Richard Wagner's

Der Fliegende Holländer

and

Die Frist ist um

A brief study of the opera, its history and its music
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To my son Róbert
Abstract

This essay is divided in two parts.

Part one pinpoint the sources that led Wagner to create the opera. It begins with an outline of myths and legends that later inspired some of the most famous fictional works. Then it focuses on what inspired Wagner, from fiction to real life experiences. Next it describes the première and other important performances, concluding with an overview of the opera's most important aspects of its harmonic and symbolic language.

Part two wants to focus on a detailed music analysis of the aria Die Frist ist um. The analysis highlight again the harmonic and symbolic language of Wagner's music, as well as evaluating the lyrics of his own libretto. This study is enriched by many excerpts from both the aria's piano-voice reduction and the full score, placed along music diagrams in order to facilitate the harmonic and symbolic understanding of the music.

The goal of this essay is to shine a light on how this opera came into shape in Wagner's mind, the path took by the composer to create it, the fortuitous events that inspired him and the innovations within the opera's symbolic and harmonic language and poetry.
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**Introduction**

Just like the evolution of all living creatures in the natural World, the evolution of music it's a slow process that require a gradual step-by-step increase in innovations and style. There can be no classic without baroque, no piano without harpsichord, no legends without storytellers. From the dawn of music itself composers have always implemented their own personal touch and creativity in their work, gradually morphing and shaping the musical styles of their time.

In the biological evolution there are sometimes big leaps that give birth to new species at a rate faster than usual. As this is true for life, it is also true for music. Sometimes, an idea take shape and hit us like a tsunami, inspiring artists and musicians around the World to embrace the next step into the fine art of composing. Particularly and not coincidentally, one of these “waves” of inspiration was sent in 1843 by Richard Wagner with his opera *Der Fliegende Holländer*. This opera is a milestone not only for the composer himself, but also for its innovation in style. It expanded beyond the boundaries of composing in such an elegant form that it inspired a leap not just into a new kind of romanticism but it also resonates into modern times.

This essay will take a journey into how a myth became the opera we know and how it marked a point of maturity for the composer and music itself. Further, it will show a glimpse of Wagner's complex interconnection between harmony and poetry.
Part one

Der Fliegende Holländer
1. The myth of the Flying Dutchman and Wagner

1.1 - The legend

The legend of the Flying Dutchman appears to be of uncertain origin and a few centuries old. Several similar versions exist in many corners of the globe that share the same description of his ship: a ghostly presence, launched at full speed even without wind, the sails torn apart, often spotted surrounded by rough fog or thick mist. The myth is so widespread that it became an established belief in the maritime folklore.

One of the earliest legends that introduce a cursed man forced to sail the sea forever is the one of Count Reginald Falkenberg. The story places the Falkenberg family at a castle in Limburg, south Netherlands, around the year 1400. However there are no clear sources whether the legend originates during this time or if it is just the timespan in which it is placed.

Anyway, here goes the story. Reginald and Waleran were two brothers, both in love with a girl named Alexia, daughter of Count Cleves. Waleran was the favourite groom among the two. Reginald could not accept this and, stricken by jealousy, he murdered both his brother and the bride. Reginald, broken by his own actions, set up a journey to meet a hermit to confess the murders and find some peace of mind. But the man did not absolve him. Instead, he told him to walk north until there would be no more land, where he should wait for a sign. So Reginald walked and walked until he reached the seashore. There two sailors appeared and brought him on board of a ship, where they began to play dices, gambling for Falkenberg's very own soul. Since then, the game has lasted for 600 years and it will continue to do so, until the end of time.¹

1.2 - Inspired (and inspiring) works

There are several fictional works based on this legend with different details and plots. One of the earliest work is by an anonymous writer published in May 1821, a fictional short story in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* called *Vanderdecken's message home*. In this publication there is no indication of the involvement of Satan or the ship making port once every seven years, which are characteristics of later versions of the myth, yet there are indications of the paranormal. One of the sailors of the Dutchman, a captain called Vanderdecken, is still trying to send letters ashore on the behalf of the crew and the captain even though, after seventy years, their beloved ones are long dead. The letters would be delivered to any ship that had the misfortune to come across the doomed Dutchman.

