

## Literature and Painting Imitating Music

Language can never adequately render  
the cosmic symbolism of music ...  
(Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*)

Contemporary critics and philosophers are acutely aware of the dilemma presented in the verbal medium: language, while necessary for meaningful experience, at the same time carries the risk of narrowing this experience, pinning it down into rational structures and presenting it as more manageable than it is. Any reduction of the multi-dimensional richness and microscopic subtlety of spiritually meaningful experience to a medium confined to the linear and the fairly coarse, presents a fundamental metaphysical problem. The probing examination of what we often uncritically assume is humankind's primary means of communication dates back to the beginnings of biblical hermeneutics and the exegesis of the Babylonian Talmud, when the human means of articulating thoughts was first and acutely felt to be inadequate for the sacred message. Similar attitudes eventually developed within the field of literature; could language express even secular contents appropriately? This feeling became once again powerful at the end of the 19th century. In the era of Symbolism, poets and dramatists distrusted the adequacy of language for conveying what Maurice Maeterlinck called "la voix profonde, mais hésitante et discrète, des êtres et des choses."<sup>117</sup> Maeterlinck insisted that there ought to be on stage (as there are in life) means of expression other than the exterior, superficially necessary dialogue. Words, he believed, cannot faithfully express authentic experience; their danger lies precisely in the fact that they create a semblance of reality, which then obstructs the access to a truer realm. Along with Mallarmé, Verlaine, Rimbaud, and other Symbolist writers, he therefore aimed at a crystallization of language—a music, as he often paraphrased it—that would enable a spiritual dialogue conducive to authentic experience.

<sup>117</sup>“The profound yet hesitant and discreet voice of beings and things”; see Maurice Maeterlinck, *Le Trésor des humbles* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1907), p. 165.

To what extent music has indeed influenced literature over the centuries is the topic of an article by Albert Gier.<sup>118</sup> Exploring this cross-fertilization in analogy to the famous semiotic triangle, Gier maintains that insofar as literature can attempt analogs to music, it will usually do so on one of three levels: “Musik als Signifikant” (music as a signifier), “Musik als Signifikat” (music as a signified), and/or “Musik als Referent” (music as a referring agent).<sup>119</sup> The categories Gier establishes here correspond largely with the questions I derived earlier from the distinctions Hans Lund draws with regard to the relationship between literature and pictorial art. There I organized my answers according to whether a work exhibits painting or poetry *and* music, *in* music, or *into* music. Here, following Gier, I now conclude that literature may relate to music in one of the following ways:

- (1) on the level of the signifier (imitating the sound, the typical surface patterns, or the aesthetic self-sufficiency of music): verbal utterance *as music*;
- (2) on the level of the signified (emulating a compositional technique or a type of structural organization typical for music): verbal utterance *following musical designs*;
- (3) on the level of the denoted (thematizing music): verbal utterance *about music*.

### **Literature and Painting *as* Music, or *like* Music**

The first category—literature trying to *be* music—goes back to the very beginning of poetry in Greek antiquity; furthermore, it has been much discussed with regard to German Romantic poetry<sup>120</sup> and the lyrical works of Victor Hugo in France. In our days, this category plays an increasingly important role in the numerous “verbal compositions” of contemporary poets, composers, and artists who cross the line between

<sup>118</sup>Albert Gier, “Musik in der Literatur: Einflüsse und Analogien,” in *Literatur intermedial*, ed. Peter V. Zima (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), pp. 61-92.

<sup>119</sup>Gier, “Musik in der Literatur,” p. 70.

<sup>120</sup>Particularly with respect to the poetry of Josef von Eichendorff and Clemens Brentano. For an excellent discussion of this aspect see Giovanni di Stefano, “Der ferne Klang: Musik als poetisches Ideal in der deutschen Romantik,” in *Musik und Literatur: Komparatistische Studien zu Strukturanalogien*, A. Gier and G.W. Gruber, eds. (Frankfurt/Main etc.: Peter Lang, 1995), pp. 121-142.

the two fields.<sup>121</sup> Literary examples range from Dadaist sound effects that eschew verbal semantics altogether to non-narrative language intended to give the listener pleasure (as music does) rather than communicating a content. While literature *as* music is possible in poetic, epic, and dramatic writing, it is clearly most frequently found in poetry.

Painting *as* music may bring to mind Paul Klee's famous *Zwitschermaschine*, to which I will be returning in a later chapter. Similarly, Mondrian's visual representation of a "Boogie Woogie," while ostensibly referring to a specific genre, clearly tries to create music on the canvas. In fact, Kandinsky (who titled many of his compositions after musical genres: concerto, symphony, fugue, study, improvisation, etc.), and several others of Mondrian and Klee's contemporaries perceived their art as primarily rhythmic; the same has been said about Jackson Pollock with regard to his drip paintings.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, Kandinsky, himself a proficient pianist and cellist, also strove for a visualization of "sound" in *Der gelbe Klang* (The Yellow Sound), a work that was originally to be complemented by a "green" and a "purple" sound.

Klee, himself the son of two musicians, the husband of a pianist, and an accomplished violinist, went furthest in asking challenging questions regarding a possible parallel between visual and musical expression. One of his quests was for a "parallel between absolute sound and theoretically autonomous form and color."<sup>123</sup> He found support for his cause from

<sup>121</sup>Verbal utterance *as music* of the recent decades includes works such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Helmut Heißenbüttel's *Mikrophonie II*, Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge*, David Johnson's *Telefun*, György Ligeti's *Artikulation* and *Aventures*, Maurizio Kagel's *Anagrama*, Luciano Berio's *Ommaggio a Joyce*, Henri Pousseur's *Trois visages de Liège*, Pierre Boulez's *Poésie pour pouvoir*, John Cage's *Solo for voice I* and the texts collected in *Silence*, Gerhard Rühm's *botschaft an die zukunft*, Sylvano Bussotti's *Torso*, Laurie Anderson's *United States I-IV*, Dieter Schnebel's *Glossolalie*, Hans G. Helm's *Daidalos* and *Golem*, Hans Otte's *Modell* and *Alpha-Omega II*, Brazilian poet Augusto de Campos's six polychromatic *poetamenos* texts based on works and ideas by Anton von Webern, etc. For in-depth discussions see Dieter Schnebel's "Sprache als Musik in der Musik" (in Steven P. Scher, ed., *Literatur und Musik: Ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines komparatistischen Grenzgebiets* [Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1984], pp. 209-230), and *Autoren-Musik: Sprache im Grenzbereich der Künste*, H.-K. Metzger, R. Riehn, eds. (*Musik-Konzepte 81*; Munich: edition text + kritik, 1993).

