ABSTRACT – Semiotics is indispensable in determining the message or meaning of a musical discourse. It is the science concerned with the typology of the sign and with its help, day and night related symbols can be analysed in a musical context. We view semiotics as playing a decisive role in offering a clearer picture of how day and night have been represented in music. The present article, therefore, has semiotic analysis as its cornerstone and looks specifically at the role of semiotics in communicating diurnal and nocturnal aspects, with an emphasis on the methods of analysis relevant to the subject of day and night in music. Its purpose is to determine the extent to which the works dedicated to the day and night are different in content. The essence of our research lies in certifying the existence of certain differences and similarities in the organization, structuring and thinking of the musical compositions of diurnal and nocturnal character. The study investigates the context in which the signs of the day and night appear and are interpreted in music, their semiotic range, while also following the development of semiotics as a method that enables the correct interpretation of musical events. Three great names in musical semiotics are particularly relevant to the study of the day and night in music: Eero Tarasti, Raymond Monelle, and Robert Hatten. While emphasizing the theories established by them, we have sought to discover new analytical approaches to the day and night in music, unravelling that innovative element that semiotics proposes. Keywords: day in music, night in music, Eero Tarasti, Raymond Monelle, Robert Hatten.

1 Introduction

Does music have meaning, sense or significance? This has been a debated question ever since the subject of music became one of major importance in social life. Rosario Mirigliano argued that “The problem – we shall say it once and for all – is not whether music means anything or what it means, but whether it is possible to describe precisely how a musical fact «means».”1 The connections people make when listening to great musical compositions are not always the same; some people are surprized that the obvious associations they make are not shared by other people. This complexity of communication creates what Husserl calls the process of “surrogation”2 referring to the connection of simple signs, which enables the emergence of multiple meanings of a sign. Indeed, if the references were identical and produced similar impressions on every listener, the music would most likely lose its depth. Kofi Agawu said: “One mark of the endurance of strong works of art is that they make possible a diversity of responses – a diversity regulated by a few shared (social or institutional) values.”3

The issues raised by musical meaning are complex and addressed in different contexts. But the sense, significance and meaning of music cannot be perceived independently of the musical sign. The musical sign is the one that generates the possibility of the existence of meaning, being a guide to its understanding. The general science of signs and the idea of the necessity of studying semiotics were developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but to understand semiotics it is beneficial to look at some opinions that could be regarded as premises. The 18th century presents an interesting idea about the relationship between music and the theory of imitation. Composers were confronted with the fact that the imitation of natural phenomena, of the singing of birds, or the sound of water fulfilled only a marginal part of the function of music. This century placed the function of expression above the function of imitation in terms of importance in music, asserting that the effect of music must be derived from a source other than imitation. In this line of thought, in 1752, Charles Avison declared that there is no greater adversary to genuine musical expression than imitation:

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1 Mirigliano, “The Sign and Music”, 44.
2 Husserl, Scrieti filosofice alese, 34.
3 Agawu, Music as Discourse, 4.
And, as dissonance and shocking sounds cannot be called musical expression; so neither do I think, can mere imitation of several other things be entitled to this name... Thus the gradual rising or falling of the notes in a long succession is often used to denote ascent or descent, broken intervals, to denote an interrupted motion, a number of quick divisions, to describe swiftness or flying... Now all these I should choose to style imitation, rather than expression; because, it seems to me, that their tendency is rather to fix the hearer’s attention on the similitude between the sounds and the things which they describe, and thereby to excite a reflex act of the understanding, than to affect the heart and raise the passions of the soul.4

Today, however, none of these views corresponds to the modern theory of musical expression, with imitation having its rightful place in comprehending meaning. In the 19th century, perspectives on the meaning of music were focused in other directions. The new generation of composers was convinced that music opens the way to the special meaning in the realm of feeling. Raymond Monelle captures the essence of musical meaning as seen during that time, in the following words: “The meaning of music, in philosophical terms, was transcendent; it was something not accessible to ordinary experience.” Thus, music represented that Innerlichkeit whose pure form was impossible to connect to any object or content. With the acceptance of the fact that music is closely related to the symbol, conceptions came much closer to the science of semiotics. Much of the literature on musical meaning has been influenced by a referential conception of music, which is the starting point of the semiotic theory. John Locke6 defines the referential meaning as the essence of an idea. The emitter-message-receiver7 model creates the context for transmitting this essence of the significance and meaning, concepts that arise when one reflects on what is being communicated.

