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## Mediating 'the One': the paramusical field of connotation of Arvo Pärt's *tintinnabuli* music

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This article delineates the 'paramusical field of connotation' (Tagg 1999) of Arvo Pärt's *tintinnabuli* music in the contemporary culture of Western music and musical mass media. 'Paramusical' (i.e. alongside or concurrent with the music) refers to that which is semiotically related to a particular musical discourse without being structurally intrinsic to that discourse. 'Connotations' are those associations which are shared in common by a group of individuals within a culture.

In order to obtain information about the associations, reactions, evaluations, etc. that *tintinnabuli* music evokes, I have, on the one hand, collected listeners' subjective personal reports on experiencing the sound of *tintinnabuli* music and applied content analysis to their vocabulary. The source of my collection of free reports has been verbal written media: previews, reviews and scholarly analyses of *tintinnabuli* music both as concert music (e.g. p/reviews of concerts and recordings, CD-inlays, concert programmes, academic publications) and as pre-existing music (e.g. of films, dance or theatre performances featuring Pärt's concert compositions) that have been published in print or on the Internet (blogs, forums/message boards, social networking websites).

On the other hand, I have researched *tintinnabuli* compositions as pre-existing film music and discovered that, as if in intersubjective agreement, very many film makers tend to use pre-existing *tintinnabuli* music on similar occasions with a similar purpose and also in a similar manner, regardless of a particular film's actual plot, or genre, or of which particular *tintinnabuli* compositions have been used. Furthermore: within the past decade, Pärt's pre-existing concert compositions have been widely used not only in numerous film soundtracks, but also in numerous dance performances and theatrical soundtracks, not to mention the large number of amateur film clips and slideshows one could find, for example, on YouTube. This observation of "as if"-intersubjective agreement holds for the latter instances of musical multimedia as well.

On the basis of the two approaches described I will show that in the contemporary Western musical (mass media) culture the paramusical perception and reception of *tintinnabuli* music proves to be remarkably consistent and, hence, predictable. In other words, sounding *tintinnabuli* music evokes a specific state of mind, a single 'emotionally polyphonic' (Cohen 2001) 'connotative complex' (Meyer

1956) which serves as an antipode to the tortured complexity of much contemporary art and life, and apparently answers a widespread psychosocial need not only for purity, comfort, calm and reflection, but also for a wider existential or ethical attitude towards issues like humanity, mortality, dignity in this (post-)post-modern, post-religious, ever-globalising material world of disconnectedness and precarious value systems. As it happens, this is fairly consistent with Pärt's own intent with *tintinnabuli* music to communicate the (Neoplatonic) 'One' (in German *das Eine*) outside of which everything has no meaning, or the perfectness (*Vollkommenheit*) that appears in many guises, while everything that is unimportant falls away (see Sandner 1984).

Finally this article focuses on the question of how *tintinnabuli* music manages to evoke such a specific paramusical field of connotation. In this discussion I have distinguished between musical and paramusical factors that contribute to the process of *tintinnabuli*-musical semiosis in the contemporary Western culture of musical mass media. The latter include, for example, the title of a composition, the image of the composer in the mass media, recurrent compositional devices of displaying pre-existing *tintinnabuli* music in the instances of musical multimedia (e.g. film, dance, theatre), etc. In order to disentangle the musical factors contributing to this process, I have adopted Philip Tagg's (2003) notion of 'musical structure' as an audible, identifiable part of a musical continuum that may be referred to or designated in either constructional or receptional terms, and that is at least approximately repeatable and recognisable as having the same or similar function when it is heard by members of the same community of listeners. The general stance beneath this discussion is that musical meaning is not a theoretical construct of semiotically-hermeneutically inclined musicologists, but "a true common practice" (as Lawrence Kramer would say; see also Maimets-Volt 2009: 12). Commonly shared musical meanings do exist within a given culture: "they are formed and altered under particular social, ideological, technological and musical-cultural contingencies" (Tagg, Clarida 2003: 106). As hinted above, this article looks into these contingencies as well.