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Mystery Motives as a Phenomenon of Transformation in the Opera "Mathis der Maler" by Paul Hindemith

Anna A. Predolyak

Krasnodar State Institute of Culture,
Krasnodar, Russian Federation,
aapkras@mail.ru✉, *https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7073-2002*

Abstract. The high mission of art has always stood in opposition to the elemental force of historical processes. The creative personality of Paul Hindemith was shaped during that period of European social development that brought humanity world wars, revolutionary explosions and unprecedented economic upheavals, along with great hopes and disappointments. In this context, Hindemith's opera "Mathis der Maler" assumes emblematic significance, representing a kind of manifesto against fascism and a statement on the place of the artist-demiurge in a world of catastrophe. The present article sets out to identify the opera's principal mystery motifs through the lens of the idea of transformation The article addresses the timeless nature of artistic creation through an examination of the work's synthetic field. The considered categorical apparatus includes such concepts as mystery, mysteriality, ritual, and the presence of mystery motifs. The typology of plots, the sequence of events and the course of action characteristic of the mystery genre are considered in relation to the genre's connection with ritual. The composition and musical dramaturgy of the work are analysed according to the stated hypothesis. The principal mystery motifs are examined in detail: spiritual death as the attainment of creative freedom, Mathis's path of initiation in the name of Art, temptation, catharsis, the discovery of the artist's true mission, renunciation of the real world and transformation. While the composer designated the work as an opera, it can also be interpreted as a drama of ideas or a modern mystery play. Viewed in this light, historical events are refracted through the composer's artistic interpretation and invested with a field of meaning arising from their simultaneity. The opera's intonational layer is identified as comprising traditional operatic music, chorale-type melodic writing and diatonic folk song within the context of mysterial space, alongside a broader generic palette that includes lament, village-fiddle playing, old folk song and march. The work's timeless character is shown to derive from its extension of the historical narrative of the Peasants' War of 1525 into the realities of the 1930s.

***Keywords*:** Paul Hindemith, "Mathis der Maler" opera, mystery, mystery motif, ritual, catharsis, composition, dramaturgy

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Мистериальные мотивы как феномен преображения в опере «Художник Матис» Пауля Хиндемита

Анна Анатольевна Предоляк

Краснодарский государственный институт культуры,
г. Краснодар, Российская Федерация,
aapkras@mail.ru✉, *https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7073-2002*

Аннотация. Высокая миссия искусства всегда противопоставлена стихии исторических процессов. Творческая личность Пауля Хиндемита была сформирована тем периодом европейского развития общества, который принёс человечеству мировые войны, революционные взрывы, небывалые экономические потрясения, великие надежды и разочарования. Опера «Художник Матис» носит знаковый характер в названном контексте — это своеобразный манифест против фашизма, определение места творца-демиурга в мире катастроф. Цель статьи — вывить основные мистериальные мотивы в аспекте идеи преображения. Исследуется синтетическое поле сочинения, затрагивается вневременная природа творчества. Рассмотрен категориальный аппарат, который включает такие понятия, как мистерия, мистериальность, ритуал, мистериальный мотив. Типология сюжетов, событийный ряд, ход действия в жанре мистерии включены в русло рассуждений о её соотношении с ритуалом. Анализируются композиция, музыкальная драматургия произведения согласно высказанной гипотезе. Детализируются мистериальные мотивы: духовная смерть как обретение творческой свободы, путь инициации Матиса во имя Искусства, искушение, катарсис, обретение истинной миссии художника, отречение от мира реального, преображение. Композитор обозначил сочинение оперой, но его можно трактовать как драму идей, как мистериальное действо. В таком аспекте исторические события принимают авторскую художественную интерпретацию и наполнены смысловым полем их симультанного действия. Выявлен интонационный пласт оперы: традиционная оперная музыка, мелодика хорального типа, народная песня диатонического склада в контексте мистериального пространства и жанровая палитра оперной партитуры, в которую входят причет, наигрыш деревенской скрипки, старинная народная песня, марш. Вневременной характер произведения совмещает хроники времён Крестьянской войны 1525 года, расширяя их до исторических реалий 1930-х годов.

Ключевые слова: Пауль Хиндемит, опера «Художник Матис», мистерия, мистериальный мотив, ритуал, катарсис, композиция, драматургия

Introduction

“There are two things to strive for: professionally honest music and a clear conscience. I have already taken care of both.” [1, p. 139] In thus describing his own creative work, Paul Hindemith expressed his aspiration to make music intelligible and accessible to all. At the same time, the composer, through his works, addressed one of the main questions: the significance of the artist, musician and scholar in the context of the time. The permeation of his operatic canvases with a sacred atmosphere creates the presence of a “spirit of mysteriality.”

In responding to the spiritual and historical events of the time, expressing the human spirit, as well as partially predicting the further development of society, art fulfils a lofty mission. Hindemith’s musical compositions “spoke” about this even in those times “when the roar of battles drowned out the sound of the strings.”

[Ibid., p. 4] As revealed in the fundamental work of Russian musicologists Tamara Levaya and Oksana Leontyeva, which is simply entitled *Paul Hindemith*, the composer's aesthetic views were formed during that period of European history which brought humanity world wars, revolutionary explosions, unprecedented economic upheavals, great hopes and crushing disappointments. [1]

Accordingly, the historical context of the 1930s demanded from Hindemith not only comprehensiveness in the field of musical language, the search for his own style, as well as the desire to synthesise polemical experiments and established dramatic laws, but also courage, in which context mystery becomes a special form of political statement in the opera *Mathis der Maler* ("Matthias the Painter"). On the one hand, it presents the creative world with a unique method of "encrypted message," while on the other, it fills the form of the composition with the contemporary sound of the times. This ambivalence allows us to go beyond the spatial representations of operatic narrative to create a temporal "loop" from the 20th century to the 15th and back, which erases the boundaries of eras and emphasises the timeless nature of the creative act.

It is worth noting that Hindemith's operas of the 1930s–1950s have been studied quite extensively in Russian musicology. Elena Vorobyova notes in her dissertation that the pattern of their comprehension occurred in a "retrospective projection," [2, p. 3] i.e., from late works to early ones. It is in this context that the series of experiments based on the composer's desire to find an individual operatic model are commonly interpreted.

The opera *Cardillac* (1926, 1952) marks the beginning of an extensive integration of different genres and concepts in which an Expressionist tragic satire is combined with elements of the mystical thriller and the Romantic tragedy of fate. This same composition precedes two of Hindemith's central works: the operas *Mathis der Maler* (1935) and *Die Harmonie der Welt* ("The Harmony of the World", 1957). They represent a complex multi-genre synthesis of historical folk-musical drama and romantic religious-philosophical tragedy, with features of psychological symbolist drama and drama of ideas. In these works, the composer was able to reflect the atmosphere of the historical time, the depth of penetration into the creative process of both the great artist of the Reformation era, Matthias Grünewald, and the brilliant scientist, astronomer, and philosopher Johannes Kepler. The aforementioned monograph also examines the genesis of these works, their historical context and the composer's artistic explorations. [1]

In these operas, the crucial questions facing the intelligentsia of the 20th century are portrayed: what should an artist (composer, poet, scientist) do in times of turmoil and great religious upheavals, wars, revolutions and totalitarian reprisals? Continue to create, even if one's art does not find a response during this period? Should one get involved in political and social conflicts or sympathise with them by taking a certain position? Hindemith resolves the question through the mystery of artistic creation, which the principal characters come to master, while their creative legacy is incorporated into the dramaturgy of both monumental works. The central conflict—between the artist, his mission and society—remains unresolved, leaving the issue open to an endless range of debates coloured by mysterial overtones. Anastasia Pyzhyanova's article approaches this problem through a study of the *Künstleroper* genre. "The romantic myth of the rejected and lonely artist persists in the 20th century," the researcher notes; "moreover, the 'opera about the artist' becomes a way of reflecting on creativity, the status of art, its existence and perception." [3, p. 15] Along the way, "socio-political motives are emphasised and questions are raised about the nature of talent and genius." [Ibid., p. 20]

Terminological dichotomies—for example, myth and history, art and freedom in the

field of musical science—are problems of an eternal nature. The category of mystery is fully integrated into this series. Due to the multi-genre character of *Mathis der Maler*, its mystery motifs should not be interpreted as expressing the composer's personal religious conviction; rather, they function as a semiotic instrument for the creation of an encoded model of spiritual resistance to the historical climate of 1930s Germany. The conflict between the creator-artist and the totalitarian power thus acquires a sacred character, which is associated with silence, suffering and inner transformation during the period of catastrophe.