Semiotics is a system of stylistic structural analysis carried out systematically in order to observe the role of the sign and its relation to meaning, significance and message. It studies the way communication and signification work, as well as the relationships between code and message, sign and discourse. Peirce defines the sign as follows: “The entire intellectual purport of any symbol consists in the total of all general modes of rational conduct which, conditionally upon all the possible different circumstances and desires, would ensue upon the acceptance of the symbol.” The semiotics of the 20th century is, therefore, a radical theory that underlies the analysis and critical discourse on music, offering an alternative to the traditional type of analysis, through the logical and scientific systems it operates with. According to it, when analysing a sonata, symphony, work or other musical genre, the premise of classifying a single note as a sign leads to significant errors. Kofi Agawu said that “if we treat the individual note as the elementary unit, we run into the immediate problem that not only does a single note have no meaning except in relation to others, but also the note is, for all practical purposes, a very small unit indeed.” This is certainly an indication that the elementary units of music are best defined at a broader level than that of the independent note in itself.

The study of musical semiotics goes beyond the boundaries of cultural or social research and exceeds the scope of music theory, music history or ethnomusicology. Semiology is not a discipline with a closed set of methodologies and subjects but includes a broad set of projects addressing aspects of the musical content in itself and the relationship between the musical content and other cultural fields. Perhaps the most appropriate words that justify the importance of semiotics in musical analysis were spoken by Raymond Monelle himself: “Without a theory of signification, music becomes merely an infinitely ramified continuum, impossible to divide into smaller units. A grasp of signification enables us to find meaningful items in this continuum and thus to begin the process of analysis. Analysis engages with signifier and signified together, and thus reveals the musical text, which is a great deal more than merely the score.”10

2 Day and Night from a Semiotic Perspective

A semiotic approach should not claim exclusivity but should draw from the historical and theoretical sources. Thus, the results of a semiotic analysis need not be incompatible with the traditional or formal ones, but rather should make an indispensable contribution thereto, providing new insights and extending the limits of musical understanding. Semiotics offers a wider range of hypotheses for explaining the musical structures that belong to the day and night. By extracting the essence of the research conducted by the three great semioticians Eero Tarasti, Raymond Monelle and Robert Hatten, we will emphasize the colossal contribution of each of them.

5 Monelle, Linguistics and Semiotics in Music, 6.
6 The concept is debated in his study entitled Essay Concerning Human Understanding, which dominated the semiotic ideas for a century after its publishing in 1690.
7 Presented by Eero Tarasti in comparison with the process of production – exchange – consumption: Tarasti, Signs of Music, 3.
8 Peirce, Semnificație și acțiune, 202.
9 Agawu, Playing with Signs, 16.
10 Monelle, The Sense of Music, 11.

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2.1. Eero Tarasti’s Perspective

The perspective from which we analyse the day and the night in music must be thought out very carefully. If, in our analysis, we relied only on Roland Barthes Seulé’s statement *Seule la métaphore est exacte*, we would lose sight of extremely important aspects of analysis. On the other hand, if we were to rely only on the conception of the existence of pure music, we would fall into an illusion that semiotics has repeatedly tried to combat.

Eero Tarasti’s contribution is considered immeasurable in developing one of the most important theories of musical semiotics. In his approach, he went so far as to analyse the thought or the psychic activity that the speaker projects into what he is saying. This thought is embodied in the word *modalities* and describes “all the intentions by which the person who voices (*énonciateur*) an utterance may color his or her «speech». On the other hand, in a particularly important way, his study develops the concept of the semiotic square, presenting the polarity between two contrasting notions based on semantic laws and applying it to musical analysis. The semiotic square thus becomes a useful concept with which one can address the complexity of interactions between binary polarities in a structured manner.

In music, the semiotic square becomes essentially effective in the case of polarities on a smaller scale, because the terms involved in the square must be seen not as separate entities, but as *extremities* between which a continuum develops. According to Mark Hutchinson, “in order to adapt the square to the non-linguistic frame of musical experience, the specifically logical connections between different terms within the square need to be loosened.” Eero Tarasti builds a model of analysis based on the four visual manifestations of light enumerated by Jacques Fontanille. Tarasti takes the visual elements of light and inserts them into the semiotic square according to the following model:

![Semiotic Square](image)

In *Immobilization*, the diffusion of light stops and appears as a colour. In *Concentration*, the light is reduced to a punctual impact and interpreted as brightness. The intensity of this brightness depends on the degree of concentration. *Circulation* puts the light into motion, providing avenues for its distribution.