<sup>122</sup>Matthew Biro, art historian at the University of Michigan, pointed out to me that this impression is supported particularly strongly in a film by H. Namuth about Pollock's paintings.

<sup>123</sup>Andrew Kagan, *Paul Klee: Art & Music* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 27.

several sides. The Orphists had long spoken about their proto-absolute color compositions in musical terms; Kandinsky similarly couched his theories of non-objective painting in a language borrowed from musical discourse; finally, the Constructivists, striving towards a complete abandonment of representation, emphasized simple, absolute formal elements that were, they hoped, in themselves neutral like musical notes. The descriptive expression that would have the most far-ranging effect on Klee was that of “pictorial rhythm,” developed in the context of the Cubists’ patterns of alternating light and dark facets, and translated then by Klee into line-drawings of fantastic rhythmic and, eventually, metric power (*Flight to the Right*, 1913; *Three-part Time with the Three*, 1919; *Rhythmic Landscape with Trees*, 1920). By 1923, Klee had developed an absolute structure, comparable to a musical staff, upon which he could “compose.” As Klee scholar Andrew Kagan observes,

He could now begin to explore in earnest the internal difficulties and possibilities of the color theme—development, color harmony, and ‘key’, color dynamics, and interval relationships (rhythm and movement of hue, value, and chroma). All, of course, with an eye toward conveying expressive content through an absolute, rational structure, as melody does in music.<sup>124</sup>

Gier’s second category (literature *like* music) comprises works that aim at translating into the verbal medium compositional techniques (such as theme and thematic development, counterpoint, canon, and leitmotif) or structural models (like theme and variation, fugue, sonata, rondo, etc.). Historically, this kind of relationship originated with the emergence of autonomous “absolute” music in the 18th century and led in extreme cases to verbal utterances creating structure at the expense of conveying an actual (verbal) message. However, more often than not, such self-imposed compositional restrictions gave rise to works that are intriguing both for what they say and for how they say it. One of the particularly successful examples is by Goethe. As a fourteen-year-old, Goethe had heard the seven-year-old prodigy Mozart in a recital in Frankfurt, and the encounter influenced him deeply. During his twenty-five years as director of the Weimar theater, Goethe staged more than 280 performances of Mozart’s works.<sup>125</sup> Particularly *The Magic Flute*, which he performed 82

<sup>124</sup>Kagan, *Paul Klee*, pp. 67-68. See also Hajo Dümling, *Paul Klee: Painting Music* (Munich: Prestel, 1997).

<sup>125</sup>On this and the following see Robert Spaethling, *Music and Mozart in the Life of Goethe* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1987).

times, fascinated him so much that the great poet toyed with the idea of writing a sequel. While the projected composition remained a fragment,<sup>126</sup> in 1773 Goethe amused himself by creating a *Concerto drammatico* in words. Steven Paul Scher lists this miniature concert as a prime example of “verbal music.”<sup>127</sup> Goethe imitates tempi and musical structures and makes every effort to compose something that would resemble music.

In his standard work for the field, *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts*,<sup>128</sup> Calvin S. Brown discusses cases of literary works that emulate various musical forms and techniques. His examples are too many to recount here, but a short overview seems in order. According to Brown, successful examples of literary works following the variation form include Eve’s morning song to Adam from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, where a “positive” theme is followed with a detailed “negative” variation,<sup>129</sup> Tieck’s play *Die verkehrte Welt* (The Topsy-Turvy World), a work with verbal overture and verbal entr’actes, the last of which is a “Menuetto con variazioni” consisting of a statement of a theme followed by three variations on it,<sup>130</sup> and John Gould Fletcher’s *Steamers* that, with its mock performance indication “(Maestoso),” underscores the designation as a musically informed poem.<sup>131</sup> Sacheverell Sitwell in *The Cyder*

<sup>126</sup>Goethe’s “Magic Flute, part II” exists as a fragment. See Victor Junk, *Goethes Fortsetzung der Mozartschen Zauberflöte* (Berlin: A. Duncker, 1899).

<sup>127</sup>Steven Paul Scher, *Verbal Music in German Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 1-12. Scher defines “word music” as “poetry that has phonetic affinity to music,” whereas “verbal music” is “literature which presents music as its theme or approximates a musical score.”

<sup>128</sup>Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987. For further discussions of these and related questions, see also Brown’s pertinent articles, “Musico-Literary Research in the Last Two Decades,” in *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 19 (1970), pp. 5-27; “The Relations Between Music and Literature as a Field of Study,” in *Comparative Literature* 22 (1970), pp. 97-107, “Theme and Variations as Literary Form,” in *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 27 (1978), pp. 35-43, and “The Writing and Reading of Music: Thoughts in Some Parallels Between Two Artistic Media,” in *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 33 (1984), pp. 7-18. An extensive overview of the use of variation form, sonata, fugue, leitmotif, etc. can be found in Horst Petri, *Literatur und Musik: Form- und Strukturparallelen* (Göttingen: Sachse & Pohl, 1964), pp. 23-81.

<sup>129</sup>John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, pp. 641-656; quoted in Calvin Brown, *Music and Literature*, p. 129.

<sup>130</sup>In Ludwig Tieck, *Sämtliche Werke* (Vienna 1918), XIII, 5-154. Discussed in Calvin Brown, *Music and Literature*, pp. 129/130.

<sup>131</sup>From Fletcher, *Preludes and Symphonies* (New York 1930), pp. 50-51.

*Feast and Other Poems* has imitated the practice popular with many composers to take another artist's theme and write a set of variations on it.<sup>132</sup>

The ABA form, one of the most basic musical molds, creates problems in literature where there is less tolerance for straightforward repetition than in music. Possibly the only example of a poem that ignores this reservation with very satisfactory result is Theodor Storm's *Die Nachtigall* (The Nightingale), among whose three five-line stanzas the first and third are exactly identical. However, as soon as one abandons the notion that sections should be balanced (and the repeated section thus considerable), one finds many other poets who have written verses that more generally repeat a (shorter) beginning for a conclusion. Among such ternary poems are Keats's *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern, Bards of Passion and of Mirth*, and *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, Poe's *Dream Land*, Alfred Noyes's *The Highwayman*, etc. Brown mentions specifically the poetry of Polish writer Ujejski whose set of eleven poems, based on compositions by Chopin, attempts to follow the musical structure. Particularly in the poem on Chopin's *Funeral march* the poet creates an interesting variant of the musically literal ABA form by distinguishing the two sections through the use of different meters but avoiding verbal repetition when the initial metric structure recurs.