In 1821 Wagner was 8 years old and it's easy to imagine that he might have had his first contact with the myth of the Dutchman through *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. The publication was quite popular at that time and Wagner might have had the chance to hear about Vanderdecken's story in this fictional work for the first time.

Wagner seems to have collected some inspiration from everywhere, but in particular from a book written by Heinrich Heine.

Illustration 1: The cover of Heine's novel.

Heinrich Heine is considered one of the greatest writers in German literature; many composers, such as Schubert, Schumann or Brahms, drew inspiration from his work and set to music many of his poems.

In *From the Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelewopski*, this fictional character finds himself, among other things, to attend a play based on the legend of the Flying Dutchman. The play describes the sailors of the Dutchman begging other ships to deliver a pack of letter ashore.

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The captain is condemned by the devil to forever roam the seven seas, able to spend just a single day on land every seven years. While ashore he could be freed from his curse only by a woman's true love. Heine also tells the tale of the meeting between the Dutchman and Katharina (daughter of a Scottish captain) who threw herself into the sea as a vow of true love, trying to reach the departing Dutchman.

This book is where Wagner drew inspiration for his libretto of Der Fliegende Holländer. Wagner did not copy Heine's work to the letter. In fact, while Heine presented his story in a satirical form and just as a small part of a much bigger and different work, the ideas and lyrics for Der Fliegende Holländer are a lot more powerful and dramatic. Not to mention that in Wagner's opera the main content is the legend itself.
2. The birth of the opera: a bit of history, a lot of adventure

2.1 – An inspiring, dangerous journey

The story of how Wagner was led into the path to create this opera is nothing less adventurous than an Indiana Jones film and this essay would not be completed without telling its tale.

The very first decision that led Wagner to the idea for this opera was, in fact, breaking the law. At that time he was living in Riga (nowadays the capital of Latvia, back then under the Russian empire) when he decided to move to Paris, trying to build up a name for himself. The problem was that the composer, despite having been working hard for a local theatre company, had debt all over town and the Russian law did not grant any permits to leave the country unless Wagner would declare his intentions in the local newspapers. Furthermore his passport had been impounded by his creditors. That said, Wagner didn't really want to make public where he was heading, so he decided to cross the border illegally, alongside with his wife Minna and his dog Robber. The three escapists reached the Prussian border in a mail carriage, close to where today lies the border between Latvia and Lithuania. There they met a trusted man, sent by Abraham Möller, a Wagner's friend from Königsberg (today's Kaliningrad). Möller advised and then helped the composer to run away from Russia and his creditors and settle all his debts only after the elusive success in Paris would have been achieved.

Once Wagner and family had reached the border that separates Russia from Prussia, all they could do was waiting. While within the safety and secrecy of a small safe house, the trusted man returned into Prussian territory (which wasn't a problem for him, being from Königsberg) and wait for them to cross the border, during the night. Wagner had a time-span of just few minutes between the relief of the guard. This also included the time to get to a safe distance, as the Cossacks had order to shoot also just within Prussian territory. The three waited after sunset and everything went according to plan. After a quick and silent crossing they were greeted again by Möller's man who led the family into a carriage and then to a tavern, where Möller was anxiously waiting for them.

Now the target of the journey was to reach Paris through London. After a very tumultuous journey they reached the port of Pillau (Kaliningrad, south-east of the Baltic sea), where they set sails for London. This trip marks the beginning of a series of events that inspired Wagner for the music and libretto of his *Fliegende Holländer*. Their vessel was caught in a stormy weather and forced to low anchor by the Norwegian coast, waiting for the weather to get better again. Wagner admitted that the first inspiration for the sailors's choirs of the opera came to him during their time within the safety of the fjords, where the sailors' chants echoed...
off the rocks surrounding them. Illustrations 2, 3 and 4 show some excerpts of the sailors choirs in full score.