This model represents a key point in Fontanille’s theory, expressing the fact that the meaning of a thing, in a non-linguistic frame, depends very much on the process of utterance of that thing. Eero Tarasti states that “If Fontanille’s theory constitutes a valid general description of the semiosis of light, it also should apply to other non-languages, such as music.”

Tarasti takes over Fontanille’s statements and applies them to music. He uses the same idea of the semiotic square, but adapts it to the musical context:

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11 In translation: “Only the metaphor is exact.”

12 However, many opinions do not support Tarasti’s theories on *modalities*. Concerning the *modalities* applied to music, Finn Egeland Hansen states: “the *modalities* applied to music are positioned at so many different levels, point in so many different directions, and in general appear so disorganized in relation to music as a sonic art, that their value as a scholarly tool is questionable.” Hansen, *Layers of Musical Meaning*, 80.


14 A concept introduced by A. J. Greimas that explores different logical combinations within a binary opposition.

15 Here, the author refers to the necessity, within the musical frame, of allowing greater flexibility between polarities, flexibility that can be visually transposed into the square model through certain cyclic lines between the poles. Hutchinson, *Coherence in New Music*, 67.


17 Eero Tarasti’s model can be found in: Tarasti, *Semiotics of Classical Music*, 317.

Light as illumination frames the forms under which we find in music the elements of day and night through general characteristics, related to the musical discourse. Here, we notice that light in motion, or the passage of time during a day/night, is rendered by music in motion, by the totality of elements that define music as a reflection of the day or night.

Although all four manifestations found in this semiotic square are particularly valuable in the analysis of the day and night in music, Light as illumination perhaps incorporates most of the elements that are essential to the analysis. This is true because within the manifestation of light as illumination we can speak of the metaphorical meaning of light (and, by extension, of the day and night) as it appears in various works. Through the general characteristics of the discourse, a piece of music can fit into certain specifically geographical patterns of composition, having a Nordic, tropical, or Mediterranean feel, given by the use of a certain rhythm or some specific keys, which form stylistic traits reinforced by the existence of certain musical universals. For instance, Eero Tarasti finds the Mediterranean luminosity in “energetic and extroverted rhythms, impressionistic stylistic devices, and bitonality,” and the Nordic light appearing “usually as a polyphonic texture in the strings in the upper register and pianissimo.”

Apart from geographical patterns of composition, Light as illumination can also include seasonal colourings. More importantly, this is precisely where the focus of this study lies: particular moments of the day and night. Eero Tarasti wrote:

- Particular moments of the day have been depicted in music, from various sunrises – Ravel’s Daphnis et Chloé and Erik Bergman’s Aubade – to the colors of the morning – Wagner’s Good Friday music – to the waning light of evening – Schumann’s Abends – and the darkness of night, illustrated by such impressionistic textures as in Szymanowski’s Symphony and in Manuel de Falla’s Nuits dans les jardins d’Espagne. Roughly speaking, entire musical style periods can lean toward particular colorings: night and evening, for romanticism, late-romanticism, and symbolism; day, for neoclassicism; morning, for impressionism.

Light as illumination stands in a relation of implication with Light reflecting the materiality of the instruments. Thus, we can state that the time of the day or night, directly influenced by the presence or absence of light, can be represented in music by involving the colour or the characteristics of a certain musical instrument. In general, using unusual ways of singing or choosing less common instruments evokes a special communication, carrying a definite message. Composers sought to involve different states of mind in their works, such as sobriety, warmth or tranquillity, defining them as musical colouring. Rarely used instruments evoke a special atmosphere when involved in musical passages, because their characteristics significantly influence the way the content of the message is conveyed. Such instruments can be the xylophone, marimba, Glockenspiel, vibraphone, celesta, English horn and others of their kind, considered less known to the connoisseur public. However, composers have often used ordinary instruments in the performance of passages that speak about day or night, light or darkness.

19 Tarasti, Semiotics of Classical Music, 322.
21 Tarasti, Semiotics of Classical Music, 332. Regarding works such as Sibelius’s Andante festivo and the slow movement of Grieg’s Piano Concerto.
22 Tarasti, Semiotics of Classical Music, 332-333.