Within this line of reasoning, the conceptual framework can be structured as follows: mysteriality—space and time—the artistic interpretation of historical events. By drawing on the categories of sign, symbol, ritual and catharsis, together with their mysterious nature, the mystery motifs in the operatic narrative of *Mathis der Maler* can be interpreted as constituting the semantic structure through which the operatic narrative generates meaning. In the next section, we will consider the definitions of the concepts of mystery and mysteriality.

Mystery and Mysteriality

The "genetic code" of German musical theatre has always been distinguished by its conceptual equipment, which has led to genre diversity and multi-genre synthesis. However, we need not go into further detail, since this aspect has been deliberately excluded from the article's analytical scope. Mystery motifs in Hindemith's operatic works are closely connected with the problem of the development of the mystery genre.

In Mathis der Maler, mystery can be understood both as a phenomenon and as a stage genre. The second definition is fully consistent with the context of the present work. "From Latin *mysterium*, via Greek μυστήριον—'secret,' 'sacrament'—a musical and dramatic genre of the Middle Ages: plays on biblical subjects," [4, p. 45] the typology of which is divided into several large cycles; as a rule, they are associated with biblical and gospel texts. Let us name the most significant ones: cosmogonic, the passion of Christ, the lives of the saints, eschatological, mythological, etc.

The course of the mystery play manifests itself through several positions: *simultaneity* (multiplicity of places and times of action); *multi-tieredness* of the mystery space (recreation of the model of the Christian world with oppositions "hell—earthly world—paradise," "higher"—"lower," etc.); *polychronicity*, where each episode, each tier with "its" time—scenic, artistic (suffering of the characters)—is correlated with the perceptual (experience of the event by the audience). This issue was previously discussed in the monograph [5] and articles published by the present author. [6; 7]

The model of the intertemporal tandem "composer–performer" was proposed by Ekaterina Prikhodovskaya and Anna Okisheva. The authors identify the specificity of perceptual consciousness and its dual nature: "For the perceiving consciousness, the concept of 'author' initially possesses duality, which presupposes both the presence of an original initiative and the presence of an initiative that connects the work with the perception of the listener. It turns out that a work always has both a timeless element (a stable fixation of the text) and an element of the present tense (sound embodiment, performance)." [8, p. 205] The dual nature of "composer–performer" is unthinkable without including a third element: the listener. All these components operate with expressive means—musical, scenic, psychological, semantic.

The sequence of events in a mystery play is almost always linear and connected to the course of the action. Let us present its main stages in a Table 1.

As can be seen from the table above, the action of the mystery is directed towards the

Table 1. Main stages of the series of events in a mystery play

Exposition of main characters and active forces	Conflict of the cosmic order Divine—Infernal Dichotomy
Initiation of the conflict	Creation of a situation that will lead to the Fall
Development of the action	Series of episodes leading to the central axis of the mystery—the ritual
Culmination of the mystery	Ritual action
Catharsis	Enlightenment, transfiguration
Conclusion	Attainment to a new reality or a new meaning of Being

ritual. Anna Porfiryeva notes that "the fusion of myth and tragedy on the basis of sacred ritual" was supposed to "lead to the birth of a new mystery—a means of transubstantiation of each human personality and the entire human community as a whole. Therefore, the immediate goal of the theatre is preparation for the mysterial revelation through the symbolisation and ritualisation of theatrical action." [9, p. 41]

The category of ritual occupies a central position in the mystery genre. In considering the relationship between the two, it is important to recognise that ritual forms the central axis of the dramatic action, which is itself a complex phenomenon. The ritual ceremony captures the process of translating supersensible reality into sensory reality, which leads to catharsis or renewal.

The question of how ecclesiastical and theatrical ritual interact within the mystery genre remains open and gives rise to numerous points of debate. It is precisely the presence of ritual within the theatrical performance that makes it possible to regard the dramatic action as having taken place. However, it is the type of plot that ultimately determines the nature of their relationship. In doing so, ritual compresses the structure of the cosmic order, any number of spaces and times, into a single point, neutralising the most complex level of conflict and creating a spatiotemporal vacuum in which a "new life" is born or the existing universe is renewed.

Mysteriality describes the quality of a musical text that is endowed with the lexemes of the genre. In *Mathis der Maler*, these qualities are realised through sacrifice, rituality, passionarity, psychological depth and miraculous transformation. When refracted through the prism of this category, the composer's aesthetic views are transformed into an "author's manifesto," in which it is precisely mysteriality that serves as a defence of creative freedom.

Hindemith also focused his attention on the symbolic and pictorial paintings of Mathis Grünewald. They determine the features of the dramatic solution of the work, forming its space-time continuum, in which the past, present and future are "compressed" at one point. The entire musical-poetic fabric, together with the work's imagery and scenic conception, grows out of the "pictorial elements" of the Northern Renaissance artist. Let us list the titles of his paintings that formed the framework of Hindemith's opera:

– "Concert of Angels" (orchestral introduction to the opera, Scene 1).

– "The Temptation of St Anthony" (Scene 6).

– "The Meeting of St. Paul and St. Anthony" (Scene 6).

– "The Entombment" (Scene 7).

These paintings, which are aligned with particular operatic scenes, become

progressively integrated into its dramaturgy as the work unfolds. After opening the artistic field of the work, they then reveal themselves at the point of the golden section and in the resolution of the conflict. The emotional tension of the main characters is correlated with external events, which influences their decision-making. The mystery component in the field of drama is manifested through the categories of sacrifice, death, catharsis and miraculous rebirth to a new life. The altar acts as material proof that art is capable of redeeming the horror of reality. Thus, death is symbolically overcome through the light of creativity. Mathis Grünewald creates his masterpiece; Hindemith, in turn, creates works that become messages to all humanity.

The composition of the opera is concentric (Table 2). At the centre is the fourth scene, the opera's most dramatic and realistic episode, depicting the battle, the rebel peasants' abuse of the Countess, the image of the Virgin and Mathis's paintings, Schwalb's death and Mathis's flight. Flanking it are two psychological confrontations: between Mathis and Ursula against the backdrop of the burning of heretical books, and between Ursula and Albrecht, who refuses to accept Ursula's sacrifice for the sake of peace.

As can be seen from Table 2, the categories of sacrifice, choice, freedom and catharsis shape the opera's compositional and dramaturgical process.

From the very first scene, the conflict is framed as a confrontation between two worlds: the real and the creative. The opera's overarching idea is realised through two conflicts: an external one—the struggle between Protestants and Catholics—and an internal, psychological one—Mathis's conflict with himself, which leads to the protagonist's change and transformation.

This overarching idea is related to creative choice and freedom of expression. The image of the main character is revealed through the problem of the artist and society. In the context of emerging fascism, it appeared as a stimulus to action and a desire to remain true to the cultural traditions of Germany. The protagonist, like the composer himself, is held hostage by historical processes, becoming a "hermit" estranged from his own time. As Siglind Bruhn observes, "there is a spiritual affinity not only between St Anthony and his painter, Grünewald, but to an even greater degree between Hindemith and his operatic protagonist, Mathis." [10, p. 15] Mystery motifs, which are derivatives of the ideological concept of the opera, form the dramatic framework of the work.