Illustration 2: Sailors choir in full score, end of act I.

Illustration 3: Sailors choir in full score, end of act I.
After four days of relative stillness the north wind struck the ship again, now even more furiously, with a storm so great that it would change Wagner's life forever.

As he thought death was to come at any moment, more by the hands of the ship's superstitious crew than because of the storm itself, more ideas and knowledge were growing inside him. This journey became the necessary first-hand experience in order to represent the power of the elements and the myth in his music and poetry.⁶

Illustration 4: Sailors choir in full score, beginning of Act III.

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2.2 – From idea into reality

The idea for Der Fliegende Holländer began to grow into Wagner's mind even before the première of his previous work, Rienzi. Two years passed since the tumultuous stormy trip in 1838 before the composer began working on the opera's poetry (while in Paris), plus another year to complete the libretto. The music on the other hand came into shape exceptionally quickly and within seven weeks most of the music was composed. It was then fully completed with the overture and the orchestration at the end of 1841.7

Initially the opera was set in Scotland where Erik and Daland were at first called Georg and Donald. Wagner later changed to the Norwegian setting, most likely to further increase the differences with Heine's work (which was set in Scotland). Furthermore, at first Wagner planned to write the opera in one act but rejections from opera houses and impracticality within the score made him divide it into the three acts we know.

3. Première

The opera was premièred the 2nd of January 1843 at the Königliches Sachsisches Hoftheater in Dresden, conducted by Wagner himself. lead singers were:

- Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient as Senta.
- Johann Michael Wächter as the Dutchman.
- Karl Risse as Daland.
- Friedrich Traugott Reinhold as Erik.

As it is sometimes the case, the first performance of Der Fliegende Holländer did not hit the hoped success, not because of the work itself but because of the location and setting in which it was performed. Apart from Devrient, the singers did not excel in their interpretation of the roles. Wächter lacked of acting skills and Risse wasn't very exciting as a singer. The theatre also did not rise to the level of Wagner's expectations. The staging was done recycling sceneries from other productions and the music didn't sound as good as he thought. According to Wagner himself the orchestra lacked the power to represent the stormy ocean and the rise of the Dutchman's phantom ship.

Wagner was a perfectionist and he quickly became frustrated with the lack of competence of the theatre company. In the end the opera was cut from the season's plan after only four performances, which was quite a low number for the standards of the time.

But the hopes of establishing the opera in the repertoire did not get lost. In fact, five months later in 1843, Der Fliegende Holländer caught the public attention in Kassel (central Germany) and also in Riga, despite Wagner's run from his creditors. However, the performance that forever established the opera in the repertoire was staged in 1851 in Zürich, conducted again by Wagner after he revised the score in the version that we know today.

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4. The innovations in *Der Fliegende Holländer*'s musical language

*Der Fliegende Holländer* is Wagner's fourth major operatic work, completed when he was thirty years old. It quickly became a reference point for his later works. The composer began paying a great deal of attention to the mood of the drama, representing it through both harmony and the graphical use of music notation.¹²

There are some contradiction among modern scholars about the importance of this opera and the influence it had. If compared with some of Wagner's later works, it might seem that it doesn't quite fit yet with the style that the composer developed later on. For this reason Wagner scholars tend to classify *Der Fliegende Holländer* as an opera that falls into the already well established rules of opera composition, without bringing true innovation and style. However, looking at this opera in its own epoch is a much better way to appreciate Wagner's work and the style that was sprouting within his music. The opera was premièred within the first half of the Romantic period but it is not unusual to still find connections with the classical style. However Wagner did not connect with the old classical composing style because of lack of ideas or maturity. He had in fact a specific plan for the representation of the characters and their interactions, an idea that persisted in his *Tannhäuser* and marked his passage into the *music drama* operatic style. This later evolved into works such as *Tristan und Isolde* and his *Der Ring des Nibelungen* four dramas cycle.