Among poems emulating the rondo form in the Elizabethan era Brown mentions Robert Burns's *Green Grow the Rushes, O*, William Browne's *A Welcome*, and Thomas Lodge's *Phoebe's Sonnet* (which is not a sonnet in the formal sense of the term); further examples include Robert Greene's *Sephestia's Lullaby*, Hebbel's *Requiem*, Nietzsche's *Der Herbst*, Thomas Hardy's *Birds at Winter Nightfall*, Austin Dobson's *In After Days*, many of the poems by Clement Marot, John McCrae's *In Flanders Fields*, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Sister Helen*.

Imitations of the structural devices of fugue and fugato are understandably rare given literature's linearity. However, Brown has much praise for what he considers a genuinely successful adaptation of fugal texture and structure in the section entitled *Dream Fugue* within De Quincey's *The English Mail Coach*.<sup>133</sup> He also mentions a *fugato* section

<sup>132</sup>The themes Sitwell employs stem from Herrick, Pope, and Milton. See S. Sitwell, *The One Hundred and One Harlequins* (London: G. Richards, 1922), p. 48ff.

<sup>133</sup>The *Dream Fugue* is found in Thomas De Quincey, *Collected Writings*, ed. David Masson (London: A. & C. Black, 1897), XIII, 270-327. See the extensive and fascinating discussion of this literary fugue in Calvin Brown, *Music and Literature*, pp. 151-159.

in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, albeit with the reservation that it may constitute the literary equivalent to an "academic" fugue.

Paul Celan in his famous poem, *Todesfuge*, also seems to use the term not merely metaphorically. As Magnar Breivik points out,<sup>134</sup> "Schwarze Milch der Frühe," which recurs three times, functions as the fugal subject, with a development at "trinken." A counter-subject (or the second subject in a double fugue?) is given in "Ein Mann wohnt im Haus." One can observe the introduction of new counterpoints along the way, a complicated combination of thematic material in the final stanza, modulations of several of the colors and images employed, and a brief conclusion. Moreover, recurring expressions like "abends" and "morgens," "ein Grab in den Lüften" and "ein Grab in den Erden," serve to create a kind of space, not unlike that which one finds in some of Bach's fugues.

More writers have turned to sonata form (referred to as either "sonata" or "symphony") than to any of the other forms mentioned above; though how this is to be understood is often unclear. The problem with extensive repetition as it would occur in the recapitulation is, of course, the same as in ABA form; not surprisingly then, poets have found the form more unmanageable than prose writers. Gautier's famous poem *Symphonie en blanc majeur* (Symphony in White Major) seems to have hardly anything whatsoever to do with music—be it content or structure—beyond the title. The same holds true for Grace Hazard Conkling's *Symphony of a Mexican Garden*, despite its suggestive indications of tempo and tonality ("In A Major, Poco sostenuto, Vivace"), which seem modeled after those of the sonata movement in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, and its numerous references to musical forms like aria, fugue, bourrée and sarabande.<sup>135</sup> In the "verse symphonies" of John Gould Fletcher, the only suggestion of the musical form lies in the division into movements.

The most successful application of various musical techniques to the writing of poetry occurs (according to Calvin Brown) in the work of Conrad Aiken; these include his "symphonies" in verse as well as his many works with titles like "nocturne," "tone poem," "variation," etc. Aiken is also the poet who stands out for his integration of compositional techniques. Brown, who has defined the poetic equivalent of a "theme" in the musical sense as "intended to evoke a state of mind by presenting imagery suggestive of that state," states that

<sup>134</sup>Electronic communication, 4 March 1999. I owe heartfelt thanks to my friend and colleague, who was willing to share with me his insights into this work.

<sup>135</sup>Text reprinted in Calvin Brown, *Music and Literature*, pp. 166-167.

except that words necessarily have external reference—a fact which Aiken is sometimes inclined to lament—[...]Aiken's themes are essentially like those of the composer. The development, then, proceeds along musical lines, with endless modification and combination.<sup>136</sup>

Aiken also achieves counterpoint of sorts, “in a passage alternating between the thoughts of an old man and a young girl living in apartments one above the other,”<sup>137</sup> originally a separate poem entitled “A Counterpoint” but later incorporated into *The House of Dust*. Another example of the same technique can be found in the morning-song of Aiken's *Senlin*, where the two alternating and, as it were, superimposed themes are the protagonist (with his actions and thoughts) and the world outside his window.

The latter part of the 19th century brought not only the “musicalization of literature” regularly invoked in the context of the Symbolists; in a recent article, the music and art historian W. Dömling maintains that one ought to speak similarly of a “musicalization of painting.”<sup>138</sup> Captions of works of art increasingly resonate with terms like “composition,” “harmony,” “rhythm,” “polyphony,” etc. Whistler's *Symphony in White* and *Nocturne in Blue and Silver*, to name just two of many, constitute parallels across interartistic space to the various poetic “symphonies.” These compositions are impressionistic; they merely take the title without attempting any structural similarities with the musical genre.

In the early nineteenth century, two German artists were particularly successful in transferring musical techniques to their work. Philipp Otto Runge (1777-1810), when talking about his painting, *Die Lehrstunde der Nachtigall* (The Nightingale's Lesson, Plate 12), used distinctly musical terminology, declaring that for him this picture became “the same as what a fugue is in music.” And he explained,

Through this I have learned to understand that such thing happens equally in our art, namely, how much one facilitates one's tasks if one grasps the compositional technique that informs the whole of a composition and allows it, varied, again and again to shine through the whole.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>136</sup>Calvin Brown, *Music and Literature*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>137</sup>Calvin Brown, *Music and Literature*, p. 197.

<sup>138</sup>Wolfgang Dömling, “Reuniting the Arts: Notes on the History of an Idea,” *19th-Century Music* XVIII/1 (Summer 1994), pp. 3-9; quote from p. 4.

<sup>139</sup>Karl Privat, *Philipp Otto Runge: Sein Leben in Selbstzeugnissen, Briefen und Berichten* (Berlin: Propyläen-Verlag, 1942), pp. 124-125. Translation from the German mine.