Table 2. Compositional structure of the opera

Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4	Scene 5	Scene 6	Scene 7
Conflict between two worlds: the real and the creative	Religious conflict between Catholics and Lutherans	Sacrifice Ursula	First climax The struggle between Catholics and Protestants	Albrecht's Sacrifice	Second climax Mathis' spiritual battle with himself	Discovering faith
The idea of choice: art or struggle	Choosing to fight	Book-burning scene	Battle Two worlds: material and spiritual	Repudiation of Ursula's sacrifice	Choosing in favour of art	Departure into eternity

Mystery Motifs as a Phenomenon of Transformation

The main mystery motif consists in the idea of the spiritual transformation of the protagonist. His path is rigorously structured according to the laws of initiation: from work on the Altarpiece in the monastery, through the chaos of the peasant uprising, suffering and the ritual of temptation, to a renewed discovery of self. The musical dramaturgy of the opera gradually reveals this process. Let us outline the main mystery motifs of the opera.
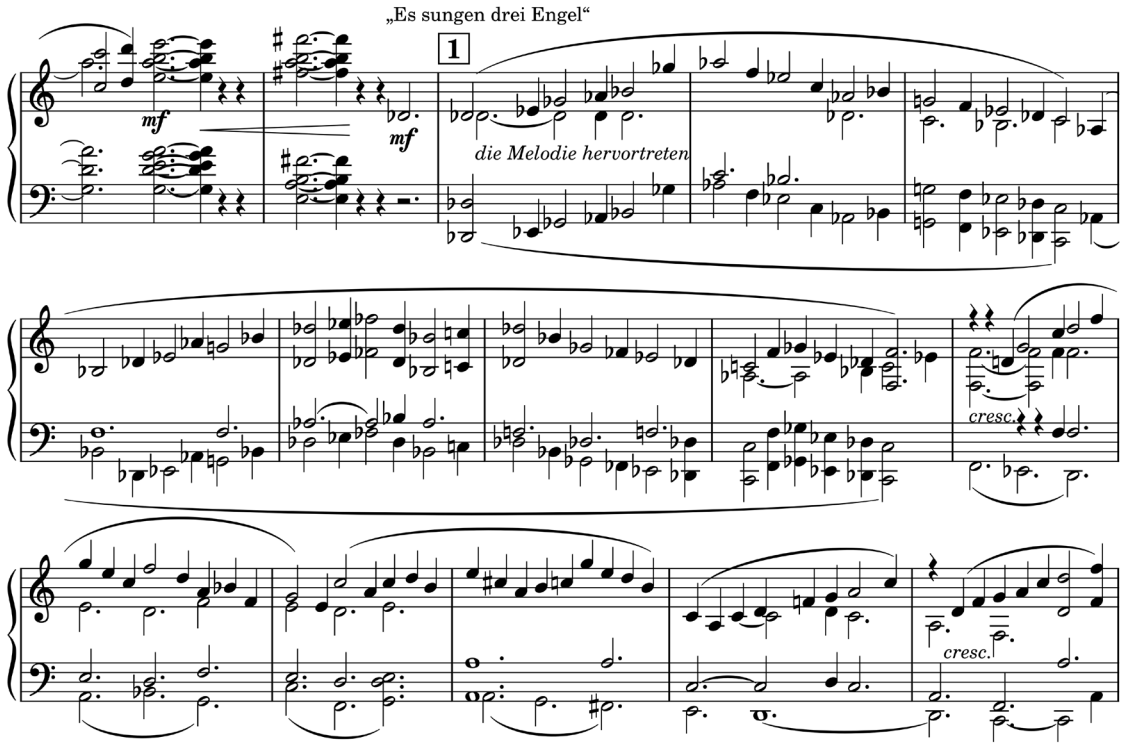
First Motif: Concert of Angels. The opera's orchestral introduction immediately immerses the audience in the space of art that takes the form of a religious service. The composer introduces the main leitmotif—the theme of the 16th century folk song *Es sungen drei Engel*. The applied principle of contrasting polyphony recreates an atmosphere of purity. The reliance on a series of consonant intervals gives the theme a transparent feel (Example No. 1).

The entire musical fabric of the opera is permeated with its intonations. For example, it appears in the scene of "The Temptation of Saint Anthony," which is distorted by "diabolical" chromatic passages and "torn" rhythmic chains. Then it reappears in its original form, symbolising the victory of the freedom of the "spirit" of creativity over the chaos of catastrophe. This symbol represents the divine nature of art. As early as the nineteenth century, Romantic aesthetics had already extended the idea of creating a temple in which the artist-demiurge could transmit transcendent messages to humanity and thus translate a super-reality into the realm of reality.

Second Motif: Transfiguration. The embodiment of this motif in Scene 6 can be divided into two episodes. The first is "The Temptation of St Anthony"; the second, "The Meeting of St Paul and St Anthony in the Desert." According to the scene's allegorical logic, Anthony corresponds to Mathis; Paul to Archbishop Albrecht.

Example No. 1

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler*.
Overture (vocal score), mm. 7–21



In the scene of the temptation of Saint Anthony, the composer "directly contrasts the chromatic, non-modal music of the 'infernal' and the diatonic, natural-modal music of the 'divine' (*Lauda Sion salvatorem* melody)" [1, p. 179] (Examples Nos. 2 and 3).

The grinding atonal force of vice and passion gives way to luminous diatonic writing of a Gregorian character.

This episode is preceded by a scene in which Mathis and Regina, driven by fear, run deep into the forest. Here the *Es sungen drei Engel* theme appears again. However, this time it forms the basis of the duet between Mathis and Regina (Example No. 4).

This is followed by Mathis's dream, in which the temptation itself is concentrated. Mathis lies on the ground, having taken the form of Saint Anthony. He is overcome by various images:

– the image of Countess Helfenstein as a symbol of wealth and luxury;

– the image of Ursula, appearing in several guises: in beggar's rags, asking him for alms, and in the form of a harlot, tempting him with the passion of love;

– the image of an angry crowd pursuing Ursula the Martyr;

– the image of the scientist Capito, who tempts Mathis with science.

The scene then moves on to the plane of temptation of Saint Anthony himself. This is directly comparable to the events depicted in the famous painting of the Isenheim Altarpiece. These are accompanied by demons, fantastic monsters, winged rhinoceroses, huge birds, insects. Such an external allegory reveals the very essence of the search for truth, the revelation of secrets, and the acquisition of the true meaning of Being. Finally, the choir of demons sings to Anthony: "Your worst enemy is within you. We torment you with images of your own paintings. You scream, but your scream is not heard. Cease resisting. 'Hell will swallow you up.'"[1] Here we hear the words of Saint Anthony: "*Ubi eras, Jhesu bone... guare non affuisti ut sanares vulnera mea.*"[2] These are similar to the words of Christ addressed to God the Father: "Lord, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46); the spirits disappear (Example No. 5).

