

Research In context (ADAD5003)

Question 3- How do we reflect on our past through audio and how do we use this to create a better emotional connection through storytelling in musical composition?

Student number: 1901500

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Lecturer: Robert Jones

In this essay, it will cover a wide range of information about the Holocaust, major events and the composers of that time. The focus of the Holocaust has come from the idea of creating a total work of art for the Holocaust Remembrance Day which is taking place during the annual Copper Coast International Film Festival or CCIFF. Additionally, it is important that society studies and learns about this subject, this is so we can learn and reflect on the actions and mistakes that our ancestors made. Reflection can be when “individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation. It may take place in isolation or in association with others” Boud (1985). Through the use of reflection, we can gain a wider understanding as well as a deeper respect for the events of that time by remembering to not forget those who went through this time.

The Holocaust was the anti-Semitic mass genocide of millions of types of people with beliefs different to Adolf Hitler, Führer of the Nazi socialist group. Holocaust, when translated from Hebrew, means “a burnt sacrifice offered whole to God” Britannica (2020). This name was chosen to represent the mass killings in the concentration camps as the many bodies of the dead were piled up and burnt in these horrible places.

As my artwork for this festival is going to be musically driven, this essay will discuss composers and music of that time, furthermore, including the sounds and recordings that could be heard during this dark time to create an emotional connection to those who are listening. Additionally, this investigation will explore popular composers of the time such as Richard Wagner whose music genre, although classical, was significant in this period.

To begin, the Holocaust was an event that was started by socialist party leader Adolf Hitler during the year of 1939 and ended in the year of 1945. This man believed the Jewish religion

did not fit into his idea of an ideal race of German people. Therefore, he set out to exterminate those who did not fit his plan. During this period of time 'Over 6 million Jewish men, women and children were murdered' (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2020), sadly this was not the total amount of lives Adolf Hitler had claimed. Unfortunately, Hitler had also targeted other groups of innocent people who did not fit his plan, people such as Roma gypsies, people with disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah witnesses, even Slavic people such as those from Polish or Russian background.

A lot of these people were sent to places called concentration camps (or labour camps), it is in these places where men, women and children were sent to work or, in the most sorrowing cases, to be executed through the use of gas chambers. It is in these places where the Jewish would be rarely fed, many died through starvation and from diseases throughout the camps due to the spreading of lice and lack of health care. On entry these people were herded, permanently labelled with a tattooed string of numbers to the arm, and then crammed into small sheds (like human sized chicken coups) which is where they would sleep in piled high bunkbeds. Sometimes the Jewish population of these camps were told that, on a rare occasion, they would be rewarded with a shower, however, once entered, the room would be sealed and Zyklon B (a cyanide-based gas) would be poured into the room, killing all those inside. After, these newly dead bodies would be piled into a furnace where they would be burnt and people in the surrounding areas would often see smoke billowing from the chimneys. These people were deemed "unworthy of life" says the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2020) as they did not fit Adolf Hitler's perfect Aryan race vision.

The images shown alongside with the musical element will be moving stills of the concentration/ labour camp known as Auschwitz or Auschwitz-Birkenau. Out of all the camps it is this place where the worst happened. Auschwitz was the largest death camp; it was located in southern Poland (which is the first place that was invaded by the Nazi's military force). As explained previously, the captured prisoners were tattooed upon arrival, those not labelled were sent directly to gas chambers to be executed. They did not care for their lives nor religion as this was one of Adolf Hitler's main goals, he only saw the Jewish people and anyone who was not German to be pests. This is proven when Hitler stated "the Jewish race was only created by God for the purpose of being in a certain percentage a parasite living on the body" (1942), this shows the pure hate and attitude he had towards non-Germans. This is why they were treated no better as rodents in these extermination camps.