**PLATE 12:** Philipp Otto Runge, *Die Lehrstunde der Nachtigall* (1804-5)  
Kunsthalle, Hamburg

Runge's work consists of a monochromatic frame inlaid with the actual painting in the manner of a large medallion. On the one hand, the frame functions as a reflection of the central topic; the two angels and the nightingale, the gnarly branches of the vegetation and musical instrument form the essential props of both the intimate inner scene and the ornamental exterior. On the other hand, the artist clearly understood the relationship between the frame and the medallion as a musical one. Dömling argues convincingly that it is the motivic unity across planes that Runge must have believed comparable to a fugue. The problem is, of course, that there is more to a fugue than unity of thematic material. My own initial impression was that of a spatially redefined ABA form; I am thinking especially of the types, popular to German composers of the

early and mid-nineteenth century, in which the “contrasting” B section recasts the material of the A section in new colors. (Musical terminology, by the way, came naturally to Runge. When planning his—never to be completed—*magnum opus*, the four-part *Tageszeiten* [Times of Day], he described it as “a fantastic musical poem with choruses.”)

Still among paintings of the Romantic era, Moritz von Schwind’s large work *Die Symphonie* refers to music both in subject matter and in structure. To what extent artists interested in the sister-arts concept considered the various genres to be transferable becomes obvious when we read that one of the alternative titles Schwind considered for this canvas was “Musical Novella.” Yet the actual narrative, described by Dömling as “a Biedermeier idyll by a late Romantic,” was apparently less significant for the artist than the formal organization. Schwind editor Stoessl writes:

On this musical foundation, the entire little story moves easily in four sections, which are analogous to the four sections of a symphony—Symphony, Andante, Scherzo, and Allegro.<sup>140</sup>

Visual artists have also played with counterpoint, motivic development, and other musical concepts not only in the description and titling, but in the structure of their works. Kandinsky’s theoretical writings (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art* [1912] and *Point and Line to Plane: Contribution to the Analysis of the Pictorial Elements* [1926])<sup>141</sup> contain a theory of what has been described as “the craft of counterpoint in abstract painting.” But once again, Klee takes the lead. As early as 1918, Klee, having begun to free his line drawings from the task of representation, had treated pictorial elements as components of musical texture. In *Drawing with a Fermata* (Kagan calls it a “contrapuntal scherzo”<sup>142</sup>), the

<sup>140</sup>Translated from Otto Stoessl, ed., *Moritz von Schwind Briefe* (Leipzig 1924), p. 254. Note that the painter uses the term “symphony” both to denote the entire four-movement form and to refer to the initial movement, possibly misunderstanding the commonly used descriptive term “sonata movement form.” That Schwind, a close friend of Schubert, was familiar with the discourse about music is evident when he talks about this painting stating that, “convinced of the necessity of grouping several depictions together... I have taken recourse to the most highly developed form in music of which the quartet, the sonata, and the symphony are created.” (Translated after Wilhelm Seidel, “Die Symphonie von Moritz von Schwind,” in Wolfgang Kemp, ed., *Der Text des Bildes: Möglichkeiten und Mittel eigenständiger Bilderzählung*, vol. IV [Munich 1989], pp. 10-34; quote on p. 21.)

<sup>141</sup>*Über das Geistige in der Kunst*. (English edition New York: Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1946), and *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche. Beitrag zur Analyse der malerischen Elemente* (English edition New York: Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1947).

<sup>142</sup>Kagan, *Paul Klee: Art and Music*, p. 37.

only pictorially concrete element is the musical symbol that, insofar as it invites lingering or pausing at the performer's discretion, is itself an emblem of artistic freedom. The remainder of the work, Klee himself claimed, is organized along the principle of contrapuntal imitation: the repetition and variation of a melodic form in different registers. A little later, Klee experimented with groups of spread stacks or "decks" of flat, colored forms as the equivalent to a "fugal idea." (*Fugue in Red*, 1921). Then, having explored ways of equating the relationship between independent lines to the principles of counterpoint, Klee eventually developed a similar polyphonic theory for color. As Kagan describes it,

he borrowed from music a dynamic conception of form, the canon (strict imitative counterpoint), in which the initial subject is repeated exactly, over and over, in different voices and registers. The continual, regular, overlapping repetitions create a very firm rhythmic and harmonic structure. Again translating the musical concept into visual terms, Klee arrived at a new paradigm of color relationships, which he called 'The Canon of Color Totality.' [...] he created a canonic structure or pattern by continually reintroducing the 'crescendo-decrescendo' color 'subjects' in different 'voices'....<sup>143</sup>

Klee himself explained this 'canonic' color relationship to his students as a "kind of three-part counterpoint."<sup>144</sup> He developed this approach further in works like *Polyphony* (1932). By contrast, he considered his most successful paintings of 1936, *Old Sound* and *New Harmony*, the summit of his achievements in homophony.<sup>145</sup>

Returning to literature and venturing a brief side-glance to drama, we find that what is arguably the most famous theatrical emulation of a musical structure stems from the prolific writer of ekphrastic poetry (and thus specialist in all kinds of transmedialization), Jean Tardieu. It is entitled, *La sonate et les trois messieurs ou comment parler musique*.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>143</sup>Kagan, *Paul Klee*, pp. 45-46. For an excellent evaluation see also Marcel Franciscono, "The Place of Music in Klee's Art: A Reconsideration," in the exhibition catalogue *Klee og musikken*, pp. 272-291. The exhibition was shown at the Art Center in Høvikodden, Norway (6-9/1985) and at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (10/1985-2/1986).

<sup>144</sup>For Klee's extensive discussion of his "Canon of Color Totality," see *The Thinking Eye: The Notebooks of Paul Klee I*, ed. J. Spiller, trans. H. Norden (London 1973), pp. 487-491.