The next scene portrays the other side of the Altar painting. St Anthony in the desert with St Paul. Here there is a perfect unity between man, animals and the Earth. It is imbued with peace and soft light. Paul speaks to Anthony the cherished words that had long lived secretly in the consciousness of Anthony-Mathis himself: "Go and write. Your creations are granted immortality."[3] The trials have been passed; the temptations have been overcome. Catharsis conveys the effect of the protagonist's aesthetic experience, the purification of his soul and the acquisition of a new meaning of Being. The scene ends in praise of God, with the chorus singing "*Alleluia*" (Example No. 6).
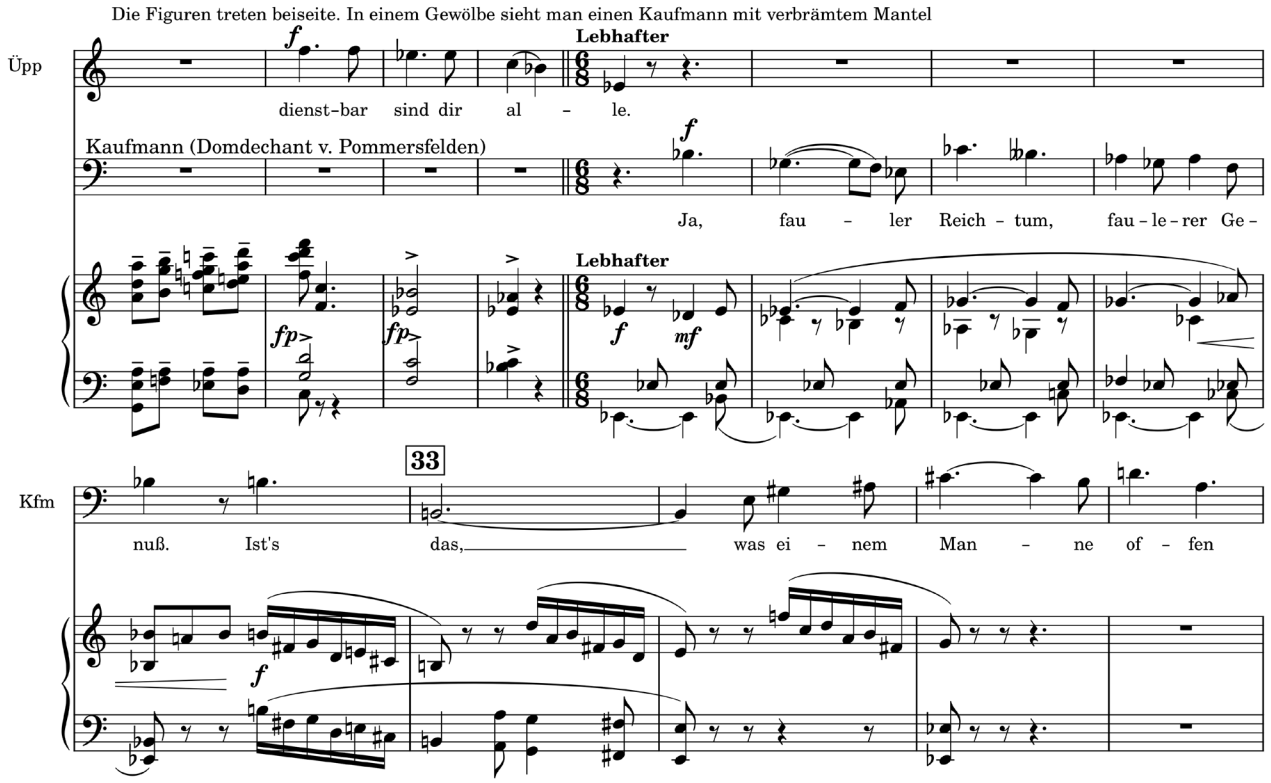
The vertical projection of spatiotemporal relations supports an interpretation of the protagonist's miraculous transformation as a cathartic renunciation of the world in favour of attaining inner unity with himself.

Third Motif: Spiritual death as the attainment of creative freedom. This motif is concentrated in the seventh scene. Death has freed Regina and Schwalb from sin. Their sacrifices once again highlight the question of the meaning of Being. Is such a struggle for the illusion of freedom necessary? The spiritual death of the artist Mathis, his emptiness after the shocks he had experienced, deprives him of the need to create. Having

[1] Hindemith P. *Mathis der Maler*. Opera. Vocal score. Paris, New York, 1954. P. 228.
[2] Ibid., pp. 239, 247–248.
[3] Ibid., p. 261.
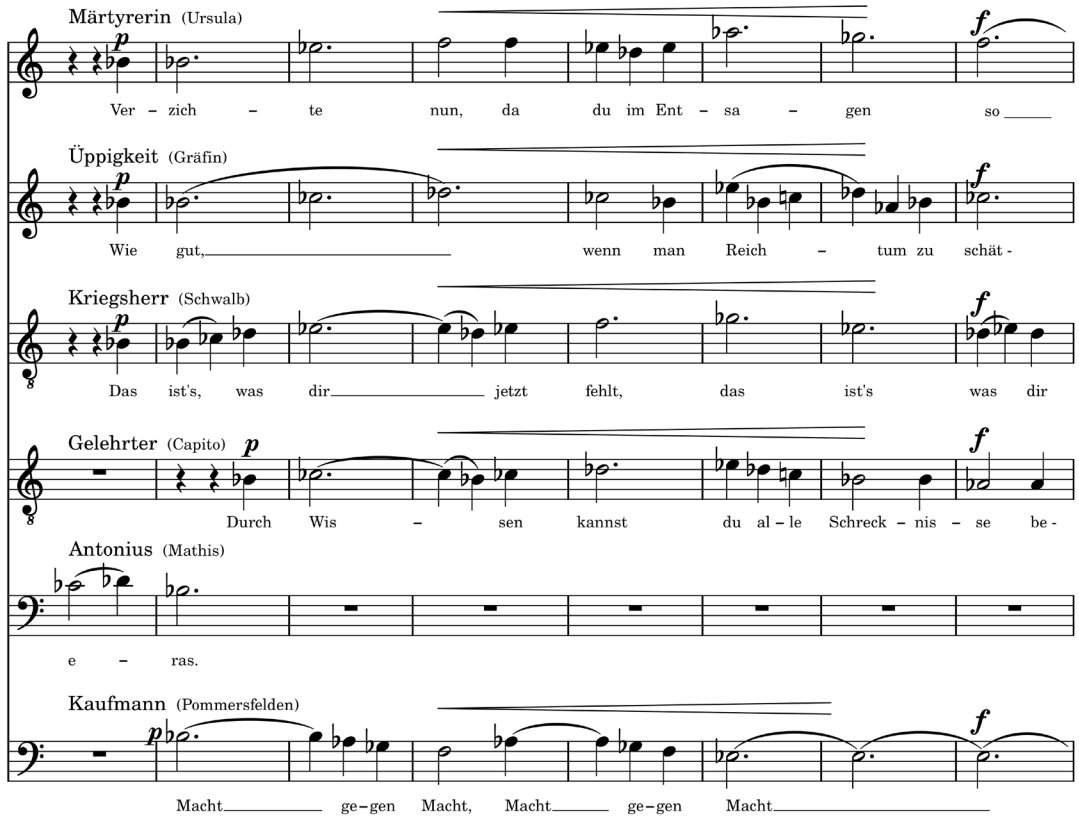
Example No. 2

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler*. Scene 6 (vocal score).
"Infernal forces" theme, mm. 509–516