The German commander of this camp was named Rudolf Franz Höss. This man "devised increasingly efficient methods of mass gassing and cremation. In 1945 he was made a deputy inspector of all concentration camps" (Britannica, 2020). He was later deemed a war criminal and tried and sentenced in Warsaw where he was later hanged in Auschwitz, the place where he killed millions of innocent civilians as well as captured soldiers and politicians. These prisoners of war and civilians were mainly transported in crammed freight train carriages like farm stock. The camp had train rails directly leading into the camp for prisoner transportation. The first ever transportation into the prison was a carriage of 30 people who were labelled as 'professional criminals', the S.S (Nazi paramilitary) had sent them from a different labour camp outside of Berlin, known as the Sachsenhausen camp.

There were other camps such as Dachau, Chelmno, Belzec or Treblinka. But none could compare to be as large and as full scale as Auschwitz.

In 1945, as military forces approached the camp the S.S. began evacuation of the site, forcing thousands of prisoners to march westward, those who could not or failed to were shot. Towards the end of the first month of that year the ally military saved all remaining prisoners, most of which were injured or suffering from illness.

To understand the events happening around the time of the holocaust and how it affected the people of this era, one must also research and gain knowledge of the struggle endured by the soldiers fighting to release these captured civilians from the occupying German's grip. To learn wisdom from this time is necessary and can be achieved by three methods "First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest." Hinnett (2002). This is important, as to learn and imitate this bravery and struggle would benefit modern society, as we would understand and appreciate the difficulties these soldiers endured to free the innocent.

After the invasion of Poland, in 1939, the ally forces consisting of the United Kingdom, France and Poland had a gathering of the largest military resources, size and manpower. However, ally forces only had slightly more firepower than in World War I, Adolf Hitler's military forces firepower, training, discipline and motivation was far more efficient despite its size, this gave Hitler the upper hand. Furthermore, the German air force, also known as Luftwaffe, was one of the most brilliant air forces of the time, the design of the planes was far superior to the ally's designs despite the ally forces having far more plane numbers. This was due to having a large range of varying planes many of which were obsolete and

outdated, Spitfire fighter planes did not enter the air until 1940 by which time the Germans had a lead on the war.

Through reflection, the Germans learnt from their mistakes in World War I, however, the British believed their victory in the first world war proved their methods to be successful, this led to a gradual time period where the allies had to slowly build up new technologies and make better innovations than the Germans. If the British had focused on innovation, they would have gathered resources far quicker and the war may not have been so long. It is through this important lesson that we learn from our ancestor's mistakes.

As the end product of this essay is a total work of multimedia, the goal is to evoke an emotional connection to the people and events of this time through mainly audio and musical score with moving image, as accompaniment. One must also conduct deep research into the sounds and musical influences of that era and its association with environment. Through this, the composer can create an inspired composition for this era, can learn to recreate these masterpieces in order to truly understand and reflect on their greatness. The experience of research into the music from this era aids in learning as "Experience is valuable in helping us to reflect on how we learn - particularly on how, as learners, we experience the interplay between cognition and metacognition. This is crucially important in shaping the effectiveness of learning" Webb (2006), it is only through experiencing past works that we can truly understand and appreciate them.

To begin this journey through these sounds, firstly one must research into composers of this time. One composer of this period, that stands out as being significant, is Richard Wagner, world known classical composer, theater director, and anti-Semitic idealist, whose music and operas had captured the attention and admiration of Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler. The Führer believed his inspiration came from Richard Wagner's music and that it showed great importance in the vision of future Germany. Wagner's founded festival, Bayreuth Festival, was used as a way of promoting Nazi propaganda and additionally Wagner's music would feature at most Nazi party events. Hitler was truly inspired by this man; this is proven when he claimed in Mein Kampf:

"The great protagonists are those who fight for their ideas and ideals despite the fact that they receive no recognition at the hands of their contemporaries. They are the men whose memories will be enshrined in the hearts of the future generations... Their lives and their work are then studied with touching and grateful admiration. Especially in dark days of distress, such men have the power of healing broken hearts and elevating the despairing spirit of a people. To this group belong not only the genuinely great statesmen but all the great reformers as well. Beside Frederick the Great we have such men as Martin Luther and Richard Wagner".