<sup>145</sup>It is important to stress that these evocative wordings are more than fancy titles; they are hints at either the interartistic problem addressed, or the acknowledged solution (or both). A few other Klee titles with similar implications are *Chorale and Landscape* (1921), *Polyphonic Setting for White* (1930), *Three-part Polyphony* (1921-22), *Five-part Polyphony* (1929-30), *Polyphony* (1932)

Finally, however, among the literary works created to *follow musical designs*, especially to emulate compositional techniques, the most convincing are found neither in poetry nor in drama but in prose writing; and here, the novella clearly takes the lead. There are striking examples in which the writer seeks an explicit emulation of musical structures. Such is the case in George Sand's novella *Le Contrabandier* of 1837, which imitates in astounding detail the complex musical structure—a combination of rondo form and developed character variation—of Liszt's programmatic work, *Rondeau fantastique sur un thème espagnol (El Contrabandista)*.<sup>147</sup> Similarly, it has been argued that Anton Chekhov's novella *The Black Monk* is laid out in the form of a sonata movement in which the two contrasting themes, rather than being persons or specific conflicts, have a startling depth dimension. As Rosamund Bartlett analyzes convincingly, the two themes are motivically expressed as the polarities of life/death and reality/illusion, while being connected “harmonically” to the two male protagonists as tonic and dominant. The exposition introduces not only the relevant elements of the narrative plot, but also—musically, as it were—elements of paradox and duality. It is when these are developed that, according to Bartlett, “in its constant shifts in narrative tone and contrapuntal tapestry of ambiguity, modulation and inversion we may discern a deeper correlation with the language of music.” The penultimate section brings the story full circle, returning to the place of the beginning and to the time (“exactly one year later”); yet “the second subject is indeed in the tonic.” The story concludes with “a brief and brilliant coda” in which “the narrative pace is considerably quickened”; one is reminded of the stretto sections that conclude many classical sonata movements.<sup>148</sup>

The prose best suited to the adaptation of musical devices is one that emulates techniques like thematic development, leitmotif technique, or counterpoint. However, terms are often applied loosely. Gier explains that

<sup>146</sup>For details see Monika Schwartz, *Musikanaloge Idee und Struktur im französischen Theater: Untersuchungen zu Jean Tardieu und Eugène Ionesco* (Munich: Fink, 1981).

<sup>147</sup>See Matthias Brzoska, “Musikalische Form und sprachliche Struktur in George Sands Novelle ‘Le Contrabandier’,” in *Musik und Literatur*, Gier/Gruber eds., pp. 169-184.

<sup>148</sup>See Rosamund Bartlett, “Sonata Form in Chekhov's ‘The Black Monk’,” in *Intersections and Transpositions: Russian Music, Literature and Society*, ed. Andrew Wachtel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, forthcoming). The suggestion actually goes back to a remark made by Dmitry Shostakovich in an 1894 article, in which the composer observed that he believed Chekhov's story “The Black Monk” to be constructed in sonata form “with main and secondary themes, development and so on.” See Solomon Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitry Shostakovich* (London, 1979), p. 225.

“it is meaningful to speak of literary counterpoint when, for instance, a novelist highlights the same topic or theme in various strands of the action and in ever new perspectives, so that a sequence appears as a mirror image of the preceding one.”<sup>149</sup> Aldous Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* seems more an example of *mise en abîme* than of counterpoint: it plays with the idea of recursion, including that of having one of the characters an author who determines to write the book in which he appears (apart from reflecting on Beethoven’s op. 132, particularly on pp. 425-431).<sup>150</sup>

Beyond themes and contrapuntal entities, leitmotifs seem to offer themselves more easily for adaptation in a non-musical genre. Short, recognizable units that recur at crucial moments, have a programmatic association, and refer to something beyond the immediate content of their tones or words, occur for instance in Gabriele D’Annunzio’s novel *Trionfo della Morte* (The Triumph of Death). In *The Magic Mountain*, according to Thomas Mann’s own statement,<sup>151</sup> “the verbal leitmotif is no longer, as in *Buddenbrooks*, employed in the representation of form alone, but has taken on a less mechanical, more musical character, and endeavors to mirror the emotion and idea.”

Novellas such as the ones just mentioned can be appreciated (and are more commonly read) without any notion of the musical relationship. In other cases, the title of a literary work may give an indication that a relation to music is clearly being sought. However, as Gier points out, such evidence in no way discloses whether we can expect a work in what I called literature *following musical designs* or literature *about music*. Thus while Robert Pinget’s *Passacaille* (1965) is structurally fashioned after

<sup>149</sup>Translated from Albert Gier, “Musik in der Literatur,” p. 73.

<sup>150</sup>For an in-depth discussion of pertinent examples restricted to one language and one century, see Lech Kolago, *Musikalische Formen und Strukturen in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Anif: Müller-Speiser, 1997). Chapters include investigations like “Heimito von Doderer: *Divertimenti*. / *Sieben Variationen über ein Thema von Johann Peter Hebel*. / *Sonatine*,” “Kurt Schwitters: *Ursonate*,” “Paul Celan: *Todesfuge*,” “Thomas Manns Erzählung *Tonio Kröger*. Eine Sonatensatzform,” “Wolfgang Hildesheimers Roman *Tynset*. Eine Toccata,” “Ingeborg Bachmanns Hörspiel *Die Zikaden*. Ein Rondo.” For further helpful discussions particularly on Thomas Mann, see Harold A. Basilius, “Thomas Mann’s Use of Musical Structure and Technique in ‘Tonio Kröger,’” *German Review* 19 (1944), pp. 284-308, and Hans Rudolf Vaget, “Thomas Mann and Wagner: Zur Funktion des Leitmotivs in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* und *Buddenbrooks*,” in Steven Paul Scher (ed.), *Literatur und Musik: Ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines komparatistischen Grenzgebietes*, pp. 326-347.

<sup>151</sup>Thomas Mann, *Stories of Three Decades* (New York: A. A. Knopf: 1936), Preface, p. vi.

the form musicians know as *chaconne* or *passacaglia* but does not deal at all with music in terms of its content,<sup>152</sup> Alejo Carpentier's *Concierto barroco* (1974) is very much about music, without therefore being cast in any recognizable musical structure.

This brings me to the third category: literature and painting *about* music. The writing on music in general or on particular musical works comes in many forms; some of them, like the program note, the textbook description, and the musical review, will be left aside here. I will also not address literary works dealing with the musician as protagonist, or works of fiction whose characters explore music as an ecstatic experience. My interest centers on those literary works that aim at transforming a musical event into something akin to its verbal equivalent—ekphrasis as “the verbal representation of a text originally composed in the musical sign system,” to paraphrase Clüver one more time.

### Literature and Painting *about* Music

Most poetry dealing with music in the narrower or wider sense does not deal with a specific composition. In a philosophically illuminating study on poetry about music, Albrecht Riethmüller deals exclusively with literary works whose topic is music as such or what he refers to as “the awareness of music”—its sound, its rhythm, its relation to time, the emotions it evokes, etc.<sup>153</sup> Similarly, H.W. Schwab in his 1965 essay, “Das Musikgedicht als musicologische Quelle,” lists exclusively poems that speak about the external aspects of music.<sup>154</sup> Poets, he holds, will either praise music as a divine art, or sing about its beneficial effects on humans. They may portray the coziness of a home in which music-making is a regular pastime or glorify a specific instrument. Occasionally, they may reminisce about a shared experience of singing, praise the power of

<sup>152</sup>See E. Prieto, “Recherche pour un roman musical. L'exemple de *Passacaille* de Robert Pinget,” *Poétique* 94 (1993), pp. 153-170.