There is a specific contrast between Daland and Erik's music and the one written for Senta and the Dutchman, as to separate the two Worlds in which the characters thrive. Daland, a Norwegian captain and Erik, a huntsman, are two mortal souls represented by an older operatic style that connects to the classical era. On the other hand, the supernatural and the dreams of an impossible love bring innovation to the music. The Dutchman and Senta are characterized by complex stylistic composition that connects more deeply to the romantic period.

To better understand this difference of style we can take a look at two excerpt from the full scored duet between Daland and the Dutchman. It's immediately clear that The Dutchman's use of sharps, naturals and flats diverts the music from simple keys into a musical language that is more personal to Wagner.

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Daland's line, on the other hand, has less changes. The key is a simple a-minor and the recitative style resemble music from the Classical period, reminding sometimes of Mozart.

Illustration 5: Excerpt from Daland-Dutchman duet, act I (Dutchman's line).

Illustration 6: Excerpt from Daland-Dutchman duet, act I (Daland's line).
Part two

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Die Frist ist um
The music of Richard Wagner is often full of changes, details and personal characteristics that make it complex and difficult to interpret. There are different ways to understand and explain such complex music. The scholar must consider the main targets of his/her studies and use deductive logic alongside a deep musical knowledge to analyse the score. Yet we should not forget that only Wagner himself could have known his exact way of working and composing. Setting some foundations and a proper work-plan can guide us well into the understanding of his music. This challenge is particularly evident in the aria *Die Frist ist um*, where Wagner created a peculiar musical language that later became the source of inspiration for more modern composers.

For this study a piano/voice arrangement and the full score were used. The first one to compress and simplify the outlook of the melodic and harmonic language, the second to widen the overview of the graphic and symbolic notational representation that signifies the poetry and the emotional content.
Die Frist ist um's 1st section begins in C major, although the music shows right away a more complex pattern. Measures 1-2-3-4-8 and 10 can be identified as an octatonic progression in B, with some chromatic touch (C – C#), identifiable as motive 1 (illustration 7). If we „tidy up“ the intervals, it's possible to notice a resemble between the musical language used here by Wagner and the Hungarian minor used later by Béla Bartók, who was deeply inspired by Wagner.

Illustration 7: Motif 1, m. 1.

Illustration 8: Octatonic language at measures 1-2-3-4-8-10.

Illustration 9: Hungarian minor.
Then, at measure 5 - 6, a peculiar scale is used to introduce the recitative: „The term is passed and once again seven years have passed“¹⁴. From this very first sentence we can already catch few informations. This is a clear reference to Heine's work, where the Dutchman is a cursed man that cannot set port but once every seven years.

If we consider the missing A#, rearranging the intervals shows another octatonic language (illustration 10) with a double augmented-second (D# - E - Fx - G# - A# - B - Cx - D#), ending on the E# (illustration 11).

This small introduction sounds dark and powerful, reflecting the character and the synopsis well. The lyrics follow the same harmony, creating a sense of suspense. By not defining precisely the key Wagner emphasizes a sense of suspension and ethereal, matching the gloomy atmosphere of the scene.

At measure 13 *motif 1.1* (illustration 12) leads to a full-diminished vii° in C-major preceding a change in tonality to d-minor, V6/5 chord at measure 15, followed by *motive 1*, built in *Locrian* mode in d-minor, and *motive 2*, in an *harmonic* d-minor. Interesting to notice the quick sostenuto and the unsettling tremolo at measure 18, right on the word ,,Qual“ (torment), as shown in illustration 14. This is a reference to the „tormenting“ swaying of the ship during Wagner's stormy journey from Pillau to London.

At measure 18 and 19 (illustration 13) Wagner uses again the same octatonic language of measure 5, but this time in C#.

Illustration 12: Motif 1.1, m. 13-14.

Illustration 13: Octatonic language by Wagner, m. 18=19.