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An eloquent example in this regard is the “sunrise” motif at the beginning of the third movement of Beethoven’s “Waldstein” Sonata, which is based on arpeggiated chords, imitations and other specific techniques.

To the Light as colour category belongs the colour function of chords, in different musical styles (such as the specific Romantic colour), or even in the colour of some keys or musical textures. We cannot deny that the atmosphere invoked by various works is due both to the musical discourse and to the tonal framework in which they unfold. Eero Tarasti states: “The dim light of Gabriel Fauré’s Ballade in F sharp major, like a never-ending summer afternoon, comes from the pastoral coloring and static musical events, as well as from the special tinge of F sharp major. In Mozart’s music, whose colorfulness Messiaen highly praised, the keys and harmonies have undeniable color function […] In Wagner’s Lohengrin A major symbolizes the light and its knight.”

Light as illumination stands in contradictory relation to the Punctual light. If light as illumination represents the general characteristics of the day and night in music (just as it might represent, for example, light in a certain season), punctual light implies, according to Tarasti, the existence of a musical effect that stands out (is brought to light). Such an example can be found in the first act of Wagner’s Valkyrie, when the stage darkens before the coming of spring, but the sword handle remains glowing in the oak, caught by a ray of light. Musically, the ray of light is rendered by the trumpet motif meant to emphasize the visual scene.

Starting from Tarasti’s model of the semiotic square of light, we can formulate a similar model focused on the day and night. In music, the contrary and contradictory relations within the square are attenuated, with the four postures through which the day and night are reflected in music being related to each other and having common implications. Thus, for a proper analysis of the day and night in music, we must take into account all four postures, each of them bringing special particularities to the analytical process.

![Fig. 3. The Semiotic Square – Day and Night in Music.](image)

Generally, the analysis of day and night in music will not involve only one of the four manifestations exposed in the semiotic square, but all their elements interwoven. For instance, in the prelude La terrasse des audiences de clair de lune, Debussy portrays the moonlight with parallel fifths in the upper register, in the final bars of the piece. Thus, the moonlight, which appears as a highlighted effect (representing the upper left side of the semiotic

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23 Tarasti, Semiotics of Classical Music, 328-329.
square) is represented by the parallel fifths (which are elements of the discourse, belonging to the lower right side of the semiotic square) in the upper register of the piano (the materiality of the instruments being in the upper right side of the semiotic square), in a certain tonal context (represented by the lower left side of the semiotic square).


Raymond Monelle’s innovative work in the field of musical semiotics is centred especially on the topic theory. One of the most important advocates of the topic theory who influenced Monelle’s principles was Leonard Ratner. In his work, Classic Music, Ratner argues for the existence of certain characteristic figures in the compositions of Classical musicians, designating them as topics. He says: “Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor. They are designated here as topics — subjects for musical discourse. Topics appear as fully worked-out pieces, i.e., types, or as figures and progressions within a piece, i.e., styles. The distinction between types and styles is flexible; minuets and marches represent complete types of composition, but they also furnish styles for other pieces.”

The types category included mainly dances, whether dance suites or dances integrated as parts of pieces, such as the minuet, passepied, bourrée etc. In the styles category, Ratner includes military and hunt music, Turkish music, Sturm und Drang or other traditional types of music. Ratner’s disciples, including Wye Jamison Allanbrook, Kofi Agawu, Elaine Sisman, and Robert Hatten, continued his work in developing the topic theory. In his turn, Monelle showed a special interest in this area of semiotics, placing particular emphasis on the cultural implications of topics.

Topics are subjects for musical discourse, classified by Raymond Monelle as iconic, indexical, or symbolic. Since it is difficult to find ways for music to work by analogy with the day and night, the subjects of the day and night would be difficult to fit into the first category of the iconic. This is mainly because there are no specific day or night sounds immediately recognizable as icons. Their nature is not primordially imitative, but one that imagines, and sonically conveys, in an elegant manner, the idea of night or day. Thus, the topics of day and night are mainly indexical and symbolic, referring to various ramifications and implications (indexes): for day – serenity, nature, light, etc.; for night – dream, mystery, darkness, etc. The essence of finding the external reality with the help of topics is rendered by Monelle in the following words: “musical topics map whole tracts of human reality.” He exemplifies the implications of the topic of the hunt by referring to indexes such as heroism, adventure, enthusiasm, and the unexpected, thus opening the way to a much greater wealth of topical qualities.