<sup>153</sup>Albrecht Riethmüller, *Gedichte über Musik* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1996), p. 7. The ten poems chosen for this collection include Ovid's *Syrinx*, an Anacreontic poem in praise of the lyre, Schiller's *The Dance*, Kleist's *Musical Insight*, Lenau's *Beethoven's Bust*, E.A. Poe's *The Bells*, Valéry's *Cantique des Colonnes*, Rilke's *Gong*, Benn's *Melodies*, and Bloch's *Dream*. Not one of them deals with a specific genre, much less with an individual piece of music. A lovely collection of contemporary poems about music is *Mixed Voices*, edited by Emilie Buchwald and Ruth Roston (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1991).

<sup>154</sup>In Walter Salmen, ed., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Musikanschauung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1965), pp. 127-138.

music in communal or political activities, or applaud an individual musician.<sup>155</sup> In the poems included in both collections there are generic poetic references to melody, harmony, or rhythm, to song, dance, or musical forms (the latter are often understood symbolically), but no poetic responses to specific compositions.

In many respects, these poems are about music as it exists abstractly in the minds of authors, *not* with extant works created by other artists.<sup>156</sup> The same is true for the pictorial art. As scores of studies in recent years have explored from many of the currently fashionable perspectives,<sup>157</sup> paintings in profuse numbers have dealt with music-making both as a societal emblem and as a carrier of sexual symbolism. In other cases, works of pictorial art, while dealing with a particular composer, do so in a very general way. Thus Klimt's famous *Beethovenfries* aims to represent the "essence" of the composer (and thus, presumably, his style and mode of musical expression rather than his biography), but does not transform any specific, recognizable work of art. It could thus be perceived as the equivalent to Kranz's wider notion of *Bildgedicht*, but not as a case of ekphrasis.

While poets and painters thus generally seem to shy away from the task to recreate in their respective media that sister art which has often been called the most elusive of them all, there are, as if in defiance of Nietzsche's well-known and widely-shared doubt, a few examples of ekphrastic poems on musical compositions, as well as a few cases of corresponding paintings. Paul Klee's so-called "operatic paintings"—*The*

<sup>155</sup>In this group fall the many 19th-century poems on composers, like Grillparzer's *Meyerbeer*, Brentano's Beethoven poems, Rodenberg's *Musical Sonnets* on Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, and Beethoven, etc.

<sup>156</sup>For a compilation of literary representations of music, musicians, or musical life, see *Musical Masterpieces in Prose*, Murray J. Levith, ed. (Neptune, NJ: Paganiniana Publications, 1981). Beside some obvious examples, the collections contains many pieces that might not immediately have come to mind. It includes, among others, Anton Chekhov's "Love Affair with a Double Bass," Thomas Mann's "The Infant Prodigy," James Joyce's "A Mother," Hermann Hesse's "Flute Dream," Katherine Mansfield's "Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day," Stephen Crane's "The King's Favor," Kenneth Burke's "Olympians," Edith Wharton's "A Glimpse," Carson McCullers's "Poldi," Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s "The Kid Nobody Could Handle," E.T.A. Hoffmann's "The Fermata," and George Bernard Shaw's "The Serenade." And then there is the discussion of Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* in Tolstoy's story by that name (esp. pp. 95-98).

<sup>157</sup>For a salient example, see Richard Leppert's *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology, and Socio-Cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).



**PLATE 13:** Arthur Rackham, "The Rhinegold, Scene II,"  
from *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie*  
(London: William Heinemann and New York: Doubleday, Page & Co, 1912), p. 7.



*Bavarian Don Giovanni* (1919), *Hoffmannesque Scene* (1921), and *Battle Scene from the Comic Operatic Fantasy "The Seafarer"* (1923)—definitely fall in this category.

Especially in the case of opera, itself a combination of music with mime and visual presentation, the boundary between such “ekphrastic paintings” and mere illustrations may at first seem difficult to define. Making one more spin-off from Claus Clüver’s definition of ekphrasis as “the verbalization of real or fictitious texts composed in non-verbal sign systems,” ekphrastic paintings would have to provide “a *visualization* of real or fictitious texts composed in non-*visual* sign systems.” Hence those depictions do not belong in this category which can easily be identified as reproductions of the (actual or imagined) *visual* presentation on the theatric stage without tangible reference of the musical language. The famous Edwardian illustrator Arthur Rackham’s sixty-four impressions of Wagner’s *Ring des Nibelungen*, deemed among the greatest visual representations of Wagner’s drama, are one example of independent illustrations that render the scene but not all of the media (see plate 13).<sup>158</sup> Similarly, set designs, even by such ingenious artists as David Hockney, by definition also do not qualify as transmedializations.

Yet a few examples of genuine transmedialization of opera into visual art exist. The artist who has me particularly convinced is the American Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917), whom fellow artist (and musician, composer, curator, and writer) Tom Phillips describes as “the finest visionary master of sea and cloudscape in the [American] history of painting.”<sup>159</sup> Interestingly, Ryder was also fascinated by Wagner, one of the most avant-garde musicians of his day, and attempted pictorial interpretations of some of the composer’s *Gesamtkunstwerke*, notably *The Flying Dutchman* and *The Twilight of the Gods*. In his large oil painting of 1888-91, entitled *Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens* (see plate 14), the figures of the three Rhine maidens in the stream who try to tease possession of the ring from Siegfried, seen approaching on horse back, provide nothing but the skeleton of the particular scene in the well-known plot.

<sup>158</sup>Analogues in visual art on literature to Rackham’s *Ring* exist, e.g., in Edgar Allan Poe’s *Raven*, published in Paris in 1875 “avec illustrations par Édouard Manet,” and Henry Fuseli’s *Prospero, Caliban, and Miranda in Shakespeare’s The Tempest, Act I, Scene 2* (Indiana University Art Museum). They demand that the appreciator be familiar with the literary context as a whole rather than only with the persons or events portrayed; and yet, what they depict are specific passages rather than entire works of art.

<sup>159</sup>Tom Phillips, *Music in Art* (Munich and New York: Prestel, 1997), p. 68.