Illustration 14: Excerpt from the aria's recitative, motif 2, m. 15=19.
This modulation bring us into a recitative without accompaniment and written atonally (measure 20 – 21). Without defining clearly the tonic Wagner gives a to the text vague sense of musical disorientation: „Never I shall find the redemption I seek on land!“ 15

Illustration 15: Excerpt from the aria's recitative, m. 20=22.

At **measure 22** Wagner creates another octatonic scale (illustration 16 and 17), slightly different. It’s a sequence of semitones and augmented 2nds with tonal focus on G#, leading to a passage in D-major and then a shift in g-minor. This ascending progression looks again like a raising wave, interrupted in the next measure. The symbolic notation refers to the following lyrics: „**Until your last wave break**“ .At **measure 25** motive 1.2 in g-minor scale (with a natural minor iii) lead to another interesting passage. In **measures 27-28** (illustration 18) motif 1 becomes slightly more chromatic and it seems to imitate a small weak wave that follows the lyrics „**and your last water runs dry**“.

![Illustration 16: Octatonic language by Wagner, m. 22.](image1)

![Illustration 17: Excerpt of the aria, m. 22.](image2)

![Illustration 18: Excerpt of the aria, m. 25-31.](image3)

At m. 32 the key shifts, however Wagner performs several changes and uses the music (*motif 3*, illustration 21) more graphically than melodically. The *allegro molto agitato* is followed by „waves“ of notes building up to a climax that crush in m. 40, where the aria begins with a musical language shown in illustration 20. The visual beauty of this technique can be better appreciated in full score (illustrations 19).

The string instruments come together mimicking the surface of the ocean disrupted by waves, in a storm that surround the Dutchman's aria just like water would surround his ship. The poetry blend into the scene, when the Dutchman speaks of the deepest abysses of the ocean and his failure to find peace in such wild waters.

Illustration 19: Excerpt of the aria in full score., m. 29-35.
Illustration 20: Excerpt of the aria in full score, m. 36-42.

Illustration 21: Motif 3, m. 32-33.

Illustration 22: Octatonic language at m. 40.
At m. 44 the key becomes a simple g-minor. It is important to note Wagner's ability to shift between his own octatonic scale and a simple g-minor just within few changes of B-flat to B and A to A-flat, an unquestionable sign of planning, musical knowledge and ability to integrate his own ideas into the established rule of composition (illustration 23).

Illustration 23: The highlighted notes make possible to switch between g-minor and an octatonic minor with a double augmented-2nd.

In m. 44 to 47 Wagner alternates between tonics and half-diminished / augmented chords that once again unbalance the music, highlighting the Dutchman's words, in vain looking for death: „But alas! I have not found death!“ (illustration 24). Motif 4 separates this section of the aria from the next one. This „flat“ motif hides two meanings within its graphical notation. Here in m. 45-46 it symbolize the land between two raging seas that the Dutchman is able to walk only once every 7 years. The second representation is shown in m. 53-54.

Illustration 24: Excerpt of the aria, motif 4, m. 44-47.

A small bridge at m. 52 modulates into g-flat minor. M. 53 to 55 imitates m. 45 to 47, but the key is different. At first it would seem to be G-flat major, however there is an unusual detail: the use of a double flat-E. If we lay down the intervals (illustration 25) we can see that Wagner created an hybrid language, an harmonic g-flat minor with a major third. This way he obtained a longer chromaticism on the bass line right under motif 4, between m. 52 – 54. This is the second symbolic representation of motif 4: the stillness of this motif is the symbolic flat ground that would hold the Dutchman's grave („mein Grab“, illustration 26).

Illustration 25: The hybrid major-minor scale, m. 53-55.

Illustration 26: Excerpt from the aria, motif 4, m. 52-54.
In m. 56 – 57 – 60 – 61 raising b-flat to a natural-b creates again the hybrid harmonic/major language we saw before (now in g-minor). Two ascending and descending chromatic scales represent two big waves that accentuate the words „Piraten“ („pirates“, m. 58 – 59, illustration 27) and “Tod” („death“, m. 62 – 63, illustration 28), one of the aria's main recurring quote. Death is often invoked or indirectly mentioned in *Die Frist ist um*. It's not seen as grim and frightening, but as something rather liberating. Death is the end of pain. This is a typical romantic approach to symbolize the dark and mysterious, not just in music but also in poetry and art in general.