This idea of topics involves a plethora of interdisciplinary elements, governed by the interpretive frame of the signifier and signified. The totality of musical devices whereby the subject of the day and night is expressed represents the signifier, whereas the day and the night represent the signified. The signifier-signified relationship carries a whole series of connections, requiring a complex semiotic analysis.

Since we can see the importance of musical meaning as an extrinsic value, we argue for the existence of the representation of the external reality in music, as a support in determining the meaning and message. In Das Musikwerk als Reflex, Abglanz, Relikt und Echo der außerwerklichen Wirklichkeit. Erkundung, Mieczyslaw Tomaszewski states that meanings and senses in musical works and in music, in general, are born as reflections, relics, traces and echoes of a work’s external reality. In his opinion, the work of art, as a reflection of its external reality, describes a complex of inspirations, suggestions and determinations that are directly derived from the composer of the work, reflecting his or her sensual sensibility, mind type, emotional character and type of imagination. All these psychophysiological powers act upon the emergence of the work. Wilson Coker, referring to the relationship between the pitches, durations and forms in the score and the extramusical ideas, calls it an extrageneric relationship.

Although the variety of characteristics of a musical work seems inexhaustible, some basic classes of works may be easily differentiated. According to Tomaszewski, there are four basic characteristics based on which

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24 Ratner, Classic Music, 9-27.
26 Wye Jamison Allanbrook develops the topic theory especially by examining dance topics in Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart, 1983.
29 Robert Hatten approaches the study of topics in Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation and Interpretation, 1994.
30 Monelle, The Musical Topic, IX.
33 The term extrageneric was used by Wilson Coker to differentiate from the internal, or cogeneric content (derived from purely structural analysis). Cumming, “Semiotics”.

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musical works can be classified. The representation of reality in a musical work can occur in the form of imitation, transformation, parallel and opposition.

The relationship of imitation is synonymous with the ancient category of mimesis. In this sense, the work of art reflects and mimics as faithfully as possible the phenomenological aspects of nature. It is this faithfulness of the presented copy that determines the value of the work. In certain moments in music history such mimetic tendencies were particularly evident. At first, in the songs of the Renaissance, reality was rendered in an obvious way, as a simple and direct projection, sound with sound, motion with motion. This can be exemplified by the noise of a battle, the tumult of a fair, or wild birds’ song. Likewise, in the Baroque, the harpsichord miniatures address similar subjects, whereas in certain moments of the Classical period, such as Haydn’s Seasons or Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony, onomatopoetic effects are present, illustrating, for instance, a storm or a feast. In Romanticism and Modernism, tendencies of a more accessible and pleasant mimesis were enriched with what can be called second-degree mimesis, which consisted in taking a model for imitation or illustration from literature or the arts.

Another correlation revealed here between a work’s external reality and the musical work is the relationship of transformation. Its character is akin to metonymy and comes from mimetic imitation, yet it differs from it in that the prototype or model derived from the empirical world manifests itself in the musical work only to a certain extent, being consciously transformed by the composer. Over the centuries, natural manifestations such as laughter and crying have been integrated into art music after being subjected to a series of cultural filters. For instance, laughter occurs in its discrete form in Haydn’s Seasons, and crying in Verdi’s La Traviata. Thus, the transformation of the natural archetype through filtration is equivalent to the transformation of noise into musical sound, or of a natural phenomenon into a cultural object.

The relationship of the parallel bears the characteristics of a metaphor. In this case, the similarity of the work with its nature-derived model refers to the existence of a common structure, reproduced in different materials. For example, in the case of the different times of day, such as morning, noon, evening (or dusk) and midnight, we relate to their structure, whose point of reference is the sun: its rise, its zenith, its setting and its absence. This is but a step away from the other musical structures that are parallel to the represented reality.

A particularly eloquent example in this regard is Eine Alpensinfonie, where Richard Strauss names the last three sections from the beginning and the end Nacht, Sonnenaufgang, Der Anstieg, and Sonnenuntergang, Ausklang and Nacht, respectively. In the musical field, we can speak of musical genres that, by their essence, draw parallels with the different ideas they represent. The genre of the sonata, which evolves from the Roman West, is, by its essence, a parallel with the atmosphere of the romantic time of evening or dusk. The genre of the romantic song goes parallel with the time of action of the night or morning. One of the most famous ballads, Erlkönig, begins with the words: “Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?...”

