethoven.

In the fifth chapter, I explain what changed from the classical melodrama, presenting the historical and artistic developments that influenced the melodrama into its Romantic form. A work that marked this transition is Beethoven's *König Stephan*, an analysis of which can be found in chapter six. The next chapter, number seven, examines another example of a Romantic melodrama, one of the first of its kind, called *Die Abschied von der Erde* by Schubert.

Part Two

A tale of two lights. My story about the third generation of the Hasidic movement in the Russian Empire. The story includes several melodramas. This is followed by a chapter giving some historical background to the story, the program that would accompany the melodrama, and an analysis giving examples of how text and music were used in relation to the melodramatic tradition. The epilogue explains some of the relations between the chosen music and its part in the story.

A conclusion will be given about how the genre and technique of the melodrama has helped shaped my own melodrama.