Illustration 27: Excerpt of the aria, m. 55-60.

Illustration 28: Excerpt of the aria, m. 61-63.
In m. 64 – 65 and 68 - 69 (illustration 29), we're in g-minor. Here the Dutchman challenge the rapacious pirates to rob and kill him, in a vain hope that they could put an end to his agony. The music is intense and fearless.

It's important to highlight the use of an interval represented in this aria by both augmented fourth and diminished-fifth: the triton. In the Dutchman's music this interval is used for a particular reason. In medieval time this interval was called Diabolus in musica (devil's music) because of its particular suspended feeling that gives the human ear an uncanny sense of mysteriousness. Considering the ghostly atmosphere of the Opera, the extensive use of the triton does not come as a surprise.

M. 66-67 show a modulation from g-minor to D-major without resolution, then in m.68 to 70 the modulation is repeated, now falling on the tonic (m. 71). Another shift in tonality at m. 72 on the dominant in e-minor slows the music, calms the mood and leads to another variation in the aria. Here the Dutchman seems to suddenly loose his strength, sounding disappointed and crestfallen, as the barbarous pirates did not dare to defy him: „Taunting, I threatened the pirate, in fierce battle I hoped for death“. Here, a long, rapid tremolo (m.73 to 81, illustration 30) is interrupted by an alternating dominant-subdominant sustain the frustration of the Dutchman: “But alas! The sea's savage son signed the cross in fear and fled away”.

Illustration 29: Excerpt of the aria, m. 64-72.
Illustration 30: Excerpt of the aria. m.73-80.
M. 83 introduces another variation of the aria on two set of scales (see illustrations 31, 32 and 33). This time, the vocal line is different and the music more complex. The bass line maintains the same structures of motif 3 over a series of sharpened full diminished chords, again in e-minor. Even though the music itself feels quite far from a simple e-minor, it will reconnect to it later in m. 97, after a chord progression of $\#\text{iii}^\circ 7 - \#\text{ii}^\circ 6/5 - \#\text{vi}^\circ 4/2 - \#\text{vii}^\circ 4/2 - \#\text{iv}^\circ$ (illustration 34).

Illustration 31: Octatonic language at measures 82-85.

Illustration 32: Octatonic language at measures 86-89.

Illustration 33: The second variation of the aria's first lyrics, m. 83-88.
Illustration 34: The second variation of the aria's first lyrics, m. 89-99.
Such a long progression of unresolved augmented chords gives a completely different feeling to the text. The Dutchman is repeating the lyrics at the beginning of the aria (m. 40) but this time he sounds less confident. The true nature of his feelings reveal desperation and his hope for redemption is fading away. This becomes particularly clear in m. 97 – 106 (illustration 35), reaching an high E just above the middle C with the lyrics „Nowhere a grave!“ and then an high F on „Never death!“\(^{19}\). This short climax that dies away almost immediately highlights the Dutchman's despair, indicating that he is still human after all despite being cursed. The climax in e-minor is built over a series of tonic and ascending diminished chords (i - #vi\(^7\) – i - \(\frac{3}{4}\)v\(^6/5\)), where the elongated and sustained tremolo increases the sense of eternal waiting for death.

Illustration 35: The climax at m. 95-106.

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\(^{19}\) „Die Frist ist um (Der Fliegende Holländer),“ Opera Cat's Opera Translations, last modified October 4, 2010, [http://www.opera-cat.dreamwidth.org/11648.html](http://www.opera-cat.dreamwidth.org/11648.html).
Here is the end of the 1st section of the aria. The intensity decreases and there is a shift in tonality, Wagner returns to the octatonic in g (see illustration 36 and 37) over a pedal-point on the tonic. The vocal range gets considerably low and the lyrics project the thoughts of the Dutchman at his darkest point: „This is damnation's terrible decree“20.