The fourth relationship between the musical works and the work’s external reality is the relationship of opposition. It has an antithetical character. In this case, the musical work is the expression of resistance and rebellion against the cultural prototypes. Here, we can refer to the two modes of utterance that have emerged over the centuries: the informative speech and the expressive song. In Pierrot Lunaire, Schoenberg tried to overcome these traditional distinctions through the vocal technique of the Sprechgesang, much debated in the musical world. In the same line of thought, Alban Berg, in his Schiess mir die Augen beide, promoted the laws of dodecaphony, which oppose the compositional techniques used in other eras, especially the symmetry and balance of Classicism. Oftentimes, the antithetical relationships associated with a work’s external reality have an ironic and satirical character.

These relationships of opposition or antinomy are an integral part of the reality we live in, and mark, on the one hand, the presence of a struggle, and, on the other, unity through contrast. In his article Structurarea și oglindirea contradicțiilor în artă [Structuring and Mirroring Contradictions in Art], Ştefan Angi states that “the aesthetic-artistic creation of contradictions faithfully imitates the process of any anthropomorphic objectification, sensibly contributing to the enrichment of human spiritual life.” As a soul mirror of the unity of opposites in life, composers have often transposed these dualities into their music. Thus, the day or the sunrise, the night or the dusk have captured the attention of various musical personalities, who have made them subjects of their works. The time of morning and dusk were the subjects of numerous volumes of poetic thoughts, which emerged from the statement, “There was an evening and there was a morning. One day.”

34 In almost all of Schubert’s songs, the action takes place during the night, including expressions such as: “by the light of the moonlight” – die Suisse-Maid; “in the night-time” – Der Suisse-sey; “…tis dark, dim, dismal!” – die Lilien; “in the midnight hour” – Das mag ich leiden.
35 Who rides so late through the night and wind? (English translation by Richard Wigmore).
36 Sprechgesang is a type of vocal enunciation used by Schoenberg, especially in Gebet an Pierrot.
38 The Old Testament, Genesis 1.
2.3. Robert Hatten: Day and Night as Topics in the Markedness Theory

The semiotic theory is an analytical method of great value. The nature and manifestation of meaning in music, the relationship between music and meaning, are elements without which one cannot study the subject of the day and night in music. Robert Hatten’s extensive research, embodied in numerous articles, studies, publications, and books, reflects a broad range of interests including music theory, musicology, semiotics and interdisciplinary studies. An analysis of his publications cannot overlook the thread running through his entire research: his preoccupation with musical meaning. Musical meaning is the main subject in many of Hatten’s studies, including, among the most extensive: *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*, 39 *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert*, 40 and *A Theory of Virtual Agency for Western Art Music*. 41 In these books, Hatten deals specifically with the semiotic theory. In the review of Hatten’s *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*, Kofi Agawu writes: “Although it deals with Beethoven’s music, in particular with the late works, the book manages in the end to leave Beethoven behind. In other words, the author seems divided in his allegiances to Beethoven, on the one hand, and to semiotic theory, on the other. My impression is that Beethoven’s music serves as a rich and convenient site for the practice of analysis.” 42

Thus, Beethoven’s music is for Hatten a way of exploring his major preoccupation, namely that of studying the nature and manifestation of musical meaning. Hatten himself points out that his study “presents a new approach to understanding the systematic nature of the correlation between sound and meaning.” 43 In the analysis of meaning, Hatten introduces the concept of *markedness*. This concept is particularly relevant for the study of the day and night in music because it analyses the relationships between pairs of opposites. In musical structures, the integrated oppositions are asymmetrical in proportion, because one term of the opposition is marked and the other one is unmarked. In the analysis of the day-night antinomy in musical works, one of the terms (for instance, the term *day*) will always be dominant (the unmarked one), whereas the other term will be secondary (for example, the term *night*; this will be the marked term). Thus, in a musical composition, if the main subject is the day, it will be marked, and everything that does not represent the day (night, but also all the other notions that could have represented the subject of the work) will be unmarked.

As Hatten’s theory argues, the marked term is secondary and not dominant because this analysis highlights the proportion of the chosen subject against the multitude of subjects that have not been chosen as the main subject of the work. It should be noted that the markedness model is intended to represent the marked element by emphasizing its restricted position compared to other unmarked elements. For example, if we think of the subject of the day in a musical composition, it was chosen and marked by the composer (by the choice he made), but it represents, proportionally, only a small section of the multitude of subjects that could have been chosen. Thus, the multitude of unchosen subjects will always be proportionally dominant relative to the chosen subject, which will be proportionally secondary.

