

Mediating ‚the One‘: the paramusical field of connotation of Arvo Pärt’s tintinnabuli music

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Abstract

To explore the associations and reactions that Pärt’s *tintinnabuli* music is perceived to communicate, this article proceeds from 1) researching the use of *tintinnabuli* compositions in film soundtracks where their purpose seems remarkably consistent, regardless of a particular film’s plot, or genre, or of which particular *tintinnabuli* composition(s) have been used; 2) analysing the vocabulary of listeners’ free reports on experiencing the sound of *tintinnabuli* music, whether as concert compositions (p/reviews of concerts and recordings, CD-inlays, concert programmes) or pre-existing music (p/reviews and scholarly analyses of films, dance or theatre performances featuring Pärt’s concert compositions). I will show that the sound of *tintinnabuli* evokes a specific state of mind, a single emotionally polyphonic connotative complex 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. Finally I discuss the musical and paramusical factors that contribute to this process of *tintinnabuli*-musical semiosis in the contemporary Western culture of musical multimedia.