Illustration 36: Excerpt of the aria, m. 107-113.

Illustration 37: Octatonic language by Wagner, m.107-125.

At m. 126 the 2nd section of the aria begins. Now the Dutchman speaks of the redemption that an angel offered to him. In this part of the aria we can find an extremely clever use of two musical languages that are simple but at the same time difficult to spot. From m. 126 to 159 (see illustration 38 and 39) the accompaniment is a long tremolo that shifts between an Æolian c-minor and a Ionian C-flat major while the voice sings independently, although following the same shifts of tonal focus.

Of course, it might be tempting to think of the scales used as a traditional major-minor tonality, but it's not a coincidence that Wagner wrote these passages in a modal language. Modal scales were (and still are) vastly used in religious compositions and here, in fact, the cursed captain is addressing his torment towards Heaven. At first, the Dutchman seems to speak kindly to the angel who offered him a way of redemption. However it all seems an illusion: he actually curses that angel, wondering if such an impossible way of salvation was just a mockery: “I ask you, blessed angel of God, who won for me the condition of my salvation: was I, accursed, the toy of your mockery, when you showed me the way to redemption?” One could argue that Æolian/natural minor and Ionian/major are actually made by the very same notes and intervals, but we should not underestimate our ability to “feel” the music as into separate entities. Our brains have the astonishing capability to interpret in multiple ways music that has been built on the same language (or key, if you will) and set in different contexts. Wagner was, most likely, aware of this.

Illustration 38: Excerpt of the aria.

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Illustration 39: Excerpt of the aria, **m. 154-159**.
At measure 160 Wagner returns to use the same language of m. 1, then m. 163 - 167 are built over an octatonic e-minor (illustration 40). Also the accompaniment is built on the very same octatonic language (ii – i – i½7, illustration 41). Now the Dutchman gives voice to his own frustration and curses his faith: „Vain hope! Fearful, empty illusion! Eternal faithfulness on Earth – is finished!“. 22

Illustration 40: Octatonic language by Wagner, m. 163.

Illustration 41: Excerpt of the aria, m. 163-167.

At **measure 168** (illustration 42 and 43) *motif 4* is built on an harmonic c#-minor, again representing the gusty ocean, although not as before. This is just a single much bigger „wave“ that crushes the Dutchman's words „Vain hope! Fearful, empty illusion! Eternal faithfulness on earth -- is finished!“ and lead the mood to a moment of stillness (**measure 171**).

This long tremolo is built on another octatonic set, again with two augmented 2nds, but this time in *g*. Here it's worth to take a look at the full score to better understand the symbolic representation of the lyrics.

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Illustration 43: Excerpt of the aria in full score, m. 169-171.
The 3rd the 4th section of Die Frist ist um are essentially composed with almost identical music. For this reason, only the 4th section will be analysed, which included the finale section with the closing cadence.

The 4th section of the aria beginning at m. 228 (illustration 44 and 45) is particularly complex and exciting. Here the Dutchman has reached the apex of his desperation. Wagner emphasizes the tension in the lyrics using a marked contrast between short eighth-notes and longer double-dotted half-notes and places them over a long pedal point in c-minor.

In m. 232 a #vii°7 in g-minor rises within the pedal point in c-minor, as a symbolic representation of the lyrics “When all the dead rise again.”. However there is more here than meet the eyes. The introduction of a sharpened subdominant (F#) in c-minor briefly creates a triton (C – F#) that resolve in the c-minor dominant (G). Then the pedal point is interrupted in m. 234 – 235 with the ultimate momentum, where the leading tone of the c-minor tonic chord is included in the subdominant chord. By doing so Wagner creates another triton (F – B natural) under an ascending chromatic scale that further relate to the words „rise again,” and further increase the Dutchman's symbolic despair. Between m. 236 – 242 the music is repeated on the lyrics „then I will pass away into nothingness”\textsuperscript{24}. Although the poetry here seems more at peace, the tension of the scene is unchanged.