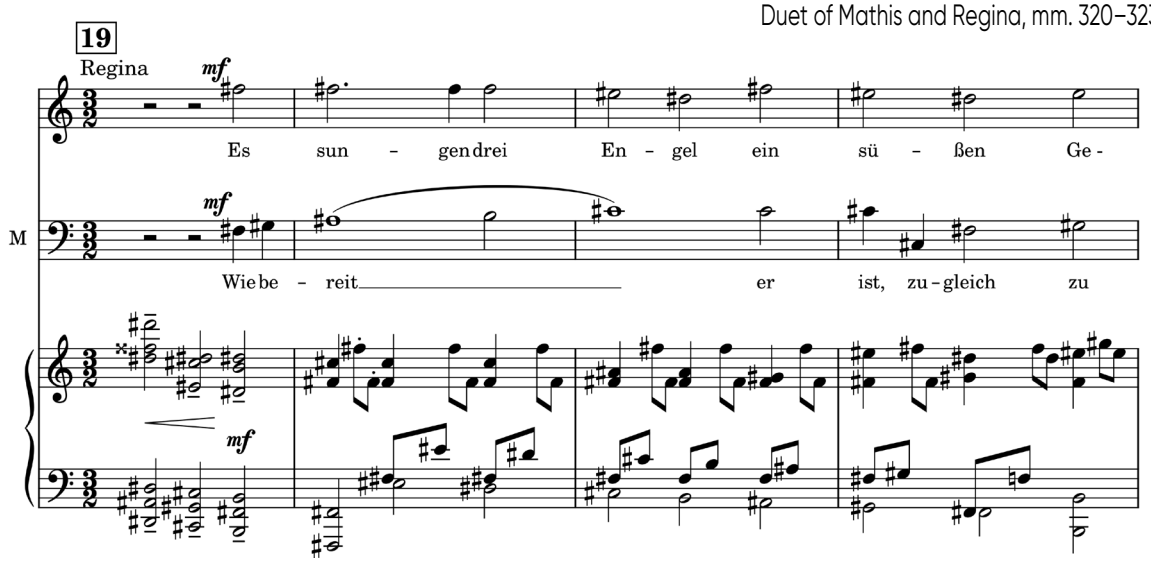
Example No. 3

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler*. Scene 6 (vocal score).
"*Lauda Sion salvatorem*" theme, mm. 961–968



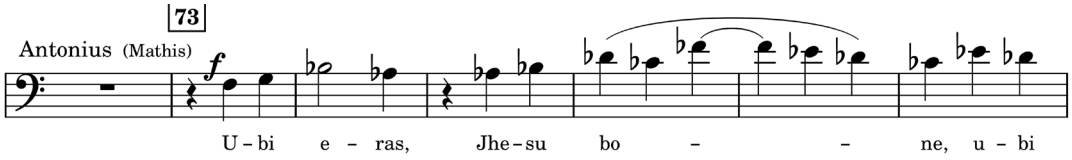
Example No. 4

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler.* Scene 6 (vocal score).
Duet of Mathis and Regina, mm. 320–323



Example No. 5

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler.* Scene 6 (vocal score).
Scene of the Temptation of Saint Anthony, mm. 954–960



expressed his horror and fear in his painting, he decides to leave the monastery. The scene is realised in quiet, lyrical tones. It comprises three principal episodes: Regina's death, "The Entombment," and Mathis's farewell. The artist has fulfilled his mission and attained freedom; however, the vector of that freedom leads towards the disintegration of society, chaos and timelessness. This ending does not resolve the problem posed by the opera. The open ending and the transfer of the action from the real world to the unreal emphasises the inability to control one's own passions and fears. Only death can stop all this. It "cleanses from sins" and becomes a transition to a new life.

Fourth Motif. Mathis's path of initiation in the name of Art. This motif is consistently revealed throughout the opera. We may identify three principal stages: (1) Renunciation, realised through the dramaturgical line of Mathis's rejection of his love for Ursula; (2) Solitude, or voluntary renunciation of the material world; (3) Transformation, associated with the sequence of events in the opera: departure from the monastery, the events of the Peasants' War, temptation, catharsis and the discovery of his true mission as an artist. All this once again emphasises the opera's overarching idea: only art is capable of recreating and resolving the eternal questions of Being; any political regime is temporary.

In this context, the first scene of the opera attracts attention. It contains three intonation spheres that complement the main mysterial series.
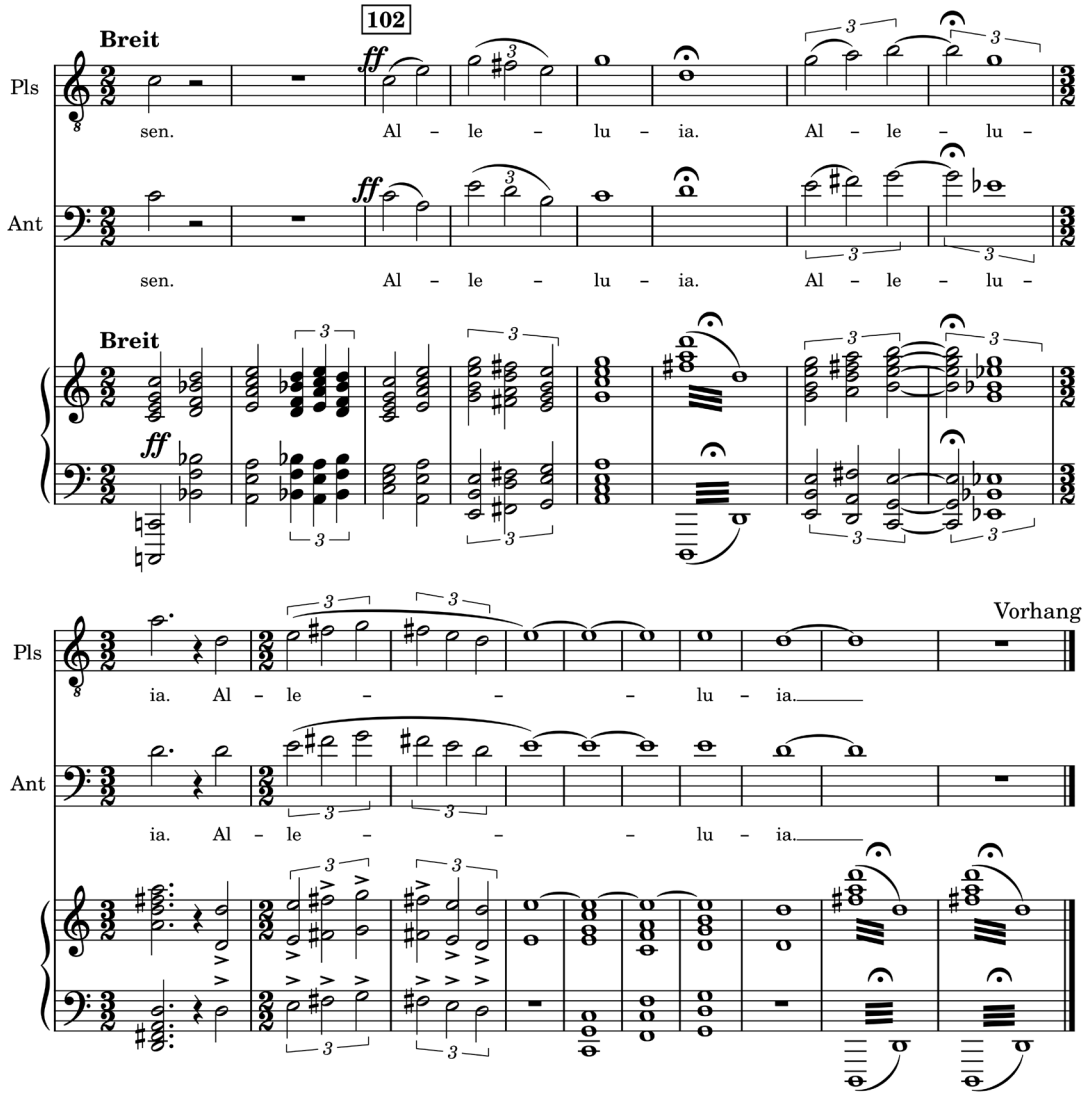
1) Traditional operatic music, centred on Mathis's part—more precisely, on his monologue (Example No. 7).