**PLATE 14:** Albert Pinkham Ryder, *Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens*.  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

“The rest of the painting is the music,” as Phillips describes it.

The jagged sky in counterpoint to the undulating trees speaks all the anxieties of the score in this final battle between choice and destiny. The natural forces at work, and the dark wind that twists everything into metaphor of a tumult to come, prophetically dwarf the agonists of the scene. As in the opera the orchestra, acting as a huge lens to magnify the drama, tells a grander tale than the action.<sup>160</sup>

In literature, Gabriele D’Annunzio’s poem *Sopra un Adagio di J. Brahms* is a very fine example of ekphrastic poetry on music from the earlier part of the 20th century. In it the Italian poet juxtaposes the theme of desolation in the main section (pictured with ruins and a vacant throne as the center of interest) with a vision of the fallen empire’s former glory in the middle section, only to return, once that vision has faded, to the original scene of despondency. Corresponding with the recurring A section, the poet retrieves many of the expressions used in the first section; yet the extent of change in individual words and images produces a verbal analogy to the device of musical variation employed by Brahms.

The 19th century, too, knew several poets pursuing transmedialization of one kind or another. To name just one who was known for her prolific output, Mary Alice Vialls is the author of a collection of poetry, *Music Fancies and Other Verses*.<sup>161</sup> There, a sonnet on the *Tannhäuser* overture stands beside one on Chopin’s *Nocturne op. 37 no. 1*. In the latter sonnet’s octave, the poet’s impressionistic treatment translates the accompanied G-minor melody that constitutes the nocturne’s main theme as a questioning of pilgrims struggling along the barren track to eternal death, while her subsequent sestet depicts the E<sub>b</sub>-major chorale-style secondary theme as a reminder to return “to the fold and to the faith,” as it were.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup>Westminster 1899.

<sup>162</sup>Calvin Brown objects that the *Tannhäuser* sonnet violates the musical form in that, in order to avoid the awkwardness of verbal repetition, it begins with the music’s middle section, while the Chopin sonnet does the opposite by ignoring the return of the main section (*Music and Literature*, p. 138). At this point I disagree. These sonnets seem not geared at reproducing the music structure so much as what it communicates, and judging them as simple one-to-one transcriptions would not seem to do them justice. (Brown mentions Robert U. Johnson’s poem on Chopin’s *Prelude No. 15* as one that does justice to both the emotional content and the structure of the composition in that it varies the verbal equivalent to the repeated A section.)

The two examples of ekphrasis on musical compositions I wish to share here are Jorge de Sena's *Sonata No 11, For Piano, K.331*, by Mozart and Lorient's narration *The Carnival of the Animals* after Saint-Saëns. The two texts have been chosen with the deliberate goal to create as pronounced a contrast as possible in all respects: regarding the era of the music represented (one refers to a typical example of Viennese Classicism, the other to French music of the late Romantic style), regarding the musical genre (a piano sonata versus a symphonic poem), regarding the poet's country of origin (Portugal/America versus Germany), and regarding the literary genre (poem versus prose narration).

Jorge de Sena, *Sonatan N° 11, Para Piano, K.331, de Mozart*<sup>163</sup>

Sonata sim, mas variações que  
 mecanicamente re repetem gráceis  
 até que um minuete lancinante as transforma  
 no rondó convencional muito *alla turca*,  
 quando a turcada era o visível Oriente  
 encravado no seio desnudo de uma Europa empoada  
 tão convencional e autocrática  
 como eles.

É quase com frívola angústia,  
 antecipada e dissoluta em percussões galantes,  
 que esta existência é som que sobrevive  
 não só a um mundo revoluto mas  
 ao pertinaz assassinato por conservatórios  
 e prendas domésticas. Frívola  
 e todavia angústia ou, mais, o quase  
 que de sonata e tempo a torna a suspensão  
 gratuita em que repetições variadas  
 sempre sobre um tema são a segurança  
 entressonhada a que viemos ser.

A sonata, yes, but variations that / are mechanically repeated with  
 grace / until a piercing minuet transforms them / into the “conven-  
 tional” rondo very *alla turca*, / when Turkish meant the visible East /  
 encrusted in the bare breast of a powdered Europe / as conventional  
 and autocratic / as the Orient. // It's almost with a frivolous anguish, /  
 anticipated and lax in elegant percussions, / that this existence is a

<sup>163</sup>From Jorge de Sena, *Arte de Música* (1968) [in *Poesia II*, 1988], pp. 175-176. Translation by F. Cota Fagundes and J. Houlihan, revised by Claus Clüver, quoted in “Ekphrasis Reconsidered: On Verbal representations of Non-Verbal Texts,” in *Interarts Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media*, U.-B. Lagerroth, H. Lund, E. Hedling, eds. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), p.29.

sound surviving / not only an agitated world but / its own persistent murder in conservatories / and by amateur talents. Frivolous / but real anguish or, still more, the “almost” that / turns anguish from sonata and time into the gratuitous / suspension where varied repetitions / always on a theme are the envisioned / certainty that we have “come to be.”

Jorge de Sena’s poem equals a somewhat distanced intellectual’s appraisal. It is a description of (a) the particular Mozart sonata, with its theme-and-variations first movement followed by a minuet as a second and a “Rondo alla turca” as a third and final movement, (b) the expectations and conventions connected with the genre, (c) the social associations and biases informing artistic representations of “the Orient,” (d) the fate of thoughtless execution that this and similar works of music suffer in much of the music making as it is typical for our cultural understanding of “art,” and (e) philosophical musings on the topic of anguish during the times of autocratic monarchies, and the attempted counteraction of such anguish through the creation—and appreciation—of predictable, clearly delineated forms such as variations, minuets, and rondos.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, the poem on the Mozart sonata deals with a work whose extra-musical implications are indirect: the reference to the Turks in the *alla turca*, and the allusions that can be understood to hide in the conventional musical forms.

By contrast, Camille Saint-Saëns’s *Carneval des animaux* (Carnival of the Animals) presents, in the titles of the individual pieces, a sequence of character sketches that the prose text then fleshes out to a complete story. Correspondingly, this text also differs strikingly with regard to the ekphrastic stance taken. Lorient’s narration on Saint-Saëns’s fantasy evokes the gleeful immersion of a highly imaginative child. His style enters the fairy-tale world the composer has portrayed musically. He sees and hears the orchestra’s depictions from the inside. Here, the verbal medium happily supplements the little details that might otherwise escape the music listener.