In Grieg’s *Morgenstemning*, the day will be the marked and secondary term, whereas all other subjects that could have been the object of the work (including the night) will be unmarked and dominant:

*Fig. 4. The Concept of Markedness Applied to the Subject of the Day and Night in Musical Works.*

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43 Hatten, “Four Semiotic Approaches to Musical Meaning”, 5.

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When Grieg composed *Morgenstemning*, he thought of it as a narrative piece. When we know the marked subject and the narrative of the piece, we listen and experience the musical works dedicated to the day quite differently than we would perceive them if we did not know that they were intended for a certain topic or program. The works dealing with the subject of the day are meant to demonstrate that music consists of a logical sequence of signs, a narrative centred on a particular marked subject.

When musical signs are correlated within a musical piece, that work becomes a narrative art. In Romanticism, composers related their music to a literary or poetic program, indicated either in the title or notated directly in the score. Liszt’s *Hymne du matin* and Bizet’s *L’Aurore* are also examples of works where the subject of the day is marked. Both Liszt and Bizet indicate through the title that the pieces are to be interpreted and understood in the light of the topics they represent.

The dichotomy of day and night presents the association of two contrasting and complementary realities. This pair of opposites suggests both the force of one and the influence of the other as two values or realities that complement each other and could not exist without each other. From the point of view of Hatten’s markedness, the pair of opposite terms, day and night, are in a relationship of permanent dependence. If the subject of a musical passage is the day, it will be marked, whereas the night will be unmarked (albeit suggested by the simple fact that the day implicitly represents the absence of the night). Thus, when only one of the terms day–night is represented in a musical work, the presence of the unmarked term will be felt precisely due to the antinomy created.

However, many compositions include both the subject of the day and the subject of the night in the same work. For instance, in the program of *Eine Alpensonate*, Strauss first includes the night (in the first section, *Nachtmusik*) and then the day (in the second section, *Sonnenenaufgang*). The day and the night are present in the same composition but are marked in different places. While one subject will always be dominant in one section, the other one will be dominant in another section, movement or passage. We can thus see the importance of markedness in determining the structure of a work.

Hatten’s markedness theory is relevant to the subject of the day and night in music not only because of its implications in the structure of compositions but also for the argumentation of the development of a specific style for each subject. The marking of certain topics, regardless of the area they refer to, gives rise to certain stylistic traits, discursive ideas and harmonic, melodic and formal constructions, which establish themselves and become specific to the subject. Beyond choosing a specific genre, composers spoke in their music about certain periods of the day or night by marking certain content typologies. Thus, they integrated melodic elements, dynamics, agogic elements and character indications, specific harmonic relations, rhythmic notions, specific timbres, orchestration and formal elements, all of which were introduced through specific techniques to represent the day or the night. Any unusual element, with a specific, imitative or programmatic character, is marked by the composer in relation to the subject it reflects.

**Conclusions: From Theoretical Aspects to Practical Analysis**

Based on our analysis of the subject of the day and night in musical semiotics, several aspects are worth emphasizing. Firstly, semiotics is the branch of study concerned with the significance, meaning or sense of music. Its depth derives from the analysis of the relationships between people’s perceptions and the musical moment. These relationships belong more or less to the objective or subjective realm, because the associations people make between music and meaning are not always the same.

To understand the semiotic perspective on day and night in music, we had to observe the trajectory of semiotics starting from its general characteristics and moving on to the actual analytical part. Semiotics is the science concerned with the study of signs, being centred on the notion of the sign that facilitates the possibility of the existence of meaning. However, this paper did not intend to discuss meaning at a general level, but rather the way of manifestation of the meaning of day and night in music. The musical semiotic theory brings to the fore the human mind that resorts to symbols, which in turn trigger emotions. However, music is not an embodiment of emotion, but rather the embodiment of the expression of an idea. Thus, it becomes a symbol, providing a more rational configuration of the variations of experiences. Eero Tarasti has developed one of the most elaborate theories on musical semiotics, namely the theory of the semiotic square. It has become a useful concept in analysing the complexity of interactions between binary polarities, in the dichotomy between day and night.