2) A chorale-type church-music layer, concentrated in the monks' hymn "*Rector potens, verax Deus.*" (Example No. 8)

3) A primitive folk song of diatonic structure, refracted through the traditions of German *Lied* (Example No. 9).
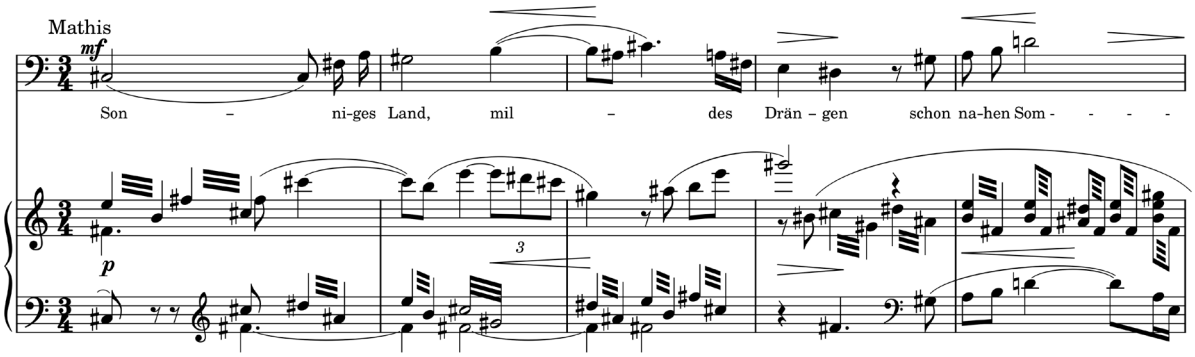
Example No. 6

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler.*
Scene 6 (vocal score). *"Alleluia"*, mm. 1256–1273
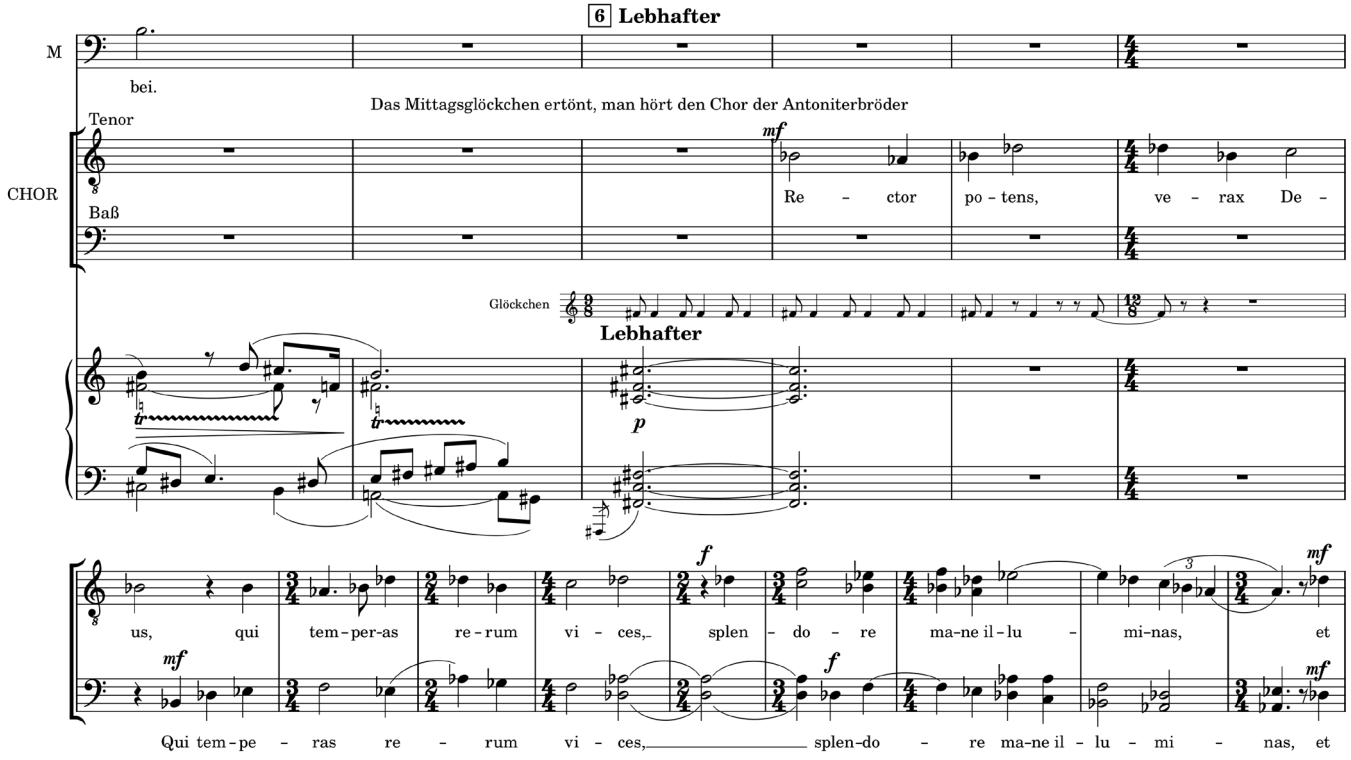


Example No. 7

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler.*
Scene 1 (vocal score). Mathis' monologue, mm. 6–10
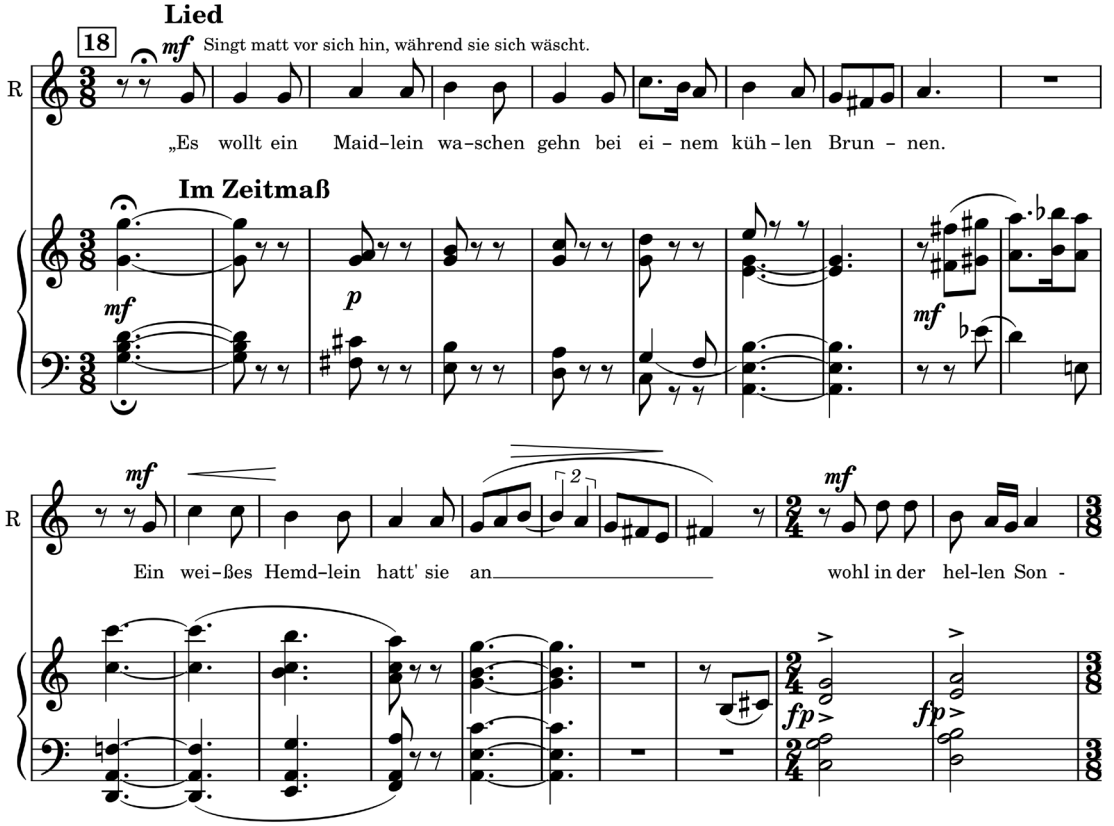


Example No. 8

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler.*
Scene 1 (vocal score). Monks' hymn, mm. 69–81



Example No. 9

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler.*
Scene 1 (vocal score). Lied, mm. 313–332



These correspond to the two main spheres of the mysteriality space: the ecclesiastical-liturgical and the folk-everyday.