This quick passages between extreme dissonances and resolutions represent the battled feelings within the Dutchman. Wagner wanted to represent a man with a strong character, a captain that does not fear death, in spite of being overwhelmed by great despair. This is another brilliant technique that established once more Wagner's creativity and ability to blend poetry and music.

In m. 243 (illustration 45) the pedal point ends on the dominant and another symbolic representation imitates the rise of the dead through ascending steps of notes. Wagner is still pushing a strong mood swing. By using a D-flat at m. 247 he introduce a perfect fourth (A flat – D flat) that is in contrast with a diminished vii°4/2. Notice the arpeggio on the bass line at m. 248, where a natural D creates another triton. From here a long cadence in c-minor finally resolve this long exiting section of the aria on the major tonic in C (m. 256) and prepares the

\textsuperscript{24} „Die Frist ist um (Der Fliegende Holländer),“ Opera Cat's Opera Translations, last modified October 4, 2010, http://www.opera-cat.dreamwidth.org/11648.html.
passage into the *finale section*. It took the whole aria before finally reaching the C-major that was set to be at the very first measure of the aria.

Illustration 44: Excerpt of the aria, m. 226-241.
Illustration 45: Excerpt of the aria, m. 242-256.
The finale from measure 257 (illustration 46 and 47) is a long cadence in C major with variations. It begins with a long scale in C-major that span more that three octaves and project the voice to a fortissimo high F, imploring the World to end at once: „Ye worlds, end your course!“. At m. 260 to 263 the symbolic language of the music wants to represent the end falling over the Dutchman. This passage is achieved with the use of the subdominant minor stretching and descending towards the tonic over four measures. The flat supertonic (D-flat) at m. 263 wants to resolve into the tonic from above instead than from below with the leading tone. Resolving the music through an half-step D flat – C sounds more precise and has a darker tone color.

The last lyrics of aria („Eternal annihilation, receive me!“) is intensely stressed by a series of chords (♯vii°4/3, ♮vi°7, i6/4, Ger 6/5, ♯vii°6/5, m. 264 – 269) where a sharp subdominant (F sharp) introduces the triton, in both augmented 4th and diminished 5th forms. With this type of harmony Wagner placed great sorrow and tension right before concluding the cadence (m. 270 – 272), obtaining a stronger shift into the tonic of the final instrumental music.

The end is a long and majestic tremolo, reaching C-major with a long plagal cadence (or amen cadence) with a diminished-2nd to further increase the excitement of the final resolution (I - iv – iv4/2 – ii° - I, measures 272 – 285).

This is a great end for this aria, so powerful and grandiose that it can only be fully appreciate in its full score as shown in illustration 48 and 49.

Illustration 46: The finale of the aria, m. 257-260.
Illustration 47: The finale of the aria, m. 261-284.
Illustration 48: The aria's finale in full score, m. 271
Illustration 49: The aria's closing music in full score, m. 275-284
6. Conclusions

Wagner's ability to write his own librettos was certainly a vantage point in terms of practicality and ability to create. He was completely free of finding his own way of connecting poetry and music in a way that was deeply personal. It connected to his everyday experiences as well as the unexpected ones.

It seems clear that he had a special ability to represent feelings and emotions through music in such an elegant and clever form that it did not resemble anyone else's music. It was so personal at writing and composing that for him it must have been an act of free and uncontrolled flow of his deepest emotions, laying completely bare and exposing his sensitivity.

We can also enjoy Wagner's ability with words in other contexts as well. Reading through his autobiography gives the same flavour and the same kind of suspense that one would find in a novel. As I read, I gradually find many moments when a smile appears on my face, even a laugh. Wagner was a master at writing, not just composing, and that might have been his strongest talent above all. The beauty of poetry and the deep connection between words and emotions can empower a flow of creativity more powerful than any technical knowledge a composer can ever hope to master.
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