(Hitler, 1925)

Although Richard Wagner was a passionate racist, his music continues to inspire generation after generation. This proves this man to be an influential historical figure and will hold a permanent place among the great composers of music and the arts.

To analyse Richard Wagner's music, the composer's creative practice was built around his concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art), meaning that all factors involved in his writing, such as opera and orchestral must work together in tandem to create a bigger end product. His music was known for their very complex and textural movements, orchestral arrangement and harmonies as well as his clever use of leitmotifs, a musical phrase that is associated with certain characters, places themes or emotions, most commonly used in film and television scoring.

This idea of using a musical phrase to bring emotion to the listener is something that Richard Wagner did very well, an idea to be explored in the total work of art for this assignment. Furthermore, Wagner used dynamics and articulation in his musical compositions to tell a story through the use of orchestration and accompaniment. For example, if Wagner wanted to add a build-up of intensity to result in a sudden impact, used to great shock and drama to a musical piece, he would use the dynamics of 'crescendo' in the score which means, in musical terms, that something is gradually getting louder. Sad tones may be portrayed in music by the use of the minor key which is created by flattening the third note of a major scale by one semi tone. This minor tone may also be accompanied by the dynamic marking 'p' meaning pianissimo, this tells the player to play softly. Unlike 'forte' which means to play loud, this is use in moments of intensity in a musical score. Different Articulation can also portray the scene of a story through audio. The articulation known as 'Glissando', meaning to glide to the next note, which can provide a musical piece with an elegance and fluidity. However, 'staccato' and 'pizzicato' give a short stabbing sound which could give the impression of danger or moments of intensity from the overwhelming sense of space between notes, not knowing where the score will head next. These various

musical terminologies are very important and are fundamental in the art of storytelling through music.

Additionally, in order to greater benefit the idea of creating an emotional connection through audio would be to explore the actual audio from that time, such as military machinery like tanks or airplanes, radio broadcasts, freight trains, air raid sirens and research into a darker path such as crying or fearful screaming, all of which can give the listener an emotional response.

Someone who successfully followed this idea of creating music from sounds during the Holocaust is the musical artist called Steve Reich. His work on the song *Different Trains* (1988) captivates and engages the listener and tells a story about the time during the war through each instrument, a documentary through music. Steve Reich was very interested in the idea of sampling onto keyboard, he used phrases of holocaust survivors that he then looped, and through the musical pitch of their voice would then create a musical score for string quartet that then followed that pitch. Through the combination of this and the use of samples of trains from that era, Reich creates a fast-paced vision of the intensity of this time during the war.

One could also focus on recreating and reflecting on Jewish music. Jewish music will often follow, what is sometimes called, the Jewish scale, despite it featuring in lots of other musical cultures such as Arabic, Indian-classical and Spanish etc. The Jewish Scale also has other naming conventions including “[t]he Yiddish name for it is Freygish, the Hebrew name is Ahava Rabbah, and Western music theory labels include Phrygian Dominant” Riskind

(2018), this scale gives a middle eastern feel which is fitting seeing as though the birthplace of Judaism is Israel which is situated next to Egypt off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

To conclude, this essay has explored many various routes to take in this idea of a total work of art. The research from this essay has shown that to convey emotion through sound one must also take into account a musical theory approach and must make proper use of dynamics and articulation in order to express the emotion that you wish to project onto the listener. In addition, through this use of sounds from that period of time it provides the listener with a deeper connection to those events, knowing that these are the sounds heard by those in remembrance. The use of a multi-visual auditory experience will develop the understanding and awareness for those with a broad range of contextual knowledge. It is through this we can truly appreciate those who fought and gave their lives protecting the innocent and our future.

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