I will thus conclude my deliberations on literature and painting *as* music, *like* music, and *about* music—and with them the first part of my study—with Lorient’s charming text on Saint-Saëns’s happening in the forest.

Loriot, *The Carnival of the Animals*<sup>164</sup>

Nobody would have consented to the arduous journey and the unusual request for fancy costumes, had this not been a cultural event of exhilarating singularity: the Carnival of the Animals.

A wood-ant, no longer in her prime, taps the giant ant-eater in front of her on the shoulder. "Excuse me, I cannot see anything if you keep your hat on." Grumpily the ant-eater takes off her headdress, an unwieldy contraption braided from wild asparagus and chicken feathers. "Thank you!" says the ant. Then she lets her eyes wander across the jungle clearing. On the arena seats alone she counts 4791 strangely costumed animals, not to mention the innumerable monkeys and birds that are crowding the overburdened tree tops.

Just now there is a stir of anticipation, for the moon ascending from behind the branches of a mango tree to signal the beginning of the festivity. "I think I hear something," says a pigeon; and she isn't altogether wrong, for over there near the entrance, in the twigs of a bare oak, sixty-four horned owls take up their instruments. And now the marabou raises his baton, the two squirrels at the pianos lower their paws into the keyboards ... and then *he* enters, with all the members of the royal family: His Majesty, the Lion. [Here follows the Royal March of the Lion.]

Accompanied by moderate applause the lion has ambled twice around the arena, looking rather bored as he waved to the crowd. Together with his spouse, his three sons, one daughter, five cousins, and an imperfectly colored aunt, he has then taken the seats of honor and closed his eyes.

"Are the hens next?" the fox asks his significant other. "Control yourself" she wants to say, but the sentence dies on her lips. An artful, fifteen-foot-high pyramid made up of seventy-seven shapely brown hens enters with swift, tiny steps. At the very top balances a cock dressed in the costume of the Emperor Napoleon! [Performance of Hens and Cocks.]

While the hens hurry breathlessly towards the exit, the cock, glassy-eyed and aloof, receives the ovations. But now! Six wild donkeys charge into the ring. [Presentation of Wild Donkeys]

"Bravo!" applaud all the mammals, as well as the fish, birds, and insects. Only one brazenly naked meal-worm shakes his head and comments: "I for one prefer the Parisian Turtle Ballet. Oh, they are coming, they are coming! Look how rhythmically they lift their legs!" [Performance of the Turtles.]

The meal-worm blows little kisses to the turtles. "Super," he judges. His neighbor, however, an African elephant with a false mustache glued to his face, does not share his view. Turtles lack the grace necessary for dancing ballet, he opines haughtily, adding that

<sup>164</sup>For the original German text see Loriot (i.e., Vicco von Bülow), "Der Karneval der Tiere", in *Möpse und Menschen* (Zurich: Diogenes-Verlag, 1983). Translation mine.

he knows of only a single living dancer of quality, namely his spouse. And there she swings in, wrapped in billowing white veils, head and trunk held high and proud, eyes half closed in restrained passion. [The Elephant's Dance.]

"Well, what do you say now?" The elephant glares at the meal-worm. The latter, wishing neither to lie nor unnecessarily to provoke the sensitive elephant, merely mutters "hmmm." The elephant has a rejoinder at the tip of his tongue... but, entirely unexpectedly, kangaroos with starched white caps hop between the rows of seats to offer refreshments. [Intermission with Kangaroos.]

A hippopotamus, having arrived late, finds his seat in the eleventh row occupied by a crocodile that appears to be asleep. For a moment, the hippopotamus listens to the crocodile's regular breathing, and then carefully sits down on the lower end of the elongated animal.

Meanwhile, four donkeys have carried a spherical aquarium into the ring. Seven salmon-colored Japanese angel-fish are seen swimming in circles, emitting silvery bubbles that rise to the surface while they attempt to smile. [Aquarium.] ... And when the donkeys carry the aquarium with its angel-fish away, they sing an old song of Love, Joy, and Sorrow. [Characters with Long Ears.]

A woodchuck has covered his ears. "These days every ass believes he has a voice," he complains and eyes the cuckoo who, in his ill-fitting suit of feathers, is now skipping toward the grand piano to provide his own accompaniment for his vocal performance. [The Cuckoo's solo.]

The cuckoo has fallen silent, and profound silence reigns. The ant-eater has puffed eyes from the tears she has wept. So does the elephant. The hippopotamus, too, and the fox. The ant and the meal-worm as well.... "Will we now see the swan?" three young cats ask. "No, the humming birds," replies the old cat. "Just watch: two thousand humming birds!" [Aviary.]

And whoosh—just as they had come they whirl away, swerving diagonally through the bare oak tree, so that the sixty-four owls must duck to avoid them. "Is it now the swan's turn?" the young cats ask. "Sit straight and be quiet," the old one snaps. "Look! The two squirrels give piano lessons to two wart-hogs!" [Pianists.]

While the squirrels and wart-hogs are still making their gracious bows, a slightly rotund beaver steps into the ring. Unfortunately, he announces, the vocal presentation of the fossils will not take place as scheduled. The great age of the once world-famous vocal quartet—allegedly several million years—has kept them from making the journey. Fortunately though, the owls have declared their willingness to perform an instrumental rendering of the fossils' hits. He hopes the

listeners will enjoy themselves. "Is the swan next?" the young cats want to know. "Hush!" says the old cat. [Fossils.]

After friendly applause, above all from the ranks of elderly iguanas, rhinoceroses, and tortoises, the festivity is nearing its climax. Twenty-nine moles have burrowed a river bed from the nearby jungle lake all the way to the edge of the arena, and now the beaver releases the concealed barrage. To everybody's utter surprise, a pond begins to rise amidst the festive audience. And now the swan comes gliding in, silver-white in the moonlight, adorned with fragrant hibiscus blossoms. "A conceited nincompoop," says the fox; yet nobody listens. [The Swan.]

"Da capo!" a speckled rabbit applauds. But the party is over. Already the lion is signaling for people to leave. One more time the marabou raises his baton, the squirrels lower their paws into the keyboards, and the horned owls join in. The lion strides towards the exit and with him the elephants and ant-eaters, the beavers, ants, meal-worms, moles, kangaroos, cats, and turtles, the donkeys, hens, foxes, and humming-birds. Hopping and chirping they vanish behind trees and mountains, from where they had come. [Finale.]