The genre component of the opera is not ignored. In an article devoted to the problem of genre invariance in Hindemith's oeuvre, Irina Stogny observes: "The musical language of Paul Hindemith, one of the 20th century's most 'genre-oriented' composers, contains numerous readily recognisable genre elements, which he employed in highly diverse ways. Through constant experimentation, Hindemith expanded and enriched both their range and their genre treatments." [11, p. 51]
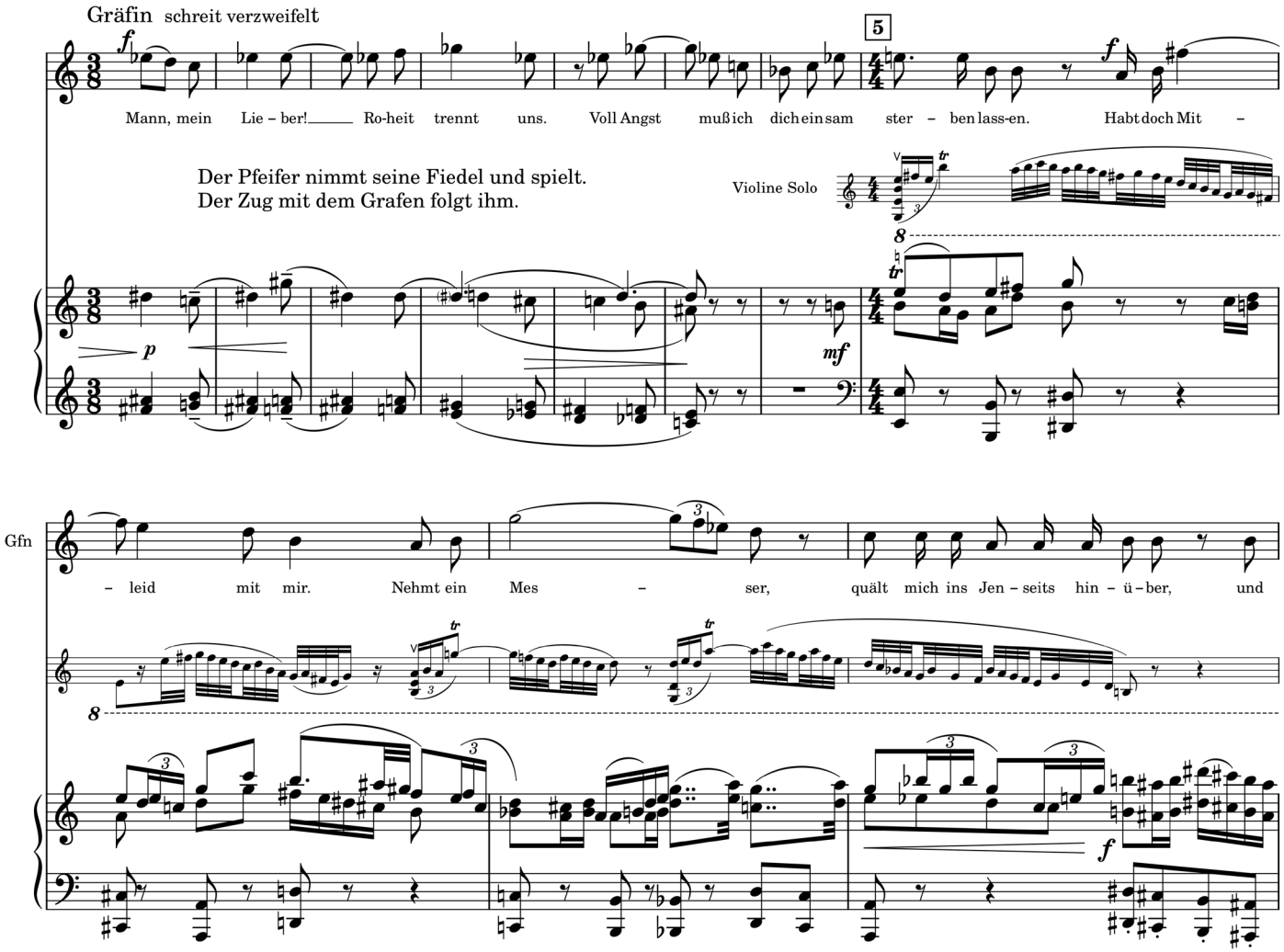
Scene 4 is particularly indicative in this regard. In the peasants' camp, Countess Helfenstein and Mathis are subjected to abuse, and Schwalb dies. Here, three genre-intonational layers are combined to broaden the opera's musical language. The Countess's plaintive lament is combined with the solo part played on a rustic fiddle (Example No. 10).

Another example is an old folk song sung by the peasants' chorus and cast in a sternly epic style (Example No. 11).

In the same scene, the composer also draws on the march genre (Example No. 12).

Example No. 10
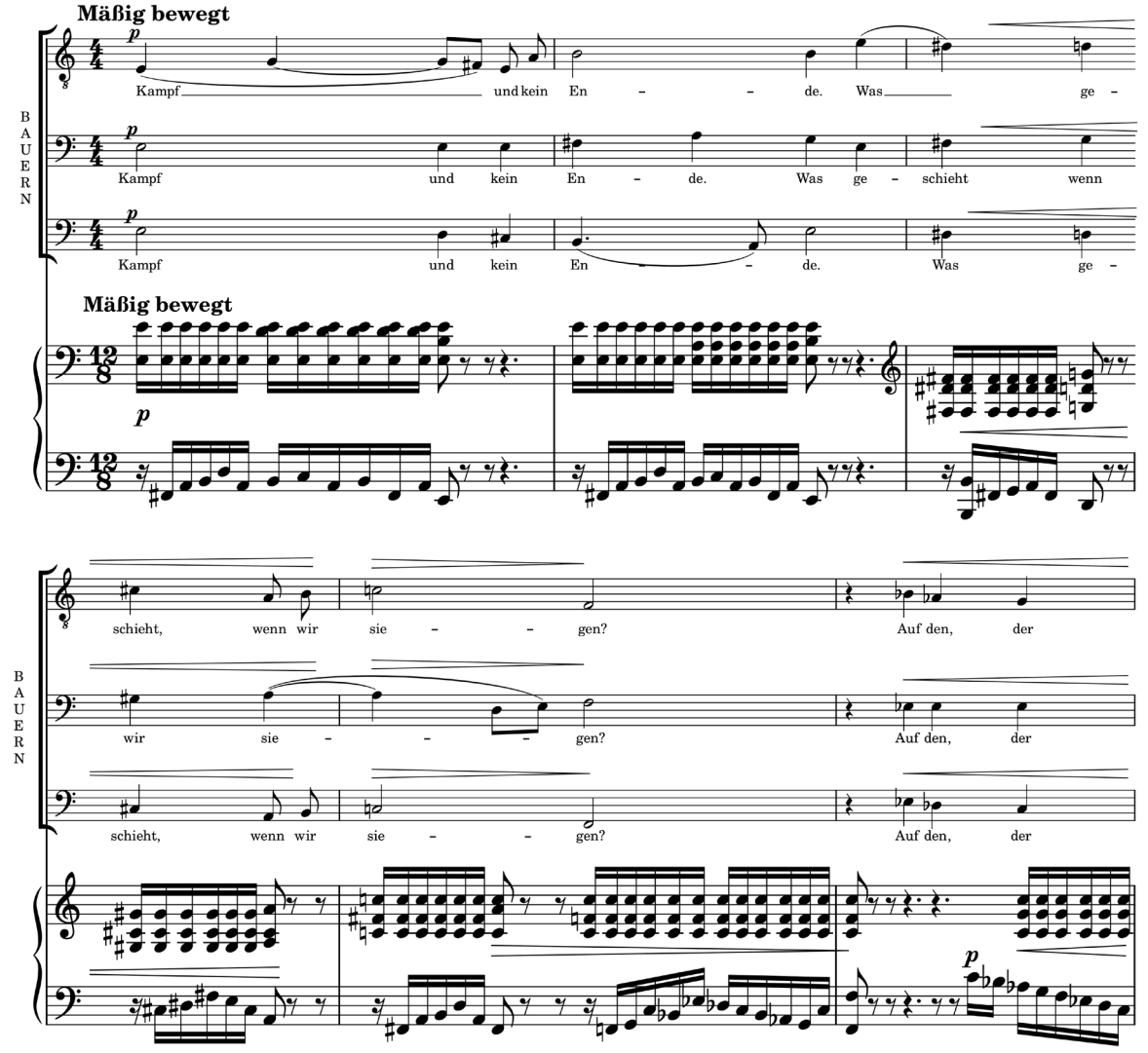
Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler.*
Scene 4 (vocal score), mm. 55–65