From a semiotic perspective, day and night stand at the intersection between sound and meaning, and thus at the intersection between signifier and signified. In his turn, Raymond Monelle points out, argues for and emphasizes the existence of *topics* or musical subjects. He divides topics into iconic and indexical subjects, providing a new perspective on these topics within the interpretative framework of the signifier and signified. The sound represents the *signifier*, and the meaning represents the *signified*, and this is the context in which music is built as a system of signs that are to be interpreted correctly. Diurnal motifs are symbols that need to be decoded to understand the image intended by the composer. Thus, the major sixth interval used by Schubert in the song *Morgengruss* was associated with the significance of the dawn’s serenity. Thus, in the representation of the day...
and night, the signs work by metamorphosing signals into symbols, which, once correlated within a musical work, give the song a narrative thread.

We would not have been able to carry out a correct analysis of the day and night in music without a complex semiotic approach. Robert Hatten’s theory has emphasized other important aspects applicable to the day and night in music. He examines the relationships between pairs of opposite terms with the help of the markedness theory. The concept shows how oppositions in musical structures are asymmetrical in proportions: one term is marked and the other one is unmarked. Perhaps the most relevant part of Hatten’s theory is the one related to the action of virtual agents. It consists of attributing various acting roles in music, demonstrating that in different periods of music history, composers designed different scenes involving virtual agents.

Also worth emphasizing is the originality proposed by a semiotic analysis of the day and night. The discussion on the reflection of day and night in music involved moving from the general to the particular. Thus, to apply the semiotic square of Eero Tarasti’s theory to the subject of day and night in music, it was necessary to first go through an analysis of the visual manifestations of light as a general phenomenon (diffusion, circulation, immobilization and concentration of light), then of the manifestation of light in music (light reflecting the materiality of the instruments, light as illumination, light as colour and punctual light), and finally of the reflection of day and night in music (through the characteristics of the instruments, compositional patterns, chord colours, tonalities or textures and highlighted effects). Eero Tarasti’s analysis has therefore provided us with a broad and structured model that we have developed and applied to the day and night in music, in order to classify the forms and ways in which day and night are reflected in a musical context.

The topic theory has enabled us to determine the type of the subjects of day and night (indexical or iconic), namely that they fall into the indexical category, as well as to show their various ramifications and implications, operating as indexes (such as light/darkness, warmth/cool, mystery/clarity, etc.). Based on the musical context chosen, the simple reality of the day and night (the day and the night being the signified) can have a simple or complex signifier. The simple signifier could be, for instance, a significant motif, a specific rhythmic formula or a musical idea. However, the reality of the day and night most often involves a complex signifier. In this case, the day and the night could be associated with different instrumental timbres, special sound constructions, tonal relationships or even formal constructions. Thus, we notice that the nature of the iconic subject is musical only in its meaning, while the signified (day and night) is taken from the external reality surrounding man. The musical content will therefore often be an imitation of the natural elements, having a conventional character.

However, it is quite difficult to practically identify how the day and night are transformed into musical content. The structuring proposed by Mieczysław Tomaszewski contributes to addressing this challenge by cataloguing the musical content into reflections, relics, traces and echoes of a work’s external reality. He divides all musical works into four classes (works where the dominating part is that of the work’s very material, its very sonic substance; works in which form plays the dominant role; works of an expressive character; and programmatic, narrative works). The compositions dealing with the subject of day and night are works that fall into the last two categories presented by Tomaszewski. The day and night can be represented in these works in the form of imitation (imitation of natural phenomena as faithfully as possible), transformation (elements from the external world are represented musically with a significant transformation by the composer), parallelism (one of the most beautiful methods of representation, based on metaphor and keeping a common structure or connection with reality – here we can mention the phases of a day used by Richard Strauss in naming the musical sections of Eine Alpensinfonie) and opposition (highlighting certain characteristics by evoking their antithetical image).

Semiotics is, therefore, a system of stylistic structural analysis carried out systematically in order to observe the role of the sign and its relation to the meaning, significance and message. It studies the way communication and meaning work, as well as the relationships between code and message, sign and discourse. The study of musical semiotics goes beyond the boundaries of cultural or social research and exceeds the scope of music theory, music history or ethnomusicology. Semiology is not a discipline with a closed set of methodologies and subjects, but rather includes a broad set of projects addressing aspects of the musical content in itself and the relationship between the musical content and cultural fields.

A semiotic approach should not claim exclusivity but should draw from historical and theoretical sources. Thus, the results of a semiotic analysis need not be incompatible with the traditional or formal ones, but rather should make an indispensable contribution thereto, providing new insights and extending the limits of musical understanding.

Bibliography


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