In the opera, this genre functions as the principal semantic antithesis. The creative space associated with Mathis the artist is articulated through ecclesiastical-chorale, polyphonic and diatonic musical language. In evoking the sphere of historical events and political violence, the march acts as a symbol of the elemental force of history, as well as the collapse of illusions and the blind mechanistic nature that sustains them. Its function is emphasised by a rigid rhythm, relentless accents on the first beat, square phrase structure, frequent chordal *tutti* and staccato articulation. The most striking example of its use occurs in Scene 4, as the Landsknecht army (German mercenary infantry) approaches. It is a kind of "voice of fate" that stands in opposition to the humanistic ideal. Another example is the funeral march, which symbolises the collapse of the peasant uprising and the apparent futility of the struggle.
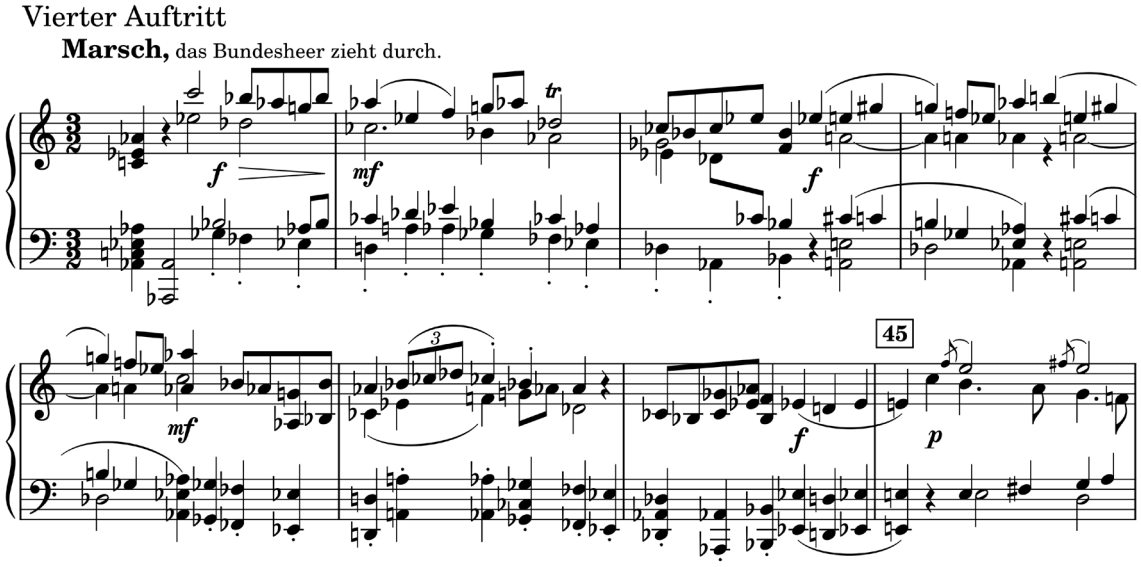
Example No. 11

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler.*
Scene 4 (vocal score), mm. 467–471



Example No. 12

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler.*
Scene 4 (vocal score), mm. 608–615



Conclusion

The composer found a means of conveying to the world an "encoded message" or an "authorial manifesto" against the fascist catastrophe of the 1930s–1940s. Identifying himself with the opera's protagonist, he deliberately used the opera's text to create a temporal "loop" from the 20th century back to the 15th, dissolving the boundaries between epochs and emphasising the timeless nature of the creative act. Germany in the 1930s was gradually turning into something "unrecognisable." [12, p. 9] Sharri K. Hall writes: "This coincided with Hindemith's present situation. The Nazis were turning Hindemith's Germany into something unrecognizable. Though science and education seemed to flourish, the Reich's leaders seemed to become only more irrational in their treatment of musicians and their blatant anti-Semitism. More generally, facets of the very opera closely mimicked facets of Hindemith's time in Germany." [Ibid.]

From here, the process of reasoning about the mystery motifs in the opera is built. Since the format of the article does not permit a full analysis of the opera's musical dramaturgy, four principal mystery motifs have been identified: the "Concert of Angels," whose supra-leitmotivic intonational-acoustic conception serves to protect art and encompasses the opera's entire spatiotemporal sphere; temptation, whose directional vector shifts the protagonist's perspective from external conflict towards the overcoming of internal conflict; catharsis as the discovery of the artist's true mission; and renunciation of the real world as the transformation of true creative freedom. Although the composer did not define the genre boundaries of the opera, it can be interpreted as a drama of ideas, as a mystery play, but it would perhaps be more correct to speak of the presence of mystery motifs.

In the context of musicology, the relationship between the genres of mystery, mysteriality and ritual relates to problems of an eternal nature. This question remains open and requires detailed study. The progression of the action and the opera's sequence of events suggest that its plot follows the typology of a saint's life. The work's multi-genre character provides grounds for suggesting that its mystery motifs do not express the composer's own direct religiosity; rather, they function as a semiotic instrument that helped create an encoded model of spiritual resistance to the historical climate of 1930s Germany.

The categories of sacrifice, choice, freedom and catharsis shape the opera's compositional and dramaturgical process. Drama combines two main spheres of conflict: external and internal. The intonation sphere complements the main mystery series. This includes traditional opera music, church choral music and diatonic folk songs. This broad genre palette expands the field of musical space of the opera. The countess's plaintive lament, the solo village fiddle, the old folk song, especially the march genre—all of these represent semantic antitheses to the creative search that reflects the essence of Being. As symbols of historical chaos and the collapse of illusions, they are opposed to the humanistic ideal.

The mystery motifs associated with the category of miraculous transformation gave expression to the composer's deepest aspirations and prophetically indicated a path towards humanity's development and salvation through art, thereby outlining a return to "the sought-for wholeness of the human being, who is increasingly becoming estranged from what is properly human within himself." [13, p. 162] The opera's thematic content has thus acquired new resonance in the light of contemporaneous realities.

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Information about the author:

Anna A. Predolyak — Cand.Sci. (Arts), Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Cinema, Television and Sound Engineering, Krasnodar State Institute of Culture, Krasnodar, Russian Federation.

Информация об авторе:

А.А. Предоляк — кандидат искусствоведения, доцент, заведующая кафедрой кино, телевидения и звукорежиссуры, Краснодарский государственный институт культуры, г. Краснодар, Российская Федерация.

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